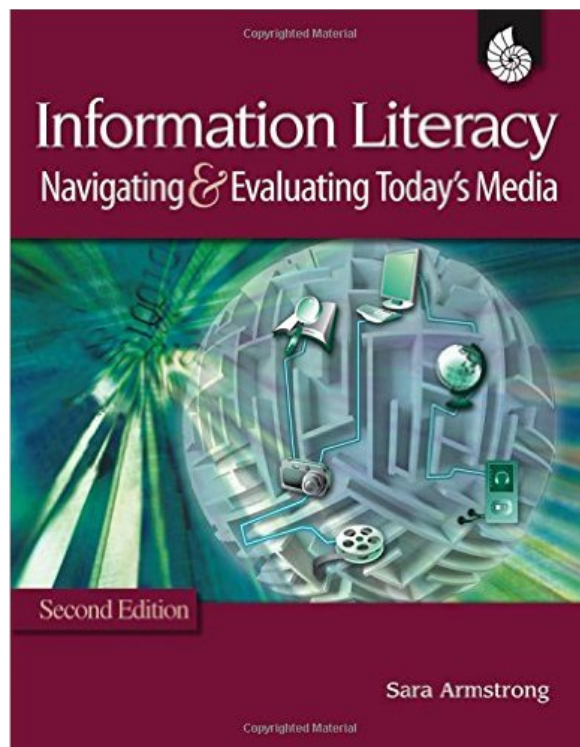


Review of *Information Literacy: Navigating & Evaluating Today's Media*

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This text is an engaging handbook, geared towards educators seeking better integration of information literacy activities in the classroom and understanding of how to appropriately access, critically evaluate, and effectively use information encountered. By providing the audience with thorough explanations, numerous sample activities after each chapter, Internet links to educational material, text references, and rubrics for critical evaluation of multiple media forms of information, this quick read serves as a rich resource for busy practitioners and simply interested readers for instructional strategies.

As an instructor in an afterschool literacy enrichment program seeking supplemental resources, my low expectations of the text were quickly refuted. The book is quite engaging, as each chapter is brief and provides basic information with many resources throughout the text, ending with additional material for further education on the topic with engaging experiences. Ideal for the overburdened teacher reading in the planning period, or the busy graduate teaching assistant seeking to make social studies literacy activities fun, audiences can quickly read a chapter for the basic objectives of an information literacy-focused lesson plan, and implement suggested activities. In addition, many of the accompanying activities are tailored to be developmentally appropriate for the target age level.

The book is sequenced in distinct parts, with Part One expounding on the vast availability of information, with particular chapters addressing specific types of media such as television, advertisements, and websites. Part Two tackles using that information, with questioning, organizing, attributing sources, search strategies, and feedback from media specialist. Part Three provides chapters pertaining to securing information from various media outlets and development of one's own media analysis projects. Part Four closes the guide with a plethora of

resources for the reader to draw on to facilitate information literacy practices

The book begins with an introduction to the concept of information literacy. Although "information literacy" is never explicitly defined in this opening chapter, the author suggests students must become equipped with skills related to critical thinking, collaborating, technological tools, and producing high quality work, which all support Project-based learning, a support instructional strategy within the book. The author asserts that the data we take in daily, such as what we see, hear, and smell, become information, which then becomes knowledge as it is pieced back into what we already know. Therefore, teaching children, our future employees, to improve evaluation skills and think critically, among other expectations of employers cited in this chapter, are primary objectives of educators.

Chapter Two focuses on developing a critical lens when viewing images, television, print material, and websites. Visual information is highlighted due to the precarious amount of visual information ingested daily, the priming of our brains to process images quickly and usually before we've processed words, and the benefits of encountering multiple streams of media through multimedia outlets. A major focus of the text is to address the need to incite students to be skilled consumers of visual information for various biological reasons. The brain has an innate capacity to intake visual stimuli, even from multiple mediums simultaneously, and such information is processed more saliently than actual verbal information. However, students must learn to be responsible consumers of the information imparted—as with television and the other forms of media mentioned. The very brief portion dedicated to critical evaluation of websites provides basic criteria for judging the quality and integrity of the information found on websites, which although lacking in emphasis within the chapter, is sufficient for teaching a quick, evaluation tool. In addition, the

justification of emphasis on visual information due to brain processes is a bit weak. Perhaps other reasoning, such as media coverage of the technology movement and/or literature suggesting benefits of integration of greater visual information in the classroom would strengthen the argument for such emphasis on visual information.

Part Two begins with Chapter Three, and is a section focused on strategies that scaffold thoughtful inquiry skills of children as means of comprehending information encounters. The author frames this approach as equipping students with power thus leading student to “engage in highly meaningful work” (Armstrong, 2011, p. 70). An insert by Dr. Jamie McKenzie argues that unless we surf the Internet for “mere ‘edutainment’” (Armstrong, 2011, p.70) students must begin Internet exploration with “essential questions” in mind (Armstrong, 2011, p.70), a skill often neglected in school.

A suggested educational strategy is that of Anderson and Krathwohl’s (2001) adjusted version of Bloom’s (1956) taxonomy, a questioning method familiar to teachers seeking to engage students in higher-order thinking. The author provides a thorough graphic of the levels of taxonomy, with various examples of questioning at each level, and additional activities and website references—making this section most fruitful for a reader who expects theoretical support for educational strategies and needs concrete visual examples for understanding. The chapter ends with evaluative criteria of what constitutes a “good” question. Explicit usage of a theoretical framework to scaffold learning was refreshing, especially for one who is skeptical of instructional activities lacking empirical investigation. As an educator, I would be wary of suggested practices that were not associated with desirable outcomes.

Chapter Four returns to the assumption that images are powerful forms of information and proposes that graphics organizers are adequate tools for visual organization of information, like webs, charts, Venn diagrams, tree maps, sequence chains, and sketches/drawings of ideas. Dual coding theory, schema theory, and cognitive load

theory, are frameworks that support the usage of graphic organizers, thus appealing to one of the eight intelligences proposed by Howard Gardner (1983) used to increase opportunities for learning.

The following chapter approaches ethical considerations for attributing authorship of information we encounter by providing the basics of copyright related laws and subsequent fair use of materials. As aforementioned, this text not only is a resource of educational materials to use in the classroom, but as a resource for practitioners to educate themselves to become information literate—thus, knowing the basics of copyright laws as protection of fair use were additional needed bits of information for the consumer. Citations as a means for attributing authorship are included yet lack adequate examples, although websites were provided on occasion. Even though an activity to practice citing is provided in the end of the chapter, they would not have sufficient information to produce basic citations documenting streams of information other than books, magazines, websites, and email. Although much emphasis is placed on television and other visual mediums of information, these sources were not backed by citations. While some areas overflow with information, examples, and applied activities, the material regarding citations is comparatively bare.

Chapter Six provides techniques for investigative searching of websites by providing steps to Internet query. They suggest one first begins with a narrow topic, find exact wording to enter into a search engine, “trim the URL” (Armstrong, 2011, p. 142) if needed to get to the site main source of information, and finally search for pages with similar content. Following these steps would presumably lead the reader to a websites with requisite information.

However, in terms of academic search engines, a clear direction is lacking. At times, throughout the text, the author references scaling of activities for developmental appropriateness. Some activities are leveled to fit the needs of elementary school teachers versus those of teaching higher grades. However, high school students who have access to search engines such as GALILEO, a database of

academic material, would arguably follow a different schema for adequate searches due to the plethora of options provided in authoring search terms. If teaching students to be information literate is the aim, academic search engines and instructions on navigating them could have been better addressed with greater detail.

Chapter Seven's emphasis on utilizing libraries is a perspective I share with the author. Libraries are storehouses of information, with media specialists, sometimes referred to as librarians, as rich resources that are underutilized. The three librarians interviewed provide much needed information regarding how teachers may assist students in becoming consumers of information, such as various evaluative tips, opinions of helping students develop critical thinking skills, activities to promote information literacy, and changes they have witnessed in libraries over the years.

I appreciate the voice of the media specialists that are often ignored being highlighted as a self-explanatory justification for this chapter. This chapter itself speaks volumes in terms of a major, rich resource of not only books containing information, but of media literacy specialists who seem eager to assist in scaffolding the skills students need to develop. The chapter then shifts to a culmination of recommendations using various types of primary sources in the classroom from leading library organizations. This shift is perhaps disjointed as to the overall focus of the chapter, but is needed. The author changes from rich feedback from librarians to highlighting the use of objects, images, audio, statistics, text, and the community as primary sources when aforementioned primary sources were unsuitable or untenable.

Part Three begins with a chapter once again emphasizing navigating online arenas, a repeated theme. Understandably, the Internet is a major source of information that students navigate, thus facilitating "Netiquette" (Armstrong, 2011, p. 180) the proper behavior norms in online settings, and avoiding cyber bullying are valuable topics. There seems to be a shift to the future of information processing, to online exchanges. Each section

provides recent issues many teachers may desire to address with technologically inclined students. Throughout the text, the reader learns various streams of information, how to conduct productive searches, and to critically evaluate the integrity of the information found. The audience shifts from not only a consumer but a producer utilizing the many mediums responsibly—more importantly the *student* is empowered as a producer of information if educators facilitate a shift of such.

The focus of producing information in blogs, wikis, podcasts, and other social-networking tools contributes to an empowering conversation. Perhaps some further support, empirically, statistically, or otherwise, would actually reveal practical usage of such forms of producing knowledge. As an educator, I would look to encourage participation in the most beneficial online arenas which could engender the most engaging and productive activities. In addition, for those working in economically strained areas, I foresee challenges in how students would participate if they lacked technology in the home. While online arenas are prosperous sectors for being empowered to produce information, how might economically disadvantaged students be empowered to produce knowledge in an equally "modern" way? Thus a critical perspective can be gleaned from this text as well.

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Project-based learning, a popular educational strategy, is highlighted in Chapter Nine as a powerful tool to "meet many needs, including the goal of educators to help students think critically about what they are learning, apply their thinking to the world outside school, and communicate clearly to an authentic audience" (Armstrong, 2011, p. 194). This theme of equipping students with

valuable skills is consistent throughout the text, especially in this chapter as project-based learning provides an arena for equipping of such skills and their practice for ultimate learning gains. In addition, information on teaching students to meaningfully assess their own work completed in project-based learning trials via rubric creation is addressed as well in a cyclical process involving student engagement. Students learn sources of information, evaluate, produce, and assess their own production of data to develop information literacy skills. This entire text is means of encouraging such learning with several examples and resources peppered throughout these chapters, some of which culminate into Part Four of the text, the conclusion.

As one who believes in transformative educational experiences for students and preparing students to be competitive agents in the employment world, this book is a comfort. Metaphorically speaking,

this book is a series of tapas or flavorful bites of food that may satisfy one's palate for curiosity. After savoring such a meal, an active reader and practitioner may inquire the recipe to recreate that flavor profile. The plethora of materials provided are the recipes to reconstruct applied experiences in the classroom and provide the students with mediums for practicing skills facilitated by explicit teaching and activities. No doubt geared towards, though not limited to, educators, the book provides a plethora of material pertaining to forms of information, critical assessment of the integrity of sources of information students encounter, means of organizing such information, navigating an increasingly Internet-dependent world, and using instructional strategies such as project-based learning. The richness of the material provided in this well organized text overshadows the minute deficits discussed, leaving myself, an advocated for education, satisfied that another quality instrument for professional development is on the market.

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