Information Literacy Core Competencies  
(Updated April, 2010)

This document is intended to serve as a guide for faculty, staff, and students at WMU seeking to integrate information literacy into the university curriculum. It is a tool to encourage and facilitate conversation.

The competencies listed below are intended to build off of one another – for example, students at the “Major Program” level should also have demonstrated competence in the “General Education and Basic Skills Courses” level. Although the Skills Goals are listed in a numbered order, they need not be taught or learned in a linear fashion.

Individuals and departments are not expected to rigidly adhere to these guidelines. Rather, they are encouraged to adapt them to specific assignment, course, program, and department goals as needed. Librarians at the WMU Libraries are available to collaborate and provide expertise in the integration of these competencies into curricula.

Faculty may also use the document to:

- develop curricula at the department or course level
- collaborate on assignment creation
- coordinate syllabi across a department
- provide a framework for faculty workshops and training
- write learning outcomes for assessment
- make information literacy more transparent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills Goals</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| I. Construct a question or problem statement  
Able to articulate need for existing information and literature and develop a research question or thesis statement. | **General Education and Basic Skills Courses:**  
Define the topic and the information needed  
Develop and refine a preliminary thesis or opinion on the topic  
Seek information beyond course materials as necessary  
Develop a manageable focus appropriate to criteria of assignment  
**Major Program:**  
Actively and independently seek sources beyond course materials  
Articulate research question or thesis statement within confines/context of discipline  
Use discipline-specific terminology  
**Graduate Programs:**  
Develop an original research question which contributes to the body of knowledge in the field |
| II. Locate and Gather Information  
Able to execute a plan for locating information by developing a search strategy and identifying sources of information | **General Education and Basic Skills Courses:**  
Create a plan for searching  
Identify sources of information inside and outside of the library  
Develop awareness of information life cycle and ability to determine which types of information are appropriate for topic  
Identify various sources of help in searching (e.g. library |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Program:</th>
<th>Graduate Programs:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify core subject research databases</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use advanced search features in subject research databases</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use effectively designed search strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify a breadth of primary and secondary sources of information in the field (e.g., scholarly journals, trade publications, books, government information, web-based resources, subject experts, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpret and use citations to find additional literature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize tools for acquiring resources outside of WMU collections (e.g. Document Delivery, Interlibrary Loan, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### III. Evaluate Sources

**Able to evaluate the quality, usefulness, and relevance of the information they discover**

**General Education and Basic Skills Courses:**
- Differentiate between scholarly, trade, and popular sources
- Evaluate resources for authority, accuracy, reliability, objectivity, coverage, and timeliness
- Evaluate found resources for relevance to the topic and adjust topic accordingly if necessary

**Major Program:**
- Identify possible biases within an information source
- Define “peer review” and articulate its value
- Seek feedback from peers and professors
- Make use of review tools to evaluate information sources (e.g., book reviews, annotated bibliographies, etc.)
- Judge a source’s ability to fit the criteria of a given project

**Graduate Programs:**
- Differentiate between types of research (e.g., qualitative, quantitative, etc.)
- Evaluate research methods within studies
- Identify research biases within studies
- Apply evaluation criteria in the identification and use of key sources of information (e.g., journal impact factors)

### IV. Manage Information and Communicate Knowledge

**Able to manage and synthesize information from a variety of sources in order to communicate content effectively**

**General Education and Basic Skills Courses:**
- Develop a strategy for managing information found
- Synthesize information from various sources
- Organize content for clear communication to intended audiences
- Recognize information overload and develop strategies to manage information anxiety

**Major Program:**
- Demonstrate awareness of the breadth and depth of research on a topic
- Synthesize and integrate information from subject-specialized sources
Communicate effectively to an audience with subject specialization
Use appropriate technology to manage and communicate information

**Graduate Programs:**
- Integrate information gathered with original research
- Organize and effectively manage voluminous information, including that relevant to original research
- Effectively communicate original work to professionals in subject discipline

**V. Use Information Ethically**
Understand the legal and ethical implications of using information appropriately and responsibly

**General Education and Basic Skills Courses:**
- Understand the basics of plagiarism and copyright
- Cite sources appropriately

**Major Program:**
- Demonstrate an increasing awareness of responsible use of information and types of plagiarism
- Recognize ethical and legal considerations specific to the discipline
- Use information ethically as global and local citizens

**Graduate Programs:**
- Attentive to how original research will be impacted by ethical and legal considerations.
- Share findings with peers in open forums

**VI. Develop Subject Knowledge**
Understand the disciplinary and societal context in which information is presented and created, and is able to contribute to that body of information

**General Education and Basic Skills Courses:**
- Be aware of subject-specific resources (e.g., subject guides, subject-specific databases, liaison librarians, etc.)

**Major Program:**
- Comprehend the academic process in specific disciplines
- Consult with university subject experts (e.g., instructors, librarians, other specialists)
- Use advanced subject-search features in research databases
- Be able to select a breadth of discipline-specific materials (e.g., scholarly journals, trade publications, books, government information, web-based resources, etc.)
- Be aware of post-graduate resources to foster professional membership, leadership, and community involvement
- Be familiar with primary sources

**Graduate Programs:**
- Be familiar with seminal works and experts in the field
- Be able to articulate the standards of the field
- Contribute to associations and networks related to the discipline
- Participate in the academic process of one’s discipline (e.g. discovery, proposal, funding, research design, dissemination, etc.)

The Information Literacy Committee at the University Libraries of Western Michigan University compiled this set of Information Literacy Competencies based on a variety of sources. We are
especially indebted to Grand Valley State University for providing us with the framework of the document, and for allowing us to adopt parts of their program for our own.

Primary resources:
- Information Literacy Competencies Standards for Higher Education (developed by ACRL, approved by AAHE & Council of Independent Colleges): http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/informationliteracycompetency.cfm
- Information Literacy standards and curricula in the disciplines (compiled by ACRL-IS): http://wikis.ala.org/acrl/index.php/Information_literacy_in_the_disciplines
- AAC&U Information Literacy VALUE Rubric: www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/pdf/InformationLiteracy.pdf
- GVSU Information Literacy Core Competencies: http://main.gvsu.edu/library/information-literacy-core-competencies-168.htm
- CSU Rubrics for Assessing Information Competence: www.calstate.edu/LS/1_rubric.doc