Mooney, Hailey; Dempsey, Paula

### Applying the Sociological Imagination to Critical Information Literacy

**Sociological Information Literacy Framework**

**Author:** Sociology Subgroup, Instruction & Information Literacy Committee, Anthropology & Sociology Section, Association of College & Research Libraries

**Five Sources:**
- Information Has Value
- Searching as Strategic Exploration
- Scholarships as Conversation
- Research as Inquiry
- Authority Is Constructed and Contextual

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Sociological Literacy Framework Concepts</th>
<th>Framework for Information Literacy Concepts</th>
<th>Information Has Value</th>
<th>Information Creation as a Process</th>
<th>Research as Inquiry</th>
<th>Scholarship as Conversation</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Authority Is Constructed and Contextual</strong></td>
<td>Evaluate based on information need and context, different types of authorities.</td>
<td>As commodity, education, influence, understanding; role of legal and socioeconomic interests.</td>
<td>Different formats reflect varying messages and delivery methods.</td>
<td>Iterative question asking, methods, analysis</td>
<td>Sustained discourse, varied perspectives</td>
<td>Iterative evaluation of range of sources, mental flexibility</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sociological Eye</strong> Sociology as a distinctive discipline</td>
<td>• Social basis and construction of knowledge</td>
<td>• Commodity: economic/financial structures support/constrain info production</td>
<td>• “the medium is the message”</td>
<td>• Ask questions like a sociologist</td>
<td>• Social context of scholarly discourse; (a) who is an expert in a field, (b) where the boundaries of a field lie, and (c) what can be said within these boundaries</td>
<td>• Deconstruct search engines as products of human engineering and bureaucracy</td>
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<td><strong>Social Structure</strong> The impact of social structures on human action</td>
<td>• Social roles may privilege some as authorities</td>
<td>• Ownership of information systems impacts the processes of information creation and what information is made available</td>
<td>• Ownership of information systems is concentrated; even where information is produced by individuals, it may be owned by private corporations (e.g., on social media platforms, transfer of copyright agreements)</td>
<td>• Expert knowledge is shaped by established scientific systems and processes</td>
<td>• Scholarly conversations are shaped by institutional structures: higher education, research firms, publishers, libraries, archives, and the WWW</td>
<td>• Search engines as gatekeepers to information</td>
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<td><strong>Socialization</strong> The relationship between the self and society</td>
<td>• Social institutions exert influence over what is considered valid or factual</td>
<td>• Creation of information as expressions of self and social belonging is monetized and monitored (e.g., social media)</td>
<td>• Ownership of information systems impacts the processes of information creation and what information is made available</td>
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<td><strong>Stratification</strong> The patterns and effects of social inequality</td>
<td>• Institutions with authority to produce knowledge recreate social inequalities</td>
<td>• “Profitable” research outputs receive more value and resources</td>
<td>• Social roles may privilege some as authorities</td>
<td>• Expert knowledge is shaped by established scientific systems and processes</td>
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<td><strong>Social Change and Social Reproduction</strong> How social phenomena replicate and change</td>
<td>• Scientific authorities are valued over others: e.g., low income students are lacking cultural capital, rather than the institutional de-valuing of different cultures</td>
<td>• Corporate control and limits on information distribution and participation</td>
<td>• “Social roles may privilege some as authorities”</td>
<td>• Expert knowledge is shaped by established scientific systems and processes</td>
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### Challenge:
Do you ever ask students to complete an assignment that includes a bibliography requirement? Literature research and writing is an opportunity to apply the sociological imagination to both the paper topic and to the process of discovering and selecting the information sources that will inform student work. However, this is often a missed opportunity: either information discovery is seen as ancillary to the assignment and not discussed, or library instruction may not meaningfully integrate sociological concepts from your course curriculum.

### Approach:
The Sociological Information Literacy Framework

- **Tool for identifying how to bring critical information literacy into the classroom**
  - Reflectively locate, understand, and use information in support of lifelong learning goals for developing informed citizens with higher-order thinking skills

- **Sociological Information Literacy** is an understanding of how information and scholarship are created, published, disseminated, and used by individuals and organizations that is informed by sociological thinking and scholarship.

### Next Steps:
- Peer review, revision, and putting it into practice!
- Review and endorsement of the Sociological Information Literacy Framework by the Association of College & Research Libraries and the American Sociological Association
- Making meaningful connections between sociological and information literacy will provide a foundation to enrich instructor-librarian collaboration in the classroom and strengthen overall student learning.

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**Engage with us!**

**Call for Peer Reviewers!**

**Sustained discourse, varied perspectives**

**Iterative question asking, methods, analysis**

**Participation in scholarly discourse relies on membership in communities of practice**

**Perceptions of relevance are shaped by social position**

**Development of expert search strategies is a skill that takes education and experience**

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**Find and Cite Three-to-Five Sources:**

**Applying the Sociological Imagination to Critical Information Literacy**

**American Sociological Association Annual Meeting 2018**

**Presenters:**
- Hailey Mooney, University of Michigan Library
- Paula Dempsey, University of Illinois at Chicago Library