

# Critical Information Literacy

Critical information literacy considers the socio-political dimensions of information and production of knowledge, and critiques the ways in which systems of power shape the creation, distribution, and reception of information

The relationship  
between  
colonialism,  
libraries, scholarly  
research  
(knowledge  
production)

- Do you know where information comes from?
- Who creates it?
- How does information find its way into the public domain? Which authors are published, and which aren't, and who decides this?
- Do prominent professional organisations exclude unpopular opinions?
- Is all research 'reliable? Even 'quantifiable data'?
- What is 'good' and 'bad' research?

The resources you use show

Who is important? Who holds authority? Who is relevant? Who matters? Who contributes?

Therefore exclusion represents

who is not important  
who does not hold authority  
who does not matter  
who does not contribute

Because of inequality in 'knowledge production' e.g. inequalities in the publishing industry and other patterns that reflect wider societal issues, many resources traditionally reflect the importance of white, cis-het, able bodied men only

## An example of bias in knowledge production



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Researchers in developing countries do incredible work often with little or no funding and constantly face an uphill battle to publish their work. Every rejection or unreasonable reviewer request amplifies the gulf in publication between the well resourced and the under-resourced



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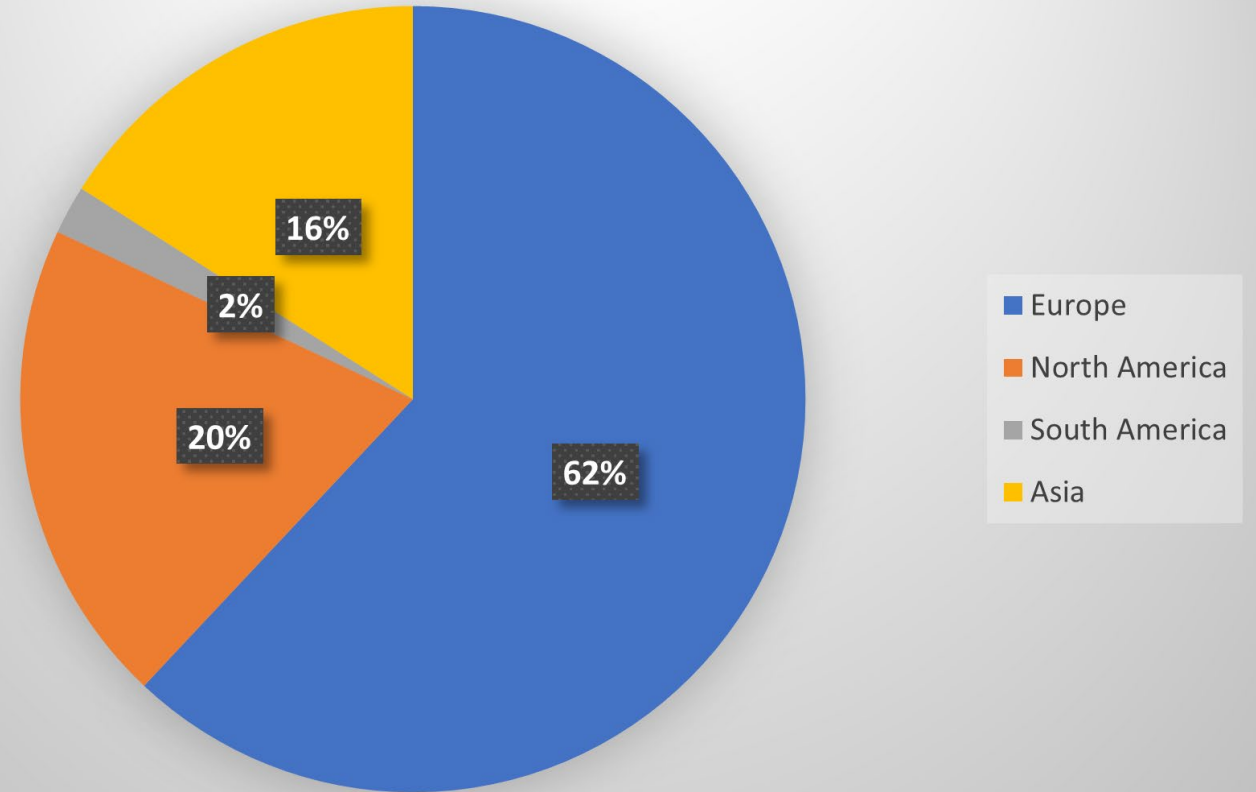
This story is one of many. We need to do better to promote equity in research & scientific publishing. The importance of a story being told should not depend on where that story is happening in the world. Equity in scientific publishing means giving equal opportunity to everyone!



# Marginalised voices

Traditional academic publishing is dominated by a small group of Western-centric publishers.

Top 50 Worldwide Publishers by Location



# Prices, accessibility and availability

- Many publishers do not make all texts available as ebooks, or price them beyond the ability of the library to provide.



University staff urge probe into e-book pricing 'scandal'  
More than 2,500 university staff ask MPs to investigate publishers over the rising cost of online texts.

[bbc.co.uk](https://www.bbc.co.uk)

# More reasons to remember why research may not be neutral

- All social research is shaped by researchers (and often funders)
- who gets to decide on what to research, how to research it, and who/what to include in the data gathering?
- All analysis – quantitative and qualitative – is guided by the researchers' beliefs about the key research problems and their theories about the processes that they are exploring. Beliefs can be influenced by bias

• Castillo, Wendy, and David Gillborn. (2022). How to “QuantCrit:” Practices and Questions for Education Data Researchers and Users. (EdWorkingPaper: 22-546). Retrieved from Annenberg Institute at Brown University: <https://doi.org/10.26300/v5kh-dd65>



# Therefore Always ask yourself

- Who are the researchers?
- What are their backgrounds and how might this influence the way they conduct research?
- What assumptions might unwittingly shape their and our research?
- Who is funding peoples research and can this influence their work?
- Was the research agenda influenced and informed by the community/ies they are researching?
- Who is benefiting from asking these questions or researching these issues?



Did the researchers analyze the data in separate racial categories? If so, how did they decide/define categories?

Do the categories resonate with the people that they seek to describe or have groups been broken up/grouped together in misleading ways?

- Who is (and is not) in the sample? How large is the sample?
- Where, how and when (date/year) was the data collected (think about recruitment)?
- Who collected it (was it researchers or community members?)

**numbers and categories can be gathered and analyzed in ways that reflect hegemonic interests, assumptions and perceptions**

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## Why we should consider applying critical frameworks to our work?

**Critical framework allows researchers to define, expose and address the ways in which assumptions play a role within research in a much more meaningful way.**

**For more information, access 'Understanding Critical Race Research Methods and Methodologies' and 'Decolonizing Methodologies' via Perlego which all UWL students have access to**