

8A—CRITICAL APPROACHES TO INFORMATION LITERACY #1

Using Social Epistemology to Understand Critical Information Literacy

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This paper argues that social epistemology—the study of the ways in which society understands in relationship to its environment—is well suited to strengthen the critical practice of information literacy. Critical theory has engaged with what was originally an LIS concept. As the core social epistemological questions continue to move into broader interdisciplinary investigations, these questions consequently become a way for LIS to critically examine both the environment in which information literacy occurs—its social context— and the means through which it is facilitated—new models of interaction between students and librarians. A review of the critical theoretical trend in LIS literature and a critique of that literature alert us to ways the library profession may improve on already valuable critical information literacy efforts. This paper suggests that future progress will be tied to better understanding the social context of knowledge.