Information Literacy

What does it mean to be information literate?

- Simply stated, information literate individuals "know how to find, evaluate and use information effectively."

- A 2012 study by Project Information Literacy (PIL) interviewed 33 employers and found that they were dissatisfied with the research skills of recently graduated hires.

- Employers cited recent graduates' over-reliance on online search tools and the first page of results as reasons for their dissatisfaction.

- Research performed by recent graduates was too superficial and lacked analysis and synthesis of multiple types of information from a variety of sources.

Points of Discussion

- how to identify different information formats;
- where to conduct your research;
- how to search effectively;
- how to evaluate sources you find

Primary And Secondary Information Sources

- Primary sources allow researchers to get as close as possible to original ideas, events, and empirical research as possible.

- Such sources may include creative works, first hand or contemporary accounts of events, and the publication of the results of empirical observations or research.

- Examples of primary sources:
  - interviews, letters, emails, Tweets, Facebook posts, photographs, speeches, newspaper or magazine articles written at the time of an event,
  - works of literature, lab notes, field research, and published scientific research

Secondary Sources

- Secondary sources analyze, review, or summarize information in primary resources or other secondary resources.

- Even sources presenting facts or descriptions about events are secondary unless they are based on direct participation or observation.

- Secondary sources analyze the primary sources.

- Examples of secondary sources:
  - journal articles, books, literature reviews, literary criticism, meta-analyses of scientific studies, documentaries, biographies, and textbooks

Differentiating between the two

- Sometimes the line between primary and secondary sources blurs.

- For example, although newspapers and news websites contain primary source material, they also contain secondary source material.

- For example, an article published on June 4, 2024 about the results of the General election of a constituency would be a primary source, because it would be written on the day of the event.

- However, an article published in the same paper two weeks later analyzing how the successful candidate gathered vote for him would be a secondary source.

Primary	Secondary
Interview with subject matter expert	Documentary on an issue or problem
Survey data	News article about scientific study
Published scientific study	Literature review on a research topic

Popular, Professional, And Scholarly Information

- Popular magazines like People, Sports Illustrated, and Rolling Stone can be good sources for articles on recent events or pop-culture topics,

- while magazines like Harper's, Scientific American, and The New Republic will offer more in-depth articles on a wider range of subjects.

- The audience for these publications are readers who, although not experts, are knowledgeable about the issues presented.

- Professional journals, also called trade journals, address an audience of professionals in a specific discipline or field. They report news and trends in a field, but not original research. They may also provide product or service reviews, job listings, and advertisements.

Scholarly Journals

- Scholarly journals provide articles of interest to experts or researchers in a discipline.
- An editorial board of respected scholars in a discipline (peers of the authors) reviews all articles submitted to a journal.
- They decide if the article provides a noteworthy contribution to the field and should be published.
- Scholarly journals contain few or no advertisements.
- Scholarly journal articles will include references of works cited and may also have footnotes or endnotes, all of which rarely appear in popular or professional publications.

Peer Review

- An editorial board of respected scholars in a discipline (peers of the authors) reviews all articles submitted to a journal.

- Peer review is a widely accepted indicator of quality scholarship in a given discipline or field.

- Peer-reviewed (or refereed) journals are scholarly journals that only publish articles that have passed through this review process.

	Magazine	Professional journal	Academic journal
Audience	• General public	• People employed in a field	• Researchers, scholars, experts
Bibliography	• No	• Sometimes	• Yes
Article Characteristics (length, depth, structure)	• Overview • Current events • General interest articles	• Articles will be of interest to those working in that field • Purpose will be to offer advice and tips to those in the trade	• Long and narrowly focused • Specialized vocabulary • Article structure will usually contain abstract, literature review, methodology, results, conclusion, references
Review policy	• Magazine editor	• Magazine editor and possibly a board	• Editorial board/ scholars in the field • Peer-reviewed
Author	• Journalist or specialist	• Someone working in the field	• Researcher/expert in the field
Appearance	• Glossy • Many graphics • Many advertisements	• Glossy • Advertising specific to that trade	• Lengthy articles • Often includes charts, graphs, statistics • Little or no advertising

Information Timeline

- Another difference in popular, professional, and scholarly sources lies in when information appears in these types of sources.

- Information about an event or issue appears in publications according to a predictable pattern known as the information timeline.

- Familiarity with the information timeline can help you best plan your research topics and where to search for information.

- For example, it typically takes several months to years for information about an event or issue to appear in scholarly publications.

- If you choose a topic that is very recent, you may have to rely more heavily on news media, popular magazines, and primary sources (such as interviews you conduct) for your research.

Time:	Day of event	Days later	Weeks later	Months later	Year(s) later
Sources	Television, radio, web	Newspapers, TV, radio, web	Popular and mass market magazines	Professional and scholarly journals	Scholarly journals, books, conference proceedings Reference sources such as encyclopedias

Type of information	General: who, what, where (usually not why)	Varies, some articles include analysis, statistics, photographs, editorials, opinions	Still in reporting stage, general, editorial, opinions, statistics, photographs
			  Usually no bibliography at this stage
				Research results, detailed and theoretical discussion
				  Bibliography available at this stage
					In-depth coverage of a topic, edited compilations of scholarly articles relating to a topic
					  General overview giving factual information
					  Bibliography available

Locating tools	Web search tools, social networks	Web search tools, newspaper and periodical databases	Web search tools, newspaper and periodical databases	General and subject-specific databases	Library catalog, general and subject-specific databases Library reference collection