

# **The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education**

ACRL adopted a new Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education in 2016. Departing from previous approaches to information literacy, the Framework is based on six threshold concepts, ideas that students are expected to become proficient in *over the course of their post-secondary studies*. The frames are not chronological and need not be taught separately or in a linear way.

## **1. Authority is Constructed and Contextual**

Sources require critical evaluation to determine their suitability for the information need. Authority represents expertise within a particular field. It can be challenged and should be analyzed with informed skepticism.

## **2. Information Creation as a Process**

The information creation process impacts a source's suitability for a particular information need. Both the information creation process and the final product will determine the usefulness of the information.

## **3. Information Has Value**

Information users and creators have rights and responsibilities when participating in a community of scholarship, including the ethical use of information and upholding academic integrity.

## **4. Research as Inquiry**

Research is not a linear process and depends upon asking increasingly complex or new questions whose answers in turn develop additional lines of inquiry in any field.

## **5. Scholarship as Conversation**

Scholarly research develops as ideas are formulated, debated, and weighed against one another over time. Students should recognize themselves as contributors to this conversation.

## **6. Searching as Strategic Exploration**

Searching for information is an iterative process. Upon evaluation of a range of information sources, researchers may need to adjust the scope of inquiry as appropriate.

**NB:** Moving from the conceptual to the practical with the Framework is most successful with a set of relevant and achievable learning outcomes specific to discipline and course goals.

## **University of Toronto Libraries Information Literacy Outcomes for Undergraduates**

The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) adopted a new Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education in 2016. Departing from previous approaches to information literacy, the Framework is based on threshold concepts, ideas that students are expected to become proficient in over the course of their post-secondary studies.

The following document presents a flexible approach to implementing the Framework at the undergraduate level at the University of Toronto. It leaves room for established disciplinary information literacy strategies, while giving librarians some suggested learning outcomes for their instruction programs. These outcomes can be used as conversation starters with instructors and program directors.

It is not intended to be a chronological or scaffolded approach to information literacy, and librarians can choose to incorporate the outcomes into their teaching practices based on need and instruction goals. They were inspired by one of the President's Three Priorities to transform undergraduate education and consulted other guiding documents from the University of Toronto.

### **Authority is Constructed and Contextual**

Sources require critical evaluation to determine their suitability for the information need. Authority represents expertise within a particular field. It can be challenged and should be analyzed with informed skepticism.

By the time undergraduate students graduate, they should be able to:

- Distinguish between different types of authority, understanding that authorities can emerge within disciplines, and that all authority is subject to critical evaluation based on context and information need.
- Develop their own authoritative voices in a particular area of study and accept the responsibilities this entails, including seeking accuracy and reliability, respecting intellectual property, and participating in communities of practice.

### **Information Creation as a Process**

The information creation process impacts a source's suitability for a particular information need. Both the information creation process and the final product will determine the usefulness of the information.

By the time undergraduate students graduate, they should be able to:

- Evaluate a source's creation process and its ability to fulfil a specific information need.
- Recognize that the format and packaging of information impacts how it may be perceived.

- Choose an appropriate information creation process and format for their own information products, understanding that those choices will impact its use and message.

### **Information has Value**

When engaging in scholarly conversations, creators and users of information have rights and responsibilities, including the ethical and legal use of information. The ways that information is valued can either privilege or marginalize certain voices.

By the time undergraduate students graduate, they should be able to:

- Demonstrate academic integrity and social responsibility in the creation and use of information.
- Apply proper attribution and citation conventions to acknowledge the ideas of others.
- Recognize how and why some individuals or groups may be underrepresented or systematically marginalized within the systems that produce and disseminate information; and acknowledge issues of access to information sources.

### **Research as Inquiry**

Research is not a linear process and explores questions whose answers in turn develop additional questions in various fields. Where appropriate, scope of inquiry may expand to adopt an interdisciplinary approach and/or incorporate information sources outside of the scholarly conversation.

By the time undergraduate students graduate, they should be able to:

- Formulate questions for research based on information gaps or on reexamination of existing, possibly conflicting, information.
- Determine an appropriate scope of inquiry for a particular information need.
- Understand the research methods in their area of study.

### **Scholarship as Conversation**

Scholarly research emerges over time as ideas are developed, evaluated, and debated. Contributing to scholarly conversations is not limited to established authorities, and students are also contributors. Engaging with previous research is necessary to move the conversation forward, and also strengthens one's own voice in the conversation.

By the time undergraduate students graduate, they should be able to:

- Recognize the influence of the original ideas of others in their own information production, and how these ideas contribute to disciplinary knowledge.
- Value themselves as contributors to scholarship at an appropriate level (e.g. an undergraduate research journal or a conference presentation/poster session), and in the context of the continuing scholarly conversation within their field of study.
- Acknowledge that uncertainty and ambiguity can impact the development and interpretation of the scholarly conversation.

### **Searching as Strategic Exploration**

Searching for information requires persistence and the flexibility to explore alternatives as new understanding develops through evaluating a range of information sources.

By the time undergraduate students graduate, they should be able to:

- Understand how information systems are organized in order to access relevant information.
- Distinguish the interested parties from various contexts (e.g. scholars, organizations, and governments) who might produce information about a topic.
- Use appropriate tools to access the information and manage search results effectively.
- Develop and revise search strategies as necessary, based on results and information needs.

### **Guiding Documents/Further Reading**

[President Gertler's Three Priorities: A Discussion Paper](#)

[President Gertler's Three Priorities: Rethinking Undergraduate Education](#)

[Faculty of Arts and Science Curriculum Renewal](#)

[U of T Strategic Research Plan](#)

[UTL Strategic Plan](#)

[Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations \(UDLES\)](#)

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May 17, 2016