

Pathfinder: Researching Information Literacy in Academic Libraries

Sarah Tribelhorn

University of Southern California

LIM 535: Library Information Sources and Services

Dr. Renee DiPilato

INFORMATION LITERACY IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Pathfinder: Researching Information Literacy in Academic Libraries

Introduction and Scope

Information literacy has been defined as recognizing information needs and then effectively finding, evaluating, and using relevant information. It includes critical information literacy, digital literacy, media literacy, and metaliteracy. It is important to critically and actively analyze all information when we receive it by verifying the sources, being aware of your own biases, considering different perspectives from your own, critically evaluating content, using fact-checking tools to evaluate information, and using reputable sources. This way you become more skilled at discerning misinformation. Furthermore, relevant information can be purposefully and intentionally chosen depending on selected search criteria. It is necessary for libraries and librarians to teach techniques of critical thinking when analyzing information to promote metaliteracy, and the most effective and accurate route to relevant information retrieval. The resources suggested in this pathfinder provide a robust starting point for individual research on information literacy in academic libraries, including perspectives from students, librarians, faculty, as well as information literacy instruction. The resources are intended as a suggestion in this research, and not as the only resources available.

Keywords

Keywords are the primary words and phrases related to a particular topic. They are fundamental for finding relevant information and can be used to search different databases and search engines. It is useful to start with broad terms generally related to the subject, and gradually narrow this down to more specific terms. This provides a solid introduction into the field you are researching, which can be refined to more specific information depending on the

INFORMATION LITERACY IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

direction you intend on researching. The following keywords are useful in providing the basis for researching information literacy in academic libraries and tertiary organizations.

Keywords: ACLR; critical thinking; information behavior; information literacy; information seeking; metaliteracy; misinformation; library instruction; searching techniques; students.

Subject Headings

Subject headings, similarly to keywords, aid information retrieval but are standardized for use across all library catalogs and databases. Furthermore, they are generally broader categories than keywords, so are most useful when applied in combination with other terms. In the USA, the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) have been used since 1898. The following subject headings are a useful starting point for researching information literacy in academic libraries.

Subject headings: academic libraries; common fallacies; critical thinking—study and teaching (higher); information behavior; information literacy—study and teaching (higher); library orientation.

Databases

A database is a collection of related data that, in the case of libraries, can be searched using keywords and subject headings to find relevant information on specific topics. Databases can include various types of information from full-text articles and books, to those with only abstracts, or only dissertations, for example. Particular databases can also include a range of subject matter, which would be useful when starting to look for broad information on a particular subject, to those that are more specific, which would be useful when requiring detailed

INFORMATION LITERACY IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

information. The following databases at the University of California Libraries were useful in finding relevant information on information literacy in academic libraries.

Emerald

This database includes articles from journals and books in information science, and most of these are available as full text. This database is useful in providing abundant resources when searching for information literacy and critical thinking in academic libraries and would be a great starting point for research on this topic.

ProQuest Library and Information Science Collection

This database includes Library and Information Science abstracts (LISA), and has many full text articles. The publications are global from several different countries and include publications in 20 different languages. The articles are on many different aspects of library science, including librarianship, patrons and library users, information retrieval, information literacy, information seeking, etc. The diversity of research in this database provides various perspectives about information literacy in academic libraries and would be useful for students and faculty wanting an in-depth understanding of different aspects within information literacy and its instruction.

Roman and Littlefield Library and Information Science Collection

This database would primarily be useful for librarians searching for information on information literacy and its instruction in academic libraries. It is a specific database with articles pertaining to the professional development of librarians in academic libraries. It would also be useful for students research this topic from the perspective of librarians and their instruction.

INFORMATION LITERACY IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Gale Information Science and Library Issues Collection

This database includes journals and publications relating to information science and librarianship, including most subjects within these, such as information literacy, information infrastructure, metadata architecture, and information publishing. It is a useful database to find specific information on information literacy and critical thinking and its instruction in academic libraries.

Books and Book Chapters

Books and book chapters provide detailed information on specific topics, often going into different aspects of the topic in detail. Books written by the same author indicate an in-depth study of a particular field, whereas some books are a compilation of different authors, focusing on different aspects of a topic, resulting in a holistic resource. The books and chapters listed here include relevant information on information literacy in academic libraries, providing both general and specific information.

Agosto, D. (Ed.). (2018). *Information literacy and libraries in the age of fake news*. Libraries Unlimited, an imprint of ABC-CLIO, LLC.

This book includes chapters on different topics relevant to fake news and information literacy in public, school, and academic libraries. It explains the origin of fake news in the USA and how to carefully discern misinformation. The impact of social and economic inequalities on information literacy are discussed. The role of critical thinking in evaluating sources, and information literacy education is highlighted. Each chapter specifically discusses these and other aspects in detail, and is highly relevant to understanding information literacy concepts, and why information literacy education and instruction is important at all levels of society, especially with the deluge of available information. This book provides relevant recent information on this topic

INFORMATION LITERACY IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

and is highly credible, with the forward written by a previous American Libraries Association (ALA) president.

Godwin, P., & Parker J. (Eds.). (2012). *Information literacy beyond library 2.0*. Facet Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.29085/9781856048804>

This book is a comprehensive resource on information literacy, with case studies on information literacy programs in higher education, ways to incorporate information literacy instruction in innovative ways, and describes various options for the inclusion of information and digital literacy for the future. This book includes many fundamental definitions and examples of how information literacy skills can be incorporated into different learning activities to enhance the scholarship of students. Furthermore, since it is a compilation from various authors, it provides unique perspectives on different aspects of information literacy. This would be a useful resource as a starting point to understand different concepts in information literacy and its instruction.

Thornton, S. (2015). Promoting information literacy and information research. In J. Ishiyama, W. J. Miller & E. Simon (Eds.), *Handbook on teaching and learning in political science and international relations* (pp. 121–131). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781782548485.00020>

This book chapter details how to promote information literacy and information research at a tertiary level. It provides a comprehensive definition of information literacy in the context of research, and although it was written primarily for use in political science and international relations, the concepts can be applied to most subjects. The chapter also provides activities to develop research and information literacy skills and emphasizes the importance of librarians in

INFORMATION LITERACY IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

information literacy instruction. This is a good resource for students when researching practical ways to enhance information literacy skills.

Dissertations

Dissertations are useful resources since they focus on a particular topic in detail and include original research, sometimes providing interesting perspectives. Some of this work may not have been published in other forms, so these resources may be the only place to find this information. Furthermore, dissertations can also provide some of the most recent research on a topic. The following dissertation provides a useful resource on information literacy in academic libraries, and the reference list also provides a bibliographic resource of related information that can be used to find additional suitable information.

Sample, A. R. (2017). *Information literacy: A critical discourse analysis of definitions in library and information science undergraduate education in the United States*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Missouri-Columbia]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

This thesis is a detailed analysis of the definitions of information literacy in relation to the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) framework, academic librarians, and scholars, and the development of information literacy skills, such as critical thinking, information use, and information integration into research papers. It provides a valuable resource of discussion regarding this topic and provides useful bibliographic references for further research. It would be beneficial to students, librarians, and faculty researching information literacy and its instruction in academic institutions with reference to the USA.

Journal Articles

Journal articles are credible, especially if peer-reviewed, sources of published information on specific topics. These resources are also relatively abundant and easy to find,

INFORMATION LITERACY IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

especially when using library search engines, using intentional keywords and strategic searches.

Journal articles are academic publications, where the research and research results are discussed based on evidence and can be used as a historical base for future research. The references within journal articles can also be used as a bibliographic source for further information, as in those from dissertations. The following journal articles provide some detailed insight into information literacy and critical thinking in academic libraries.

Beheshti, B., Bartlett, J. C., Bilal, D., Gwizdka, J., Mackey, T. P., Jacobsen, T., Limberg, L., & Ishimura, Y. (2016). Information literacy: Bridging the gap between theory and practice. *Proceedings of the ASIST Annual Meeting*, 53(1), 1–6.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/pra2.2016.14505301019>

This article provides useful insight on linking the theory and practice of information literacy. Several different authors provide background on different aspects based on their research, including metaliteracy, information literacy education, and information literacy skills, and information seeking. The article provides reliable general information on how to integrate the theory with practical suggestions. This resource would be useful for academic teachers planning to implement information literacy into their curricula, and for general research into information literacy in academic environments.

Insua, G. M., Lantz, C., & Armstrong, A. (2018). Navigating roadblocks: First-year writing challenges through the lens of the ACRL framework. *Communications in Information Literacy*, 12(2), 86–106. <https://doi.org/10.15760/comminfolit.2018.12.2.35>

The study analyzed typical challenges first year students encounter when conducting research, and how they typically mitigate these challenges. It is important for librarians to understand these challenges to effectively integrate ACLR information literacy frameworks into

INFORMATION LITERACY IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

instruction models, specifically aimed at first year students to specifically enhance effective learning and scholarship. The article would be useful to researchers as a starting point when looking into how to effectively include information literacy and skills instruction for students, or to researchers looking into the challenges that students face, especially without information literacy instruction.

Nowrin, S., Robinson, L., & Bawden, D. (2019). Multi-lingual and multi-cultural information literacy: perspectives, models and good practice. *Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication*, 68(3), 207–222. <https://doi.org/10.1108/GKMC-05-2018-0050>

This resource provides a useful perspective on how multilingual and multicultural effects impact information literacy development, especially focusing on international students. The authors analyze current practices and approaches to information literacy skill development, focusing on language and culture. It provides recommendations for best practices. This article would be useful to students or faculty researching the effect of different cultures and languages on information literacy in an academic setting.

Refaei, B., Kumar, R., & Harmony, S. (2015). Working collaboratively to improve students' application of critical thinking to information literacy skills. *Writing & Pedagogy*, 7(1), 117–137. <https://doi.org/10.1558/wap.v7i1.17232>

The intended audience of this article is librarians and academic staff because it is based on collaborative research between librarians and writing instructors at a college. The purpose of the article was to analyze the effectiveness of work produced by students who had been instructed in information literacy, to determine if it enhanced their ability to find and critically evaluate information sources. This is an informative article, where the authors taught practical

INFORMATION LITERACY IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

information literacy skills, such as concept maps and research logs, with positive outcomes that can be applied to other organizations.

Rutledge, L., & LeMire, S. (2017). Broadening boundaries: Opportunities for information literacy instruction inside and outside the classroom. *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 17(2), 347–362. <https://doi.org/10.1353/pla.2017.0021>

The authors consider various options for the instruction of information literacy that promotes learning experiences and collaboration for students, faculty, and staff of academic organizations, and suggest different methods of efficient instruction for librarians. The article describes how information literacy instruction could be included in curricula; different methods of information literacy instruction; facilitating the development of personalized learning environments; and encouraging students and faculty in learning. This would be a useful resource for faculty and librarians, researching different methods of effective information literacy instruction.

Withorn, T., Gardner, C. C., Kimmitt, J. M., Eslami, J., Andora, A., Clarke, M., Patch, N., & Guajardo, K. S. (2019). Library instruction and information literacy 2018. *Reference Services Review*, 47(4), 363–447. <https://doi.org/10.1108/RSR-08-2019-0047>

This article is a literature review that provides abundant references on information literacy and library instruction. It would be useful for librarians, and those researching this trend in all libraries, especially if focusing on academic and school libraries. It primarily includes articles, monographs, and dissertations written in English, providing relevant information on each source, including annotations, and a discussion of distinctive or consequential contributions to this field in context with current scholarship. It is a suitable resource to use when searching for

INFORMATION LITERACY IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

further information on this subject, as it provides current references on information literacy and instruction with scholarly perspectives.

Internet sources

Internet sources are a good starting point for any research, since it is quick and easy to type a few keywords into a search engine. These sources, including websites, blogs, and online articles, are usually less formal than the previous resources, but can still provide valuable information. However, since they are generally not peer-reviewed, their credibility should be evaluated to ensure they do not include misinformation. Generally, government and educational websites provide credible and reliable information. The following resources could be useful as starting points when researching information literacy.

Association of College and Research Libraries. (2016, January 11). *Framework for literacy in higher education*. <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>

This resource, published by ACRL, a division ALA, provides a ‘framework’ for information literacy at a tertiary level. This framework suggests core concepts of information literacy, based on the competency standards originally published by the ACRL, and practical ways to implement them. The concepts basically include authority, information creation, information value, research inquiry, scholarship, and searching strategies. The framework focuses on metaliteracy and metacognition, providing librarians and faculty with a baseline to develop and assess information literacy during instruction, assignments, coursework, and curricula. It could be considered as one of the most important resources for librarians, faculty, and students to understand the fundamental concepts of information literacy, and how it can be practically developed in academic libraries.

INFORMATION LITERACY IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Luevano, S., Travis, T., & Wakiji, E. (2001, December 12). *Information competence for Black Studies*. <https://web.csulb.edu/~ttravis/IC/CSULB/whatisil.htm>

Although this a comparatively older resource, it highlights that information literacy and critical thinking skills have been considered important for the last twenty years. This resource is part of an original tutorial aimed primarily at faculty in Black Studies. It defines information literacy, describes the roles librarians have in teaching critical thinking and information literacy skills, and provides information pertaining to faculty. It is a good resource to start with when researching how to implement information literacy skills in a teaching environment, especially to previously underserved communities.

Madison College Libraries. (2020, March 25). *Information literacy: Guide for students: What is information literacy?* <https://libguides.madisoncollege.edu/InfoLitStudents>

The informative website is authored by the Madison College of Libraries directed at students, which is clearly illustrated in the title. It is a research guide to help students understand information literacy, and the research process at the undergraduate and graduate level, and how to critically analyze information and sources, and includes writing tips. It provides clear definitions of many terms regarding information literacy. Since it is an academic library research guide, it can be used as a good starting point for students needing relevant information on all aspects of information literacy and critical thinking.

University of Missouri University Libraries. (2020). *MU Libraries information literacy plan*. <https://library.missouri.edu/guides/instructionplan/>

This webpage by the University of Missouri (MU) Libraries details information regarding their literacy program, which ties into their overall mission. It provides a good definition of information literacy, and how the program particularly focuses on providing the support for

INFORMATION LITERACY IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

successful scholarship in undergraduate and graduate students, while also meeting the needs of teaching and research needs of staff and faculty at the university. It includes the outcomes of the information literacy plan, and how it is assessed and evaluated, and indicates the next steps required for the MU Libraries to take in this mission. It would be a good resource to use when researching information literacy, and practical and functional steps in how to plan an information literacy program and follow through with its implementation, particularly in academic libraries.