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## 1. Information Literacy in context

There are several different definitions of information literacy. CILIP defines information literacy in the following way (2018):

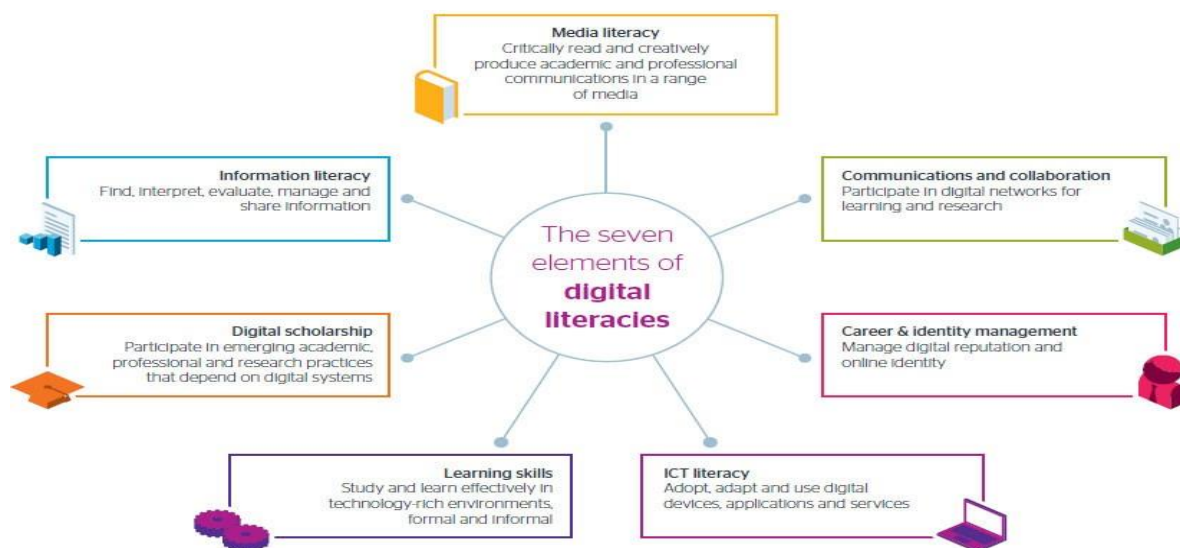
*“Information literacy is the ability to think critically and make balanced judgements about any information we find and use. It empowers us as citizens to develop informed views and to engage fully with society.”*

This definition focuses on individuals as consumers of information and indicates the necessity for people to be able to critically appraise information to participate fully in an information-based society. The ability to distinguish between reliable, authentic information and false and spurious information is also a core component of criticality, an attribute that university education seeks to develop in learners. The active learning and social and collaborative learning approaches that underlie the University of South Wales 2030 strategy are based on constructivist and social constructivist learning theories which view learning as participative and socially collaborative activity. This means learners need to be able to do more than consume information in their learning. Information literacy incorporates finding, using, managing, synthesizing, and communicating information, which is reflected in SCONUL’s definition of information literacy (2011).

*“Information literate people will demonstrate an awareness of how they gather, use, manage, synthesise and create information and data in an ethical manner and will have the information skills to do so effectively.”*

This definition aligns with the skills demanded by active and collaborative learning methods such as challenge-based learning, where learners need to develop the ability to create, use and communicate information, as well as find and critically evaluate information.

Information literacy forms part of a wider digital literacy skills set. JISC defines digital literacy as “the capabilities which fit someone for living, learning and working in a digital society” (2014). The JISC report *Deepening digital know-how: building digital talent* shows the increasingly integral nature of digital literacy skills to employment by illustrating how they apply to those employed in the post-compulsory education sector (2015).



Digital and information literacies underpin the process of learning to learn and support the transition from higher education to independent learning and the workplace. They enable the harnessing of new technologies to keep pace with current practice in subject areas, education and research methods. We want all our students to learn and study successfully and to acquire the information literacy skills that will enable them to participate fully in society as well as develop skills that are valued by employers. Skills that include:

- Finding information online quickly
- Making judgements about the validity of information sources
- Selecting suitable information or evidence to support decision making.
- Being able to research effectively.
- Keeping up to date with developments in your field

### 1.1. Benefits of delivering Information Literacy for students and for the University.

- Raise academic standards for all students.
- Improve student satisfaction via more efficient and successful research for assignments.
- Contribute to improved degree attainment.
- Contribute to improved retention levels.
- Contribute to closing the attainment gap between students from different backgrounds.
- Contribute to development of transferable skills valued by employers.
- Prepare for entry into higher degrees and research.
- Develop life skills: the academic strands of IL are part of a larger skill set e.g. managing

your digital footprint, avoiding online fraud and using the internet effectively to save time and money.

- Meet Professional body's validation criteria e.g. the Solicitors Regulation Authority.
- Meet QAA Honours Degree Subject Benchmarks.

## **1.2. Key Drivers**

### **1.2.1. USW 2030 Vision and Information Literacy**

The USW 2030 strategy is focused on producing graduates with the skills required by employers in the workplace and in the community. Graduates need to be information literate to flourish in the workplace and society. Problem and challenge-based learning requires students to find, critically evaluate and synthesize information and develop advanced information literacy skills. Faculty Librarians can work with course teams and students to facilitate the development of information literacy skills at appropriate points in problem and challenge-based learning. They can work with groups of students and assist them in developing strategies to collect, assess and synthesise the information needed to address the problem or challenge they have been set. This will help students develop the information literacy skills they will need both to complete their academic work as well as information skills that are relevant to solving real-life problems in the outside world. To support workplace, blended and online learning Faculty Librarians can facilitate active learning sessions face-to-face, online or using a blended approach. Asynchronous online information literacy materials based on active learning principles are also available for students to use on an individual basis.

### **1.2.2. Academic Blueprint**

The **Academic Blueprint** for all courses at University of South Wales advocates a single consistent approach to course design with the objective of ensuring quality of provision, achieving CPIs and KPIs specifically linked to the student experience and employability. The library is acknowledged as being an integral part of this objective in the section 'Immersive learning in the first six weeks, Year 1 & 3', where reference is made to providing all undergraduate students with an induction to the library.

This will be achieved both by timetabled classroom-based sessions, library tours, and asynchronous online materials.

### **1.2.3. Digitally Enabled Active Learning (DEAL)**

[DEAL](#) allows Library Services to provide a learning experience that is responsive to current and future changes.

Library Services follows the DEAL principles:

#### **1. Build social learning communities**

Faculty Librarians offer opportunities for informal learning via social-media promotions and informal sessions where students can meet library staff. Library Services mark university, regional and national events through library displays and social media campaigns. This ensures that Library Services are a constant presence (White, 2020) in the student journey through USW.

#### **2. Facilitate enquiry over instruction during Learner/Tutor interactions**

The Faculty Librarians strive to create an atmosphere where students can apply the skills learned during a session either simultaneously or afterwards. Most of our sessions and tutorials entail practical elements and activities that encourage participation.

#### **3. Provide inclusive, accessible and flexibly accessed instructive digital material which builds understanding and engagement**

Academic Services (Library Services) have created an asynchronous offer of online tutorials, videos and library guides which students can access and complete at their own pace and at times that work around their own personal and university commitments.

#### **4. Support high-quality personal interactions with academic and professional service staff**

The Faculty Librarians take part in several activities during the year to allow students to interact with the library in a more personal way. Faculty Librarians offer individual appointments to students for guidance on how to navigate library resources and are fully embedded in the courses they support by offering sessions tailored to the needs of specific assignments and modules.

#### **5. Offer appropriately challenging active learning opportunities both individually and with peers**

Faculty Librarians can advise on how students can develop the ability to find, evaluate, synthesize and communicate information as part of active learning activities and facilitate group and individual sessions to encourage the development of these skills. Information literacy sessions delivered by Faculty Librarians to groups and individuals can also incorporate active learning techniques. The library's online tutorials have been designed using active learning principles.

#### **6. Respond to our learners and our ethos of 'Students as partners'**

Faculty Librarians can work with lecturers and students to navigate the information environment in their subject area to find solutions to the issues they are investigating.

#### **7. Scaffold learning and make progress visible to learners as they develop**

The library offers two information literacy sessions to all students. *Library Skills: the next step* builds on information skills developed in *Library Skills: Getting Started* and provides a scaffolded approach to introducing information literacy concepts. Faculty Librarians can advise on scaffolding information literacy skills within a course and deliver sessions that enable students to develop their information literacy skills over the duration of their course.

#### **8. Ensure access to high-quality online support services**

Faculty Librarians can deliver live online information literacy sessions or pre-recorded information literacy materials aimed at specific groups of students. Additionally, the library website contains information about library services and resources available including asynchronous online tutorials on individual aspects of information literacy. The library has a 24/7 virtual chat service and Faculty Librarians offer online one-to-one appointments.

### **1.2.4. Graduate attributes**

The University of South Wales's 2030 strategy aims to maximize graduate success and opportunities. [University of South Wales Graduate Attributes](#) specify the following attributes as those that will be acquired and developed by University of South Wales graduates:

**Digital literacy:** Information literacy is an integral part of the larger digital literacy skill set which equips people to exploit the benefits and opportunities of living in a digital society.

**Commercial awareness and Innovation and Enterprise:** The ability to find accurate, reliable and up-to-date information about business and enterprise activities is essential for the development of commercial awareness and to identify gaps in the market where innovations can be made.

**Leadership and Project Management:** Effective leadership and project management is dependent on acquiring relevant information and being able to manage information in a professional way.

**Communication:** Knowing how to communicate information ethically, securely and within the law across multiple, diverse channels of communication is essential in an information-based society.

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## 2. Our Information Literacy Offer

Our Information Literacy offer defines the type of information and digital literacy awareness practices and skills, which Faculty Librarians can support at USW.

Our Information Literacy offer is informed by the scaffolding principles proposed by Shaw (ca. 2020):

- **Procedural learning:** students will learn how to use the basic features of library databases.
- **Conceptual learning:** students will learn what information needs they have and how to organise their search strategies around those needs.
- **Strategic learning:** students will understand the value of evaluating and reflecting on their own search strategies.
- **Metacognitive learning:** students will be asked to reflect on what they have learned about Information Literacy.

The library has defined a minimum standard for three distinct types of information literacy sessions, delivered face-to-face or virtually, and supported by a range of online and print materials, including video tutorials and subject guides. If assignment briefs are shared with Faculty Librarians, they can work in partnership with colleagues to tailor these sessions to meet the individual requirements of the assignment.

### 2.1. Library Skills: Getting Started

This session is aimed at students who are new to the University. It is envisaged that it will be delivered to students during the first term of their course. This session can be tailored to specific assignments if the assignment brief is shared with the Faculty Librarian in advance of the session.

**Aim:** To welcome new students, introduce them to the library facilities and resources and to how to use FINDit to find information for their assignments.

#### **Students will understand:**

- How the library service operates, including where the libraries are located, what facilities and services are offered and how help can be obtained.
- The key characteristics of different types of information (e.g. book/journal/report, print /electronic, primary / secondary, freely available / subscriber only / invisible web) that are relevant to academic study in their subject area.
- The advantages and disadvantages of using different types of information sources in academic study.
- The importance of following referencing standards.

#### **Students will be able to:**

- Identify suitable information sources in their subject area for academic study.
- Identify FINDit as the key tool for finding information from library services.
- Find book(s) and journal article(s) from a reading list using FINDit.
- Use basic search techniques on FINDit to find relevant learning materials, eg. use filters to refine a search, identify appropriate keywords.
- Evaluate information using appropriate evaluation criteria.
- Record details of sources of information used.

## 2.2. Library Skills: The Next Step

An in-depth session focused on preparing students for undertaking a substantial piece of individual research, such as a dissertation, project, report or literature review. This session can be tailored to specific assignments if the assignment brief is shared with the Faculty Librarian in advance of the session.

**Aim:** To extend students' skills in systematically searching academic information sources for up-to-date information.

### Students will understand:

- Searching for information in a defined subject area is most effective when it is planned and is approached in a systematic manner.
- A research topic can be described in different ways and from different perspectives.
- Common search features can be used across databases and on the Internet.
- Information needs to be critically appraised for reliability and validity.

### Students will be able to:

- Develop a search strategy to find information on a defined subject.
- Identify keywords that describe a research topic accurately.
- Select and use a wide range of sources appropriate to the discipline from the library and beyond.
- Carry out a subject search within a subject database.
- Use common search features in FINDit, individual databases and the internet to find relevant information, eg. truncation, wildcards and filters.
- Make use of the personalisation features (such as search alerts) available through library databases and understand how these features can make the research process more streamlined and effective.
- Interpret database results (e.g. bibliographic or full text), and use results functionality (e.g. sorting, saving, exporting).
- Apply appropriate quality/evaluation criteria to critically evaluate information from any source to establish reliability and validity.
- Use information found ethically and responsibly.

## 2.3. Asynchronous Offer

As White points out (2020), the most important aspect of learning of any kind is to create a sense of presence. Bearing in mind USW's target of expanding its international student body through partnerships and the overall objective of increasing distance and blended learning across all courses, it is important for Library Services to offer asynchronous learning materials that suits students' needs and circumstances (Bali and Meier, 2014) and ensures that the library team is present throughout their learning journey.

Library Services can offer and have offered asynchronous learning in several ways. For example:

- **Online tutorials:** we have designed a [series of online tutorials](#) that introduce library users to the main skills needed to use library resources, such as finding books and articles.
- **Library guides:** we have created [library guides](#) with generic advice on using the library and subject-specific guidance.
- **Audio-visual materials:** we have a [Youtube channel](#) with bite-size videos on using library tools. Faculty Librarians can also be asked to produce subject-specific audio-visual materials to help students navigate resources for their courses.
- **Online guidance:** Library Services provides a 24/7 online chat enquiry service. Faculty Librarians can be added to discussion boards in Blackboard modules to answer queries about library resources and services.

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