

Memorandum

From: Information Literacy Faculty Learning Community
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To: Speaker Nagel, UEPC Chair Eudey, AVP Young

C: President Junn, Provost Greer, VP Kaul, Dean Rodriguez, Chair Nainby, Chair Winter, FDGE Wooley, Assessment Specialist Littlepage

RE: **Progress Report and Recommendations from the IL-FLC**

Date: 9 September 2018

Please see below the progress report and recommendations from the IL-FLC. The report includes an introduction, a description of information literacy instruction at Stanislaus, a literature review, discussion of a campus-wide survey and other local consultation, findings, and recommendations. We believe the recommendations lay out important conceptual changes for the way IL is addressed at Stanislaus, and we are now moving to a focus on pilot assessment and refinement of the rubric. We also plan to participate in work on implementation of any recommendations that are accepted.

Progress Report and Recommendations from the Information Literacy Faculty Learning Community

Acronyms and Initialisms

ACRL	Association of College & Research Libraries
GWAR	Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement
IL	Information Literacy
IL-FLC	Information Literacy Faculty Learning Community
IMVL	Information, Media, and Visual literacy
ML	Media Literacy
PIL	Project Information Literacy
WASC	Western Association of Schools and Colleges
WP	Writing Proficiency

Introduction

Of the five highlighted core competencies at Stanislaus State, four have explicit and long-term inclusion in the university curriculum through general education and other requirements: critical thinking, oral communication, quantitative reasoning, and written communication. The fifth, information literacy (IL), is present but has not been clearly articulated or integrated in the general education, baccalaureate, or graduate curricula in a carefully designed manner to ensure that all students receive adequate instruction in IL.

While IL, previously referred to as Information Competence, has been increasingly prominent in the last two decades in the CSU system, it has not been accorded the same degree of import as the other long-standing core competencies. It is a given that 21st-century students have grown up and been educated in an information age that both empowers and disempowers individuals through the immediate access to a vast store of both valid and spurious information; indeed, much of the information is pushed to students rather than them seeking it out. Head notes that “the information landscape has shifted from one of scarcity of resources to abundance and overload” (“Project” 473). The recent attention to fake news and misinformation campaigns is not novel in history, but it has helped to refocus educators on the fundamental role that IL plays in the function of the university to prepare critically aware citizens able to navigate a limitless mass of conflicting and algorithmically targeted information they encounter daily.

As part of this renewed emphasis at Stanislaus and in response to the designation by our accreditor, WASC, of IL as a core competency, the Senate Executive Committee and the Associate Vice-President for Academic Affairs charged a Faculty Learning Community (FLC) to:

- Define Information Literacy;
- Develop assessment method/criteria for assessment;
- Develop/identify sample assignments for pilot implementation;
- Individually implement the course assignment and apply assessment method/criteria;
- Share findings with FLC and, if necessary, revise the assessment method;

- Forward recommendations about the assessment method/criteria and pilot analysis to faculty governance for review and approval.

During two years of work, the five members of the IL-FLC also completed a broad review of the literature related to IL and a survey of campus students, staff, faculty, and administration.

The following sections report on the ACRL Standards and new Framework, the status of IL at Stanislaus, a selective review of the literature, local consultation, and recommendations. The work of the IL-FLC will continue, but the group feels it is appropriate to forward recommendations concerning recognition of IL as a core competency and initial implementation work.

IL Instruction at Stanislaus State:

In addition to faculty teaching information literacy, librarians provide an array of information literacy services to accompany library information resources. Faculty can request research instruction sessions led by a librarian. MDIS/SSCI 3005, Research and Information Literacy, taught online by library faculty, is a required course for students in History and Social Sciences, focusing primarily on the 2006 standards and academic research essays. Students also can learn about research at the reference desk, or they can chat 24/7, email, or make an appointment with a librarian for in-depth instruction. Research guides and tutorials are also available from the library homepage for students to serve themselves.

Programs have an option to select a general education learning outcome geared to IL as a choice in the certification or recertification of area GE Area A3 courses. ENGL1007, a First-Year Composition course satisfying A2, has an explicit learning outcome of IL.

A review of program curriculum maps indicated some coverage of IL in Communication Studies, English, and Psychology/Child Development. Survey results (discussed later) indicated a broader range of courses include some instruction in IL.

Review of Selected Sources

Any discussion of IL must acknowledge the work done by the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) on Standards and a Framework. The ACRL has provided definitions of information literacy for librarians and faculty to share. The ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education (2000) defined information literacy as a set of learning goals and detailed outcomes that followed the research process, including identifying information needs, researching, critical thinking, and using information ethically and legally. The Association has also worked with faculty to develop discipline-specific information literacy rubrics.

Recently, ACRL has developed a more conceptual Framework for Information Literacy (2016), which takes a different approach. Instead of standards, it delineates six concepts that help librarians and faculty teach about the information ecosystem and its use. The concepts are

distinct but related, and they can apply to both introductory level and advanced discipline-specific instruction. They are not written as assessable learning goals, but rather leave to faculty and librarians flexibility to apply them for their particular situations. They include emphasis on metacognition, on understanding how information is created and consumed, and on empowering students to engage with information effectively in academia and their lives. The table below juxtaposes the common elements of the Standards and the section headings of the Framework that center on, “a cluster of interconnected core concepts, with flexible options for implementation, rather than on a set of standards or learning outcomes, or any prescriptive enumeration of skills.”

ACRL Standards (2000)	ACRL Framework (2016)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Determining information requirements 2. Locating and retrieving information 3. Evaluating information 4. Organizing information 5. Incorporating information ethically 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Authority Is Constructed and Contextual 2. Information Creation as a Process 3. Information Has Value 4. Research as Inquiry 5. Scholarship as Conversation 6. Searching as Strategic Exploration

At the same time, the ACRL expanded its definition of information literacy:

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.

We believe the Framework and expanded definition present concepts that better illustrate the complexity of IL and that will better facilitate cooperative work between librarians and disciplinary faculty. The Standards have broader application, but their use has been primarily employed in academic writing, for example research essays students write at all levels of their post-secondary education as they learn to incorporate other, authoritative voices into their writing. Also the Standards were developed at a time when more attention was required for using digital technology per se (locating and retrieving information were more complex tasks). Further, at that time, a higher percentage of information students worked with as news, knowledge, or truth in “real life” was more thoroughly filtered or vetted: “It wasn’t so long ago that we had common touchstones for the news, the morning paper, the evening broadcast” (Cohen). Different expectations for what constitutes a fact or truth are at play. Cowan characterizes this change well, noting that “what had once taken place only in research contexts became the activity of our daily lives” (23). The Framework encompasses the Standards, opens the view of IL far beyond the research essay, and is designed to more fully prepare students as academics *and* as citizens. The Standards may, of course, be used by

individual faculty to cover more than the academic essay; however, the first three headings of the Framework -- Authority Is Constructed and Contextual, Information Creation as a Process, and Information Has Value -- plop a more nuanced and useful approach to IL right into the 21st century. The shift is also a shift to threshold concepts that offer to students new perspectives, a core function of higher education. This is a very positive development for students and a very timely one as well.

On January 1, 2018, A. G. Sulzberger was named the new publisher of the New York Times newspaper. In "A Note from Our New Publisher," Sulzberger opined:

The business model that long supported the hard and expensive work of original reporting is eroding, forcing news organizations of all shapes and sizes to cut their reporting staffs and scale back their ambitions. *Misinformation is rising and trust in the media is declining as technology platforms elevate clickbait, rumor and propaganda over real journalism, and politicians jockey for advantage by inflaming suspicion of the press. Growing polarization is jeopardizing even the foundational assumption of common truths, the stuff that binds a society together.* [emphasis added]

In 2016 researchers at Stanford University published a study based on responses from "Middle school, high school and college students in 12 states [who] were asked to evaluate the information presented in tweets, comments and articles. More than 7,800 student responses were collected" (Wineburg). Responsive to both Sulzberger's concerns and the ACRL Framework, the researchers developed an instrument to study "civic online reasoning," the ability to analyze and evaluate the many different forms of communication and varieties of messages that daily bombard students through various media, including social media. The researchers are careful to note that "[w]e did not design our exercises to shake out a grade or make hairsplitting distinctions between a "good" and "better" answer. Rather, we sought to establish a reasonable bar, a level of performance we hoped was in reach of most middle school, high school, and college students." Nonetheless, the researchers were able to summarize their findings in one word: *bleak*. The *bleak* is not in reference just to a lack that impedes student progress or achievement; *bleak* references a lack that weakens as Sulzberger said "the stuff that binds a society together."

The Stanford study looks at a swath of information that fits well within the ACRL Framework, and the researchers' focus addresses *media* literacy (ML) as a vital core of IL; one of the three overall tasks was evaluating claims made on social media. Cowan also argues throughout her essay that IL, where institutionalized, has been institutionalized as a programmatic outcome that bends to the central role of librarians and the contours of the disciplines and that IL must be rethought in a context where wrestling with information has become more complex and challenging due to "dramatic shifts in the way information is produced and disseminated" (28). We routinely posit that our "digital native" students must be "media savvy," but do we assume that savvy comes from just being a digital native? The study would argue otherwise. And to what degree has our understanding of IL as an institutional competency and outcome embraced media literacy? Koltay cites the European Commission's 2007 definition, "Media

literacy is generally defined as the ability to access the media, to understand and to critically evaluate different aspects of the media and media content and to create communications in a variety of contexts” and Duncan’s:

Media literacy is concerned with developing an informed and critical understanding of the nature of the mass media, the techniques used by them, and the impact of these techniques. It is education that aims to increase students’ understanding and enjoyment of how the media work, how they produce meaning, how they are organized, and how they construct reality. Media literacy also aims to provide students with the ability to create media products. (213)

This definition provides a more robust view of IL through the study of media itself and how varied techniques affect audiences, and these components align well with the first three elements of the ACRL Framework (see page 2). Beyond investigating how media shapes our values and beliefs, the definition also adds a focus on creation not just of an academic research essay but of varied genres of media to inform and persuade. For life in an increasingly visual society, *creation* must entail more than the alphabetic text, for example, incorporating visual literacy as a pronounced part of IL.

In the developing post-truth/fake news era, the Pew Research Center in “Distinguishing Between Factual and Opinion Statements in the News” reported on a 2018 survey of 5035 American adults to examine “whether members of the public can recognize news as factual --something that’s capable of being proved or disproved by objective evidence-- or as opinion that reflects the beliefs and values of whoever expressed it.” Making such distinctions is a fundamental and critical skill in evaluating and using information. Three key findings of the study inform IL/ML. First, that only 26% of respondents could correctly identify 5 factual statements as factual and 35% could correctly identify 5 opinion statements as opinion.¹ Whether we think students entering the university should have learned such critical skills elsewhere and sooner, the study demonstrates that a striking majority of American adults cannot successfully sort fact from opinion.

The second key finding of the Pew study was that those most successful at discriminating between fact and opinion shared three characteristics: “high levels of political awareness [high confidence] in using digital devices . . . [and] a lot of trust in the information from national news organizations.” Levels of political awareness and digital savvy are grounded in regular exposure to news and regular use of digital tools. Project Information Literacy notes that “students are driven by efficiency and predictability in order to manage and control the vast amounts of information” (Head 472). In these results we can see that the fundamental skills of IL are also connected to students’ future roles as an informed, voting citizenry. The third,

¹ A part of the study also dealt with borderline statements; the researchers, then, saw the factual and opinion statement as clearly fact or opinion. Examples of factual and opinion statements used in the study:

Fact: *Health care costs per person in the U.S. are the highest in the developed world.*
Opinion: *Democracy is the greatest form of government.*

related finding is that respondents' values, beliefs, and political biases affect whether they perceive a statement as fact or opinion. For example, when respondents disagreed with statements, they were also more likely to "incorrectly classif[y] factual statements as opinions." Though these findings may well not be precisely indicative for curricular and pedagogical design, they do indicate the need for a combination of broad domain knowledge, repeated instruction and use of technologies deployed in instruction, and an awareness of the effects of one's biases as elements of IL.

In six studies Project Information Literacy (PIL) collected data from over 11,000 students at 57 colleges and universities. Director of PIL, Alison Head, asserts "where PIL has explored new territory is with their typology about finding context -- searching for meaning that facilitates interpretation so that results may be had" (Head 476). Evaluating information from many forms of media in a more complex information landscape, recognizing how one's own biases shape evaluation, and sorting fact from opinion are all critical abilities in finding that appropriate context whether the result that "may be had" is a well-reasoned essay or a well-reasoned vote. Finding context is also clearly a threshold concept to provide students a new perspective.

Head also reports, specific to the workplace, in "Learning Curve: How College Graduates Solve Information Problems Once They Join the Workplace" based on interviews with 23 US employers that

when we specifically asked employers to assess how adept these new graduates are at finding and using information, many noted that the online proficiency they had prized at the recruiting stage turned out, in many cases, to be dismayingly limited. Most employers needed and expected more from their new hires, including research done more rigorously and more flexibly. (11)

Survey information

In February of 2017 we surveyed Stanislaus students, faculty, administration, and staff asking them to describe the markers of information literate people (i.e., what do information literate people do well?). For faculty we also asked if they engaged in IL instruction, in which courses, and how it was assessed. We also asked students if they received instruction on IL and how it was incorporated in class. Of the 1029 respondents, 765 were students, 124 were faculty, 22 were administrators, and 118 were staff. IL-FLC members engaged in an informal qualitative analysis over the summer of 2017. Results of this analysis are below.

We found that respondents generally agreed with the standard definitions/markers of information literacy (e.g., ACRL), including accessing information, evaluating it, and using it to answer questions. Respondents also cited these skills as being taught and assessed when included as part of class instruction. In addition to the standard components, several respondents also described flexibility (ability to take into account multiple viewpoints, openness to change) as part of IL. A handful of respondents also included computer/technology competency as part of IL. Further, some included communication as part of IL, and written and oral reports were the most frequently cited modes of assessing IL.

Based on survey results from faculty, IL is included in some form in all majors. It is mostly included in upper division coursework but is also included in lower division and graduate coursework. Faculty noted that when they taught IL they specifically taught students how to locate sources, evaluate information, and incorporate sources into their assignments. Students cited research strategies as the most frequent form of IL instruction they received. Also cited were critical thinking and basic literacy (ability to read and write), and to a lesser extent determining the reliability/validity of a source and using information. Faculty indicated evaluating and using primary sources (and, to a lesser extent, finding primary sources) as the primary skills they assessed when they assessed IL.

Respondents indicated that they thought that IL was important to learn. When asked about how to better integrate IL as a core competency for Stan State students, respondents suggested better information/communication about it to students, integrating it into the curriculum, integrating it into class instruction, designating/creating specific courses in the curriculum, including IL skills as requirements of coursework, and teaching faculty how to implement IL assignments and assessments.

Other Local consultation

At the outset of its work, the IL-FLC, through facilitation by the deans, met with the chairs or executive group of each college to discuss IL, to request placement of IL on departmental meeting agendas, and to offer to attend department meetings. Many of the elements covered above were also parts of those discussions. An additional point the IL-FLC found important from these meetings was that visual literacy² is an important strand of IL. Since the early 1990s, Gunther Kress (right) and other scholars have documented the turn to the visual and the increasing percentage of meaning carried by visuals in texts, that images are no longer considered mere supplements to the written texts but are important communicators and persuaders in their own right. Few would deny that our society/culture and politics are ever more visually oriented, and it follows that instruction in critical scrutiny and creation of images and other visual elements is a responsibility of the university.



Takings/Findings

Foremost the IL-FLC found that there is an awareness of IL/ML at Stanislaus, that there is some ambiguity about the meaning of the term(s), and that there is recognition that IL is an important competency for our students. While faculty reported teaching IL in over 100 courses ranging from lower-division to graduate, many faculty also questioned whether what they were teaching was indeed IL. Additionally, review of curriculum maps showed little systematic mapping of IL outcomes linked to general education, baccalaureate, and graduate learning goals. Assessment of IL is occurring in individual courses, primarily focused on traditional

² Brief overviews: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visual_literacy
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visual_rhetoric
Also see the *Journal of Visual Literacy* (published 1998-current)

components with little evidence of media literacy elements or program-level assessment. However, the approved alignment of General Education areas and goals does foresee program assessment of IL linked to Area 2 and Area 3 courses.

The IL-FLC ground a proposed local definition of IL in two ways: First the definition draws on the traditional markers of IL combined with markers drawn from local consultation. In addition to the markers, the review of literature -- especially the initial elements of the ACRL Framework together with the Stanford study -- and local consultation indicate that *media literacy* as well as *visual literacy* should be explicitly recognized as a necessary constituents of information literacy; we should consider information, media, and visual literacy (IMVL) as our overarching term.

The suggestions for integration of IL by survey respondents were unsurprising. From that advice, listed earlier, the recommendations on integration which follow will focus on how IL tasks and skills may be fitted into the curriculum, how those skills and abilities may be assessed at and above the course level, and why authentic professional development for faculty will be necessary.

Recommendations and rationales

1. *The University explicitly include media and visual literacy as elements through the label Information, Media, and Visual Literacy and adopt the following critical markers:*
 - determine information requirements
 - access required information
 - *approach information skeptically*
 - evaluate information and sources critically
 - use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
 - access and use information ethically and legally
 - *take into account multiple views*
 - *practice an empathetic understanding of conflicting views*

*italicized items are local additions to the ACRL Standards

Rationales: To ensure that visual and media literacy are recognized as vital aspects of information literacy, the reference to the core competency should incorporate those terms, hence, *Information, Media, and Visual Literacy*. The listed markers are a combination of the traditional ACRL standards, which have remained fairly stable over a long period, combined with other traits recommended by the IL-FLC after extensive review and reflection.

2. *The University explicitly recognize IMVL as a valued core competency necessary to the development of our students as scholars, professionals, and citizens.*

Rationale: Our accreditor recommends IL as a core competency; student, faculty, and staff responses demonstrate recognition of the importance of IL; and the climate of political divisiveness and “fake news” highlights the need for an information-literate citizenry. However, IL is not emphasized and integrated into the curriculum to the same extent as other core competencies such as oral and written communication, critical thinking, and quantitative reasoning. An important step toward more visible institutionalization is a formal statement recognizing IL as a core competency. Further, recognition of greater emphasis on IMVL as an urgent need is warranted.

3. *That each department on campus specify which course(s) address elements of IMVL.*

Rationale: Through self-report on the survey, 36 disciplines reported having 1 or more courses with IL as a learning outcome. The reports, though, were from individual faculty and it is likely that not all disciplines with such courses were captured.

Department/disciplinary discussions of courses that include IMVL learning outcomes are needed to verify that the program does indeed offer such instruction. Some departments may question whether they address the outcomes, and others may question their role vis-a-vis IMVL. And the IL-FLC will be available for consultation with all programs. Departmental review will also show whether a program provides instruction at the upper division, an important consideration given that WASC is concerned with assessment of core competencies at or near graduation. It seems that many programs are already addressing aspects of IMVL in upper-division Writing Proficiency and/or research methods courses.

4. *A structure with primary emphasis on media and visual literacy at the lower division as appropriate to the given discipline, especially in general education courses, and primary emphasis on the traditional elements of the IL Standards for academic research essays at the upper-division as appropriate to the given discipline.*

Rationales: In six studies Project Information Literacy (PIL) analyzed both “course-related research” and “everyday life research”³ processes of students. This recommendation proposes that CSU Stanislaus also emphasize those everyday research processes. This would be a departure from more traditional views of IL as centered on preparation of academic research essays. Rather than seeing certain general education courses as sites of basic preparation for upper-division research essays, IMVL should be focused on the generalizable life skills that will endure across students’ lifetimes and on a broader spectrum of media that confronts students day to day. This is not to say that the two aims are mutually exclusive as the proposed markers apply across IMVL. This can be analogized to the vertical writing proficiency

³ *Course-related research* includes all research from assignment to final submission of assignment; *everyday life research* is “the research that students conduct for personal reasons and for use in their everyday lives.”

program at Stanislaus where lower-division GE A2 and A3 courses focus on writing skills generalizable to most writing situations (e.g., focus, development, organization, control of language), and upper-division Writing Proficiency courses additionally emphasize the writing skills of a given discipline.

Additionally, we hope that at the lower-division a broad range of courses contribute to media and visual literacy instruction. And, the idea of “primary emphasis” is meant to curb neither Standards-based instruction in lower-division courses nor visual and media literacy in upper-division courses.

5. *Professional development for faculty including mutually informative work bringing together librarians and disciplinary faculty.*

Rationales: Conceptions of broad terms such as IMVL vary from group to group and context to context. In the pilot survey, several faculty responded that they were unsure whether their instruction addressed IMVL. Collegial support for faculty has been important and successful for other core competencies; a clear example is the support provided to faculty in developing Writing Proficiency courses. A necessary step for centering IMVL in the curriculum is professional development that should facilitate understanding concepts, integrating concepts into current assignments or development of new assignments, and assessment. GREAT funding has been approved for a spring 2019 semester-long workshop with a small number of instructors for integrating IMVL into assignments in lower-division composition classes, and this will serve as a pilot and model for broader professional development.

Very important to a professional development plan is the role of librarians who have a long history of working with the ACRL Standards and are knowledgeable about the recently-developed [Framework for Information Literacy](#). The Framework embraces the standards while moving beyond them, noting that a “rapidly changing higher education environment, along with the dynamic and often uncertain information ecosystem in which all of us work and live, require new attention to be focused on foundational ideas about that ecosystem.” The IL-FLC believes the Framework also can redirect the work of faculty and librarians into a richer experience, one where, for example, library and disciplinary expertise mutually contribute to understanding and teaching the Framework’s initial frame, “Authority is Constructed and Contextual.” That is, one can easily see how disciplinary perspectives on authority and context will inform the development of more specialized library presentations and modules, especially for use in upper-division courses. And, as has been the case with work on the ACRL standards, librarians will play a vital role in greater application of the standards to media and visual literacy.⁴

⁴ For example developing modules and curricula for instruction covering “how authority is constructed” or investigating “fake news” seem fruitful areas for collaborative work.

6. *Program-level assessment based on a flexible rubric that allows for elaboration and alteration by the program. (See the draft rubric below.)*

Rationale: Many rubrics exist for assessment of IMVL, including a VALUE rubric.⁵ The IL-FLC proposes a flexible rubric which would provide for elaboration at the program (or instructor) level. A commonplace statement in assessment discussions is that assessment must be authentic and meaningful to have validity for students, faculty, and other users. The incorporation of local elements into the rubric and the openness to elaboration on all elements invites programs to think more freely and more carefully about IMVL. This recommendation assumes that program-level assessment aligned to GE, baccalaureate, and graduate learning goals will suffice for accreditation purposes.

In the spring 2019 GREAT-funded workshops with faculty aimed at better integration of IMVL into ENGL1007 courses, part of the group's work will be to flesh out general and elaborated indicators (Advanced, Developing, Elementary).

Finally, it is also important to note two things the IL-FLC does not recommend. First, we do not recommend an IMVL graduation requirement similar to the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR/WP). Second we do not recommend a specific, generic IMVL course required of students.⁶

⁵ See <https://www.aacu.org/value-rubrics>

⁶ However, we do want to be clear that we support courses such as MDIS/SSCI 3005; we do not make a recommendation for such courses as a **requirement** for all students.

DRAFT rubric

	Advanced	Developing	Elementary
Determine information requirements			
<i>Program Elaboration</i>			
Access the needed information			
<i>Program Elaboration</i>			
Evaluate information and its sources critically			
<i>Program Elaboration</i>			
Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose			
<i>Program Elaboration</i>			
Access and use information ethically and legally			
<i>Program Elaboration</i>			
Approach information skeptically			
<i>Program Elaboration</i>			
Take into account multiple views			
<i>Program Elaboration</i>			
Practice an empathetic understanding of conflicting views			
<i>Program Elaboration</i>			

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