Information Literacy of LIS students: Gathering and Synthesizing Sources for a Literature Review

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Abstract: Information literacy is understood as the key set of skills needed to recognize when information is needed, the ability to locate and evaluate this information from a variety of sources, and the ability to use the information gathered effectively to fulfil the task at hand. Conducting a literature review for an evaluation research proposal in Library and Information Science (LIS) calls for higher order skills with the ability to find, gather and synthesize multiple sources to create a coherent narrative of the prior work done on the research topic. LIS students are often found struggling through the process. At times, they create an article-by-article summary rather than a synthesis of the literature. Despite the huge and growing amount of literature, there is a lack of effective tools and processes to help students make sense of all the information, find the needle(s) from the haystack and to connect the dots. In this study, the information seeking behaviour of 28 LIS students working on a research design and literature review assignment for an 'Evaluation of Information Services' course will be studied. A set of scaffolds were provided to help students develop the required information literacy skills: 1) lecture and instruction video 2) workshop by the librarian 3) an Excel sheet template for summarising each article and creating themes across articles 4) working with a partner 5) peer feedback 6) instructor feedback. In the 1-month period when students worked on the assignment, they were asked to maintain an online journal with 3-5 posts reflecting on their individual processes of working on the literature review. This study will evaluate the student reflections, the peer feedback, their literature review assignments, as well as student responses in a survey questionnaire to ascertain which scaffolds were most useful to them in learning to carry out the review. The survey will also ascertain the role of each scaffold in different phases of the literature review process – when starting, mid-way and in the end. Insights gained from the study should shed light on the process by which students conduct a literature review, as well as their fears, frustrations and triumphs. Findings will especially be useful for information literacy instruction across disciplines by highlighting the sets of tools, sources and scaffolds most useful in different phases of the literature review process.
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Keywords: literature review; creative instruction of information literacy; scaffolds