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Subject: Teaching Toolbox: Making Information Literacy a Habit
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Teaching Toolbox: Making Information Literacy a Habit **by Liz Thompson**

For students, keeping up with the rapidly changing information landscape requires continuously learning new skills. Just in the past couple of years, we have experienced fake news and net neutrality changes that have altered the way we access, manage, and evaluate information. In a recent [CFI Teaching Toolbox](#), Peter Eubanks identifies “foster[ing] digital or information literacy” as one of the ways to build students’ abilities to navigate fake news and points to librarians as enthusiastic collaborators.

So what is information literacy? At its essence, information literacy “blends the abilities to ask questions and be curious; identify where and how to find information in different formats; evaluate the content, intent, and value of information; and create ... work that builds on and is informed by the ideas of others” ([JMU Libraries definition, 2017](#)). As students gain information literacy skills, they learn to

- develop their own perspective on a topic,
- assess the credibility of a source,
- appreciate opportunities and barriers to information access,
- evaluate the capabilities and limitations of different formats to best communicate their ideas and make their voice heard, and
- recognize the value of intellectual property, copyright, and attribution.

In the Project Information Literacy (PIL) [Passage Studies](#) (Head, 2013), researchers observed that information literacy skills students developed in high school are often not adequate for university level research. To improve incoming students’ skills, JMU’s General Education (Gen Ed) program includes information literacy learning outcomes in [Cluster One](#). Recent assessment results of freshman students’ information literacy skills show a minimum of 8% and as much as a 16% improvement in learning outcomes during their first year at JMU.

Librarians have experience scaffolding student learning outcomes, providing assignment support, and understanding how information literacy looks through disciplinary lenses. Instructors can collaborate with liaison librarians in a variety of ways, including in-class instruction, individual consultations, and the development of teaching materials like [custom guides](#) or modules. For example, JMU librarians developed the [PSYCH 211 Research Methods Guide](#) to support students as they acclimate to their academic area of study. Instructor/librarian collaborations have led to [information literacy programs for student athletes](#), developing assignments (e.g., [Wikipedia](#)), and designing course assessment (e.g., [health science](#)) and even full courses and curricula (e.g., [Chemistry](#)) with integrated information literacy learning outcomes.

Developing information literacy habits can make the complex information landscape more manageable ([AAC&U 2016](#)), and practicing information literacy skills provides students with a strong foundation for developing the habits that will lead to academic success at JMU and beyond.

We'd be happy to help! Please [contact liaison librarians](#) directly or [book an appointment](#).

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