

# Library Instruction Program Learning Outcomes Portland State University

## Introduction

The Portland State University Library is committed to supporting student learning through its instruction program. There are many ways students learn about information and the research process at the library. They may have an interaction with a reference librarian, attend a library instruction session, arrange a consultation with a subject librarian, visit the library, or visit the website. The librarians at PSU have developed learning outcomes for students that will inform our instruction regardless of the mode. These learning outcomes were based on and designed to support PSU's Campus-Wide Learning Outcomes, particularly in the areas of Critical and Creative Thinking and Ethics and Social Responsibility. These outcomes are focused on student learning and will help guide ongoing individual and program-level assessment of our instruction. Some of this assessment will, by necessity, be conducted collaboratively with disciplinary faculty.

While library instruction in any specific discipline will be unlikely to cover all of these outcomes, they do represent the breadth of instructional activities provided by the library to students across the curriculum.

## Strategize

**Definition:** Students will develop the disposition and skills to develop a realistic topic and plan for research; determine what types of sources they should seek, develop an effective search strategy and ask for help when needed.

**Rationale:** In order to find the information they need, students must first be able to clearly define their information need and understand what resources are available to them.

### Specific Outcomes:

- Use general information resources to increase familiarity with the topic and disciplinary vocabulary.
- Identify keywords, synonyms and related terms in order to flexibly search information resources.
- Define or modify the research topic, question or thesis to achieve a manageable focus appropriate to the assignment criteria and available resources.
- Seek out relevant individuals in one's network in order to get assistance with their research.
- Recognize that emotions play a role in the research process in order to decrease research anxiety.
- Identify the range of library resources and services in order to develop a realistic overall plan and timeline for research.
- Distinguish characteristics of sources produced for different audiences (scholarly, popular, professional, corporate, government) in order to select appropriate resources.

## Gather and Organize

**Definition:** Students will effectively search information resources, select appropriate resources to search, modify their search or topic when necessary, seek out sources from diverse perspectives and record what they have found.

**Rationale:** In an era of information abundance, students need to be able to zero in on the appropriate information sources and target their search effectively in order to find the most relevant information. It is also important that they seek out diverse points of view in order to broaden their perspectives.

### Specific Outcomes:

- Identify the features and content of different research sources (such as databases, catalogs and websites) in order to search those most appropriate to the information need.
- Identify and use search language or controlled vocabulary appropriate to the retrieval system, language, culture or discipline in order to retrieve relevant results.
- Use search functionality specific to the research source in order to retrieve results appropriate to the information need.
- Use the organizational structure of information resources (such as footnotes, bibliographies and indices) effectively in order to locate relevant information.
- Narrow or broaden their search, research topic, question or thesis based on initial search results.
- Seek resources from diverse perspectives in order to broaden their frame of reference.
- Pursue information despite challenges in order to persist in information seeking.
- Make independent choices in the selection of resources and information in order to perform self-directed inquiry.
- Retrieve a book or article in full-text from a citation.
- Determine appropriate means for recording or saving relevant resources found in a search in order to retrieve them when needed.
- Devise a system for current awareness of the literature on their topic(s) in order to keep up with the latest research.

## Analyze and Evaluate

**Definition:** Students will critically evaluate information sources for relevance, accuracy, quality, timeliness, authority, and context as well as appraising whether they have sufficient support for their argument.

**Rationale:** In order to develop an informed community, users of information must be able to critically evaluate what is presented to them.

### Specific Outcomes:

- Engage with a research topic, question or thesis and investigate the answers in order to go beyond a mere collection of facts.

- Maintain a critical stance in order to determine the validity and accuracy of all information.
- Examine a work's citation and abstract in order to determine its relevance to their research.
- Critically examine sources using criteria such as depth of coverage, quality, language and time-frame in order to select those appropriate to the information need.
- Recognize methods and resources available for evaluating information in order to determine how others have appraised a source.
- Evaluate research methods within studies in order to determine validity and the generalizability of their conclusions.
- Recognize the cultural, physical, or other contexts within which a work is created in order to understand the social or historical origin of the information.
- Determine when the quantity of citations retrieved is adequate for the information need in order to demonstrate substantial support for the research.

## **Behave Ethically**

**Definition:** Students will demonstrate ethical behavior through their use and creation of information.

**Rationale:** Cognizance of one's ethical responsibility to others is critical to developing social responsibility.

### **Specific Outcomes:**

- Recognize issues related to privacy, intellectual property and copyright in order to safeguard personal information, respect the rights of others or comply with institutional policy.
- Provide attribution when quoting or paraphrasing the ideas of others in order to acknowledge the research sources used.
- Apply the author's intended meaning when quoting or paraphrasing in order to accurately represent content.
- Use a documentation style appropriate to the discipline in order to appropriately cite sources used.
- Apply ethical and legal considerations specific to information or research in their discipline.