
The SCONUL seven pillars model of information literacy: 2011 update

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In 1999 the SCONUL Working Group on Information Literacy published *Information skills in higher education: a SCONUL position paper* (SCONUL, 1999), introducing the Seven Pillars of Information Skills model. Since then the model has been adopted by librarians and teachers around the world as a means of helping them to deliver information skills to their learners. However, the information world is constantly changing and, while the basic principles underpinning the original Seven Pillars model remain valid, it was felt that the model needed to be updated and expanded to reflect more clearly the range of different terminologies and concepts that we now understand as 'information literacy'.

The new model is meant to be organic and to be changed and adapted to meet the needs of different groups of learners and to be relevant in different contexts. For this reason it has been devised as a core framework to which a series of lenses can be applied depending on the situation of the learner. The term information literacy is used very broadly, covering concepts such as digital literacy, information handling, information skills, data curation and data management, to name just a few. Information literacy is evidenced through understanding the ways in which information and data are created and handled, learning skills in their management and use and modifying learning attitudes, habits and behaviours to appreciate the role of information literacy in learning. The SCONUL definition states that:

'Information literate people will demonstrate an awareness of how they gather, use, manage, synthesise and create information and data in an ethical manner and will have the information skills to do so effectively.'

Developing as an information literate person is described as a continuing, holistic process often with simultaneous activities or processes that can be encompassed within the Seven Pillars of Information Literacy. The Seven Pillars are conceived as a three-dimensional circular 'building', founded on an information landscape which comprises the information world as it is perceived by an individual at that point in time. Within each 'pillar' an individual can develop from 'novice' to 'expert' as they progress through their learning life, although, as the information world itself is constantly changing and developing, it is possible to move down a pillar as well to as progress up. The expectations of levels reached on each pillar may be different in different contexts and for different ages and levels of learner and is also dependent on experience and information need. The model defines the core **skills and competencies** (ability) and **attitudes and behaviours** (understanding) at the heart of information literacy development in higher education.

At the time of publication (April 2011), only the Core Model and the Research Lens are available: http://www.sconul.ac.uk/groups/information_literacy/seven_pillars.html

We hope that teachers and librarians representing other learner groups will participate in the development of other lenses.

A longer article on the new model will be published in a future issue of SCONUL Focus.