

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

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*

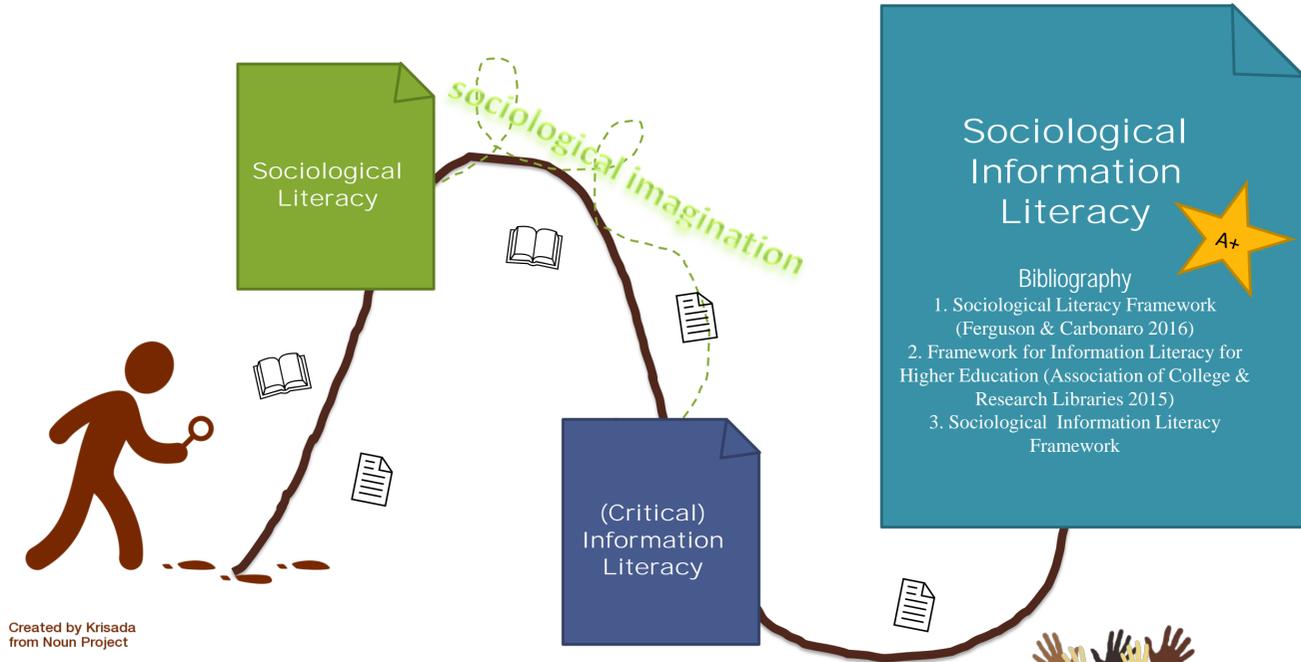
- Tool for identifying how to bring *critical information literacy* into the classroom
 - Reflectively locate, understand, and use information in support of lifelong learning goals for developing informed citizens with higher-order thinking skills

- *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!

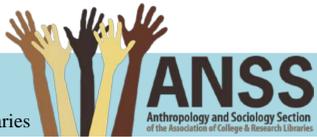
- Review and endorsement of the Sociological Information Literacy Framework by the Association of College & Research Libraries and the American Sociological Association
- Making meaningful connections between sociological and information literacy will provide a foundation to enrich instructor-librarian collaboration in the classroom and strengthen overall student learning.

Engage with us!
 Call for Peer Reviewers



Sociological Information Literacy Framework (Draft)

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



Sociological Literacy Framework Concepts	Framework for Information Literacy Concepts					
	Authority Is Constructed and Contextual Evaluate based on information need and context, different types of authorities.	Information Creation as a Process Different formats reflect varying messages and delivery methods.	Information Has Value As commodity, education, influence, understanding; role of legal and socio-economic interests	Research as Inquiry Iterative question asking, methods, analysis	Scholarship as Conversation Sustained discourse, varied perspectives	Searching as Strategic Exploration Iterative evaluation of range of sources, mental flexibility
Sociological Eye Sociology as a distinctive discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social basis and construction of knowledge • “Truth is political” • Scientific knowledge vs. other ways of knowing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “the medium is the message” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commodity: economic/financial structures support/constrain info production • Means for education: varying access, promotion of “correct” information • Means to influence: role and impact of propaganda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions like a sociologist • Social assumptions vs. scientific evidence • Verification process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deconstruct search engines as products of human engineering and bureaucracy • Search is a social behavior • Knowledge is <i>not</i> easy
Social Structure The impact of social structures on human action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social roles may privilege some as authorities • Social institutions exert influence over what is considered valid or factual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ownership of information systems impacts the processes of information creation and what information is made available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert knowledge is shaped by established scientific systems and processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarly conversations are shaped by institutional structures: higher education, research firms, publishers, libraries, archives, and the WWW 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search engines as gatekeepers to information • Algorithms reflect the interests of their creators
Socialization The relationship between the self and society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideologies impact accepted authorities • “Fake news” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media as performative work • Trusted formats and sources vary by culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of information as expressions of self and social belonging is monetized and monitored (e.g., social media) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural contexts shapes perceptions of legitimate knowledge and questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in scholarly discourse relies on membership in communities of practice • Citation practices, plagiarism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of relevance are shaped by social position • Cultural bias impacts design of search engines and classification systems
Stratification The patterns and effects of social inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutions with authority to produce knowledge recreate social inequalities • Certain forms of knowledge production are valued over others: e.g., low income students as <i>lacking</i> cultural capital, rather the institutional de-valuing of different cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socioeconomic status impacts ability to participate as a producer of information, or to access information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Particular methods of scientific inquiry are privileged as creating “neutral” knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical exclusion of subordinated social groups from scholarship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unequal access to literacy education • Development of expert search strategies is a skill that takes education and experience
Social Change and Social Reproduction How social phenomena replicate and change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certain kinds of knowledge are reproduced; because scientists use existing theories for hypothesis building, methodological design, and interpretation, they will often fail to see what does not fit into these theories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social movements may be aided by social media, but the terms of use and algorithms that impact what information is seen are set by private ownership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every day, scientists encounter phenomena that cannot be explained by existing theories: often, these anomalies are ignored or avoided through a focus on certain methodologies over others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are trained in certain disciplines; While these disciplines may address similar problems, they remain distinct and the conversations within them siloed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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