

Final Author Manuscript of:

**Hinchliffe, L.J. (2001), "Information literacy as a way of life." *Research Strategies*, Vol. 18, pp. 95-6  
[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0734-3310\(02\)00068-X](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0734-3310(02)00068-X)**

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What is it that we do when we teach? We do things that we think (or hope!) will bring about learning for students. Sounds almost mundane. Yet, if we take a moment to think about what learning is, the responsibility of a teacher becomes very serious. Learning implies a change in the students—a change from a previous behavior to a different behavior, from a previous belief to a new belief, or from a previous way of thinking to a new way of thinking. Moreover, we are usually dissatisfied with superficial changes. We are seeking deep, lasting, and substantial changes.

If this is the case, we must ask ourselves "What are the deep, lasting, and substantial changes we seek through our instruction sessions?" In other words, what is our motivation? What is our inspiration?

For me, the learning vision that motivates and inspires is best summed up in the phrase "Information Literacy as a Way of Life." That is what I want for my students—for them to become habitual askers of questions, seekers of new knowledge, critical thinkers, and informed decision makers.

Thinking about information literacy as a habit or a "way of life" is a powerful framework for thinking about the goals of our instruction efforts. In *Activating and Engaging Habits of Mind*, Costa and Kallick (2000, p. xii) write that habits or dispositions are "behaviors that require a discipline of mind that is practiced so it becomes a habitual way of working toward more thoughtful, intelligent action." As such, the student with an information literacy habit is disposed to a particular kind of approach in preparing to take action and, because information literacy is a habit, the student does not differentiate between the approach taken in the classroom and the approach to be taken in the workplace or in civic life. The information literacy disposition prepares the student for lifelong engagement in an information literate community and in the general information society.

While a powerful framework for thinking about instruction, the notion of "information literacy as a way of life" places additional demands on us as teachers. We too must exhibit that way of life. This does not necessitate sharing our personal lives with our students. It does, however, mean using teaching methods and approaches that model information literacy practices. If information literacy means knowing what information is needed, seeking it out, thinking about it carefully and critically, and then using it, all in a legal and ethical way, our role as teachers provides us with a subtle opportunity to demonstrate an information literacy approach to life.

What information do we need? As teachers, we need to know who the students are, what they know, and what they need to know. We need to know how they learn, what barriers and challenges they face, and how prior experiences affect their attitudes and approaches to learning.

What strategies might help us locate the information that we need? Perhaps most simply, we can ask. We can ask other instructors, campus faculty, institutional researchers, assessment officers, and student life staff. We can ask the students themselves. We can do so formally or informally. We can investigate the published literature. We can go to conferences.

How can we best think about what we find? We should think carefully, cautiously, and critically. We can be reflective or action oriented. We can contemplate privately, engage in public dialogue, write essays, or present formally at conferences or campus teaching events. We should identify answers and generate new questions.

What should we do with the information we gather? Eventually, as teachers—as practitioners—we must act. We may act with caution or with boldness. We may make tentative, gradual, or sweeping changes. We must act and, because we are teachers, we act publicly in the sense that our actions are taken in the presence of students.

What legal and ethical issues might concern us? So many legal and ethical issues concern us, as they concern anyone who seeks out and uses information. Copyright seems likely the largest legal issue we might face, though certain kinds of research, e.g. surveys, will also be affected by human subjects' rules and regulations. How we use information about specific individuals and how we gather that information are also areas for careful attention.

So, what teaching methods and practices best model information literacy as a way of life? Those practices that are grounded in understanding who students are as learners, emphasize seeking out new information about students, learning, and teaching, and utilize assessment techniques to investigate the effectiveness of instruction are the practices that allow us to live information literacy in the presence of students so that they might come to recognize what it means to have “information literacy as a way of life.”

#### References

A.L. Costa, B. Kallick (Eds.), *Activating and engaging habits of mind*, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Alexandria, VA (2000), pp. i–xix