What is Information Literacy?
And why should I care?

Information Literacy - In General

American Library Association Definition (abridged)

Information Literacy is a set of abilities requiring individuals to "recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information." Information Literacy also is increasingly important in the 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 formats, raising questions about its authenticity, validity, and reliability. In addition, information is available through multiple media, including graphical, aural, and textual, and these pose new challenges for individuals in evaluating and understanding it. The uncertain quality and expanding quantity of information pose large challenges for society. The sheer abundance of information will not in itself create a more informed citizenry without a complementary cluster of abilities necessary to use information effectively.

Plain-Speak English Definition

Information Literacy encompasses the set of skills a person needs to effectively identify when they need information, as well to efficiently find and use that information.

Why does this matter to me?

This matters because IL is a life-long set of skills. It covers every discipline and every level of education. It’s how you get the best deal on a car, succeed in a 4yr institution, maintain professional licensure, or confidently pick a political candidate. Information Literacy is how you make sense of the modern world.
Information Literacy - In Depth

You can use this chart to better understand the skills at the core of Information Literacy and what it might look like when you use those skills in your studies. For even more information on the ALA Information Literacy Standard, including additional examples of skilled behaviors (“Performance Indicators” & “Outcomes”), visit [http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/informationliteracycompetency](http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/informationliteracycompetency).

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<th>ALA Standard</th>
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| determines the nature and extent of the information needed | you can pick an appropriate research topic and know what kind of info is both available and best suited to that topic | - Developing a clear thesis statement
- Developing questions for research to answer
- Creating a realistic timeline to finish
- Using general/reference info to gain background knowledge |
| accesses needed information effectively and efficiently | you know how to devise a search strategy that uses info from lots of different kinds of sources - and you know how to regroup if your first strategy falls flat | - Developing a research plan - complete with useful keywords and search strategies
- Identifying - then filling - gaps in info
- Keeping track of citation info all along
- Creating a way to organize found info |
| evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system | you can summarize and evaluate sources, in order to extract the good info - you can also mix prior knowledge and info to create new insights and ideas | - Paraphrasing new concepts accurately
- Choosing verbatim quotations appropriately
- Evaluating reliability, accuracy, bias, etc.
- Knowing when your information need has been filled |
| uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose, individually or as a member of a group | you can create an appropriate product, based on the info you find - you also know how to revise if you aren't quite making your point clearly | - Learning from past successes and failures - and changing behavior accordingly
- Planning a “product” appropriate for the assignment AND the audience
- Using technology to create your “product” |
| understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally | you follow the rules, respect copyright, cite your sources, and NEVER plagiarize | - Consistently citing research sources
- Understanding the differences between free web sources and subscription sources
- Gathering info without violating copyright or intellectual property guidelines |