

## What is Information Literacy?

### According to Middle States:

"Information literacy is an intellectual framework for identifying, finding, understanding, evaluating and using information. It includes determining the nature and extent of needed information; accessing information effectively and efficiently; evaluating critically information and its sources; incorporating selected information in the learner's knowledge base and value system; using information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose; understanding the economic, legal and social issues surrounding the use of information and information technology; and observing laws, regulations, and institutional policies related to the access and use of information. Information literacy is vital to all disciplines and to effective teaching and learning in any institution"

(Middle States Commission on Higher Education *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation*, 2002)

### According to Salisbury University:

**At Salisbury University, information literacy is the acquisition of skills and concepts that enable learners to access information efficiently, evaluate it critically, and use it appropriately. Information literate students are competent independent learners able to use information for problem solving and lifelong learning.**

For more information, see:

"Characteristics of Programs of Information Literacy that Illustrate Best Practices: A Guideline," American Library Association, July 07, 2006. <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/characteristics.cfm>

## Middle States, Maryland Higher Education Commission and National Standards

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) indicates that information literacy skills, "...apply to all disciplines in an institution's curricula" and that "information literacy is an essential component of any educational program at the graduate or undergraduate levels."

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) also recognizes information literacy as one of the core competencies as part of their goal for Student Centered Learning.

The Middle States' definition of information literacy is based upon national standards developed by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), which defines an information literate individual as one who is able to:

- 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; and
- Observe laws, regulations, and institutional policies related to the access and use of information.

Two specific Middle States standards speak directly to information literacy:

### **Standard 11: Educational Offerings**

The institution's educational offerings display academic content, rigor, and coherence that are appropriate to its higher education mission. The institution identifies student learning goals and objectives, including knowledge and skills, for its educational offerings.

Relative to this standard, an accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate...

- collaboration among professional library staff, faculty, and administrators in fostering *information literacy*... ..skills across the curriculum;
- programs that promote student use of a variety of information and learning resources...

...and for analysis relative to accreditation standards, should show...

- evidence of *information literacy* incorporated into the curriculum with syllabi, or other material appropriate to the mode of teaching and learning, describing expectations for students' demonstration of *information literacy* skills; and
- assessment of *information literacy* outcomes, including assessment of related learner abilities.

### **Standard 12: General Education**

The institution's curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and technological competency. What are presented as general education skills are not necessarily distinct and apart from each other. There is an inherent relationship among these skills. This interrelatedness is evident in the concept of "information literacy," which embraces all of the specific general education skills.

Relative to this standard and for analysis toward accreditation standards, an accredited institution should show...

- evidence of articulated expectations of student learning outcomes for... *information literacy*... for all undergraduate degree students.

(Middle States Commission on Higher Education [\*Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation\*](#), 2006)

### **Library Support for Information Literacy**

The Salisbury University faculty librarians welcome the opportunity to work with course faculty to incorporate information literacy into existing courses.

By combining strengths, both course and library faculty can work together to help students see that information literacy is not something that exists in a vacuum and that by becoming information literate, they can better understand coursework, develop critical thinking skills, produce better research papers, ask more probing questions and access necessary information with ease.

Collaboration can take a variety of forms including - but not limited to:

- Individual faculty consultation with a librarian - to map the application of information literacy concepts and skills into course curriculum;

- Library instruction classes - arranged during regular class meeting times and taught by librarians (librarians taught 214 classes, reaching 4413 students this last academic year);
- Distance learning instruction - course and library faculty collaborate to find the best method to teach information literacy within MyClasses (discussion threads, chat, etc.);
- Self-help teaching and learning tools - created by librarians, these tools can be placed within course content at the most appropriate time and place.

## Discipline-Specific Guidelines and Standards

The following professional and accrediting organizations have developed discipline-specific information literacy guidelines and standards for undergraduates (if your discipline does not appear in the list it simply means that standards have yet to be officially developed for those areas of undergraduate study):

### **Anthropology and Sociology:**

*Information Literacy Standards for Anthropology and Sociology Students* American Library Association (ALA), 02/06/2008.

[http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/anthro\\_soc\\_standards.cfm](http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/anthro_soc_standards.cfm)

### **Chemistry:**

*Chemical Information Retrieval*, American Chemical Society (ACS), 2007.

[http://portal.acs.org/portal/fileFetch/C/CTP\\_005584/pdf/CTP\\_005584.pdf](http://portal.acs.org/portal/fileFetch/C/CTP_005584/pdf/CTP_005584.pdf)

### **English Literature:**

*Research Competencies Guidelines for Literatures in English*, ALA, 09/06/2006.

<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/researchcompetenciesles.cfm>

### **Music:**

*MLA Information Literacy Instructional Objectives for Undergraduate Music Students*, Music Library Association (MLA)/ACRL, 09/2005.

[http://www.musiclibraryassoc.org/pdf/BI\\_MLA\\_Instructional\\_Objectives.pdf](http://www.musiclibraryassoc.org/pdf/BI_MLA_Instructional_Objectives.pdf)

### **Political Science:**

*Political Science Research Competency Guidelines*, ALA, 07/2008.

<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/PoliSciGuide.pdf>

### **Psychology:**

*Psychology - Information Literacy in the Disciplines*, ALA, 09/29/2006

Links and citations to information literacy standards and curricula developed by accrediting agencies, professional associations, and institutions of higher education, gathered by the ACRL IS Information Literacy in the Disciplines Committee.

[www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/about/sections/is/projectsacrl/infolitdisciplines/psychology.cfm](http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/about/sections/is/projectsacrl/infolitdisciplines/psychology.cfm)

### **Science and Engineering:**

*Information Literacy Standards for Science and Technology*, ALA, 07/24/2006.

<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/infolitscitech.cfm>