

O'CONNOR, LISA G., Ph.D., August 2006

Educational Foundations and
Special Services

LIBRARIANS' PROFESSIONAL STRUGGLES IN THE INFORMATION AGE: A
CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION LITERACY (256 pp.)

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Since the first public library opened in Boston in 1854, librarians have believed libraries can play a central role in the preservation of pluralist democracy by supporting the development of an educated electorate (Shera, 1965). They have asserted that, by offering equal access to the repository of human knowledge despite individual ability to pay for such access, libraries ensure greater opportunity in the capitalist society (Information literacy, 1990). Librarians believe they are in the midst of a new age: the Information Age. Supposing that information is the capital of this new society, they stress that literal access to it is no longer adequate to promote equal access. Rather, people must now become information literate. That is, because the amount of information available to people is growing exponentially, there exists the threat of incapacitation caused by information over-load. Only people who know how to locate, access, evaluate and use information will thrive in this new society. Librarians, particularly those in K – 12 schools and colleges and universities, believe that they should teach these skills: that they can best support progressive democracy by preparing information literate citizens, employees, and individuals. Once the limited domain of public services librarians, information literacy is increasingly considered the organizing concept for libraries in educational institutions across the country. This dissertation will examine the liberatory claims of information literacy by tracing its development within school and academic librarianship. It will demonstrate that information literacy was central to librarians'

attempts to carve out an educational jurisdiction in order to legitimate the profession during a period of profound social, economic and technological change. Having situated information literacy in its cultural and historical context, this dissertation will critique information literacy as a product of professionalization and an extension of the literacy movement. Finding that information literacy has developed as a set of professional practices lacking a fully-formed theoretical foundation that does not ultimately promote democracy, I will suggest ways in which it might be reconceptualized to realize its original liberatory intent.