

A Checklist of Information Competencies for College Students

This Checklist is a collaborative work by a team of California State University and California community college librarians. Together, we are developing a common understanding of the competencies students should master during their college years. The Checklist is intended to be a succinct list of essential competencies. We hope it will encourage collaboration among libraries serving two- and four-year institutions and also serve as a resource for planning and assessing information literacy programs.

Lower Division Students ♦ *Basic Information Resources and Search Strategies*

Ability to:

- use signage, maps, and user guides to locate library collections and services
- use the library's classification system to browse by subject and to locate an item by call number
- develop a focused topic and strategies for obtaining needed information
- gather background information in books and encyclopedic works
- search by author, title, and keyword in library online catalog and locate relevant items
- identify relevant keywords and controlled vocabulary terms for searching a topic
- conduct a search in an interdisciplinary database (e.g., *Expanded Academic ASAP*) using Boolean operators, limit function, etc.
- identify relevant subject databases, e.g., *PsycInfo* and execute a basic search
- use database features to mark/save/print/email citations and link to fulltext
- interpret catalog and database search results; link from subject headings to find additional resources
- determine local availability of cited items and use interlibrary loan services as needed
- match search tool to information need: academic library databases, search engines (e.g., *Google*), etc.
- evaluate information gathered by such criteria as: relevance, authority, currency, peer review process
- revise topic and/or strategy if search results are unsatisfactory
- understand and differentiate between primary vs. secondary, popular vs. scholarly resources
- summarize, organize, and synthesize information found
- cite sources properly according to appropriate style guide
- observe copyright guidelines; legally obtain, store, and use text and data
- recognize the need for information for any purpose (academic, work, personal)

Upper Division Students ♦ *Disciplinary Resources and Critical Evaluation*

Ability to:

- identify and use specialized reference sources in the major field, e.g., subject dictionaries
- use special features of subject databases, e.g., chemical structure searching in *SciFinder Scholar*
- select controlled vocabulary specific to the discipline
- use appropriate subject-based style manuals and/or citation style formatting software
- describe how research literature is generated and disseminated in the major subject
- identify investigative methods in the major subject, e.g., fieldwork in anthropology
- identify and use unique resources in the major subject, e.g., case studies (business) and datasets (geography)
- observe guidelines and standards endorsed by the discipline/profession, e.g., human subjects research
- use appropriate criteria to evaluate and select resources suitable for upper-division work, such as relevance, scope, authority, objectivity, and currency
- perform cited reference searches in order to follow a research topic forward and backward in time
- conduct a comprehensive literature review for papers/projects, including books, journal articles, dissertations, technical reports, non-print media, etc.
- analyze a body of research literature, drawing conclusions and developing new insights
- use research collections beyond the local library when needed (e.g., special libraries and archives)
- apply ethical and legal principles to the use of information in all formats and contexts
- apply acquired information and research skills in new situations and contexts

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Source Documents:

“Online Tutorials.” *CSU Information Competence*. 1999. <<http://www.lib.calpoly.edu/infocomp/modules>>
Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education. Chicago: ACRL, 2000.
<http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlstandards/informationliteracycompetency.htm#stan>
“Competencies For Each Year of Study.” *Information Literacy: Program and Desired Outcomes*. University of Connecticut Libraries, 2003.
< <http://www.lib.uconn.edu/using/tutorials/instruction/infolitmain.htm> >