

In the statement by Zurkowsky some points should be noted:

1. the “**business**” origin of the term, since Zurkowsky was representing the information industrialists of the time;
2. the qualification of information as an **economic good**, that has **value** to people and can be sold at a certain price in the marketplace (as the existence of the Information Industry Association demonstrates);
3. the **policy dimension** of the concept: the statement clearly mentions Zurkowsky’s hope that a national program would be started, aimed at achieving universal information literacy within a decade. Therefore, the Information literacy concept was originally characterised as an intervention having a political matrix.

1989: Information Literacy as a skill

Despite its business, economic, and political imprinting, the IL problem has been entrusted to academic libraries and mainly dealt with as a competency to be spread and diffused among library users.

As a result, today we are presented with a vast amount of literature having a “library matrix” that discusses IL as a particular **skill**, according to the following definition:

To be information literate, a person must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to **locate**, **evaluate**, and **use effectively** the needed information. The information literate individuals are those who have **learned how to learn** (American Library Association, 1989).

An important precursor of this definition is the work of Winkworth⁴ as cited in (Wilson, 1981):

Winkworth offers a categorization of information skills in a survey of user-education in schools which can be adapted to other systems. The categories and contents are shown in Table 1, which is reproduced from Winkworth’s report.

Winkworth’s table distinguishes the following steps in the research process:

- Define subject
- Locate information
 - Locate material in library
 - Locate information in material
 - Locate material outside library and school
- Select information
- Organise information
- Evaluate information
- Communicate results.

It is remarkable that as early as 1977 Winkworth laid out the basic model for most of the IL competency standards, syllabi and tutorials currently available.

Information Literacy as a graduate attribute

The ALA 1989 definition has given rise to a number of standards, which, in turn, have had a great impact on the Higher Education sector.

In the USA the *ACRL IL standards for Higher Education*⁵ were defined in 1999 by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) and translated into: Finnish, French, German, Greek, Italian, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, and Iranian.

⁴ Winkworth, F.V. (1977), *User education in schools: a survey of the literature on education for library and information use in schools*. London: The British Library. Research and Development Departments (BLRDD 5391 HC).

⁵ www.ala.org/acrl/ilcomstan.cfm.