

Information Literacy at the University of Richmond

A Four Year Plan

This document outlines the goals of a comprehensive plan for integrating information literacy into the University of Richmond curriculum beginning in the First Year Seminars, advancing through the General Education coursework, and culminating in upper division classes. It is based on the Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education and endorsed by the American Association for Higher Education (www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/standards.pdf).

A strong foundation of information literacy competencies forms the basis for lifelong learning. Every graduate of the University of Richmond should be able to identify, access, evaluate, and use information from a variety of research resources available through both libraries and the Internet. Students should begin to develop these abilities in First Year Seminars and develop them further in research intensive courses that require them to formulate a question or topic, find appropriate information sources, analyze those sources, and use them ethically and effectively. Students who have completed research intensive courses in a variety of subject areas will understand how researchers and practitioners in the disciplines access, use, generate, organize, and present information.

Ideally, capstone courses will provide students with opportunities to demonstrate mastery of research competencies and intellectual context within which knowledge in a subject area is generated, as well as knowledge of the subject itself.

The competencies described below are common to all disciplines, to all learning environments, and to all levels of education. They enable those who possess them to master content and extend their investigations, become more self-directed, and assume greater responsibility for their own learning. The standards describe the information literate person as one who can:

- Determine the extent of information needed.
- Access the needed information effectively and efficiently.
- Evaluate information and its sources critically.
- Incorporate selected information into one's knowledge base.
- Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.
- Understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and access and use information ethically and legally.

First Year Competencies for Information Literacy & Skills:

First-year competencies emphasize foundational knowledge and the availability of resources. Students are introduced to information that they can use and build on throughout their four years at the University of Richmond. During a student's first year, through First Year Seminars and Library sessions, he/she will:

First Year Outcomes for FYS Information Literacy Class Sessions:

- **Students will utilize the library website** to locate information through the catalog, specific databases, online or personal help and library services, in order to use appropriate resources and scholarly information to support their assignments. [planning: pre-class online tutorial – work in conjunction with in-class exercise]
Students will search the library catalog in order to locate a wide variety of library materials, such as books, compact discs, DVDs, electronic books and government documents.
- **Students will correctly decipher a database citation** in order to locate an information source.
- **Students will construct a keyword search and apply limits in the Academic Search Complete database** in order to identify a scholarly article.
Students will use established criteria to evaluate information resources in order to successfully discern when journal articles and websites are relevant and/or appropriate for use in academic research.
- **Students will identify scholarly and popular types of information resources** in order to discover that different types of information sources have different purposes and audiences.
- **Students will identify primary and secondary resources** in order to recognize how their use and importance varies with each discipline.
- **Students will learn how to efficiently and effectively locate & access articles (electronically and in print) using available resources, such as Journal Locator** in order to demonstrate a general knowledge of how to **obtain** information and develop a realistic overall plan and timeline to **acquire** the needed information that may (or may not be) readily available.
- **Students will identify subject specific library guides** in order to recognize how different resources are required to meet their information needs in various disciplines.
Students will recognize when a source must be cited in order to locate appropriate supporting documentation and to correctly document a source.
- **Students will understand the university’s expectations for academic integrity** in order to take responsibility for using information ethically.

Second Year / General Education Competencies for Information Literacy & Skills:

In determining how to ensure that our students are prepared “to live lives of purpose, thoughtful inquiry, and responsible leadership,” we must ask ourselves how we are going to reinforce the basic skills students acquired in the first year and prepare students for research, using more specialized and discipline specific resources in upper division courses. Specifically:

1. How will students learn to analyze the content, format, and origin of information sources and to judge whether information is both credible and relevant to their research? How will they learn how to determine the comparative value of different sources?
2. Who will teach students responsible use of their source material when they paraphrase, summarize, quote, and cite?
3. How will students learn to self-instruct—to identify critical issues, to search for, select, and analyze documents that represent historical as well as current approaches to the question, and to use the information or the inferences they draw from it to generate further questions?
4. How will students learn to deepen and broaden their experiential learning with research that helps them to establish a context, evaluate goals, methods and procedures, and report outcomes in a manner consistent with scholarly and professional expectations?

Second year competencies build on tools and strategies that were introduced in the First Year Seminars. General Education courses offer the opportunity to broaden students' awareness and knowledge of information resources and how to appropriately use the information in their academic work.

Here are some of the specific competencies that should be acquired by all students as part of the General Education Curriculum:

- Increase ability to think critically about and evaluate information, including that found on the Internet and from a range of media sources, such as video, podcasts, YouTube, etc...
- Understand the range of information resources available.
- Increase familiarity with different subject specific resources used for research within an academic discipline, including learning/using the language of specific disciplines.
- Broaden awareness of print vs. electronic sources and how to locate print resources.
- Explore questions focused on how information is published and disseminated; i.e., who produces information and for what reasons; what constitutes information in different fields?
- Identify/evaluate types of websites useful for scholarly purposes; learn about the both the connections and differences between the library and Internet resources.
- Learn to apply different citation formats based on subject needs.
- Learn advanced search skills for both databases and the Internet.

Upper Level – Third/Fourth Year Competencies:

Upper-level competencies continue to build on and broaden students' knowledge of resources and critical thinking skills as they are applied to information sources and information seeking processes. Planning for information needs is emphasized in upper level competencies, as students focus their

study within a discipline, or apply these skills broadly across interdisciplinary areas of study. These students now have more sophisticated research needs.

In order to understand the nature of their academic discipline and its intellectual protocols, students in discipline-specific seminars need to understand how research is conducted and how results are reported in their fields. They also need to know how the information domain is organized, and how the intricate web of research, publication, and citation drives advances in scholarship. If they have attained the competencies projected for the General Education Curriculum, these students will be ready to learn to:

- Prepare annotated bibliographies & recognize the importance of using bibliographies for research.
- Understand and apply the use of primary sources in subject research.
- Select and employ appropriate resources to answer specific questions and determine research topics.
- Search beyond immediately accessible sources, by using for example, subject bibliographies, archives, and special collections.
- Learn ways to organize and manage bibliographic research; for example, learn to use RefWorks or EndNote citation management software.
- Develop viable research questions, distinguishing between a broad topic and a preliminary hypothesis, and a plan to answer them, by exploring possible avenues and resources for discovering the necessary information.
- Employ advanced techniques to search library and web resources.
- Learn to further differentiate between free web, Invisible web and “pay” resources; and identify and evaluate how/when each can appropriately be used.
- Analyze and write abstracts based on information findings.
- Learn ways to present information based on results appropriate to the needs/requirements of different audiences.
- Broaden awareness of copyright laws and means that careful researchers and writers use to avoid plagiarism.

For more information on anything in this document, please contact Carol Wittig (cwittig@richmond.edu, 289-8459), Head of Instruction and Information Services or Lucretia McCulley (lmcculle@richmond.edu, 289-8670), Director of Outreach Services, Boatwright Memorial Library, The University of Richmond.