Proposed Definition: Information Literacy at the Claremont Colleges

Claremont Colleges Library Information Literacy Steering Group - Spring 2013

The Western Association of Schools & Colleges recently adopted *information literacy* (IL) as one of five redesigned "core competencies" required for institutional accreditation.[1] In order to foster a common framework for understanding IL across the Claremont Colleges, the Information Literacy Steering Group (ILSG) of the Claremont Colleges Library (CCL) presents the following definition of information literacy to be considered for adoption by each College:

Information Literacy at the Claremont Colleges: Engaging Critical Habits of Mind

Information literacy is the ability to use critical thinking to create meaningful knowledge from information. The information literate Claremont Colleges student:

- Engages in a process of **inquiry** in order to frame intellectual challenges and identify research needs;
- Strategically accesses and **evaluates** information;
- **Communicates** information effectively;
- Provides clear **attribution** of source materials used;
- And develops **insight** into the social, legal, economic, and ethical aspects of information creation, use, access, and durability.

Supplementary/Supporting Documentation

The remainder of this document is not included in the IL definition, but provides elaboration on its five "critical habits of mind" as well as sample learning outcomes that are intended to clarify the role of IL in the Claremont student experience.

Critical Habits of Mind Skill/Competency Areas

1 **Inquiry** - interpreting assignments; determining information needs; developing a research strategy, question(s), and/or thesis to facilitate strategic information discovery and access; preliminary research tool and source selection

2 **Evaluation -** resource analysis, inference, and revision of research strategy

3 **Communication -** synthesis, integration, contextualization, and presentation of evidence in scholarship and creative work

4 **Attribution -** providing clear documentation of source materials; perceiving and engaging in a scholarly conversation; understanding copyright regulations, fair use, and when to seek permissions

5 **Insight** - critical understanding of the social, legal, economic, and ethical aspects of information creation, use, access, and durability

Sample Information Literacy Learning Outcomes

First-Year Outcomes

At the culmination of their initial year at the Claremont Colleges, the information literate student should be able to:

1 **Inquiry**
- understand and interpret assignment parameters
- clearly define a research or information need
- conduct basic information search strategies
- develop a bibliography using resources beyond web-based or popular media sources

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[1] WASC's redesigned core competencies are "written and oral communication, quantitative skills, critical thinking, and information literacy." See http://wascsenior.org/redesign/revised-draft-2013-handbook.

2 Evaluation
- conduct preliminary research to inform a research question or information need
- engage with, understand, and draw inferences from scholarly work
- select sources that are broadly appropriate to a research topic
- distinguish between categories and types of information (e.g., fact v. opinion, scholarly v. popular, primary v. secondary)

3 Communication
- paraphrase arguments and provide basic summaries of information sources
- clearly distinguish between their own ideas and those of others
- provide a limited original synthesis of information sources

4 Attribution
- convey a preliminary understanding of why, when, and how to give attribution
- understand the criteria of academic honesty and how to avoid intentional and unintentional plagiarism
- cite basic information sources based on a specified style format in-text as well as in bibliography/endnotes/footnotes

5 Insight
- distinguish between institutionally provided and open web resources
- begin to recognize the universe of scholarship related to academic disciplines
- possess an emerging critical understanding of the social, legal, economic, and ethical aspects of information creation, use, access, and durability

Capstone/Graduate Outcomes
At the culmination of their capstone undergraduate experience or at the graduate level, the information literate Claremont Colleges student should able to:

1 Inquiry
- clearly articulate an information need, define appropriate keywords and revise them as necessary
- discover/access specialized information resources and explore multiple contexts of information creation
- identify and articulate the limits of the information that is available to them
- employ source materials in a way that demonstrates sophisticated independent thought

2 Evaluation
- effectively analyze information from multiple advanced sources into a project that represents significant new or novel information in their field of interest
- show an understanding/knowledge of scholarship related to topic
- choose appropriate resources for scope of information need

3 Communication
- organize, synthesize, and articulate a complex array of sources accessible to the intended audience
- integrate and synthesize evidence expertly to support claims

4 Attribution
- develop a thorough bibliography with multiple and diverse sources of information that indicates a clear grasp of the 'scholarly conversation' in a discipline or disciplines
- exhibit proper use of paraphrasing, citations, footnotes, etc. in advanced original work.
- demonstrate sophisticated understanding of why, when, and how to give attribution

5 Insight
- demonstrate a grasp of where, why, and how to obtain open access versus institutionally-affiliated research resources and articulate their institutional access privilege beyond open web resources
- understand the various social, political, and cultural factors that affect information creation, use, access, durability, and openness
- perceive how these factors may affect the ability to obtain information post-graduation and form an alternate access strategy based on subsequent information need and context (e.g., interlibrary lending, information in the professions)
- clearly recognize the universe(s) of scholarship related to academic disciplines and interdisciplines