

Learning Outcomes Assessment Newsletter

Welcome to the first edition of the Learning Outcomes Assessment Newsletter. Every two weeks we will feature a different topic relevant to the exciting world of Learning Outcomes Assessment. The topic of discussion for this edition is information literacy. Future issues will discuss assessment techniques, making use of assessment finding, and building assessment cultures. For the online version of this newsletter [click here](#).

Information Literacy in the Digital Age

Google, Wikipedia, Proquest Databases... so much digital information available, but only so much time, space and mental capacity to use it all. As the amount of information available for our consumption increases, so too must our ability to make use of that information in effective ways. The need to be better consumers of information has lead educators to the concept of information literacy.

The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) has defined [information literacy](#) as “The ability to find a need for information and then locate, evaluate and use information ethically and responsibly to meet that need.” To assist institutions establish and articulate their own goals for student competency in information literacy the ACRL has established the following [standards for higher education](#):

1. The information literate student determines the nature and extent of the information needed.
e.g. Identifies the value and differences of potential resources in a variety of formats (e.g., multimedia, database, website, data set, audio/visual, book)
2. The information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently.
e.g. Selects among various technologies the most appropriate one for the task of extracting the needed information (e.g., copy/paste software functions, photocopier, scanner, audio/visual equipment, or exploratory instruments)
3. The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system.
e.g. Determines probable accuracy by questioning the source of the data, the limitations of the information gathering tools or strategies, and the reasonableness of the conclusions
4. The information literate student, individually or as a member of a group, uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.
e.g. Integrates the new and prior information, including quotations and paraphrasing, in a manner that supports the purposes of the product or performance
5. The information literate student understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally.
e.g. Selects an appropriate documentation style and uses it consistently to cite sources

How to Improve Your Information Literacy IQ (Institutional Quotient)

The ACRL has identified the following [characteristics of literacy supportive institutions](#). They can be used to assess readiness of an institution to implement information literacy programming.

1. Librarians are teachers, not just support staff.
2. Librarians are engaged in curriculum planning (i.e., serve on institutional curriculum committees).
3. An institutionally-developed a definition of information literacy.
4. Information literacy is evident in the institution planning documents, such as strategic plans.
5. Faculty show commitment to the importance of information literacy.
6. Faculty accept/partake in responsibility for information literacy education.
7. There are support and rewards for faculty who develop and redesign curriculum to include concepts of information literacy.
8. The institution engages in resource-based, problem-solving learning.
9. Teaching modalities are student-centered (with an emphasis on active learning).
10. Collaboration exists among curricula designers, faculty, librarians, academic advisors, computing staff.
11. Campus is fully networked.
12. The library offers a variety of digital and print information resources in quantity and scope.

The Role of Libraries and Librarians in Promoting Information Literacy Skills

Librarians have traditionally been the main advocates for the promotion of information literacy skill, either through specialized programming, or one-on-one instruction offered though the help desk. This role may be especially important for institutions where other faculty and administrators are unaware or indifferent to student needs for information literacy skills. As [Bennet \(2007\)](#) has noted, despite the fact that “most campuses can point to impressive advances and substantial accomplishments with regard to technical infrastructure... few would claim they have achieved comparable results regarding information literacy.” [Gilchrist and Oakleaf \(2012\)](#) have suggested that libraries may be eager to emphasize information literacy skills in response to current trends in outcomes-based education. They go on to suggest that in the future, librarians may take on even more responsibility for teaching information literacy skills, either through their regular programming or through for-credit courses.

How to incorporate Information Literacy into Your Program’s Goals

Information literacy skills are often expected of students, but seldom taught directly. For example, students may be expected to write a literature review on a particular topic, without receiving direct instruction on how to locate, evaluate and present information in an effective way. [Gilchrist and Oakleaf \(2012\)](#) have suggested the following ways in which information literacy skills can be incorporated in to program and course curriculums:

1. Add or incorporate information literacy skills to a set of existing program learning outcomes
2. Assess information literacy using a standardized test, such as the Information Seeking Skills Test (ISST)
3. Add courses in information literacy to program requirements

Join the Conversation!

We want to hear your thoughts on what information literacy means to you and the role it should play at Carleton. In the [comments section](#), let us know...

- ... How important is information literacy to the outcomes for your students?
- ... How information literacy is currently addressed in your curriculum?
- ... In what ways do you engage with the library?
- ... How could the library assist you to ensure the development of information literacy skills is included in your curriculum?
- ... If information literacy skills are already being addressed, how could the library assist you in assessing information literacy skills?