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## Navigating Information Overload

This column has often addressed the issue of distinguishing informed information from uninformed, especially for teens, although it is a matter for adults too. Now, there is a breakthrough in new legislation on the issue in relation to education in school classrooms and school Libraries.

As background first, in this column the subject has been discussed, especially, in the context of student applications to participate in the Pittsburgh Regional Science and Engineering Fair (PRSEF). At least five valid bibliographic sources are required with each student Research Plan, and valid they very often are not. (Rarely are they print books either, but web sites, which is another story.) Our collaborating WLN remedy was to direct students to a useful statewide Power Library link at <https://www.wlnonline.org/prsef/>. It is specifically for those PRSEF participants' needs, but anyone will benefit from it.

Now, the state of New Jersey has addressed the issue legislatively. On January 4, 2023, as reported at the state's official web site, the Governor, after bipartisan legislative approval, signed bill S588 into law, directing the Department of Education to develop "New Jersey learning standards in information and media literacy."

The approval of the bill establishes "the requirement of K-12 instruction on information literacy under the implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. The signing of this bipartisan legislation reaffirms the Governor's commitment to leading the nation in public education while preparing students for lifelong learning by equipping them with the skills they need to accurately assess information.

"The bill requires the New Jersey Department of Education to develop New Jersey Student Learning Standards in 'information literacy,' which is defined as a set of skills that enables an individual to recognize when information is needed and to locate, evaluate, and effectively use the needed information. Information literacy includes, but is not limited to, digital, visual, media, textual, and technological literacy."

"The bill requires the Commissioner of the Department of Education to convene a committee, including certified school library media specialists and teaching staff members, to assist in developing the information literacy standards. The standards will be reviewed by experts as they are developed. This will provide an opportunity for collaboration among teachers and school library media specialists to advance information literacy in the K-12 learning standards. The proposed information literacy standards will also be subject to public input prior to their adoption by the State Board of Education."

"The guidelines will include, at a minimum, the following: (1) the research process and how information is created and produced; (2) critical thinking and using information resources; (3) research methods, including the difference between primary and secondary sources; (3) the difference between facts, points of view, and opinions; (4)

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accessing peer-reviewed print and digital library resources; (5) the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information; and (6) the ethical production of information.”

I do not know to what extent this new legislative initiative will extend to public Libraries, or how quickly other states will emulate it, but, WOW, what a step forward!

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