



# Library

# Curriculum



**Western  
Libraries**

<https://www.lib.uwo.ca/teaching/index.html>

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# Foundation

Western Libraries' curriculum is centred on the values of respect, social justice, lifelong learning, collaboration, and [information literacy](#). We teach students to value who they are and what they know, while questioning the forces that shaped their learning. As students are introduced to other ways of seeing the world, Western Libraries supports them with identifying gaps in their knowledge, helping them understand whose perspectives might fill these gaps, and where such perspectives can be found. We help students strategically search for knowledge and seek out multiple voices to expand their worldview. At each stage of their learning journey, we encourage students to think critically about where misusing knowledge can cause others harm, asking them to pause and carefully consider before using or sharing others' ideas. Given the ever-changing complexities of the information age, we also equip students with essential library research and data skills. Ultimately, we teach students to recognize their power to create change, to use their privilege as university community members to influence others responsibly, and to lend their voice to important discussions about social justice.



# Learning Outcomes



By the end of their degree, then, students should be able to:

1. Respect others by considering the value and limitations of all forms of knowledge (Knowledge Justice).
2. Reflect on the scope of their own knowledge and investigate perspectives that can broaden that scope (Critical Reflection).
3. Search for new and diverse knowledge in inclusive and ethical ways (Searching).
4. Critically evaluate sources of knowledge before using them (Identifying and Evaluating Sources).
5. Make culturally respectful choices about their use of others' knowledge (Responsible Use of Knowledge).
6. Acknowledge their power to responsibly influence others when sharing ideas (Creation and Dissemination of Knowledge).



## 1 – Knowledge Justice

Respect others by considering the value and limitations of all [forms of knowledge](#). By the end of their degree, students should be able to:

- Respectfully explore [diverse](#) forms of knowledge, accepting that knowledge can come in many forms (e.g., spiritual, scientific, land-based, creative) that are assigned value differently according to context.
- Practice [cultural humility](#) and [relational thinking](#) by reflecting on how to integrate new [epistemologies](#) with their personal views and practices.
- Use the knowledge, skills, and values from this curriculum to courageously and safely advocate for [social](#) and [cognitive](#) justices.
- Examine and critique [information privilege](#), both generally and as members of a university community.

## 2 – Critical Reflection

Every person has their own unique knowledge. Students critique the scope of their knowledge and investigate who can help them grow. By the end of their degree, students should be able to:

- Use a [holistic lens](#) to reflect on what they know, evaluating their sources of knowledge for bias and whether they are exclusionary, contradictory, or incomplete.
- Explore gaps in their understanding, assessing how their knowledge is influenced by their [positionality](#) and lived experience.
- Investigate whose perspectives can fill their knowledge gaps, where those voices are allowed to speak, and how they communicate.





### 3 – Searching

Search for new and diverse knowledge in [inclusive](#) and ethical ways. By the end of their degree, students should be able to:

- Address knowledge gaps by articulating a question, search string, or specific need.
- Identify the [biases of search tools](#) in order to design [inclusive](#) search strategies that lead to sources that fill their knowledge gaps.
- Use an [ethic of care](#) when seeking knowledge from living beings, accepting that we do not always have the right to receive it.
- Acknowledge that searching can be emotional: the process can be overwhelming or inspiring and the product can expose discrimination and [violence](#).

### 4 – Identifying and Evaluating Sources

Critically evaluate sources of knowledge before using them. By the end of their degree, students should be able to:

- Differentiate between various source types by examining their [characteristics](#) and creation processes.
- Question the [rules and customs](#) governing source creation, including their effects on [access](#), use, [inclusivity](#), and the exploitation of others' ideas.
- Determine the authority of a source by critically evaluating creator [positionality](#) and intended purpose(s) and audience(s) in consideration of students' context and needs.
- Evaluate a source's accuracy and contextual value by assessing how it might be used to misinform, lead, falsify, persuade, promote, or coerce.



## 5 – Responsible Use of Knowledge

Make culturally respectful choices about their use of knowledge. By the end of their degree, students should be able to:

- a) Explore legal, cultural, and ethical implications of using others' knowledge, including Copyright Law, Creative Commons Licensing, [Traditional Knowledge and Biocultural Labels](#), privacy legislation, and intellectual property.
- b) Demonstrate respect for [diverse forms of knowledge](#) by using culturally appropriate forms of [attribution](#), providing fair payment, and requesting all necessary permissions.
- c) Ethically manage and store collected knowledge and data.
- d) Evaluate what impact using or sharing others' knowledge may have on diverse audiences, particularly marginalized groups.

## 6 – Creation and Dissemination of Knowledge

Acknowledge their power to responsibly influence others when sharing ideas. By the end of their degree, students should be able to:

- a) Decide how, where, and when to disseminate their ideas, reflecting on whether their work can be used or misused by others, and their rights and responsibilities as creators.
- b) Choose methods of dissemination that are [accessible](#), [inclusive](#), [equitable](#), and easy to maintain, choosing open whenever appropriate.
- c) Contribute to [contextual dialogue\(s\)](#), giving proper [attribution](#) to others' knowledge and recognizing scholarly sources as one type of evidence.
- d) Create and maintain an online presence consistent with their values, identities, and goals.

# Glossary

**Access**

In this context, whether someone can use, obtain, or retrieve knowledge or information.

**Accessible**

In this context, able to be reached, seen, and used by all persons.

**Attribution**

Acknowledging or giving credit to the creator of a work.

**Authority**

A person or organization having power, influence, or control in a particular area. An implied understanding in this curriculum is that authorities are knowledgeable or even experts in their area of influence, but that this authority is contextual.

**Characteristics of Knowledge Sources**

Features or elements of knowledge sources. Western knowledge sources are often described in terms of their identifying physical features, such as format, language, media, accessibility, date of publication, etc. Traditional knowledge characteristics could include communication method, use practices, values, ritual, spirituality, and agricultural practices ([UNESCO](#)).

**Citation**

A scholarly approach for honouring the work of a creator. Citations allows authors to “provide the source of any quotations, ideas, and information they use in their work based on the copyrighted works of other authors.” ([Self-Publishing Guide](#), 2022). Academics typically use disciplinary-based citation systems to cite their sources.

**Cognitive Justice**

The right of different forms of knowledge to co-exist, and the responsibility we hold for engaging in dialogue across those forms. Coined by Indian scholar Shiv Visvanathan, cognitive justice recognizes and elevates non-Western forms of knowledge, arguing that bringing together different worldviews is essential for creating a more sustainable, equitable, and democratic world ([Wikipedia](#)). See also: [Leibowitz](#), 2016; [Hoppers](#), 2021.

**Contextual Dialogue(s)**

Conversations within a certain context or culture. In this case, examples could include academic scholarship, work or family conversations, social media debates, class discussions, etc.

**Creative Commons Licensing**

Creative Commons (CC) is an example of public copyright licenses that enable the free distribution of an otherwise copyrighted work. “When choosing a CC license, [creators choose](#) whether to give other people the right to share, use, and build upon their work” ([Wikipedia](#); [Creative Commons](#)).

### Cultural Humility

“A process of self-reflection to understand personal and systemic biases and to develop and maintain respectful processes and relationships based on mutual trust. Cultural humility involves humbly acknowledging oneself as a learner when it comes to understanding another’s experience” ([First Nations Health Authority](#)). Cultural humility is different from other culturally-based training because it “focuses on self-humility rather than being an other-directed ‘they/them’ way of achieving a state of knowledge or awareness” ([Wikipedia](#)).

### Diversity

“Diversity includes the whole range of human, cultural, and societal differences among populations.” Diversity encompasses identity differences as well as the protected grounds of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Aboriginal and Treaty rights, and human rights legislation, such as race, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, and disability. Diversity is also used to differentiate types of knowledge production... and encompasses the nature and content of curricula, research, teaching, service, and engagement” ([Igniting Change: Final Report and Recommendations](#), p. 119).

### Epistemologies

Theories of knowledge from any number of worldviews, and the values that underpin each perspective. When exploring our epistemology(ies) we may answer questions such as: what is the nature of knowledge; how do we recognize knowledge; who is allowed to be knowledgeable; why would we choose to become knowledgeable? Examples of epistemologies include [relationality](#), [holism](#), the scientific method, and feminist theories.

### Ethic of Care

An ethical theory from the feminist perspective where “moral” or “responsible” behaviour is centred on interpersonal relationships, or the idea that caring for the well-being of others is a universal human attribute ([Britannica](#)).

### Equity

“Equity is concerned with justice and fairness. Equity is a state of being, a process, and a condition that is rooted in fundamental human rights, and, therefore, is not reliant on individual choice or voluntarism. Where as equality may lead to an assumption of an even playing field... equity requires more; it is about understanding and accommodating difference and providing people with what they need to enter and thrive within the academy. Equity requires proactively identifying and combatting discriminatory ideas, attitudes, behaviours, as well as systems, policies, processes, and practices that lead to disadvantage. It is a legal and ethical commitment to doing what is right and necessary to achieve such a state through proactive measures to identify root causes, and design interventions to remove obstacles to fair opportunities and experiences in all spheres of academic life” ([Igniting Change: Final Report and Recommendations](#), p. 120).

### Forms of Knowledge

Forms of knowledge are holistic and relate directly to our epistemologies (or how we answer the questions: what is knowledge, how do we recognize it, how is knowledge formed and how can we share it?). Example knowledge forms include, but are not limited to land-based knowledge, scholarly sources, oral traditions, or music. This curriculum references forms of knowledge to avoid the continued privileging of western forms of knowledge in academic libraries.

### Holistic Lens

Considering someone as a whole person, inclusive of their various identities, recognizing the interconnectedness of their parts or intersections. From Indigenous epistemologies, holism means “engaging the four knowledge domains that interweave all aspects of learning: emotional (heart), spiritual (spirit), cognitive (mind) and physical (body)” ([Pulling Together: A Guide for Curriculum Developers](#)).



### **Inclusion**

“Inclusion entails interconnected actions to dismantle barriers that impede participation, engagement, representation, and empowerment of diverse social identities and from various backgrounds in the life of the academy. Inclusion means that we design our educational and cultural spaces from the beginning so that they may be used fully by all peoples and all communities. Inclusion foregrounds the social and institutional relations of power and privilege, drawing necessary attention to who gets a seat and voice at the decision-making tables, and who is empowered by institutional processes, policies, systems, and structures” ([Igniting Change: Final Report and Recommendations](#), p. 120-1).

### **Information**

“Knowledge obtained from investigation, study, or instruction” ([Merriam-Webster](#)). In an academic context, the word “information” implicitly privileges scholarly publications and the written word. While Western Libraries continues to provide instruction in critical [information literacy](#) knowledge, skills and values, this curriculum encourages scholars to look beyond western ways of knowing and consider information as one [form that knowledge](#) can take.

### **Information Literacy**

“Information literacy is the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning” ([Association of College and Research Libraries](#), 2016).

### **Information Privilege**

The ability to access information that others cannot. “Barriers to access include a person’s geographical location, access to technology, access to education/higher education, status, financial situation, among other things. This creates a power dynamic where portions of a society benefit from having access to the highest quality information, those who benefit from selling/gatekeeping this information, and those who are marginalized by their lack of access to said information. Students attending higher education institutions with access to databases are advised to share that information while they have it since when they graduate, they lose access to it” ([Wikipedia](#), 2022).

### **Knowledge**

“The fact or condition of knowing something with familiarity gained through experience or association” ([Merriam-Webster](#)). This curriculum uses an inclusive definition of knowledge, welcoming of multiple worldviews. Knowledge can be social, physical, spiritual, ancestral, cultural, land-based or experience-based and take [many other forms](#).

### **Pedagogies**

Methods and practices of teaching, from any number of worldviews. We often choose our teaching practices, or pedagogies based on our [epistemology](#). For example, we answer questions like: Who is allowed to become knowledgeable? How does one become knowledgeable? What are we not allowed to know? Who holds knowledge? What rules and traditions are there for giving or receiving knowledge?

### **Positionality**

“Positionality refers to how the differences in social position and power shape identities and access in society” ([University of British Columbia](#)). To identify our positionality, we must “analyze our degrees of privilege through factors such as race, class, educational attainment, income, ability, gender, sexuality, and citizenship with the purpose of analyzing and acting from one’s social position in an unjust world” ([Duarte](#), 2017, p. 135).

### Relationality

“The concept that we are all related to each other, to the natural environment, and to the spiritual world, and these relationships bring about interdependencies. [Educators] can apply the concept of relationality by creating learning opportunities that emphasize learning in relationships with fellow students, teachers, families, members of the community, and the local lands” ([Pulling Together: A Guide for Curriculum Developers](#)). Our reference to [cognitive justice](#) in this curriculum is intended to foster relationality in library education. For example, [Two Eyed Seeing](#) or Etuaptmumk, shared by Mi'kmaw Elder Albert Marshall, is a way to see the strengths of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives with one eye and to see the strengths of Western knowledge and perspectives with the other eye; then you learn how to see with both eyes together to benefit all ([Institute for Integrative Science & Health](#)).

### Rules of Source Creation

Cultural rules, norms, or traditions that govern how sources of knowledge are to look, sound, feel, etc. Examples could include the peer review system in academia, or Kahiko Hula dances of the Polynesian peoples. In many cases, rules of source creation are dominated by the global north, and biased in favour of white, English-speaking, westernized forms of written communication.

### Search Tools

Technologies that aid knowledge-seekers in finding information sources, including directories, databases, search engines, or other applications (such as social media). All search tools are human-created and therefore biased such as in terms of their purpose, epistemology, algorithms, indexing, business model (or lack thereof), or controlled vocabulary.

### Social Justice

“Justice in terms of the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society... including the breaking of barriers for social mobility, the creation of safety nets, and economic justice” ([Wikipedia](#)).

### Traditional Knowledge and Biocultural Labels

“Traditional Knowledge (TK) and Biocultural (BC) labels allow Indigenous communities to express local and specific conditions for sharing and engaging in future research and relationships in ways that are consistent with already existing community rules, governance and protocols for using, sharing and circulating knowledge and data. The TK labels identify and clarify community-specific rules and responsibilities regarding access and future use of traditional knowledge. This includes sacred and/or ceremonial material, material that has gender restrictions, seasonal conditions of use, and/or materials specifically designed for outreach purposes” ([Local Contexts](#), 2022).

### Violence

“The intentional use of force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, psychological harm, maldevelopment, deprivation, or death” ([World Health Organization](#)). In this context, knowledge seekers may discover historical and ongoing examples of violence, whether harm done to research participants, epistemicide (the purposeful destruction of existing knowledge), or the colonialization and theft of knowledge, such as that experienced by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Similarly, students may be required to engage in searching that leads to self-violence, such as when non-Western epistemologies are prohibited or penalized against.