Information Literacy: A Practical Overview

The 5 Core Competencies:
Assess, Access, Absorb, Apply, & Appreciate

Information Literacy Competencies:
1. Assess your information needs
2. Access the needed information
3. Absorb the information retrieval method
4. Apply the information retrieved
5. Appreciate the ethical and legal responsibilities of information use

[Reference: http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/informationliteracycompetency]

1. Assess your information needs
   a. Understand information in general
      i. Age (Stone Age, Agricultural Age, Industrial Age, or Information Age)
      ii. Type
      iii. Form
      iv. Delivery method
   b. Evaluate information sources to determine what you need
      i. What form is it in?
      ii. Who created it?
      iii. Where was it created/disseminated?
      iv. When was it created?
      v. How was it meant to affect its audience?

2. Access the needed information
   a. For sources in print form, use the Traurig Library Online Catalog
   b. For sources in electronic form, use Traurig Library’s databases
      (available through Blackboard or www.post.edu access points)
         ➢ A quick note on searching electronic information sources

3. Absorb the information retrieval method
   a. Blueprint, barcode, & blackboard
   b. Ask a librarian

4. Apply the information retrieved
   a. Critical reading, critique, and analysis
   b. American Psychological Association (APA) style and citation format

5. Appreciate the ethical and legal responsibilities of information use
   a. Academic integrity
   b. Copyright and fair use
### Understanding Information

**Ages, Types, Forms, & Delivery Methods**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The many ages of information</th>
<th>The many types of information</th>
<th>The many forms of information</th>
<th>The many delivery methods of information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stone Age</td>
<td>Hunting methods, cooking instructions, etc.</td>
<td>Skeleton, animal migration patterns, etc.</td>
<td>Cave etchings, word-of-mouth, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Age</td>
<td>Crop care, laws, religious prayers, etc.</td>
<td>Stars/Sun/Moon movements, street signs, tombstones, etc.</td>
<td>Calendars, posted proclamations, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Industrial Age</td>
<td>Factory rules, etiquette standards, etc.</td>
<td>Stories, fine art, home décor, clothing, etc.</td>
<td>Books, telegraph messages, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Age</td>
<td>Identification numbers, popular culture, etc.</td>
<td>Computer discs, law enforcement tickets, passports, news, etc.</td>
<td>Radio broadcasts, television shows, telephone calls, internet websites, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluating Sources in the Information Age

What are the physical characteristics of this information source?

Is it a book, a print journal article, an article found on a database, a website, a newspaper article, a report, a popular magazine, a video clip?

Who is the author or creator of this information source?

Is the author a respected scholar, an industry leader, an impartial journalist, a biased group member?

Where is this information source created and where is it disseminated?

Is the article created in a Midwestern mega church and disseminated to abortion clinics along the Eastern seaboard? Is it created by a medical doctor in Germany who is disseminating his latest research to the global medical community?

When was this information source created?

Was the wartime diary entry written on a field during the American Revolutionary War, in a hidden crawlspace during Hitler’s WWII home invasions, in a foxhole during the Vietnam War, or from an office in Washington D.C. just last week?

How is this information source meant to affect its audience?

What piece of the P.I.E. does the article mean to serve? Is it meant to PERSUADE the readers, INFORM them, or simply ENTERTAIN?

STEP 1:
To begin a search, click on a database. Here, we’ll use EBSCOhost as an example.
STEP 2:
Once in EBSCOhost, click “Select /deselect all” to search all the databases and click “Continue.”

STEP 3:
In the search boxes, type in a few main search terms for your project (for example, “human resources” And “crisis intervention”) and click “Search.”
STEP 4:
Congratulations! You found 385 search hits! The first page of hits is most relevant to the topic. To narrow the results down, you can select different criteria on the left-hand-side of the screen (for example, to search “full text” or “scholarly journals”). Then click on the PDF to view your article!
A quick note on searching electronic information sources:

Internet search engines are great tools if you understand information literacy.

Imagine walking into a library and asking for all the books with the word “red” to come flying off the shelves and into your hands. You’d have too many resources to handle, and most of them wouldn’t be relevant to your search!

So you narrow your search results by requesting “red” and “apples.” Now, the books flying at you are still a lot, but a little more manageable and on topic. Limit the results even more by adding search terms (like “red,” “Washington,” “apples”) and you’re really cooking!

Now imagine that you walk onto the street and try the same exercise. Not only would you get information from some reliable sources—like scholars and industry leaders—but you would also get information from less-reliable information sources—like a high-schooler who created his first “apple” website for class, or the apple-eating web enthusiast in a van down by the river.

This is what happens when you search for information on internet search engines.

Now, if you understand that anything can come up from an internet search engine, you’ve already won half the battle. Use this knowledge to search these engines wisely. Think of searching the internet as polling the audience in “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire”: If you want to know what the world thinks about something, then search the internet; this could be very handy in finding related search terms for your research (find out what other people call “red Washington apples”). Once you have the search terms you need, then phone a friend: If you want to know what a credible scholar or an industry leader says about “red Washington apples,” search your library databases.

And remember, you can always phone or e-mail your librarian friends 7-days a week at Traurig Library for research assistance: library@post.edu or 203-596-4560.
Blueprint, Barcode, & Blackboard
A Simple Formula for Information Literacy Retention

So now you have a handy formula to apply your information literacy skills:

BLUEPRINT + BARCODE + BLACKBOARD = BEGIN YOUR RESEARCH!

STEP 1: BLUEPRINT
Remember to blueprint exactly what type/form/etc. of information you need.

STEP 2: BARCODE
Always keep your library barcode in a handy location. *(It’s your access key to library resources!)*

STEP 3: BLACKBOARD
Familiarize yourself with the “Library” page in Blackboard. *(It’s the easiest access point for reliable info!)*

STEP 4: BEGIN YOUR RESEARCH!
Post University Traurig Library librarians are here to help YOU!

Please feel free to call us at 203-596-4560 or e-mail us at library@post.edu 7 days a week. We’re here to help you with research strategies, getting a barcode, accessing the databases, and any other information assistance you might need!

Critical Reading, Critique, & Analysis

What to Do With Your Research

Critical Reading

Determine the *purpose* of the article:
- To persuade?
- To inform?
- To entertain?

Determine how the article communicates its purpose:
- Tone? Which words slant the tone a certain way?
- Language? Are there any signal words that jump out at you?

Critique

Once you’ve determined the purpose of the article (to persuade, inform, or entertain), you must then determine the *success* of the article:
- Does the author’s *information* seem accurate?
- Does the author’s *interpretation* of information seem accurate?
- Does the *logic* of the author’s argument make sense?
- Overall, do you *agree or disagree* with the author?
  - If you agree, what in the author’s writing *persuaded* you?
  - If you disagree, what was *lacking* in the author’s writing?

Analysis

Follow C.R.A.C.: Conclusion, Research, Analysis, and Conclusion
- **C.** Start with your thesis statement. Be sure to answer “So what?”
  Explain what your paper is contributing to the scholarly conversation surrounding your topic.
- **R.** Offer some insight into the research you’ve done and the scholarly conversation surrounding your topic.
- **A.** Give examples from your research and your analysis of them. This is the bulk of your paper and the place where you explain the origin, and the defense, for your thesis statement. This analysis section requires some planning ahead of time: Determine which paragraph will analyze which piece of evidence and in what order the paragraphs will flow.
- **C.** End with a restatement of your opening conclusion.
  Be sure not to introduce any new information here.

Follow the American Psychological Association (APA) research style in your papers.

- Here’s a link to the Post University Traurig Library’s APA format sheet: [http://post.edu/docs/default-source/library/apa_style_august2010.pdf?sfvrsn=1faa4833_2](http://post.edu/docs/default-source/library/apa_style_august2010.pdf?sfvrsn=1faa4833_2)

- Here’s a link to the Purdue University Writing Lab’s APA resource: [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/)

Also, Post University Writing and Learning Centers are available 7 days a week to help you with writing and citing! You can find their websites here: [http://post.edu/student-services/university-learning-center](http://post.edu/student-services/university-learning-center)
Think of a research paper as your voice chiming in on a scholarly conversation that’s been going on for years. It’s expected that you will have some, often many, sources to cite in that paper; how else can you know what the conversation is about if you don’t research what the scholars have been saying about your selected topic?!

The key is to cite these sources (no matter what they are) in-text and on your “References” page.

Citing will:
- give credit to the author of the sources you used,
- protect yourself from a dishonorable reputation in school or at work,
- allow your readers to follow up on sources that interest them, and
- give credibility to the evidence you present.

Many academic institutions have a very low tolerance for plagiarism (intentional or not) and administer strict sanctions on students whose actions threaten to jeopardize the academic integrity of the school.

Play it safe and always cite your sources.
Intentional or accidental, plagiarism is taken very seriously both in school and in the workplace.
The Legal Obligation to Acknowledge & Respect Another’s Work

Academic integrity is one reason to cite your resources…the law is the other reason.

Whether done intentionally or accidentally, copyright infringement is a serious matter that could have legal repercussions.

For more information on copyright and fair use, visit the United States Copyright Office at http://www.copyright.gov.

For more help with information literacy, call us at 203-596-4560, e-mail us at library@post.edu, or visit our Library Tutorials page:

http://post.edu/student-services/library/library-tutorials