
National information literacy framework to benefit Welsh society

An all-Wales information literacy project launched today aims to ensure that Wales receives the social, economic and educational benefits of a fully information literate population.

Launched on the United Nations' International Literacy Day, the Welsh Information Literacy Project will develop a unified and progressive framework to support information literacy in schools, further and higher education, the workplace and the wider community, raising awareness of the importance of information literacy in 21st century Wales.

The project begins with the launch of the information literacy statement for Wales, inspired by an information literacy conference held at Gregynog Hall in mid-Wales in 2009 which identified the need and scope for the project. The statement in full is:

'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.'

Lying at the core of lifelong learning, information literacy empowers a proactive learning culture which is fundamental to educational attainment and progression. Information literacy skills also develop social inclusion, as access to information equates to choice and the power to make informed decisions. Those excluded from today's 'information society' are in turn disempowered in aspects of life from the economic to the social.

The Welsh Information Literacy Project is based in Cardiff University's Information Services Directorate and is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government's CyMAL: Museums, Archives and Libraries Wales division. The project brings together librarians from all sectors across Wales and is working with partners from the Welsh Assembly Government and others to develop and promote an information literacy framework, mapped across the curriculum. Librarians are also exploring ways of working with the recently announced National Literacy Plan for Wales to ensure greater success. The Welsh Information Literacy Project will provide evidence of information literacy best practice via case studies, highlighting current work across all sectors.

Hywel James, Chair of the project steering group, said:

'Libraries have a great record of working together and it is good to see all the library services in Wales supporting this development which will provide a firm foundation for action. Libraries also have an impressive record of working in partnership with others and we hope that this framework will encourage others to join with us to promote the aim of helping people find and use the information they need.'

The project's holistic approach, embedding information literacy training throughout education and employment, will enable Wales to fully capitalise on the benefits of information literacy. These include increasing social inclusion, enhancing academic achievement, and supporting citizens' access to key knowledge.

For more information, please visit the Welsh Information Literacy Project website:

<http://library.wales.org/informationliteracy/>

or contact Joy Head, Information Literacy Development Officer for Wales, at headja1@cardiff.ac.uk.