What is Information Literacy?

Information Literacy is defined as a set of abilities requiring individuals to: recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and ethically communicate information.\(^1\) Information literacy skills are vital in the rapidly-changing, information-driven world of the 21\(^{st}\) century.

“To respond effectively to an ever-changing environment people need more than just a knowledge base, they also need techniques for exploring it, connecting it to other knowledge bases, and making practical use of it. In other words, the landscape upon which we used to stand has been transformed, and we are being forced to establish a new foundation called information literacy.”\(^2\)

As an information literate individual you will be able to:
- Identify your information gaps or needs
- Effectively find information using a range of electronic and print resources
- Critically evaluate information
- Use information for problem solving and decision making in your academic, personal and professional life

Information literacy skills have ramifications for both academic and non-academic situations such as:
- Finding useful high-quality articles for a course paper
- Efficiently completing a literature review for a theses or dissertation
- Finding and using information in the workplace
- Making personal decisions from accepting a new job, moving to a new city or making a major purchase such as a house or a car
- Keeping up to date with advances in your profession
- Gathering information for medical decisions for yourself or a loved one
- Effective lifelong learning
- Being an informed citizen and participating in the democratic process
- Adapting to ongoing technological changes
- Judging quality and evaluating information from a growing number of news and information sources

The Association of College and Research Libraries and the American Library Association have created Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education. These standards have been adopted by numerous universities and university libraries across the country. There are additional organizations who have created standards, such as the Big Six for K-12 education as well.

National and state accreditation bodies identify information literacy as a critical outcome of higher education. This includes the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, Western Associate of Schools and Colleges and the Southern Association of Colleges and Universities. In addition, an increasing number of professional accrediting bodies include information literacy in their accreditation standards.

Capella University has recently adopted Information Literacy as a University Outcome. The outcome states:

_Capella graduates are expected to identify information needs, effectively locate, evaluate, use and communicate information using appropriate technologies with knowledge of the legal, ethical, social, professional and discipline specific issues surrounding the creation, dissemination and use of information._

The Capella University Library is working with partners across the University to incorporate information literacy into the curriculum.

**Additional resources:**
Information Literacy from the Association of Collection and Research Libraries:
http://www.ala.org/acrl/acrlissues/acrlinfolit/informationliteracy.htm


