

**AUTHORITY IS
CONSTRUCTED
AND CONTEXTUAL**

BREAKING DOWN THE ACRL FRAMEWORK

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.



AUTHORITY.

(WHOSE AUTHORITY?)

INFLUENCE RECOGNIZED OR EXERTED WITHIN A COMMUNITY

- types of authority, such as subject expertise (e.g., scholarship), societal position (e.g., public office or title), or special experience (e.g., participating in a historic event).
- research tools and indicators of authority.
- credibility of sources (and the elements that might temper this credibility).

action: develop and maintain an open mind when encountering varied and sometimes conflicting perspectives.



**CONSTRUCTED.
CONTEXTUAL.**

(SAME THING? KINDA.)

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

CONSTRUCTED

- verb.
- build or erect (something, typically a building, road, or machine).
- form (an idea or theory) by bringing together various conceptual elements, typically over a period of time.

CONTEXTUAL

- adjective.
- depending on or relating to the circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea.
- depending on the preceding or following parts of a text to clarify meaning.

authority can only be contextualized within the schema of how it has been constructed.

ACTION WORD: CONSTRUCT.

ACTION WORD: CONTEXTUAL.

- understand that many disciplines have acknowledged authorities in the sense of well-known scholars and publications that are widely considered “standard,” and yet, even in those situations, some scholars would challenge the authority of those sources.
 - authority varies from class to class, expert to expert, school of thought to school or thought, etc.
- recognizing that authority may be conferred or manifested in unexpected ways.
- authoritative content may be packaged formally or informally.
 - may include sources of all media types.
- assess content with a skeptical stance and with a self-awareness of ones own biases and worldview.



**ENGAGING
CONSTRUCTED
AND CONTEXTUAL
AUTHORITY.**

**(BOTH AS EASY AS YOU THINK AND
HARDER THAN YOU COULD EVER
IMAGINE.)**

STUDENTS SHOULD...

- understand basic indicators of authority, such as type of publication or author credentials.
- recognize schools of thought or discipline-specific paradigms.
- determine the validity of the information created by different authorities .
- acknowledge biases that privilege some sources of authority over others.
- seek authoritative voices but also recognize that unlikely voices can be authoritative, depending on need, including their own.

STUDENTS SHOULD...

- critically examine all evidence and ask relevant questions about origins, context, and suitability for the current information need.
- view authority with an attitude of informed skepticism and an openness to new perspectives, additional voices, and changes in schools of thought.
 - respect the expertise that authority represents while remaining skeptical of the systems that have elevated that authority and the information created by it.
- understand the increasingly social nature of the information ecosystem where authorities actively connect with one another and sources developed over time.
- acknowledge they are developing their own authoritative voices in a particular area and recognize the responsibilities this entails, including seeking accuracy and reliability, respecting intellectual property, and participating in communities of practice.



EXERCISES.

(FOR YOU, YOUR INSTRUCTORS, AND
YOUR STUDENTS.)

YOU CAN...

- with your subjects: familiarize yourself with the main schools of thought, key authors, paradigms, theories, pedagogies, researchers, et.
- with your classes: think critically about what is being taught and why it is being taught.
 - what isn't being taught and why.
- with instructor assignments: question how the exercise is impacting the class work.
 - is this the best assignment for the students do learn the objectives?
- with your instructors: seek understanding from their publications.
 - what authorities do they value or undervalue? can you challenge their opinion?
- with students: help them develop their understanding of authority in scholarship.
 - use resources that present opposing viewpoints.
 - play devil's advocate.
 - teach fake news analysis.

INSTRUCTORS CAN

- question the authorities in field.
 - are they serving the field and moving it into the current global discourse?
 - are they conducting research based on their biases?
 - do they have room to grow by exploring other authorities?
- develop counter-authorities in field.
 - “we’ve always done things this way” is not a viable excuse to trudge along.
- create dynamic relationships.
 - in the field and without. (aka with your librarians)

STUDENTS CAN


- evaluate disciplines.
 - understand the history, movements, theories, paradigms, methods, ideas, etc. in their discipline.
 - familiarize self with the practices, rules/regulations of the discipline.
- evaluate professors.
 - understand why the professor studies what they study.
- evaluate authors.
 - author is the big wig on his topic, but why?
- evaluate sources.
 - understand how the author has engaged with the concept being presented.
 - is the source credible both in form and in context? why or why not?
- question everything/think critically.
 - engage with fake news and opposing view points.



“EXPERTS”

ARE...

(NO ONE IS EVER AN EXPERT.)



**CONSCIOUS THAT
MAINTAINING THESE
ATTITUDES AND
ACTIONS REQUIRES
FREQUENT SELF-
EVALUATION.**

**(EMPHASIS ON
FREQUENT.)**

REFERENCE

- ACRL Framework. 2016. “Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education.”
<http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>.



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