An historical perspective on information literacy, 1832–1867

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Abstract

Purpose
To inform social and academic discourse through an idiographic exploration of attitudes towards information expressed in Britain during the period 1832-1867.

Aims and objectives
To systematically examine primary sources from Britain in the period 1832-1867 for discourse pertaining to information literacy; To analyse examples thus identified in order to identify terminology and representations of 'information literacy'; To consider whether examples identified might be considered comparable to current theories.

Methodology
Delimitation of a sampling frame; Identification of potential source material; Identification of themes prevalent within the dataset, utilising directed, open and axial coding techniques; Content and contextual analysis of sources pertaining to each theme.

Conclusions
The concept of information literacy was much in evidence in the political, education, public and societal spheres of nineteenth-century discourse; It is therefore overly simplistic to regard information literacy as a modern-day construct.

Word count: 14519

Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes and/or an appropriate citation method giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr Allen Foster, for keeping me grounded in the social sciences, and my husband, for teaching me to think like a historian.

" 'A little Learning is a dangerous Thing' - Then make it greater.
No learning at all is surely the most dangerous thing in the world ...
learning is acquired knowledge and nothing else."

"A little learning is a dangerous thing"
The Penny Magazine, 16 June 1832, vol. 1, no. 13, p. 112

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter explains the purpose of the study, and outlines the structure of the dissertation.

Context

One of the consequences of the economic and social upheaval witnessed in early nineteenth-century Britain was an amplification of the demand for reform of an electoral system which had remained largely unchanged since the late 1680s. The prospect of reform, however, was infused with an understandable anxiety that disturbances such as the Swing Riots might escalate to the level of the revolutionary chaos sweeping mainland Europe.

The unsettling nature of the times led to a re-awakened interest in social questions seen previously as less significant; amongst discussion of public order and policing, church reform and Catholic emancipation, attention was paid to issues surrounding information, and in particular its dissemination to the British populace at a time when class boundaries and the balance of power were being increasingly challenged. The Whig MP John Roebuck, for instance, declared in a House of Commons debate that:

> *"education means not merely the conferring ... of knowledge, but it means also the so training of the individual, that he may be able and willing to acquire knowledge, and to turn it to its right use."*

> (Roebuck, HC Deb. 30 Jul. 1833, vol. 20, c.142)

Interest in informational topics was not confined to the political and ruling classes; in Samuel Smiles' *Self help*, which sold over a quarter of a million copies during his lifetime (Sinnema, 2002, p. vii) – a figure comparable with sales of *Oliver Twist*[1] – Smiles commended the acquisition of knowledge through "diligent and persevering effort," (Smiles, 1859, p. 369) and counselled that "the most profitable study is that which is conducted with a definite aim and object," (*ibid.*, p. 379).

The opinions expressed were far from homogeneous; whereas the radical William

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1. www.economist.com/node/21546930 (accessed 16 May 2012)

Cobbett characterised "a learned man," ("Education" 21 Sep. 1833, p. 731), as one with "great knowledge in his profession or calling; and not he who can read about the knowledge of others," (*ibid*.), the scientist T.H. Huxley, a proponent of adult education, opined that to "teach a man to read and write," (Huxley, 1868, p. 92) was to "put into his hands the great keys of the wisdom box. But it is quite another matter whether he ever opens the box or not," (*ibid*.).

These, and other, examples of discourse pertaining to information are strongly evocative of what is today understood as 'information literacy', a term which has seen increasing use since the 1970s, in particular since the publication of *The information service environment relationships and priorities* (Zurkowski, 1974). The opinions of Roebuck, Smiles, Cobbett, Huxley and others not only challenge the view that information literacy 'originated' in 1974, but, moreover, suggest that awareness of the concept was perhaps even higher than it is today, when, despite being recognised as "a core concept in libraries," (Elmborg, 2006, p. 192), discussion of information literacy is confined mainly to the spheres of librarianship and information sciences.

Information literacy

A variety of definitions and models of information literacy have been proposed, one of the most significant being the American Library Association definition of 1989. In light of its continuing influence (Campbell, 2004; Seamans, 2012 *et al.*), this will be adopted as a 'working definition', prior to the further exploration of contemporary models within the literature review:

> *"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."*

> (ALA Presidential Committee on Information Literacy, 1989)

In accordance with the behaviourist focus of this definition, most studies of information literacy have hitherto concentrated either on the development of process-models, or on the observation and measurement of information behaviour; little attention has been paid to the historical background to information literacy.

Scope, research questions, and objectives

The purpose of this study is to inform present social and academic debate through an idiographic exploration of historical attitudes towards information, which could potentially stimulate the development of a theory of pre-1974 information literacy in Britain. Whilst such an undertaking might be considered valuable for *any* historical period, this study focuses on Britain in the years 1832 to 1867 (between the two major nineteenth-century electoral reform acts) this being a period of immense social change, during which the subjects of public education, literacy, and public libraries, received much social and political attention.

It should be emphasised that, in searching for evidence of information literacy, the focus of the study is not on the experience of information *per se*, but rather on the *awareness* of the processes involved in information experience.

 The key research question of this study is therefore:

1. What examples of views pertaining to information literacy can be identified within the British body politic during the period 1832-1867?

The objectives of the study are twofold: firstly, to systematically examine primary sources from Britain in the period 1832-1867 for discourse pertaining to information literacy; secondly, to analyse the examples thus identified, employing as a framework the following supplementary research questions:

2. What terminology and representations of 'information literacy' are present within the examples identified?

3. What were the political, social and economic contexts of the examples identified?

4. Can the examples identified be considered comparable to current theories, in terms of their content, authorship, audience or purpose?

Overview

The overall structure of this study comprises eight chapters, including this introductory chapter.

The literature review in chapter two explores both the current state of research on British nineteenth-century informational topics (in particular literacy and education) and contemporary models of information literacy. The third chapter is concerned with the methodology employed for identifying and examining sources. The study findings are presented thematically within chapters four to seven. Finally, chapter eight weaves the thematic strands together, in order to respond to and draw conclusions upon the research questions, and includes a discussion of the implication of the findings to future research into this area. To facilitate contextualisation of the sources examined within this study, a time-line of significant events of the study period is presented in appendix B.

Chapter 2: Literature review

The primary purpose of this literature review is to establish a precedent for the investigation of historical contexts to information literacy. The body of research into informational topics relating to the period 1832-1867 will then be explored, with particular focus on literacy and education. Finally, contemporary models of information literacy will be appraised.

The origins of information literacy

A general consensus in the professional and academic literature (Doyle, 1994; Bundy, 2000; Kapitzke, 2003a; Mokhtar, Majid, & Foo, 2008 *et al.*) cites the first concomitant use of the words 'information' and 'literacy', as being by Paul Zurkowski, then President of the Information Industry Association, in 1974. Zurkowski characterised 'information literates' as "people trained in the application of information resources to their work ... [who] have learned techniques and skills for using the wide range of information tools as well as primary sources," (Zurkowski, 1974, p. 6). Buschman (2009), however, places the origins of information literacy slightly earlier, in the examination of the conceptions and consequences of literacy which took place during the 1960s, and mentions in particular Goody & Watt (1968). Also from this earlier period, Roe (1969) discusses 'learning to learn', and suggests that the ability to evaluate information is a requisite skill for information users.

In the view of Bruce (2000a), the 1980s were the 'precursor' phase in the development of information literacy, when the concept grew out of the related disciplines of informational skills and bibliographic instruction. However, in an earlier publication, she asserts that "The concept of information literacy has its roots in the emergence of the information society, characterised by rapid growth in available information and accompanying changes in technology used to generate, disseminate, access and manage that information," (Bruce, 1997, p. 2). This description of a society 'characterised by rapid growth in available information' might be equally applicable to periods of history other than our own. Indeed, Pawley (2003) traces the relationship between the terms 'information' and 'literacy' back further

still, to the Enlightenment ideology that "reading could transform society by informing its people," (Pawley, 2003, p. 422), and to the contemporary vision of public empowerment through knowledge synthesis.

Although Pawley considers Enlightenment epistemology only within an eighteenth century context, her study makes an extremely valuable contribution to the literature of information history, providing as it does one of a very few explorations of the pre-1974 origins of the concept of information literacy. Such precedent for the historical contextualisation of information literacy opens many potential avenues for further enquiry; the aim of this study is to contribute to what may be considered a canonical continuation of the research into the nineteenth century, and a period during which Enlightenment ideologies were widely scrutinised in British political discourse. There have hitherto been few social and cultural studies of information in nineteenth-century society (Weller, 2009); instead, the focus has been on technological and political factors, such as the development of the telegraph, or the political debate surrounding the questions of public libraries and state-provided education.

The nineteenth century as an 'age of information'

Certainly, the focus period 1832-1867 exhibits the characteristics of an information society as defined by Bruce (1997), and is considered by Black (2001) to be an "embryonic information society," (Black, 2001, p. 66); indeed, *The Times* used the phrase "an age of information" as early as 1853 ("Daily increasing distress …" 5 Dec. 1853, p. 6). Increasing rates of literacy and education, the establishment of public libraries, mechanics institutes and mutual improvement societies (Hill, 1985; Rose, 2001), and the burgeoning news and popular presses (Storey, 1969; Barker, 2000 *et al.*) are all indicative of increasing information availability, and what Weller (2009) terms a "nascent information interest," (Weller, 2009, p. 10). Newspapers in particular were instrumental in the formation and articulation of public opinion (Barker, 2000), and in appraising the accuracy of information (Weller, 2009) – a concept which today underpins much of the framework of information literacy.

The work of Sanderson (1972), Cressy (1994), Standage (1998), Vincent (2009) *et al.* focuses on technological changes; Vincent espouses the Penny Post as the instigator of a revolution in written communication, whilst Standage regards the telegraph as paramount. Indeed, Postman (1999) asserts that the telegraph made a critical contribution to the separation of information from context, permitting its commercial exploitation by, for instance, the Reuters Agency (Storey, 1969; Read, 1992). Weller (2009) suggests further that this acceptance of information as an (economically) valuable resource was a critical factor in the development of our own information age.

For Black, Muddiman & Plant (2007), the emergence of the information profession is testament to the growing importance of information management. Frankel (2006), however, places the emphasis on the expansion of 'informational tasks' within government – in particular the analysis of census returns, which Vincent (2009) regards as the invention of modern social statistics, and "one of the world's first performance indicators of public expenditure," (Vincent, 2009, p. 4). Moreover, Vincent considers these developments to be indicative of a functioning state infrastructure – and the rise of the nation-state – which Giddens (1985) links to the beginnings of our own, modern, information age.

Literacy

Following the argument of Pawley (2003) that the origin of the term 'information' lies in the "development of a rationalist belief that people could be shaped for the better – 'in-formed' – through reading," (Pawley, 2003, p. 428) and thus that the common factor in the heritage of information and literacy lies the social practice of reading, it is relevant to explore the literature relating to literacy, within social and educational contexts.

The period of this study is considered by Sanderson (1995) as witnessing the drive to mass literacy; analyses of 'signature literacy'[2] are indicative of broadly increasing levels of literacy throughout the period. Whilst imperfect in many respects – not least because the ability to sign one's name is very different from any measure of

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2. That is, signatures on marriage registers, data on which were compiled in the annual reports of the Registrar General between 1839 and 1884.

functional literacy (Reay, 1991) – Stephens (1987), Vincent (1989), Higgs (2004b) *et al.* have sufficient confidence in the data to consider it a rough proxy for literacy. Reay, however, complains of the few attempts to correlate signature literacy with functional literacy, noting that "it is rare for historians to have information on individual educational attainment as well as an indication of signature literacy," (Reay, 1991, p. 112), whilst Sanderson contends that marriage registers can be used to demonstrate *illiteracy,* but not literacy.

When considering literacy, Schofield (1968) reminds us to regard reading and writing as separate skills, and suggests that pre- and early-industrial England afforded greater importance to the ability to read. Sanderson (1972 & 1995) and Altick (1998) draw a distinction between mechanical and functional literacy, and observe that the latter was not an essential cultural or economic skill; in south-east Lancashire in the 1830s, for instance, 30 per cent of the workforce were functionally illiterate, and "almost all the new factory jobs … were successfully operated by sub-literate labour," (Sanderson, 1995, p. 10).

Moreover, in attempting to understand the social and cultural significance of literacy, Cressy (1994) asks whether literacy was "a product to be consumed or a tool for consumption," (Cressy, 1994, p. 305) and warns against being misled by the high value placed upon literacy in contemporary society: "enthusiasm or sympathy for the transformative power of literacy becomes an impediment rather than an asset when it comes to historical research," (*ibid*., p. 306). Altick (1991) observes a further distinction, made by nineteenth-century educational leaders, between literacy for 'desirable' and 'undesirable' ends.

The preceding discussion demonstrates the potential for the meaning and significance of literacy to vary according to context; naturally, this has repercussions for the interpretation of information literacy. Schofield (1968), for instance, observes that illiterate individuals could access textual information via a literate intermediary, such as a friend, relative or colleague: "there was a large area in which there was effective participation in the literature culture by essentially illiterate people," (Schofield, 1968,

p. 313). Non-textual sources of information should also be considered, as demonstrated by Anderson (1991) and Weller (2009) in their examinations of printed images as information sources, and by Palmer (1988) in the evaluation of verbal communication and traditions of oral history. Gardner (1993) suggests, however, that the traditional paradigm of intelligence is based on verbal and analytic concepts, and is thus inadequate for appropriate understanding of contexts where textual media are not the primary information sources.

Education

During the focus period of this study, questions surrounding the role of church and state in education provided what Johnson (1970) describes as "a perennial source of very inconclusive debate," (Johnson, 1970, p. 97) in the political and public spheres. Adelman (1970), Mitch (1984), Gillard (2011) *et al.* argue that industrial growth and extension of the franchise rendered a major reorganisation of elementary education a political imperative, although Stone (1969) and Ball (2008) also consider demographic factors such as rural-to-urban migration, and the declining mortality rate. Johnson asserts that working-class education constituted "one of the strongest of early Victorian obsessions," (Johnson, 1970, p. 96) to the extent that the 'condition of the poor' came almost to be synonymous with the condition of their education.

The provision of faith-based education by the Anglican *National Society*[3] is examined by Johnson (1970), Newbould (1987), Sanderson (1995) *et al.*, although Hill (1985) and Smelser (1991) also emphasise the importance of the *British and Foreign Society* to non-conformists. The motivations of these religious educators have variously been interpreted either as self-protection on the part of those who equated public order with religious adherence (Johnson, 1970), heavy attempts at indoctrination by a re-invigorated Anglican church (in part driven by the Oxford Movement) and the competing non-conformist denominations (Curtis & Boultwood, 1962; Smelser, 1991), or as the genuine produce of Christian conscience (Stone, 1969; Johnson, 1970).

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3. To give it its full title, *The National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church in England and Wales* (National Society, 2012).

These differing interpretations lend themselves to very different assessments of the intentions, relevance and efficacy of the education provided. Reay (1991) and Vincent (2009) remark upon the religious content of the curriculum, whilst Hill (1985) observes that under the monitorial system, students could be mechanically drilled in the catechism, without being equipped with any skills for critical thought. Tholfsen (1976) asserts that evangelical Anglican establishments linked education with religious and moral improvement, thus were content to inculcate students with the protestant worth-ethic rather than the skills of reading and writing. In the view of Altick (1998), however, religious schools focused on "literacy for the sole purpose of learning one's religious duties and ordained place in life," (Altick, 1998, p. 144), which meant enabling students to read the Bible, yet discouraging them from reading for pleasure.

The changing nature of the relationship between state and education observed during the focus period is also open to multiple interpretations. Newbould (1987) describes the Whig governments of the nineteenth century as 'Erastian' in their criticism of church-provided education as insufficiently liberal. Johnson (1970), West (n.d.), Harrison (1994) *et al.* observe that Utilitarian reformers emphasised the pragmatic benefits of 'educational rehabilitation' – including a reduction in the crime rate and increased economic productivity – implicitly recognising the potential for education to empower citizens in their social and economic lives. However, Gash (1965), Johnson (1970), Ball (2008) *et al.* acknowledge the political motivation behind Whig support of "any practicable measure of official educational action," (Johnson, 1970, p. 97); Curtis & Boultwood (1962), for instance, suggest that the allocation of £20,000 of public money to education in 1833 was motivated by the awareness of education as a populist concern. Implicit in much of the literature is the understanding of social reform as a political manoeuvre intended to quell civic unrest, and prevent the turmoil experienced across Europe from being replicated in the British Isles (Crossick, 1987; Ball, 2008).

Although previous studies have not looked explicitly at information literacy, much attention has been paid to school curricula, which lend an insight into the knowledge and skills deemed relevant to nineteenth-century schoolchildren. Crossick (1987) and

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Hoppen (1998), for example, observe that curriculum differentiation was used as a means to preserve social stratification; classical education, for instance, being the preserve of the upper strata. Furthermore, Hill (1985) observes that towards the 1867 Reform Act greater emphasis was placed on the intellectual improvement of newly-enfranchised citizens. The proposal of payment by results, made following the Newcastle Commission of 1858, however, was considered a retrograde step by Curtis & Boultwood (1962), Hill (1985), Ball (2008) *et al.* who note that it led to a neglect of anything beyond a basic grasp of the 'three Rs'.

Definitions of Information Literacy

There remains a conspicuous lack of consensus over the scope and definition of information literacy (Behrens, 1994; Bruce, 1997; Snavely & Cooper, 1997; Bawden, 2001 *et al.*), with Foster (1993) referring to it as "a phrase in quest of a meaning," (Foster, 1993, p. 344), and Behrens (1994) preferring to regard it as an abstract metaphor rather than a definable concept. In the view of Elmborg (2006), disagreements over the definition of information literacy "are not merely a matter of semantics or technicalities," (Elmborg, 2006, p. 192), whilst for Tuominen, Savolainen & Talja (2005) the difficulties "stem partly from the fact that it marries two concepts (information and literacy) that in themselves are ambiguous and resist exact definition," (Tuominen, Savolainen & Talja, 2005, p. 332).

In contrast, Owusu-Ansah (2005) remarks that although the debate creates an impression of conflict, there is actually much consensus and common ground, with discourse founded upon the underlying assumption that information seekers are "lacking in their knowledge and awareness of the information universe," (Owusu-Ansah, 2005, p. 370). Additionally, Behrens (1994) observes the oft-assumed potential of information to assist social empowerment implicit in most discourse. Whilst correct to the extent that most models and definitions focus on remedying an identified deficiency amongst information users, there is a danger that regarding differences between approaches as a "distraction" (Owusu-Ansah, 2005, p. 367) fails to acknowledge the potentially diverse perspectives on information literacy that the differing models provide. Bruce (2000a), for instance, recognises that in addition to

what can perhaps be considered the 'traditional' positivist approach, multiple research agendas have explored multiple information literacy paradigms, including cognitivism, constructivism, phenomenography, and critical theory.

Amongst the contemporary discourse on information literacy, four models and definitions will be examined here as a means to explore a variety of different paradigms: the definition produced by the American Library Association (ALA) in 1989; the 'Big Six Skills' model of Eisenberg & Berkowitz (1990); the constructivist approach of Kuhlthau (1993); and the phenomenographic approach of Bruce (1997).

The first definition to be examined – the ALA definition of 1989 – is still regarded as relevant by Snavely & Cooper (1997), Breivik (2005) *et al.*:

> *"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."*

(ALA Presidential Committee on Information Literacy, 1989)

Owusu-Ansah (2005) argues that authoritative regard for this definition, however, has transformed information literacy into an unduly "educational enterprise" (Owusu-Ansah, 2005, p. 367) to the neglect of other disciplines. For instance, Sternberg (1985) *et al.* have noted that information literacy in the 'real world' differs enormously from the educational setting, where problems are more likely to be clearly-defined, 'pre-packaged', and known to have solutions.

The pattern of 'access-evaluate-use' entailed in the ALA definition is clearly reflected in several later process-models (Elmborg, 2006). These include the second model considered here, the 'Big Six' skills approach proposed by Eisenberg & Berkowitz (1990). This model identifies the skills required to use information in problem-solving as being: task definition; construction of information-seeking strategies; location and access; use of information; synthesis; evaluation. Since the Big Six model was developed during the same time-frame that the ALA was engaged with the task of defining information literacy, the similarities between the two approaches are perhaps unsurprising (see table 1); however, the later models developed by Doyle (1992) and

SCONUL (1999 & 2011) achieve remarkably similar subdivisions of the research process.

Bruce (1997), Webber & Johnston (2000), Tuominen, Savolainen & Talja (2005) *et al.* highlight the extent to which such process-models are behaviourist, formulated in terms of normative prescriptions of cognitive information skills. Webber & Johnston and Markless & Streatfield (2007) express concern that the expression of information literacy in tangible stages in this manner promotes "a more logical and sequential approach to information seeking and exploitation than even the most accomplished information users actually exhibit," (Markless & Streatfield, 2007, p. 16), and encourages fragmentation of cognitive and meta-cognitive processes. A further criticism of this positivist approach comes from Mutch (1997), Limberg (1999), Grafstein (2002), Marcum (2002) *et al.*, who note the importance of relating information literacy to context, whether that be the contextual meaning of the information, or "the context brought to the process by the learner," (Marcum, 2002, p. 12).

The third model to be explored, the Information Search Process (ISP) model developed by Kuhlthau (1988 & 1993), attempts to accommodate context by interpreting information literacy as a holistic mode of learning, rather than a discrete skill-set. Whilst still a process-model, the ISP adopts a constructivist rather than behaviourist stance, perhaps better reflecting the information-processing paradigm of Dretske (1983) and Alder (1986) whereby the individual experiences a progression from data to information to knowledge. The constructivist approach is advocated by Bruce (2000a), Lloyd (2005), Tuominen, Savolainen & Talja (2005) *et al.* as a means of acknowledging "the multiple realities of everyday life," (Lloyd, 2005, p. 571) whilst recognising that "knowledge and meanings are built through dialogue and debate," (Tuominen, Savolainen & Talja, 2005, p. 337). Despite the importance of interpersonal interaction, however, constructivism emphasises the individual nature of the experience of information literacy; each individual should come to their own understanding of information literacy, through practical experience and problem-based learning (Bruce, 1997).

	American Library Association (ALA, 1989)	Big Six Skills (Eisenberg & Berkowitz, 1990)	National Forum on Information Literacy (USA) (Doyle, 1992)	7 Pillars of Information Literacy (SCONUL, 1999; SCONUL, 2011)
R E C O G N I S E	To be information literate, a person must be able to recognize when information is needed …	1. Task definition	An information literate person is one who recognises the need for information …	1. Identify
			… recognises that accurate and complete information is the basis for intelligent decision making …	2. Scope
A C C E S S	… and have the ability to locate …	2. Information seeking strategies	… identifies potential sources of information …	3. Plan
			… develops successful search strategies …	
		3. Location and access	… accesses sources of information, including computer-based and other technologies …	4. Gather
E V A L U A T E	… evaluate …	6. Evaluation	… evaluates information …	5. Evaluate
U S E	… and use effectively the needed information.	4. Use of information	… organises information for practical application …	6. Manage
			… uses information in critical thinking and problem solving …	7. Present
		5. Synthesis	… integrates new information into an existing body of knowledge …	

Table 1: Comparison of information literacy process-models

Finally, the phenomenographic paradigm investigated by Bruce (1997) and Limberg (1999) places the emphasis on perception, rather than any concrete context. Bruce describes a relational model, which isolates seven 'faces' or modes of information literacy experience; these may be experienced independently of, or in relationship to, another, according to context. The interpretation of information literacy as a characteristic component of the relationship between information and its users reveals the extent to which intellectual manipulation of information takes precedence over technical skill or ICT competence (Bruce, 2000b).

Despite the multiplicity of approaches to information literacy, as illustrated by the preceding discussion, Kapitzke (2003a) expresses the concern that current approaches

neglect lack cultural, historical and ideological contextualisation, whilst Luke & Kapitzke (1999) consider them "at best anachronistic, and at worst counterproductive," (Luke & Kapitzke, 1999, p. 486) in their avoidance of central issues. Lloyd (2005) criticises the entire construct of information literacy in a formal landscape as reductionist, oversimplified, and representative of a 'Cartesian' approach to learning though textual modality prevalent in Western society: learning is considered successful if there is a change in the "mental state, from one of ignorance to one of knowledge," (Beckett & Morris, 2001, p. 36).

Summary

The literature review has demonstrated the existence of a wide body of contemporary research into nineteenth-century educational topics, much of which has a bearing on this current study, but which fails to directly address concepts of information literacy. Whilst contemporary models approach information literacy from diverse perspectives, the aim of empowering individuals to access, evaluate and use information effectively is prevalent throughout.

The intention of this study is therefore to contribute to a reconciliation of these two research areas, through an examination of the extent to which themes evident in contemporary information literacy discourse may also be discerned within nineteenth-century sources.

Chapter 3:   Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodologies adopted for the identification and investigation of primary source material, and the analytical framework employed.

Rationale

The methodology described here was constructed so as to permit the exploration of a variety of material that appropriately reflected a diverse range of relevant perspectives, whilst also being apposite to the analysis of historical documents within a social science context. In particular, it was important to accommodate the potential implications of source availability – including the 'accident of survival' – upon research findings, and, moreover, to recognise that the objects of study were not deliberately created for the purpose of research. A broadly phenomenological exposition of evidence of awareness of information literacy was therefore appropriate; an idiographic approach was adopted in order to obviate the 'exception fallacy' and to prevent the grouping of texts with similar themes to impose a narrative upon essentially unrelated sources.

The stages involved in identification, categorisation, and analysis of discourse pertaining to information literacy are outlined below, and explained in more detail in the following sub-sections:

1. Delimitation of a sampling frame;

2. Identification of potential source material, and development of strategies for systematically accessing documents;

3. Identification of themes prevalent within the dataset;

4. Content and contextual analysis of sources pertaining to each theme.

Sampling frame definition

The vast theoretical population of interest for this study rendered the definition of a

sampling frame, with clear criteria for the inclusion or exclusion of individual sources, a practical imperative. The criteria used to delimit the sampling frame were as follows:

Physical medium – Textual resources, including written transcriptions of debates and lectures, were included. Accompanying illustrations were also included where relevant. No further restriction was imposed upon the publication status, organisation, format, or purpose of sources.

Language – Only sources written in the English language were considered. Translations were not included, unless accompanied by significant criticism or commentary.

Geographical scope – Throughout this study, the name 'Britain' will be used to refer to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Sources written or published within Britain, pertaining to all or part of Britain or the British Empire (including Canada, Australia and the Cape Colony) were included. Sources written or published outside Britain, but pertaining to it (for example (Engels, 1845)), were excluded from direct analysis, but included in discussion of the broader context.

Temporal scope – Sources written or published between 1832 and 1867 (inclusive) were included. Reprints and re-publications were excluded, unless accompanied by significant criticism or commentary. Works of fiction set during the period, but published later in the nineteenth century (for example, (Disraeli, 1880)) were excluded from direct analysis, but included in discussion of the broader context.

Subject matter – Sources were included if and only if they might be considered pertinent to information, or the experience thereof. Where possible, this was determined using topical subject headings (see appendix A). Whenever full-text searching of digitised resources permitted, it was possible to 'mine' sources for keywords (again, see appendix A); however, the potential for this to influence later analysis of language and content meant that the former approach was preferred.

Categories of source material

Six categories of source material were identified, encompassing personal, private and public documents. In addition to the conditions imposed by the sampling frame, differentiated strategies were employed for systematic access to sources within each category.

Parliamentary records – Sources of parliamentary history for the study period include House of Commons and House of Lords *Parliamentary Papers*, as well as the (near-)verbatim accounts of debates published in *Hansard*. Potentially relevant papers and debates were located using the indexes covering the period 1832-1867 (see appendix A) and examined in chronological sequence to identify policies and opinions pertinent to the study. Legislation, bills and command papers, however, were not routinely examined, but were referred to primarily to contextualise other sources.

News reportage – Articles from the national and regional press were invaluable in providing an overall perspective on the period, as well as being rich in commentary and analysis of political events. Practical considerations rendered it necessary to restrict the newspapers examined, thus titles were selected in order to achieve a range of political perspectives across the period. National newspapers examined were *The Times* (described by Robert Peel in 1832 as "a powerful advocate of Reform," (Peel, HC Deb. 22 Mar. 1832, vol. 11, c. 761))*, Cobbett's Weekly Political Register* (a radical paper[4] which ran until 1836)*, The Penny Magazine* (published between 1832 and 1845 by the Whig-supportive *Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*) and the *Era* (broadly, if not overtly, conservative). Regional papers considered included the *Leicester Chronicle* (Whig-sympathetic) and the *Aberdeen Journal* (Tory-sympathetic).

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4. Cobbett initially founded the paper in 1802 as an anti-Jacobin, but had become increasingly radical by the mid-1810s.

Published pamphlets and non-fiction literature – A wealth of published monographs from the study period remain in the collections of libraries and archives. Potential sources were identified using Library of Congress subject headings (LCSH; see appendix A) from the wide range available within the catalogues listed below:

- – The nineteenth century (http://c19.cchadwyck.co.uk/);

- – Copac (http://copac.ac.uk);

- – 19th century British pamphlets online (www.britishpamphlets.org.uk).

The majority of useful material was found within mutual-improvement manuals and educational treatises.

Transcripts or published proceedings of debates and lectures – These were sourced through the local studies collections of North Yorkshire County Library Service. Whilst the sample is thus limited in geographical scope, this restriction may be justified on the grounds that speakers on 'lecture tours' often repeated the same material in multiple locations across the country. Moreover, the opinions expressed through these publications are commonly those of the lecturers, rather than the local population.

Works of fiction – Within the context of this study, perception and opinion were just as important – indeed arguably more so – than actuality. This justified the inclusion of fictional representations of society, such as Disraeli's novel *Sybil*, or Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* which explore their characters' attitudes towards literacy and education. Whether or not these fictional depictions reflect the true opinions of the books' authors, they may still be considered valid as influential and widely-read explorations of perspective.

Unpublished literature – Where practicalities and availability permitted, personal papers of individuals encountered within other (published) sources, were sought. Letters and the commonplace book of Edward Edwards, politically a Chartist and professionally a librarian, proved particularly valuable in their representation of

multiple perspectives on information.

Identification of themes

Directed coding (Hseih & Shannon, 2005) using codes derived from present-day models of information literacy (see table 2) was selected as being an appropriate content analysis technique. The objects of study providing only mediate access to nineteenth-century opinion, there was no risk that use of pre-determined codes might impose preconceived categories upon the source material; moreover, the ability to begin content analysis immediately was of pragmatic benefit in allowing meaningful interaction with the large volume of available source material.

However, in order not to allow the use of a modern framework to lend itself to postmodernist or a-contextual interpretations of nineteenth-century ideas, 'conventional' open coding was also employed, as a means to identify ideas and terminology inherent within the sources. Codes were then refined into conceptual themes, and sources were axially re-coded according to their relevance to these emergent themes.

	Contemporary information literacy theme	Number of sources identified
RECOGNISE	Recognise a need for information	28
ACCESS	Construct search strategies	12
	Locate and access information	44
EVALUATE	Evaluate information	37
USE	Use information effectively	13
	Use information ethically	7
	No simple comparison possible	8

Table 2: Thematic categorisation of sources identified

Although such coding techniques are more commonly associated with grounded theory, this study was neither nomothetic nor inductive; axial re-coding and condensation of themes were purely pragmatic means of weaving thematic strands into narrative. Furthermore, there was no reason to presuppose that the themes identified were mutually exclusive. Consequently, whenever a source was identified as being relevant to multiple themes, it was imperative to maintain a balance between the potential benefit of deconstructing the source in multiple contexts, and the

concordant danger of overemphasising its significance.

The following broad narrative themes form the basis of the discussion and analysis in chapters 4 to 7 of this study:

1. **Political perceptions**

   Political awareness of, and justification for, the information requirements of the public, and of politicians themselves.

2. **Educational perceptions**

   Explicit references to education as a means of conveying information, and the role of education in social empowerment.

3. **Societal perceptions**

   Evidence for awareness of information-access processes within the activities of libraries, mechanics institutes, mutual improvement societies and other institutions.

4. **Public perceptions**

   Explicit and implicit views on access to information expressed in the public sphere.

Clearly, this is just one interpretation of the available source material[5]. Innumerable other factors contributed to the Victorian information landscape – gender, social class, and geographical location, for instance – thus to adopt, say, a Marxist or feminist perspective, or the inclusion of source material in Welsh, Gaelic, Cornish and other regional dialects, might engender a classification based on very different thematic facets. As Evans (2000) observes, "postmodernist theorists and critics should force historians to rethink the categories and assumptions with which they work," (Evans, 2000, p. 252), therefore it was crucial that later analysis attempted to understand, and account for, the extent to which this interpretation might be constrained by the contemporary context of the study.

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5. And one in which the importance of the word 'available' should not be underestimated.

Contextual analysis of sources

When considering information history, it is important to remember that social consciousness of information is a relatively new phenomenon (Weller, 2009), thus nineteenth century discussions of information are more commonly implicit than explicit. It was imperative, therefore, that analysis proceeded with caution, taking care not to distort the original purpose of texts through over-emphasis of their significance in relation to information literacy.

The process of contextual analysis followed the procedure outlined in (Scott, 1990), in conjunction with guidelines published by the National Archives[6] and the American National Archives[7]. The following attributes of each source were considered: nature; origin; authenticity; credibility; representativeness (within individual and broader contexts); purpose (including intended audience); and meaning. Particular attention was paid to understanding the context to the attitudes and ideas presented – whether they are representative of a particular political ideology, for instance; or their social justification. In order to facilitate understanding of temporal context, a time-line of relevant events from the study period is included in appendix B.

6. www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/students/study-skills.htm (accessed 20 January 2012)
7. www.archives.gov/education/research (accessed 20 January 2012)

Chapter 4: Political perceptions

Reports of parliamentary debates published in Hansard furnish much of the primary source material for this chapter, which examines politicians' attitudes towards their own information needs, in contrast to those of the wider public. An insight into reciprocal perspectives is also provided by political commentaries from the news media and contemporary popular literature.

Politicians' information needs

Within parliamentary debate, references to information required for governmental purposes were both frequent and explicit. Statements such as "it was desirable to obtain every information by which to enable Parliament," (Finch, HC Deb. 23 Jul. 1840, vol. 55, c. 927), and "information on this point … was most desirable," (Romilly, HC Deb. 7 May 1846, vol. 86, c. 211) may be considered analogous to the first stage in contemporary information literacy models: recognition of an information need. One notable difference, however, is the expression of 'desire' rather than 'need'[8]; perhaps reflecting what the political economist Henry George[9] later described as "a difference in relative importance [between] the satisfaction of needs and the gratification of desires," (George, 1898, vol. 1, p. 83). Thus, references to information 'desires' suggest a degree of self-awareness amongst politicians as to the still-emergent contemporary body of knowledge – the first Ordnance Survey of Britain, for example, was not completed until 1874 – and the potentially synthetic nature of information requirements.

Whilst 'information' appears typically to have been understood in a broad sense of knowledge or understanding, an increasing appetite for more specialist 'statistical knowledge' (*e.g.* Gibson, HC Deb. 8 Apr. 1856, vol. 79, c. 360) became apparent as the period progressed; the number of references to statistics in *Hansard* rose from 163

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8. As an elementary demonstration of this, the text of *Hansard* online (http://hansard.millbanksystems.com, accessed 27 January 2012) contains 106 references to 'information need', compared to 595 references to 'information desire', during the nineteenth century.
9. Although an American, and thus falling outside the scope of this study, George visited the United Kingdom during the latter half of the nineteenth century, and his theories were to influence the Liberal government of the early 1900s.

during the 1830s, to 1151 in the 1860s. Attempts at reform often demanded statistical justification – the time-line in appendix B opens with the 1831 Reform Bill, described as "an experiment in legislation founded on a numerical theory," (W.M., 1831, p. 1) – economic reform, in particular, provided an opportunity to embed statistics into government policy and activity. To cite just one example, Conservative support for the 1856 Agricultural Statistics Bill was in part justified by the perceived "importance of obtaining general statistics … in order to arrive at a knowledge of the progress of the country," (Stanley, HL Deb. 11 Mar. 1856, vol. 140, c. 2207). The extension of the topical coverage of the census[10] provides further evidence for mounting statistical enthusiasm:

> *"But was it not an undeniable fact that the Census of 1851 had furnished considerably more information than the Census of 1841? And yet he believed that so anxious was the public for still further statistical information, that before the year 1861 comes round, the Government would be called upon to make very extended investigations,"*

> (Pelham-Clinton, HL Deb. 16 Jun. 1854, vol. 134, c. 247)

Indeed, the political preoccupation with statistics was such that it became an object of satire. Disraeli, for instance, ridiculed Lord Melbourne's Whig government of 1835-1841 for being "so anxiously influenced by a laudable desire for information, that even little Lucca did not escape ... A statistical report on Lucca!" (Disraeli, HC Deb. 8 Mar. 1842, vol. 61, c. 236)[11]. Similar derision is also evident in Dickens' references to "the deadly statistical clock," in *Hard times* (Dickens, 1854, p. 253), which "knocked every second on the head as it was born, and buried it with his accustomed regularity," (*ibid*., p. 126).

Access to information within government

Whilst informational desires were made explicit, less (or less overt) attention was afforded to modes of information access. It is possible, however, to discern a sense of confidentiality, and a suggestion that politicians were jealous guardians of

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10. For information about the topical coverage of the census, see
www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/ research-guides/census-returns.htm (accessed 31 January 2012).
11. The well-known aphorism "there are lies, damned lies, and statistics" is often (mis-)attributed to Disraeli; see, for example, http://www.york.ac.uk/depts/maths/histstat/lies.htm (accessed 11 May 2012).

"information … received from private sources," (Adderley, HC Deb. 2 Aug. 1867, vol. 189, c. 769); the relatively small nineteenth-century state meaning that these were often better-resourced than official government sources. In posing a question in the ongoing debate over Canadian clergy reserves, for instance, Lord Stanley "would freely acknowledge that the information on which it was grounded was derived entirely from private sources," (Stanley, HL Deb. 6 Jul. 1859, vol. 153, c. 1184). Moreover, there is evidence of contempt for information obtained from more public sources. The somewhat disparaging phrase 'the ordinary sources of information' was used to refer to the popular press (*e.g.* Rolfe, HL Deb. 14 May 1858, vol. 150, c. 631), and to condemn politicians perceived as being over-reliant on such an inadequate information source, as the following acerbic remark illustrates:

> *"Those of your Lordships who merely consult the ordinary sources of information, the daily papers, may reasonably have come to that conclusion; but as it was my duty to ascertain exactly what passed in that right rev. conclave, I wrote to the editor of the Guardian, a paper conducted with ability and fairness, and which concerns itself in these matters, for assistance, and I received from him a report which he assured me I might with confidence rely upon."*

(Grosvenor, HL Deb. 6 May 1858, vol. 150, c. 151)

Thus, competition between the different political factions, combined with the prestige associated with access to privileged information, served to stimulate the political information appetite. Whilst this is perhaps unsurprising – indeed, whilst many of the observations made in the preceding two sections might be considered to apply universally – it is precisely for this reason that they are relevant within the context of this study, since they serve to challenge the present-day consensus that information literacy 'originated' in 1974.

Dissemination of information from government

Intertwined with the demand for information within parliament was a palpable assumption that it was necessary also to disseminate information on "the subject of the laws of the land, of which no man may plead ignorance in his own benefit," (HC 8 Aug. 1832, p. 178); a statement which may be considered comparable to the assertion

by Labour MP Douglas Alexander that the 'DirectGov' website[12] would "[make] it much easier to find and access Government information and services," (Alexander, HC Deb. 29 Mar. 2004, vol. 419, c. 1154W).

Parliamentary papers – known as 'blue books' – were the assumed means by which information was broadcast by nineteenth-century government. Concern was, however, expressed about the limited circulation of these publications[13]; even amongst the politically affiliated, "there still were many individuals who knew not how those documents were to be obtained," (Hume, HC Deb. 1 Feb. 1837, vol. 36, c. 71). In 1852, the reformer Joseph Brotherton argued that "by sending the volumes of Parliamentary reports to mechanics' institutes the public would have greater access to them," (Brotherton, HC Deb. 7 Dec. 1852, vol. 123, c.1070), prompting a Select Committee investigation, which concluded that "great advantage would accrue from a general diffusion of the most interesting and instructive[14] Parliamentary Papers," (HC 7 Jul. 1853, p. iii).

Nevertheless, public consciousness of the blue books – even if the means to access them was lacking – is indicated by references within contemporary popular literature:

> *"...his room was quite a blue chamber in its abundance of blue books. Whatever they could prove (which is usually anything you like), they proved there, in an army constantly strengthening by the arrival of new recruits."*

(Dickens, 1854, p. 112)

Published reports of parliamentary debates were also regarded as an important means by which to "inform the whole country of the proceedings of its Representatives," (Buckingham, HC Deb. 10 Aug. 1836, vol. 35, c. 1069). Indeed, the reporting of debates became itself a focus of debate during the 1830s and early 1840s, as part of the wider issue of 'taxes on knowledge', *viz.* stamp duty, and the 1842 Copyright Act. The ensuing discussion provides an insight into the value placed upon the reliability

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12. www.direct.gov.uk (accessed 9 February 2012)
13. Just as, more recently, concern has been expressed at the "low public take-up of e-government in this country," (Heald, HC Deb. 22 Jun. 2004, vol. 422, c. 1180).
14. The criteria by which Parliamentary papers might be judged 'interesting and instructive' were, regrettably, not made explicit.

of information; in particular the importance of "giving a full and accurate report of all that transpired with the utmost impartiality," (*ibid*.). In advance of the 1840 Parliamentary Papers Act, for instance, Peel expressed concern that "witnesses [before committees] were uniformly permitted to revise their evidence … the most improper liberties were sometimes taken … under the pretext of legitimate correction," (Peel, HC Deb. 1 Feb. 1837, vol. 36, c. 71).

Demonstrating consciousness of criteria by which they would judge the value of the information sources available to them, politicians who expressed such concerns clearly fall within the present-day SCONUL characterisation of the evaluative skills of information literate individuals, who understand "issues of quality, accuracy, relevance, bias, reputation and credibility relating to information and data sources," (SCONUL, 2011, p. 9). Furthermore, in his argument that inaccurate reportage "indisputably tended to shake the confidence of the public," (Peel, HC Deb. 1 Feb. 1837, vol. 36, c. 71) Peel elucidated a subtle difference between politicians' evaluation of information gathered for their own political purposes, and of that intended for wider dissemination. Within parliament, the emphasis was placed on origin as an indicator of reliability; without parliament, the concern was for the impression which parliament presented to the (enfranchised) populace.

'The public' *vs.* 'The working class'

The quotation in the preceding paragraph furnishes just one example of the frequent allusions to the information needs of 'the public': "this information, so essential to the public…" (Ewart, HC Deb. 7 May 1850, vol. 110, c. 1240); "information which the public were so anxious to have," (Leveson-Gower, HL Deb. 11 Jul. 1854, vol. 135, c. 31); "It was important that the public was fully informed," (Liddell, HC Deb. 25 Jul. 1859, vol. 155, c. 364). The word 'public' appears not have referred to the entire British populace[15], but rather to "an abstraction called a People," (Dickens, 1854, p. 350). The 'public' thus intimated were a broader group than the parliamentarians alone, but a group which nonetheless expressed some interest in the workings of parliament.

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15. Still less to the population of the British Empire, notwithstanding that legislation *did* apply to them.

Indeed, 'the public' appears to have been differentiated from 'the working class', described in 1859 as "the largest but least informed class," (Wood, HC Deb. 21 Mar. 1859, vol. 153, c. 451). Although from the present-day perspective these terms should not be considered mutually exclusive, it may be observed that within nineteenth-century political discourse 'the public' were attributed with specific informational needs – "the public were entitled to have every information relative to the proposed … affairs," (Hall, HC Deb. 6 Jun. 1850, vol. 111, c. 863) – whereas 'the working class' were in need of more general mental or intellectual 'improvement' (*e.g.* Walmsley, HC Deb. 5 Feb. 1856, vol. 140, c. 220; Baines, HC Deb. 27 Apr. 1866, vol. 183, c. 57). Lord Stanley, then Prime Minister, articulated the difficulty in understanding the scope of each term in his observation that:

> *"There is nothing in England so impossible to define as a class, and the term "the working class" is the vaguest of all, because it may be confined to the very humblest grade of society, or it may extend almost indefinitely upwards."*

<div align="right">(Stanley, HC Deb. 21 Mar. 1859, vol. 140, c. 411)</div>

References to "one of the greatest curses … the spread of science among the working classes," (Borthwick, HC Deb. 1 May 1843, vol. 68, c.1129) and "the educated portion of the mechanical classes, and such of them who have access to the ordinary sources of information," (Villiers, HC Deb. 9 May 1843, vol. 69, c. 27) suggest that the distinction between 'the public' and 'the working class' may be further understood in terms of information access. Recurrence of the phrase 'ordinary sources of information' perhaps implies a commonality of information access between 'the public' and political or ruling classes, from which 'the working class' were excluded.

This subtle distinction is not dissimilar to that drawn between mass and respectable public opinion; a letter written prior to the 1832 Reform Act, for instance, suggested that 'respectable' public opinion was "the work of time and reflection," ('Letter to a noble lord …' 1831, p. 33) in contrast to the "incoherent foundation," (*ibid.*) of mass opinion. Furthermore, the observation that "public opinion … depends on the degree of information and wealth," (Mackinnon, 1828, p. 1) suggests that whilst 'the public'

might hold 'respectable' opinion, the working classes were precluded from doing so by their lack of both economic power and access to information.

Such attitudes, expressed early in the period of study, reflect a prevalent fear that knowledge "infallibly disturbs the public mind, which when once unsettled is not easily quieted," ("Letter to a noble lord ..." 1831, p. 8). In part a reactionary response to the French revolution[16], these views were also in accord with the Tory ideal of knowledge as preserve – and preserver – of the higher social strata, members of which were ascribed with sufficient education and intellect to make proper use of that knowledge. Indeed, legislative attempts to curb the circulation of material deemed seditious – paper duties, for instance, were described as "a tax upon every description of knowledge," (Buckingham, HC Deb. 28 Apr. 1836, vol. 33, c. 440) – effectively undertook to evaluate information on behalf of the public in general, and the working class in particular.

These views, however, were gradually adjoined by a more liberal acknowledgement that the public were "fully able to appreciate the information conveyed [to] them," (Brotherton, HC Deb. 7 Dec. 1852, vol. 123, c.1070), particularly as the political imperative to extend the franchise brought with it a need to educate the voters: "If the people were seeking political power it was important that they should have the best political education," (*ibid*.). In contrast, Edward Stanley's argument against working-class enfranchisement demonstrates the persistence of conservative attitudes:

> *"If a large minority of those who are styled the working classes cannot read or write, I am willing to admit that the fault is far less theirs than that of the classes above them. But although the inability to read and write may not be a fault, it may be a disqualification."*

(Stanley, HC Deb. 21 Mar. 1859, vol. 153, c. 413)

A further view, expressed by the Irish MP Herbert Baldwin, recognises a more subtle relationship between the evaluative skills of the public, and access to information, by differentiating "… subjects on which all the information was accessible to all ardent inquirers [about which] the people at large were likely to form more correct, more

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16. *Viz.* the *perceived* threat of "difficulties and dangers almost as great as those which distracted France," (Vane, HL Deb. 5 Oct. 1831, vol. 7, c. 1366).

unprejudiced judgments *[sic]*," (Baldwin, HC Deb. 17 Jun. 1833, vol. 18, c. 908) from "questions which might be affected by unforeseen events, or on which the information necessary to an accurate judgment *[sic]* was not open to the great body of the people," (*ibid*.).

In confirmation of assertions made during discussion of the stamp duty, Baldwin's description of the press as "popular orators," (Baldwin, HC Deb. 17 Jun. 1833, vol. 18, c. 908) assumes the popular press as the primary source of information for the working class – notwithstanding that previous exemplars have demonstrated politicians' contempt for information thus obtained. Spring-Rice argued that "The press derived its character from the character of the people among whom it circulated, and it must necessarily suit itself to the feelings of the people by whom public journals were read," (Spring-Rice, HL Deb. 24 May 1855, vol. 138, c. 963). However, he developed this argument to assert a formative relationship between public education, public morals, and evaluative skill; moreover, these in turn stimulated a demand for higher quality information. Thus, a connection was made between all aspects of the information literacy experience:

> *" … it was his opinion that, since the year 1836 … there had been a marked, though gradual, improvement in the tone and temper of the newspaper and periodical press. This, no doubt, was mainly attributable to the better feeling and taste and to the more extended education of the public."*

<div align="right">(Spring-Rice, HL Deb. 24 May 1855, vol. 138, c. 963)</div>

Conclusions

The overt references to informational experiences within nineteenth century political discourse – particularly in relation to needs, access and dissemination – demonstrate sufficient fluency with information literacy to challenge the notion that it originated from the work of Zurkowski in 1974. However, politicians' interpretations of the skills and processes involved were evidently critically defined by their individual political beliefs and ideologies, not least in relation to the value afforded to information.

Differing interpretations of the terms 'public' and 'working class' also exerted a significant influence on the perceived importance of information within government, in striking similarity to the 'Digital inclusion' agenda of recent years (DCLG, 2008; CILIP, 2009). Although to an extent information access was understood to be the differentiating factor, the classes thus defined were essentially figurative, permitting their boundaries to be modified as political expediency dictated.

Chapter 5: Educational perceptions

Explicit references to information access within educational discourse provide an insight into the dichotomy between the teaching of skills for independent study, and the direct impartation of factual knowledge. The understanding of 'ignorance' and the role of education in empowerment are also explored.

Individual abilities

> *"Education is usually supposed to signify merely learning to read and write, and sometimes, by a stretch of liberality, it is made to include arithmetic. But this is not education, it is simply some of the means of education ... Education means not merely the conferring these necessary means or instruments for the acquiring of knowledge, but it means also the so training or fashioning the intellectual and moral qualities of the individual, that he may be able and willing to acquire knowledge, and to turn it to its right use."*

(Roebuck, HC Deb. 30 Jul. 1833, vol. 20, cc. 141-142)

Thus, the recently elected MP for Bath attacked a government who had "pertinaciously neglected," (Roebuck, HC Deb. 30 Jul. 1833, vol. 20, c. 140) the question of national education, a subject which, in his opinion, "can be surpassed by none in the importance of its influence upon the well-being of society," (*ibid*., c. 139). In doing so, Roebuck not only stimulated a debate linking the political and educational spheres, but also provided a definition of education which may be considered commensurate with modern concepts of information literacy. Comparison with the ALA definition examined in the literature review (ALA Presidential Committee on Information Literacy, 1989), for instance, reveals phraseological similarities with "the ability to locate … and use effectively the needed information," (*ibid*.).

Moreover, in contrast to the political perceptions explored in the previous chapter, Roebuck focused on the individual; in particular, on recognition of a desire for information *by* individuals, rather than *on behalf* of them. This notion of individuality

also featured prominently in the report of the 1861 Education Commission, which drew a distinction between "two principal types of education; … intellectual training by which the mind is supposed to be qualified to turn to any special object … [and] the direct imparting of knowledge," (Education Commission, 1861, vol. 3, p. 17). As the term 'intellectual training' implies, the former aspired to "exercise the reasoning powers," (*ibid*., p. 18) of the individual, and to promote independence in information seeking and use.

Although inspectors were instructed not pass judgement on the relative merits of these educational methods, the following submission of W.B. Hodgson[17] suggests that he was not entirely without partiality:

> *"Knowledge cannot be conveyed in the true methods without "giving intellectual training;" while just in proportion as the subject is taught intellectually is the knowledge itself likely to be absorbed and certain to be retained. There is much the same difference between learning by rote and intellectual learning as there is between mechanical mixture and chemical combination."*

(Hodgson *quoted in* Education Commission, 1861, vol. 3, p. 550)

Hodgson also remarked on the need to "train the pupils to the right use of their acquirements … so as to give them at the outset of their career a chart of their life-voyage and a compass to direct their course," (Hodgson *quoted in* Education Commission, 1861, vol. 3, p. 555). Within the contemporary context of information literacy process-models, Moore (2002) makes a similarly metaphorical appraisal of "thinking while information handling," (Moore, 2002, p. 6) as providing students with "a 'cognitive road map' of the process and tools for thinking about progress," (*ibid*., p. 7). Indeed, although Hodgson did not employ the linear progression of a process-model, his vision of intellectual training included four processes following the recognise-access-evaluate-use pattern:

- "Consciousness of ignorance," (Hodgson *quoted in* Education Commission, 1861, vol. 3, p. 501);

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17. Inspector for the London boroughs of St. George's Southwark, Newington, Wandsworth, St. Olave Southwark, and St. Saviour's Southwark.

– Accessing information through "an intelligent appreciation of the meaning of what is read," (*ibid*., p. 548);

– Opening of students' "mental eyes," (*ibid*., p. 559);

– The use of knowledge thus acquired "in fitting for the struggle with … actual daily, English, nineteenth-century life," (*ibid*., p. 496).

The fact that Hodgson described these processes – and, perhaps more significantly, no others – not only provides evidence in support of the existence of a nineteenth-century concept of information literacy, but, moreover, suggests that the stages of the contemporary process-model might be considered in some sense canonical. The components of intellectual training as described by Hodgson will be examined further in the following sub-sections.

Consciousness of ignorance

As has already been observed, the first of these processes, consciousness of ignorance, may be understood either from the perspective of recognition, or from that of attribution. A series of outspoken articles published between 1833 and 1835 in *Cobbett's Political Register* exploited this theme, to criticise Whig reform proposals for focusing unduly on information needs as perceived by government:

> *"What is ignorance? It means a not knowing. But when we talk of an ignorant man, we mean that he does not know that which he ought to know, considering the state of life in which he is. We frequently say, that we are ignorant of such and such facts; that is to say, that we do not know them. Therefore, before we pronounce a man an ignorant man, we ought to come to an opinion concerning the point, whether he ought to know the matter, with respect to which we are ascribing ignorance to him."*

<div align="center">("Education and 'heddekashun'" 7 Dec. 1833, p. 587)</div>

Cobbett opined that government proposals would promote not "useful knowledge," ("Education and 'heddekashun'" 7 Dec. 1833, p. 588), but rather "*"headikashon,"* which means, scrawling upon paper with a pen, and gabbling over words printed upon paper," ("Education" 12 Oct. 1833, p. 91). This distinction was, in many respects,

identical with our present understanding of information and mechanical literacies; however, whilst both are today regarded as fundamental, Cobbett believed that 'heddekashun'[18] was "not only not a benefit to the people, but a very great injury to them," ("Education and 'heeddekashun'" 7 Dec. 1833, p. 579).

Intelligent appreciation of meaning

The process which Hodgson referred to as "intelligent appreciation," (Hodgson *quoted in* Education Commission, 1861, vol. 3, p. 548) is perhaps best correlated with our modern usage of 'comprehension' in relation to the written word. Educational discourse suggests a wide spectrum of opinions on reading comprehension; in particular, the relationship between reading as a skill, and reading as a mode of information access.

An anonymous article from the *Penny Magazine*, for instance, differentiated the two, in observing that "reading and writing form no part of real knowledge, being simply acquirements – implements – with which, if we learn how to use them, some knowledge may be acquired and communicated," ("Difficulty of supplying the want of early education" 8 Nov. 1834, p. 437). Roebuck, moreover, emphasised the additional need for fluency – in many ways, expressing the same concerns as Cobbett about the deficiencies of mechanical literacy:

> *"Whilst reading is difficult it cannot be made a means or instrument of knowledge. The mind is absorbed by the process, its difficulties attract attention all to itself, and the subject matter is necessarily passed over … So with reading in our own language; the process must be one so easy and familiar, that we must not regard it, otherwise we shall vainly hope to make it an instrument of knowledge."*

(Roebuck, HC Deb. 30 Jul. 1833, vol. 20, c. 156)

Similarly, Coombe (1858) held "Reading and Writing as the means of acquiring, recording, and communicating knowledge," (Coombe, 1858, p. 31) in higher regard

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18. " *" heddekashun*," coming from the new verb of the BROUGHAM school, *"to heddekate,"* " ("Education and 'heeddekashun'" 7 Dec. 1833, p. 579). Cobbett's spelling of the term varied.

than all other academic subjects. However, whilst he acknowledged that mechanical reading ability was not sufficient to permit comprehension – "Reading implies merely the knowledge of the written or printed artificial signs or words … and we must be instructed in their meaning before we can derive any substantial benefit from them," (*ibid*., p. 33) – he also suggested that "Instruction in the objects, qualities, relations, and … things which the words are employed to designate, should … go hand in hand with the teaching of words themselves," (*ibid*.).

This suggestion that it was possible to simultaneously learn *to* read and learn *through* reading was reinforced by "the peculiar distinction of our commons schools … to make the reading of a book in class the foundation of lessons in every branch of knowledge," (Fraser[19] *quoted in* Education Commission, 1861, vol. 1, p. 261). The following passage from a reading primer is indicative of the factual information which students were expected to absorb in this manner:

> "The best *kind of bell-metal is made, when* four *parts of cop-per are mix-ed with* one *part of tin ; so that, in* good *bell-metal, there are* four *times more cop-per than tin ... The larg-est [bell] in Eng-land is at* Ox-ford. *It is called the "Great Tom of Ox-ford," and* weighs *17000 lbs."*

(*The word making primer*, 1854, p. 58)

Indeed, the primer concludes with the exercise "We should learn from this, to think a-bout what we read, and what we do, and not to be con-tent with just go-ing through out les-sons, but to strive to know the mean-ing of all we read, and see, and hear," (*The word making primer*, 1854, p. 72). Similarly, *The syllabic primer and reading-book* provides the valedictory advice "Now that you can read, I can teach you many pretty things;" (Thelwall, 1859, p. 41). The implicit assumption that elementary education should focus on mechanical literacy for the acquisition of factual knowledge is in stark contrast to the contemporary National Curriculum, within which "work in 'speaking and listening', 'reading' and 'writing' is integrated,"[20] and primary-school students are encouraged to "use language to explore their own experiences and imaginary worlds."[21]

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19. Inspector of agricultural areas in the West of England.
20. www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/primary/b00198874/english/ks1 (accessed 15 May 2012)
21. *Ibid.*

Evaluative skills

Hodgson's 'mental eyes' allude both to the importance of critical evaluation, and to the auxiliary role played by observation and practical experience as non-textual information sources. In the former respect, the allusion is inherently similar to the ability which Cobbett nominated "sound judgement," ("Education and 'heddekashun'" 7 Dec. 1833, p 587), and to what T.H. Huxley, writing shortly after the study period, described as 'reasoning':

> *"The mental power which will be of most importance in your daily life will be the power of seeing things as they are without regard to authority; and of drawing accurate general conclusions from particular facts. But at school and at college you shall know of no source of truth but authority; nor exercise your reasoning faculty upon anything but deduction from that which is laid down by authority."*

(Huxley, 1868, p. 96)

In contrast to the modern-day emphasis on "authenticity, validity, and reliability," (ALA Association of College and Research Libraries, 2000, p. 2) primary focus was given to logical deduction, "the power or habit of thinking and reasoning for itself," (Grey & Shirreff, 1850, p. 64). This perhaps stemmed from the perceived danger of encouraging individuals to question "that which is laid down by authority," (Huxley, 1868, p. 96) at a time when scientific advance was doing just that. In this respect, Combe (1848) observed, "the religion of a great country presents an almost insurmountable obstruction to the education of its people," (Combe, 1848, p. 3).

Although largely outwith the scope of formal education, there is also evidence to suggest that students were encouraged to observe, think about, and learn from, the world around them. Conceivably a residuum from the Enlightenment, Ellis (1839)

described the desire "in education … to invest material things with the attributes of mind," (Ellis, 1839, p. 343).

Empowerment

The final educational perception to be explored is the role of information literacy in personal empowerment. Many educators followed Wyse (1836) in extolling the generic self-improving nature of education: "men who have knowledge and reflection, will soon have a steady and well-regulated will, and will not lightly surrender themselves to the random guidance of others," (Wyse, 1836, p. 15). Likewise, Smiles (1859) observed that "The education received at school or college is but a beginning, and is valuable mainly inasmuch as it trains the mind and habituates it to continuous application and study," (Smiles, 1859, p. 369).

More specific assertions were atypical; however, speaking in a House of Commons debate on state education, the prolific essayist and popular historian Thomas Macaulay attributed "all the outrages of the Bristol and Nottingham riots, and all the misdeeds of General Rock and Captain Swing," (Macaulay, HC Deb. 19 Apr. 1847, vol. 91, c. 1008) to a lack of public knowledge about "how to pursue redress of real wrongs by constitutional methods," (*ibid.*), and a concomitant lack of "respect for legitimate authority," (*ibid.*). Similarly, using rhetoric reminiscent of David Cameron's concept of the 'Big Society'[22], the following submission to the Education Commission cited ignorance of 'social duties' as the root cause of social problems:

> *"What then can we gather as to the causes of misery and crime? … Was not ignorance the first cause of evil? But ignorance of what? Not of reading, writing and arithmetic, grammar, geography, Scripture and catechism. These the "decent lad" we started with had acquired to a fair extent; he was well educated, according to the prevalent ideas of a good education for the working man. Ignorance then of what was it? Of his social duties. Ignorance of the remote effects of certain acts on himself, and the community of which he formed a unit."*

(Education Commission, 1861, vol. 3, p. 357)[23]

22. See, for example www.conservatives.com/News/Speeches/2009/11/David_Cameron_The_Big_ Society.aspx (accessed 15 March 2012): "by giving people more information we give them more power … unless we stimulate social action, we will not create [a] responsible society,"
23. Opinion of Mr Roberts, reported to the Education Commission by Josiah Wilkinson, inspector for the London boroughs of St. Pancras, St. George-in-the-East and Chelsea.

Conclusions

Whilst previous studies (Curtis & Boultwood, 1962; Hill, 1985; Ball, 2008 *et al.*) have confirmed the importance of mechanical literacy within nineteenth-century educational practice, the preceding discussion has demonstrated that at least some individuals – albeit many of them outwith the nineteenth century 'mainstream' – were conscious of the potential for formal education to empower students for, and through, independent information access; as has been noted in chapter 4, the same concerns arise within contemporary discussion of participation in e-government. Overall, despite differences in opinion over the relationship between literacy and comprehension, the value of "good reading – the key of knowledge – the power which is to enable a man to become a self educator," (Education Commission, 1861, vol. 1, p. 251) was clearly recognised.

Chapter 6:   Societal perceptions

This chapter examines material pertaining to libraries, mechanics institutes, mutual improvement societies, and other institutions, for evidence for awareness of information-access processes.

Information access

The latter half of the study period, commencing with the Public Libraries Act of 1850, is regarded by Black, Pepper & Bagshaw (2009) as a formative era for the municipal public library; the associated political debate during this period (see appendix B) – and in particular the 1849 Commons Select Committee on Public Libraries – provides a valuable insight into perceptions of information access. For instance, the Committee recorded the opinion of the librarian of Archbishop Tenison's Library, that "as a public library," (HC 23 Jul. 1949, no. 548, p. 67) his institution had "no influence upon the population of that part of London as a source of literature and knowledge," (*ibid*.) and observed that if Dr. Williams' Library "could be opened in the evening, it would be more useful to people in business, and the working classes," (*ibid*., p. 72).

A nineteenth-century 'information technology conception'

Three key deficiencies in existing library provision were identified by the 1849 Committee: prohibitive membership costs; unduly restrictive opening hours; and lack of borrowing rights. By emphasising these practical considerations, their outlook parallels the 'information technology conception' (ITC) of information literacy described by Bruce (1997), which places information technology considerations in the primary sphere of awareness. Figure 1 reproduces Bruce's user-centric diagrammatic representation of the nested spheres of the ITC (Bruce, 2007), contrasting it with a re-interpretation of the model within the context of this study. The importance of community membership to the experience of information literacy within the ITC[24] (Bruce, 2007) is also pertinent in the context of the nineteenth-century public institution.

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24. "It is possible to experience information literacy, according to this view if one is a member of a community which supports the use of technology," (http://sky.scitech.qut.edu.au/~bruce/il/faces.jsp, accessed 19 April 2012).
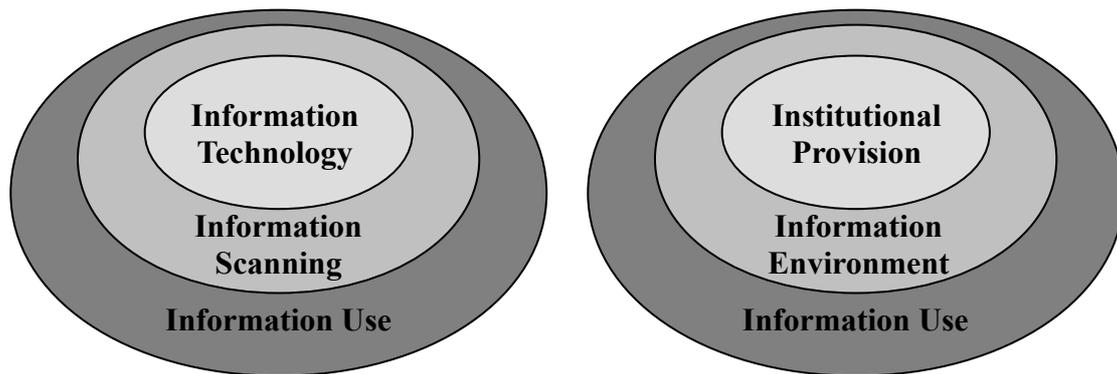
Figure 1: The 'information technology conception' in the present-day (left) and nineteenth-century (right) contexts, adapted from (Bruce, 2007)

Other organisations may be placed within the primary sphere of awareness of this model: coffee-house book clubs, co-operative societies, and mechanics' institutes, for instance, commonly supplied their members with information, through classes, lecture programs, lending libraries, or reading rooms. Indeed, the Chartist leader William Lovett later ascribed his desire for intellectual stimulation to "being introduced to a small literary association, entitled 'The Liberals,' which ... was composed chiefly of working men, who paid a small weekly subscription towards the formation of a select library of books for circulation among one another," (Lovett, 1876, p. 35).

In respect of information provision, the aims of the new public libraries bore close resemblance to those of what may be grouped under the term 'mutual aid organisations'. There were, however, some important differences, perhaps the most notable being the understanding of the second sphere of awareness (labelled 'information environment' in figure 1), within which individuals were required to navigate the information sources within the 'community'. Whilst librarians were concerned with the role of catalogues and library layout, the mutual aid organisations provide some evidence of a more holistic appreciation of research and information literacy; such differences will be examined in the following sub-sections.

The information environment within public libraries

The professional discourse of librarians lends a particular insight into how individuals might – or might not – find information, once access to the library had been obtained. Andrea Crestadoro, for instance, lamented the "vast and daily increasing results of labour," (Crestadoro, 1856, p. 5) which "remain hidden and thus are of little or no service, from the want of some ready means of reference," (*ibid*.); a sentiment which perhaps impelled him to extol the virtues of the catalogue for "successfully aiding the searcher in ascertaining the exact extent of the treasures which the Library keeps at his disposal on any branch of knowledge," (*ibid*., p. 28)[25].

William Libri observed that "from my own experience … in the public libraries … the first thing that is required is a good catalogue," (Libri *quoted in* HC 23 Jul. 1949, no. 548, p. 120), whilst the commonplace book of Edward Edwards (Edwards, n. d., GB127.BR 020.9 E1) reveals a similar pre-occupation with the potential of a catalogue. Indeed, in his *Handbook of library economy* Edwards asserted that:

> *"There is no matter connected with the administration of a Public Library which can vie, in point of importance, with the character and the condition of its catalogues. However liberal its accessibility, however able its chief, however numerous and well-trained its staff, however large and well selected its store of books, it will fall lamentably short of the true standard of a good Library, if its catalogues be not … thoroughly at the command of its frequenters."*

<div align="right">(Edwards, 1859, p. 749)</div>

Despite the existence of a catalogue of Archbishop Tenison's Library, however, the librarian complained that "I can rarely find any particular book that I look for, but I attribute that chiefly to the disarrangement of the books rather than perhaps the absence of them," (Hale *quoted in* HC 23 Jul. 1949, no. 548, p. 67). The British Museum catalogue was derided by the logician Augustus de Morgan[26]: "the entries seem too close together … so that I confuse the press-mark of one work with the press-mark of another," (de Morgan *quoted in* HC 1850, no. 1170, p. 383); de Morgan

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25. Indeed, Crestadoro went so far as to support the idea of "an universal catalogue not merely of the books existing in our National Library but of all the books so far known that have ever been printed in any language in this Country and abroad," (Crestadoro, 1856, p. 59).
26. Also a regular contributor to the publications of the *Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*.

found the catalogue so inadequate that he thought it better to "spend the money in keeping a person who should give the public information by letter … [which] would enable people in the country to ascertain whether they should come up to town or not," (*ibid*.). Within the nineteenth-century technological context – de Morgan was writing only ten years after the introduction of uniform penny postage (Blake, 2010) – such an enterprise has many parallels with the modern OPAC[27]; a 2006 study by the US think-tank Public Agenda, for instance, reported that 48% of Americans regarded remote (internet-based) catalogue access as a priority for their local public library (Public Agenda, 2006).

The information environment within mutual aid organisations

Using language suggestive of the constructivist approach of Kuhlthau (1993), mutual aid organisations ostensibly encouraged members to "expand their ideas by sound information, and to engender habits of study and reflection, and gain knowledge," ("Young men's intellectual improvement association" 28 May 1856, p. 2). Furthermore, references to the value of "sources of information in matters so important to them," (Peel, HC Deb. 11 Mar 1841, vol. 57, c. 124) acknowledge "the context brought to the process by the learner," (Marcum, 2002, p. 12); something which Marcum considers lacking from present-day discourse.

An essay by Hexham teacher William Mitcheson (Mitcheson, 1858), yields three observations which bear close resemblance to present-day research guidance; for the purposes of comparison, they are here contrasted with extracts from *The good study guide* (Northedge, 1990). Although the opinion of just one individual, the essay was not only awarded a silver medal at the 1857 annual meeting of the Northern Association of Literary, Mechanics' and Education Institutes, but was later published by the Association, thus it is reasonable to assume that the sentiments expressed are representative of their context.

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27. Online Public Access Catalogue.

"It is better to thoroughly master one good book than to skim over a legion ... Nor is it, perhaps, too much to say that even Dr. Johnson would have been benefited had his reading been more systematic."

(Mitcheson, 1858, p. 60)

"Sometime you will get a good return by investing in a very detailed reading of a small section of a text which is central to your current interests. At other times you will get a good return by dipping into several texts here and there and skimming in order to broaden your ideas."

(Northedge, 1990, p. 35)

"To become conversant in any one subject we must be content to remain ignorant of many. After consulting his own tastes and powers, each should choose for himself a subject which he intends to master in all its details as completely as his ability and his circumstances will allow."

(Mitcheson, 1858, p. 61)

"You cannot learn effectively unless you can become interested in the subject matter at some level. Any subject can be interesting if looked at in the right way ..."

(Northedge, 1990, p. 25)

"To obtain a sound knowledge of any period, it is not sufficient to read the works of so-called historians, for the utmost they accomplish is to present us with an outline which further research must fill in ... If, however, the accounts which writers of history furnish of the causes and consequences of events do not receive a close analytical examination from each individual reader, and are not subjected to his judgment [sic]*, then to him history ... becomes a mere idle tale."*

(Mitcheson, 1858, pp. 61-62)

"The underlying purpose of reading is to develop your thoughts; to weave new ideas and information into the understanding you already have and to give new angles to your thinking. If you try to bypass this thinking process, you are not really learning as you read."

(Northedge, 1990, p. 34)

Whilst the sentiments expressed in the above examples are not identical, they serve to illustrate the thematic and linguistic similarities between nineteenth- and twentieth-century discourse.

Information use

A further characteristic of the discourse pertaining to mutual aid organisations is an emphasis on the usefulness of information – the outer sphere of awareness of the 'information sources conception' explored earlier – as illustrated by the following description of a mechanics' institute:

> *"It is easy to dress up a description of such a scene; but it is enough to say, that of all ages, from the intelligent, active-looking boy of fourteen, with his open shirt collar, to the graver tradesman of maturer years, I saw them deeply intent on understanding the principles used in their several trades, and most keenly desirous to avail themselves of the information thus afforded to them, for practical purposes. I need not say how important to the cause of good order, to the morals of great cities, and to the respectability of artizans* [sic] *and mechanics it is,"*

(Peel, HC Deb. 11 Mar 1841, vol. 57, c. 124)

Thomas Jones, librarian of Jesus College Oxford, also implicitly placed the value of information within its practical application by expressing concern that "mechanics' institutes … buy amusing books," (Jones *quoted in* HC 23 Jul. 1949, no. 548 p. 78) in preference to "such works as they [the working classes] might be improved by," (*ibid*.).

A further example is provided by the National Political Union (NPU). Perhaps in support of the wish of its founder that "those among the working people who were discreet orderly well informed men should be associated as closely with us," (Place, 1831, Add. Ms. 27791, f. 34) the NPU secretary claimed that "the establishing of our reading room ... [and] a series of lectures on these all important subjects," (Detrosier, 1832, p. 3) would "promote the diffusion of sound moral and political information amongst the people," (*ibid*.). To its detractors, however, the NPU and other political unions were perceived as being "far more mischievous and dangerous than any proceedings of a more avowed and violent character, palpably illegal and treasonable," ("There are those who assert …" 12 Nov. 1831, p. 2).

References to information use appear less common within discourse pertaining to libraries, although, somewhat unusually, Samuel Smiles framed his support for public

libraries in terms of giving people an opportunity for "using the information they have acquired," (Smiles *quoted in* HC 23 Jul. 1949, no. 548, p. 125); the information being used, in this case, would be the ability to read imparted in early education. A similar opinion was expressed by the Reverend J.J. Smith, librarian of Caius College, Cambridge:

> *"Now that in almost every parish in England they are teaching reading, I should think it becomes essential to have some collection of books, and some opportunity for the people to have general reading within their reach."*

(Smith *quoted in* HC 23 Jul. 1949, no. 548 p. 151)

Conclusions

The preceding discussion has highlighted the extent to which the 'information technology conception' of information literacy (Bruce, 1997) may be employed as a frame of reference for understanding information access issues within the context of nineteenth-century institutions. In particular, much of the discourse focuses on practicalities, and consigns purpose to a peripheral sphere of awareness; thus, many concerns – particularly those expressed by librarians – relate more to the role of the information provider than the information user.

Chapter 7:   Public perceptions

This chapter examines explicit and implicit views on access to information expressed in the public sphere, focusing particularly on print media (books, newspapers, and periodical literature). Whilst some overlap between public and political discourse is not unsurprising, analysis of the more overtly political material may be found within chapter 4.

The public sphere

For the purposes of this study, the 'public sphere' will be understood in the present-day sense[28] of any arena in which personal opinion might be articulated, or public opinion formed. The emergence of new, and working-class, voices into the public sphere is reflected within nineteenth-century news media; an article in the *Leicester Chronicle*, for example, observed that "in the social communion and interchange of thought … towns are the natural nurseries of liberty and light," ("Class schisms & wayward workmen" 25 Dec. 1841, p. 1).

Whilst defining the public sphere thus, might anticipate the importance of newspapers as primary source material, an insight into opinions expressed by private individuals may also be gained from published pamphlets and fiction literature, and their accompanying illustrations. It would be dangerous to assume that a holistic picture of the nineteenth-century public sphere can be constructed from primarily textual sources; however, other manifestations, for instance public meetings and coffee-house conversations, are not accessible to the modern researcher. Notwithstanding the attention afforded – particularly by news publications – to contemporary political and social issues, this chapter will not repeat analyses of previous chapters. Several pertinent issues, however, arise uniquely within the public context.

Diverse presentations of information need

Firstly, consideration of news media provides a vantage point on "the diffusion, as widely as possible, of the stores of information already amassed," ("Character of

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28. Indeed, Price (1992), World Bank, CommGAP (1999) *et al.* place the origins of this modern denotation within the nineteenth century expansion of news and print media.

modern knowledge ..." 13 Jan. 1838, p. 15), as opposed to concern for "the acquisition of still further stores," (*ibid*.) as was encountered within educational discourse. Indeed, the diverse audience for such diffusion of knowledge is reflected in the heterogeneous language of the public sphere, as well as the juxtaposition of observational reportage with satire or hyperbole.

The public presentation of information need constitutes an illustrative example. Formal commentary is provided by *The Times'* description of "an age of information," ("Daily increasing distress …" 5 Dec. 1853, p. 6), and by the report of "little demand for the more expensive works of the leading publishers Messrs Murray Longman SEC but a very large call for Parlour and Railway Libraries shilling novels," (Wynter, 1856, p. 311). At the less formal end of the spectrum, a caricature in *The Ladies' Cabinet* painted an amusing picture of the inquisitive gentleman who "delights in the difficult, the inaccessible, the hidden, the obscure," ("The inquisitive gentleman" 1 Feb. 1833, p. 81) who would "ask the names and parentage of every body in a company, toss over every book, examine every note and card …" (*ibid*., p. 80). Similar derision appeared in the following book review in *Punch*:

> *"A Book with the odd title of "A History of the Fountains of Europe" has recently appeared. The subject cannot possibly be a dry one, but (without wishing to throw cold water on the author) we are bound so say that we have no particular thirst for the knowledge he undertakes to impart."*

("Literature at low water mark" 1853, p. 185)

A third perspective is provided by the fictional depictions of information need in novels such as *Armadale* (Collins, 1866) and *North and South* (Gaskell, 1855):

> *" "…We must find out the law for ourselves."*
> *"With all my heart," said Allan. "How?"*
> *"Out of books, to be sure! There must be quantities of information in that enormous library of yours at the great house…" "*

(Collins, 1866, vol. 3, p. 3)

"He has led a practical life from a very early age; has been called upon to exercise judgment [sic] *and self control. All that developes* [sic] *one part of the intellect. To be sure, he needs some of the knowledge of the past, which gives the truest basis for conjecture as to the future; but he knows this need, – he perceives it, and that is something."*

(Gaskell, 1855, vol. 2, p. 163)

Such references to information need within popular fiction may perhaps be understood as indicative of a degree of public acceptance of, and familiarity with, the sentiments pertaining to information that are expressed therein. Indeed, the latter example is particularly remarkable in this respect, not merely for its explicit statement of information need, but for its approbation of self-awareness of information need.

Advertising as a stimulant

"If there is anything terribly in earnest in the world it is the advertising sheet of this paper. Was anything ever more fearfully alive? Every advertisement seems to fight with its neighbour for pre-eminence and distinction, and each page seems to writhe and wrestle all over like a dish full of maggots."

(Wynter, 1865, p. 323)

The above description of *The Times* gives an indication of the importance of advertising within nineteenth-century newspapers. Through advertising, editorials and opinion pieces, news publications not only attempted to satiate a desire for information, but also to stimulate and shape it for commercial benefit.

A *Penny Magazine* editorial of early 1832 included the observation that "We consider it the duty of every man to make himself acquainted with the events that are passing in the world ... Every man, however, may not be qualified to understand them; but the more he knows, the less hasty and the less violent will be his opinions," ("Reading for all" 31 Mar. 1832, p. 1). Whilst this may, at one level, be understood as overt self-advertisement, a more subtle promulgation is suggested by the commencement, merely two weeks later, of a series of select bibliographies of books deemed to be of interest to the readership: "We propose in a series of short notices under our present title to lay before our readers … such information as may assist them in the task of selection, in reference both to old and to new books," ("The library" 14 Apr. 1832, p.

21).

Similarly, the following extracts from the front-matter of the novel *Eric* (Farrar, 1858), demonstrate how references to information need were used within advertising:

WORKS PUBLISHED BY A. AND C. BLACK.

BLACK'S GUIDE BOOKS

FOR

ENGLAND, SCOTLAND, AND IRELAND.

Illustrated by Maps, Charts, numerous Views of the Scenery, full particulars regarding Hotels, Inns, Rates of Charges, Distances, and every information likely to prove Useful or Instructive.

Figure 2: Advertisement for Black's Guide Books
(*printed in* Farrar, 1858, p. 36)

NICOL.—ELEMENTS OF MINERALOGY; containing a General Introduction to the Science, with descriptions of the Species. By James Nicol, F.G.S., Professor of Natural History in Marischal College and University of Aberdeen. 12mo, 5s.

" We cannot say more in favour of Professor Nicol's book than that it professes to afford precisely the information which every practical man should possess, and that it accomplishes as much as it professes."—*Mining Journal.*

Figure 3: Advertisement for Nicol's Elements of Mineralogy
(*printed in* Farrar, 1858, p. 43)

Visual commentary

The relative informality of the public sphere also provided an environment in which images could provide social commentary. The following *Punch* cartoon (figure 4), for

example, burlesques the public attention afforded to literacy:

A YOUNG GENTLEMAN AND SCHOLAR.

Fond Mother. "WHY, HE DOESN'T WRITE VERY WELL YET, BUT HE GETS ON NICELY WITH HIS SPELLING. COME, ALEXANDER, WHAT DOES D. O. G. SPELL?"

Infant Prodigy (with extraordinary quickness). "CAT!"

Figure 4: A young gentleman and scholar (1846)

Similarly, the cartoon in figure 5 caricatures a society in which increasing levels of literacy enabled the public to access information which they were incapable of understanding; indeed, it appears to replicate the sentiment expressed twenty years previously by Cobbett:

> *"" "Knowledge is power," says ever pert coxcomb, who believes, or course, that all his namby-pamby phrases contain knowledge. Very true, that "knowledge is power;" but it must BE knowledge,"*

("Education and 'heddekashun' " 7 Dec. 1833, p. 596)

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER.

Tom. "Jack! Whereabouts is Amstid–am!"
Jack. Well, I can't say exackerly but I know it's somewhere near Ampstid–Eath!'"

Figure 5: Knowledge is power (1853)

Whilst in itself the aphorism 'knowledge is power' remains relevant in contemporary society, further parallels may be drawn between the understanding by the nineteenth-century public of textual information, and the understanding by the twenty-first-century public of information encountered on the internet (*see, for example*, Bartlett & Miller, 2011).

Reliability, accuracy and morality

Implicit in the advertisements and illustrations considered above is a recognition that the value of information might depend upon its reliability and relevance; criteria which remain crucial to the evaluation of information sources today[29]. Periodicals

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29. CILIP defines evaluation in terms of "authenticity, accuracy, currency, value and bias," (www.cilip.org.uk/get-involved/advocacy/information-literacy/pages/skills.aspx, accessed 26 March 2012).

which regarded themselves as quality news publications employed "increasing attention to accuracy and precise information," ("We had occasion to observe …" 8 May 1830, p. 1) as a means to distance themselves from the "popular journals which penetrate every corner of society, read alike by the educated and the ignorant, the good and the bad," (Bulwer-Lytton, 1847, p. 4)[30]. *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, for instance, was "anxious to guard against the supposition that we seek to foster an iniquitous system of so-called 'cheap' publication … against which we cannot too loudly protest … [which] extorts, in the long run, extravagant prices for very questionable wares," ("Literature for the people" 18 Feb. 1854, p. 1).

Indeed, in 1852, against a backdrop of political turmoil in Britain following the French coup d'état of the previous December, *The Times,* under the editorship of John Delane, set out "the most clear exposition of the doctrine of the 'fourth estate'," (Williams, 2010, p. 106), identifying news media as channels of communication, rather than commercial exploiters of information:

> *"The first duty of the press is to obtain the earliest and most correct intelligence of the events at the time, and instantly, by disclosing them, to make them the common property of the nation … For us, with whom publicity and truth are the air and light of existence, there can be no greater disgrace than to recoil from the frank and accurate disclosure of facts as they are."*

("The first duty of the press …" 6 Feb. 1852, p. 4)

There is, moreover, evidence of ninenteenth-century concern for the moral tone of literature – whether fiction or non-fiction. Institutions such as the mehcanics institutes examined in the previous chapter aimed to "promote the diffusion of sound moral and political information," (Detrosier, 1832, p. 3) to protect against "the influence of a low, enfeebling, and often pestilential literature," (Ewart, 1849, p. viii). This concern was even reflected within fiction depictions; the character Eric, for instance, in the novel by Farrar of the same name, "had not been taught any distinction between "Sunday books" and "week-day books," but no book had been put in his way that was not healthy and genuine in tone," (Farrar, 1858, p. 6). Cobbett, however, placed the

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30. Bulwer-Lytton expressed a particular concern that such popular magazines were "the sole vehicles of literary information to those whom it is most facile and most dangerous to mislead," (Bulwer-Lytton, 1847, p. 4).

onus for evaluation of moral tone on the individual:

> *"Ordinary discrimination will be sufficient to enable a man to pitch on the proper books, and common sense will direct him when to use them. If he even makes an election of unprofitable works, he does no more than betray his incapability of judging between good and evil ..."*

<div align="right">("Heddekashun" 28 Dec. 1833, p. 817)</div>

Plagiarism

Whilst a degree of linguistic heterogeneity and informal language use might be expected within the public sphere, application of the term 'plagiarism' is particularly noteworthy. Of 105 references to 'plagiarism' in *The Times* between 1832 and 1867, just seventeen related to literary theft, the sense in which the term is commonly understood today[31]. Thirty-two instances referred to musical or theatrical themes 'borrowed' from well-known composers or playwrights: "the least practised ear can hardly fail to detect the plagiarism," ("Royal English Opera" 10 Dec. 1860, p. 5); a further twenty used 'plagiarism' to describe the adoption of one politician's stance by another: "if the house should give him leave to bring in his bill, he did not know if the right hon. gentleman would accuse him of plagiarism," ("House of Commons" 15 Feb. 1839, p. 3).

Such examples demonstrate the breadth of the nineteenth-century understanding of plagiarism, which, in addition to literary theft, might be considered synonymous with our current usage of 'imitation', 'caricature' or 'mockery'. Indeed, references such as "graceful plagiarism" (Editorial, 1 Jan. 1847, p. 4) suggest that – notwithstanding the implications of its etymology[32] – the descriptor was not exclusively employed in negative contexts. Nevertheless, *The Times* variously denounced plagiarism as 'disreputable' ("Yesterday Mr Tilt ..." 16 Oct. 1833, p. 6), 'incautious and unjustifiable', and 'literacy fraud' ("The very incautious and unjustifiable act ..." 27 Jul. 1844, p. 1), whilst *Punch* launched a satirical attack on newspaper piracy:

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31. Plagiarism: "The action or practice of taking someone else's work, idea, etc., and passing it off as one's own; literary theft." (www.oed.com/view/Entry/144939, accessed 20 March 2012).
32. From the Latin *plagārius* 'kidnapper' (www.credoreference.com/entry/acbwordorig/plagiarize, accessed 20 March 2012).

"A PERSON who gave the name of PAUL JONES, described as the proprietor of the Literary Pirate, a penny paper of the people, was charged with having in his possession several valuable articles which were reasonably suspected to have been stolen ... On a further search, a large pair of scissors, with a paste-pot and other implements were discovered, by which it is supposed the prisoner has been in the habit of carrying on his nefarious practises [sic].*"*

("Literary larceny" 1855, p. 192)

A *Times* article examining trans-Atlantic piracy quoted a criticism of "appropriating extracts without acknowledgement of the source whence they were drawn," (*quoted in* "English plagiarism" 27 Nov. 1844, p. 5). However – perhaps corollary to the number of anonymous articles in the public sphere, conjoined with the increasing commercial commodification of information – interest in accurate citation appears to have been concerned with the protection of the intellectual property of the information provider, rather than the ethical responsibilities of the consumer. Additionally, Wynter (1865) demonstrated light-hearted concern for reliability in his examination of the development of the Reuters Agency:

"ALL the world is asking this question. Is the mysterious individual who tells us through the public press what battles have been won or lost — what kings have decamped, or what words emperors have spoken an hour since in far-off countries, which will shake the political world to its foundation — is this Mr. Reuter an institution or a myth?"

(Wynter, 1865, p. 297)

A more relevant, but somewhat selfishly-driven, assessment of the dangers of out-of-context quotation or mis-attribution was provided by Bulwer-Lytton, in response to criticism of his novel *Lucretia* (1846):

"...wherever personal motives are strong enough to violate the ordinary decorum of literary censure, the reader must be prepared to expect that they will suffice to corrupt all integrity of statement. Thus extracts will be garbled and misquoted---sentences stripped of the context that explains them,---and opinions, which the writer most earnestly holds up to reprobation, and places in the lips of characters whom he draws but to condemn, be deliberately cited as the sentiments of the author himself."

(Bulwer-Lytton, 1847, p. 3)

The opinion expressed above by Bulwer-Lytton is one which is increasingly pertinent in the present day; a 2011 DEMOS report, for instance, expressed concern about information encountered over the internet which has been "deliberately packed by the producers to be misleading or deceitful," (Bartlett & Miller, 2011, p. 6).

Conclusions

The examples of publicly-voiced concern for information need and information quality considered within this chapter are redolent of the initiation and conclusion stages of modern-day information literacy process models. In particular, satire of the quest for reliable information in a public sphere saturated with the "namby-pamby phrases" ("Education and 'heddekashun'" 7 Dec. 1833, p. 596) of the political elite is strongly evocative of the present-day anxiety that "the architecture and functionality of the internet makes the job of separating the wheat from the chaff even harder," (Bartlett & Miller, 2011, p. 5). Indeed, just as in 1854 *Jackson's Oxford Journal* sought to elevate itself from "very questionable wares," ("Literature for the people" 18 Feb. 1854, p. 1), today even *Wikipedia* hosts an article examining its own reliability[33].

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33. 'Reliability of Wiikipedia' (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reliability_of_Wikipedia, accessed 4 April 2012)

Chapter 8:   Conclusions

This, final, chapter reviews the study findings in light of the aims and objectives, and suggests areas for further research.

Findings

Our Victorian inheritance remains an issue in the forefront of public consciousness; earlier this year, for instance, the University of Exeter hosted a panel discussion entitled *Great exhibitions and great debates : Victorian values and 21st-century Britain*[34]. Yet, despite the familiarity of names like Dickens, Smiles, and Thackeray, despite the legacies of nineteenth-century governance, civil life, law and order; despite all of this, the Victorian era is perhaps most striking for how alien it is to society today. After all, in contrast to our relatively tranquil present, nineteenth-century society was characterised by revolution abroad and unrest at home; by imperialism and industrialisation; by new-found prosperity and unimaginable poverty; by the spread of secularism and by church construction on a scale not seen since medieval times. It is within this context that we must evaluate the findings of this study.

The intention of this study has been to investigate discourse pertaining to information, in order to ascertain the extent to which awareness of informational topics might be considered commensurate with modern concepts of information literacy. The very existence of the examples analysed within the preceding chapters, and of the others cited in the study bibliography, serves to demonstrate that information did indeed enter the political, educational, societal, and public consciousnesses of the period under consideration. Moreover, the comparative analysis of sentiments expressed within these examples and contemporary models of information literacy permits the conclusion that the concept of information literacy was very much in evidence in nineteenth-century society. This suggests that it is overly simplistic to regard information literacy as a modern-day construct; rather it should instead be understood

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34. http://humanities.exeter.ac.uk/news/college/title_201264_en.html and
http://rammuseum.org.uk/whats-on/great-exhibitions-and-great-debates-victorian-values-and-21st-century-britain-a-panel-discussion (accessed 18 May 2012)

in the broader context of an evolving relationship between information and individuals.

In addition to the over-arching conclusion that the concept of information literacy did not 'originate' in 1974, a number of salient corollaries to the study are summarised below:

1. Political references to information 'desires' suggest awareness of the potentially synthetic nature of information requirements;

2. Whilst informational needs and desires were frequently explicit, discourse on information access was primarily encountered within the institutional context, in which it mirrored the 'information technology conception' of Bruce (1997);

3. Within parliament, the value of information was judged according to its origin as an indicator of reliability; without parliament, morality was also employed as an evaluative criterion;

4. 'Plagiarism' was understood in a broader sense than it is in the present day, often without negative connotation;

5. A wide spectrum of opinions were expressed on reading comprehension, the role of reading as a skill, and as a mode of information access. Intellectual training was frequently differentiated from the direct impartation of knowledge, just as today information literacy is differentiated from mechanical literacy.

One not insignificant aspect of the relationship between information and individuals is the fact that, during the period subjected to analysis in this study, as now, the majority of opinions expressed in any kind of formal sphere – public or otherwise – emanated from individuals whose ability to exploit information was very different from that of the subjects of their dialogue. Present-day discourse, for instance, often focuses on technological ability or internet connectivity, which are almost ubiquitous amongst

the political elite – although examples such as Tony Blair[35] illustrate the dangers of generalisation – but not amongst the general population. Similarly, in the nineteenth-century, the differentiating factor was perhaps linguistic ability, encompassing mechanical literacy, and comprehension.

Research conducted by Manchester Metropolitan University observed that "recent definitions of literacy have extended the traditional view of the term to include comprehending the meaning of the words that we read or write," (MMU Department of Information & Communications, 2005, p. 15). However, the multiple perceptions of 'reading for meaning' encountered during chapter 5 of this study indicate that the word 'recent' is misplaced. The close contemporary relationship between literacy and information literacy – the ALA, for instance, single out "illiterate adults [and] people with English as a second language," (ALA Presidential Committee on Information Literacy, 1989) as being "among those most likely to lack access to the information that can improve their situations," (*ibid.*) – has, in fact, been observed to be more open to question in the context of the lower literacy levels of the study period; for instance, in Cobbett's attack on 'heddekashun'. Indeed, amongst political perceptions, an inability to read and write was regarded as a fault perhaps as often as it was a disadvantage.

Furthermore, present-day discourse concerning information literacy often emphasises social empowerment (Behrens, 1994) and the personal skill-set and abilities required to "keep up-to-date and in control," (ALA Presidential Committee on Information Literacy, 1989). This study, and in particular the educational perceptions explored within chapter 5, has highlighted to the extent to which the same may also be said of nineteenth-century discourse. Indeed, the importance of practical and technological aspects of information access in the context of empowerment was arguably just as strong during the nineteenth century as it is in the more contemporary environment, allowing for the very different manifestations of such practicalities.

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35. See, for example 'Blair gets to grips with mobiles' *BBC news* (12 Jul. 2007)
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/6896760.stm, or 'Blair discovers joys of e-mailing' *BBC news*
(14 Jul. 2006) http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/5180888.stm (both sites accessed 18 May 2012).

Characteristics of sources

Despite the breadth of material examined – as evidenced by the study bibliography – the most profitable sources of informational discourse encountered within this study were furnished by a small number of individuals, most notably Cobbett, Peel, Roebuck, and Smiles. Several such individuals may be characterised by a proclivity for making their ideas and opinions known – Cobbett, for example, penned literally hundred of pamphlets, and was imprisoned from 1810 to 1812 for sentiments expressed in his *Political Register*. However, the names of Hodgson, Mitcheson, and other relatively less-known individuals, serve as a reminder that this is merely a generalisation.

Furthermore, the opinions encountered within this study were often isolated fragments arising within discussion of related issues, suggesting that although some individuals were implicitly aware of information literacy, it was not recognised as a discipline in its own right, and thus did not receive coherent treatment within any sphere of discourse. However, those facets of information literacy which were recognised did receive more direct, focused, attention; plagiarism, for instance, was directly addressed in the news press, whilst educational discourse focused on a dichotomous division of education into knowledge acquisition and intellectual training. Although it would be erroneous to consider such opinions – expressed by a few individuals as addenda to debates on other topics – a suitable proxy for nineteenth-century society, within the idiographic context of this study they provide a valid demonstration of awareness of information literacy.

Evaluation of methodology

From a methodological perspective, various specific research challenges were encountered during this study. The potential implications of these challenges upon the study findings are outlined below.

Quantity of source material – As was discussed in chapter 3, the volume of potential source material provided a significant practical challenge. Whilst the methodology was designed so as to ensure systematic access to a wide range of potentially relevant

material, a combination of factors – including the longevity (or otherwise) of historical documents, constraints upon access to documents within libraries and archives, and palaeographical challenges – make it probable that relevant opinion will have been omitted from the study.

Selection and analysis of source material – The study findings should be understood within their qualitative context, taking into account the subjectivity of source selection and analysis.

Perceptions of reality – The historical nature of the study prohibits comparison of the opinions and perceptions encountered with actuality. Thus, the conclusions drawn from the study should be understood in the context of perceptions of experience of nineteenth-century society, rather than of factual reality.

Reportage – The adage 'lack of evidence is not evidence of lack' is pertinent here: whilst news reportage constituted a valuable source of study material, it should be remembered that consciousness of information literacy may have manifested itself in ways not of interest to the news media.

The intangibility of awareness – Whilst it might reasonably be assumed that awareness of information literacy is higher today than it was during the nineteenth century, it is instructive to compare the sale of 20,000 copies of Smiles' *Self help* within the first year of its publication (Sinnema, 2002, p. vii) with the circulation figures for *CILIP Update,* delivered to the 17,000 members of CILIP (Middleton, 2012). This serves as a reminder of the difficulty of comparing such an intangible quality as 'awareness'; study findings should be understood within this context.

Suggestions for further research

As has been discussed in the preceding section, the selection and categorisation of source material for this study was both qualitative and personally subjective. The extent to which this influenced the research findings could be better understood through follow-up studies, which would potentially yield alternative – and equally valid – coding and categorisation of source material. Moreover, any such re-

examination of source material would have the additional benefit of compensating for the fact that the historical focus of the study prohibited method triangulation.

Equally worthwhile would be to approach the study from a difference perspective: a Marxist historical analysis, for example, would subject relationships between class and information to closer scrutiny; a feminist critique might focus on the circumstances which, prior to the Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882, prohibited a married woman from owning a book. Such manifold approaches might include, for instance, regional, racial, or linguistic perspectives – perhaps to analyse the informational experiences of Welsh or Gaelic speakers. Such diverse research 'lenses' are likely to lend themselves to different interpretations of nineteenth-century informational experiences; provided that their context is appropriately understood, all such appraisals should be regarded as equally credible.

Finally, the precedent for historical investigations of information literacy having been established, the canonical extension of this study would be to investigate other historical periods; for instance commencing with a survey of the 'gap' between 1867 and 1974.

Concluding remarks

In April of this year, CILIP announced the publication of a new book entitled *Information literacy beyond library 2.0* (Godwin & Parker, 2012). Within the opening chapter, Peter Godwin, Academic Liaison Librarian at the University of Bedfordshire, describes present society as characterised by "unequal access to information," (*ibid*., p. 10) and opines that the divide between information literates and illiterates should be understood as "being more about cultural and social issues, rather than about technological ones," (*ibid*.). He highlights, further, a "need to foster understanding of how media affects an individual's perception of the world," (*ibid*.), and cites concern for information literacy because "We are losing our ability to concentrate, contemplate and reflect – to think!" (*ibid*., p. 4). As has been demonstrated within this study, such concerns are more deeply and historically ingrained within our society than Godwin perhaps realises.

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Appendix A : Subject-headings used in source identification

LCSH subject-headings used to identify monographs

Books and reading
Chartism
Communication
Comprehension (Theory of knowledge)
Conduct of life
Democracy
Education
Education and state
Education, Compulsory
Education, Elementary
Educational law and legislation

Educators
Franchise
Group reading
Intellect
Knowledge, Theory of
Learned institutions and societies
Learning
Learning and scholarship
Lectures and lecturing
Libraries
Literacy
Newspaper presses

Newspaper publishing
Newspapers
Press
Public libraries
Public meetings
Publishers and publishing
Reading
Self-culture
Study skills
Study, Method of
Thought and thinking
Writing

Subject-index terms used to identify debates within *Hansard*

Books and reading
Chartism
Communication

Comprehension (Theory of knowledge)
Conduct of life

Democracy
Education

Keywords used within full-text searching

('fuzzy' searches, stemming and lemmatisation techniques were used where available)

Accuracy
Book
Censorship
Chartism
Communication
Comprehension
Co-operative
Democracy
Education
Educator
Fiction
Illiterate
Inform

Information
Institution
Intellect
Knowledge
Learning
Lecture
Library
Literate
Literature
Mechanics' institute
Mutual improvement
News
Newspaper

Pamphlet
Plagiarism
Press
Public
Publish
Reading
School
Self help
Study
Thought
Writing

Appendix B : Time-line

British Prime Minister		Significant Events

British Prime Minister

Significant Events

1830

1831 — Reform Bill

1832 — First issue of the *Penny Magazine*

— First Reform Act

1833 — First government grant for schools

1834

Grey (Whig)

— Poor Law Amendment Act

Melbourne (Whig)

Wellington (Tory)

Peel (Tory) — Tamworth Manifesto

1835

— William Cobbett dies; last issue of *Cobbett's Political Register*

1836 — Reduction of tax on stamped newspapers

— Foundation of London Working Men's Association

1837 — William IV dies; Victoria becomes Queen

— First issue of the *Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser*

1838 — Working Men's Association drafts *People's Charter*

— Establishment of Privy Council education committee

1839 — Chartist demonstrations

1840 — Parliamentary Papers Act

— Grammar School Act

1841 — Census

1842 — Chartist riots

— Copyright Act

1843

Melbourne (Whig)

1844 — 'Rochdale Pioneers' (first co-operative society)

— Formation of Ragged School Union and London School Mission

1845 — Last issue of the *Penny Magazine*

1846 — Repeal of Corn Laws

Peel (Conservative)

1847

1848 — *Communist Manifesto* published

— Revolutions across Europe; Chartist demonstrations in England

1849 — Formation of Newspaper Stamp Abolition Committee

— Commons Select Committee enquiry into Public Libraries

Russell (Whig)

British Prime Minister		Significant Events
Russell (Whig)	**1850**	
		Public Libraries Act
	1851	
		Census
	1852	
Derby (Conservative)		Manchester Free Library opens
		Duke of Wellington dies
		Last issue of the *Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser*
Aberdeen (Conservative)	**1853**	
		The Times uses the phrase 'age of information'
	1854	
		Start of Crimean War
		Hard Times published
	1855	
Palmerston (Whig)	**1856**	
		End of Crimean War
	1857	
		Indian Rebellion
	1858	
		Appointment of Royal Commission on the Present State of Popular Education in England
Derby (Conservative)	**1859**	
		Self-help published
	1860	
		First issue of *Cornhill* magazine
	1861	
		Start of American Civil War
		Census
Palmerston (Whig)		Report of Education Commission
		Paper tax abolished
	1862	
		Lowe announces 'revised code' of payment by results
	1863	
	1864	
		Public Schools Act
	1865	
		Palmerston dies
Russell (Whig)		End of American Civil War
	1866	
Derby (Conservative)	**1867**	
		Second Reform Act
	1868	
Disraeli (Conservative)		
Gladstone (Liberal)	**1869**	
	1870	
		Married Women's Property Act
		Forster's Education Act
		Outbreak of Franco-Prussian War