**Information Literacy Guide**

What is information literacy?

Information literacy is defined as the ability to access, evaluate, organize, and use the best, most current information available from a variety of sources.

The A.M. Al-Refai Library has developed this Information Literacy Guide to help students in their literature search. It will equip students and staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to enable them to use the library’s information resources effectively.

A research process for literature search involves the following:

* Identify the information you need
* Know the purpose and suitability of the resources available
* Develop an appropriate research plan
* Evaluate the worth and relevance of the information retrieved
* Document information and its sources
* Organize information

**Identify the information you need**

* What questions do you need answered?
* Identify the main concept and scrutinize the scope of the topic

**Know the purpose and suitability of the resources available**

* Distinguish [*academic* vs. *popular*](http://www.gust.edu.kw/library/userguides/Popular%20vs%20Academic.pdf), [*primary* vs. *secondary*](http://www.gust.edu.kw/library/userguides/Primary%20vs%20Secondary%20Sources.pdf) resources
* Understand that the [library catalog](http://library.gust.edu.kw/) leads to resources in the library, but does NOT contain details at chapter/journal article level. Know how to interpret A.M. Al-Refai Library holdings
* Distinguish the different types of literature, e.g. reference books, textbooks, journal articles
* Understand that library databases contain indexed subject references to journal articles, books, reports, etc. Databases can be of different types – index, abstract, full-text with different subject coverage
* Understand that the Internet leads to some excellent information, but results need to be [evaluated](http://www.gust.edu.kw/library/userguides/Criteria%20for%20Evaluating%20web%20pages.pdf)
* Use varied sources of information

**Develop an appropriate research plan**

* Create the search terms/phrase (keywords)
* Identify the resources that are relevant to your research
* Execute the search by linking the keywords with [*Boolean operators*](http://www.gust.edu.kw/library/userguides/Searching%20Tools.pdf) and narrowing the results to retrieve appropriate information quickly

**Evaluate the worth and relevance of the information retrieved**

* Review the relevance of the information retrieved
* Understand and apply criteria for evaluating the information
* Identify inaccuracies and misinformation in the information retrieved

**Document information and its sources**

* Document all search strategies, sources used and location of sources
* Acknowledge/reference sources using standard [reference styles](http://www.gust.edu.kw/library/researchhelp.asp) (MLA, APA, etc)

**Organize information**

* Combine information from various sources to compile your research
* View/Save/Print/email information retrieved from various sources
* Maintain a backup of the research

### Description and examples of sources that may be used for a literature search

**Guides to literature search**: Explain how to conduct a literature research

**Example**: [Texas Information Literacy Tutorial](http://tilt.lib.utsystem.edu/intro/internet2.htm) (TILT) is a very comprehensive information literacy Website with online modules that walk you through a range of topics and discuss the issues involved in selecting, searching and evaluating information.

**Library catalog**: The library online catalog contains over 40,000 bibliographic records for the books, ebooks, journals, and audiovisual materials available in the library. Each record consists of fields such as author, title, publisher, item location, call number, description, bibliography and subject.

**Example**: [A.M. Al-Refai library catalog](http://library.gust.edu.kw/)

**Databases**: A database is a collection of information organized in such a way that a computer program can quickly select desired pieces of data. The A.M. Al-Refai Library subscribes [to bibliographic and full-text databases](http://www.gust.edu.kw/library/lib-rec/databases.asp). These databases allow you to find articles in journals, magazines and newspapers. They can also contain references to book reviews, conference proceedings, reports, book chapters and other publications. These databases can contain a mixture of record types including full text, abstracts or citations.

**Example**:

[Academic Search Premier](http://search.epnet.com/?profile=asp), [JSTOR](http://www.jstor.org)

**Monographs (books)**: A monograph is a scholarly piece of writing of essay or book length on a specific, often limited, subject.

**Example**:

*Poetry Criticism: Excerpts from Criticism of the Works of the Most Significant and Widely Studied Poets of World Literature* (PN 1010 .P499 vol.79 2008)

*The Norton Anthology of American Literature* (PS 507 .N65 2003)

*A Beginner's Guide to Critical Reading: An Anthology of Literary Texts* (PR 83 .J34 2001)

*An American Mosaic: Prose and Poetry by Everyday Folk* (PS 508 .W73 A83 1999)

*The Longman Anthology of Women's Literature* (PR 1110 .W6 L66 2000)

**Journals**: An academic journal is a peer-reviewed periodical containing scholarly articles in a recognized field of study.

**Example**:

*American Literature, Early American Literature*

**Dictionaries**: A dictionary is a book of alphabetically listed words in a specific language, with definitions, etymologies, pronunciations, and other information.

**Example**:

*Al-Mawrid: A Modern Arabic-English Dictionary* (PJ 6640 .B342 2004)

*Dictionary of Literature in English* (PR 19 .K56 2002)

*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (PE 1628 .L58 1995)

**Encyclopedias**: A comprehensive reference work containing articles on a wide range of subjects or on numerous aspects of a particular field, usually arranged alphabetically.

**Example**:

*The New Encyclopedia Britannica* (AE 5 .E363 2002)

*The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language* (PE 1072 .C68 2003)

*Encyclopedia of American Literature of the Sea and Great Lakes* (eBook)

**Bibliographies**: A bibliography is a list of citations for books, periodical articles or other materials. Published bibliographies on specific subjects are often found in the reference collection.

**Example**:

*A Bibliography of Islamic Economics* (HB 126.4 .B516 1993)

*Mathematical Models in International Relations: A Bibliography* (Z 6461 .C48 1979)

**Internet**: A worldwide network of computers that allows the "sharing" or "networking" of information at remote sites from other academic institutions, research institutes, private companies, government agencies, and individuals. Understand that the Internet leads to some excellent information, but results need to be [evaluated](http://www.gust.edu.kw/library/userguides/Criteria%20for%20Evaluating%20web%20pages.pdf).

**Example:**

Outline of American Literature, Revised Ed.

Academy of American Poets

African American Women Writers in the 19th Century

Bartleby.com

American Verse Project

Cambridge History of English and American Literature

Collected Works of William Shakespeare

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare

**Writing tools**: While writing a research paper, documenting the sources is very important. There are different styles of documentation. Ask your mentor which style of documentation to use.

**Example**:

MLA style, APA style, [Chicago style, Turabian style](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/instruct/guides/chicago-turabianstyle.pdf)

*MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (LB 2369 .G53 2003)

*Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (BF 76.7 .P83 2001)

*The Chicago Manual of Style* (Z 253 .C45 2003)

**Other writing guides available in the library:**

*How to Write Research Papers* (LB 1047.3 .S267 2002)

*Research Papers for Dummies*(LB 2369 .W66 2002)

*Shaum's Quick Guide to Writing Great Research Papers* (LB 2369 .R69 1999)

*The Curious Researcher: A Guide to Writing Research Papers* (LB 2369 .B246 2004)

### How to Read a Web Address

1. **Do you recognize the domain name?**

The domain name is found after the **http://** and **www.** to the first forward slash **/**. For example, in the URL **www.harrypotter.com,** *harrypotter.com* is the domain name.

 A domain name can sometimes provide clues about the quality of information of a site or tell you what a site is about.

1. **What is the extension in the domain name?**

**.com** and **.net** are examples of extensions. Extensions are an important part of domain names. You probably know quite a few already. Extensions are intended to show the type of establishment that owns and publishes the domain. Here is a list to look for:

## COMMON EXTENSIONS

.edu Educational organization (most US universities)

 .k12 US school site (not all US schools use this)

.ac Academic institution (outside of US)

 .sch School site (some schools outside of the US use this)

 .com Company (usually .co in the UK)

 .org Any organization

 .gov Government agency

 .net Network

 .mil Military institution

 New extensions to look for are .biz, .name, .pro, .info. All are used for commercial purposes.

Extensions can also include country codes, such as .**uk**, .**ca**, .**za**, etc.

Some extensions *may* provide more reliable information than others, but there are no guarantees. Ones that *may* be more reliable are .**edu**, .**gov**, .**k12**. Ones to watch out for are .**com**, .**org**, .**net**. These domains can be purchased by anybody. This is not to say that sites with these extensions can never be trusted, but it is good to know whether you are on a commercial or special interest-type site if you are trying to access academic-type information.

1. **Are you on a personal page?**

You may or may not recognize the domain name or extension of a URL. Keep reading past the first forward slash / for more clues. If you are on a personal page the information you are reading may or may not be trustworthy.

A personal page is a web site created by an individual. The web site may contain useful information, links to important resources and helpful facts, but sometimes these pages offer highly biased opinions.

The presence of a name in the URL such as **jdoe** and a tilde **~** or **%** or the word **users** or **people** or **members** frequently means you are on a personal web site.

1. **URL is an acronym for…**

*Uniform Resource Locator*

1. **Identify three Boolean search terms.**

# AND, OR, NOT

1. **How do you find the owner or publisher of a Web site?**

*Go to* [*www.easywhois.com*](http://www.easywhois.com) *and enter the URL of the site you would like to research.*

1. **Follow-up Activities for Teachers and Students:**

Have students find owner information for the site [www.harrypotter.com](http://www.harrypotter.com)

1. **Identify these extensions and what they represent:**

*.org - organization*

*.com - company*

*.sch – school (used outside of US)*

*.k12 – most US school sites*

*.edu – US higher ed*

*.gov – US government (add country code for outside US)*

*.ac – higher ed outside of US usually used with country code, example, “.ac.uk”*

*.net - network*

*.mil – US military*

.co – Company (if paired with a country code, example “.co.uk,” the state of Colorado or the country, Columbia)

