



Llythrennedd Gwybodaeth

Information Literacy

Digital Inclusion Consultation Feedback

Welsh Information Literacy Project

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Signatures below show approval for the contents of this document:

Role	Name	Organisation	Signature	Date
Project Manager	Cathie Jackson	Cardiff University	<i>C Jackson</i>	25/08/10
Information Literacy Development Officer	Joy Head	Cardiff University	<i>J.Head</i> <i>(E-mail)</i>	23/08/10
Steering Group Chair	Hywel James	Gwynedd Libraries	<i>H James</i>	03/09/10
Steering Group Mem-	Chris Clarke	RDO SE Wales	<i>C Clarke</i>	03/08/10
ber	Sue Mace	WHELP	<i>S. Mace</i>	26/08/10
Steering Group Mem-	Alison Harding	Trinity University College	<i>A Harding</i>	03/09/10
ber	Carolyn Howe	Coleg Glan Hafren	<i>C Howe</i>	03/09/10
Steering Group Mem-	Christine George	Torfaen Library	<i>C.George</i>	31/08/10
ber	Lisa Thomas	Caerphilly CBC library Service	<i>L. Thomas</i>	23/08/10
Steering Group Mem-	Mandy Powell	CILIP Cymru	<i>M Powell</i>	03/09/10
ber	Meinir Howells	Cwmtawe Comprehensive School	<i>M. Howells</i>	02/09/2010
Steering Group Mem-	Liz Smith	Pembroke School	<i>L. Smith</i>	02/09/2010
ber	Karl Drinkwater	RSC Wales	<i>K. Drinkwater</i>	23/08/10
Steering Group Mem-	Sue Thomas	Health Promotion Wales	<i>S Thomas</i>	03/09/10
ber	Nicola Watkinson	Glyndwr University	<i>N.Watkinson</i>	27/08/10

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1. Document Administration

1.1 Change History

This section details the full document history: This includes the version number, the version author, a brief outline of the changes made since the previous version and the date the new version was published.

Version	Author	Detail of Amendment	Date of Amendment
0.1	Joy Head	First Draft issued for internal review	20/08/2010
0.2	Joy Head	Including KD and LT feedback	23/08/2010
0.3	Joy Head	Including CJ feedback and SM signoff	26/08/2010
0.4	Joy Head	Including AT feedback and NW signoff	27/08/2010
0.5	Joy Head	Including LS feedback	02/09/2010
0.6	Joy Head	Add CJ edit & remove duplicate skills.	03/09/2010
1.0	Joy Head	Signed off	03/09/2010

1.2 Associated Documents

This section details any associated documents that are signed off but formally unpublished.

Document	Description	Location
Delivering digital inclusion – A strategic framework for Wales	Version issued for public consultation 17 th June 2010	Welsh Assembly Government website/Consultation.
Delivering Digital Inclusion: A Strategic framework for Wales: Response from the Society of Chief Librarians	Response document by the Society of Chief Librarians (Wales).	N/A

1.3 **Executive Summary**

This document is written in response to a public consultation of the Digital Inclusion Framework document (identified in the section above), issued by the Welsh Assembly Government in June 2010. All content below is a direct response and is comprised of consensus feedback from the Information Literacy Project steering group.

1.4 **Scope**

The scope of this document is restricted to:

- Outlining the drivers and goals of the Information Literacy Project in order to convey areas of common interest between the Information Literacy Project and the Digital Inclusion Framework.
- Responding directly to the questions posed in the Digital Inclusion Framework Consultation document.

2. Information Literacy

2.1 Overview

The Welsh Information Literacy Project has adopted the definition of information literacy provided by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals:

Information literacy is knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner. (CILIP, 2010)

2.2 Why is Information Literacy Important?

With information growing exponentially and traditional publication channels being supplemented by new technologies, we need to develop our understanding and skills, in order to thrive in this changing information environment.

We need information literacy throughout our lives. According to the Alexandra Proclamation made by UNESCO and others:

Information literacy lies at the core of lifelong learning. It empowers people in all walks of life to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goals. (UNESCO, 2005)

2.2.1 Economic Impact

Producing an effective workforce is essential to the prosperity of any nation and we believe that information literacy is a key attribute for the workplace. In a study of

SMEs in the UK, for example, it was estimated that employees spend 6.4 hours a week looking for information. 37% of searches are unsuccessful, equating to £3.7 billion in wasted time each year (DeSaulles, 2007).

2.2.2 Educational attainment

The evolving information landscape of the digital age means that education must adapt accordingly in order to prepare students to be effective learners and ultimately productive members of society. Curriculum development in Wales increasingly recognises the importance of cross-curricular skills in supporting attainment across subject boundaries. Information literacy however, is currently not explicitly covered in the curriculum. In an educational environment that is committed to encouraging independent learning, it is essential to provide students with the skills to independently find and evaluate information. This empowers the individual and develops the proactive learning culture that is so fundamental to educational attainment and progression. We therefore believe that it is essential to embed a clear and joined up information literacy framework which will support learners and provide them with these core skills for life.

2.2.3 Social Inclusion

Access to information has exploded over recent years with an unprecedented impact on society. Increasingly the old adage that “knowledge is power” has been replaced by the new truth that it is access to information which equates to choice by enabling informed decisions. Consequently those who are excluded from the ‘information society’ are invariably disempowered in aspects of life from the economic to the social. The importance of avoiding this social exclusion is recognised by the Welsh Assembly Government’s Digital Inclusion Framework. The Welsh Assembly Government recognises

the correlation between social and economic inclusion and digital inclusion in that document. We as a project however believe that access alone is not sufficient, the skills of information literacy are also fundamental to creating a more digitally inclusive and thereby financially and socially cohesive society. This will be discussed in greater detail in section 3.

2.2.4 International Perspective

Information literacy is becoming increasingly important in a global context due to the factors which are outlined above. This can be seen in UNESCO's commitment to the "Empowerment of people through information and media literacy" (UNESCO, 2010, 1). Furthermore, in October 2009, U.S. President Barack Obama issued a Presidential Proclamation, designating October 2009 Information Literacy Awareness Month (Obama, 2009).

2.3 Welsh Information Literacy Project

2.3.1 Overview and Origins

The Welsh Information Literacy Project has been initiated by librarians across Wales as a response to the need for a co-ordinated and partnership approach to enhance the information literacy. A conference of librarians from all sectors was held at Gregynog Hall in November/December 2009, and an action plan and project proposal established. The project has now been financed by CyMAL: Museums Archives and Libraries Wales, a division of the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) from July 2010 – March 2011.

The conference and previous discussions identified that a national framework for information literacy is required to ensure a common understanding and to provide a reference point from which information literacy can be integrated into other strategies as appropriate. The project

has buy-in from libraries across and beyond all education sectors in Wales, and the project is seeking to engage with other stakeholders beyond the profession. Information literacy is not constrained to the domain of librarians but a critical success factor to digital inclusion, educational success and an informed citizenry.

2.3.2 Project Aim and Objectives

2.3.2.1 Aim

- We aim to promote the understanding and development of information literacy in education, the workplace, and the wider community in Wales.

2.3.2.2 Objectives

This project will deliver the following objectives:

- To establish an overarching statement on information literacy in Wales. (see 2.3.3).
- To create a report on information literacy provision in each library sector in Wales, identifying case studies of good practice and gaps requiring further enhancement.
- To deliver a draft framework for information literacy in Wales that will provide notional levels of information literacy skills and competences for all levels of learners.

2.3.3 Statement

An Information Literacy Statement for Wales Inspired by the Gregynog Conference, 2009

**This statement was agreed by the cross-sector information
literacy steering group on 18/6/10**

As humans, we like to find out about things – whether that’s information about our next holiday destination or a health condition. Being able to use different ways of finding information and being able to judge whether the information is trustworthy or accurate is vital: it opens up choices, empowers us and can give us more confidence. This is information literacy.

Empowering individuals to seek, find and use the information they need to help them achieve their goals fosters an information literate population. This can lead to social and economic benefits to the Welsh nation.

Librarians in Wales have come together to focus on information literacy and would welcome working with other partners to achieve this goal. This statement is the first step towards an information literacy framework for Wales, and ultimately, an information literate nation.

3. Response to Digital Inclusion Framework Consultation

The following section responds directly to the questions posed at the end of the digital inclusion framework document that was issued for public consultation on 17th June 2010.

3.1 Do you agree with this description of why digital inclusion is important?

We believe that digital inclusion is essential for the social, economic and academic advantages of life in the modern world. To be denied access to digital information is therefore to be disempowered, disadvantaged and segregated. The document gives excellent specific examples of the benefits of going online, such as searching for low cost holidays (p 7). There are also wider benefits of being able to access the whole range of information: these include access to varying viewpoints, up-to-the minute news and reaction or academic discussion. It is essential to be able to access, critique and use such information effectively in order to be an informed citizen. We agree that many of the 900,000 digitally excluded adults in Wales fall into groups that are already economically and social disadvantaged and that these groups can least afford to be penalised through digital exclusion. By denying these groups the opportunity to find, manipulate and reflect on the plethora of information available online we believe that academic potential and ultimately employability prospects are damaged.

We firmly stress that the promotion of information literacy in combination with providing digital access is essential to achieving true digital inclusion. It should be noted that in addition to the 900,000 fully digitally excluded adults, there are undoubtedly greater numbers who have yet to realise the full potential of the internet due to underdeveloped information literacy skills. Moreover, it is essential to be able to critically evaluate sources when one is digitally included in order to ensure safety online. When promoting digital inclusion, it is essential to help people be aware of and protect themselves from the incumbent risks. The development of Information Literacy in Wales is therefore timely and essential to support the growth of successful and safe digital inclusion.

3.2 Do you agree with **the nature of the problem** as set out above? What **other factors** should be considered?

The term 'access' is used generically in the consultation document in relation to a variety of exclusion causes. We recognise that digital exclusion is a complex issue that includes a variety of factors which for sake of clarity we have subdivided below:

- Network Access (e.g. patchy network infrastructure in rural Wales) .
- Physical Access (e.g. the issue of restricted access to PCs and broadband due to prohibitive cost).
- Motivational factors (e.g. insufficient awareness of the benefits of finding information or using services online).
- Skills (e.g. lack of confidence or skills to use digital resources confidently and effectively).

In the section below, the nature of each of these factors is outlined and its relationship with information literacy is defined.

Network Access

Network infrastructure access is often cited in the media as being the sole cause of digital exclusion. However, as has been stated by WAG in the consultation sessions, this only accounts for a relatively small percentage of the digitally excluded total. It is clearly essential to provide the physical access as a prerequisite to tackling the following three issues.

In areas of low network coverage, where access to web based sources of information and services are unavailable, it is necessary to find and use information in alternative formats. This gap is frequently filled by public libraries, providing information through books, newspapers and journals. Furthermore these public libraries provide essential information literacy training and support their users in finding information in information medias that are appropriate to the environment (for example using newspapers or other printed media where network access is not available.) Libraries act as information hubs at the heart of many digitally excluded communities providing lifelines to essential services and information literacy and are flexible and adaptive to fit the needs of the community.

Physical Access

As stated above we agree that many of the 900,000 digitally excluded adults in Wales fall into groups that are already economically and social disadvantaged. The cost of the essential

hardware to get online, not to mention the regular cost of broadband is therefore an issue for many people. Public libraries traditionally have excellent relations with these target groups which include the elderly and the unemployed.

Public libraries provide free access to computers for citizens to use. This is vital where there is restricted access to hardware at home. Library staff are skilled and trusted to provide the learning support needed in helping people use computers, often for the first time. As these libraries are located at the heart of the communities they often have the greatest opportunities to nurture information literacy and foster digital inclusion. This importance of fostering digital inclusion in local communities is supported by Lord Carter, former Minister for Communications, Technology and Broadcasting' in his definition of digital inclusion as "The best use of digital technology, either directly or indirectly to improve the lives and life chances of all citizens, particularly the most disadvantaged, and the places in which they live." (Carter, 2009)

It should also be noted that the children of the 900,000 digitally excluded adults may enter the education system with a lower level of digital information literacy than their contemporaries. In order to break a cycle of exclusion it is essential that intervention occurs in educational establishments.

Libraries in the education sector for example encourage equal learning opportunities through the provision of physical access to IT resources and IL support. They provide access to information in a variety of formats and give training on the effective use of the tools and resources available. Pedagogic approach is also affected by the availability of computer equipment which is often provided through school libraries. IT is one of the key skills across the curriculum at Keystage 3 and teachers must demonstrate its use in all subjects. This is often done through a combination of taking classes to the library for IT based lessons (where pupils will use word or specialised software applications) and setting IT based homework. Computers are made available in school libraries not only for lesson-based work, but also for homework as well as many other wider learning opportunities within and beyond the school day. School librarians guide pupils throughout this time in the use of online sources, helping them to carry out more effective searches, question and evaluate the information they find and use it ethically. Without these resources, pupils from digitally excluded families may not be able to keep up with the demands of the curriculum. Alternatively, without the support of the school libraries (which, unlike Scotland, are **not** currently statutory in Wales or England) some teachers would not be able to set IT homework in deprived areas where there are higher percentages of pupils who do not have PCs at home. Information literacy and IT training are often provided by school librarians in partnership with teachers in order to bridge the gap for pupils from digitally excluded families who

would otherwise have to contend with serious disadvantages in the classroom. Increasingly, this is now being built into teaching as part of the focus on essential skills, and the joint working between teacher and librarian is crucial.

It is also worth highlighting that issues relating to physical access also include physical disabilities, for example, visual impairment. Digital information needs to be available in formats that are suitable for these requirements and websites should conform to international standards on accessibility (see <http://www.w3.org/WAI/>). Many public libraries offer suitable software (e.g. audio screen readers) that can also help people with visual disabilities. Furthermore, information literacy can help to overcome barriers to the digital world that are the result of physical disabilities, for example accessing information in the most appropriate medium or finding alternative sources where initial results are inaccessible.

Motivational Factors

Many people do not know that they are missing out on the benefits of using the internet for a range of enquiries and transactions. Lack of awareness of digital services and their benefits is invariably a significant cause of digital exclusion, particularly among older age groups. Older individuals may not see the need for doing things differently but as the information landscape changes and transactions are increasingly managed online it is essential that society supports these individuals. Information literacy includes by

definition knowing when and why you need information which raised awareness of the benefits of digital participation. Information literacy also includes knowing where to find information which includes raising awareness of the full range of information media, including online resources. By developing these skills, awareness of the benefits of digital participation will be raised

Public libraries already enjoy excellent community relationships with socially excluded groups such as the elderly and the unemployed. Many people, particularly the elderly, are put off by the risks that digital engagement poses such as theft of identity or financial information. Library services traditionally have good relations and enjoy a position of trust with this demographic group and therefore are well placed to offer information literacy training which may encourage digital participation amongst such groups. They are a 'neutral' space, open to all thus making them ideal venues for training and engagement with diverse social groups.

Skills Factors

The Welsh Information Literacy Project supports the skills emphasis shown by the digital inclusion framework's statement "The ability to use these technologies is now becoming as important as reading and writing". This phrase sums up the core of the digital exclusion problem which is, in our opinion, to a significant degree skills based. However the use of basic technology must be supported with the

development of critical evaluation. As President Obama proclaimed in October "Rather than merely possessing data, we must also learn the skills necessary to acquire, collate, and evaluate information for any situation." (Obama, 2009). The failure to develop critical skills not only prevents the exercise of informed citizenship and inhibits consumer options, but fundamentally impacts employment prospects, social interaction and academic achievement.

The Welsh Information Literacy Project was pleased to see the Gateways to Learning case study identified as an area of outstanding practice in digital inclusion. We would, however, emphasise that these case studies show that it is information literacy, not just ICT skills that enhances digital inclusion and enables progression from informal to formal education via library based learning. The consultation document fails to differentiate between IT skills, which enable a functionalist use of applications, and the critical skills that enable effective and independent engagement in a digital society. While ICT in schools covers the basic elements of using computers, this need to be complemented by an understanding of how to process the information found. Information literacy is central to digital inclusion and must be clearly identified in the framework document as being a core means of developing a digitally inclusive society.

Information literacy develops the skills of:

- How to identify need (enhanced ability to identify that they have information needs– which may be best met online)
- How to find information
- How to evaluate information
- How to use information
- How to appropriately contribute to the body of information.

Whilst the first four items listed here have already been discussed in this document in the context of combating digital exclusion, the last feature is significant too. Engaging in any society requires, not just receiving information but multidirectional communication. It is therefore important that engaged members of a digital society are equipped with the skills to contribute to discourse effectively and appropriately. By developing the skills and the confidence to contribute directly to the digital community, individuals become visible and more truly engaged. This is a significant social equaliser particularly with reference to a socially disenfranchised demographic described in the digital inclusion document. As Web 2.0 technology advances, greater opportunity exists for everyday expression through blogs, social network sites and even providing feedback on sales and services. Access is available to discussion groups and special interest communities regardless of geographic location or social status. The confidence and skills required for appropriate interaction and thereby social inclusion, however, must be developed in order for these benefits to be universally achieved.

Furthermore, we also feel that the link between digital literacy, information literacy and literacy generally needs to be considered in more detail as this is a very significant factor. Although you do state that there is a correlation between poor basic skills and digital exclusion (page 17) "there is a likelihood that the 25% of the adult population aged 16-65 that have literacy skills below level 1 are also digitally excluded ", it should be identified that libraries have a key role to play, not only provide opportunities for digital inclusion but also promoting basic literacy. Basic skills training is often carried out in further education and public libraries in combination with information literacy which greatly supports digital inclusion. For example, at Coleg Glan Hafren in Cardiff the award winning role of learning support advisor combines basic skills support together with information literacy teaching and coaching. This provides a one stop approach to learning support which has proved to be very effective in supporting and encouraging adult learning.

3.3 To what extent do you agree with the approaches and actions outlined here? **What else should be considered?** What does not need to be included? What is the most important **priority?**

The absence of a skills focus is a serious omission within the framework document. We observe that the closest thing to an analysis of skills in the consultation document is the mention of the Consumer Framework for Digital Inclusion, which includes, for example "I know when content and services are truthful and reliable". We believe that a broader range of skills required for digital inclusion, including information literacy, needs to be identified as a high priority.

We also believe that the skills to evaluate information are essential when groups of people are suddenly exposed to vast quantities of free-flowing and unchecked content. Unsupported views can be presented as fact via some digital mediums such as the internet and, in order to

engage appropriately, critical skills are required. This is currently underdeveloped in the digital inclusion framework and needs further consideration as an important priority.

Individuals need be equipped with the skills to make sense of the dizzying array of viewpoints that are freely expressed on the Internet and to protect their personal information. This is essential to ensure the online safety of individuals who are developing confidence in the digital arena.

The Information Literacy Project can significantly add value to the Assembly Government's efforts to overcome the skills and motivation based obstacles to digital inclusion, as noted in paragraph 3.4 below. We would also add that libraries across Wales currently support digital inclusion in a variety of ways from providing physical access to computers for those who do not have them, to providing group and one to one support in developing the skills needed to use basic applications such as email.

In support of our position, the value of information literacy in tackling digital exclusion is highlighted by Lord Carter of the Department of Business Innovation and Skills who states that the very first of the Key Challenges that faces digital inclusion is "Making significant progress in reducing the number of people who lack the skills, resources, or motivation to engage with digital technology "(Carter, 2009, 3)

3.4 How are you/your organisation going to contribute to this agenda through your policy and practice?

We believe that information literacy is a fundamental requirement for effective digital inclusion. We seek to encourage the

development of the skills to access, evaluate and use appropriate information as the surest means of closing the digital divide. This is central to our aims and objectives which are laid out at the beginning of this document. The project model is collaborative and partnership-led as we recognise that each library sector (including schools, public and university libraries) have their part to play in enhancing the IL of their users. Therefore, we welcome the collaborative approach suggested in the Framework document, recognising that many different organisations and bodies have a part to play in achieving the shared vision for the whole of Wales. We are firmly committed to the vision of a digitally inclusive society which we believe is essential for a fair, inclusive and prosperous future.

4. **General Comments**

It must be recognised that the skills to navigate the sea of information available are as essential as physical access. Indeed it has been suggested that the majority of the 900,000 individuals believed to be digitally excluded in Wales are excluded through the absence of digital and information literacy skills rather than network access. The development of information literacy must therefore be seen as central to the digital inclusion initiative.

We believe that information literacy as a discrete learning area needs to feature more prominently in the digital inclusion framework document and strategy. We would like to see the Welsh Assembly Government engaging directly with the information literacy project and with libraries from schools, colleges, universities and public libraries, helping to deliver the digital inclusion policy objectives. The need for this is shown by the numerous areas of commonality which are highlighted throughout this document. In order to deliver a radical social change such as digital inclusion we believe that partnerships are essential and we look forward to working together in order to achieve our shared aims.

5. Glossary of Abbreviations

The following table shows a list of abbreviated terms alongside their full meanings.

Term	Meaning
CILIP	Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
CyMAL	Museums Archives and Libraries in Wales
IT	Information Technology
SCL (Wales)	Society of Chief Librarians (Wales)
SCONUL	Society of Colleges, National and University Libraries
SME	Small to Medium sized Enterprise
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government

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