Information Literacy Guide

What is information literacy?

Information literacy is defined as the ability to access, evaluate, organize, and use the best, most current information available from a variety of sources.

The A.M. Al-Refai Library has developed this Information Literacy Guide to help students in their literature search. It will equip students and staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to enable them to use the library's information resources effectively.

A research process for literature search involves the following:

- Identify the information you need
- Know the purpose and suitability of the resources available
- Develop an appropriate research plan
- Evaluate the worth and relevance of the information retrieved
- Document information and its sources
- Organize information

Identify the information you need
- ✓ What questions do you need answered?
- ✓ Identify the main concept and scrutinize the scope of the topic

Know the purpose and suitability of the resources available
- ✓ Distinguish Academic vs Popular, Primary vs Secondary resources
- ✓ Understand that the Library Catalog leads to resources in the Library, but does NOT contain details at chapter / journal article level. Know how to interpret A.M. Al-Refai Library holdings
- ✓ Distinguish the different types of literature – Reference books, Textbooks, Journal articles
- ✓ Understand that library databases contain indexed subject references to journal articles, books, reports, etc. Databases can be of different types – index, abstract, full-text with different subject coverage
- ✓ Understand that internet leads to some excellent information, but results need to be evaluated
- ✓ Use varied sources of information

Develop an appropriate research plan
- ✓ Create the search terms/phrase (keywords)
- ✓ Identify the resources that are relevant to your research
- ✓ Execute the search by linking the keywords with Boolean operators and narrowing the results to retrieve appropriate information quickly

Evaluate the worth and relevance of the information retrieved
- ✓ Review the relevance of the information retrieved
- ✓ Understand and apply criteria for evaluating the information
- ✓ Identify inaccuracies and misinformation in the information retrieved

Document information and its sources
- ✓ Document all search strategies, sources used and location of sources
- ✓ Acknowledge/reference sources using standard reference styles (MLA, APA, etc)

Organize information
- ✓ Combine information from various sources to compile your research
- ✓ View/Save/Print/email information retrieved from various sources
- ✓ Maintain a backup of the research

Description and examples of sources that may be used for a literature search

Guides to Literature search: Explain how to conduct a literature research

Ex.: Texas Information Literacy Tutorial (TILT) is a very comprehensive information literacy web site with online modules that walk you through a range of topics and discuss the issues involved in selecting, searching and evaluating information.

Library Catalog: The library online catalog contains over 40,000 bibliographic records for the books, ebooks, journals, and audiovisual materials available in the library. Each record consists of fields such as author, title, publisher, item location, call number, description, bibliography and subject.

Ex. : A.M. Al-Refai Library Catalog

Databases: A Database is a collection of information organized in such a way that a computer program can quickly select desired pieces of data. The A.M.Al-Refai Library subscribes to bibliographic and full-text databases. These Databases allow you to find articles in journals, magazines and newspapers. They can also contain references to book reviews, conference proceedings, reports, book chapters and other publications. These databases can contain a mixture of record types including full text, abstracts or citations.

Ex.: Academic Search Premier, JSTOR

Monographs (Books): A scholarly piece of writing of essay or book length on a specific, often limited subject.

Ex. :   Poetry criticism : excerpts from criticism of the works of the most significant and widely studied poets of world literature (PN 1010 .P499 vol.79 2008)

The Norton anthology of American literature (PS 507 .N65 2003)

A beginner's guide to critical reading : an anthology of literary texts (PR 83 .J34 2001)

An American mosaic : prose and poetry by everyday folk (PS 508 .W73 A83 1999)

The Longman anthology of women's literature (PR 1110 .W6 L66 2000)

Journals: An academic journal is a peer-reviewed periodical containing scholarly articles in a recognized field of study.

Ex.: American Literature, Early American Literature

Dictionaries: A dictionary is a book of alphabetically listed words in a specific language, with definitions, etymologies, pronunciations, and other information.

Ex.: Al-Mawrid : a modern Arabic-English dictionary (PJ 6640 .B342 2004)

Dictionary of literature in English (PR 19 .K56 2002)

Longman dictionary of contemporary English (PE 1628 .L58 1995)

Encyclopedias: A comprehensive reference work containing articles on a wide range of subjects or on numerous aspects of a particular field, usually arranged alphabetically.

Ex.: The New Encyclopedia Britannica (AE 5 .E363 2002)

The Cambridge encyclopedia of the English language (PE 1072 .C68 2003)

Encyclopedia of American literature of the sea and Great Lakes (eBook)

Bibliographies: A bibliography is a list of citations for books, periodical articles or other materials. Published bibliographies on specific subjects are often found in the reference collection.

Ex.: A bibliography of Islamic economics (HB 126.4 .B516 1993)

Mathematical models in international relations :a bibliography (Z 6461 .C48 1979)

Internet: A worldwide network of computers that allows the "sharing" or "networking" of information at remote sites from other academic institutions, research institutes, private

companies, government agencies, and individuals. Understand that internet leads to some excellent information, but results need to be evaluated.

Ex.: Outline of American Literature, Revised ed.

Academy of American Poets

African American Women Writers in the 19th Century

Bartleby.com

American Verse Project

Cambridge History of English and American Literature

Collected Works of William Shakespeare

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare

Writing tools: While writing a research paper, documenting the sources is very important. There are different styles of documentation. Ask your mentor which style of documentation to use.

Ex.: MLA Style Guide, APA Style Guide, Chicago-Turabian Style Guide

MLA Handbook for writers of research papers (LB 2369 .G53 2003)

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (BF 76.7 .P83 2001)

The Chicago manual of style (Z 253 .C45 2003)

Other writing guides available in the Library:

How to write research papers (LB 1047.3 .S267 2002)

Research papers for dummies (LB 2369 .W66 2002)

Shaum's quick guide to writing great research papers (LB 2369 .R69 1999)

The curious researcher: a guide to writing research papers (LB 2369 .B246 2004)