**ACRL Framework and Supporting Information**

The ACRL Framework can be a little daunting for First-Year Students. This section breaks down each section and tries to put it in words and concepts that First-Year students can better handle. The original document is linked below as well.

[Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education](https://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework)

The American Library Association (ALA) defines it as a “set of abilities requiring individuals to “recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information” (ALA.org).

In layman’s terms: the ability to see a piece of information and know how to make sure it is the best, most comprehensive and correct form of information you have.

The Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) has created a framework for information literacy in Higher Education. The framework for information literacy is basically a set of ‘guides’ that allow us to understand how we engage with information. The framework has 6 structures or ‘frames’ in which we understand information.

They are:

* Authority is Constructed and Contextual
* Information Creation as a Process
* Information Has value
* Research as Inquiry
* Scholarship as Conversation
* Searching as Strategic Exploration

Some of them are obvious. Information has value? Of course it does. You wouldn’t be in a college classroom if it didn’t, but what does it mean that authority is constructed? What is scholarship?

Let’s go through the framework and try to break it down.

**Authority is Constructed and Contextual**

Breaking this concept down will make it easier to understand. Start with the word Authority.

At the root of the word authority is the word author, so let’s start there. Ask yourself, who wrote the piece of information you’re reading? Why are they writing? What stake do they have in the information they’re presenting? What are their credentials (you can google their name to learn more about them)? Who are they affiliated with: a university, a company? Are they trying to make a profit? These are important questions that need answers.

**Authority is Constructed**

Have you ever heard the phrase social constructs? Some people say gender is a social construct or language (written and spoken) is a construct. Constructed basically means humans made it up at some point to instill social order in their own communities (most pack animals do this, to an extent).

This means our social order is not part of the nature of existence,

nor is it derived from the laws of nature. A baby is not born understanding they should put on clothes when they go out in public. Nature doesn’t respect the weekend (ever have plans ruined because of rain?). In fact, social order is constructed by humans and is a human product (Berger & Luckmann, 2011).

When we say authority is constructed, we are saying individuals and society select who is given authority. Generally, we feel obligated to accept the legitimacy of authority because others accept it. However, too often we don’t realize that authority may be given or displayed in unexpected ways.

Let’s look at an example:

If aliens land on South Padre Island in Texas one summer, there will probably be many witnesses to the event. Someone with a PhD, like Neil Degrasse Tyson, might write an article about the extraterrestrial beings because he is an authority on the subject, and has written books and hosted TV shows about space. If he did write an article, it would likely be taken very seriously.

Additionally, a teenager was there and saw the aliens land, she recorded the event on her phone. The teenager has direct experience with the event. Should the teenager be taken seriously? In this example, both have authority to discuss the extraterrestrial beings because they both have a type of expertise, even though only one has a PhD in astrophysics.

We should not think someone with more education is inherently more trustworthy, or smarter, or has more authority all the time. Some people who are authorities on a subject are highly educated, some are not.

**The final word is Contextual**

The word contextual and its use is a little easier to understand. It basically means to understand something in a certain setting.

Here is an example.

If you go to the hospital and a medical doctor says she’s going to take out your appendix, you’re probably comfortable with that. If you go to the hospital and your Political Science professor tries to take out your appendix, you’re probably going to be a little suspicious.

Medical doctors have authority in the context of medicine. Political science doctors have authority in the context of political science.

This applies to authority through experience, too. If an engineer tells me what it’s like to be a 4th grade teacher, I’m not going to trust their authority. I will however trust a 4th grade teacher to tell me about teaching 4th grade.

Context is a critical factor when assessing authority, which means, the circumstances and situation in which we assign authority needs to be evaluated.

Here is another way to think about authority and context. It matters less who an author is than who an author is talking with, how the information is received, and the reasons an author might be engaged in the conversation. Authority is not a simple binary (either you have it, or you don’t), but is instead determined in context, in conversation, and in relationship with structures of power that [may] privilege some voices over others (Drabinsky, 2016).

Remember: Just because someone says something, doesn’t necessarily make it true. It’s ok to question the authority of someone to make a claim.

**Information Creation as a Process**

What does it mean to create information? It means just that. Every time you write an essay, you’re creating information. Every time you make a note about something you need from the grocery store; you are creating information. Every phone number you write down, every article you analyze that’s information creation.

Even though we make information willie-nillie, to begin understanding how to match information products to information needs we need process. If you are writing an essay about Shakespeare, and you include your grocery list in the middle of it, technically you have created information… but you have not created information that is needed in the context you are writing in.

Many of us are familiar with youtube and tiktok content creators. We all have our favorite video essayist to watch, or our favorite animal rescue, make-up artist telling true crime stories (etc) to watch. Trying to build content is a much larger ordeal than just accidentally taking a funny video that goes viral.

If you search “how to make a successful YouTube channel” you will get thousands of links with advice. But most of them boil down to Information creation as a process. They say things like “Be consistent when you post”, or “Research topics before you create the video”. They will suggest ways to set up a shot to make it look good. Next time you are watching your favorite creator on TikTok, try to figure out how they’ve organized their video?

Unfortunately, I can’t tell you EXACTLY what the process is to create information. The same process that your bestie uses to create make-up tutorials won’t work for you creating a persuasive speech. You should do the following:

* Make sure you are using GOOD, CREDIBLE information
* Make sure you are organizing the information in a way it makes sense
* Pay attention to the rhetorical triangle (who are you talking to, why are you talking to them and how are you going to talk to them to get their attention).

Funny story: we cover all these topics in this textbook! You might use the source we created for you to create your OWN information!

**Information Has Value**

What qualifies as value? Money, for sure. But isn’t it valuable when your friend tells you about an event where you can go see your favorite musician play? Or when a classmate reminds you that you have a test on Friday? Information has all different kinds of value.

One kind is monetary. Let’s say you write a book, and it gets published. People will pay money for your book. You might end up getting a better job opportunity because of your book. You might get some fame… people might want to buy the rights to your book to make an Oscar winning movie. That’s the obvious kind of value.

Information is also valuable at the societal level. When we want to move to a new area, we might ask our friends or neighbors if it’s a good neighborhood, or where the best restaurants are. We might ask if there is a lot of crime. If our friend says “yes, this place is CRIME CENTRAL!” it influences how we decide. Perhaps you choose not to move there. Perhaps you choose to move there but invest in some security. You are doing things you might not have done if you didn’t have that information before.

Another example, think about the information on food packages. If you are trying to eat healthier, when given the nutritional information, you might make a different decision about the food you buy. If you have food allergies, you might look to see if that is listed and if so, you probably won’t buy the product. If you accidentally eat something that does have an ingredient you are allergic to and end up in the emergency room, the information about what you ate is valuable to the doctors and nurses treating you.

Information can also have value if it’s used intentionally to misinform and deceive others. When this happens, information is defined as disinformation, that is, false information intended to mislead. Disinformation is often represented and expressed in fake news.

Fake news pretends to be accurate news but it’s deceptive; its

intention is to damage the reputation of a person, advance propaganda, or make money through advertising revenue. You’ve seen the links that say “You won’t believe what happened to Taylor Swift when she started eating this one food” then you click on the link and it’s just a long ad.

Fake news is significantly dangerous because intentionally creates social instability and division by spreading lies and distorting commonly shared truths. That’s why fake news is a real danger to global democracies which are based on truth. These harms undermine a democratic society’s capacity to engage in communication characterized by moral respect, logic, the use of facts, and democratic inclusion. So, if you value social stability, learn to value the truth of information.

On the other hand, if someone is trying to keep information hidden or secret, it’s probably a sign that the information they’re hiding is important, which is to say, valuable.

**Here are some links to visit to help you learn more about disinformation**

[The News Literacy Project](https://newslit.org/) – a nonprofit focused on helping people determine the credibility of news

[Snopes](https://www.snopes.com/) – an organization that investigates rumors and finds the truth through investigative reporting and evidence-based and contextualized analysis.

[The Bell Library News and Newspaper research guide](https://guides.library.tamucc.edu/c.php?g=89322&p=576214): a series of databases curated by the Bell library to centralize where you can find news information that is credible.

So, when information is valuable, we shouldn’t keep it to ourselves. We must use that information for the betterment of ourselves, our families and friends and our society. We do this by sharing the information and citing our sources.

**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is defined as taking someone else’s work and passing it off as your own. (OED). You’ve probably heard about plagiarism, and been told it’s bad, but you may never have realized just how bad it can be.

As a student of TAMUCC our code of conduct says you will use scholastic integrity when you are pursuing your education. Basically, you won’t cheat. But if you’re caught cheating, you can face consequences. You can learn more about academic misconduct [here](https://www.tamucc.edu/conduct-advocacy/conduct/academic-misconduct.php).

But it’s not just losing points on a class or being kicked out of college that you face. Remember: Information has value. Your reputation is information about you, and if your reputation is that you are a cheater, then it can have a negative impact with everyone you meet. Protect your reputation and cite your sources.

**Research as Inquiry**

Inquiry is another word for curiosity or questioning. Maybe a better title for this concept is “Research as Curiosity,” because it more accurately captures the way our human brains work.

When you think to yourself, “How old is Beyonce?” and you google it to find out her age, that’s research! You had a question (how old is Beyonce?), you applied a search strategy (googling “Beyonce age”) and you found an answer to the question. That’s it!

But it’s not all research can be. Even after your research question is answered, you may still have questions, so you go back to the inquiry step again and ask another question about your topic.

Sometimes we’re never really done even though we’ve answered the initial question and maybe even written an entire essay on the topic. If it’s a topic you’re interested in, you will keep asking and answering questions repeatedly.

If you’re really curious about Beyonce, you might think to yourself:

How old is Beyonce? Wait, really? Her skin looks amazing! What’s her skincare routine? When did she start making music? She was part of a group called Destiny’s Child and she’s acted in movies! Are any of her movie’s streaming

In this example, your questions lead you to answers which lead you to more questions and to more answers. Humans are naturally curious; we have an instinct to learn things and that drives us to ask questions. It’s all “Research as Inquiry.”

In short:

When you have a question, ask it.

When you’re genuinely interested in something, keep asking questions and finding answers.

**Scholarship as Conversation**

Have you ever entered a room only to hear a conversation? Sometimes it’s nice just to be among other people and appreciate what they have to say. Think of reading books and articles or listening to podcasts as engaging in a conversation too. It’s fine to simply want to listen. What happens when you want to join the conversation?

For example, if you were writing a research project on social justice, you may want to participate in a conversation on X (formerly twitter) related to homelessness. Some of the posts may be important if they develop into a discussion that addresses why certain groups of people are marginalized within a particular society. You might even re-post a source of information on the injustices associated with homelessness and then post your own thoughts. A conversation like this could be of great value if it identifies additional topics associated with homelessness and if it encourages you to engage in activities that improve the circumstances of others.

THAT is entering the conversation. So, scholarship (basically, what you study and write about in academia) as conversation is you discussing a topic you have done research on. Scholarly conversation is about sharing, responding, and valuing one another’s work.

For example, if Joe responds to an article you wrote on social media and algorithms, then he is going to cite you. If Sue then publishes an article that disproves Joe’s article, she is going to cite Joe.

There are few reasons why Sue uses citations in her article:

Even if Sue disagrees with Joe’s work, she respects that Joe put effort into it and his work has value. She also wants his work to be recognized.

When Sue cites Joe, it also means anyone who jumps into the conversation later will be able to backtrack and catch-up with the entire conversation. Using Sues citations, anyone new to the conversation can trace the discussion back to Joe’s article and then trace that back to yours.

The Takeaway

There is a lot to take away from this concept:

* Whenever you communicate you are engaging in a conversation.
* When you respond to the ideas of other scholars in your research, you’re really responding to the scholars themselves and including them in your conversation.
* Following citations, over centuries, can show the influence of an idea. Citations tell us where research began and where it might go in the future.
* Be respectful of other scholars’ work and their part in the conversation by citing them.
* Engage in scholarly conversations whenever you feel ready and in whatever platform you feel comfortable.
* Engage in open conversations. This means making sure information is available to those who want to listen and making sure we hear the voices that are at risk of being silenced.

**Searching as Strategic Exploration**

Searching as Strategic Exploration is the part of information literacy that we think of as “Research”. But it’s more than that. It deals with the actual task of searching for information. The word exploration is a good choice because it implies a journey. Think of research as exploring, investigating, or searching for information while confronting obstacles and navigating uncertain paths along the way. Remember in a previous section when we had a question about Beyonce’s age, and that led us down a rabbit-hole? We went on the strategic exploration.

Sometimes your journey may even end up in an unexpected place, but the good news is, unforeseen outcomes are associated with searching for information and the research process in general. Also, unlike a typical journey where there is a beginning and end, strategic exploration involves continuous cycles. Research does not follow a one-way linear progression, instead it is a continuous process of checking and re-checking, evaluating, and analyzing, and repeating the entire process again and again.

Searching for information is rarely as simple as just entering a keyword into a search engine or library database and getting all the information you need. You will likely try different ways of searching for information, and in different places.

If you want to succeed in your strategic exploration, remain flexible and refine your search strategies as need.

Typically you will want to do the following:

* Identify a topic and research question
* Do some preliminary research to figure out what you already know, what you need to know, and what you need to learn to successfully write about the topic.
* Turn your research question into a thesis statement.
* Use your resources to find the articles and information you need to prove your thesis

Sometimes it’s necessary to reevaluate your research. Remember: Research isn’t linear. It’s not like driving down the road to a grocery store. You don’t always have smoothly marked paths. Sometimes, it’s more like walking through a maze. You try a path, hit a dead end, turn around, try another path, find yourself a little bit lost, and then find the path again. Be open to research being messy and hard.

Research is a continual checking and rechecking and repeating the entire process until you get to the end product!

Information you encounter at the beginning of the research process will help you refine your topic and questions.

Take a second to think realistically about the information you’ll need to accomplish your task. You don’t need a peer-reviewed article to find out if praying mantises eat their mates, but you might if you want to find out why.

**CC LICENSED CONTENT INCLUDED**

*Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*. (2021, April 8). Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL). <https://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework> *Filed by the ACRL Board on February 2, 2015. Adopted by the ACRL Board, January 11, 2016.* This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/) [NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

Metcalf, Emily (2021). *A beginner’s guide to information literacy.* OER Commons, <https://www.oercommons.org/courseware/lesson/83552>. CC BY- SA 4.0.

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (2011). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*.

Burke, K. (1957). *The philosophy of literary form: Studies in symbolic action*. New York: Vintage Books.

Drabinsky, E. (2016). *Turning inward: Reading the framework through the six frames*. College & Research Libraries News. Retrieved October 6, 2021, from [https://crln.acrl.org/index.php/crlnews/](https://crln.acrl.org/index.php/crlnews/article/view/9537/10862) [article/view/9537/10862](https://crln.acrl.org/index.php/crlnews/article/view/9537/10862).

Hall, S. (2015, October 26). *Exxon knew about climate change almost 40 years ago*. Scientific American. Retrieved October 22, 2021, from [https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/exxon-](https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/exxon-knew-about-climate-change-almost-40-years-ago/) [knew-about-climate-change-almost-40-years-ago/](https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/exxon-knew-about-climate-change-almost-40-years-ago/).