



## ***School and Academic Libraries Funding: Information Literacy as a critical skill***

### **OLA'S POSITION**

Information literacy is the ability to use the right tools to identify information that is useful, meaningful and accurate. The Oregon Library Association supports placing Information literacy at the forefront of K-12 and college education along with Reading & Writing, Math and Science. It should be integrated into the K-12 curriculum through strong school libraries and reinforced in higher education through support for academic libraries and learning centers. Teaching information literacy skills needs to be central in our educational system from kindergarten to graduate level work, exposing students to the analytic and research practices that will prepare them for life.

### **BACKGROUND**

Every day, Oregonians from young children to seniors encounter a complex world full of facts, figures, ideas and data. When one Google search can result in thousands of "results," Information literacy skills empower the searcher to find the right answers and prepare him or her to utilize this information effectively. Information literacy is essential to the overall economic prosperity, educational opportunity and quality of life. This set of skills enhances people's personal lives and is also directly linked to the creation of a highly skilled workforce. Those who are fluent in working with information resources will be those who are most prepared to compete in the global economy.

School and academic libraries are essential in nurturing information literacy for Oregonians in all stages of life. They help students, teachers and adults determine the usefulness, authorship, currency and point of view expressed in a website, magazine article, book or other source. Information literacy teaching begins in kindergarten, exposing children to the analytic and research practices that will prepare them for life. This training continues for adults as academic and public libraries provide ongoing guidance on evaluating existing information resources and emerging technologies.

### **CHALLENGES THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED:**

- Cuts in K-12 funding have eliminated many professional librarian positions, replacing them with library staff who are not trained to provide instruction.
- There is limited use of accountability standards among schools for strong library and information literacy programs.
- The State along with Colleges and Universities need to continuously and systematically assess how Information Literacy is achieved beyond grade 12 both for transfer and non-transfer degree programs.

Research shows that investing in information literacy as a critical skill increases student achievement and improves education for all students. The business industry agrees that information literacy is a fundamental skill in the workplace that benefits small and large businesses alike. Finally, information literacy is critical in closing the digital divide among citizens and plays a leading role in reducing inequities in our society.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

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