



Information Literacy Programmes at The Academic Level in The Field of Law: a Croatian Perspective

Visokošolski programi informacijskega opismenjevanja na področju prava: hrvaška perspektiva

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Abstract

Purpose: In law libraries in the Republic of Croatia, only a small number of information literacy programmes have been recorded. This indicates the need to strengthen and promote more effective teaching of information literacy in the field of law. The aim of this paper is to analyse the published literature to gain insight into the existing knowledge regarding information literacy in the field of law over the past 30 years in the Republic of Croatia. This analysis aims to determine possible directions for development and to find more effective teaching methods for information literacy.

Methodology/approach: The methodology used included a qualitative research approach, specifically content analysis of works published in the last 30 years concerning information literacy at the academic level in the field of law in the Republic of Croatia.

Results: The development of information literacy at the academic level in the field of law can be observed in parallel with the development of information literacy at the broader academic level in the Republic of Croatia. The most significant changes can be seen over the past five years, both at the theoretical and practical level of law school library work. Research on information literacy in the field of law, initially primarily focused on user education, is deepening and expanding, both in terms of methodology and content, because of intense and dynamic changes in the information and educational environment. As a result, further directions of development should be guided

by the need for more research on the essential literacy skills of the 21st century for all stakeholders in the educational process. Such research would contribute to a greater understanding of the most relevant content and methods to be included in information literacy programmes tailored to the specifics of the legal discipline.

Research limitation: A literature analysis revealed numerous different terms related to information literacy at the academic level in the field of law, especially in works published in the 1990s, when the term “information literacy” was not established in the Republic of Croatia. Therefore, there is a possibility of unintentional oversight of specific works. Another limitation of the research is the role of one evaluator/researcher in implementing the content analysis of the publications due to possible subjectivity in the analysis.

Originality/practical implications: This study is one of the first to offer detailed insights into the current trends in information literacy development at the academic level in the field of law over the past 30 years. On a practical level, the author aims to encourage academic librarians to create and implement formal information literacy programmes within the realm of law and its related libraries.

Keywords: information literacy in the field of law, information literacy programmes, Republic of Croatia

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Izvleček

Namen: V pravnih knjižnicah v Republiki Hrvaški je zabeleženih le malo programov informacijskega opismenjevanja (IOP). To nakazuje na potrebo po okrepitvi in promociji učinkovitejšega IOP na področju prava. Namen prispevka je analizirati objavljeno literaturo z namenom pridobivanja vpogleda v obstoječe znanje v Republiki Hrvaški o informacijski pismenosti (IP) na področju prava v zadnjih tridesetih letih. Namen analize je določiti možne usmeritve za razvoj in najti učinkovitejše učne pristope pri IOP.

Metodologija/Pristop: Uporabljena je kvalitativna metodologija, natančneje analiza vsebine del, objavljenih v zadnjih tridesetih letih na področju IP na visokošolski ravni na področju prava v Republiki Hrvaški.

Rezultati: Razvoj IP na visokošolski ravni na področju prava lahko gledamo vzporedno z razvojem IP na širšem akademskem področju v Republiki Hrvaški. Najpomembnejše spremembe zaznamo v zadnjih petih letih, tako na teoretični kot na praktični ravni dela knjižnic pravnih šol. Raziskave IP na področju prava, ki so se prvotno najbolj osredotočale na izobraževanje uporabnikov, se pogloblja in razširja, tako glede metodologije in vsebin, zaradi intenzivnih in dinamičnih sprememb v informacijskem in izobraževalnem okolju. Posledično bi morali usmerjati nadaljnji razvoj na osnovi dodatnih raziskav osnovnih veščin pismenosti 21. Stoletja za vse udeležence v izobraževalnem procesu. Tako raziskovanje bi prispevalo k boljšemu razumevanju najbolj relevantnih vsebin in metod, ki bi jih bilo treba vključevati v programe IOP, prilagojene specifikam področja prava.

Omejitve raziskave: Analiza literature je razkrila številne in različne termine, povezane s področjem IP na visokošolski ravni na področju prava, zlasti gre tu za dela, objavljena v 90-tih letih prejšnjega stoletja, ko termin »informativna pismenost« na Hrvaškem še ni bil vzpostavljen. Obstaja torej možnost nenamerne spregleda specifičnih del. Druga omejitev je vloga raziskovalke pri uporabi analize vsebine zaradi možne subjektivnosti.

Izvirnost/praktična uporaba: To je ena prvih študij, ki ponuja podroben vpogled v trenutne trende razvoja IP na visokošolski ravni na področju prava v zadnjih tridesetih letih. Na praktični ravni je namen avtorice spodbuditi visokošolske knjižničarje k oblikovanju in implementaciji programov IOP na področju prava in sorodnih knjižnic.

Ključne besede: informativna pismenost, pravo, informativno opismenjevanje, Republika Hrvaška

Podatkovni set: Vsi raziskovalni podatki, na katerih temeljijo rezultati, so na voljo kot del članka in niso arhivirani v nobenem drugem viru.

1 Introduction: Information Literacy at the Academic Level

Although information literacy has almost simultaneously developed with new learning approaches and educational theories, it experienced a real boom in the mid-1990s with the availability of the internet and the development and appearance of new tools for searching information (search engines, metasearch engines, invisible web, etc.) (Bruce, 2000; Lau, 2006; Špiranec and Banek Zorica, 2008; Zurkowski, 1974). The above is confirmed by Bruce (2000), who discusses the four primary phases of information literacy research. The first phase is the so-called pre-phase of information literacy research covering the 1980s. In this phase, the researchers in this field investigate information skills, but the term information literacy is absent. In the second phase, the so-called experimental phase from 1990 to 1995, the authors develop and create terms and define the concept of IL. The concept of information literacy was spread in the third research phase from 1995 to 1999, and the last, fourth development phase from 2000 continues to this day. Bruce points out that the most significant growth occurred in the development phase. Thus, the existing research areas primarily focused on education are being deepened and expanded, methodologically and in terms of content, due to increasingly intense and dynamic changes in the information environment. New areas less represented in previous phases, such as the workplace, the broader social environment, or specific demographic groups that have left the formal education system, are also included.

Due to the development of information and communication technology and the emergence of new educational concepts and paradigms at universities (introduction of the Bologna Process), the need to develop students' information skills

has come to the fore. Thus, present-day students are required to actively learn, participate in the research process, solve problem tasks, and find and evaluate relevant sources of information (Dewey, 1997). Students must learn to find information, use it effectively, assess it, and judge it while developing their critical thinking and acquiring the skills they need throughout both their academic and lifelong education (Bruce, 2000, 2013; Špiranec and Banek Zorica, 2008, p. 14).

Knowledge and use of information and communication technology and information resources are related to user needs. Therefore, librarians should align their services and activities with these needs. In doing so, they must alert users to the different possibilities of accessing information resources and the evaluation, judgement, and effective use of information (Webber and Johnston, 2000). Consequently, information literacy programmes are an increasingly indispensable part of the work of higher education libraries because the competencies covered by information literacy are becoming a prerequisite for successful student learning (Lau, 2006; Webber and Johnston, 2000).

However, regardless of the importance of formalising information literacy content, the practice of information literacy implementation and inclusion in higher education libraries worldwide differs. For example, in the United States of America, Canada, Great Britain and Ireland, Scandinavian countries, and Australia, information literacy programmes have long been implemented at the formal level of academic institutions (Lupton and Bruce, 2010). In other countries, such as in Southeast Europe, programmes are most often implemented at an informal level. This is because librarians and academic libraries encounter different problems in the implementation and application of methods of teaching information literacy to students. In practice, these teaching methods are sometimes difficult to achieve due to the awareness of the teaching staff or the inclusion of information literacy in the curriculum of the academic institution. One of the problems is a lack of understanding of the role of the library as a participant in the educational process taking place at academic institutions, but also the lack of awareness among teachers that libraries implement and offer information literacy programmes. On the other hand, some teachers believe that they have sufficient knowledge to implement content related to information literacy themselves as part of their classes and that they do not need librarians (Rubinić and Stričević, 2013; Zanin-Yost and Dillen, 2019). Furthermore, research and teaching staff often believe that the current generation of students does not need to develop information skills because this so-called Google generation grew up with information and communication technologies (Kirschner and Bruyckere, 2017; Nicholas et al., 2011; Williams and Rowlands, 2008, p. 69).

However, numerous studies have actually shown the opposite. More and more students have the false impression that they know how to use the necessary information resources during their studies. They often overestimate their knowledge of the internet and do not recognise relevant information. They are superficial in their searches and do not have developed evaluation criteria. According to Torras and Sætre, such students become a challenge for libraries because librarians believe that it is difficult to get students to recognise the library as a relevant source of information and a place where they will acquire and develop the information literacy competencies they need (Torras and Saetre, 2009). This challenge is even more significant because each scholarly discipline has its own specificities, so librarians at academic libraries often must consider the specificities of a scholarly field when designing information literacy programmes. The reason for this is that information literacy is a prerequisite for lifelong learning, and by connecting generic (fundamental) skills and conceptual (specific) information literacy skills of particular disciplines, students acquire the necessary and complete information literacy skills that they will need in their everyday life and work.

2 Information Literacy in the Field of Law

The development of information literacy in the field of law can be compared to the development of information literacy in universities and higher education libraries worldwide. As in scholarship in other fields, most researchers have indicated that, due to the development of information and communication technology and changes in the educational environment, law libraries must adapt their information services and apply information literacy programmes as much as possible (Callister, 2003; Breland, 2022; Dell, 2019; Garingan, 2021; Kaplan and Darvil, 2011; Naveed and Shah, 2023; Webber and Johnston, 2000). Jayasuriya and Brillantine (2008) state that with each wave of innovation in legal publishing and the development of information technology, law librarians must re-evaluate their information services for students. Students have increasingly high expectations. They expect to conduct research more easily and without any issues, given the accelerated changes in information and communication technology (Abbas et al., 2014; Bronstein and Solomon, 2021). As early as 2001, Pengelley (2001) pointed out that the education of lawyers was no longer just carried out in the classrooms of the faculties of law; legal education was already becoming a hybrid place that includes electronic resources available on the web and new ways of learning, such as e-learning, making the internet crucial in developing the educational experience of students. Today, 20 years later, numerous authors are considering the rapid development of information and

communication technology and emphasise the importance of adopting new attitudes, knowledge, skills, digital competencies, media literacy skills, and other 21st-century literacy (Osborne, 2018). For example, Garingan and colleagues stress the importance of the skill of “algorithmic literacy” regarding the use of artificial intelligence tools in the legal profession, which makes it easier for lawyers to understand and apply advanced legal technologies in the digital environment (Garingan, 2021; Garingan and Pickard, 2021).

But information literacy within the field of law requires many specific features, even unique in relation to other fields of knowledge (especially the humanities and natural sciences) (Callister, 2010). Due to the constant development of new branches and areas of law, new demands are placed on Croatian legal scholars and practitioners regarding their knowledge and interpretation of law. In order to perform their work in a timely and accurate manner, they must successfully search, use, and have a good knowledge of relevant European and international legal resources. During their education, law students must learn how to find, use, evaluate, and cite numerous legal sources (for example, learn to use a relevant legal source, know different ways of citing legal acts, and recognise the peculiarities of legal bases). Likewise, they must learn to analyse and critically approach a legal issue, recognise the normative framework for a legal problem, compare different legal systems available in different legal databases or other sources of information, and learn to evaluate scholarly information in the field of law (Ryesky, 2007). Considering these demands, the authors cited believe that students should develop not only generic (general) information literacy skills but also contextual (professional) information literacy skills in the field of law, which are crucial to developing their lifelong competencies as future jurists (Beljaars, 2009; Davies and Jackson, 2005).

Furthermore, the Principles and Standards for Legal Research Competency were set in the United States of America in 2013 and revised in 2020. They are based on ACRL standards but are designed to correspond to the development of the necessary information skills and specific search tools and techniques intended for law students (American Association of Law Libraries, 2012; Principles and Standards for Legal Research Competency, 2013, rev. 2020) due to the necessity of implementing a holistic approach to legal education and of distinguishing legal skills from information literacy skills in the field of law (Kim-Prieto and Kahvecioglu, 2014). Encouraged by the experience of American colleagues, in 2012 British and Irish Association of Law Librarians (BIALL) introduced the BIALL Legal Information Literacy Statement (2012), which, along with the revised version of the SCONUL model using a series of lenses, is a key document for the development of information literacy in the field of law in Great Britain and Ireland (Bird, 2013). They provide a framework for the creation of information literacy programmes

in the field of law which are based on an integrative approach to curriculum creation through the collaboration between teaching and library staff (Society of College National and University Libraries, 2011; 2013).

Positive changes related to information literacy are also visible at law faculties in Southeast Europe (Rašidović, 2019). In 2013 the Southeast Europe Association of Law and Related Libraries created the document “Roles and Competencies of Librarians in Law and Related Libraries”. The document contains guidelines for monitoring, planning, evaluating, and upgrading the continuous professional education, development, and training of law librarians. Under point 3, on the jobs and tasks of librarians in law and related libraries, the document indicates that the role of librarians is to teach the user community in the sphere of information literacy.

There are different practices of implementing information literacy programmes around the world, which is reflected in the representation and inclusion or non-inclusion of information literacy at the formal institutional level, but it can be concluded that, given the specifics of law, collaboration between teachers and librarians in creating information literacy programmes is indispensable. In doing so, experts believe that programmes must be based, as in the United States of America, Great Britain, and Ireland as the countries with the longest tradition of law librarianship, on practical models of information literacy that emphasise a collaborative and integrative approach to shaping the institution’s curriculum in order to develop the necessary information literacy skills of law students (Bird, 2013; Callister, 2003; Davies and Jackson, 2005).

3 General Presentation of Current Conditions

The changes in society just described, the development of information and communication technology, the digital environment, and the emergence of new educational concepts and paradigms are also visible within higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia, which was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic (Martinović, 2022). Thus, an increasing number of information literacy programmes implemented by higher education libraries in the Republic of Croatia has been recorded, which is decidedly positive. However, the issue remains that little systematic implementation of programmes has been carried out in academic institutions at Croatian universities. Due to unsystematic and irregular education, students are often not independent or proactive in the research process and in preparing theses and dissertations that require skills and knowledge in the field of information literacy. Although they are competent

at using modern technologies for everyday communication and entertainment, they often lack the information and digital literacy skills they need to successfully learn and explore in a digital educational environment. Some do not know how to use online library services, do not use institutional repositories, do not know how to use, search, and evaluate different databases, and are not sufficiently critically aware of the importance of wise and ethical use of information regardless of the medium (Martinović, 2022).

4 Aim, Purpose, and Research Questions

The problem mentioned above is also manifested in the practices of law school libraries, where a small number of information literacy programmes have been documented, indicating the need to strengthen and promote more effective teaching of information literacy in the field of law. To find an answer to the question of how to strengthen and promote the teaching of information literacy at the academic level at law faculties in the Republic of Croatia, I have conducted an analysis of the published literature on information literacy in the field of law in approximately the last 30 years in the Republic of Croatia. This analysis investigates to what extent information literacy is contextually positioned as a phenomenon at the academic level in the field of law and to what extent it is perceived as an essential factor affecting learning outcomes and the abilities necessary for lifelong learning. This analysis seeks to determine the direction of information literacy development in the field of law in the Republic of Croatia and to find more effective teaching of information literacy in the field of law.

The purpose of this research is to revise and expand the previous theoretical knowledge about information literacy in the field of law and to encourage discussion about the importance of promoting, refining, and raising awareness about the inclusion of formal information literacy programmes at the academic level in the field of law in the Republic of Croatia, which will lay the foundation for further research. On a practical level, I wish to encourage academic librarians to create and implement formal information literacy programmes in law and related libraries.

This is one of the first studies that provides a more detailed insight into the current directions of information literacy development at the academic level in the field of law in the last 30 years. The applied methodology, content analysis, can be used for other similar research, and the investigated theoretical frameworks can be used to determine further directions of research that would contribute to

a greater understanding of information literacy in the field of law in the Republic of Croatia.

With this in mind, the following research questions arise:

1. Has information literacy been recorded as a phenomenon at the academic level in the field of law in the Republic of Croatia, and since when?
2. Is information literacy perceived as an important factor affecting learning outcomes and skills necessary for lifelong learning?
3. What are the tendencies in the development of information literacy in the field of law in the Republic of Croatia?
4. What is the attitude of librarians and teaching staff at law faculties towards teaching information literacy?

4.1 Research Methodology

To find answers to these questions, it is necessary to gain a more detailed insight into information literacy in the field of law and to try to determine its direction of movement and development in the last 30 years in the Republic of Croatia. The methodology used included a qualitative research approach, which included a content analysis of published works on information literacy in the field of law in Croatia (Case, 2012; Neuendorf, 2002).

The content analysis made it possible to search and analyse the available literature in a systematic, simple, and high-quality manner, but also to gain insight into the most frequently used terms and relevant terminology related to the concept of information literacy and information literacy programmes at the academic level in the field of law. The analysis included identifying literature on the topic of research (books, research articles, book chapters, proceedings, books of abstracts, etc.), and a critical evaluation and selection of literature on information literacy at the academic level in the field of law in Croatia was carried out (Case, 2012). Content analysis was used while processing the documents. Qualitative (non-frequency) analysis was used to detect the recording of certain content and to analyse its features, i.e. to what extent information literacy concepts and related concepts were represented and used in the analysed literature (Tkalac et al., 2011).

Works that were published within the last 30 years were analysed. In doing so, the four fundamental phases of information literacy research, according to Bruce, were taken into account as a foundation, with an emphasis on the last development phase that began in the 2000s, characterised by changes that took place in law libraries due to the emergence of the internet, rapid development,

the application of information and communication technology, and changes in higher education in the 20th century (Bruce, 2000, 2013).

To determine the direction of information literacy research in the field of law, the first step in analysing the content of the works was to search for works indexed in the Croatian Scientific Bibliography (CROSBİ) and the portal of Croatian and scholarly journals HRČAK, considering their interdisciplinary nature and quality and credible sources. Search queries were composed in the database's search engine, such as "information literacy in the field of law", "information literacy programmes", "user education", etc.

Various well-known variants and synonyms of key terms were taken into account (e.g. user education, user education in the field of law, information skills of students); too narrow or too broad ordering of terms was considered, and the appropriate tools enabled by CROSBİ and HRČAK were applied: keywords, words from the title and abstract, various filters, etc.

The second step was the analysis of the content of the published bibliography of works in the field of Croatian academic and special librarianship from 1950 to 2015 (Majstorović and Leščić, 2017) and the programme books and published proceedings of the professional and scholarly conference Special and Academic Libraries Days, covering the field of academic and special librarianship in the Republic of Croatia. Various well-known variants and synonyms of key terms were taken into account (e.g. user education, user education in the field of law, user teaching, information skills of students, information literacy in the field of law, law librarianship, user training programmes, information literacy programmes etc.).

When identifying appropriate and relevant versus irrelevant works, the exact question posed and any conclusions were taken into account, i.e. an attempt was made to determine whether the works provided important information not only on practical application but also for future research in a consistent, objective, and unbiased manner; the reputation of the author and the publication in which the work was published were also considered (Franić et al., 2016).

4.2 Research Limitations

A literature review reveals that authors used many different terms in their works on information literacy at the academic level in the field of law, especially in works published in the 1990s, when the term "information literacy" was neither adopted nor commonly used in Croatia. Therefore, there is certainly a possibility

of unintentional oversight of certain works. Another limitation of the research is the role of one evaluator/researcher in implementing the content analysis of the publications due to possible subjectivity in the implementation of the analysis.

5 Results

Regarding the aim of the work and the direction of information literacy development in the field of law, the reviewed literature was selected, i.e. classified into three main groups (Table 1). The first group of selected works referred to those on information literacy in the field of law in Croatia published in the period from 1990 to 2000. The second group included works on information literacy in the field of law in Croatia published from 2001 to 2010. The third group included works on information literacy in the field of law in Croatia published from 2011 to 2023.

Table 1. *Main groups of selected and analysed works on information literacy in the field of law in the Republic of Croatia*

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Works published from 1990 to 2000	Works published from 2001 to 2010	Works published from 2011 to 2023

5.1 Information Literacy in the Field of Law in the Republic of Croatia (1990–2000)

In the period from 1990 to 2000, no works were recorded in which the term “information literacy” is mentioned in the field of law. However, the analysis reveals several works that mention the importance of user education in searching and using information resources at universities (Bekovac-Lokmer and Gilić, 1987; Majstorović and Leščić, 2017). For instance, at the meeting of the Rijeka Library Association, held on 19 March 1987, Dubravka Stančin-Rošić gave a review of the emergence of user education, and researched activities in the field of education in national and university libraries of the republics and provinces, as well as in university libraries in the Socialist Republic of Croatia (Bekovac-Lokmer and Gilić, 1987). She also pointed out that the issue of user education was considered at the federal level of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia at the Eighth Congress of the Federation of Library Associations of Yugoslavia in Priština in 1979, where the importance of staff and user education was mentioned, and that between 1970 and 1987, 13 papers were published on the aforementioned topic. Six of them were published in the Socialist Republic of Slovenia. At the end of

the 1980s, university and national libraries implemented two types of education. One type of education guided users on using library services, and the other type included so-called bibliographic instructions focused on using library materials and searches of reference materials, bibliographies, and secondary journals in a narrow professional field. It was also pointed out that none of the mentioned libraries had elaborate work programmes for educating users nor did they have continuous visits and agreements with individual university faculties. According to Stančin-Rošić (1987), everything in this framework still depends on individual professors' goodwill and understanding of our higher education institutions regarding the need to introduce students to the library. 1990 was an important year for academic libraries in Croatia, since the Standards for Higher Education Libraries in Croatia (Standardi za visokoškolske knjižnice u Republici Hrvatskoj, 1990) were published that year. These standards mention user education, among other topics, in the description of the faculty library's services:

... direct work with users, which includes providing information (catalogue, bibliographic, factual, referral, etc.), retrospective searches ...; working with users, which includes teaching users how to use the catalogues and other information aids that the library holds and familiarising them with the possibilities of searching for information and obtaining the desired documents from available databases and funds.

Likewise, Petrak (1990) published a paper on the topic of education among the student user population in higher education medical libraries in 1990. In the literature from the period analysed, a variety of terms related to user education can be observed, e.g. user training, user education, user teaching, etc. (Petrak, 1998).

In terms of works on law librarianship, most authors emphasise the importance of educating users on utilising and providing access to legal sources (such as official publications and law databases, e.g. Lexis Nexis). This topic is mainly dealt with by the staff employed in the Official Publications Collection at the National and University Library in Zagreb. However, only a few works were recorded from this period that were published or presented at gatherings by librarians from law faculties but that did not deal with topics related to user education, instead describing their services and forms of work or special collections of law books (Bačić, 1998).

5.2 Information Literacy in the Field of Law in the Republic of Croatia (2001–2010)

More important changes in the work of academic libraries and the implementation of user education can be seen by analysing works and presentations

published and held at the beginning of the 21st century. Thus, from 2000 to 2003, for example, there was a trend of promoting the importance of user education in academic libraries, with an emphasis on using different sources of information, especially commercial multidisciplinary databases, as one example. Such a trend can also be seen in the works of authors from the field of law librarianship, who emphasise the importance of educating users and librarians about legal databases, e.g. European Union databases (Baršić-Schneider and Peradenić-Kotur, 2006). In her presentation at the 5th Special Libraries Days, Peradenić-Kotur (2004) talks about the importance of user education in state administration libraries, with an emphasis on the specificity of legal sources. Also Pilaš emphasises the importance of the continuing education of librarians in the field of official publications (Pilaš, 2000, 2004).

Since 2003 the term “information literacy” has become increasingly common in scholarly papers (Cassel et al., 2003; Hoić-Božić, 2003; Lasić-Lazić et al. 2006a). This has been particularly evident since 2008, when Špiranec and Banek Zorica (2008) published the book entitled *Information Literacy: Theoretical Framework and Starting Points*. In analysing the abstracts of programme books from professional meetings of academic libraries, including law libraries, one finds that “education of users” and related terms are mostly used, e.g. user teaching and user education, and the term “information literacy” was still not established in practice until the end of the first decade of the 21st century (Jokić, 1999, Pažur, 2003; Tokić et al., 2003).

Since 2004, both on a theoretical and practical level, there has been a greater interest among scholars in topics related to the context of information literacy, namely the role of the academic library at faculties and universities, the perception of the higher education library as a partner in research and educational work, and the importance of advocacy in academic libraries in different communities (Bačić and Pšenica, 2006; Petr Balog, 2009; Raos, 2006; Tokić, 2005; Tomljanović, 2005).

Thus, at the 7th and 8th Special and Academic Libraries Days, numerous presentations were recorded on the topic of partnership in special and academic libraries (for example, the presentation by Tomljanović (2005), who talks about the role of the University Library as a partner in research and teaching work, and Bačić and Pšenica (2006), who emphasise the importance of public advocacy for special and academic libraries).

There are also more works on both the practical and theoretical level by researchers who deal with the issue of measuring the quality of business operations, activities, and services of the academic library. At the theoretical level, Petr’s

dissertation, “Qualitative Indicators of the Success of Academic Libraries”, was published in 2004 (Petr, 2004), and at the 10th Special and Academic Libraries Days in 2008, numerous presentations were held on this topic (10. dani specijalnih i visokoškolskih knjižnica, 2008; Machala and Machala, 2009).

5.3 Information literacy in the Field of Law in the Republic of Croatia (2011–2023)

In 2011, entering the new decade of the 21st century, the greatest positive developments in terms of the practical work of academic libraries were recorded in the field of information literacy, including in law libraries. One of the central topics at the 12th Special and Academic Libraries Days was services and users, and a special session was devoted to law librarianship, with an emphasis on working with users and providing information on resources of official publications and state information. In their presentations, Čar (2011), Martek (2011), Pilaš (2011), Peradenić-Kotur (2011); and Ramljak and Grošek (2011), emphasize the importance of education on searching for legal information, and particularly the importance of educating users on the use of European Union resources (12. dani specijalnih i visokoškolskih knjižnica, 2011).

The trend of user education continued during the following years. In 2013 the term “user information literacy programmes” and the term “information literacy” in an academic context were documented for the first time in the titles and abstracts of papers held at the 13th Special and Academic Libraries Days. There are as many as four papers in which the concept of information literacy is mentioned. The authors talk about the importance of implementing information literacy programmes at the academic level, and two of them are from the field of law. For example, Petr Balog, Zetović, and Plaščak (2014) presented on the role of libraries in the service of information literacy by presenting the state of academic libraries at the University of Osijek, while Špiranec spoke about information literacy in the era of social media.

Two presentations were recorded on law libraries, namely by Salatić (2014), who researched the information literacy level of students at the J. J. Strossmayer University in Osijek, and Siber (2014) who spoke about information literacy programmes for students at the Faculty of Law in Osijek. While analysing the programme book of the 13th Special and Academic Libraries Days, numerous other presentations were found that emphasise the importance of the librarian’s role as a partner in teaching and/or scholarly and research processes and the importance of developing users’ information skills; some describe ways of implementing information literacy programmes (systemic teaching – individual and collective, conferences, courses, lectures, workshops, seminars, exercises).

Moreover, in their presentations the authors emphasised the importance of evaluating information resources and library support in e-learning (Macan, 2013; Mučnjak, 2013; Stojanovski, 2013). In addition to the aforementioned topics, new ones have opened, such as the development of librarian profiles and professions due to newly emerging changes in the digital environment and e-education (Machala, 2015).

In the context of information literacy in the field of law, this period also recorded the largest number of scholarly and professional publications. While there is still a small number of scholarly works on information literacy in the field of law, as well as on students' information literacy, this still represents a positive change in comparison to the previously analysed periods. In these works, the authors mainly deal with the importance of including information literacy programmes at the formal level of law faculties, the necessity of developing law students' information skills, and the importance of promoting information literacy at law faculties among research and teaching staff and the management of the institution (Konjevod et al., 2016). The analysed papers indicate that in law libraries information literacy programmes are most often implemented either by librarians independently or at the invitation of the course coordinator in an informal arrangement. This means that programmes are usually not mandatory and are not included at the formal level of law schools (Golenko et al., 2017). They are carried out sporadically, partially, in individual courses, or within the framework of seminar classes, which are not attended by all students but only by those who applied. Such information literacy programmes are most often implemented in parallel or independently within the library, and the concept of information literacy is not integrated into the goals, outcomes, and instruction of the academic course or programmes within the field of law.

Regarding the specifics of the legal field and the needs of law students in their daily work and learning, the authors cited emphasise that partnerships and cooperation between librarians and research and teaching staff are indispensable in creating and implementing information literacy programmes (Golenko et al., 2017). The authors clarify this by highlighting that librarians are often not lawyers by profession, and they therefore do not even have the necessary legal skills and knowledge. Part of the teaching staff also has the problem of understanding the concept of information literacy in the field of law. Although the teaching staff demands special knowledge and application of legal skills from every law student, and thus future lawyer, some of them do not emphasise the development of information literacy skills in the field of law. For example, only one programme is recorded at law faculties in the Republic of Croatia that is formally included in the teaching curriculum and conducted as an independent course at the post-graduate level (Kolegij Pretraživanje pravnih izvora i baza podataka, 2014).

Due to unsystematic sporadic education that is not included at the formal level of the institution, the authors consulted point out that students in all years of study possess different levels of information literacy skills, which are crucial to developing their lifelong competencies needed not only during their education but also as future jurists. At the same time, they believe that this leads to students often not being independent or sufficiently active in the research process and in drafting papers that require skills and knowledge in the field of information literacy (Golenko et al., 2013). There is also no feedback on the success of such education that would enable further planning, progress, etc. On the other hand, the problem they see is that law students are often not even very interested in fields outside law, and in the first year of studies, as they enter the academic world, they are not even aware of the importance or meaning of this form of education; it is therefore difficult to get them interested in actively participating in such forms of teaching (Golenko, 2016a; Petr Balog et al., 2013; Petr Balog and Siber, 2014).

For example, Petr Balog et al. (2013) conducted a study at three faculties at the University of Osijek on the evaluation of information literacy programmes for students at the academic level and the importance of their implementation. Golenko et al. (2012) conducted a pilot study on law students' use of information sources in a case study at the Faculty of Law in Rijeka.

Due to the unsystematic and sporadic education at law faculties, some authors stress the importance of representing information literacy in strategic documents (Golenko et al., 2013; 2017). A step further is research that examines the views and experiences of the institution's management and bodies that decide on strategic documents and curriculum stressing the implementation of information literacy programmes, their inclusion at the formal level, and the development of students' information skills (especially in the field of law) at law faculties in Osijek and Rijeka (Golenko et al., 2017).

Regarding the specifics of the scholarly discipline at the theoretical level, some papers investigate the issue of the necessary pedagogical competencies of librarians for the implementation of the information literacy programmes in the field of law (Golenko, 2018, 2020). Thus, these authors point out that librarians, if they want to have a more active daily role in the work of an institution of higher education, must not neglect the educational role of the library and must be more active partners in the creation of educational programmes. At the same time, they warn that librarians must also possess pedagogical knowledge to be able to hold classes at an academic institution or participate in it – that is, to create and implement various educational programmes, especially information literacy programmes in the field of law (Golenko, 2016b; Golenko and Arh, 2020).

The work covering the broadest context of information literacy in the field of law in the Republic of Croatia is the research I conducted in my doctoral dissertation. In the dissertation, I offered a proposal for a model of an intracurricular approach to information literacy at the academic level in the field of law (Golenko, 2016a). The abovementioned model is a theoretical framework for interpreting processes and interrelationships in the information literacy process in the field of law. Using this, it is possible to interpret processes and interrelationships and simultaneously consider the proposed guidelines as necessary steps to enable the application of the information literacy process. This model is the first such paradigm in the field of law at the national level in the Republic of Croatia. Therefore, it is subject to changes and upgrades and should continue to be tested and upgraded in the future.

In my dissertation and in creating this model, I concluded that information literacy programmes in the field of law are essential and that they should be based on intracurricular types of information literacy where information literacy is part of the institution's curriculum but which should be implemented in close collaboration between teachers and librarians. However, for the model to be applicable, I warn of the necessary prerequisites based on previous experiences and acquired information skills and competencies of all participants in the educational process, as well as their previous knowledge of information literacy. The question arises as to what prerequisites, i.e. already acquired experience, information skills, and knowledge about information literacy, the participants of the educational process possess when they are involved in planning and implementing the programme so that the proposed model could be applicable in a certain context in the field of law.

In the last few years in the Republic of Croatia, several significant changes have taken place in higher education that relate to the work of academic libraries, including law libraries, with the introduction of new services and a shifting role in the educational process of faculties. Thus, the Croatian Declaration on Open Access (Hrvatska deklaracija o otvorenom pristupu, 2012) defined the term "open access" as "open, free of charge, and unrestricted access to digital scientific information that enables reading, storing, distributing, researching, retrieving, indexing, and/or other legal use".

Following European initiatives, universities in the Republic of Croatia support open science and an open approach to representing the concept in various strategic documents and policies. They also implement numerous activities on a practical level (for example, providing support to researchers related to archiving and self-archiving in institutional repositories as part of Dabar, a national

service that enables digital academic archiving and repositories) (Deklaracija Sveučilišta u Rijeci “Europska otvorena znanost”, 2019).

In terms of legislation, the new Law on Library Activities and Libraries (Zakon o knjižnicama i knjižničnoj djelatnosti, 2019, 2022¹) came into force in the Republic of Croatia, and after 35 years, the new Standard for Academic, University, and Scientific Libraries (Standard za visokoškolske, sveučilišne i znanstvene knjižnice, 2022) was published. Both documents emphasise the role of academic librarians in implementing information literacy programmes intended for students, research and teaching staff, etc., undoubtedly yielding concrete positive effects. In 2022 the E-University Project was launched at the national level in accordance with the guidelines and policies of the European Union and the recommendations of the Council on Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning, with the main goal of improving the digital teaching infrastructure, introducing digital teaching tools, and strengthening the digital competencies of teachers and students in the digital environment.

Following the above, works on information literacy in the field of law in new contexts have been recorded. For example, several authors are engaged in research on the importance of developing the information literacy of law scholars and researchers in the context of new modes of scholarly communication and open access (Golenko et al., 2021). On the other hand, research has been documented on law students’ essential digital literacy skills (Martinović et al., 2022). With the publication of the Standard for Academic and Special Libraries in the Republic of Croatia, a discussion has been opened on the importance of creating information literacy standards in the field of law, based on the model of British and Irish Association of Law Librarians and US standards, within the Commission for Legal and Related Libraries at the Croatian Library Association and Association of Librarians of Law and Related Libraries of Southeast Europe (SEALL) (Dani specijalnih i visokoškolskih knjižnica, 2023).

6 Discussion

Based on the content analysis of previous research in the last 30 years in the field of information literacy at the academic level in the field of law, we can come to

¹ In 2022, amendments were made to several articles of the law which was passed in 2019. It’s not a new law but rather amendments to the one from 2019, and for this reason the first year the law was issued is cited, followed by the subsequent year of amendments to the law.

the following conclusions by comparing professional and scholarly literature. Considering the large number of results and the scope of the work, the most important results are summarised in Table 2 for ease of reference.

Table 2. Overview of research topics: Information literacy in the field of law in the Republic of Croatia (1990–2023)

Information literacy in the field of law in the Republic of Croatia (1990–2000)	Information literacy in the field of law in the Republic of Croatia (2001–2010)	Information literacy in the field of law in the Republic of Croatia (2011–2023)
<p>1. In the scholarly and professional literature, the term »information literacy« is not used, but similar and related terms (education, bibliographic instructions, etc.) are found.</p> <p>2. The works emphasise the importance of developing the information skills of users.</p> <p>3. There are no recorded scholarly works on the topic of information literacy in the field of law, but there are recorded examples from the work of law libraries.</p> <p>4. Education at academic libraries is conducted rarely and often depends on the research and teaching staff's awareness of the role of the educational academic library.</p> <p>5. Content of education in law libraries: use of information resources of the library, primarily official publications and laws and court practice.</p>	<p>1. Works were recorded on the role of the academic librarian, the necessary skills and competencies of librarians, the quality of measuring the success of the academic library, and the importance of the academic librarian's dialogue and collaboration with research and teaching staff, as well as research on students' information skills.</p> <p>2. In the scholarly and professional literature, the term »information literacy« is increasingly used (the term was recorded in scholarly papers as early as the beginning of 2000, while it began to be used more frequently in the professional public only after 2010).</p> <p>3. A greater number of examples of good practice in the implementation of education compared to the previous period were recorded, which are most often implemented informally, depending on the research and teaching staff's awareness of the role of the educational academic library.</p>	<p>1. The most fruitful period in the development of information literacy at the academic level and in the field of law.</p> <p>2. The most significant changes in law libraries are visible, especially in the last five years.</p> <p>3. Wide use and frequency of use of the term »information literacy«, financing of numerous projects related to information literacy at the academic level, and inclusion of the term information literacy in national strategic documents, policies, and missions of various higher education institutions.</p> <p>4. The authors deal with the relationship between the learning process and information literacy at law faculties.</p> <p>5. Conducted numerous studies on the understanding of information literacy in different contexts and from the angles of different participants in the educational process and educational environment (research and teaching staff, students, librarians, institutional management, legal practitioners, etc.).</p> <p>6. information literacy programmes have still not been formalised at most law faculties in the Republic of Croatia.</p> <p>7. One of the contributions is the first theoretical model that provides a deeper insight into the understanding of information literacy at the academic level in the field of law in the Republic of Croatia (Golenko, 2016a).</p>

Information literacy in the field of law in the Republic of Croatia (1990–2000)	Information literacy in the field of law in the Republic of Croatia (2001–2010)	Information literacy in the field of law in the Republic of Croatia (2011–2023)
<p>6. Types of education: guiding users on the use of library services; bibliographic instructions focused on the use of library materials, consultation of reference materials, bibliographies, and secondary journals in a narrow professional field.</p>	<p>4. Content of education: use of library information resources, multidisciplinary databases, legal databases (Westlaw, Lexis Nexis), primarily official publications and laws and court practice.</p>	<p>8. New directions of research in the last five years in the practice of information literacy in the field of law, with an emphasis on the development of information literacy research and contemporary forms of literacy in the 21st century from the perspective of the experience of information literacy users:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – research focused on the settings of formal education – deepening the understanding of the experience of legal scholars in order to connect information literacy with the needs of today’s society and scholarship in the digital age – research based on the experience of legal practitioners and their learning experience – research on the relationship between information literacy and learning, which will enable the discovery and setting of the best patterns of learning, especially in the context of higher education in the field of law

6.1 Information Literacy in the Field of Law in the Republic of Croatia (1990–2000)

In the scholarly and professional literature, the term “information literacy” is not used, but similar and related terms are recorded (e.g. education, bibliographic instructions, etc.). Research on information literacy began in the 1990s when the importance of developing the information skills of users became more prominent, primarily related to the use of information resources offered by academic libraries, including law libraries. At the same time, academic librarians, using various educational methods, guided users on how to utilise various aids, tools, and resources, such as databases, thesauruses, indexes, etc., in the field of law, legal resources, and databases. Thus, librarians carried out two types of education, most often independently and much less frequently in collaboration with research and teaching staff. Librarians helped users take advantage of library services and follow bibliographic instructions focused on the library materials, reference materials, bibliographies, and secondary journals in a narrow professional field.

6.2 Information Literacy in the Field of Law in the Republic of Croatia (2001–2010)

The next phase of the development of information literacy at the academic level in the field of law can be compared with the development of information literacy at the higher education level in the Republic of Croatia. Many papers have been recorded on the role of the academic librarian, their necessary skills and competencies, the quality of measuring the success of the academic library, and the importance of the academic librarian's dialogue and collaboration with research and teaching staff, and there is also research on students' information skills. The results of the mentioned works can help not only librarians but also teachers and political and strategic decision-makers. In this period, authors began using the term "information literacy" in both scholarly and professional literature. This was recorded in scholarly works as early as the beginning of 2000, while it began to be used more frequently by the professional public only after 2005.

6.3 Information Literacy in the Field of Law in the Republic of Croatia (2011–2023)

The period since 2011 is one of the most productive periods in the development of information literacy at the academic level and in the field of law, and the most significant changes are visible during this time, especially in the last five years. The term "information literacy" is often used in these works, projects to create information literacy programmes in the field of law have been financed (Modernising European Legal Education, 2020) in which law librarians participate, and the term information literacy is included in national strategic documents, laws, and standards related to academic librarianship and in the politics and missions of various institutions. The authors cited deal with the relationship between the learning process and information literacy at law faculties. Numerous studies have been carried out not only on students' information literacy skills; some works also include insights into the entire educational environment at law faculties, the importance of including information literacy in the strategic documents of law faculties, the importance of formalising the information literacy programmes at law faculties, the importance of developing generic and contextual law students' skills, considerations of the specifics of the field of law as a discipline of research, and the importance of collaboration between librarians and teachers in creating information literacy programmes. One of the scholarly contributions designed in 2016 is the first published theoretical model that provides a deeper insight into understanding information literacy at the academic level (Golenko, 2016a).

However, despite the largest number of published papers and numerous examples of implementing information literacy programmes in law libraries,

information literacy still has not come into practice at the formal level of law faculties in the Republic of Croatia.

7 Conclusion

Analysing the researched literature shows numerous changes in academic libraries, including law libraries, during the last 30 years in the Republic of Croatia. They were influenced by the constant development of information and communication technology, the emergence of the internet in the 1990s, changes in higher education, and new forms of learning (such as e-learning and open access). During the years investigated, it was observed that law libraries adapt their services and activities to the requirements of the educational environment due to the aforementioned factors. Thus, the paradigm of libraries as information centres gradually changed in the first period considered (1990–2000), and the researched works highlight the more significant educational role of academic libraries, including law libraries, through the education of users on the utilisation of various information resources, primarily databases – and in the field of law, the database of laws and court practice or the database of the European Union. Although in the 1990s the term “information literacy” was not documented in scholarly and professional works in the field of academic libraries in the Republic of Croatia, including law libraries, numerous similar terms were recorded, such as user education, user teaching, bibliographic instructions. However, in the period from 1990 to 2000, such types of education were mostly carried out by university libraries and the National and University Library, while a smaller number of such programmes were recorded at academic libraries. One of the reasons authors gave is the issue of research and teaching staff’s awareness of the importance of such education. This is precisely why the programmes have been carried out sporadically and unsystematically, depending on the friendly agreement between teachers and librarians.

This practice also continues in the next observed period (2001–2010). However, the first significant changes and increased education in academic libraries, including law faculties, were also noted. This has been especially evident since 2005, when the term “information literacy” became established not only in research literature but also in the work of academic libraries, including law libraries.

The most positive changes in scholarly and professional papers in the field of information literacy at the academic level in the field of law can be seen in the last period considered, from 2011 until today. Thus, a large number of information

literacy programmes were recorded that are intended for different types of users, not only students but also young researchers and research and teaching staff. These programmes cover different topics from information evaluation to open access, with an emphasis on developing new forms of modern literacy of the 21st century, digital literacy, media literacy, scientific literacy, etc. All this is convincing evidence of the promotion of information literacy and awareness of participants in the educational process about the importance of developing the information skills of information literacy students as a prerequisite for lifelong learning.

If we put the aforementioned in the context of the directions of information literacy research that Bruce talks about in her research (2000, 2013), the development of information literacy at the academic level in the field of law in the Republic of Croatia can be compared with the directions of information literacy development around the world, but with a few years of deviation. Thus, the end of the 1980s and 1990s in Croatia can be seen as a preliminary phase of information literacy research at the academic level in the field of law. In their works, the authors cited here emphasise the importance of users' skills in acquiring information through various resources, such as databases, thesauruses, and indexes, and the concept of information literacy was not used.

From 1990 to 1995, according to Bruce, the authors mainly discussed the formation and creation of the term and the definition of the concept, and from 1995 the spread of the term information literacy began throughout the world. This can also be observed in the analysed works in Croatia, since in that period (1990–1999) Croatian authors did not use the term information literacy in the academic realm in the field of law. However, since the 2000s the term information literacy has become increasingly common in the works of Croatian authors, initially in scholarly works and then in professional works. According to Bruce, the most significant developments in information literacy at the academic level occurred after 2000, which we can observe when comparing the analysed works within academic libraries in the field of law and the Republic of Croatia. Thus, research on information literacy in the field of law, which was primarily focused on education, is deepening and expanding, methodologically and in terms of content, precisely because of increasingly intense and dynamic changes in the information environment.

However, despite the greater amount of research on information literacy in the field of law in the Republic of Croatia in recent years than ever done before and the large number of registered information literacy programmes as part of library practice, the problem of formalising information literacy programmes at law faculties remains. Namely, the different practices of implementing information

literacy programmes are still visible, and information literacy education is primarily conducted in an unsystematic way, sporadically, most often through informal collaboration between librarians and teaching staff.

Therefore, open questions remain as to whether such information literacy programme implementation in the informal environment of law faculties should be viewed negatively. Could it be that one of the answers to it is a lack of critical awareness of the importance of evaluation and the wise use of information among the various stakeholders of the educational process? Or is it a question of a lack of knowledge, necessary competencies, and initiatives in implementing the information literacy programmes among academic librarians at law faculties?

These issues should be viewed primarily as challenges that can contribute to new directions of research and, on a practical level, to the development of new services and the creation of the most appropriate information literacy programmes at law libraries in the Republic of Croatia. This research confirms exactly that, because the recorded changes in higher education and the development of information and communication technology over the years encourage librarians to continuously develop and include new services, activities, and programmes to meet their users' demands. In terms of legislation in the Republic of Croatia, a major positive step can be seen with the adoption of the Law on Library Activities and Libraries (2019, 2022) and the Standard for Academic, University, and Research Libraries (2022), which emphasise the role of academic librarians in the implementation of information literacy programmes that are intended for students, research and teaching staff, and other patrons. This can undoubtedly be one of the arguments for the formal inclusion of information literacy programmes in the university curriculum and institution.

At the same time, the key factors for the successful inclusion of these programmes at higher education institutions should certainly be considered:

- the vision and mission of user education and information literacy must maintain the strategic goals and educational priority of the institution;
- education must be built on a pedagogical foundation that supports the curriculum of the discipline and subject areas within which library programmes would be included;
- it is vital to approach legal education holistically due to the necessity of distinguishing generic and contextual information literacy skills in the field of law in relation to legal skills needed not only during one's studies but also during lifelong education.

It is also important to note that due to the specificity of legal scholarship in general, each individual legal discipline requires specialised knowledge and competencies in promoting the inclusion of information literacy programmes at the institutional level, and both teachers and librarians must collaborate. Namely, if information literacy is included in the institution's curriculum, it is included and planned in the goals and learning outcomes throughout the course of study, and librarians and teaching staff promote information literacy within the context of the discipline and specific skills of a particular discipline, but also in all areas of learning and teaching. In that manner, including information literacy makes it possible to foster excellence in providing information resources while considering the changes in higher education and the context of learning, thus adding value to learning. Hence, students develop generic and context-specific information literacy skills in all years of study, since information literacy is included in the course's learning outcomes and the institution's curriculum through the partnership between librarians and teaching staff. At the same time, the importance of librarians acquiring the necessary pedagogical competencies for implementing information literacy programmes in the field of law should be addressed. That is, if librarians want to have a more active daily role in the work of an academic institution and be more active partners in the creation of educational programmes, they must also possess pedagogical knowledge to be able to hold classes or participate in education. These abilities would allow them to create and implement various educational programmes, especially information literacy programmes in the field of law.

But implementing information literacy is primarily made possible by librarians who advocate for and promote the importance of information literacy within their institutions. It should not be forgotten that information literacy is better known and researched in librarianship and information science than in the academic law community. This is precisely why the academic librarian should assume the role of advocate, ambassador, teacher, and educator in promoting and advocating the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to information literacy and be a strong supporter of the success of the community in which they operate as a pillar in fostering a culture of lifelong learning. This is undoubtedly one of the most important steps in advocating the inclusion of formal information literacy programmes at the academic level in the field of law in the Republic of Croatia.

We can therefore conclude that the directions for the development of information literacy at the academic level in the field of law should be viewed through the need for a greater number of empirical studies on the knowledge, abilities, and competencies of all stakeholders in the educational process concerning the new forms of literacy of the 21st century (digital, media, metaliteracy, AI literacy, etc.) that are needed to navigate today's complex information environment and can

affect the quality of daily life, learning, research, education, communication, and lifelong learning. Such research would contribute to understanding the context, prerequisites, and individual experiences of dealing with information. On a practical level, it would contribute to a greater understanding of the most appropriate contents and methods to be included in information literacy programmes regarding the specifics of the legal discipline and the changes described.

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