CHAPTER- 1

INTRODUCTION
1.1 Introduction

The growth and development of global information society which is ultimately leading to a knowledge society has optimized the use of information from different walks of life. Now learning has become a continuous process. Hence in this ICT driven society, information literacy has become the pillar for the independent lifelong learning. Moreover information literacy empowers the people to thrive successfully in the ocean of information. Mention may be made that an information literate person can seek, evaluate, use and create information efficiently and effectively to meet their personal, social, occupational and educational goals. In Alexandria Proclamation (2005) it has been considered as the basic human right to survive in this digital world. It is evident that the informed and updated citizens are always participative, thus encourages social inclusion, which is indeed crucial for any nation to take full advantage of emerging opportunities for the shared advantages.

In the global scenario, some countries have realized the importance of information literacy since it is knitted with continuing learning i.e. lifelong learning and is well recognized in their respective national policies/agendas. Whereas in some countries it is in nascent stage and many encouraging initiatives have been undertaken to attain the desired acclaim.

1.2 Information Literacy-What it Comprises?

Since the time immemorial, human beings have always been dependent on information. In this ever changing digital world, we can access to different information within no time. But to have the desired/precise information, requires some training /skills to avoid the consequences of information overload (Information Fatigue Syndrome) and data smog. Thus information literacy comprises the competencies/skills to identify his/her information need, and have the capabilities to locate, evaluate, use, create and communicate information within cultural and social context with some legality. Information literacy extends beyond technological fluency to information fluency. It includes searching skill, evaluating skill, interpretative skills and referencing skills which ultimately empowers individuals, communities and the nation as a whole.
1.3 Information Literacy- What UNESCO Means?

The term ‘information literacy’ was first devised by Paul Zurkowski in 1974, the then President of United States Information Industry Association in a proposal to the National Commission on Library and Information Science. He described information literate individuals as “trained in the application of information resources to their work” (Owusu-Ansah, 2005, p. 367). However, the definition developed by the ALA, Presidential Committee on Information Literacy: Final Report (1989) as the ability to recognize when information is needed and “locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information” (O’Connor, 2009, p. 79) is widely accepted worldwide. Moreover, American Association of School Librarians (AASL) and Association of College Research Libraries (ACRL) has extended the definition by publishing Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning: Standards and Indicators (1998) and Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education (2000) respectively.

Likewise, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) connote “Information Literacy” to provide people with the skills and abilities for critical reception, assessment and use of information in their professional and personal lives. It is considered as prerequisite to use Information and Communication Technology (ICT), its various tools and services. Information literate persons are usually a confident user of information and an active contributor of new knowledge. UNESCO through IFAP (Information for All Programme) engaged to deal with the challenges of information literacy worldwide.

It is worthwhile to mention that several definitions has been propound by different authors, organizations, association and groups, but the sole notion is to equip the people/individual to address the complexities in the use of information in the digital era.

1.4 Need of Information Literacy in Library

The need to raise the awareness about information literacy is well stated in the ALA’s final report (1989) as:
“To respond effectively to an ever-changing environment, people need more than just a knowledge base, they also need techniques for exploring it, connecting to other knowledge bases and making practical use of it. In other words the landscape upon which we used to stand has been transformed, and we are being forced to establish a new foundation called information literacy. Now knowledge-not minerals, or agricultural products or manufactured goods—is this country’s most precious commodity and people who are information literate—who know how to acquire knowledge and use it—are America’s most valuable resources.” (ALA, 1989, p. 9)

The ALA report indicates the need of information literacy in general parlance relating to the contemporary milieu as the strong base of the lifelong learning.

In the present context, emerging technologies, products and services has necessitated the deliberation on information literacy. It is evident that in higher education, Research and Development institutions and in professional practices it is getting more attention as it enhances academic performance and professional accountability. Moreover it is considered as indispensable entity in teaching, learning and research.

In this transitional period, libraries are also at crossroad providing both traditional as well as ICT enabled services. The old concept of library has changed, now it has been epithet as knowledge centre and professionals as the knowledge managers. Therefore, to tackle the various complexities in managing, organizing and developing the library system, information literacy should be adopted as the core of continuous learning and development by the professionals. On the other hand, availability of online databases in public domain, e-journals subscription through different consortium, host and aggregators has necessitated to equip the users with information literacy skills to capitalize the relevant information resources. Henceforth, users should be trained up to tap relevant resources validating its currency, authenticity and usability. Thus, information literacy is the aggregation of different literacies i.e. basic literacy, library literacy, ICT literacy, visual literacy, media literacy, tool literacy, research literacy, publishing literacy, and critical literacy.
1.5  **Role of Library Professional in Information Literacy**

Adapting to an emerging technology is the survival factor for the library and information professionals. Simultaneously in this changing environment their role has also been changed from “passive providers of information support to more pro-active providers of information itself” (Jain, 2006, p. 645). The role of library professionals are conceived as the promoter, facilitator, expert consultant, adviser, teacher/trainer and a change agent to “help other domains develop and put their information literacy policies, programs and projects in place” (Chakravarty, n.d., p. 16). These emerging roles of library professionals will be instrumental in effective and efficient use of different resources of the library and would be able to bring proximity between user and their needed information.

In the academic environment, library professionals are required to provide different services under the purview of information literacy (Jain, 2006, p. 646)

- Orientation of staff as well as students.
- OPAC training.
- To put the rules and regulation on college website
- Provide information on mail.
- Send latest booklist by mail or manual.
- E learning and web based instructions/Internet.
- Feedback form.
- Display board / Guides.
- Assist on internet for information search.
- Use of Audio Visual Method/Power Point presentation.
- To train how to use online journals.
- Information retrieval through digital resources
- Printed booklet.
- Lectures, Library tour.
- Offline CDROM browsing and search pattern
- Make aware of copyright issue & IPR.

Moreover, library processionals should work in close coordination with different experts in the field like media expert, programmer, faculty (subject expert) to bring
out an effective information literacy program with sound pedagogy and assessment method.

1.6 Statement of the Problem

Assam is considered as the gateway of North- Eastern regions, which includes seven states popularly known as seven sisters viz. Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and in 2001 one more state, Sikkim, has been included in its fraternity. Geographically it is surrounded by the seven states, West Bengal and two countries viz. Bangladesh and Bhutan occupying an area of 78,438 sq. kms i.e. about 2.4 per cent of the country’s total geographical area.

Assam symbolizes large and exceptional assemblage of varied natural scenery and cultural background. It is the state of two river valleys based on the two main river systems- Brahmaputra valley and Barak valley. For the administrative and revenue convenience it has been divided into 27 districts- 24 districts in Brahmaputra valley and 3 districts in Barak valley. According to the 2011, Census of India, the population of Assam is “3, 11, 69, 272 of which 1, 59, 54, 927 are males and 1, 52, 14, 345 are females” (Govt. of Assam, 2011-12, p. 7).

Due to the advent of information and communication technologies, having access to the needed information is an easy affair. Many researches have been carried out in the different aspects of library and information profession of which information literacy is one of the important areas where some special attention is needed.

College libraries are important segment of library and information system and cater maximum users like university and public libraries. Information Literacy for college libraries could serve as an important tool for young users to enter into higher education. The ability to access, use and retrieve information is the most fundamental needs of college students which facilitates growth and development in their educational career. Moreover, information literacy is considered as the most effective tool for college libraries. Therefore this new concept has prompted the scholar to undertake a research problem with special reference to colleges (Government, Provincialised, and Non-Provincialised) located in Lower Assam for the greater interest of the users.
1.7 Objectives of the Study

The present research problem has following objectives:

- to study the level of information literacy awareness of users and staff of a college library
- to make an assessment of present status with regard to information literacy
- to develop a model or standard of information literacy for imparting skills among the users and library staff.
- to suggest measures to be undertaken by college library authority and library staff for effective implementation of information literacy practices so as to promote professional competency of both users and staff.

1.8 Scope of the Study

Brahmaputra Valley is divided into four divisions under the respective commissions- Upper Assam Division, Lower Assam Division, North Assam Division and Hills & Barak Valley Division. The study entitled “Information Literacy for College Libraries with Special Reference to Lower Assam: A Study.”, has covered only the 12 districts of Lower Assam Division out of 27 districts of Assam having nearly about 76 provincialised Colleges, 86 non-provincialised / venture colleges and 2 Government Colleges. The study is confined to the general academic colleges which impart Arts, Science and Commerce only. Some of the academic colleges provide the degree courses on one stream only. This study does not cover any professional, vocational and technical/medical etc. colleges. The lists of Government, provincialised and non-provincialised/ venture colleges in Lower Assam are given in the Appendix -1. The coverage of the study includes proportionate selected randomly from the Government, Provincialised and Non-provincialised /venture colleges (2-Governemnt i.e. Cotton College and Kokrajhar Government College, 2 Provincialised i.e Handique Girls’ College and B.Borooh College and 2 Non-provincialised/venture i.e Kanya Mahavidyalaya and Hamidabad college). Mention may be made that Government Colleges signify- the colleges which directly comes under the State government. Provincialised Colleges are those which receives deficit grants-in-aid from the State Government, and Non-provincialised/venture colleges are those which receives adhoc grants from the State Government, where teachers are given remuneration by the
parent body based on the students’ admission fees and public donation. However, the sample colleges should represent all the 12 districts.

1.9  Methodology

The following methodologies were adopted for data collection, analysis, and interpretation in order to derive appropriate conclusion of the research problem:

A) Questionnaire Method: The six colleges under study have been selected on the basis of date of establishment. The researcher has framed a two separate structured questionnaire to solicit information from users, and library staff/library authorities to acquaint and appraise the concept of information literacy and the extent of its implementation in college libraries. A total number of 759 questionnaire were distributed among the users randomly comprising the faculties and the students, out of which a total number of 687 respondent have responded which constitute 91%. Further the scholar distributed another set of questionnaire to the librarian of the colleges under study and the scholar got a response rate of 100%. Data obtained from both the questionnaire were tabulated for analysis and inferences accordingly were drawn by the scholar.

B) Interview Method: Selective interview of the leading experts were carried out by the scholar who have implemented information literacy in their libraries, planners and policy makers associated with higher education in the state and college management to solicit their opinion and practice of information literacy in college libraries as a policy.

C) Case Study Method: The best and healthy practices being implemented at national level with regard to information literacy in college libraries shall act as a model or standard in the present research problem.

Data Analysis and Interpretation: Data analysis obtained through the structured questionnaire explored the truth prevailing in the libraries. It facilitates the researcher to draw viable inferences to satisfy the objective of the study. The numerical variables are analyzed with the help of MS-Excel which is supported by tables and graphs to deduce various statistical inferences which form the basic of research. It also explore means to the researcher to test various hypothesis formulated by the researcher.
1.10 Hypotheses

The present research problem has the following tentative assumptions:

\[ H_1: \] Inadequate number of library staff and ICT infrastructure has serious impact on information literacy.

\[ H_2: \] Lack of awareness by both users and authority result into non-implementation of information literacy programmes in colleges.

\[ H_3: \] Absence of national and state level policy on information literacy hinders promotion and propagation of information literacy in enhancing professional competency of both users and staff.

1.11 Review of Literature

Information literacy is a global phenomenon, though the word has been endorsed in the 1974, tremendous work has been done in the realm of information literacy since 1980s all over the world. Rader (2002) mentioned that in 1970s most of the publications were concerned to user education. In 1973 nearly 28 publications were reviewed while in 2002 the publication goes up to nearly 300 which are related to information literacy. To consider annually, about 60% of the publications deals with academic libraries and 20% related to information literacy instruction in school media centers.

By scanning different databases like LISA (Library and Information Science Abstract), ERIC (Education Resources Information Centers), LISTA (Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts), and many other multi-disciplinary databases Pinto, Cordon, & Diaz (2010) found that in the last thirty years though the term is not frequently used but it came into view in large of selected text. Furthermore, occurrence of the term is highest as compared to other related terms. The authors also highlights that number of articles in computer literacy is followed by information literacy and subsequent progress in the field is evident through different publication like monographs and doctoral thesis. As the review of literature is an important aspect of research, the scholar has reviewed and consulted different publications-primary and secondary sources, which are published between the periods
of 2000 to 2013. Some of the core literatures reviewed are given below and are arranged chronologically:

Choudhury & Sethi (2009) makes a comprehensive study to identify the level of skill and usefulness of information literacy in the rapidly changing scenario for the library professionals of university libraries of Orissa.

Singh (2009) describes and demonstrates the set of information literacy skills that makes a person a competent lifelong learner to find, evaluate, filter and use information in an effective manner.

Catts & Lau (2008) provides a basic conceptual framework for measuring information literacy and is designed to serve as a reference to facilitate the elaboration of information literacy indicators.

Lwehabura & Stilwel (2008) investigates the status and practice of information literacy so as to determine the best ways of introducing or improving information literacy programmes in four Tanzanian universities.

Saunders (2008) explores the possibility of support that information retrieval systems and information literacy standards which can further information literacy instruction by providing librarians impending development.

Varalakshmi (2007) has suggested three types of models for trainers, under graduates and post graduate and the necessary procedures for their application in the Indian perspective especially in higher education.

Chauhan, Chand, & Murthy (2006) describes the efforts initiated by INFLIBNET through UGC-Infonet: E-Journals consortium to provide awareness to academicians and to train them in the use of e-resources available through consortium up to optimum level.

Crawford (2006) focuses on the impact of Electronic Information Services (EIS) on Glasgow Caledonian University students, both past and present.
Devi & Devi (2006) highlights the ways in which library professionals can support an information literacy programme in some selected academic libraries of Manipur.

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) (2006) have provided vital guidelines which comprises different concepts, principles and procedures to the library and information professionals for creation of effective information literacy program. Information literacy leads to lifelong learning process and for its successful implementation, concern institutional support is indispensable.

Singh & Joshi (2006) conducted a study to determine the information literacy skills of students and to provide a background for the development of an information literacy schedule for the undergraduate students of the college.

Karisiddappa & Rajgoli (2005) states that in the international scenario, like in USA, UK and Australia much work has been done in information literacy. However the authors concluded with a note that such initiatives should also be taken by the government of India.

Nyamboga (2004) presents the results of a study concerning to the training opportunities for library and information professionals in India and how the Indian University libraries are providing information skills and information literacy program to the users.
1.12 Chapterisation

The present research problem comprises the following chapters:

**Chapter-1 Introduction:** This particular chapter deals with the meaning of the term ‘Information Literacy’, its need in library, role of library professionals, statement of the problem, objectives, scope of the study, methodologies, hypothesis and literature review pertaining to the research work.

**Chapter-2 Information Literacy: Trends and Developments- International and National:** This particular chapter highlights the different initiatives rendered by different international bodies, and countries of the world which gives a glimpse of information literacy trends.

**Chapter-3 Information Literacy in Academic Libraries (Colleges and Universities):** This particular chapter deals about the initiatives and various studies carried out in different academic libraries of India in the context of information literacy.

**Chapter-4 Information Literacy Scenario in College Libraries of Lower Assam:** This particular chapter illustrates the general educational system in Assam, information literacy in academic libraries of Assam, information literacy in college libraries of Lower Assam and information literacy in six colleges of Lower Assam under study.

**Chapter-5 Data Analysis and Findings:** The fifth chapter consists of the data analysis and the different findings of the study which are stated in different categories. Moreover, the chapter comprises the testing of hypotheses.

**Chapter-6 Suggestions and Conclusion:** Based on the different findings, Information Literacy Model has been developed for the library staffs and library users which are suggested for the Colleges of Lower Assam. In addition, some of the scope of further research in the area has also been highlighted with conclusion.
**Bibliography:** At the end of every chapter references are arranged according to 6th edition of the American Psychological Association style manual. Simultaneously in the end of the thesis comprehensive bibliography is also arranged in accordance to the same style manual.

1.13 Conclusion

Since the existence of this world, information plays a vital role in all realms of life. Information is created through some mechanism of human intellect, where the data is the constituent part of the information and according to one’s need; collected data are manipulated to serve the purpose. Moreover, when information gets mingled with human experience then it becomes wisdom/knowledge which is the ultimate. During ancient times, information was basically used for the war purpose, which highly helped in decision making and planning. Physical involvement is indispensable in whole process of sending and receiving of information. But in this 21st century, information society, lot of changes has taken place from the grassroots to top level every one is craving after the information to be the beneficiary of it. Now getting information is not a problem, but indeed having the authentic, reliable and useful information is the big question before the users of information. Users get bewildered in the heap of information available in different sources of information through internet. And in this confused situation, having the knowledge of information literacy will prove to be the boon. The next chapter deals with international trends prevailing in some countries of the world in the domain of information literacy.
References:


