Information literacy is the ability to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively. Increasingly in today’s world, it is both a core and critical skill to be able to quickly assess information from a wide variety of sources. While future means and methods of assessing information cannot be predicted, information literacy will grow in importance as information proliferates in volume, scope and on a world-wide scale. Information literacy skills are key outcomes of a college education as recognized by both accreditation agencies¹ and employers², who seek individuals with the skills to effectively locate and evaluate information.

An information literate individual is able to:

- Determine the extent of information needed
- Access the needed information effectively and efficiently
- Evaluate information and its sources critically
- Incorporate selected information into one’s knowledge base
- Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
- Understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and access and use information ethically and legally³

In support of the UW-Colleges’ Mission, the UW-Colleges libraries help students develop the information literacy skills needed to be successful in their educational careers. Information literacy fosters scholarly activity, promotes lifelong learning and responsible citizenship in support of the Wisconsin Idea. It is an integral part of the liberal arts education and tradition. It embodies this tradition with ongoing, innovative instruction and cross-discipline collaboration that incorporates a variety of resources and formats and reflects the information needs of each discipline or profession.

Information literacy is a primary goal of the UW-Colleges libraries. This is achieved through active and intentional reference services and classroom instruction, in collaboration with faculty or instructional staff members across a wide range of disciplines. Library support for information literacy instruction includes, but is not limited to, individualized research sessions for classes; customized, web-based research guides and direct assistance to users, both in person and on-line.

Adopted and approved May 8, 2012 by the UW Colleges Library Council

¹ The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), the Western Association of Schools and College (WASC), and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).
³ http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/informationliteracycompetency