

Digital information literacy among senior citizens

- the role of the public library

What is information literacy?

- No exact Norwegian term parallel to English "information literacy"
 - closest is perhaps "information competence" or "digital competence"
- Literacy in the traditional "reading" sense may mean
 - Technical capability of combining letters to words and sentences
 - Ability to understand and extract meaning from what is read

Components of information literacy

- Technical ability to use information and communication technology
- Knowledge and technical ability to use ICT equipment to search for information in a given technological context (e.g. using a search engine)
- Capability to use search options in a given environment to construct and perform efficient searches
- Ability to evaluate sources
- Ability to understand and extract meaning of the information selected
- Ability and competencies to utilize the communication capabilities of digital technology

Who needs information literacy?

- About 86 % of Norwegian homes have PC access
 - But 98% of homes with children
- 56% of Norwegians use PC on an average day
 - 75% of people under 24
 - But only 21% of people aged 67-79
- Government policy documents mainly focused on promoting information literacy among
 - Students in all age groups
 - Underprivileged and technically deprived
 - Eg. newly arrived immigrants
- Seniors not particularly targeted in official policy

Who needs information literacy?

- Digital competencies more and more universally necessary
 - Correspondence with authorities (eg. Income tax return)
 - Banking transactions
 - Booking, purchases etc (eg. Travel)
 - Keeping in touch with friends and family
 - Keeping informed

The role of the library

- Library community among earliest users of the term “information literacy”
- Apart from schools, libraries are most often mentioned in official policy documents about information literacy
- Libraries possess several key factors relevant to a policy for information literacy
 - “neutral”, multi-purpose space for people to meet
 - Technical equipment
 - Competent personnel
 - Tradition for information mediation

Information literacy activities in libraries

- Focus on two groups with different needs
 - Young people
 - Channeling digital activity in meaningful directions
 - Encouraging critical attitude towards choice and use of digital information sources
 - I.e. focus on understanding and creating meaning
 - Senior citizens
 - Conquering the technical divide
 - I.e. focus on technical abilities

Information literacy for senior citizens

- “Senior-surf”
 - Annual activity in 250+ local communities, 2/3 of them in libraries
 - Purpose: promote basic internet skills
- Courses throughout the year in a number of libraries
 - Internet, e-mail, word processing, image handling
- Groups which expose seniors to technology
 - Local history “memory projects”
 - Senior academies

Experiences and prospects

- Seniors are more eager to take part in activities furthering information literacy than other “information illiterate” groups
- Still difficult to sustain activities
 - Expensive to keep technical equipment up to date
 - Taxing on personnel
- Move towards “seniors help seniors” or even “juniors help seniors”
- Librarians need training in integrating information literacy focus in individual interaction with patrons
- What will be the need of the next generation?
 - Meeting place for common activities?
 - Training to meet continual technical development?