

Information Literacy

“Information literacy is knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner.” (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, 2004).

“Enhanced information literacy will give students an edge academically, in the workforce, and throughout their lives.” (Maybee, 2006¹)

Various universities have mapped out across levels of student experience the separate elements of information skills which help a person become information literate. The list below borrows and adapts good practice from Southampton Solent and South Bank Universities.

Level	Using the Library	Using Library resources effectively	Searching for information using databases	Using the Internet for academic purposes
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locate the main areas of book stock for your subject • Have an item issued to you • Use self-service issue and return “Q-jump” • Use the photocopiers • Ask questions at the appropriate Enquiry Desk • Act with consideration for other library users and staff • Comply with copyright law in using library materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be able to interpret the entries for different types of stock shown on reading lists • Access the catalogue in the library and from outside • Use the catalogue to locate individual named items e.g. books, DVDs, journals • Choose keywords to find books on a topic • Find an item on the shelf from the information on the catalogue • Make a reservation on the catalogue if all copies of a book are on loan • Check and renew your books online • Access an e-book • Locate and access journals in printed and electronic form • List some of the key journals for your subject area • Find items in Short Loan • Find any special collections for your subject area e.g. Statistics, Parliamentary Papers, Subject Reference • Understand what plagiarism is and how to avoid it • Correctly reference books, chapters in edited books, journals and websites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse topics to identify information needs • Identify relevant search terms (keywords) for a topic • Access a database on- and/or off-campus • Conduct a basic search in a relevant database • Broaden a search using synonyms • Link terms using AND, OR, NOT and proximity • Truncate search terms • Print or save useful information found • Differentiate between web pages and databases as information sources • Differentiate between full-text and indexing databases • Locate articles found via databases if not full-text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the nature of the web as an information source • Locate relevant sources using the Library Subject Directory • Navigate round an important site for your subject • Use a major directory service for your subject e.g. SOSIG • Conduct an advanced search on Google • Explain the importance of evaluating information from the web • Evaluate a web page using academic criteria e.g. authority, purpose, bias

¹ Maybee, C. (2006) “Undergraduate perceptions of information use: the basis for creating user-centered student information literacy instruction.” *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 32 (1), 79-85.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare and contrast information offered in a textbook and an encyclopaedia • Compare and contrast information in books with newspapers, magazines and academic journals • Describe how databases can help you with research for essays • Set up an Athens account and know what it can provide 		
2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidently select appropriate high quality information sources for your needs • Check other libraries' catalogues e.g. COPAC • Make an interlibrary loan request • Correctly reference a full range of sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devise effective search strategies for more complex needs i.e. dissertation • Keep systematic records of searches performed and material found • Conduct an advanced search on relevant databases • Limit searches using fields • Use a wider range of databases • Select appropriate databases for each search without guidance • Understand when databases may not be an appropriate place to search 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguish confidently between different types of web resources • Always evaluate web pages before using them for academic work
M		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use UK Libraries Plus or SCONUL Research Extra to borrow from elsewhere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct complex searches using Boolean operators • Set up email alerting for relevant journals • Save and re-run searches in relevant databases • Save results to a bibliographic reference management package 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use mailing lists / discussion groups / newsgroups for your research

- This can be adapted to meet the differing learning requirements in subject areas, e.g. medical sciences may have a heavier reliance on journal literature from early stages in a course
- Embedding of skills into existing units has been shown to be more effective (reference?) than stand-alone units. Often a 10 minutes slot within an existing lecture will work better than a whole session out of context
- Timely delivery can aid students – showing students how to do a literature search for their dissertation proposal can lead to better and more realistic proposals
- There may be a need to update teaching staff on some information skills as this is a dynamic area – the Library workshop programme is one way to address this, another is to talk to your Faculty/Subject Librarian