

# **Students' Awareness with Media and Information Literacy: A Case Study**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is inevitable to survive in the digital world. Media viz. Internet, multimedia, video lectures, webinars, E-Journals, E-books, social networking etc. are playing pivotal roles in academics. Media literacy is considered the ability to think critically to access, evaluate and use media. It enhances decision making and helps to build competitive societal intellectual capabilities; and a competitive education system. How is media and information literacy productive in the technical education of undergraduates? To know the fact a study was carried out among a sample of B. Tech. final-year students through a questionnaire-based survey. The study's finding reveals that engineering students need to improve their media and information literacy skills. These include identifying the most efficient search strategies and evaluating digital information. Awareness of Media and Information Literacy is the responsibility of the faculty members and Librarian. Its purpose must be supportive, innovative, and collaborative to enhance the critical thinking abilities of the students.*

**KEYWORDS:** Media and Information Literacy (MIL), Critical Thinking, MIL Curriculum.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The amalgamation of information and media has made radical changes in the literature search and information-seeking behavior of students. This practice has brought about revolutionary changes in the academic system with action and is augmented with integrated audio-visual teaching aids for lectures, presentations etc. ICT, the component of media has been playing a pivotal role in information retrieval from among the clusters of ever-rising data in the digital world. Nowadays, students are enjoying the ease of accessing the desired information by browsing the Internet. As a result, they have started avoiding accessing the library and its conventional and education oriented resources like E-journals, E-books, and databases for study and consultation. American Library Association (1989) defines an information literate person "as one who can recognize when information is needed, and to locate, evaluate and use the needed information effectively". Media and information literacy awareness programs are essential to making the competent use of relevant and authentic content from media.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The study is focused on knowing the students' awareness level about Media and Information literacy and their ability to retrieve process and evaluate the relevant information. What kind of search tools they usually use to search for the required information? What are their search strategies? To what extent they are dependent on the internet and media resources etc? Can library personnel play a crucial role in making the Media and Information Literacy program more effective than teachers?

The main objective of the study was to investigate awareness of media and information literacy of B.Tech. students. The study was focused on two main areas:

1. Are the students' awareness of media and information literacy?
2. Is formal education essential to equip the students with media and information literacy?

The survey method was considered most appropriate for this study which helps to know the student's background, experience, and the types of media information sources and format they generally used for information retrieval. The questionnaire was designed, in such a manner where objectives of the study remain within. To determine the current status of media and information awareness among students under the study, a questionnaire limited to fifteen questions was distributed to 540 B.Tech students in their final year. Only 185 (34%) completed filled-in questionnaires were submitted. The scope of the study was limited to the B.Tech final-year students of Private engineering colleges in Dehradun, Uttarakhand which are affiliated to Uttarakhand Technical University and Approved by the All Indian Council of Technical Education (AICTE), New Delhi.

## **DISCUSSION**

The term 'Information Literacy' was first used by Paul Zurkowsky, the president of the US Information Industry Association (IIA) in 1974. He was of the view that people should be trained in application resources in their work. In 1979 The Information Industry Association (IIA) defined information literate "as a person who knows the techniques and skills for using information tools in molding solutions to problems" (Garfield, 1979). In 2005 Alexandria proclamation states that information literacy empowers people from all walks of life to seek, evaluate, use, and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goals. Theoretically, there are no absolute definitions of Information literacy, media literacy, and digital literacy. Conceptually, Media literacy is a fusion of all literacies and their competency values viz. access, evaluation and use are the same and evaluated more or less with the same indicators.

Media literacy is the ability to understand and evaluate the embedded information in various kinds of formats and gadgets like audio and visual signals received via television, radio, computers, newspapers, magazines, and, of course, advertisements every day and to create personal meanings from them which depends on individuals insight. According to Gloria J. Leckie and Anne Fullerton (1999), "Media and Information Literacy are self-directed learning, for both teachers and students. There is a need to develop guidelines for optimum utilization of electronic resources. Librarians should customize the services according to the information need of students, faculty members and departments as and when required." Whereas Diane Mittermeyer Diane Quirion (2003) in his study on first-year students entering university revealed that the students cannot retrieve the relevant information from the sources. Horton, Forest Woody (2007) expressed that a media literate person should have enough understanding and skills to evaluate the embedded information in various kinds of formats e.g. PDF, HTML, text format, JPEG, JIF etc. and

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should have the ability to extract the actual message from media viz. print materials, television, laptop, tablet, mobile radio, CD, DVD etc. Ali et al (2010) in their research paper "Information Literacy Skills of Engineering Students" revealed that information skills among undergraduates need much improvement. It also indicates that there is a need to encourage the students and make them aware of using more scholarly electronic resources in their coursework. The Students ought to be encouraged to use higher scholarly resources in both print and electronic format. Ian, Huay Lim and Yin Leng Theng (2011) Study was focused on Youth's awareness and perceived confidence in Media Literacy Skills revealed that the youth of Singapore are more exposed to new media as an entertainment and communication choice. From the findings, even though there was an overall fair level of skills acquired the students were developing media literacy skills more for media consumption than creative expression and production. The study is significant for making such policies which help to enhance media and information literacy education and training etc. Jagtar Singh (2012) in his paper "Placing Media and Information Literacy at the Core of Instruction" is focused on student's dependency on Google instead of library resources. He is alerting constantly that commercial publisher intruding the libraries for making money they are not concerned with information flow in the interest of library users. He is of the view that there is a need to frame a policy for information literacy skills development of the stakeholders, and turning the rote learners into independent lifelong learners to build abilities of critical thinkers.

### **RESULTS**

The assessment of the survey was used to understand the current scenario in terms of challenges and roots for possible improvements regarding access, evaluation, and use of media information by engineering students who are mass users of digital content and presumed comparatively technically sound. The method of data analysis used for the study was the the simplest form of organizing data on Excel 2007, in this research the response figures were converted to percentages and tabulated. The responses were analyzed according to their relevance to the research questions.

**Table 1** - Media and Information Literacy (MIL) Awareness

<b>Options</b>	<b>Responses N (%)</b>
Never heard of MIL	34(18.38)
Ability to use the media without formal training	45(24.32)
It may be a new development of ICT	56(30.27)
Aims to improve critical thinking to access, evaluate and use of media.	50(27.03)
Total	185(100)

Table 1 data reveals that the terms of media and information literacy perhaps were heard first time by 18.38% of respondents. 24.32% of the population can use the media but they have no formal training to access and evaluate the information. 30.27% of respondents discarded the term media and information literacy contending that it may be a new terminology for ICT. Only 27.03% of respondents were convinced by the term media and information literacy which is self-explanatory and realized formal training on the technical skills and approaches to explore the contents and effective use of media in any form and format. 27.03% of respondents are convinced with the media and information (MIL) terminology and realized the effective aim of MIL to improve the critical thinking abilities of students to access, evaluate and use of media information.

**Table 2 - Media and Information Literacy Curriculum in B.Tech Course**

Hurdles	Responses N (%)
Yes	6(3.24)
No	53(28.64)
Can't Say	126(68.12)
Total	185(100)

The result of Table 2 reveals that 68.12 % of potential respondents are not able to understand the suitability of the inclusion of media and information Literacy curriculum in B.Tech Courses. Proper awareness and training programme may change their mindset into active respondents. It indicates that 28.64% of respondents are strictly against to include the curriculum of MIL in the B.Tech programme because they are already overloaded. Only 3.24% of active respondents welcomed to introduce the media and information literacy in B.Tech programme to access and use the information effectively.

**Table 3 - Problems in Media and Information Literacy**

Options	Responses N (%)
Lack of Knowledge	67(36.21)
Lack of awareness	89(48.13)
Teacher/Trainer are required	12(6.48)
Can't Say	17(9.18)
Total	185(100)

Table 3 data indicates that 36.21% of respondents were of the view that the implementation of media and information literacy curricula in the engineering program is a tiresome task to convince the students as students' are not able to understand the significance of MIL in media education. MIL is a burning subject in the media world, UNESCO has taken the initiative to aware the masses for its significance. 48.13% respondents believed that there is no proper awareness program has been initiated at the school and college level which causes the subject of media and information literacy is taken lightly. 6.48% of respondents are supposed that special teacher and trainer are required to train the people for MIL. 9.18% potential respondents were not able to give the perfect response of the question due to lack of knowledge and awareness about the subject.

**Table 4 - Media Preference of Students**

Options	Responses N (%)
Internet	130(70.27)
Print	45(24.32)
Audio/ Video	10(5.41)
Total	185(100)

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Table 4 data depicts that at the college level 70.27% respondents prefer the Internet to prepare assignments, project works entertainment, etc. Only 24.32 % of respondents prefer print and text-based materials viz. books, lecture notes, etc. 5% of respondents use video/audio lectures in their studies. You tube, lectures of NPTEL, slide shares, etc.

**Table 5 - Media best describes information requirement**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Responses N (%)</b>
Internet	105(56.76)
Print media	56(30.27)
Audio / Video	18(9.73)
All of these	6(3.24)
Total	185(100)

Table 5 exhibits that 56.76 % of respondents believed that the Internet is best suited to them for instant information retrieval. 30.27 % respondents prefer print media for their information needs. 9.73 % of respondents describe audio/video as are best-suited media to understand the theoretical concepts. Because sometimes text and the internet both fail to clear the concept then only audio and video help to explain the workings of the object. 3.24% respondents use all kinds of media to search the information as per their requirements.

**Table 6 - Strategy to use Media and information Literacy**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Responses N (%)</b>	
Regular teaching in practice	56	(30.27)
Regular training to the students	31	(16.76)
Personal interest of students	98	(52.97)
Total	185	(100)

Teaching and training are integral parts of learning to keep the users up-to-date with the new media information and technologies. Table 6 indicates that 30.27% of respondents believed that media and information literacy needs regular teaching to enhance MIL competencies while 16.76% respondents believed that regular training is far better than regular teaching as media usage is a practical-oriented activity. This needs regular practice and awareness to cope up with the new technologies and their use. 52.97% of respondents thought that MIL is an individual subject of interest. There is no need for formal teaching and training in media and information literacy.

**Table 7 - Best Description of Media and Information Literacy**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Responses N (%)</b>
Emphasize on relevant information retrieval	85(45.94)
Critical abilities to evaluate the information	67(36.23)
Pedagogy of media	33(17.83)
Total	185(100)

The term media and information literacy is a subject that is interpreted according to the individuals' inspection. Table 7 exhibits that 45.94% of respondents compared media and information literacy with the information retrieval practice on the internet while 36.21% of respondents are somewhat near the exact meaning that media and information literacy is an ability to evaluate the information through critical thinking. 17.83 % of respondents supposed that MIL is pedagogy of media.

**Table 8 - Biggest hurdle in Media and Information Literacy**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Responses N (%)</b>
Lack of Teaching / Training	110(59.45)
Lack of ICT knowledge	23(12.43)
Lack of personal interest	52(28.12)
Total	185(100)

Teaching and Training MIL and knowledge of ICT is essential to use the media and content effectively. Individual Interest can only overcome the hurdle of accessing information from any kind of media. Table 8 exhibits that 59.45 % of respondents opined that lack of teaching and training is the biggest hurdle to getting familiar with the conceptualization of media and information literacy; on the other hand, 12.43 % of respondents are unable to recognize the effectiveness of media as they are not familiar with the ICT competencies. They belong to the population who are digitally deprived while 28.1% of respondents feel that lack of personal interest of individuals is a big hurdle.

## **CONCLUSION**

There is a misconception about media and information literacy (MIL) vis-à-vis IT skills. Most of the students had misunderstood the terms of media and information literacy and compared it with information communication and technological skills. The finding of the study reveals that the students have not been assisted with media and information literacy training by the institutes and their libraries. The factors acting as impediments to the awareness of media and information literacy were inadequate knowledge, media, and information literacy at the infancy level, lack of trained faculties as well as lack of individuals' interest and competencies.

The study provides a deep insight into the assessed students of engineering that are used for answering the questionnaire are deemed to be closer to understanding the meaning of media and information literacy. The survey reflected on the aspect of finding the initial objective of the awareness of media and information literacy among students.

Analysis of the study explains that students are interested in informal education for Media and information Literacy but they don't want to add Media and Information literacy as a subject in B.Tech. Curriculum as they are already overloaded. It has been tested from the responses obtained from 185 (34% of the sample population of 540) respondents that awareness about media and information literacy is very poor. However, students are computer savvy and have an excellent skill in searching and retrieving the desired information from the text as well as from

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the internet but they fail to understand the significance of media and information literacy and have poor ability to access, evaluate, and use the information.

It is recommended that Institutes should initially organize training, workshops, and seminars about media and information literacy for students to increase their understanding of media and technological systems. Encourage open and free discussions to get wider viewpoints thus avoiding premature consensus on issues that need deeper analysis. Encourage greater proactive involvement of faculty members and librarians to facilitate media and information literacy. Besides, IT application in education must be a non-credit curriculum of MIL which consists media oriented psychological and ethical issues for developing critical thinking abilities of students with regards to media and information literacy.

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