UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

UTS: Library

Developing the information literate person:

the UTS Statement

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Information literacy has been identified in the recent Federal government report *Higher education at the crossroads: a review of Australian higher education* (2002) as part of the 'emerging' skills and knowledge required by graduates for participation in democratic society. However, information literacy is a term not widely understood outside library circles. This UTS Statement provides a summary to the *Developing the information literate person: UTS Framework*, in which UTS Library seeks to:

- Explain what the terms *information literacy* and *information literate person* mean
- Show that information literacy is a key component of the UTS Graduate Attributes
- Link the theoretical basis of information literacy with the practical skills and knowledge implied by the UTS Graduate Attributes
- Identify paths of strategic collaboration between library staff, academic staff, and other members of the UTS community, to best assist UTS students to become information literate graduates

Definitions

Information literacy is defined in the Council of Australian University Libraries (CAUL) *Information Literacy Standards* (2001):

> Information literacy is an understanding and set of abilities enabling individuals to "recognise when information is needed, and have the capacity to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information".

The skills, articulated in the seven Australian Information Literacy Standards, enable an information literate person to:

1. recognise the need for information
2. access and find information
3. use, critically analyse and evaluate information
4. store information and manage information
5. share information and create new knowledge
6. use information ethically, legally and respectfully
7. become a self-directed, self-reliant, lifelong learner

UTS Graduate Attributes and Information Literacy

Information literacy lies within the knowledge literacies domain described in the *UTS Statement of Graduate Attributes* (2000). Information literacy relates to developing lifelong learning attributes essential for living and working in knowledge based environments, characterised by continuous information explosion and change. UTS successful graduates research confirms that the ability to access and use relevant information is essential to effective professional performance. The significance of information literacy is also highlighted in the *Higher education at the Crossroads* (2002) report and in the U.K. report, *Competing with Knowledge* (2001). These reports outline how the emerging knowledge economy is changing the way people live and work, and the skills that are required for participation in this information environment.

Building a Framework

In developing the information literate person, UTS Library is building a framework which aims to support:

- students in their study and learning
- academic staff in their teaching and research
- research students and staff in their research
- graduates and the wider community through links to business, industry, professional groups, libraries and schools

By ensuring that information literacy learning is:

- understood as underpinning core graduate attributes
- integrated into curriculum design and assessment
- learner-centered, developmental and ongoing
- evaluated and monitored for effectiveness and quality

Collaboration & Integration

Integrating or embedding information literacy into the curriculum requires university-wide collaboration. This involves fostering partnerships in which students, library staff, academic staff and University administrators collaborate to:

- identify information skills learning needs
- define information literacy outcomes and assessments
- integrate implicit and explicit information skills learning into courses and programs

Practice

Developing the information literate person involves designing and delivering programs which expand information skills. The *Practical plan* uses information literacy skills and learning outcomes, articulated in Australian Information Literacy Standards and gives examples of their application at UTS. The *Practical Plan* uses a double helix image to suggest that effective use of information is a key to ongoing learning, with continuous renewal and interaction between the elements, just as genes determine biological growth. The seven standards are pursued through learning and assessment activities which have been grounded in the curriculum to ensure their relevance and immediate utility to the student, as well as long-term benefits.
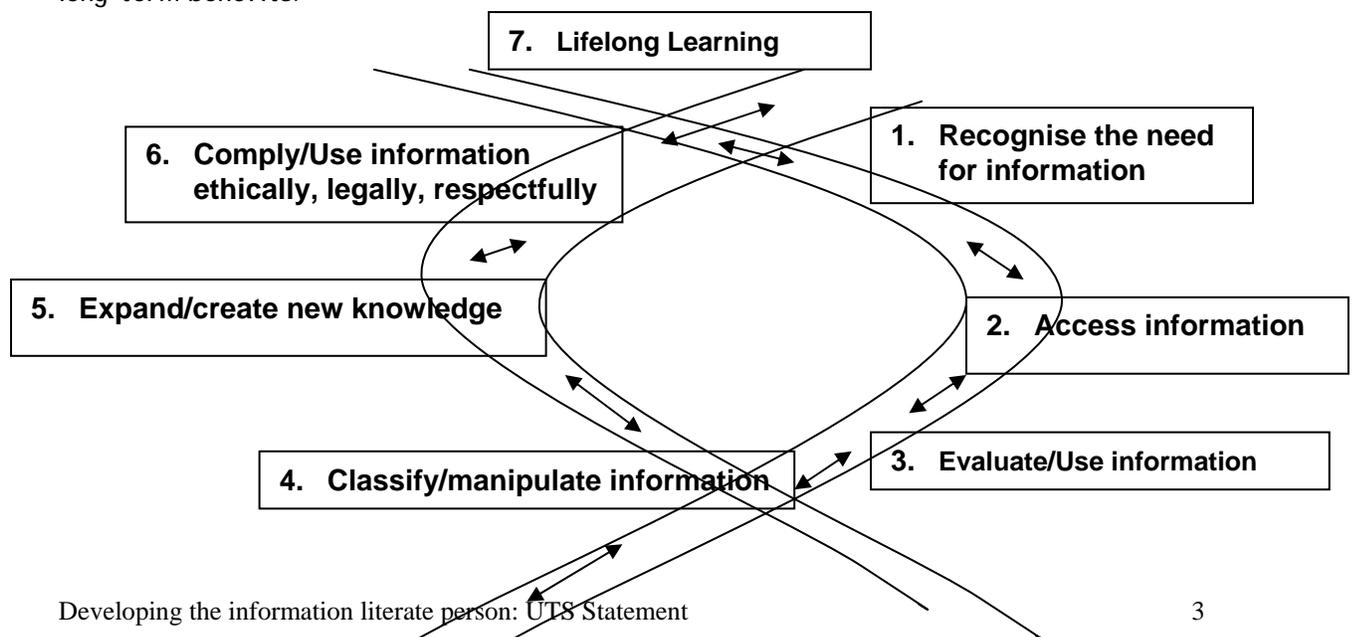
Conclusion

The development of information literacy skills and knowledge builds essential components of the attributes expected of UTS graduates in their personal and professional lives. The skills they acquire assist them to achieve in their studies and careers. By providing a strategic framework for developing information literate graduates, UTS Library acknowledges and supports the UTS community in achieving these vital skills and understandings.

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