Information Literacy Definition
In our academic, professional, and personal lives, we all face the common challenge of understanding of how to locate, manage, and use information effectively, in the face of an increasingly complex information landscape. According to the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education:

*Information literacy is 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.*

The Six Core Concepts
The Framework consists of six frames, or core concepts. Each core concept identifies what learners will need to know, experience, and do to demonstrate their increasing information literacy.

**AUTHORITY IS CONSTRUCTED AND CONTEXTUAL**
The credibility of an information source is due, at least in part, to the credibility and expertise of the information creator. There are different types of authority or expertise, but having expertise in one area does not imply expertise in others. The context in which information is needed and will be used can impact the level of authority that is needed. In the academic context, specific types of sources are often considered to be more authoritative than others.

Students who are developing their information literacy:
- Can define different types of authority, such as subject expertise, societal position (e.g., public office or title), or special experience
- Use indicators of authority to determine the credibility of sources
- Recognize that authoritative content may be packaged formally or informally
- Motivate themselves to find authoritative sources

**INFORMATION CREATION AS A PROCESS**
Information products are created by a number of different processes and can also be used for a variety of different purposes. Some information formats (e.g., books, journal articles, blog posts, websites, Tweets) may be better suited for conveying certain types of information or meeting specific information needs than others. Understanding how and why an information product was created can help to determine how that information can be used. All types of sources can have value, but the format can influence the perceived value of an information source.

Students who are developing their information literacy:
- Can describe the benefits and drawbacks of different types of information sources
- Assess the fit between an information product’s creation process and the information need
- Recognize that information may be perceived differently based on the format
- Are familiar with the information creation processes and formats most appropriate for their discipline or field

**INFORMATION HAS VALUE**
Information has value in many different contexts - personal, educational, social, political, financial, etc. Due to the value of information, there are a number of factors (political, economic, legal) that influence the creation, access, and distribution of information (such as copyright law). Not everyone has equal access to information or the equal ability to make their voice heard. Recognizing the value of information leads to practices such as citing sources and respecting laws concerning intellectual property, as well as demonstrating care when determining which information to pass on to others, to avoid spreading false or inaccurate information.

Students who are developing their information literacy:
- Give credit to the original ideas of others through proper attribution and citation
• Recognize issues of access or lack of access to information sources and the impact this may have on individuals or groups
• Make informed choices regarding their online actions when accessing, sharing, or creating information
• Value the skills, time, and effort needed to produce knowledge

RESEARCH AS INQUIRY
Research is focused on answering questions or solving problems (which can be personal, academic, or social). Research is rarely a simple, straightforward search for one “perfect” answer or source; instead, it is an iterative, open-ended, and messy process in which finding answers often leads to new questions. Expert researchers are able to accept ambiguity and recognize the need for adaptability and flexibility when they search.

Students who are developing their information literacy:

• Formulate questions for research based on information gaps or on reexamination of existing, possibly conflicting, information
• Deal with complex research by breaking complex questions into simple ones
• Use various research methods, based on need, circumstance, and type of inquiry
• Consider research as open-ended exploration and engagement with information

SCHOLARSHIP AS CONVERSATION
Scholars are engaged in ongoing “discussions” in which ideas are continually being developed, debated, challenged, and, in some cases, rejected. Information literate individuals are able to locate, navigate, and understand the “conversations” within their discipline or field. They learn to think of themselves as possible contributors to these conversations through their own research and writing, but understand that they may first need to learn the accepted research methods and means of discussion within their specific field.

Students who are developing their information literacy:

• Identify the contribution that particular sources make to disciplinary knowledge
• Summarize the changes in scholarly perspective over time on a particular topic within a specific discipline
• Recognize that a given scholarly work may not represent the only or even the majority perspective on the issue
• Suspend judgment on the value of a particular piece of scholarship until the larger context for the scholarly conversation is understood

SEARCHING AS STRATEGIC EXPLORATION
The information literate individual understands the properties of various information search systems and makes informed choices when determining search strategy and search language. Expert searchers shape their search to fit the information need, rather than relying on the same strategies, search systems, and search language without regard for the context of the search.

Students who are developing their information literacy:

• Understand how information systems are organized in order to access relevant information
• Match information needs and search strategies to appropriate search tools
• Design and refine search strategies as necessary, based on search results
• Use different types of searching language (e.g., controlled vocabulary, keywords, natural language) appropriately

For the full Framework, see http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework

This handout is based on the Association of College and Research Libraries’ Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0), as well as the Framework handout created for the ACRL by Sharon Mader (CC BY-NC 2.0). Some of the exact language from the Framework and Mader’s handout are included, but modifications have been made in certain areas. This revised handout is licensed CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.