

4.6.6: Information Literacy

Learning Objectives

Identify the seven pillars of information literacy

People will often talk about the importance of information literacy, but just what does it mean to be information literate? The American Library Association defines information literacy as the ability to “recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information.”^[1]

The Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL) 7 Pillars of Information Literacy provides a framework strategy for assembling material for your research project. If you follow this strategy, you can consider yourself information literate.

The pillars are as follows:

- **Identify** what you need to find out.
- **Assess** current knowledge, identify your personal knowledge gaps, and understand what types of information are available.
- **Plan** where you’ll locate data and how you’ll use it.
- **Gather** data needed, keeping track of where you found your information
- **Evaluate** both your research process and the information you find; compare and analyze data.
- **Manage** the information you’ve gathered professionally and ethically—cite all of your sources.
- **Present** the knowledge you’ve gained, disseminating information to others and apply your knowledge to your life.

Once you’ve evaluated your personal skill set, you can identify gaps in your current material or sources. This can be particularly helpful when determining whether any primary source research is required, and especially whether you would need to conduct any of your own fieldwork (i.e., surveys, interviews, observations, etc.).

Watch This

This video provides an alternate presentation of the seven pillars, diving into each component a bit deeper.



SCONUL 7 Pillars of Information Literacy. Authored by: Billie Coxhead. American Library Association. Presidential Committee on Information Literacy. Final Report. (Chicago: American Library Association, 1989.)

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