

Research as Inquiry

Research is iterative and depends upon asking increasingly complex or new questions whose answers in turn develop additional questions or lines of inquiry in any field.

Experts see inquiry as a process that focuses on problems or questions in a discipline or between open or unresolved disciplines. Experts recognize the collaborative effort within a discipline to extend the knowledge in that field. Many times, this process includes points of disagreement where debate and dialogue work to deepen the conversations around knowledge. This process of inquiry extends beyond the academic world to the community at large, and the process of inquiry may focus upon personal, professional, or societal needs. The spectrum of inquiry ranges from asking simple questions that depend upon basic recapitulation of knowledge to increasingly sophisticated abilities to refine research questions, use more advanced research methods, and explore more diverse disciplinary perspectives. Novice learners acquire strategic perspectives on inquiry and a greater repertoire of investigative methods.

Knowledge Practices

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

- Formulate questions for research based on information gaps or on reexamination of existing, possibly conflicting, information
- Determine an appropriate scope of investigation
- Deal with complex research by breaking complex questions into simple ones, limiting the scope of investigations
- Use various research methods, based on need, circumstance, and type of inquiry
- Monitor gathered information and assess for gaps or weaknesses
- Organize information in meaningful ways
- Synthesize ideas gathered from multiple sources
- Draw reasonable conclusions based on the analysis and interpretation of information

Dispositions

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

- Consider research as open-ended exploration and engagement with information
- Appreciate that a question may appear to be simple but still disruptive and important to research
- Value intellectual curiosity in developing questions and learning new investigative methods
- Maintain an open mind and a critical stance
- Value persistence, adaptability, and flexibility and recognize that ambiguity can benefit the research process
- Seek multiple perspectives during information gathering and assessment
- Seek appropriate help when needed
- Follow ethical and legal guidelines in gathering and using information

- Demonstrate intellectual humility (i.e., recognize their own intellectual or experiential limitations)

From the ACRL Framework: <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework#inquiry>