

# Information Literacy Student Learning Goals

Musselman Library, Gettysburg College | 2026

Information literacy (IL) skills are essential for success in the academic, personal, and future professional lives of Gettysburg College students. In collaboration with teaching faculty, librarians at Musselman Library serve as active partners in the development of these skills through one-on-one interactions with students at the research help desk, individual research consultations, and course-integrated instruction.

## What is Information Literacy?

Our IL instruction program is informed by the Association of College and Research Libraries' *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*, which has defined information literacy as: "...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."<sup>1</sup>

Our IL instruction program supports the College's stated curricular goals<sup>2</sup> — particularly the outcomes and guidelines for courses in the Gettysburg Seminars and First-Year Critical Skills sequence — as well as Middle States accreditation Standard III, Criterion 5b.<sup>3</sup>

## Foundations of Musselman Library's Information Literacy Program

- Student learning goals for information literacy are interconnected with the College's curricular goals.
- Information literacy is an integral part of both academic and "everyday life" research.
- Information literacy instruction and any subsequent activity must help to realize faculty learning goals at the course and department levels.
- Students should be given sequential opportunities to learn new information literacy abilities, to practice them, to reinforce them, and ultimately to master them.
- Above all, we emphasize the teaching of concepts over skills as a means to achieve our mission of educating information literate lifelong learners.

## Information Literacy and Gettysburg College Students

The student learning goals for information literacy, listed below, are informed by the six frames of The Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education. At Gettysburg, we have articulated six interrelated core information literacy concepts for our students: **scholarship as conversation, research as inquiry, searching as strategic exploration, authority is constructed and contextual, information creation as a process, and information has value.**

Student learning outcomes are identified under each concept. Rather than being prescriptive, these are meant to develop wider conversations on our campus about student learning and to provide a starting point when designing instruction sessions with librarians, assignments, and courses.

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<sup>1</sup> Association of College and Research Libraries, *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*, Chicago: ACRL, 2015, <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>

<sup>2</sup> Gettysburg College, *The Gettysburg Curriculum*, 2026, <https://www.gettysburg.edu/academic-programs/curriculum/>

<sup>3</sup> Middle States Commission on Higher Education, *Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation*, 14th ed., Wilmington, DE: MSCHE, 2013, <https://www.msche.org/standards/fourteenth-edition/>

## Six Core Information Literacy Concepts

### Scholarship as Conversation

Communities of scholars, researchers, or professionals engage in sustained discourse with new insights and discoveries occurring over time as a result of varied perspectives and interpretations.

By the end of the FY, a student should be able to:	The intermediate student should be able to:	The graduating senior should be able to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain how scholarship is a conversation in which meaning is created and debated by information creators and consumers over time</li> <li>• Explain how an issue may be represented by multiple perspectives and approaches</li> <li>• Recognize that information may be perceived differently based on the format in which it is presented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the contribution particular information sources make within an ongoing scholarly conversation</li> <li>• Engage with information in ways that demonstrate critical thinking and new understanding</li> <li>• Recognize that knowledge can be organized into disciplines that influence the way information is discovered and accessed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss role as a contributor to a scholarly conversation rather than simply as a consumer</li> <li>• Recognize that participation in a scholarly conversation is impacted by power and authority structures, prioritizing certain voices and perspectives</li> <li>• Contribute to a scholarly conversation at an appropriate level and venue (e.g., undergraduate research journal article, poster presentation, etc.)</li> </ul>

### Research as Inquiry

Research is iterative and depends upon asking increasingly complex or new questions whose answers in turn develop additional questions or lines of inquiry in any field. Searching for information is often nonlinear, requiring the evaluation of a range of information sources and the mental flexibility to pursue alternate avenues as new understanding develops.

By the end of the FY, a student should be able to:	The intermediate student should be able to:	The graduating senior should be able to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize that research is an iterative process that requires persistence, adaptability, and flexibility</li> <li>• Formulate research question of an appropriate scope for assignment or purpose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop research question(s) based on curiosity, information gaps, and/or conflicting information</li> <li>• Evaluate information and explore multiple perspectives while maintaining an open mind and critical stance</li> <li>• Create or utilize a system for organizing and managing information sources</li> <li>• Articulate how information decisions/choices are made</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpret, analyze, and synthesize information in order to form new knowledge</li> <li>• Determine an appropriate scope of investigation and apply advanced research strategies for the need, context, and type of inquiry</li> <li>• Communicate the value of curiosity-driven research</li> </ul>

## Searching as Strategic Exploration

Searching for information is often nonlinear, requiring the evaluation of a range of information sources and the mental flexibility to pursue alternate avenues as new understanding develops. It requires using various search strategies, depending on the sources, scope, and context of the information need.

By the end of the FY, a student should be able to:	The intermediate student should be able to:	The graduating senior should be able to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an effective search strategy by identifying key concepts or terms</li> <li>• Distinguish among information search tools (MUSCAT, article and citation databases, Google Scholar, AI tools, and others)</li> <li>• Employ strategies to broaden/narrow search results (Boolean operators, search filters, etc.)</li> <li>• Access a source by using different retrieval methods (e.g., call numbers, Get It button, interlibrary loan, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effectively apply advanced search skills within disciplinary search tools, including specialized subject headings or facets</li> <li>• Develop effective search prompts for different types of tasks</li> <li>• Identify information gaps or weaknesses and refine search strategies as necessary</li> <li>• Explain the interdisciplinary nature of research and how it impacts search strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine comprehensiveness of results by questioning the limits of search tools or strategies</li> <li>• Critically discuss the role search tools and systems play in learning, including the development of critical thinking and research skills</li> </ul>

## Authority is Constructed and Contextual

Information sources reflect their creators' expertise and credibility. Sources should be evaluated based on the information need, the context in which the information was created, and how the information will be used. Authority is constructed in that various communities may recognize different types of authority. It is contextual in that the information need may help to determine the level of authority required.

By the end of the FY, a student should be able to:	The intermediate student should be able to:	The graduating senior should be able to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critically examine information from various sources in order to evaluate accuracy, authority, currency, and point of view</li> <li>• Evaluate summaries, claims, arguments, and language presented by search tools and information sources</li> <li>• Identify usefulness and relevancy of information sources for an assignment or purpose</li> <li>• Recognize a scholarly, peer-reviewed article and identify its key components</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe different types of authority, such as subject expertise, experience, societal position, etc.</li> <li>• Identify indicators of authority recognized by disciplines, professions, and communities of practice</li> <li>• Develop a self-awareness of personal bias and worldview and explain how that influences information interpretation</li> <li>• Recognize the cultural, physical, or other context within which information is created and how that context impacts interpretation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate differing viewpoints encountered in the literature and determine whether or not to incorporate or reject these ideas</li> <li>• Develop own authoritative voice in a particular area and summarize the responsibilities this entails, including seeking accuracy and crediting the ideas of others</li> <li>• Recognize the traditional notions of authority within a discipline and seek underrepresented voices</li> </ul>

## Information Creation as a Process

Information in any format is produced to convey a message and is shared via a selected delivery method. The iterative processes of researching, creating, revising, and disseminating information vary, and the resulting product reflects these differences.

By the end of the FY, a student should be able to:	The intermediate student should be able to:	The graduating senior should be able to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distinguish among types of sources (e.g., books, journal articles, primary/secondary, scholarly/popular, etc.)</li> <li>• Describe the scholarly peer review process and how it impacts scholarly research</li> <li>• Use sources to support an argument or claim with evidence</li> <li>• Explain how sources may be perceived and valued differently based on their format as well as creation and dissemination processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articulate the capabilities and constraints of various processes of information creation within a discipline</li> <li>• Recognize that the information creation process may result in a range of information formats that vary by discipline</li> <li>• Select appropriate format (e.g., academic paper, digital project, poster, presentation) to communicate information based on audience and purpose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employ traditional and/or emerging processes (e.g., digital scholarship) of information creation and dissemination within a particular discipline</li> <li>• Determine preferred level of copyright permissions when publishing/sharing own work</li> </ul>

## Information Has Value

Information possesses several dimensions of value, including as a commodity, as a means of education, as a means to influence, and as a means of negotiating and understanding the world. Legal and socioeconomic interests influence information production, dissemination, and access.

By the end of the FY, a student should be able to:	The intermediate student should be able to:	The graduating senior should be able to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize when ideas need to be attributed to others and what is “common knowledge”</li> <li>• Identify citation elements and document sources accurately</li> <li>• Integrate the ideas of others through quoting and paraphrasing</li> <li>• Summarize College policy on academic integrity and the Honor Code, including how that policy applies to information and tool use for individual courses and assignments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distinguish among different disciplinary conventions for citation and communication</li> <li>• Recognize issues related to information commodification (e.g., filter bubbles and search result personalization)</li> <li>• Identify and discuss issues related to open access and fee-based resources</li> <li>• Articulate the purpose and distinguish characteristics of copyright, fair use, and the public domain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine information privilege and how the production and dissemination of information may impact issues of access or lack of access</li> <li>• Follow legal and ethical guidelines in gathering data and using information</li> <li>• Identify and discuss issues related to censorship, freedom of speech, and access to information</li> </ul>