Teaching and Learning Services Home

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What is information literacy?

Information literacy is the ability to think critically about information. It is a fundamental part of critical inquiry in the Information Age.

The information literate student can: ¹

- Determine the extent of information he or she needs
- Access the needed information effectively and efficiently
- Evaluate information and its sources critically
- Incorporate selected information into his or her knowledge base
- Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
- Understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and be able to access and use information ethically and legally

Although the term 'information literacy' is spreading throughout the library literature today, it is not a new idea. Faculty have been concerned about teaching these concepts and skills for a long time.

Why is information literacy important?

The ability to locate, evaluate and use information has always been important, but in today's Information Age, with the explosion of online library and Internet resources, these abilities take on a new urgency. Having more information from which to choose can make research more difficult rather than easier. Often the easiest information to find is unfiltered or unreliable, making information literacy skills more important than ever.

Information literacy skills are important for students' academic, work and personal lives. In academia, discipline specific information is constantly changing, and much of what students learn in class will become outdated. An information literate student is a lifelong learner, with the skills necessary to continually find and evaluate information about new developments in an academic discipline. In an information economy, students will need information literacy skills to succeed in the work force, whether they are creating a marketing proposal for a new product or looking for current medical research to treat a patient. Information literacy skills also enrich students personal and civic lives. For example, students will draw upon these skills to apply for government services, buy a car, participate in elections, make informed health care decisions for themselves and their families, and manage their finances.

How is information literacy taught?

Students are more likely to learn the concepts and skills in the context of an academic course when they have an information problem to solve. For that reason, information literacy best practices recommend integrating the teaching of information literacy into the curriculum. Ideally, information literacy competencies are sequenced and integrated into the curriculum of an academic department. As students move through their major, they master increasingly sophisticated competencies.

What do librarians offer for curriculum planning?

On a programmatic level, librarians are available to map information literacy competencies onto an existing departmental curriculum, or to work with departments to build those sequenced

https://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/aboutinfoLit.html
How can librarians support faculty in the teaching of information literacy?
Librarians are available to assist faculty in teaching information literacy skills to their students in a number of ways. These methods, which can be combined, include:

- collaborating with faculty to create effective research assignments
- creating exercises for faculty to assign to students to teach information literacy concepts (ex: the difference between scholarly and popular)
- creating course research guides for a specific assignment
- library instruction sessions
- online tutorials tied to course content
- involving a librarian in your online course (ex: Blackboard)

How do I know if students are learning?
Any information literacy program will include an assessment of student learning. Individual assessments are developed in consultation with the faculty member. For an example of how information literacy assessment may be approached, see the current Teaching & Learning Services Assessment Plan.

1 (Adapted from the Association of College and Research Libraries "Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education")