Authority is Constructed and Contextual

Think critically about information – whether it’s from a blog post, a book, or a peer-reviewed journal article. Ask questions about the author(s), the purpose, and the context of the information. Recognize the value of diverse ideas and world views.

How do you determine the credibility of a source?

What makes a source authoritative?

What points of view might be missing?

Whose voice does the information represent?

Information resources reflect their creators’ expertise and credibility, and are evaluated based on the information need and the context in which the information will be used. Authority is constructed in that various communities may recognize different types of authority. It is contextual in that the information need may help to determine the level of authority required.

(ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education, 2015)

Adapted from Bucknell University Bertrand Library Research Services, 2015 UCI Libraries Education & Outreach, 2016
Information Creation as a Process

Consider the characteristics of information resources that indicate how and for whom they were created. Understand that information may be perceived differently based on the format in which it is presented.

How might the process influence the kind of sources you will use?

Why did the author(s) select this format for the publication of their work?

A Cycle of Revolving Research

Information in any format is produced to convey a message and is shared via a selected delivery method. The iterative processes of researching, creating, revising, and disseminating information vary, and the resulting product reflects these differences. (ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education, 2015)

How and for whom was the information produced?

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Information possesses several dimensions of value, including as a commodity, as a means of education, as a means to influence, and as a means of negotiating and understanding the world. Legal and socio-economic interests influence information production and dissemination.

(ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education, 2015)
Research as Inquiry

Approach research as open-ended exploration and engagement with information. Tap into your intellectual curiosity, ask questions, and be flexible – ambiguity can help the research process!

What do you already know about the topic, and what do you need to explore further?

What is the dialogue or debate surrounding your topic?

Think about your ideal source. Who might produce this information?

Has your research taken you down an unexpected path? Should you modify your focus?

Research is iterative and depends upon asking increasingly complex or new questions whose answers in turn develop additional questions or lines of inquiry in any field. (ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education, 2015)
Scholarship as Conversation

Understand that the research process gives you the chance to participate in an ongoing scholarly conversation in which information consumers and creators come together and negotiate meaning. You have an opportunity to contribute to the conversation!

Have you sought a variety of perspectives?

What are the modes of discourse in your field?

Do you have the information you need to cite your sources?

What are the established authority structures that privilege certain voices and information?

Communities of scholars, researchers, or professionals engage in sustained discourse with new insights and discoveries occurring over time as a result of varied perspectives and interpretations. (ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education, 2015)
Searching as Strategic Exploration

Realize that information sources vary in content, format, and relevance to your needs, depending on the nature of your search and the scope of your research. Be flexible and understand that your first attempts at searching are just the starting point. Keep asking questions!

What questions are you asking to direct your information search?

What is the scope of your research?

What type(s) of information do you need?

Who might produce this information? (e.g. scholars, organizations, governments)

Searching for information is often nonlinear and iterative, requiring the evaluation of a range of information sources and the mental flexibility to pursue alternate avenues as new understanding develops. (ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education, 2015)

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