

The Infobase Information Literacy Strategy Handbook

High School Edition

From Planning to Assessment:
A Guide to Creating a Successful
High School Information Literacy Program



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About the Author



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Introduction

As a librarian, you've been covering information literacy (IL) concepts forever with your students, both in the library and in the classroom when you can get time there. In recent years, however, more challenges are facing libraries and librarians. You're forced to show your worth more than ever and to defend the right of students to have access to all of the materials and skills they require to be successful in school and after graduation. Add to that an increased need for students to be able to spot misinformation, to approach the world of artificial intelligence in an informed and ethical way, and to be savvy consumers of video, and an updated IL program might be needed at your school.

What We'll Cover

We'll address in this handbook how to use inquiry-led learning to impart IL skills to your students that “check” the American Association of School Librarians’ (AASL) Standards, Common Core Standards, and the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Standards, along the way also listing multimedia from [Credo Source](#) and other [Infobase resources](#) that can help. Given classroom time constraints, the most practical way to work is by covering topics upon request in classroom sessions, adding related “modules” while there. (Yes, it's hard to get invited into classrooms, and we'll cover how to market your services so you're more likely to get those requests.)

If your school already has an IL program, you can still find lots here that can be added to that curriculum. We'll discuss how to cover the IL aspects of generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI)—for example, covering general principles for efficient and ethical use that students can benefit from in the long term, rather than particular products, since those are always changing. Misinformation is not new but, as related techniques are always changing, and as this is an area that is particularly affected by AI, it is most likely part of an existing curriculum that could use a refresh. And



students need concentrated help on how to critically view videos, given their voracious appetite for information in that form.


We will cover the above topics with a focus on teaching them using inquiry-led learning. A [2020 article](#) by Keith Curry Lance and Leslie K. Maniotes explains, “The particulars of inquiry learning may vary from school to school, but the underlying principle is the same: Students choose a topic of interest to them, study it at depth, and share what they’ve learned.” The authors continue, “inquiry helps students develop self-directed lifelong learning skills that will contribute to their readiness for, and success in, college, career, and life.” Lance and Maniotes’s work promotes the tie between a schoolwide focus on inquiry learning and librarians’ work on IL, and offers a useful look at the impact of librarians’ work in K–12 schools.

Learn360

For help with finding a subject to research and for multimedia on the topic, steer students toward Learn360. The Topic Centers in Learn360 present videos, interactives, printables, audio, and images on STEAM, social studies, literacy, and community building. For more on Learn360 and its Topic Centers, see <https://infobase.com/products/learn360/>

Lance and Maniotes note that, while inquiry-related principles are well integrated into curriculum standards, many teachers find the principles difficult to implement. That’s where their librarian colleagues come in, with the evidence showing that librarians are most likely to impart essential IL skills in an inquiry-led environment. The results noted in Lance and Maniotes’s article include:

- “Multiple librarians reported that inquiry practices helped students to engage in critical thinking and deeper learning.”
- Students are...
 - “more critical of their sources and more willing to wonder and investigate the why”
 - “more self-directed, independent, and appear to have a greater sense of ownership of their learning”
 - “going beyond their normal expectations in their use of multiple sources to learn more deeply”



Information literacy gains by students also benefit teachers, as student IL boosts will help classes run more smoothly—a happy side effect that can help convince teachers to allow you time in class or at least to consider having the class complete activities you suggest.



Chapter 1

The Value of Information Literacy

Chapter 1 The Value of Information Literacy

What Is Information Literacy?

The American Library Association's Presidential Committee on Information Literacy tells us:

To be information literate, a person must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information. Producing such a citizenry will require that schools and colleges appreciate and integrate the concept of information literacy into their learning programs and that they play a leadership role in equipping individuals and institutions to take advantage of the opportunities inherent within the information society.

Fleshing that out a bit, here's what we mean by IL at Infobase. We view it as a means of encountering the world of information and making it your own—a means to becoming a capable citizen in today's world. IL starts with figuring out that a problem or a need you are facing is something that can be addressed by learning what others have found out. It gives you the skills to then gather print and digital information, sift through it to see what is accurate and useful, and synthesize it for your needs.

Information rejection is perhaps just as important as information gathering, and it only starts with being able to push aside unreliable sources. Even after a student finds quality material, it's crucial for them to figure out which paper, book, website, or other item is best for the project at hand. In some cases, students also have to figure out how to scan what they find to match the source types specified by their teacher. Being able to efficiently move from the recognition of an information

need to finding a thorough, factual answer to that need is information literacy.

High School Information Literacy Needs

As high school is a threshold stage of life, the skills students learn at this stage must address current and future needs. In high school, students are gaining the IL skills to:

- Thrive in high school
- Prepare for college
- Manage their personal lives, now and in the future

The resulting curriculum could be intimidatingly sprawling. However, a thoughtful approach to the skills that students need in high school classes can help equip them with the right competencies for gathering information and making decisions in college, work, and their personal lives.

Addressing these needs at the high school level can be difficult. Students spend much of their time preparing for standardized tests, writing college application essays, and completing other college-hopeful tasks as well as working on the material in their school's core curriculum. You know that all of these things can be made easier by IL skills, but students don't necessarily know that and, even if they do, they likely struggle to find the time for something they might consider "extra." Their teachers, too, find it hard to squeeze the core curriculum into the time allotted, let alone allow a librarian in to teach general IL concepts. A look at the literature on the value of IL to young students can be a helpful reminder that what you're doing has a solid purpose.

Chapter 1 The Value of Information Literacy

The Impact of a School Library

A growing body of research that's referred to as "school library impact studies" shows a positive correlation between K–12 student achievement and the availability of a school library that is staffed with a librarian or librarians. The research tends to mention [literacy](#) (reading) as opposed to information literacy, but it also points to student gains in school generally, as measured by test scores, resulting from school library use. Conversely, the closure of many school libraries and the assumption that librarians are not necessary even if there is a library have backfired in terms of student achievement. A 2022 [EveryLibrary Institute Report](#) written by Nijma Esad describes these trends,

and librarian authors Keith Curry Lance and Debra E. Kachel [summarized related research](#) as showing that the positive effect of a school library is most strongly shown in increased achievement by "the most vulnerable and at-risk learners, including students of color, low-income students, and students with disabilities."

Strong reading ability is central to informational literacy, so data on reading skills is helpful. For a more focused look at how skills more traditionally associated with IL are imparted by library use and benefit students, try work by Keith Curry Lance, mentioned above, whose website has an area devoted to [School Library Studies](#).



Chapter 2

Planning Your Program with Information Literacy Standards and Design Principles in Mind

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Take Stock!

Before you do anything, take stock of what you need to do to help your students become information literate.

- **What standards do you need to address?**
The IL standards that K–12 schools commonly need to address are listed below.
- **What are you already doing that meets those standards?**
Look at library work that’s already underway.
- **What are others doing that you can point to or add to?**
Meet with teachers and department heads to find out which aspects of IL are already being addressed in classrooms. Meeting with library “champions” is helpful, but try to find those whom you don’t often interact with, too. There might be pockets of IL instruction going on that you don’t know about.

Jargon alert: Teachers may not refer to what they’re doing as “information literacy” even though it might check the boxes for you, so ask open-ended, jargon-free questions about what kinds of activities and assignments students are doing—you’ll recognize IL activity when you see it.

- **What are the activities and materials that you and others have created to meet the standards and keep accessibility principles in mind?**
Teachers also work toward the standards that you have to meet, and there may be documentation available showing how they do so. Try to get information on how your school is meeting the standards it’s required to achieve, especially if you can’t get meetings with teachers to find out which IL needs are being met.

Standards

The main standards that U.S. schools need to address when it comes to IL are the AASL, Common Core, and ISTE standards, and those are the ones we’ll focus on here. Some states have their own standards and there are other local needs at play, but they each cover the tenets of IL described in the introduction to this guide—getting students from the realization that they need information through finding it, evaluating what they find, and synthesizing it into their work and world. So even if AASL, Common Core, and ISTE standards aren’t the letter of the law for you, you’ll still be able to use this guide to satisfy your administration and accreditors.

Here are excerpts from the standards showing what each expects of information literate students.

AASL

InfoLit Standard 1

1. Recognizes the need for information
2. Recognizes that accurate and comprehensive information is the basis for intelligent decision making
3. Formulates questions based on information needs
4. Identifies a variety of potential sources of information
5. Develops and uses successful strategies for locating information

InfoLit Standard 2

1. Determines accuracy, relevance, and comprehensiveness
2. Distinguishes among fact, point of view, and opinion
3. Identifies inaccurate and misleading information
4. Selects information appropriate to the problem or question at hand

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InfoLit Standard 3

1. Organizes information for practical application
2. Integrates new information into one's own knowledge
3. Applies information in critical thinking and problem solving
4. Produces and communicates information and ideas in appropriate formats

Common Core Standards

Students Who Are College and Career Ready in Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening, and Language...

Demonstrate Independence

Students can, without significant scaffolding, comprehend and evaluate complex texts across a range of types and disciplines, and they can construct effective arguments and convey intricate or multifaceted information. Likewise, students are able independently to discern a speaker's key points, request clarification, and ask relevant questions. They build on others' ideas, articulate their own ideas, and confirm they have been understood. Without prompting, they demonstrate command of standard English and acquire and use a wide-ranging vocabulary. More broadly, they become self-directed learners, effectively seeking out and using resources—including teachers, peers, and print and digital reference materials—to assist them.

Build Strong Content Knowledge

Students establish a base of knowledge across a wide range of subject matter by engaging with works of quality and substance. They become proficient in new areas through research and study. They read purposefully and listen attentively to gain both general knowledge and discipline-specific expertise. They refine and share their knowledge through writing and speaking.

Respond to the Varying Demands of Audience, Task, Purpose, and Discipline

Students adapt their communication in relation to audience, task, purpose, and discipline. They set and adjust purpose for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language use as warranted by the task. They appreciate nuances such as how the composition of an audience should affect tone when speaking and how the connotations of words affect meaning. They also know that different disciplines call for different types of evidence (e.g., documentary evidence in history, experimental evidence in science).

Comprehend as Well as Critique

Students are engaged and open-minded—but discerning—readers and listeners. They work diligently to understand precisely what an author or speaker is saying, but they also question an author's or speaker's assumptions and premises and assess the veracity of claims and the soundness of reasoning.

Value Evidence

Students cite specific evidence when offering an oral or written interpretation of a text. They use relevant evidence when supporting their own points in writing and speaking, making their reasoning clear to the reader or listener, and they constructively evaluate others' use of evidence.

Use Technology and Digital Media Strategically and Capably

Students employ technology thoughtfully to enhance their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language use. They tailor their searches online to acquire useful information efficiently, and they integrate what they learn using technology with what they learn offline. They are familiar with the strengths and limitations of various technological tools and media and can select and use those best suited to their communication goals.

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Come to Understand Other Perspectives and Cultures

Students appreciate that the twenty-first-century classroom and workplace are settings in which people from often widely divergent cultures and who represent diverse experiences and perspectives must learn and work together. Students actively seek to understand other perspectives and cultures through reading and listening, and they are able to communicate effectively with people of varied backgrounds. They evaluate other points of view critically and constructively. Through reading great classic and contemporary works of literature representative of a variety of periods, cultures, and worldviews, students can vicariously inhabit worlds and have experiences much different than their own.

ISTE

1.1 Empowered Learner

Students leverage technology to take an active role in choosing, achieving, and demonstrating competency in their learning goals, informed by the learning sciences.

1.2 Digital Citizen

Students recognize the rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of living, learning, and working in an interconnected digital world, and they act and model digital citizenship in ways that are safe, legal, and ethical.

1.3 Knowledge Constructor

Students critically curate a variety of resources using digital tools to construct knowledge, produce creative artifacts, and make meaningful learning experiences for themselves and others.

1.4 Innovative Designer

Students use a variety of technologies within a design process to identify and solve problems by creating new, useful, or imaginative solutions.

1.5 Computational Thinker

Students develop and employ strategies for understanding and solving problems in ways that leverage the power of technological methods to develop and test solutions.

1.6 Creative Communicator

Students communicate clearly and express themselves creatively for a variety of purposes using the platforms, tools, styles, formats, and digital media appropriate to their goals.

1.7 Global Collaborator

Students use digital tools to broaden their perspectives and enrich their learning by collaborating with others and working effectively in teams locally and globally.

Universal Design

In 1997, North Carolina State University College of Design's [Center for Universal Design](#) released the Principles of Universal Design, with universal design defined as "the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design."

The principles are:

- **Equitable use**
The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities. A website that is designed so that it is accessible to everyone, including people who are blind, employs this principle.
- **Flexibility in use**
The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
- **Simple and intuitive**
Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

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- **Perceptible information**
The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.
- **Tolerance for error**
The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
- **Low physical effort**
The design can be used efficiently and comfortably, and with a minimum of fatigue.
- **Size and space for approach and use**
The design provides appropriate size and space for approach, reach, manipulation, and use, regardless of the user's body size, posture, or mobility.

Some of the principles above are likely more than you will be involved in when planning an IL program—for example, the design of classrooms. Still, these principles should be kept in mind during your planning. It may not be possible to redesign or even rearrange a room, for example, but it may be possible to choose among rooms and find one that matches the guidelines listed above.

Universal Design for Learning

To take a narrower approach that focuses on curriculum only, you can work with the guidelines laid out by CAST (previously called the Center for Applied Special Technology) in their Universal Design for Learning (UDL) document:

- [Design multiple means of engagement](#)
- [Design multiple means of representation](#)
- [Design multiple means of action and expression](#)

Educational databases and websites must meet ADA requirements, and Infobase products are no exception. Meeting ADA requirements means that our materials will meet UDL principles, and you can see exactly how we match up to the ADA's requirements on our websites. For example, here is how Credo Source, our platform of high school reference materials and IL videos, meets [ADA requirements](#).

What to Avoid

Deficit Thinking

In their 2019 [In the Library with the Lead Pipe](#) article and related 2021 book, Chelsea Heinbach and co-authors describe deficit thinking as a mindset that “labels any student that does not fit into a traditional norm as ‘at-risk’ or ‘working at a deficit.’” Their work concentrates on academic librarians’ beliefs about transfer students, but it also provides a literature review that looks at the history of this idea in academia generally.

Deficit thinking, explain the authors, can lead to believing that students’ educational difficulties are due to innate traits, a belief that they describe as particularly hurting minority students. The opposite is strengths-based or asset-based education, which looks at student knowledge rather than concentrating only on where they lack.

Look at what your students do know. Some of them may be avid users of your library or of their local public library and may be effective researchers. They may be enthusiastic readers and be aware of different kinds of sources that the library has or that are on the web. They may be experts, or budding experts, on some aspect of culture. They may know another language or languages. They may have come to your high school from a different kind of educational system and be familiar with ways of learning that are different from the ones emphasized

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in your school. While it describes work in a community college, Kim L. Morrison's "[Informed Asset-Based Pedagogy](#)" offers a valuable look at this approach, one that has lessons that can be transferred to high school education.

Assumptions about "Digital Natives"

Another problematic assumption to avoid about high school students is that they are "digital natives" and therefore know much more than you about using computers and the internet.

The term "digital native" was popularized by technologist and author Marc Prensky. His 2001 article "[Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants](#)" introduces the generation born after 1984 who are, explains Prensky, "'native speakers' of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet." The term is still commonly used, but it has

drawn some disfavor as it goes too far. It's true that the generation currently in high school has been exposed to digital media and tools since birth, but that just means that they are frequent users, not necessarily effective ones.

[Dispelling the myth](#), Jessica Frawley of the University of Sydney reminds readers that "it is too easy to stereotype students and assume that familiarity with one kind of technology meant mastery over many, or ignore the very real issues that may face students who may not have had the access, skills or confidence that is assumed of them when they start." Frawley concludes by instructing educators to "[design] our teaching for real students and not the stereotypes we have imagined."

With those caveats in mind, let's move on to designing your new program.



Chapter 3

Creating a Dynamic, Interactive Curriculum

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Once you've assessed your students' information literacy needs and the standards you have to meet and compared those needs to what you're already doing, create lessons and assessments that address any gaps using inquiry learning.

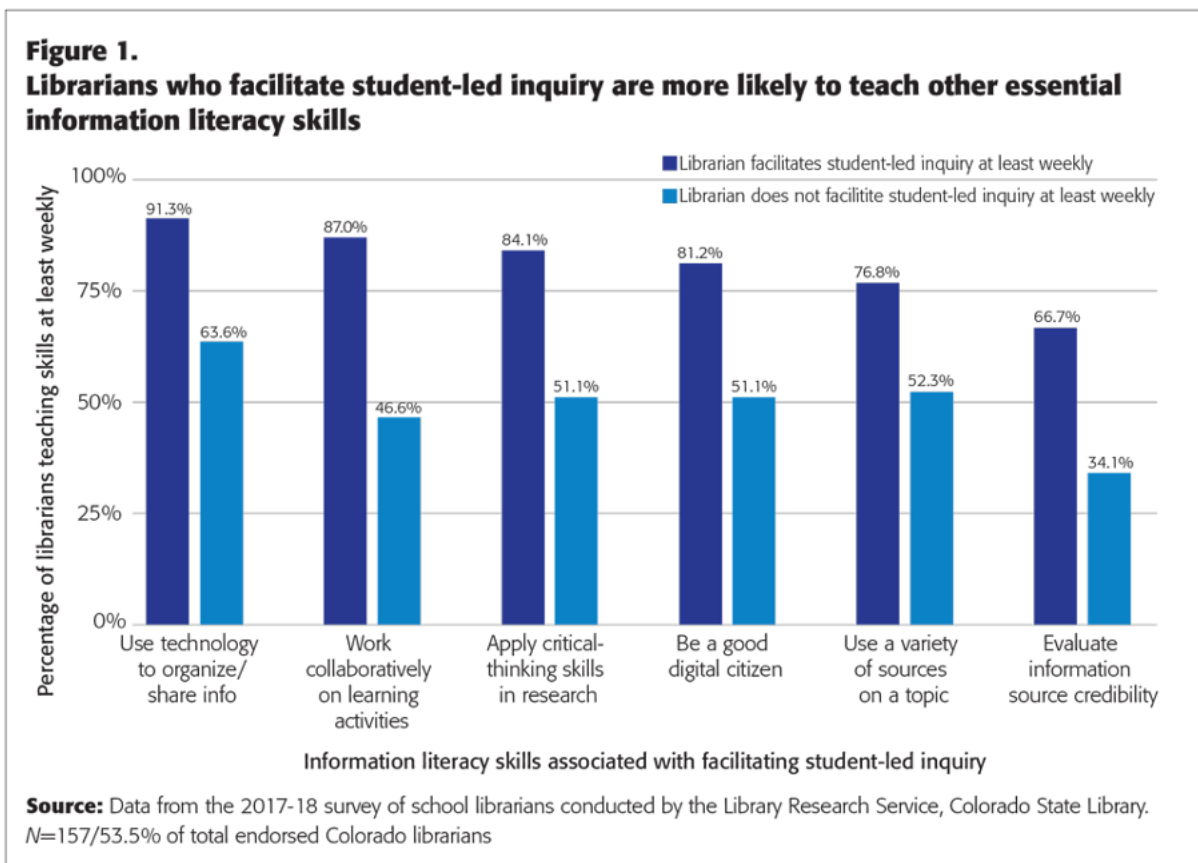
Inquiry Learning

Inquiry is the tackling of complex questions by students. It includes research but is not limited to that—it begins before the research process, when students decide on a topic that they want to investigate, using prior knowledge to decide on the topic and how to approach it. Inquiry also continues after research is over, when students integrate their new knowledge into answering future questions and approach their work overall in a more curious way.

A 2021 webinar by K–12 librarian Lori Donovan, [Inquiring Minds Want to Know: Inquiry-Based Learning in the School Library](#), offers a lot more detail on this mode of learning, and the article ["Linking Librarians, Inquiry Learning, and Information Literacy"](#) has a handy chart (see below) showing the extra skills that librarians have been found to impart using the approach.

Sample Inquiry Learning Activities

The following are three sample activities that you can use to make students' thinking and learning inquiry based and help them with three subject/format areas that they often need help with: finding and using reliable videos, understanding the drawbacks of using AI, and discerning information from misinformation. Each activity is designed



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to be completed over several class sessions. These activities can be preceded by watching and discussing information literacy-related videos from [Learn360](#) with students, such as:

[Introduction to Information Literacy](#)

[Mastering the Art of Information Literacy](#)

[Chapter 1: Introduction to Information Literacy](#)

[Chapter 2: Seven Habits and Skills](#)

[Chapter 3: Evaluating Information Sources](#)

[Chapter 4: Effective Search Strategies](#)

[Chapter 5: Fact Checking and Verifying](#)

[Chapter 6: Ethical Use of Information](#)

[Chapter 7: Media Literacy](#)

[Chapter 8: Media Literacy, a Summary](#)

[Internet Research and Information Literacy: Effective Strategies and Cautionary Tales](#)

[Effective Internet Search: Basic Tools and Advanced Strategies](#)

[Recognizing Online Propaganda, Bias, and Advertising](#)

[Plagiarism 2.0: Information Ethics in the Digital Age](#)

[How to Recognize Fake News, 2-part series](#)

In developing your own inquiry-based activities, keep in mind Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe's recommendation of a backward-design approach to creating learning. Taking this approach means identifying the desired knowledge outcome of a class or program, figuring out how you will know that students have achieved the desired knowledge, and developing learning opp-

ortunities that lead to that outcome and assessments that prove it.

Editing Wikipedia Using Information from Learn360

In this activity, you'll use an inquiry-based learning approach to help students edit Wikipedia articles using information they find in Learn360. In the process, students will learn how to discern which films are reliable and become information creators as well as consumers. This can be done in classes on any subject.

1. Brainstorm as a class which topic(s) the students are interested in. Remind them that, in the beginning, more questions are encouraged; no answers are needed yet. What questions do students have about the topic they're interested in?

2. Watch the following Infobase video in small groups:

Credo Source Research Skill Builders video [How to Narrow Your Topic](#)

This should be followed by small-group discussion with one person in each group taking notes on new questions and topics the students now have.

3. Each group's notetaker should report to the class what additional questions and topics came up during the small-group exercise.

4. Now ask the students to choose their final topic based on all of the options they've heard. Students may stick with their original interest or join a new group.

5. Students should use Learn360 to explore their topic. An introduction to that resource is available on our [Support](#)

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[Center](#), and a list of the topics covered is available within [Learn360](#). Some videos students might find interesting include:

- [Science of Surveillance](#)
- [Animals: How Smart Are They?](#)
- [The 2nd Amendment Explained](#)

Encourage them to note observations they have while watching the videos and inferences they can make from the material they see. Ask them to reflect on how the presentation differs from the kinds of videos they see on YouTube and other free sites and, in relation to that, ask them to watch the following Credo Source multimedia:

- Credo Source Research Skill Builders video: [Evaluating Sources](#)
- Credo Source Research Skill Builders tutorial: [Evaluating Sources for Objectivity](#)

6. Now it is time for students to become information creators by editing Wikipedia. Have them set up Wikipedia editor accounts if they don't already have those, and walk them as a group through the process of adding a fact from Learn360 to a Wikipedia article. Full details on how to run a Wikipedia edit-a-thon are available from [Wikipedia](#). The organization also provides lists of articles that need [updating](#) and [improvement](#).

Writing a Position Paper Using Issues & Controversies and AI

Using this assignment, students can learn how to find a topic for a position paper, find relevant articles for and against their position, and fact check what they find in article database [Issues & Controversies](#) and what they find using artificial intelligence. The aim is that students

will find that AI is not the shortcut they think it is.

1. Ask students what controversies they've heard about lately and from history. Ask them what they've done in the past to figure out what's real and what's not when it comes to controversial topics. What difficulties did they come up against? What is their first instinct when they hear about something that stirs emotions or seems incredible?

2. Introduce them to the [issues](#) and [pro/con](#) lists in the Issues & Controversies database. Have them observe the kinds of sources that are available in that database and watch the Credo Source Research Skill Builders video [Types of Resources](#). How do they know that Issues & Controversies is a reliable source?

Some Issues & Controversies articles that can stimulate conversation are:

- [Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering: Are Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering Positive Advances?](#)
- [Celebrity Gossip: Is Celebrity Gossip Harmless Entertainment?](#)
- [Violent Video Games: Should the Government Pass Laws Restricting Children's Access to Violent Video Games?](#)

3. For their position papers, have students choose a topic in Issues & Controversies or one that they come up with themselves. What are their initial thoughts about that controversy? What do they expect to find out about it?

4. Have them read the relevant articles and take notes on their observations. What's new to them? What's surprising? What is the author's authority to write this article?

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5. Now ask them to watch the Learn360 video [Introduction to Information Literacy](#), which includes coverage of issues related to using artificial intelligence. Ask them what they think it will be like to use AI to find information about the topic compared to using a library database. What do they expect to find and not find? What are their observations about the information provided by AI compared to what they saw in Issues & Controversies?

6. Ask them to fact-check the content they found in the database and with AI by doing lateral reading, as described in the videos that are part of the Credo Source tutorial [Using Lateral Reading to Evaluate Sources](#) (each of these videos is only around two minutes long).

Prebunking Misinformation to Protect Students

In a 2023 episode of the American Psychological Association podcast *Speaking of Psychology*, social psychologist Sander van der Linden recommended a misinformation-busting technique called “prebunking.” Van der Linden described prebunking as “preemptively exposing people to a weak dose of misinformation.” He said that “by refuting and deconstructing [the misinformation] in advance, people can build up cognitive antibodies and become more resistant to it in the future.”

How to do this as a librarian is the focus of a [white paper](#) written for Infobase by librarians Mandi Goodsett of Cleveland State University and Evan Meszaros of Case Western Reserve University, and a [related webinar](#) by the two librarians. Just telling students (or anyone) that their beliefs are incorrect and giving them the correct information isn’t very helpful, note Goodsett and Meszaros, because of what’s called the “continued influence effect,” which means that what people hear first tends to stick in their minds. Instead, get ahead

of the wrong information by warning students that misinformation is out there and how to watch out for it.

1. Start by explaining that others might want to manipulate them and make them believe wrong things.

2. Explain what to look out for when encountering information:

- **Strong emotions**

If you hear or read something that makes you feel a strong negative or positive emotion, it might have been designed to manipulate you. Stop and read or listen more carefully and consider that someone may be attempting to deceive you.

- **Polarization**

The author of the material may be attempting to pit those with different ideologies against one another, making the author's statements worth a closer examination.

- **Conspiracy**

Does the author claim that only they have special access to information that the mainstream media, government, and others don’t have or are hiding? Authors pushing this narrative should have their claims closely examined.

- **Discrediting**

This is when someone attacks the messenger rather than providing facts for or against the message, and is a red flag for misinformation.

The above are just examples, but whichever topics you approach with students, an inquiry-led class works the same way—by encouraging reflection and questions before the work begins and at each step. The teacher should continue to ask students what they anticipate they will find, why they think they will find that, and what they can infer from what they actually find. The students

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should also be helped to find intrinsic motivation to do the assignment by being told the benefits to them of being more information literate. Which benefits to mention depend on the individual student; for a variety of ideas, see Cara Berg, Darby Malvey, and Maureen Donohue's "[Without Foundations, We Can't Build.](#)"

Scaffolded Learning

The various standards listed earlier in this guide specify habits and modes of understanding rather than the ability to complete specific tasks. Over several years, then, your lessons should start with a foundational expression of each standard and reinforce it over time, getting more complex with each repeat. For example, AASL Standard 1, part 4, is "Identifies a variety of potential sources of information." In a student's first year in high school, this might be satisfied by the student using a library book in

addition to websites. Later, the student could be expected to use a greater variety of source types, such as a video interview, a book, and an article from a library database. This building upon earlier work is called "scaffolding" of learning.

Over time, an inquiry mindset should set in as a complement to the scaffolding. For example, after students in the early years of high school have had some inquiry-led learning that compares using the open web and using library databases, they should be ready in later years to approach more complicated questions using primary sources or more advanced books than they were ready for before. Still, the teacher's approach—encouraging questions and inferences at every step—will be the same. For extra assignment ideas, see [Project CORA](#) (Community of Online Research Assignments).



Chapter 4

Marketing Your Information Literacy Program

Chapter 4 Marketing Your Information Literacy Program

So you've developed inquiry-led lessons based around what students at your high school need to know, both for their own learning and to meet outside standards. Now you need to let teachers know about your new offerings so they can invite you to their classrooms. Where do you begin?

The great news is that you've already started. Planning the program involved multiple people throughout your school, so your marketing informally began long before any instruction was available. Along the way, you should have been delivering elevator speeches about how IL lessons can help classes and students' research assignments run more smoothly and be more satisfying for all involved. Now it's time to inform your broader audience that the program is up and running. This could include teachers whom you didn't consult with while developing the new lessons, your administration, and students who come to the library independently and could use facets of your program as quick lessons.

Tell Users What's in It for Them

Marketing is most effective when you clearly communicate to potential users what you and your resources can do for them. Think of when you're writing a cover letter for a job application. The letter is a marketing document about yourself. You focus on how your skills and experience will help the company, not just what you can do overall or why you need the job.

Library marketing is the library's cover letter. It allows you to tell students, teachers, and others about the materials and services the library has and how those materials and services can help them to teach better or learn more easily. Your communication shouldn't just describe what the library has, nor impart the idea that library use is a good idea generally. It should mention specifically how the library's materials and services benefit the user.

Positive outcomes relating to students at your own institution are best.

What's in It for Students

When you're speaking to students about the benefits they will get out of IL and library use, try to help them find intrinsic motivation related to the work. When students feel personally connected to and satisfied by the work they're doing, they find it easier and get more benefit from the information. For example, students whom you know are avid manga readers might enjoy learning how to find material on Japanese culture and can pick up effective catalog and database searching methods along the way. Students who enjoy debate club can be shown how to use databases like Issues & Controversies to find pro/con articles on various topics and to discern among sources to see what's reliable and what's right for the project at hand. And you've likely heard about students' media creation—TikTok videos, for example. Show them how to find films and other media that can be inspiration for dance, singing, and other performances while also discussing in the process how to spot a quality video. You know your students best. Find out what they love and introduce them to IL concepts using their pastimes as a hook.

Tell students about their peers who've previously been helped by library instruction, too. Keep the stories short and include clear cause-and-effect details. For example, your tale could be about a student who was completing a project about criminal justice, learned how to use a related database, and told you how he got a better grade than on previous papers because his sources were more scholarly than those he had used in the past.

Other ideas for your marketing initiative can come from thinking about why you created this program, whom it will help, and how it will help them. Take a moment to consider why you did this work, and be ready to explain

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your motivation to others—enthusiasm about a project is contagious. For example, have your students been using AI to plagiarize, and one of your goals in this work is to show them how to use AI ethically? It's unfortunate that plagiarism using AI is common, but it offers an opportunity for conversations.

What's in It for Teachers and Administrators

Getting access to classrooms can be difficult, so, as when marketing to students, find hooks that can interest teachers and administrators in your work. If a particular incident of disinformation has been in the news, use that as an opportunity to mention to teachers that you can visit their classrooms to lead an anti-disinformation lesson. Or is there pressure at your school to make better progress toward state or other standards? While starting an IL program to meet Common Core or other standards might feel like box-checking, administrative pressure to show that the standards have been achieved provides a chance to get institutional buy-in for your efforts. Contributions to these "outside" goals place library work in front of a larger audience.

Identify various teacher groups and target them separately with information tailored toward their needs. For example, if you want to reach English Language Arts teachers, choose a place where they can be found, such as their department's mailing list, a departmental meeting, or the noticeboard outside their office area. Don't bombard them with information that's better suited for students or faculty in other subjects; stick to news and resources for English teachers. Links to Credo Source can be sent as part of emails so teachers can view a video or read an article, giving them a taste of what the library has to offer their students.

You know the population best, so figure out what will grab their attention and elicit a response. In each

communication, mention only a few things and include an "action item." In an email to faculty, for example, ask them to contact the library to set up IL lessons or to attend a session in which you'll address how the library can help with devising IL-rich assignments. Here are some more best practices for your marketing communications:

- Time your communications for when the audience is available (in the business world, marketers avoid sending communications on Mondays or Fridays).
- Establish regular contact with your various segments (though not so regular that you're spamming them).
- Remember that a resource or service might still be news to them even if you've had it for a while.

Contact individual teachers as necessary, too. How often have you heard a teacher mention that they wish they had known that you had that one, perfect resource (that you already have!) or that you could teach their students the ins and outs of finding primary sources? If you know a social studies teacher wants to implement a certain kind of project in an upcoming class, tell them how your IL lessons can help students with that work. For example, if that social studies teacher is planning to have students research and write about pandemics through history, say something like, "I heard your students will be researching pandemics. Do you want to set up a time for me to drop into your class so I can talk to them about finding reliable materials and avoiding disinformation?"

Explain to your principal and other administrators that information-literate students are more successful, at first using statistics from schools overall that can be found in Keith Curry Lance's work. Once your IL classes have been underway for a while, you should have successes at your school that you can point to, both achievements

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by individual students and by classes and the high school overall.

Attach a precise goal to all these efforts. This approach is recommended by library marketing expert Terry Kendrick. “The first step in creating any marketing plan is knowing what your ambition is,” noted Kendrick in an [American Libraries](#) interview. For example, if meeting accreditation requirements is your reason for starting an IL program, outline precisely which of the accreditation agencies’ requirements you need the program to meet and by when you will meet them. Where disinformation is a concern, make a goal that student papers will, for example, include a certain percentage of library resources rather than solely open-web ones.

Marketing as Job Protection

Marketing to staff has the benefit of alerting the administration to the library’s and the librarians’ worth. Without data correlating library activity with carefully watched metrics such as test scores, the library and its staff can appear only as a cost. The Center for American Progress noted in 2023 that “since 2000, there has been a nearly 20 percent drop in school librarian positions, which translates to 10,000 fewer full-time school librarians across the country,” making it clear why you have to show how you benefit the school.

Prepare data on the benefits of IL and connect the dots for administrators. Go beyond simply noting that students who take IL instruction are better at research. Bring up specific academic issues at your school and illustrate how your program will help. Point to improved reading scores, for example, and correlate the improvement with literacy initiatives that you outline for the administrators, or show examples of work that students were able to complete after taking information literacy classes.

Use Research as a Marketing Tool

[A 2018 study](#) by Lisa Hinchliffe, Allison Rand, and Jillian Collier of the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign revealed the most common misconceptions that first-year college students have about research. Their list is a ready-made marketing tool—provide it to teachers as a guide to what your IL lessons can “cure.” According to Hinchliffe, Rand, and Collier, first-year students (who, you can point out to teachers, were recently high school students):

1. Believe they are supposed to do their research without assistance.
2. Perceive the library as only a place to get books or to study.
3. Believe that research is a linear, uni-directional process.
4. Believe that freely available internet resources are sufficient for academic work.
5. Think Google is a sufficient search tool.
6. Believe that accessibility is an indicator of quality.
7. Believe that they are information literate.
8. Believe that all library sources and discovery tools are credible.
9. Think that every question has a single answer.

Word of Mouth

You likely know students who are avid library users. These frequent fliers can give a great boost to your marketing efforts, so be sure to make them aware of the IL assistance that the library can offer. They will likely become ambassadors for your work. Partner with local colleges that your students may already be attending through bridge programs and find out what IL instruction and/or lesson

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plans they can provide to you and students. This may mean that fewer remedial courses will be necessary for your students when they move to college, saving their families money.

Social Media

If you are allowed to use it at work, your library can maintain an engaging social media presence. Select your platforms based on what resonates with your users and what you want to post. Your library may already have a Facebook page or an Instagram account, but creating library and information literacy content for TikTok can be a more effective—and fun!—way to connect with today’s students. Though this may change over time, TikTok is currently one of the best places to reach young users.


Dina Mkgadi Mashiyane provides a helpful overview of ways in which libraries are using TikTok for everything from promotion to advocacy in her article “[Libraries Breaking Barriers through TikTok: Enhancing Access and Visibility](#).” And check out libraries that are already marketing their materials and services through social media, such as Great Valley High School in Malverne, PA, which has successful presences on [TikTok](#) and [Instagram](#). Social media posts can be useful as you’re planning your IL progress, allowing you to reach other high school librarians and teachers and quickly receive advice and

feedback on your plans. Let your student and teacher followers know how you can help them in addition to asking for their opinions and ideas.

Here are a few tips to help you get the most from your social media strategy:

- Post at regular intervals and stick with it.
- Don’t only post about “yourself” or, in this case, about your library. Mix it up, sometimes offering info about your collections and services, but also sharing other interesting school-related or non-academic topics.
- Follow your users back, as well as other libraries, librarians, and schools so that you can get tips on IL instruction and see trends and ideas.

After an IL interaction, follow up with the faculty member or students involved and ask about outcomes. Use follow-up questions to discern how IL knowledge has affected the student or teacher personally. For example, if a student mentions that they now have a better understanding about how to use databases, ask about what that improvement means for them: Less time per paper? Reduced anxiety about future work? Potential users of a service want to know what’s in it for them. Hearing concrete examples can show them how they, too, might benefit from the service.



Chapter 5

Conclusion

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In this handbook, we've covered why IL is important, some of the IL standards you might have to meet, how to develop assignments that teach students what they need to know to complete high school work and be more savvy information consumers in college and after, and how to market the lessons you develop, all using Infobase and other resources. To close, we'd like to wish you well with your current and future IL endeavors and remind you that Infobase is here to help. To discuss how

to use Infobase materials in your IL work, please contact Henrietta Thornton at hthornton@infobase.com.

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