

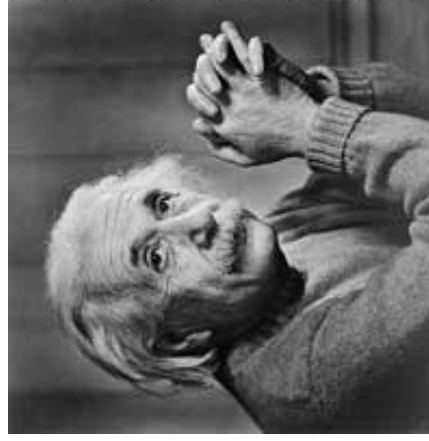
**Being fluent and keeping looking;
questioning concepts and models in information
literacy**

David Bawden
City University London

There is nothing so
practical as a good
theory

(Kurt Lewin)





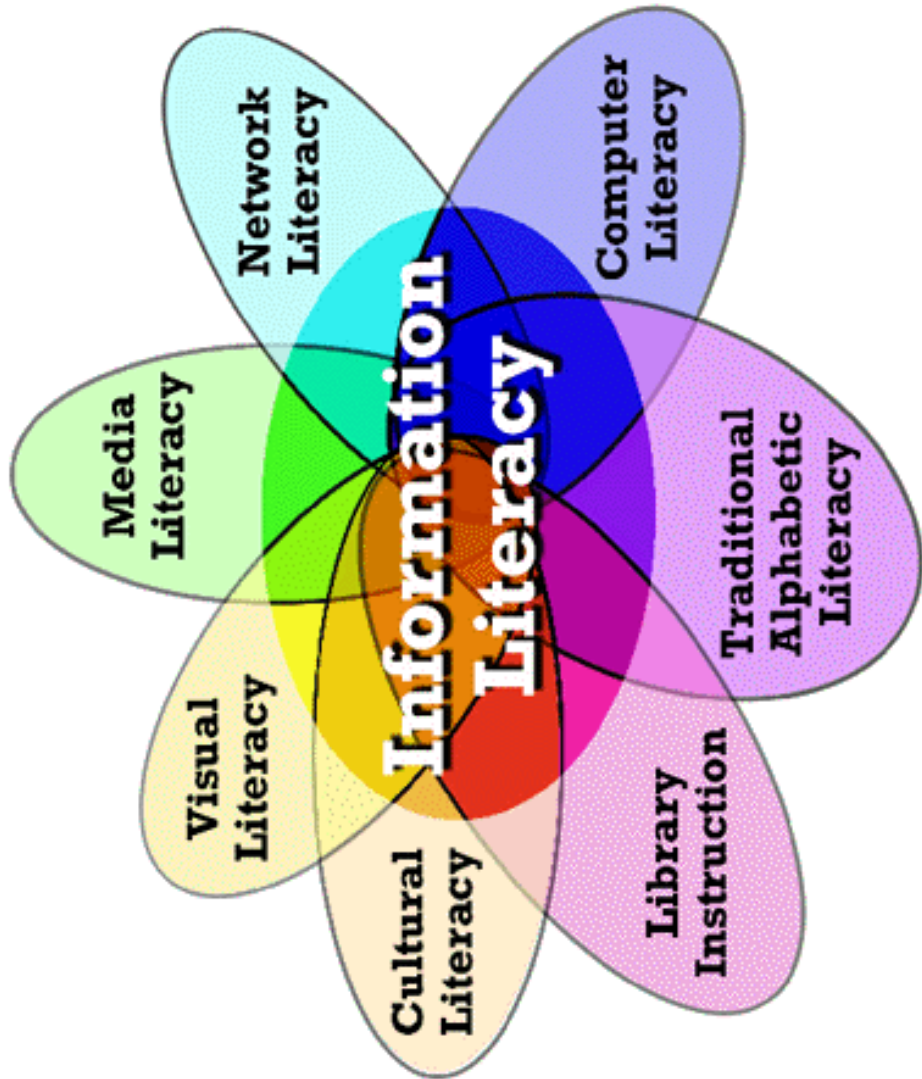
*“In theory, theory and practice are the same
In practice, they are not”*

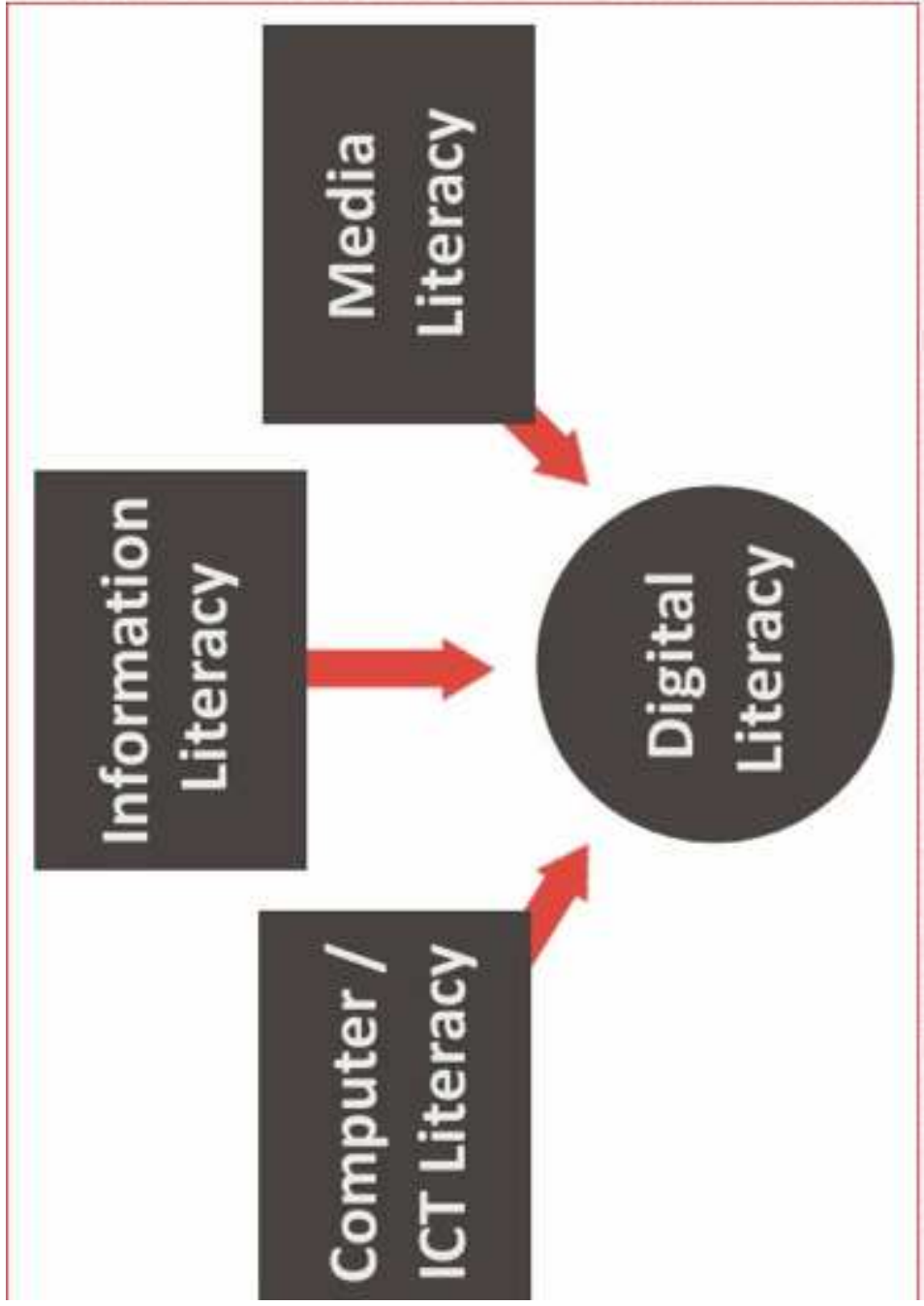
Albert Einstein

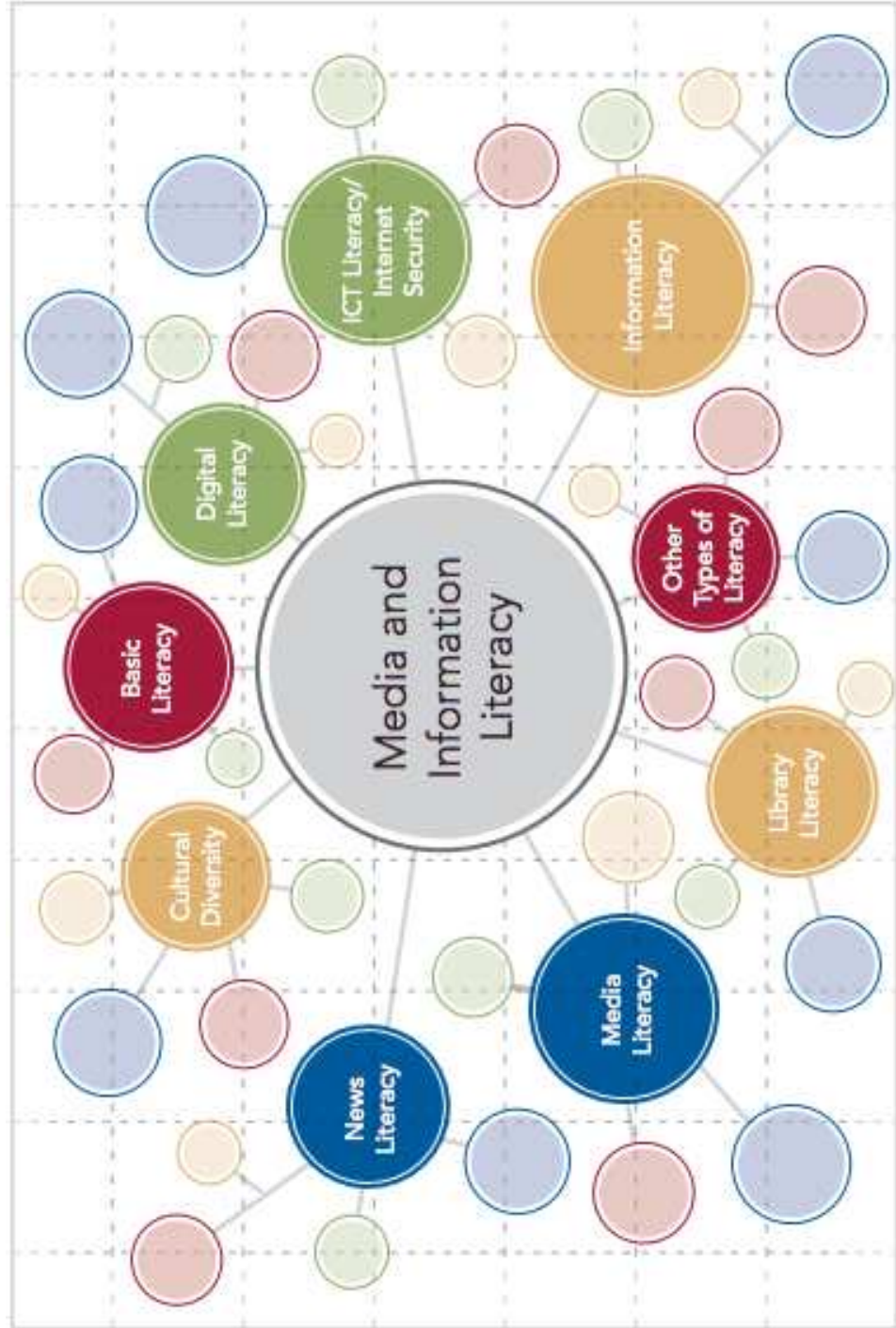
“If we care about information literacy, let us be brave enough to let it go... Information literacy is alive and well. And should be. But perhaps not by that name, and perhaps not in the hands – at least no mostly in the hands – of librarians”

SM Cowan, Information literacy: the battle we won that we lost?, *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 2014, 14(1), 23-32

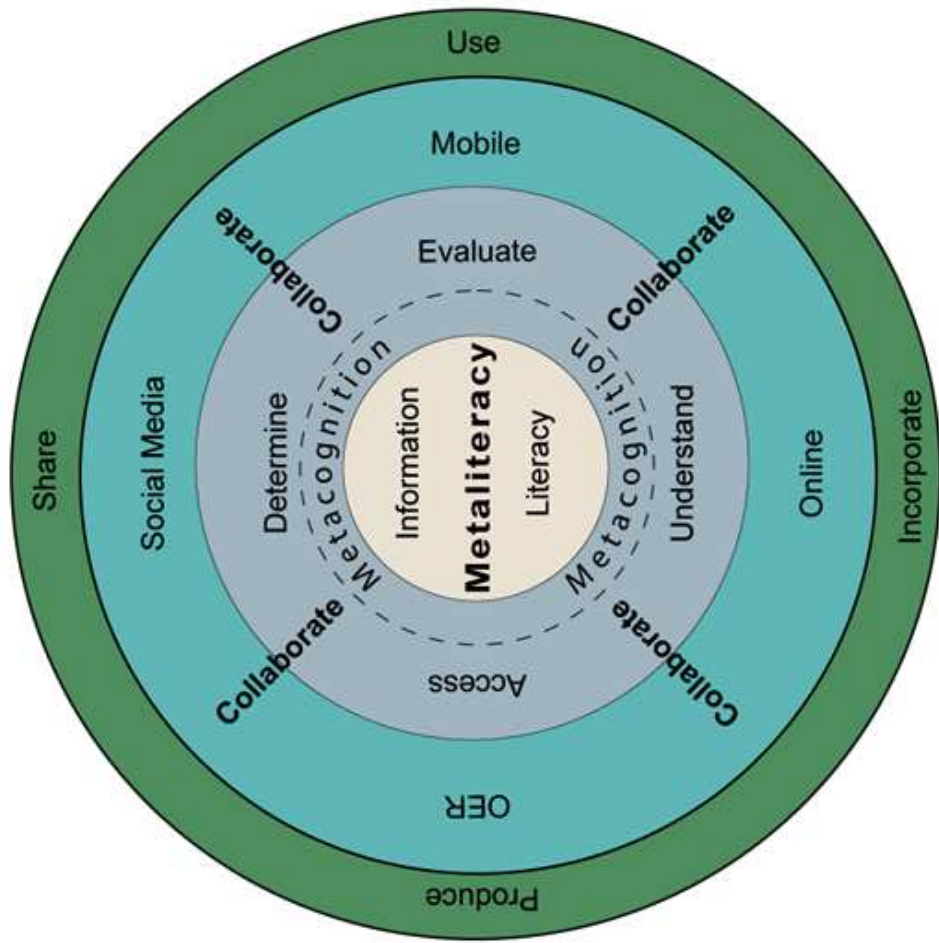
- Is IL still relevant in the Google / social media age?
 - When the problem is no longer how to get information
- How far can IL go outside formal education?
 - work, ‘serious leisure’, everyday life ...
- Who is responsible for IL?
 - Is it still a librarian thing?
- What is IL? Now and future
 - Many literacies / multi-literacies / frameworks











To rule them all?



A helpful(?) framework

- Purpose
 - General, long-lasting, not technology-related
- Vision
 - More specific, slowly-changing, technology-related
- Objectives
 - specific, rapidly-changing, some technology-related

Objectives

- pillars, competencies threshold concepts, lenses
- specific and concrete
- can be customised to the situation
- can change quickly
- some are technology-related, some not

pillars and lenses

The researcher is able to:

Scope the research question clearly and in appropriate language

Define a search strategy by using appropriate keywords and concepts, defining and setting limits (e.g. date, location, type of information)

Select the most appropriate search tools (people, search engines, databases etc.) and data collection techniques

Identify controlled vocabularies and taxonomies to aid in searching

Identify appropriate search techniques (eg from finding contents pages and indexes to complex data mining)

Identify specialist search tools appropriate to each individual information need

threshold concepts

- **Format as process**

Different forms of information resource are distinguished by the process by which they created, rather than by how they are accessed

An article in a scientific journal, a newspaper article and a blog post are different because of their production, even if they all accessed on the web

vision

- encompassing framework / multi-literacy/
meta-competence
- medium specificity, change slowly
- for particular technical environment
 - Gilster's digital literacy: Internet
 - Metaliteracy: social media
 - ?: immersive media

Purpose

- the most general and abstract
- stable over time
- not technology-related

- difficult to determine

Information fluency

Because only librarians
are interested in
information literacy
(Dame Lynne Brindley)



Information fluency

“a conceptual understanding of, and ability to adapt to, changing information technologies”

(Being fluent with information technology,
U.S. National Research Council, Committee on
Information Technology Literacy, 1999)

Compare with..

Digital literacy means those capabilities that mean an individual is fit for living, learning and working in a digital society. Digital literacy is about being able to make use of technologies to participate in and contribute to modern social, cultural, political and economic life.

(British Computer Society Digital Literacy for Life Programme)

Fluency

a conceptual **understanding** of, and ability to **adapt** to, changing information technologies

Expanded information fluency

a conceptual understanding of, and ability to adapt to, changing information ~~technologies~~ environments

—

Three more (continuing) questions

- Is information enough?
- Generic and/or discipline-specific?
- Individual and/or social?

Is information enough?

- information literacy promotion usually assumes that what people need is information
- but perhaps what they really need is education ... or advice, or counselling

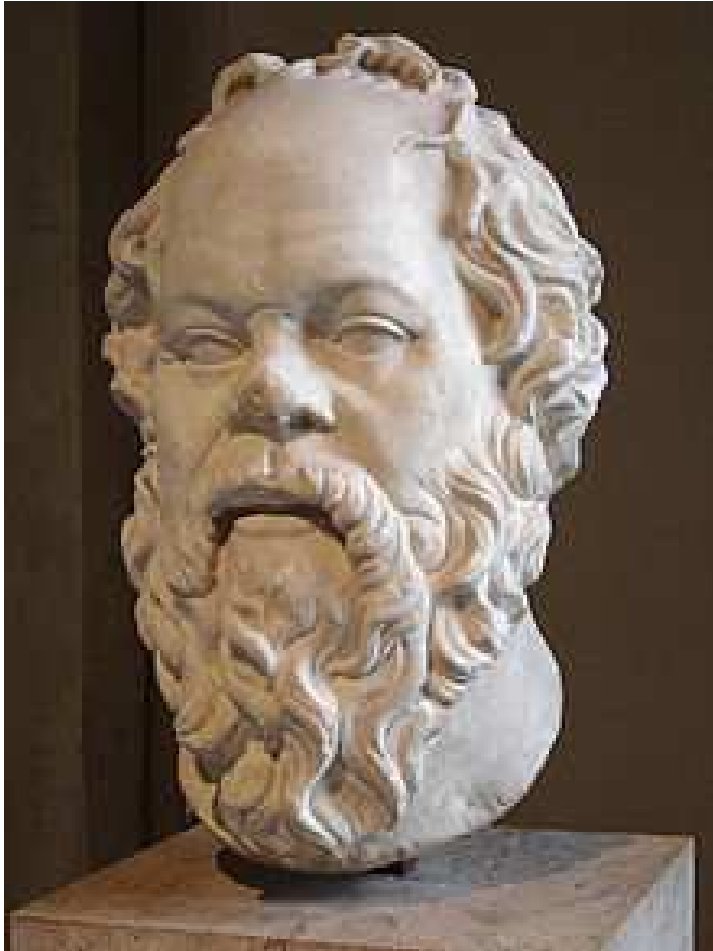
New research into health literacy levels across England has shown that health information is too complex and that 42% of people aged between 16 and 65 years are unable to effectively understand and use everyday health information. This figure rises to 61% when the information also requires numeracy skills. This means between 15 -21 million people across the country are not accessing the information they need to become and stay healthy.

Disciplines and domains

- is there just one generic ‘information literacy’, so that there can be general IL training programmes
- studies show that IL issues are different in different domains (subjects, life situations...)
- recognised in some areas, e.g. ‘health information literacy’

Is subject knowledge necessary for
information literacy promotion?

Phyllostachus Aurea: didn't he work with Socrates ?



Individual and social

- IL is a socially constructed context
- IL training is planned for, and delivered to, groups

But

- individual differences matter in information behaviour
- one of the marks of the information literate person is that they have an explicit personal information style (Christine Bruce)

Personal information management and 'lifelogging'

-



- can we integrate IL and PIM?

Some final questions?

- is it an out-dated idea?
- is it still a subject in its own right ?
- is it just part of 'literacy'?
- part of 'education'?
- part of life in an information society?

Some possible answers

- multiple level model, with information fluency at the top keeps IL relevant
- emphasise understanding
 - of the information environment
 - of individual information styles
- respect domain differences
- meld information into advice/education
- don't worry who does it

There is nothing like looking, if you want to find something. You certainly usually find something, if you look, but it is not always quite the something you were after.

Thorin Oakenshield

