

Information Literacy for Wesleyan Students

Wesleyan University Library

Information literacy is a crucial skill in the pursuit of knowledge. It involves recognizing when information is needed and being able to efficiently locate, accurately evaluate, effectively use, and clearly communicate information in various formats. It refers to the ability to navigate the rapidly growing information environment, which encompasses an increasing number of information suppliers as well as the amount supplied, and includes bodies of professional literature, popular media, libraries, the Internet, and much more. Increasingly, information is available in unfiltered formats, raising questions about its authenticity, validity, and reliability. This abundance of information is of little help to students who have not learned how to use it effectively.

For students to become lifelong learners, they need to know not just how to learn, but how to teach themselves. They must acquire the skills necessary to be independent, self-directed learners. Students should be able to:

- **Identify** information needs and determine the extent of information needed. Clearly and concisely define the question to be answered, and realize that the question may evolve.
- **Locate** and retrieve appropriate sources of information.
 - Understand the structure of information: how is it produced, disseminated, organized, cataloged, stored, and retrieved, and how these factors vary by discipline. For example, how do scholars or professionals keep up to date in and contribute to their field.
 - Use indexes and other search tools effectively and efficiently to find specific resources (e.g., select appropriate tools, formulate search strategies, use appropriate search techniques, evaluate results)
- **Evaluate** information and its sources critically.
 - Understand different types of sources and formats, and how to use them.
 - Evaluate the relevance and reliability of the information retrieved.
- **Synthesize** the information retrieved, integrate it into one's current knowledge base, and successfully apply it to the original information need.
- **Present** this newly acquired knowledge so that others can use it.
 - Determine the audience's needs and the best presentation format; know the standards and criteria for presenting information in the relevant subject/field/discipline.
 - Properly cite sources: direct the audience to sources of further information and acknowledge one's sources.
- **Translate** these abilities and concepts to new projects and disciplines.

In addition to providing access to information, Wesleyan's librarians assist students in developing research skills appropriate for their particular needs and levels of scholarship. We offer sessions with individual students, group sessions outside of class, in-class presentations, and extensive assistance for course-integrated instruction on learning from and contributing to the professional literature of a field.

Information literacy is best learned in conjunction with an assignment that requires the use of information resources. Typical assignments could be: a large research project involving writing a paper as if it were to be submitted for publication; writing a research proposal; an annotated bibliography of sources on a topic; a brief review article on a topic; a short comparative analysis of different reference works on a given subject. We invite faculty to work with librarians in [designing course-related assignments](#) that include information literacy objectives.

Derived from the Association of College and Research Libraries' [Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education](http://www.ala.org/acrl/ilcomstan.html) <<http://www.ala.org/acrl/ilcomstan.html>> [accessed June 28, 2000]
See also the Directory of Online Resources for Information Literacy
<<http://nosferatu.cas.usf.edu/lis/il/>> [accessed June 28, 2000]