



ANSS: Anthropology and Sociology Section

Association of College and Research
Libraries (ACRL)
Instruction and Information Literacy Committee

July 7, 2006

The ANSS Instruction and Information Literacy Committee invites your review of the attached draft standards for critical information literacy of Anthropology and Sociology students.

We are very interested in your comments and whether or how these standards resonate with you as a professor of anthropology or sociology. Please direct your comments to:

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Sincerely,

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Information Literacy Standards for Anthropology and Sociology Students Draft – July 7, 2006

Preamble

What do anthropology and sociology students need to know about doing research and constructing knowledge in their disciplines? Faculty and librarians consider this question from their particular vantage points and sometimes put their ideas into action in the classroom and in consultations with students. The following draft standards are an attempt by librarians and faculty to frame information-seeking and knowledge-acquisition in these two disciplines as an aid to helping students become effective researchers and critical thinkers. The standards reflect (a) how knowledge is produced in anthropology and sociology and (b) what contributes to critical information literacy.

The standards can be a tool to:

- provide ideas for infusing coursework, assignments, and websites with content that will both increase students' anthropology or sociology knowledge and enhance their research skills
- assist faculty and librarians in communicating with students about research and critical approaches to information
- equip faculty and librarians with a discipline-specific understanding of "information literacy" which can be useful in discussions with administrators, curriculum committees, and accreditation teams
- facilitate faculty-librarian communication about information literacy goals and provide opportunities for wider discussion of these issues
- inform the teaching and consulting that librarians provide anthropology and sociology students
- help students understand what is expected of them in specific terms for research and writing in these two disciplines

Completion and acceptance of the standards is the foundational phase of this project. Phase two will be the creation of an online repository of assignments, curricula, course syllabi, and active learning methods that can be used by faculty and librarians to enrich coursework and enable students to meet the standards.

The draft standards are derived specifically for students in anthropology and sociology from the more general Association of College & Research Libraries standards (2000). Like the ACRL Standards, the draft includes five basic areas (determine information need, access, evaluate, and use information, and understand relevant ethical and legal issues). Unlike the ACRL document, however, this draft incorporates the fifth standard (ethics) into the other four so that it is not separate from but integral to all the knowledge and behaviors of critical information literacy.

The standards build from basic to more advanced, as do the key behaviors for success identified for each standard. Likewise, students will learn the necessary skills incrementally over time as each successive information-seeking and research experience provides opportunities for learning. Local institutions, academic departments, and curricular committees will decide how and when students are introduced to the concepts and skills that enable them to meet the standards, and at what point in the education for a major or a graduate degree each standard should be partially or fully met.

The standards are written in such a way as to make it possible to assess whether students can accomplish the “key behaviors.” The standards can therefore be used in department assessments and department/program reviews. They can also be used in conjunction with the ASA recommendations on the undergraduate sociology major (McKinney, Howery, Strand, Kain, & Berheide, 2004. pp. 2-29), the ASA’s shared learning outcomes in anthropology and sociology (Kain, Wagenaar, & Howery, 2006, pp. 19-20), and similar statements on learning in or education for anthropology and sociology.

Standard One – Know what kind of information is needed

What the student needs to do:

1. Define and articulate the information need.

Key behaviors for success:

- a. Identifies and describes a manageable research topic or other information need appropriate to the scope of research questions in anthropology and sociology, using discipline-specific terminology, methods, and contexts.
 - b. Reads information sources in anthropology and sociology to increase familiarity with the topic. **Examples:** Encyclopedia of Sociology; Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology.
 - c. Identifies key concepts and terms that describe the information need. **Examples:** the discipline-focused encyclopedias, Thesaurus of Sociological Indexing Terms, and Outline of Cultural Materials (HRAF).
 - d. Reevaluates the nature and extent of the information need to clarify, revise, or refine the question after some initial research, reading, interviews, and work with data or a population have taken place.
2. Identify a variety of formats and sources in which anthropological and sociological information may appear.

Key behaviors for success:

- a. Describes how information used in anthropology and sociology is formally and informally produced and disseminated. **Examples:** the U.S. Census, ethnographies, field notes, artifacts, data sets, conference papers, gray or fugitive literature, and peer reviewed scholarly articles.
- b. Recognizes that anthropological and sociological knowledge is organized in certain ways and in various formats which may influence how it is accessed and evaluated. **Examples:** scholarly

journals, popular press, conference proceedings, museums, article databases, data archives such as those available via the ICPSR, Web sites, and multimedia.

- c. Differentiates between primary and secondary sources in anthropology and sociology, recognizing the use and value of each type. **Examples:** the use of field notes in writing ethnography, the use of site reports in archaeological analysis, and the value of raw data in constructing information and writing a sociological analysis.
- d. Recognizes that existing information can be combined with original thought, experimentation, and/or analysis to produce new information and insights into society, social phenomena, aspects of culture, and social theories.

3. Consider the costs and benefits of acquiring the needed information.

Key behaviors for success:

- a. Determines the availability of needed information and when necessary broadens the search beyond local resources. **Examples:** interlibrary loan, using resources at other locations including abroad, and obtaining images, videos, text, or sound.
- b. Defines a realistic overall plan and timeline to acquire the needed information, do the field work, analyze data, or learn new skills.

Ethical, sociocultural, and legal dimensions and behaviors:

- c. Identifies and discusses issues related to free vs. fee-based access to information, including pertinent inequalities of access in the U.S. and abroad.

Standard Two – Access needed information effectively, efficiently, and ethically

What the student needs to do:

1. Select the most appropriate investigative methods and information retrieval systems for accessing the needed information.

Key behaviors for success:

- a. Identifies anthropological and sociological investigative methodologies applicable to the research project, such as fieldwork, participant observation, data analysis, survey research, and literature review.
- b. Selects information retrieval systems most appropriate to the information need. **Examples:** discipline-specific databases such as Anthropology Plus, AnthroSource, eHRAF, Sociological Abstracts, Social Sciences Citation Index, Population Index, Family & Society Studies Worldwide, Annual Review of Anthropology/Sociology, National Criminal Justice Service Abstracts, Ethnic NewsWatch, Bibliography of Data-Related Literature; library catalogs; data sets, e.g. the NORC General Social Survey and others from the ICPSR; and research guides for anthropology and sociology on academic library Web sites.

- c. Distinguishes between databases that provide up to date indexing of a variety of journals, book chapters, dissertations, and conference proceedings in anthropology and sociology (such as those listed in Two 1.b), databases that provide the online text of journals from many disciplines but which are typically limited in date and/or scope for anthropology and sociology (**examples:** JSTOR, Expanded Academic ASAP, Google Scholar), and the companies or systems that license the databases or online text of journals (**examples:** CSA, EBSCO, Sage).
- d. Uses Web search engines such as Google critically and cautiously for scholarly research.

Ethical, sociocultural, and legal dimensions and behaviors:

- e. Complies with laws and university rules on access to information resources, and storage and dissemination of text, data, images, field notes, and visual and audio works.
 - f. Demonstrates an understanding of institutional policies related to human subjects research, including access to subjects, informed consent, and institutional review board requirements.
 - g. Identifies and discusses privacy, confidentiality, security, and other ethical issues related to participant observation according to the American Anthropological Association Code of Ethics or the American Sociological Association Ethical Standards.
2. Construct, implement, and refine well-designed search strategies that use a variety of methods to find information.

Key behaviors for success:

- a. Uses appropriate sociological and anthropological terminology for searching databases, recognizing the different effects of using free-text keywords, synonyms, and vocabulary from the database's own particular list of subject indexing terms.
 - b. Creates and uses effective search strategies in several anthropology and sociology databases (examples in Two.1.b) and various search interfaces using advanced search features, such as Boolean operators, truncation, and proximity searches; refines searches as needed later in the process to obtain additional or missing information.
 - c. Searches for and finds books as well as scholarly journals, and sources appropriate to the inquiry, such as surveys, interviews, audio and visual sources, and data, and seeks out knowledgeable individuals in the library, academic department, and community as part of the research plan.
3. Keep track of the information and its sources.

Key behaviors for success:

- a. Produces accurate reference lists using the standard styles for anthropology and sociology.
- b. Uses a citation management system for organizing and managing citations, recording all pertinent citation information for future reference. **Examples:** RefWorks or EndNote.

Ethical, sociocultural, and legal dimensions and behaviors:

- c. Knows when citation is necessary and applies the documentation style of the American Anthropological Association, the American Sociological Association, or the American Psychological Association consistently to cite sources and list references.

**Standard Three – Evaluate information and its sources critically;
Incorporate selected information into knowledge base and
value system**

What the student needs to do:

1. Summarize the main ideas to be extracted from the information gathered and synthesize main ideas to construct new concepts.

Key behaviors for success:

- a. Selects the main ideas from texts (books, scholarly articles, interview transcripts, ethnographies, etc.), chooses concepts to restate in his/her own words, and identifies verbatim material that can be appropriately quoted.
 - b. Recognizes interrelationships among concepts, social theories, field observations, and other data and combines them into potentially useful primary statements with supporting evidence.
 - c. Utilizes technologies (such as audio or visual equipment, spreadsheets, and statistical packages) for studying the interaction of ideas and other phenomena. **Examples:** to analyze migration patterns, census data, and videos and sound recordings of populations studied.
2. Apply appropriate criteria for evaluating both the information and its source.

Key behaviors for success:

- a. Examines and compares information from various sources in order to evaluate reliability, validity, accuracy, authority, timeliness, and point of view or bias.
- b. Seeks differing viewpoints in alternative databases, books, Web sites, and articles, always evaluating the source of the information or argument, and determines whether to incorporate or reject viewpoints encountered.
- c. Analyzes the structure and logic of supporting arguments or methodology within an anthropology or sociology framework, understands what constitutes valid evidence in the discipline, analyzes the reasonableness of the conclusions, and recognizes prejudice, deception, or manipulation.
- d. Recognizes the cultural, physical, or other context within which the information was created and accessed, and understands the impact of context on interpreting the information. **Examples:** questions and understands whether the researcher had full access to pertinent government sources or to the population studied, whether the researcher encountered censorship or culturally imposed limitations in asking questions or gathering information, for

whose benefit the research was produced, and which data or viewpoint might be missing from the analysis.

Ethical, sociocultural, and legal dimensions and behaviors:

- e. Identifies and discusses issues related to censorship and freedom of speech in the U.S. and in countries/cultures being studied.
 - f. Identifies and discusses issues related to privacy and security of information. **Examples:** cases in which field notes can be subpoenaed or government funding organizations can demand primary research data.
3. Compare new knowledge with prior knowledge to determine the value added, contradictions, or other unique characteristics of the information and take steps to reconcile differences.

Key behaviors for success:

- a. Determines whether the information satisfies the research need, and selects information that provides evidence for the topic, integrates new information, and draws conclusions based upon information gathered.
- b. Seeks expert opinion through interviews, email, etc. with anthropologists, sociologists, and subject-area specialists in the library to validate sufficiency and interpretation of the information.
- c. Reformulates initial query if necessary based on findings, and reviews and extends search strategies for additional concepts or broader synthesis. **Examples:** searching databases in related fields such as linguistics, education, political science, ethnomusicology, biology, geography, ethnic or local area studies, and psychology.

Standard Four – Use information effectively and ethically to accomplish a specific purpose

What the student needs to do:

- 1. Apply new and prior information to the planning, creation, and revision of a particular product or performance.

Key behaviors for success:

- a. Organizes and integrates the content, quotations, and paraphrasings in a manner that supports the purposes and format of the product or presentation. **Examples:** outlines, oral reports, drafts, videos, and presentation software, and manipulation/transfer of digital text, images, and data for the presentation or product.
- b. Maintains a journal of activities related to the information seeking, evaluating, and communicating process. **Example:** creates a blog to record searches conducted for an evaluation of hate crime law and legislation from a criminal justice perspective.

- c. Reflects on past successes, failures, and alternative strategies for integrating new and prior information and creating the presentation. **Example:** rewrites the text of an original presentation on Navaho weaving to make it more accessible to a general audience, adding sound files and images to augment the content.

Ethical, sociocultural, and legal dimensions and behaviors:

- d. Demonstrates an understanding of what constitutes plagiarism and does not represent work attributable to others as his/her own.
2. Communicate the product or performance effectively to others.

Key behaviors for success:

- a. Chooses a communication medium, format, and style that best supports the purposes of the product or performance and the intended audience. **Example:** integrates maps, photos of artifacts and texts of field diaries into a PowerPoint package on a specific archaeological site and mounts it on the Internet to educate local residents about a salvage project involving a new highway.
- b. Uses a range of information technology applications, incorporating principles of design and communication, in creating the product or presentation. **Example:** creates a study of Polynesian music integrating sound bites and links to photographic images from the HRAF files and contemporary performances.

Ethical, sociocultural, and legal dimensions and behaviors:

- c. Demonstrates an understanding of intellectual property, copyright, and fair use of copyrighted material, and obtains and posts necessary permissions from authors and organizations where needed to use copyrighted material in writing or presentations.
- d. Shares the product of the research, e.g., the report, data, or ethnography, with groups and sponsors in keeping with ethical principles of the AAA or ASA.

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