Scholarship as Conversation

Communities of scholars, researchers, or professionals engage in sustained discourse with new insights and discoveries occurring over time as a result of varied perspectives and interpretations.

Research in scholarly and professional fields is a discursive practice in which ideas are formulated, debated, and weighed against one another over an extended time. Instead of seeking discrete answers to complex problems, experts understand that a given issue may be characterized by several competing perspectives as part of an ongoing conversation in which information users and creators come together and negotiate meaning. Experts understand that, though some topics have established answers through this process, a query may have more than one uncontested answer. Experts are, therefore, inclined to seek out many perspectives, not merely the ones with which they are familiar. These perspectives might be in their own discipline or profession or may be in other fields. Even though novice learners and experts at all levels can take part in the conversation, established power and authority structures may influence their ability to participate and can privilege certain voices and information. Developing familiarity with the sources of evidence, methods, and modes of discourse in the field assists novice learners to enter the conversation. New forms of scholarly and research conversations provide more avenues in which a wide variety of individuals may have a voice in the conversation. Providing attribution to relevant previous research is also an obligation of participation in the conversation. It enables the conversation to move forward and strengthens one’s voice in the conversation.

Knowledge Practices

Learners who are developing their information literate abilities do the following:

- Cite the contributing work of others in their own information production
- Contribute to scholarly conversation at an appropriate level, such as local online community, guided discussion, undergraduate research journal, conference presentation/poster session
- Identify barriers to entering scholarly conversation via various venues
- Critically evaluate contributions made by others in participatory information environments
- Identify the contribution particular articles, books, and other scholarly pieces make to disciplinary knowledge
- Summarize the changes in scholarly perspective over time on a particular topic within a specific discipline
- Recognize that a given scholarly work may not represent the only or even the majority perspective on the issue

Dispositions

Learners who are developing their information literate abilities do the following:
• Recognize they are often entering into an ongoing scholarly conversation and not a finished conversation
• Seek out conversations taking place in their research area
• See themselves as contributors to scholarship rather than only consumers of it
• Recognize that scholarly conversations take place in various venues
• Suspend judgment on the value of a particular piece of scholarship until the larger context for the scholarly conversation is better understood
• Understand the responsibility that comes with entering the conversation through participatory channels
• Value user-generated content and evaluate contributions made by others
• Recognize that systems **privilege** authorities and that not having a fluency in the language and process of a discipline disempowers their ability to participate and engage

From the *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*:

[http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework#conversation](http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework#conversation)