Conclusion

Review of the Seven Pillars

At the beginning of this text, you learned about the Seven Pillars of Information Literacy and how each of these pillars represents a set of understandings and abilities that will help you become a better researcher and a more savvy citizen of the information world we live in. We have also covered Visual Literacy and Science Literacy to further enhance your knowledge.

When you first started reading this book, you may have already been skilled in some of these areas while other concepts may have been totally new to you. Developing these skills is not necessarily a linear process that starts in one place and ends in another. The process also won't end after you've finished reading this book. You will continue to grow as a researcher as you take on more challenging research projects. These skills will serve you not only in your academic life, but also in your professional and everyday life.

Here is a quick review of the main points from each of the chapters.

Identify

Identifying your need for information is a crucial first step in your research process. Navigating the current information environment requires critical thinking, and the ability to investigate what is available and whether it is presented in a clear and straightforward manner. Properly identifying your information needs makes the search process more productive and improves the quality of your results. Defining your research question is a key step in the process and may require several topic revisions depending on your investigation. The Identify chapter contains useful exercises for you to practice.

Scope

Determining the scope of your research entails not only knowing what you need to know about your topic, but also knowing what information is available and which forms of that information will be most relevant to you. Information exists in a variety of formats, in-
including books, articles, and government documents, and it can be found using tools that are both basic and specialized.

Plan

Planning your research step by step is vital to the success of your project, whether you’re trying to find information for your personal use or working on a class assignment. You can ensure success by closely following several steps. Self-reflection at the beginning stage of the planning process helps you reassess your own attitudes toward the research process and identify the areas unknown to you. The selection of appropriate research tools, whether library catalogs, databases, or authoritative web sources, will help save time. Another time-saving trick is consulting an expert, such as a librarian. The final step in this process is determining the best search concepts and keywords for your research. Once you determine your search concepts and keywords you will soon begin to see results.

Gather

Gather helps you with the actual process of collecting information after you’ve mastered your skills within the Identify, Plan, and Scope pillars. The Gather phase concentrates on the importance of understanding that there are different types of information and distinguishing between them. It also emphasizes the importance of critical evaluation. The Gather chapter includes tips on searching library catalogs and databases as well as advice on understanding the Library of Congress classification system. The chapter also reviews another important skill for a college student: being able to write a proper citation in the publication style required by a professor, whether it is MLA, APA, or another style.

Evaluate

In the process of gathering your sources, it’s important to evaluate them on criteria such as how relevant they are to your topic, the quality of the information in the source, the author’s credentials for writing on the topic, and other characteristics that may be relevant to your research. Different types of sources play different roles in the research process and may need to be evaluated in different ways. Knowing when to stop searching for and evaluating sources in order to meet deadlines and avoid becoming overwhelmed is also an important part of this pillar.
Manage

Managing information is concerned with being able to organize information both ethically and professionally. Much of the information that is out there is someone’s intellectual property, which means when you use the information, you have a responsibility to acknowledge that person’s contribution, usually through citation. Citation helps to avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional use of someone else’s ideas without giving proper credit; examples of plagiarism are not limited to the academic world. Style manuals for each of the most common citation styles (APA, MLA, and Chicago) are likely to be available at your library. You can also use a citation generator as a reference or ask for help from a librarian.

Present

Presenting the results of your research is important as it sums up the long journey during your information quest. An early step for presenting the information you have found is to decide who your audience is, whether it’s your friends, family members, classmates, instructors, or an even wider audience. Your research can be presented in a wide variety of ways, including written, verbal, or visual formats. Examples include written materials such as research papers or blog posts, verbal modes such as presentations or songs, and visual methods such as photographs or flowcharts. It is important to keep your intended audience in mind.

Visual Literacy

This chapter addresses the application of information literacy to visual materials. It begins with an historical overview and definition of visual literacy and then looks at each of the Seven Pillars in relation to this. Particular attention is given to the difficulty of finding and accessing images, evaluating these images for accuracy and resolution, and the citation of visual materials. The Present pillar is discussed at length, with multiple examples of tools and approaches given for creating and sharing your work. This chapter concludes with a series of relevant quotations and additional resources relating to visual literacy.

Science Literacy

Science literacy is related to one’s ability to understand basic concepts and laws of science and to use this knowledge in everyday life. There are several types of science literacy: civic, cultural, practical, consumer, and aesthetic. The chapter presents an overview of each of these types and provides an overview of other science-related concepts and movements that are all related to information. The chapter also addresses creating and disseminating scientific information, the open access movement, citizen science, and lifelong learning as an important component of science information literacy. Keeping up with the latest scientific
discoveries after graduating from college will help you remain scientifically literate. Case studies and exercises emphasize a practical approach to science literacy.

Further Reading

As you continue to develop your research skills and knowledge, you may wish to do further reading on information literacy. These resources may not use the Seven Pillars of Information Literacy as a lens, but they will all help you become a more knowledgeable researcher. The following items can be purchased through online retailers or borrowed from your library.


