Find and Cite Three-to-Five Sources: Applying the Sociological Imagination to Critical Information Literacy

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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

**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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### Sociological Information Literacy Framework (Draft)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sociological Literacy Framework Concepts</th>
<th>Framework for Information Literacy Concepts</th>
<th>Information Creation as a Process</th>
<th>Information Has Value</th>
<th>Research as Inquiry</th>
<th>Scholarship as Conversation</th>
<th>Searching as Strategic Exploration</th>
<th>Mental Flexibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authority Is Constructed and Contextual</td>
<td>Evaluate based on information need and context, different types of authorities.</td>
<td>Different formats reflect varying messages and delivery methods.</td>
<td>As commodity, education, influence, understanding; role of legal and socioeconomic interests</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>Sociological Eye Sociology as a distinctive discipline</td>
<td>• Social basis and construction of knowledge</td>
<td>• “the medium is the message”</td>
<td>• Commodity: economic/financial structures support/constrain info production</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>
<td>• Knowledge is not easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Structure 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>• 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>
<td>• Search engines reflect the interests of their creators</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Socialization The relationship between the self and society</td>
<td>• Ideologies impact accepted authorities</td>
<td>• Social media as performative work</td>
<td>• Cultural contexts shapes perceptions of legitimate knowledge and questions</td>
<td>• Participation in scholarly discourse relies on membership in communities of practice</td>
<td>• Perceptions of relevance are shaped by social position</td>
<td>• Unequal access to literacy education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stratification The patterns and effects of social inequality</td>
<td>• Institutions with authority to produce knowledge recreate social inequalities</td>
<td>• Social media as performative work</td>
<td>• Creation of information as expressions of self and social belonging is monetized and monitored (e.g., social media)</td>
<td>• Citation practices, plagiarism</td>
<td>• Cultural bias impacts design of search engines and classification systems</td>
<td>• Development of expert search strategies is a skill that takes education and experience</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Change and Social Reproduction How social phenomena replicate and change</td>
<td>• Scientific authority comes from approval by educational institutions; Academic success requires acceptance of certain “truths” about the social and natural world; Through young scholars, these “truths” persist</td>
<td>• Profitable” research outputs receive more value and resources</td>
<td>• “Profitable” research outputs receive more value and resources</td>
<td>• Historical exclusion of subordinated social groups from scholarship</td>
<td>• Unequal access to literacy education</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Deconstruction:**

- Ask questions like a sociologist
- Social context of scholarly discourse
- Social movements may be aided by social media
- The terms scholars use in search depend on the conventions of their discipline; it is more difficult to find and read scholarship outside the discipline in which one is trained

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**Institutions with authority to produce knowledge recreate social inequalities**

- Certain forms of knowledge production are valued over others; e.g., low income students are lacking cultural capital, rather the institutional de-valuing of different cultures
- "Profitable" research outputs receive more value and resources
- Corporate control and limits on information distribution and participation
- Commodification of personal information (i.e., surveillance capitalism) and privacy ramifications

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**Socioeconomic status impacts ability to participate as a producer of information, or to access information**

- Profitable research outputs receive more value and resources
- Corporate control and limits on information distribution and participation
- Commodification of personal information (i.e., surveillance capitalism) and privacy ramifications

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**Socialization Impact of Social Structures on Human Action**

- Social roles may privilege some as authorities
- Social institutions exert influence over what is considered valid or factual

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**Authority Is Constructed and Contextual**

- Authority is constructed and contextual
- Evaluate based on information need and context, different types of authorities