

Information Literacy Definition, Components, and Outcomes Adapted for Green River Community College

This document is the library's first Program Assessment Project, and it was created for and funded by the Learning Outcomes Committee. The Faculty Librarians hope with this document to begin a conversation about the importance and relevance of assessing Information Literacy on the Green River Community College campus.

In the following report you'll find:

1. A short introduction to information literacy.
2. A clear and understandable definition of information literacy.
3. Simplified information literacy standards that work for Green River Community College students across programs/disciplines, or for General Education.
4. Key questions for each standard.
5. Some of the outcomes expected for each standard. Again, these are for General Education, and can provide a list for faculty to take "as is" or adapt to fit their classes/discipline.

Introduction to Information Literacy

Information Literacy is a critical set of skills for students' success in school, at work, and as citizens of our democracy. The skills are not simply library search skills, nor are they only information technology skills. "Information Literacy has progressed from the simple definition of using reference resources to find information. Multiple literacies, including digital, visual, textual, and technological, have now joined information literacy as crucial skills for this century."¹

This skill set is increasingly recognized as a necessary component of higher education. The American Association of Community Colleges states that "Information literacy, which encompasses information fluency and information technology mastery, is critical to success in higher education and lifelong learning... Classroom faculty should partner with library and learning resource center [faculty] to form instructional teams to encourage information literacy outcomes in credit and noncredit instruction."² Of 27 Washington SBCTC colleges recently polled³, 16 include Information Literacy as one of their Campus-wide Learning Outcomes. And this year, for the first time, the President of the United States declared a National Information Literacy Awareness month, seeking to "highlight the need for all Americans to be adept in the skills necessary to effectively navigate the Information Age."⁴

¹ Standards for the 21st Century Learner.

² AACC Position Statement on Information Literacy

³ Poll of SBCTC library directors via the LMDC (Library and Media Directors' Council) listserv. Poll conducted by Jennifer Dysart, GRCC Library Director, in July, 2009.

⁴ http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Presidential-Proclamation-National-Information-Literacy-Awareness-Month/

Librarians at GRCC, funded by the Learning Outcomes Committee, have created a set of Information Literacy Standards, Key Questions, and Outcomes which we hope can “outline the process by which faculty, librarians, and others can pinpoint specific indicators that identify a student as information literate.”⁵

There are many other schools and institutions that publish IL standards and outcomes, and though we looked to these for inspiration, we did not adopt any of them “as is.” We believe that it is necessary to adapt the standards to the context of GRCC, and by doing so, make them more relevant to our faculty and students. In addition, some of the published standards and outcomes presume that students in higher education come to the table with some fixed level of information literacy competency. ACRL presents performance indicators of “the information literate student” without showing a progression or path toward this literacy. By adapting the standards, creating tailored outcomes, and providing a rubric for assessment, we allow for the fact that our students will fall along a wide continuum of information literacy skills. We provide a vision of the path toward being information literate rather than just the outcome.

Definition of Information Literacy

Information literacy is a set of abilities enabling students to recognize when they **need information** and to be able to **ethically access**, **evaluate**, and **synthesize** the needed information to achieve academic, career, or personal goals.

⁵ These standards, outcomes, and questions are adapted from two sources: The Association of College and Research Libraries’ (ACRL) Information Competency Standards for Higher Education, and The American Association of School Librarians *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner*

Information Literacy Standards, Key Questions, and Outcomes for Green River Community College

Standard One: Information Need

Key question: Can a student recognize when he/she needs information in order to actively participate in class, solve a problem, complete an assignment, get a job, etc.?

Outcomes include:

- Student can identify and articulate an information need
- Student can describe the information need with key concepts and terms
- Student can pose appropriate questions based on the information need
- Student recognizes when outside information is needed to successfully complete a research assignment or practical task

Standard Two: Access

Key question: How effectively and efficiently can a student obtain the needed information?

Outcomes include:

- Student can identify the appropriate method with which to investigate the information need (ask a question in class, do library research, perform a laboratory experiment, interview an expert, etc.)
- Student understands the breadth of tools available to access information (instructors, the internet, library databases, library catalog, etc.)
- Student understands the breadth of sources available to provide information (instructors, course readings, books, newspapers, magazines, journals, web sites, other experts, etc.)
- Student selects tools and sources appropriate to the information need
- Student is able to manipulate tools and sources effectively
- Student can adapt information seeking strategies when needed

Standard Three: Evaluate and Synthesize

Key question: When presented with new information, can the student think critically about the information in order to determine whether or not it satisfies his/her need? Can the student make a real-world connection with the information in order to gain knowledge or values from it?

Outcomes include:

- Student can summarize the main idea of a source of information
- Student uses prior and background knowledge (including what he/she has learned in class) as context for new learning
- Student can recognize whether or not new information does or does not satisfy his/her information need
- Student recognizes and considers differing viewpoints, value systems, biases, and opinions in information sources
- Student can apply knowledge to new situations

Standard Four: Use

Key question: Can a student use needed/found information as required?

Outcomes include:

- Student can draw conclusions and make informed decisions using found information
- Student can create coherent statements, questions, assignments, etc. with found information
- Student can integrate new information appropriately including citations and attributions

Standard Five: Information Ethics

Key question: Does a student understand economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the access and use of information?

Outcomes include:

- Student finds and uses information legally and responsibly
- Student complies with GRCC/instructor policy surrounding information and information technology (passwords, acceptable use policy, instructor rules about online discussions, etc.)

- Student respects copyright and/or intellectual property rights of information creators and producers
- Student understands plagiarism
- Student behaves as a safe and responsible member of online communities including eLearning courses and other social networks
- Student solicits and respects diverse perspectives within tools and sources

Sources

- American Association of Community Colleges. *Position Statement on Information Literacy*. (2008, May 4). Retrieved from <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/About/Positions/Pages/ps05052008.aspx>.
- American Association of School Librarians. *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner*. (2007). Retrieved from http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/guidelinesandstandards/learningstandards/AASL_LearningStandards.pdf.
- Association of College and Research Libraries. *Presidential Committee on Information Literacy: Final Report*. (1989, January 10). Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/publications/whitepapers/presidential.cfm#>.
- Association of College and Research Libraries. *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education*. (2000, January 18). Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/informationliteracycompetency.cfm>.
- Green River Community College. *Written Communication Rubric*. (2005, February 15).
- Open Education Practices. *Information Literacy Rubric for General Education (from Augustana University)*. (2004, August 27). Retrieved from <http://openedpractices.org/files/Info%20lit%20rubric%20Augustana.pdf>.
- Sinclair Community College. *General Education Outcomes Rubric*. (2005, November 4). Retrieved from <http://www.sinclair.edu/about/learning/gened/genedrubs/>.
- South Seattle Community College. *Student Learning Outcomes*. (n.d.) Retrieved from <http://www.southseattle.edu/campus/slo.htm>.
- SUNY Oswego. *Information Literacy Learning Outcomes for SUNY Oswego Undergraduates*. (2006, March 27). Retrieved from <http://www.oswego.edu/library/instruction/outcomes.pdf>.
- The White House Office of the Press Secretary. *National Information Literacy Awareness Month, 2009: by the President of the United States of America, a Proclamation*. (2009, October 1). Retrieved from http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/presidential-proclamation-national-information-literacy-awareness-month/.