Italy
Information Literacy State-of-the Art Report
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Laura Ballestra
Università Carlo Cattaneo LIUC
lballestra@liuc.it

A. Introduction

Although at the beginning of the 2000's "information literacy instruction" was already an imperative in worldwide LIS literature, in Italy only a few articles had been published in LIS magazines and journals.

Before then, the term "Information literacy" had been used in the information specialists community (they are called "documentalists" in Italy). However, librarians were not involved in information liteteracy debate.

From 2000, Italian librarians realize that poor information competences could be a systemic disadvantage. This was first noticed in the high school context and in the university context. As a consequence, information literacy instruction activities appeared, especially in University library courses, and sometimes became part of students' curricula.

On the contrary, public libraries and corporate libraries did not consider this issue of importance.

In enterprises, the decade 1990-2000 culminated in the end of a long process of library closures, with the exception of the biomedical sector. Instead, corporate libraries made the decision to switch their investment to IT (Information technology), as this was assumed to be a better choice to meet information needs.

The term "Information literacy" was translated into Italian in many ways:

alfabetizzazione informativa (Anna Baldazzi, 1995; Biblioteconomia. Guida classificata, 2007), *cultura dell'informazione* (Carla Basili, 2004), *competenza informativa* (AIB Commissione nazionale università e ricerca, 2000 – used for both "information literacy competency" and "Information literacy").

The problem with "alfabetizzazione" is that, in Italian, this term refers to an action, not to a status, so probably one could strictly translate "Information literacy instruction" with *alfabetizzazione informativa* o *alfabetizzazione alla ricerca e all'uso dell'informazione* (Ballestra, Cavaleri, 2006) and "Information literacy" with *alfabetismo informativo*.

Some Italian authors do not translate "Information literacy" at all (Lucchini, 2008).

Moreover, in Italy the expression "Information literacy" has been used for a variety of activities, including general courses on Internet use in public libraries, OPAC user instruction courses in school and university libraries and deep analysis on information production in a specific discipline in research and university libraries.

There is a strong need for reflection on what IL is in Italy, because the concept was imported from another cultural context and it can be interpreted differently depending on: teaching style; public libraries role; university library relevance.

To give an example of the differences in teaching style, Italian LIS literature refers to ACRL standards as a useful model, but in reality there is only little opportunity for it to be

put into practice. Teaching style is traditional and problem solving that uses information skills is not valued. Italian students are not requested to write assignments and, as a result, they often miss out on the opportunity to search for information. This is different to other systems, such as the American one, where students are also evaluated on the basis of their literature searching skills and results.

Even if technology is changing education (PC laboratories, online whiteboard, Internet etc. are now present in many schools), there is a misunderstanding on the role of IT as a solution to students' knowledge problems. This point has negative consequences on IL: Information Literacy is not recognized as a core problem at a political level. Much attention has been devoted to the so-called "digital divide" (PC use, now Internet access for all…), but the "information divide" (a concrete reason of social exclusion in a global information society) has not been considered by politicians as one of the most important questions.

In 2007, Minister of Education, Mr Fioroni, presented his program with clear reference to key competences for citizens, such as " learn how to learn", "problem solving", "acquiring and interpreting information"[1], but when the Government changed no one put these words into action.

Currently, the approach called "digital school Project" promoted by "The University and Education Ministery" and "Agenzia Nazionale per lo sviluppo dell'Autonomia scolastica" is that of creating a digital environment in the class (interactive whiteboards).

Also students, according to Italian Law 133, 2008[2], starting 2011, must use text books only in electronic format.

All this emphasis on computer literacy and the necessity of Internet use hides important deficiences Italian students have in searching information, text comprehension and reading literacy, as PISA Reports show[3].

Unfortunately, from the Government's view, school libraries are not considered important information centers or learning environments, in which digital and information competences can be taught, but maintain their traditional role of book repository.

In lifelong learning, information literacy is not presented as a core competence for adults. More emphasis is given to ICT and adults re-qualification to ICT. For example, the public sector is involved in Project EDA (Education for adults, by "University and Education Ministery" and "Agenzia Nazionale per lo sviluppo dell'Autonomia scolastica"). Excluding primary and secondary school certifications, the main activities are linguistic and computer based literacy courses, not information literacy courses.

Concerning the private sector, in Italy there are many SMEs, unable to organize company information centers and training due to their small dimension and budget constraints. As a consequence of this, there is little opportunity for information literacy to be taught in the private sector.

Public libraries could represent a key role in providing support for "lifelong learning" through the provision of information literacy. However, in order for this to occur, library

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[1] "Il nuovo obbligo di istruzione: cosa cambia nella scuola", *Allegato 2. Competenze chiave per la cittadinanza = key competence for citizens*, p. 30, available:
<http://www.pubblica.istruzione.it/news/2007/allegati/obbligo_istruzione07.pdf>
[2] Starting 2011-2012 text books adopted by classes will be in electronic version only, or both paper and electronic version (Legge n. 133, 2008, art. 15, c. 3).
[3] At the moment PISA 2009 Project, centred on reading literacy, is not finished yet. The international report will be presented in Autum 2010, national reports in Autumn 2011.

users should change their perception regarding libraries. The widespread opinion is still that libraries represent only a place to find books, with some kind of social function.

The educational role in the public library is targeted for joung people: they run many user instruction courses for children to teach them basic library skills.

Unfortunately, only a few Italian public libraries have considered the possibility of providing IL trained staff to help adults in finding information of public utility (e.g. community information, laws, jobs information). It is hoped that more Italian public libraries become aware of the strategic importance of this matter for the future.

The professional associations have devoted some attention to IL instruction: for example the "AIB[4] University and Research Library Standing Committee" translated, in 2000, the ACRL *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* into italian.[5]

Also, the "AIB School Library Standing Committee" is involved in disseminate IL importance among school librarians.

On a local/regional level, IL instruction dissemination has been carried out by Regional Sections of AIB, in order to assert IL importance among Italian librarians.

In addition to this, other Professional Associations are involved in IL diffusion including AIDA (Italian association for advanced documentation), Gidif (Gruppo italiano documentaristi dell'industria farmaceutica e degli istituti di ricerca medica).

B. IL Products for users

In Italy there are resources and tutorials developed for information literacy instruction, in particular for university students. Some are freely available on the web and here you find just some examples:

1. Tutorials and other IL materials (guides)
a. Bologna University Libraries
CIL - Corso di Information Literacy english version
http://www.cib.unibo.it/portale/formazione/corso-di-information-literacy

b. Cattaneo University Castellanza. Mario Rostoni Library
Guide alla ricerca di informazione
http://www.biblio.liuc.it/pagineita.asp?codice=151

In school context there are many experiences.
Here you find some examples that comes from two different repositories, *Biblioscuole* and *GOLD*.

c. Madie Annalise, I.T.C.S. Schiaparelli-Gramsci di Milano
Chi cerca trova
http://repository-biblioscuole.cilea.it/handle/2172/3599?mode=full

d. Marzulli Andrea, Istituto Rebora di Rho (MI)
La storia e la rete
http://gold.indire.it/nuovo/gen/show-s.php?ObjectID=BDP-GOLD00000000002063DF

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[4] AIB is Italian Library Association, <http://www.aib.it>
[5] *Standard sulla competenza informativa per gli studi universitari* : traduzione italiana / a cura di Alina Renditiso e Alberto Scarinci, con la collaborazione di Cinzia Bucchioni e Serafina Spinelli, per la Commissione Nazionale Università e Ricerca dell'AIB, <http://www.aib.it/aib/commiss/cnur/tracrl.htm3>

2. Credit/no-credits courses

Many universities offer IL courses or workshops, especially on a facultative basis. In some cases these courses give credits to students. These are just a few representative esamples.

a. Bologna University. SBA. Archivio delle iniziative di formazione
http://www.biblioteche.unibo.it/portale/formazione/iniziative/archivio-delle-iniziative-di-formazione

 b. Bolzano University. Library. Information literacy nella biblioteca universitaria
http://www.unibz.it/it/library/infolit/default.html

c. Cattaneo University Castellanza. Mario Rostoni Library. Information literacy
http://www.biblio.liuc.it/pagineita.asp?codice=7

d. Firenze University. Faculty of Social sciences. Library. Corsi e assistenza alla ricerca
http://www.sba.unifi.it/biblio/scienzesociali/corsiassistenzaricerca.htm

Other examples come from different contexts (government libraries, public libraries):

a. Teca del Mediterraneo. Biblioteca del Consiglio Regionale della Puglia
http://www.bcr.puglia.it/tdm/training.htm

b. Some public libraries organize courses to help citizens to search for information, especially on the Web, is not possible to provide a list

C. Publications

There are a few books regarding information literacy in Italy.
There are books on reference services and especially on user instruction in reference services, in which IL has a relevant role. This is a list starting 2000s:

Basili, Carla (2003). "Italy*". In *Information literacy in Europe: a first insight into the state of the art of information literacy in the European Union*. Edited by Carla Basili. Roma. ENIL. 2003.

Biblioteche & formazione (2008): Dall'information literacy alle nuove sfide della società dell'apprendimento, a cura di Claudio Gamba e Maria Laura Trapletti
Milano. Bibliografica. 2008

Inciampare nel problema (2004): il processo di ricerca dell'informazione nella biblioteca scolastica multimediale: atti del convegno internazionale, Padova 30-31 gennaio / 1 febbraio 2003, a cura di Donatella Lombello Soffiato, Ademario Lo Brano. Padova. Imprimatur. c2004.

Leonardi, Carla (2000). *I servizi di informazione al pubblico*. Milano. Bibliografica. 2000

Lucchini, Patrizia (2007). *La formazione dell'utente*. Milano. Editrice bibliografica. 2007

Rasetti, Maria Stella (2004). *La biblioteca trasparente. L'istruzione all'utenza come strategia organizzativa*. Pisa. ETS. 2004

In Italy there is no journal centered on reference services or IL services. *Biblioteche oggi* published some articles on the problem. Here is a list of some relevant articles:

Baldazzi Anna (1995). "Alfabetizzazione informativa". In *AIDA Informazioni*. 13 (1995). 4. p. 25-31

Ballestra Laura (2003). "E-learning e information literacy: un connubio vincente". In *Biblioteche oggi.* 21 (2003). 10. p. 11-23

Ballestra Laura, Cavaleri Piero (2006)
"Information literacy nella scuola superiore e nell'università: percorsi per studenti e insegnanti". In *Convegno Information literacy in biblioteca*, <available: http://www.eurac.edu/NR/rdonlyres/0168EBA7-2E5A-4C8C-91C9-29B6CA6AF064/0/BallestraCavaleri_testo.pdf>

Basili Carla (2001). "Information literacy: un concetto solo statunitense". In *AIDA informazioni.* 19 (2001). 2. p. 10-13

Basili Carla (2004). "Verso una patente europea dell'informazione". In *Biblioteche oggi*, 22 (2004). 5. p. 45-51

Mammoli Fiammetta, Gorreri Marina (2003). "Dalla formazione dei bibliotecari alla formazione degli studenti". In *Biblioteche oggi*, 21 (2003). 4. p. 21-28

D. Organizations

1. Associations and professional bodies

1.a. Italian Library Association (AIB)
<http://www.aib.it>
AIB, as already said, has two Committees supporting IL actions: University and Research Library Standing Committee and School Library Standing Committee.

1.b. Italian Association for Advanced Documentation (AIDA)
<http://www.aidaweb.it/>
AIDA supports initiatives addressed to information specialists and information literacy training in specific discipline.

2. Research centers / Research projects

2a. In Italy LIS Masters and PHD are not centered on reference services.
One exception is represented by "Bibliotecario nei servizi scolastici, educativi e museali", a first level master of Padova University in which user education and information literacy are thought: <http://bibliotecario.scform.unipd.it/index.php>

2b. CNR - The European network on Information Literacy (EnIL) <http://www.ceris.cnr.it/Basili/EnIL/gateway/gatewayhome.htm.>
ENIL is a network of researchers actively involved in Information Literacy, drawn from most of the EU25 countries. The network has been established by initiative of the Italian National Research Council.

E. Training the trainers

In Italian University System, LIS disciplines are part of a more general approach to cultural heritage management; librarianship is not the main focus of these courses and IL is not present as a discipline. There are some seminars on reference services in which is possible to find lessons on user instruction.
Professional courses promoted by professional association (AIDA, AIB etc.) and the ones organized by single institutions for their librarians (single Universities, Regions, etc.) are a very important way of disseminating IL among italian librarians.

F. Communication

1. Conferences (ascending order)

1)*Inciampare nel problema : il processo di ricerca dell'informazione nella biblioteca scolastica multimediale : convegno internazionale*
Padova, 30-31 gennaio / 1 febbraio 2003
Organized by: Università degli studi di Padova, Dipartimento di scienze dell'educazione, Gruppo di ricerca sulle biblioteche scolastiche

2)*School libraries and information literacy: a European perspective*
Roma, 31 October 2003
Organised by: AIB Lazio and ENSIL (European network for school libraries and information literacy)

3)*Information literacy in biblioteca* : Servizio di reference - Formazione degli utenti - Formazione del bibliotecario
Bolzano, 13 ottobre 2006
Organized by: EURAC research

3)*Biblioteche & formazione: dalla information literacy alle nuove sfide della società dell'apprendimento*,
Milano, 15-16 marzo 2008
Organized by: Biblioteche Oggi, Comune di Milano, Provincia di Milano con AIB e Goethe Institute

4)*Information Literacy in the 21st Century - Spring Event*

Naples, March 26 – Rome, March 27 2009
Organized by: American University of Rome, US Embassy Rome. Office of Public Affairs, Information Resource Center e CNR-CERIS

In Italy you don't find any discussion lists on information literacy.

G. Conclusion

Today's Italian library context is very diversified regarding IL diffusion and penetration.

University libraries: some universities implemented information literacy programs, some others maintained traditional bibliographic user instruction activities. In the first case you find an institutional framework for information literacy and active collaboration between librarians and professors. In less advanced situation, the most common, libraries offer their user education courses, while faculty is not part of the programme. SCONUL and ACRL are the most commonly used models.

School libraries: in Italy school libraries are afflicted by the weekness of italian school library sistem: many schools do not have libraries, and many libraries do not have a professional librarian, but teachers working as librarians. One recent national initiative called "Amico Libro" help libraries with new founding to buy books, but weakness remains.
Neverthless, school librarians gave many effort in information literacy experiences. There is no national coordination, but single activities in which teachers and librarians work together.
GOLD project, by "Agenzia Nazionale per lo sviluppo dell'autonomia scolastica", an archive of good practices of Italian schools, shows some examples of IL[6]
The most cited model in this sector is Big6.

Public libraries: in Lombardy, the Region with the highest number of libraries in Italy, the 2007-2009 Plan do not refer to IL programs[7], and do not have a focus on reference services, but on reading promotion in general. Public libraries should do much more to have an educational role on information literacy instruction. They organize courses and user instruction (OPAC courses, PC courses, language courses, Internet courses…), but they do not seem devoted to present themselves as a primary service for information skill development.
There are specific projects of integration among different type of libraries on digital reference services[8]. They generally did not consider the possibility to open these projects to information literacy instruction or instruction activities.

A quite relevant number of events (conferences) regarding user education and information literacy instruction took place in Italy in recent years, as shown above.
Neverthless, for the moment a small number of librarians think that playing a role as information intermediate in a pro-active way (instruction, courses etc.) is a central point for our profession in order to survive next changes.

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[6] *GOLD : le buone pratiche della scuola italiana*: <http://gold.indire.it/gold2/>
[7] *Programma regionale pluriennale 2007-2009 ai sensi dell'art. 22, LR:14 dec. 1985*, Official Journal of Lombardy, February 6th, 2007
[8] Gargiulo Paola, *Chiedi al bibliotecario. Cooperative reference directory* : http://www.aidaweb.it/reference/chiedi.htm

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Lucchini, Patrizia (2007). *La formazione dell'utente*. Milano. Editrice bibliografica. 2007