Information Literacy in a Nutshell

Because information literacy (IL) is complex, it can be difficult to define in a simple and comprehensive way. The Association of College & Research Libraries’ (ACRL) definition of IL provides a useful framework for articulating IL skills. As ACRL’s definition (below) suggests, IL literacy exists on a continuum of complexity and is relevant to all stages and levels of education.

Broadly, information literacy is the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning.

More specifically, students with these “integrated abilities” can demonstrate their ability 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 ethically and legally

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