

Brief Introduction to Information Literacy



What is Information Literacy?

“Information literacy is a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information.” -American Library Association.

It's basically knowing if the piece of information you are using is credible, factual, and reliable. With fake news and click bait being everywhere, it's up to you to distinguish what's credible or not. Regardless of what field you will find yourself in, information literacy is an important skill to have.

By becoming information literate you...

- 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

What is a primary source?

A primary source is a document or physical object which was written or created during the time under study. These sources were present during an experience or time period and offer a first hand account of a particular event. Some types of primary sources include:

- Original documents such as letters and diaries
- Newspapers (first hand account)
- Autobiographies
- Oral histories
- Relics or artifacts
- Government documents
- Manuscripts
- Research data
- Audio recordings
- Speeches

What is a secondary source?

A secondary source interprets and analyzes primary sources. These sources are one or more steps removed from the event.

Some types of secondary sources include:

- Textbooks and reference books
- Magazines
- Documentaries
- Journals
- Newspapers (not first hand accounts)
- Biographies
- Books on a subject
- Works incorporating primary sources

Credibility

Credibility is when a source is accurate and can be trusted. Databases are usually the best sources for information since the articles come from credible journals and are peer reviewed.

Here are some questions to ask yourself when wondering if what you are reading is credible:

- Who published the source?
- Does the information appear to be valid and well-researched, or is it questionable and unsupported by evidence?
- Is it from a government agency?
- Is there a list of references or works cited?
- Is the source self-published?
- What is the quality of these references?
- What is the purpose of the publication?
- Where does the information in the source come from?

Bias

Bias is when an author shares their own opinion, point-of-view, and not just the facts. Almost all sources have bias. A document that's very biased will discriminate against a group, an idea, or a person and this can weaken its credibility. Some authors try to avoid demonstrating a strong bias so that their work will be considered more credible.

Questions to ask yourself if you think a source is biased:

- What is the author's intention by creating this source?
- Is the information fact, opinion, or propaganda?
- Is the author trying to be objective and honest or do they seem to have some sort of agenda?
- Would the author benefit in some way if this document were misleading?

Databases

Databases provide students with a collection of journals, magazines, e-books, and research sources. They give you access to online sources that aren't freely available on the internet and have a wide range of topics. Databases provide scholarly information that's written by experts in their fields, credible with limited bias, and are peer reviewed.

[SMHS Research Databases](#)

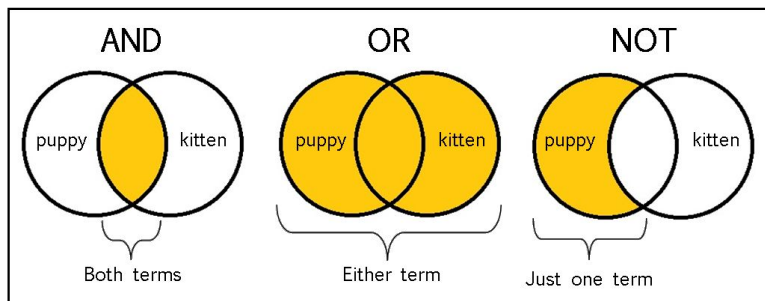
Boolean Operators

Boolean Operators:

The “and” finds the intersection of your ideas, it narrows your search by giving you fewer results.

The “or” finds the union of ideas by broadening searches and retrieving more results while decreasing relevance.

The “not” excludes ideas from your search by narrowing results and increasing relevance.



NoodleTools

NoodleTools is a web-based research service that helps you cite sources in MLA, APA, and Chicago/Turabian citation styles. You can use NoodleTools throughout your research project to keep track of your sources, take notes, create outlines, share your project with classmates, and format your bibliography/works cited page.

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