

Blount Library

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Orientation



# Information Fluency for Traditional Undergraduates

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# Project Abstract

We address information fluency as a component of critical thinking and communication in general education, based on a [standard](#) from the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL). Averett freshmen complete a library tour, tutorial, and in-class orientation, and optional research consultations with librarians. Librarians offer instruction in library research methods for courses in the major disciplines. We will assess information fluency in two ways: (1) course instructors score use of supporting documentation in class projects, and (2) graduating seniors complete an *Information Fluency Assessment* adapted from the NITLE *Research Practices Survey*.

*“Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it.”*

Attributed to Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) by James Boswell, in his *Life of Johnson, Chap. ix. 1775.*

# ACRL: An information literate individual can...

1. Determine the extent of information needed
2. Access the needed information effectively and efficiently
3. Evaluate information and its sources critically
4. Incorporate selected information into her knowledge base;
5. Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
6. Understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and access and use information ethically and legally

# Averett Definition

## **Information Fluency = the ability to:**

1. Define and articulate a topic or problem.
2. Locate and retrieve reliable information from a variety of sources.
3. Critically evaluate this literature (or data) in the context of the topic, modifying the topic or seeking additional sources as warranted.
4. Use the knowledge gained to communicate effectively and ethically.

# Timing Library Interventions

College freshmen appear to benefit from gradual exposure to sources and expectations for scholarly and professional communication as they build vocabulary and perspective through foundational reading and instruction in a variety of academic subjects.

# Touring—Learning—Doing

Though Averett librarians find that direct instruction is best deferred until the second semester of the freshmen year when students (a) have acquired foundational knowledge and vocabulary from introductory courses, and (b) have one or more assignments requiring scholarly or professional information sources, we offer ....

# A Library Tour

Library faculty offer a guided or self-guided library tour with exercises for new (IDS) students and visitors:

<http://www.averett.edu/library/tour.pdf>.

(Printed copies are available at the Circulation Desk.)

# An Online Tutorial

Library faculty created an [online tutorial](#) with worksheets and optional exercises addressing foundational skills. We encourage English 111 instructors to include this [tutorial](#) in their syllabi.

# Tutorial Objectives

In this Tutorial you will ...

- identify Library of Congress call numbers by subject,
- locate a book and borrow it from Blount Library,
- link to an electronic book from the library catalog,
- access subscription databases from on or off campus,
- link to full text articles,
- save and email articles,
- request a book or article through Interlibrary Loan,
- find some information on a subject,
- attribute the sources in which you found the information.

# Direct Instruction

At the option of the professor for each section of English 112, librarians offer one session of in-class instruction designed to prepare students for a major research project.

# Reference Consultations

Library faculty offer consultations to English 112 students, and to any student preparing a research paper, presentation, or other project requiring scholarly and professional sources.

# Research Methods Instruction

At the request of classroom faculty, librarians offer in-class instruction on library research methods for upper division courses, emphasizing specialized resources for the major disciplines.

# Scoring Student Performance

Beginning in 2010, we will ask interested faculty to score seniors' performance on research projects and presentations per a departmental rubric, or one such as those from [McKendree](#) and [St. Johns](#) universities.

# Assessing Research Practices

To further determine the level of information fluency attained by Averett graduates, we developed and pre-tested an assessment for successive senior classes. It is based on the HEDS/NITLE *Research Practices Survey*, licensed under the Creative Commons.

# This Assessment Seeks to Learn:

1. Where students seek information to complete research assignments
2. What database search skills they have acquired (Boolean, phrase, truncation)
3. Whether they can identify and retrieve pertinent books, articles, and primary sources (data, manuscripts, unpublished research reports) efficiently

4. How they organize citations and notes for the sources they retrieve
5. Whether they know when and how to attribute sources used for their research
6. How much they enjoy academic research and how much effort they devote to its various components

7. How they manage the time they have to complete an assignment
8. To whom they go for help with assignments
9. Their beliefs and attitudes about formal research as a means to solve problems and answer important questions

10. Advanced study or employment AU graduates anticipate that may require information fluency, e.g.,

- a. Graduate school
- b. Business, accounting, or law professions
- c. Teaching, coaching, counseling
- d. Analyst, engineer, scientist
- e. Health care professions
- f. Government, law enforcement, social service

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## Questions?

To learn more about this project, include your students, or preview the Information Fluency Assessment, please contact: [elaine.day@averett.edu](mailto:elaine.day@averett.edu)  
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