Information Literacy Instruction at Holman Library
(http://www.greenriver.edu/academics/library.htm)
(revised 8/2017)

What is Information Literacy?

Information literacy refers to the ability to **think critically about information, find information effectively**, and **use and produce information ethically**. The Association of College and Research Libraries defines information literacy as: "the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning."  

Information literacy is essential in our contemporary environment of rapid technological change and proliferating information resources. Because of the escalating complexity of this environment, individuals are faced with diverse, abundant information choices—in their academic studies, in the workplace, and in their personal lives. Information is available through libraries, community resources, special interest organizations, media and the Internet—and increasingly, information comes to individuals in unfiltered, and varied, formats, raising questions about its authenticity, validity and reliability. The uncertain quality and expanding quantity of information pose tremendous challenges for society. The sheer abundance of information will not in itself create a more informed citizenry without complementary abilities that enable us to think critically about the production and purpose of that information, and to use that information effectively.

Information literacy forms the basis for lifelong learning. It is common to all disciplines, to all learning environments, and to all levels of education. At Green River, we teach information literacy to pre-college students, academic transfer students, professional & technical education students, and international students. Information literacy enables learners to master content and extend their investigations, become more self-directed, and assume greater control over their own learning and information creation.  

GRC librarians teach information literacy through the ACRL’s Framework for Information Literacy Instruction, which identifies six core threshold concepts that are relevant across academic disciplines and professional programs:

- **Authority is constructed and contextual** recognizes that all information reflects its creators’ expertise, credibility and point of view and the authority of any information source is constructed, rather than absolute. Authority should be viewed with a critical eye and other perspectives and knowledge sought out. Decisions about using information should be based on considered evaluation of the source and the context it is needed for.

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1 http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework
2 This description of information literacy is a minor revision of the ACRL’s: Information Literacy Defined. http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/informationliteracycompetency
• Big Questions:
  o How do we judge if someone is an authority on any given topic?
  o How can we speak or write with authority?
  o Are some voices and perspectives granted more authority in our society than others? Why? How can we find a range of voices?
  o What kinds of authority are valued in academic work?

• Objectives – Students should be able to:
  o Define different types of authority, such as personal experience, academic expertise or professional knowledge and choose information that is appropriate for each context, whether academic discipline and assignment, professional or personal need.
  o Assess all sources of information for credibility and bias.
  o Question their own biases or blind spots on a subject.
  o Find alternative opinions, analysis and information.
  o Understand that some voices are silenced or marginalized.
  o Develop their own authority on a topic by engaging with and citing credible sources.
  o Think critically about and be open to considering conflicting perspectives.

Information creation is a process refers to the understanding that the purpose, message, and delivery of information are intentional acts of creation. While published information used to be physically "packaged" - in a book or newspaper, for example - in the digital age, information is published in formats that reflect how it is gathered and the purpose for which it is intended. Recognizing the nature of information creation, information literate individuals look at the underlying process of creation as well as the final product to critically evaluate the usefulness of the information on the basis of its timeliness, accuracy, audience, complexity, and other attributes.

• Big Questions:
  o How might information be perceived differently based on how it’s published? For example, why might there be an expectation to use scholarly sources in a college paper?
  o How might a tweet have a place in an academic paper?
  o How is authority related to format?
  o How does one match an information need with the right type of information source?
  o What are the implications of viewing students as content creators and not merely consumers?

• Objectives – Students should be able to:
  o Understand the process through which any given piece of information was created.
  o Recognize the implications of information formats that contain static or dynamic information.
  o Articulate the traditional and emerging processes of information creation and dissemination in a particular discipline.
  o Connect format to purpose and identify source types appropriate to a need.
  o Recognize that information may be perceived differently based on the format in which it is packaged.
  o Understand that different methods of information dissemination with different purposes are available for their use.
Information has value refers to the idea that information has value as a commodity that is bought and sold, a means to an education, a means to influence others, and as a means to understand the world. The value of information reflects legal, social, political and economic interests.

- Big Questions:
  - Why is it important to cite sources in research? What does it mean to use others’ ideas and give them credit?
  - What might some of the consequences be of not having access to information?
  - Why are some voices silenced?
  - What is the impact of Open Access Resources on the value of information?
  - Why does protecting one’s privacy online matter?

- Objectives – Students should be able to:
  - Understand that not everyone has equal access to information, whether for financial, political, ideological or cultural reasons.
  - Recognize that privacy of information matters. We produce significant quantities of information about ourselves daily in our online lives and that information can be commodified and exploited.
  - Respect the original ideas (creations) of others. Information created by others needs to be credited, even if some information is in the public domain or open access.
  - See themselves not just as consumers of information, but also as producers.
  - Understand that the information pipeline is political and some voices are marginalized.

Research is inquiry refers to the idea that research is an iterative process in which the questions that are asked and answers found produce new and increasingly complex questions, disagreements, and lines of inquiry to follow. This is true across academic disciplines, as well as in work and private life.

- Big Questions:
  - What does it mean to approach research with an open mind?
  - What is the difference between research and looking up the answer to a factual question?
  - How does an information need determine the questions that are asked?
  - How can someone new to a topic recognize gaps in the research?

- Objectives – Students should be able to:
  - Develop questions and lines of inquiry based on gaps in or conflicting information.
  - Determine an appropriate scope of inquiry
  - Take a complex research project and break it down into smaller steps and questions
  - Employ a range of research strategies
  - Synthesize ideas from multiple sources
  - Draw conclusions based on analysis of information
  - Understand that research is an ongoing and open-ended process
  - Value curiosity and open mindedness
  - Maintain a critical perspective on information gathered
  - Seek diverse points of view on a subject
  - Find and use information ethically
Scholarship is conversation refers to the idea that communities of scholars, researchers and professionals engage in ongoing analysis, discussion, critique and knowledge-building. New insights and discoveries build upon or in contradiction to existing knowledge.

- Big Questions:
  - How can I participate in a scholarly conversation without merely parroting ideas?
  - How do I recognize a gap in information when I am not an expert?
  - How do I establish my own credibility on the subject?
  - How do our responsibilities shift when moving from mere consumers of information to critics and/or creators of it?

- Objectives – Students should be able to:
  - Identify existing knowledge in a field and the contribution particular articles, books and other scholarly work make to disciplinary knowledge
  - Identify the ongoing conversation on a subject and step into that conversation at an appropriate level
  - Identify debate and disagreement
  - Seek out multiple perspectives
  - Think critically about existing knowledge in a field
  - Credit the ideas of others
  - Recognize that authority privileges some voices over others
  - Understand that knowledge is dynamic and evolving
  - See themselves as creators, rather than simply consumers, of information

Searching is strategic exploration refers to the idea that searching for information is recursive and nonlinear; it requires evaluation of information sources; and it benefits from intellectual flexibility and an openness to refining questions, topics and sources.

- Big Questions:
  - What do I do if I can't find anything on my specific subject?
  - How does my information need change my approach to searching?
  - What is the value of searching for information in different sources?
  - How can I search for information in a way that lets me stumble across other useful resources?

- Objectives – Students should be able to:
  - Formulate initial research questions and refine them as needed
  - Use inquiry, discovery and serendipity as means to learning
  - Identify stakeholders who produce info on that topic and know appropriate search strategies to access that information
  - Recognize the range of information types appropriate to an information need and successfully navigate those resources with effective search terms and search strategies
  - Be tenacious and flexible in searching for the best information from a variety of sources
  - Ask for help when needed

While information looks different in different academic disciplines, an information literate individual is able to:

- Determine the extent of information needed
- Access the needed information effectively and efficiently
- Evaluate information and its sources critically
- Incorporate selected information into a knowledge base
- Use and create information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
- Understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information