

How Information Works

This summarizes the document, [*ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*](#). Summary below by Sherri Saines.

Authority Is Constructed and Contextual

- Who we trust as an expert depends on why we need the information & who's doing the trusting.
- Authority exists because a community gives it to someone. Beware: sometimes authority comes mostly from "privilege" that can drown out other voices.
- Good thinkers consider information skeptically, but keep an open mind.
- An expert can use any medium to communicate their ideas. Information is increasingly built socially, and formats will continue to change.

Information Creation is a Process

- The way information is shared changes the way it is created, and vice versa.
- Good information can come in any format. Every format has its benefits and drawbacks, including assumptions about quality and authority that may or may not be true.
- Formats are changing fast, and researchers have to keep up with how these new formats work so they can understand the information that comes out of them.

Information Has Value

- Information is worth money. It can be bought and sold.
- It is valuable because seekers learn from it & use it to influence others.
- Economic, legal, and social forces influence how it is created, used, packaged & traded.

Research is Inquiry

- Research is seldom a straight line with an answer at the end. It is a spiral of deeper questions that arise as understanding grows.
- The more a researcher works, the more skill and perspective they gain about the process itself.

How Information Works (continued)

Scholarship is a Conversation

- Researchers talk to one another, even across the centuries, gathering new ideas into old questions. The interplay creates new things.
- There may be many answers to a single question.
- A researcher may have to earn the right / learn the rules to speak in a given conversation, depending on who / what is already “in the room.” It might not be fair.
- When someone adds a new idea, they must say whose ideas they gathered to get that far.

Searching is Strategic Exploration

- Searching is a skill set: search mechanics matter.
- The mental flexibility to ask a question in many different ways of many different kinds of sources – and learn as you go – is also necessary.
- Who you are affects how you search. Learn to stretch.
- Searching can get convoluted; stay organized.

In both actions and attitudes, and for each of these ideas separately, a researcher moves along a continuum from novice to expert. Their path to **Expert Information User** is just as convoluted and recursive as the research they are doing.

For example, one aspect of **Information Has Value** might be stated this way:

Novice information users underestimate the time and skill that goes into creating a product; they see themselves as consumers. Experts see themselves as producers, and value the work & time it takes.

Visit ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework for the full document this summary is based on.