CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION
'Literacy' means the ability to use language in its written form. Literate persons are supposedly able to read, write and understand their own language and able to express a simple thought in writing. The concept of literacy is ever evolving. Formerly it encompassed the skills to read and write. Now it extends to critical thinking. Elementary education takes care of making students literate. But as a student is promoted to higher standards, basic literacy which means only to read and write, needs to be supplemented with critical thinking. Critical thinking helps students to solve problems. Problem solving is the need of the hour. For the holistic development students need to know about various information sources. The present generation of students is exposed to media explosion. In this era, the existence of Internet and other electronic sources of information, it is very difficult to choose the right source for the right purpose at the right time. One can find innumerable number of sources for any particular information. The problem is which source is to be selected and on what basis. The quality of various information sources are questioned on the basis of authenticity and up datedness. It has become extremely important to select a right source for right purpose. It is also very important that this selection process is addressed right in the beginning of a student’s life. The very basic need for the present educationalists is to think about the skills to be taught to the students which will help them in handling this
media explosion in effective way. The skills to handle this explosion will help them to become well informed citizens.

From time immemorial knowledge is considered as the most important tenet of human excellence. Though the concept of 'knowledge society' has come in the later stage, 'knowledge' conceptually has always been at the centre stage in the researches of the social scientists. Information being the basic unit of knowledge spectrum, is considered as the basic necessity. Information is the basic requirement of one's life. Information is the basic necessity of any nation's development. A nation's success in economy, democracy, and intellectualism depends on the use of information. However, it is evident that the world of information has opened itself through innumerable sources. Today, documentary as well as non documentary, formal as well as informal and print as well as e-documents can be availed without much of a problem. The print media as well as the electronic media have made us confused with the excessive supply of information. The availability of information through multiple media raises the question of authenticity, validity, clarity and up datedness.

The abundant choices of information sources in the academic field, work field and personal lives have created tremendous confusion. Apparently acquiring information is not a difficult issue. It is just a click away. The whole world of information is in front of us and we need to just grab it. The perennial question lies in the fact that whatever information we collect from various sources is worth using or not. The doubt is, whether we are able to collect right information from the right source in the right time for the right purpose. The question is whether the challenge of efficient collection,
organization and use of information is well taken care of. The challenge is whether we are able to manage the explosion of information which has occurred in the world in recent times with extraordinary development in communication and information technology. The answer lies in the concept of 'Information Literacy' (IL). Information Literacy is the ability to understand the need for information, efficiency to collect from right sources and ability to use it in its right form. Through teaching concept of information literacy, the problem of tackling information overload would be easier.

MEANING AND DEFINITION OF INFORMATION LITERACY

In 1974, Zurkwoski, President of the Information Industry Association, introduced the term ‘Information Literacy’ in a proposal submitted to the National Commission of Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS). According to him,

“people trained in the application of information resources to their work can be called information literates. They have learned techniques and skills for utilizing the wide range of information tools as well as primary sources in moulding information solutions to their problems (Eisenberg, 2004).”

Zurkwoski used the term Information Literacy (IL) to address a goal within an information policy, to accommodate the transformation of traditional library services into innovative private sector information provision, for the new information industry that was emerging (Correia & Teixeira, 2003). IL is associated with the effective use of information
within a working environment, specifically for problem solving (Bowden & DiBrenedetto, 2001).

According to American Library Association (American Library Association, 2005), "Information literacy is a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information." ALA justifies "...because of the escalating complexity of the environment, individuals are faced with diverse, abundant information choices--in their academic studies, in the workplace, and in their personal lives."


"...individuals are information literate if they recognize that they have a need for information; possesses the knowledge and skills that enable them to discover where and how to search information they are seeking; are comfortable using necessary tools to find, modify and assimilate that information into another work; and can critically evaluate and synthesize the information they find to understand the social economic and political implications of the information."

California Academic and Research Libraries Task Force, 1997 (Eisenberg, 2004) has put a new dimension in the definition of IL. "...the ability to effectively identify, access, evaluate and make use of information in its various formats, and to choose the appropriate medium of communication. It also encompasses knowledge and attitudes related to the ethical and social issues surrounding information and information technology."

The phenomenon of information explosion has occurred through various media or formats. It is indeed necessary to consider the other forms of literacy which come under the bigger umbrella of IL. The idea of IL can be
better understood if other forms are considered. The other forms concerned are Visual literacy, Media Literacy, Computer Literacy, Digital Literacy, Network Literacy (Eisenberg, 2004).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

IL is considered as the new economy skills set and a solution to information overload (O'Sullivan, 2002) The information overload is the phenomenon that occurred due to rapid development of communication technology. The impact of Internet and easy availability of other electronic resources enable people to use more methods to satisfy their information needs. On one hand technology smoothen the accessibility of information, on the other it throws the challenges of validity, authenticity and intellectual evaluation of accessed information. “There is an evident gap between the physical access and the intellectual access to information” (Rajaram, 2006).

Needless to say that, the school builds the foundation to a child’s intellectual needs. Ideally speaking the school libraries are the hubs of all intellectual activities and should stimulate the intellectual access to information world by providing necessary resources to the students.

The Generation X students are equipped with the electronic gadgets which help them in getting physical access to the world of information. They are the blessed ones to have the easy access to enormous information. They are well versed with the electronic gizmos. The pertinent question is whether the students have the capability to recognize the information needs, locate the information available and critically evaluate the available information. The question arises because in the present curriculum of the school
education system there is hardly any scope for developing all these skills. At the same time one may ask do the school teachers and the school librarians have any scope for helping the students in developing the above skills in their regular school schedule?

The present study titled, “The role of the school librarians to promote information literacy among school students” examines the existing level of information literacy in different schools, whether there is collaboration among teachers and librarians and role of school libraries to promote IL.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

There is a need for initiating Information Literacy in school education. School education is the most important part of any one's life. The students should be guided to become life long learners with proper guidance. The concept of IL being so important in one's life, should be incorporated at the early stage of education. Appropriate learning strategies should be learnt at school age. School library is the place where the students get the opportunity to interact with the world of knowledge. School libraries empower students and facilitators to quench their thirst. But the question is whether the interaction between the students and the world of knowledge takes place automatically and in effective way. Do the users learn automatically? The obvious answer is no. The users must learn how to use the resources. Learning happens only when the facilitators make it happen. Here comes the responsibility or the scope of the modern age librarians to come out of their shell of being ‘keeper of knowledge’ to ‘facilitators of knowledge’.
As far as Indian education system is concerned, National Policy on Education 1986, modified in 1992 says that, ‘education in India stands at the crossroads today. Neither normal linear expansion nor the existing pace and nature of improvement can meet the needs of the situation’ (UNESCO, 2005). With the development of information communication technology in the country, it is observed that different evaluation organizations for example, State Education Boards, Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), Indian Certificate School Examination (ICSE) are in continuous research to update their systems. Moreover, the bodies like National Council on Education Research and Training (NCERT), and state councils are continuously researching on the curriculum development. National Curriculum Framework 2005 published by NCERT, (NCERT, 2005) is the evidence of intensive research by eminent educationists. The concerned organizations have started thinking about doing away with the system which encourages rote learning. They have started thinking how to relate school education with life.

Studies worldwide show that every year information is increasing by 30%. Not only the academic world, the whole world is affected by information explosion. The educational institutions are more so. It is becoming unmanageable for the information users to locate authentic information, organise it and utilise in effective manner. At times it becomes a sheer wastage of time while trying to find out a particular information from print sources and e-sources. Apart from that as the world has become more competitive, the education institutions feel more responsible to provide pragmatic education.
National Curriculum Framework 2005 published by NCERT, Delhi, opines that teachers' role in educating students should be 'overhauled'. It says that,

"Knowledge in teacher education is multidisciplinary in nature within the context of education. In other words, conceptual inputs in teacher education need to be articulated in such a manner that they describe and explain educational phenomena—actions, tasks, efforts, processes, concepts and events. It further adds up that the teacher's role should be shifted from 'Disciplinary focus' to Multidisciplinary, educational focus, from 'Linear exposure' to 'Multiple and divergent exposure', from 'Appraisal, short, few' to 'Multifarious, continuous'.

The change in the education scenario is imperative for leap in the research scenario in Indian education field. The paradigm shift in the curriculum framework leading to shift from rote learning to practical learning demands change in the approach to educate students. This in turn has implications for the role of school librarians. The present research explores the role of school libraries/ librarians which in turn can help in practical learning.

The specific objectives of the present study are

1. To study the extent of library use by the students of different Indian schools.

2. To study the collaborative approach among teachers and librarians in carrying out the teaching-learning process.
3. To find out the existing level of information literacy of the school students. (according to Association of College and Research Libraries Standard)

4. To study the co-relation between library use by the students and level of information literacy.

5. To study the co-relation between library use by the students and collaborative approach between librarians and teachers.

6. To study the scope of school librarians to promote information literacy among the students.

The entire research report is divided into 8 chapters and 5 appendices. The present introductory chapter introduces the concept of Information Literacy followed by the statement of the study, significance of the problem and objectives of the study. The second chapter talks about the concept of IL, types of IL and issues related to IL. The IL standards according to American College and Research Libraries (ACRL) are discussed in this chapter. The chapter ends with overview of literature. Chapter 3 deals with research methods used in the present study. Pilot study, scope of the present study, sample, criteria for selecting sample, data collection technique, data analysis method and limitations of the study are discussed. The chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 deal with the data analysis and interpretation. Chapter 4 examines the extent of library use and reading habit of students of various schools of four zones. Chapter 5 gives the comparison of collaborative efforts among teachers and librarians in teaching-learning process. Chapter 6 examines the Information Literacy level of the students of sample schools. The level is determined
according to ACRL standard. Chapter 7 finds out the scope for school librarians to enhance IL among school students. Chapter 8 gives the conclusions and suggestions. It also talks about the scope for further studies.
REFERENCES


UNESCO. (2005). *Pilot testing of performance indicators for information & communication technology (ICT) in education in India.* UNESCO.