

St George's Library: Information Literacy Framework



St George's Library aims to support staff and students of St George's, University of London and NHS partners in learning, teaching and research. It accomplishes this through the provision of relevant information resources and a commitment to information literacy for staff and students to reach their academic and workplace goals.

We work in partnership with academic staff to design and deliver relevant and timely IL training, as well as promote subject specific resources, to enhance student learning.

We also offer teaching and support to SGUL staff, such as literature searching for their research, and to increase their awareness of resources available to students in order to signpost students effectively.

Our NHS provision is driven by NHSE's 'Knowledge for Healthcare' vision to provide the right information at the right time. We design programmes aligned with learning needs of staff from our affiliated Trusts to enable them to discover resources and mobilise knowledge for better care, decision-making, education and research.

In this document we articulate our approach to delivering information literacy. It also serves to give some insights into how we plan to develop our provision in line with the Library strategy, which was published in May 2023.

Definitions of Information Literacy and why it's important

St George's approach to Information Literacy draws on the following:

- Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) Definition of Information Literacy (CILIP Information Literacy Group, 2018).
- A new curriculum for information literacy framework (ANCIL) (Secker and Coonan, 2011).

According to Secker and Coonan (2011) Information literacy (IL) is a set of skills, attributes and behaviour that underpin student learning, and lifelong learning beyond the workplace in this digital age.

Secker and Coonan (2011, p.1) also state that IL skills are "transitional, transferable and transformational" and a strong positive link is made between the acquisition and use of IL skills and graduate capabilities, employability, enhancing student experience and improved achievement.

In addition to this, CILIP Information Literacy Group (2018, p.3) defined information literacy as:

“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 to engage fully with society.”

CILIP Information Literacy Group (2018, p.3) also recognises the widening scope of IL in its statement:

“Information literacy is associated and overlaps with other literacies, including specifically digital literacy, academic literacy, and media literacy. It is not a stand-alone concept and is aligned with other areas of knowledge and understanding”.

This is an intriguing proposition, also espoused by Secker and Coonan (2011), which provides SGUL Library with opportunities to widen the scope and delivery of our current provision. We do this by collaborating with, or signposting to, other student support facing teams. This includes the Centre for Technology in Education (CTIE) and learning and development colleagues in our affiliated Trusts.

In a post-pandemic, Black Lives Matter world, it is important for learners to take an increasingly critical approach to the processes of information creation. It is important that biased west-centric models of knowledge production and presentation are acknowledged and challenged. This widened scope fits well with the strategic direction of St George’s, University of London’s Inclusive Education Framework and speaks to EDI strategies within the NHS.

With this backdrop in mind, St George’s Library has written this Information Literacy Framework to underpin the training and support delivered by the Library Liaison Team. This work aims to create independent learners who are adept at using a wide variety of sources and information retrieval skills, who can think critically about sources used for academic and workplace endeavours.

What we do

Our framework and associated programme focus on 3 Learning Categories (LCs) for our students, staff and NHS partners as outlined below:

LC1. Becoming an independent learner - Our ultimate goal is to help students and staff develop an enquiry-based approach to information acquisition. The development of these transferable skills will support current academic, as well as future workplace, learning and information needs.

Learners who are developing their information literate abilities demonstrate:

1. Awareness and utilisation of the services and subject specific resources available from the Library
2. Formulation of a researchable topic or clinical question
3. Judicious selection of authoritative and relevant sources

4. Identification of relevant and useful keywords to aid and focus retrieval

LC2. Discovering, searching, evaluating the health information landscape - Taking a scaffolded, inclusive approach, our users will learn to plan and scope searches for assignments and work-based projects. These may include quality improvement initiatives; practical knowledge and use of key resources and tools; search skills and critical analysis skills required for effective evidence-based healthcare.

Learners who are developing their information literate abilities demonstrate:

1. Planning and scoping of searches
2. Identification and use of both primary and secondary sources
3. Deployment of subject-specific bibliographic databases
4. Knowledge and execution of sophisticated search strategies (keyword searching vs subject heading searching, Boolean logic, truncation, phrase searching and adjacency searching)
5. Evaluation skills with regards to assessing results and refining search strategies
6. Critical evaluation of citations retrieved for quality and application of critical appraisal skills to sources

LC3. Organising, managing and sharing information ethically - Our programme covers a range of documenting, referencing and reference management skills. Students learn how to avoid plagiarism by referencing correctly.

Learners who are developing their information literate abilities demonstrate:

1. Practical application of reference management software
2. Strategies for maintaining current awareness and life-long learning
3. Avoidance of plagiarism and correct citation of references
4. Awareness of professional guidelines regarding the use of information in healthcare and evidence-based practice
5. Understanding of how and why some individuals or groups of individuals may be underrepresented or systematically marginalized within the structures that produce and disseminate information in STEM

Who we work with

Our Framework recognises that the acquisition of information literacy skills does not work in isolation. The most effective way to develop these skills in learners is to embed them in the curriculum or workplace practices. They should also interlink with other critical skills such as digital and academic skills. Moreover, certain elements will lend themselves to being delivered by colleagues outside of the Library. This may include signposting to IT training, academic staff, learning development and learning technology staff.

For academic purposes, this framework is best implemented through embedding and allowing the students to develop them in the context of their discipline and assignments.

In the healthcare workplace, the development and use of these skills is the first step in making evidence-based decisions around treatment options and quality care (NHS England, 2021).

How we implement the Framework

Our Information Skills programme aims to provide a timely, relevant and scaffolded programme of learning activities. We work with academics and NHS staff to integrate sessions as much as possible into modules and clinical teaching, linking the content to module learning objectives and workplace needs.

We provide a combination of face-to-face sessions and online learning material for a blended approach, as well as targeted workshops for academic staff on topics such as My Reading List and Cite Them Right. Similarly, we run a variety of bespoke sessions for NHS staff on finding the evidence base for effective healthcare.

In addition to scheduled training, we provide support via 1-2-1 appointments, video tutorials, LibGuides and the Library Canvas module. Tailored guidance is also provided on student Canvas modules as required.

New areas for development include addressing notions of decolonising literature searches. We are also developing guidance on the use of generative AI and combatting the spread of misinformation in healthcare by developing more critical stances around evaluating information.

Details of the specific courses we offer can be found on the Library website.

How we monitor the impact of the Framework

Delivery of our Framework will be monitored via evaluation of sessions and research into the impact of our activities. We will use UX (user experience) methodologies such as journey mapping and focus groups to get a fuller picture of the impact of the framework and will work with students to evaluate and develop it.

References

CILIP, Information Literacy Group (2018) *Definition of Information Literacy*. Available at: <https://infolit.org.uk/ILdefinitionCILIP2018.pdf> (Accessed 26 June 2023).

NHS England (2021) *Knowledge for Healthcare: Mobilising evidence; sharing knowledge; improving outcomes*. Available at: <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/knowledge-for-healthcare> (Accessed 26 June 2023).

Secker, J. and Coonan, E. (2011) *A new curriculum for information literacy framework (ANCIL)*. Available at: http://ccfil.pbworks.com/f/ANCIL_final.pdf (Accessed 22 May 2023).