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Lost in Translation: Creating a Common Language for Information Literacy across Disciplines

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**Information Literacy Core Competencies**

**What is information literacy?**
Information literacy is a set of skills which includes finding information effectively; managing the abundance of information available; thinking critically about resources; synthesizing and incorporating information into one’s knowledge base; creatively expressing and effectively communicating new knowledge; using information ethically; and using knowledge to better society.

**Why is information literacy important?**
Within the context of a liberal education, information literacy prepares students for lifelong learning, a value championed in the University's strategic planning and curriculum documents. Grand Valley State University's mission is to educate students to shape their lives, their professions and their societies.

Information literacy supports this mission by empowering learners to:

- Inform themselves
- Inform their profession
- Inform society

**What is the purpose of this document?**
Information literacy is a shared responsibility among all stakeholders; it requires awareness of what others are doing in programs and initiatives across the university and in the community and, after awareness, a willingness to take deliberate, mindful action. To that end, this document is an attempt to provide a shared language to spark dialogue within the broader academic community. Such dialogue lays a foundation for integrating information literacy into learning opportunities. This can take many forms: collaborating on assignment creation; coordinating syllabi across a department, providing a framework for faculty workshops and training, writing learning outcomes for assessment. This document is one tool to help facilitate that integration. These actions ultimately make information literacy more explicit to faculty and students and encourage ongoing conversation.

**How is this document structured?**
Information literacy concepts defined in this document were mapped wherever possible to GVSU's General Education Program guidelines in order to illustrate that information literacy is implicit in all learning environments.
A hierarchical numbering system was imposed upon skills goals in order to make conversations about this document easier. However, when the document is used as a tool it need not be used in this linear fashion. The order in which information literacy skills are learned is dependent on one's specific information needs and existing skills.

While the skills goals are not necessarily linear, the objectives within each goal are intended to build upon one another. A scaffolding hierarchy was used throughout the objectives in order to delineate a deepening understanding of information literacy as students progress in their education. For example, students in their major programs are expected to have already learned the information literacy skills listed under the General Education and Basic Skills sections.

The objectives also may be used to begin identifying deficiencies in information literacy skills. For example, it might be necessary for a graduate student to relearn skills ordinarily expected of students at the basic or major level.

**How might individual faculty and departments interpret this document?**

Every effort was made to use inclusive language and to make concepts adaptable to any academic discipline. Individual faculty, departments, and units are encouraged to modify the document to better address the unique requirements of their disciplines. This document may be used as a lens through which to view existing assignments and to edit them to better elucidate information literacy skills goals.

Faculty may also use the document to:

- collaborate on assignment creation
- coordinate syllabi across a department
- provide a framework for faculty workshops and training
- write learning outcomes for assessment
- make information literacy more transparent

This document is not intended to be an assessment document with measurable outcomes. The outlined teaching objectives are intended to shape instruction; measurable outcomes could be written to create a separate assessment document, however, that is currently outside the scope of this document.
## Information Literacy Core Competencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills Goals</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I. Construct a question or problem statement</strong>&lt;br&gt;Able to articulate need for existing information and literature and develop a research question or thesis statement.</td>
<td><strong>General Education and Basic Skills Courses:</strong>&lt;br&gt;- Define the topic and the information needed&lt;br&gt;- Develop and refine a proto-thesis or preliminary opinion on the topic&lt;br&gt;- Seek information beyond course materials as necessary&lt;br&gt;- Develop a manageable focus appropriate to criteria of assignment&lt;br&gt;<strong>Major Program:</strong>&lt;br&gt;- Actively and independently seek sources beyond course materials&lt;br&gt;- Articulate research question or thesis statement within confines/context of discipline&lt;br&gt;- Use discipline-specific terminology&lt;br&gt;<strong>Graduate Programs:</strong>&lt;br&gt;- Develop an original research question which contributes to the body of knowledge in the field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II. Locate and Gather Information</strong>&lt;br&gt;Able to execute a plan for locating information by developing a search strategy and identifying sources of information</td>
<td><strong>General Education and Basic Skills Courses:</strong>&lt;br&gt;- Create a plan for searching&lt;br&gt;- Identify various sources of help in searching (e.g. library and classroom faculty, library staff, peers, library guides, etc.)&lt;br&gt;<strong>Major Program:</strong>&lt;br&gt;- Identify core subject research databases&lt;br&gt;- Use advanced search features in subject research databases&lt;br&gt;- Use recursive searching techniques&lt;br&gt;- Identify a breadth of primary and secondary sources of information in the field (e.g., scholarly journals, trade publications, books, government information, web-based resources, subject experts, etc.)&lt;br&gt;- Interpret and use citations to find additional literature&lt;br&gt;- Recognize tools for acquiring resources outside of GVSU collections (e.g. Document Delivery, Interlibrary Loan, etc.)&lt;br&gt;<strong>Graduate Programs:</strong>&lt;br&gt;- Seek primary sources from foundational theorists and practitioners&lt;br&gt;- Construct advanced searches that are efficient and yield pertinent information</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### III. Evaluate Sources

Able to evaluate the quality, usefulness, and relevance of the information they discover

**General Education and Basic Skills Courses:**
- Differentiate between scholarly, trade, and popular sources
- Evaluate resources for authority, accuracy, reliability, coverage, and timeliness
- Evaluate found resources for relevance to the topic and adjust topic accordingly

**Major Program:**
- Identify possible biases within an information source
- Define peer reviewed
- Seek feedback from peers and professors
- Make use of review tools to evaluate information sources (e.g., book reviews, annotated bibliographies, etc.)

**Graduate Programs:**
- Differentiate between types of research (e.g., qualitative, quantitative, etc.)
- Evaluate research methods within studies
- Identify research biases within studies
- Apply evaluation criteria in the identification and use of key sources of information (e.g., journal impact factors)

### IV. Manage Information

Able to manage information from a variety of sources

**General Education and Basic Skills Courses:**
- Develop a strategy for logging and retrieving information found
- Recognize information overload and develop strategies to manage information anxiety.

**Major Program**
- Use a citation management system (e.g., RefWorks or EndNote)
- Recognize how current awareness technologies (e.g., RSS feeds, blogs, listservs) can be used to stay informed in areas of interest

**Graduate Programs:**
- Use current awareness technologies (e.g., RSS feeds, blogs, listservs) to stay versed in research
- Preserve/archive research, data, portfolio, thesis, project, etc. to ensure its future accessibility
### V. Use Information Ethically
Understand the legal and ethical implications of using information appropriately and responsibly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Education and Basic Skills Courses:</th>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Recognize the basics of plagiarism and copyright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Cite sources appropriately</td>
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</table>

**Major Program:**

- Develop an increasing awareness of responsible use of information and types of plagiarism
- Recognize ethical and legal considerations specific to the discipline
- Use information ethically as global and local citizens

**Graduate Programs:**

- Choose whether to retain author rights for future use of research output
- Adhere to professional ethical guidelines (e.g. HIPAA, FERPA, HRRC/IRB, etc.)

### VI. Communicate Knowledge
Understand the disciplinary and societal context in which information is presented and created, and is able to contribute to that body of information

<table>
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<td>▪ Synthesize information from various sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Develop awareness of publication lifecycle</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Recognize the financial forces driving the availability of information</td>
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**Major Program:**

- Apply content knowledge to service learning environments
- Identify post-graduate resources for professional development, leadership, scholarly communication and community involvement
- Use government information to foster informed citizenry

**Graduate Programs:**

- Contribute to associations and networks related to the discipline
- Participate in the academic process of one's discipline (e.g. discovery, proposal, funding, research design, dissemination, etc.)
- Share findings with peers in open fora
References


Grand Valley State University. (n.d.) *General education program: Knowledge and skills goals, explanation, and some possible objectives [Draft]*. Received by the ILC Committee September 24, 2008, via e-mail from Carol Griffin via Julie Garrison.


New Mexico State University. (n.d.). *IL competencies for NMSU students at various levels*. Retrieved from [http://lib.nmsu.edu/instruction/about/tieredILcompetencies.PDF](http://lib.nmsu.edu/instruction/about/tieredILcompetencies.PDF)


