

# Back to basics: the critical turn in Information Literacy

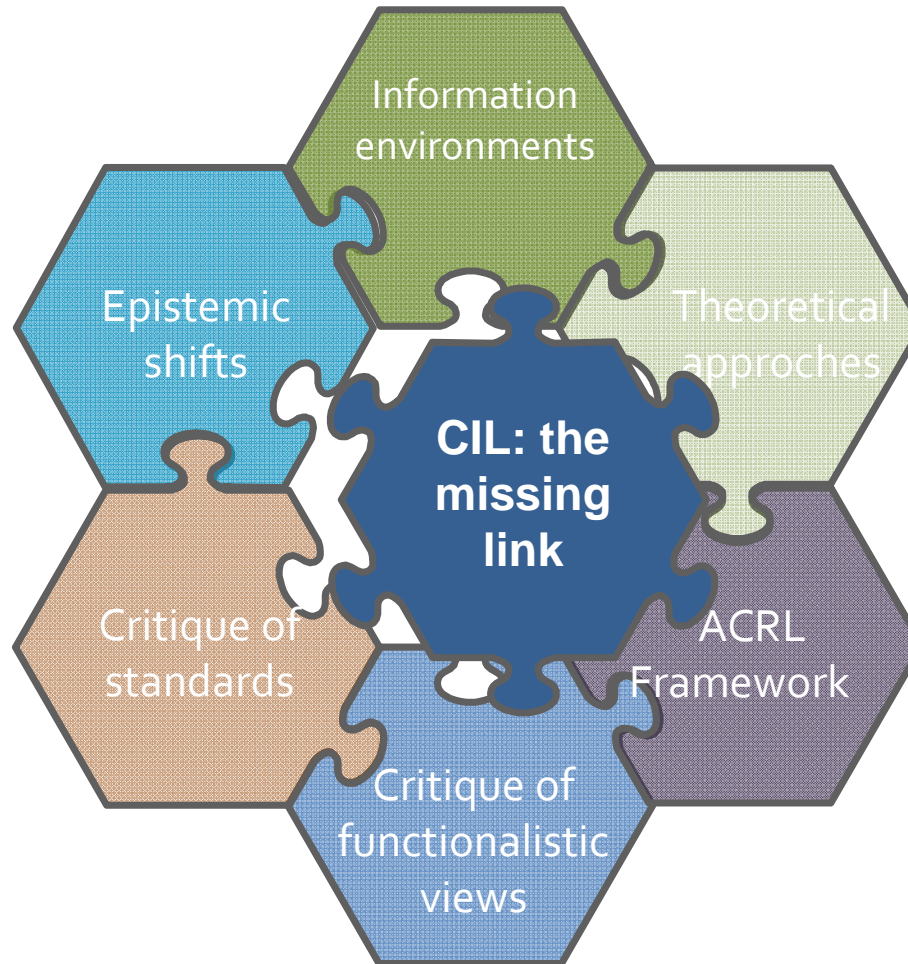
Sonja Špiranec,

Department of information and communication sciences

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Zagreb, Croatia



Why now?



# Prologue: what is CIL (critical information literacy)

- distinctive contribution to the IL body of knowledge
- IL „with a twist“
- theoretical approach, ideas for developing alternative IL practices
- soft, „higher order skills“: understanding, awareness-raising, making conscious
- *CIL empowers the user to develop an awareness of **economic, social and political** features and contradictions in **information environments***
- Its purpose lies in the agenda of facilitating personal and social transformation



## What is CIL (2)

- **Information Literacy:**
  - deals with information processing (how-to in finding, evaluating, using)
- **Critical Information Literacy:**
  - socially conscious interactions with information



## What is CIL (3)

- examines the *social construction* and *political dimensions* of information, and problematizes information's development, use, and purposes with the intent of prompting students to think critically about such forces and act upon this knowledge.
- Includes a lot of thinking, understanding, „higher order thinking skills“, e.g.
  - Choose a result that looks most useful and relevant; why did you choose this result?
  - Detection of varied perspectives on historical events; locate sources from different periods, grouping works
  - Nurturing students capacity to pose thoughtful questions (as opposed to clear answers)
  - How the public is engaging in particular subjects, ; how different audiences are framing the discussion of a subject
  - Questioning the information cycle: e.g. scholarly communication is influenced by grant money



# CIL – departure from „closed“ information environments



- from closed to participatory information environments

<b>INFORMATION BANK ENVIRONMENT</b>	<b>PARTICIPATORY, WEB 2.0 / SOCIAL MEDIA ENVIRONMENTS</b>
Structured systems	Negotiation
Resource-based	Participatory
Information filters	Different voices
Closed Systems	Conversational
Top-down structure	Bottom-up structure



# CIL – epistemic shifts



- Epistemic assumption, i.e. our views on how knowledge is generated, have always influenced how IL is researched or put into practice
- Print-based environments: linear notions associated with the accumulation, growth, acquirement of knowledge:
  - linear and rule-based approaches dominated in IL as well
- Web 2.0 based environments: seismic shift in epistemology” (Dede, 2008): users are able to switch between several roles by also becoming the producers, creators and co-creators of information, variety of approaches to arriving at knowledge
  - Unleashes social power: re-distribution of social influence and the social and political empowerment
  - architecture of participation encourages a non-elitist construction of knowledge
- Participatory environments: a „push” towards CIL



# CIL – theoretical shifts

- Lupton and Bruce(2010) have identified three conceptual lenses that have shaped IL discourses:
  - **generic skills (behavioural) lens,**
  - **situative and social practice (sociocultural) lens,**
  - **transformative (critical) lens.**
- Generic = IL standards
- Situative/social = IL is contextual, collaborative, participatory
- transformative = challenging the *status quo* in order to bring about change(s); literacy is regarded as critical, awareness-raising





# CIL – departure from functionalistic and instrumental approaches

- IL is still often thought of in functionalistic terms, principally being associated with abilities such as those to access, evaluate and use information
  - criticised for limiting information literacy to a set of decontextualized skills (Jacobs, 2008)
  - can hardly be applied in real-life situations.
  - The functionalist approach provides IL with a measurable framework, but reduces it to fragmented and isolated units
  - „click and tick approaches“



# CIL – congruences with the ACRL Framework

- **Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education (ACRL, 2015)**
- the dynamic and often uncertain information ecosystem
- cluster of interconnected concepts; not prescriptive or enumerative
- Framework as inspiration to focus on concepts, rather than exclusively on tools and techniques
- students are consumers and creators of information
  - Authority Is Constructed and Contextual
  - Information Creation as a Process
  - Information Has Value
  - Research as Inquiry
  - Scholarship as Conversation
  - Searching as Strategic Exploration



## CIL – congruences with the ACRL Framework

- Information literacy is the set of integrated abilities encompassing the *reflective discovery of information*, the *understanding* of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in *creating* new knowledge and *participating* ethically in communities of learning
- the *Framework* makes a marked turn towards CIL
- Some of the sociocultural complexities of scholarly information and research are explicitly addressed, as reflected in the Frames “Authority is Constructed and Contextual” and “Information Has Value.”



# CIL – new research avenues

- Understanding new information ecologies
- Authority
- Communicating information
- „Criticality“ in IL



# ***Understanding new information ecologies***

CIL as a way „*through which to view the cycle of information production within society.*” (Swanson, 2015)

- information of high quality may appear outside traditional scholarly domains (blogs, self-published items, wikis, videos presentations)
- non-traditional information objects that lack the imprimatur of publishers, but still may be of educational / scientific value
- Understand information as historically produced human constructs

**Research focus:** use of novel forms of information, why do users choose some results over others, how do they reflect upon how information is presented in different sources (popular blog vs. scholarly article)

# Authority

- new definition of metrics to establish authority
- evaluate information, not the container
- Information sources based on opinion are more prevalent in participatory online communities

**Research focus:** how users perceive authority, what are “signes” of authority, new evaluation criteria

- Why do we trust some sources over others?
- How are sources such as audio and video clips,, non-textual materials assessed
- How is the dividing line line between facts and opinions established
- Discussions are not local any more; how users are recognizing and sythesizing conflicting views

# ***Communicating information***

***“besides reading, the notion of literacy embraces the idea of writing”***  
(Hulvila, 2011)

- extends to discuss issues online identities
- CIL is communicative/dialogic per se; more emphasis on producing/sharing information

## **Research focus:**

- Expanding research in finding information to sharing information (where, what formats etc. to where, what in sharing, how do they assess shared information)
- Motivation and capabilities of users to discuss and to engage in the dialog
- reflect on issues of personal privacy, information ethics, and intellectual property.

# „Critical” perspectives in IL

- The word „critical” has been part of IL from its very beginnings
  - e.g. 40% of the search results in GS on IL deal with “critical” aspects; SCOPUS 31% , WoS 10%
  - critical perspectives have not yet been thoroughly researched

## Research focus:

- How the goals of library instruction relate to the development of critical consciousness,
- engagement in particular subjects, why? Patterns?
- „groupthinking”: promotion of those with the loudest voices, and the marginalization of unpopular viewpoints. Dynamics?
- Possibility of curricular interventions for civic participation and political agency (III)



## Conclusion: let us be inspired!

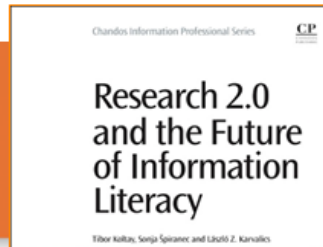
*Current IL research is still reflecting a strong dependence on a print-based culture and functionalistic/instrumental approaches to IL*

Contemporary IL discourse and research is still under a strong influence of views and concepts formulated and popularised by Paul Zurkowski in 1974.

- Static (closed) information environments, functionalistic views
- **CIL** inspires us to introduce critical and conversational, socially engaged features in IL, „echoes“ new information environments, opening up new research fronts



# References



**ISBN:** 978-0-08-100075-5

**PUB DATE:** September 2015

**LIST PRICE:** £47.50/€56.95/\$78.95

**FORMAT:** Paperback

**PAGES:** c. 230

#### **AUDIENCE**

The target audience for this book is academic librarians, information professionals, decision makers in research and scientific institutions and researchers interested in digital scholarship issues.

## **Research 2.0 and the Future of Information Literacy**

**Tibor Koltay** Professor, Department of Information and Library Studies, Szent István University, Hungary.

**Sonja Špiranec** Associate Professor, Department of Information and Communication Sciences, University of Zagreb, Croatia

**László Z Karvalics** Associate Professor, Department of Cultural Heritage and Human Information Science, University of Szeged, Hungary



*Research 2.0 and the Future of Information Literacy* addresses address information literacy, scientific literacy and academic literacy from the viewpoint of scientific research, especially in the light of the changing research landscape characterized by the emergence of Research 2.0.

#### **KEY FEATURES**

- Summarizes the most important and up-to date approaches towards Research 2.0, including researchers' skills and abilities, the data-intensive paradigm of scientific research, open science, not forgetting about factors that inhibit a wider uptake of Research 2.0
- Discusses the nature of information literacy in the light of its definitions, declarations and related frameworks and by outlining the new literacies context, reading and writing, the cultural context, and the turns of library and information science
- Numerous literacies, other than information literacy, its relationship to information overload and personal information management are also subject of the book
- Theoretical and practical perspectives are given to enable the understanding of the transformations of information literacy and its relationship to Research 2.0

#### **DESCRIPTION**

*Research 2.0 and the Future of Information Literacy* examines possible congruencies between information literacy and Research 2.0, because the work of today's researcher mobilizes a number of literacies. From among the various types of relevant literacies, at least three types of literacies can be mentioned in this relation: information literacy, scientific literacy and academic literacy. This book addresses these literacies in the light of the changing research landscape. Broad contexts of the researcher's abilities, as adaptive and innovative thinking, problem solving skills, self-management and design mindset are also examined. Computational thinking and the computational paradigm in a number of fields of research are taken into consideration, as well. Researchers differ to non-researchers when populating social media, which means that these two different groups require different literacies. The relationship between information literacy and information is approached in a new way. Among the multitude of issues, we introduce a new interface between information literacy and Research 2.0. It encompasses the issues of research data management and data literacy, which represent also a challenge both for the academic library and for the communities of researchers. Similarly, the questions of new metrics of scientific output are addressed in the book.



# References

- Association of College & Research Libraries. (2014), "Framework for information literacy for higher education: draft 3", available at: <http://acrl.ala.org/ilstandards/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Framework-for-IL-for-HE-draft-3.pdf>
- Dede, C. (2008), "A seismic shift in epistemology", *Educause Review*, Vol. 43 No. 3, pp. 80–81
- Elmborg, J. (2006), "Critical information literacy: implications for instructional practice", *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, Vol. 32 No. 2, pp. 192-199.
- Huvila, I. (2011). The complete information literacy? Unforgetting creation and organization of information. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 43(4), 237-245
- Lupton, M. and Bruce, C. S. (2010), "Windows on information literacy worlds : generic, situated and transformative perspectives" in Lloyd, A. and Talja, S. (Ed.), *Practising information literacy: Bringing theories of learning, practice and information literacy together*, Centre for Information Studies, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, N.S.W., pp. 4-27.
- Swanson, T. (2004), "A radical step: Implementing a critical information literacy model", *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*, Vol. 4 No. 2, pp. 259-273



Thank you!

