

LIRT Top 20 Articles

2016 Committee

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Ackerman, E., & Arbour, B. K. (2016). "I have ten peer reviewed articles. Now what?" How political science research methods textbooks teach students about scholarly context. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 42(5), 612–619.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2016.06.009>

In this article, academic librarians Ackerman and Arbour examine to what extent political science research methods textbooks address methods for situating one's research within the existing literature when conducting scholarly research. They recognize that instructors and librarians may stress the acquisition of searching/finding/citing literature skills – at the expense of the more complex task of understanding the concepts underlying the literature and being able to make connections among those concepts.

The researchers review thirteen of the most commonly used research methods textbooks used in political science. They find that these texts fall into three categories: 1) those that give negligible attention to establishing and understanding the scholarly context of one's research area, instead focusing on statistical methods; 2) those that pay some attention to establishing and understanding the field, but without offering explicit directions for how to accomplish this; and 3) those that teach both the value of establishing and understanding the scholarly context, and methods for doing so.

The authors note that the set of tasks students are being asked to accomplish in a research paper (i.e., "identify and extract important concepts and ideas...identify important authors and works, [and] bring these concepts, ideas, authors into conversation with one another in a way that sets up an original research question") is complex work, perhaps more the work of subject experts than undergraduates. For this reason, they suggest that librarians and instructors work to reinforce the information literacy (IL) skill of establishing and understanding the scholarly context of one's research as presented in the research methods textbooks. This reinforcement of higher-order IL skills may occur through the design of curriculum/courses, assignments, and even individual student interactions. PJ

Adams, N. E., Gaffney, M.A., & Lynn, V. (2016). The role of evidence-based practice in collaborations between academic librarians and education faculty. *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 16(4), 697-720. <https://doi.org/10.1353/pla.2016.0048>

Evidence-based practice (EBP) is an established approach in medicine. However, there is growing interest in applying EBP to the profession of education. The authors conducted a rigorous qualitative study of academic librarians and education faculty who collaborated in teaching EBP to students. One important finding is that librarians and

educators need to understand and respect disciplinary differences regarding conceptions of knowledge, evidence, and EBP. This study is an important contribution to the literature given the paucity of research on EBP-focused collaboration between academic librarians and education faculty. Additionally, the article provides an interesting illustration of the importance of authoritative knowledge, one of the frames described in the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education. DZ

Bauder, J. & Rod, C. (2016). Crossing thresholds: Critical information literacy pedagogy and the ACRL Framework. *College & Undergraduate Libraries*, 23(3), 252-264. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10691316.2015.1025323>

Bauder and Rod weave together concrete examples of information literacy instruction from practice-based literature and from their institution to illustrate how the ACRL Framework not only teaches standards-based competencies but also makes room for critical information literacy. Their discussion of the threshold concepts takes shape within the context of library literature published prior to the Framework. This retrospective look effectively demonstrates how the threshold concepts have been at play in instructional practices even before they were named. Bauder and Rod's supporting evidence and salient examples help the reader step over the threshold and into a deeper understanding of how the Framework enhances student learning. Although the authors offer a plausible explanation for why they excluded examples illustrative of "searching as strategic exploration" and provide a reference to examples readers can explore on their own, the inclusion of supporting examples for this concept would have been welcome. AMS

Bingham, T. J., Wirjapranata, J., & Chinnery, S. (2016). Merging information literacy and evidence-based practice for social work students. *New Library World*, 117(3/4), 201-203. <https://doi.org/10.1108/NLW-09-2015-0067>

With the high value placed on students engaging with evidence-based content in the social and medical science fields, the authors recognized the opportunity to highlight the connections between information literacy (IL) and evidence-based practice (EBP) within a particular academic program (social work). The authors infer that IL skills provide substantial foundational benefits for students developing EBP and those starting to connect research with practice. The research findings are the result of nearly a decade of research with third-year social work students and have practical implications (e.g., activities for implementation) and social implications (e.g. understanding the contribution research has for a professional's knowledge base). LC

Carini, P. (2016). Information literacy for archives and special collections: Defining outcomes. *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 16(1), 191-206. <https://doi.org/10.1353/pla.2016.0006>

The author addresses primary sources as well as special collections and archives, a key component of several disciplines of research, with the intent of establishing a preliminary, functional "framework" for the integration of primary sources into information literacy practices and instruction. While scholarship about primary sources is not rare, and neither is scholarship on special collections, the author identifies a gap in the field literature with regard to competencies for "primary source literacy." In particular, the author aims to create expert undergraduate-level primary source users, asks what it means to be literate with primary sources, and considers what standards and outcomes

may best suit this variant of information literacy. The goals for student development are structured through “standards,” starting with “know” and moving through “interpret,” “evaluate,” “use,” and “access,” to “follow ethical principles.” The tables within the article, and their surrounding text, address opportunities and approaches to application of these standards in multiple levels of primary source research sessions. LC

Cowan, S. & Eva, N. (2016). Changing our aim: Infiltrating faculty with information literacy. *Communications in Information Literacy*, 10(2), 163-177. Retrieved from <http://www.comminfolit.org/index.php?journal=cil&page=article&op=view&path%5B%5D=v10i2p163>

Gathering evidence and examples from the literature, Cowan and Eva develop a sound argument in support of using a “teach the teacher” model to infuse information literacy throughout the curriculum. Through an exploration of the barriers that prevent librarians from being embedded in classes and integrating information literacy across the curriculum, the authors clarify how faculty are perfectly positioned to take on this mission and help students understand information literacy within the context of a discipline. The authors concede that the “teach the teacher” model has its own challenges, but assert that a carefully planned, multifaceted approach can overcome these barriers. The examples cited from the literature will sound familiar, but Cowan and Eva piece these ideas together in a wholly new way to create deeper understanding of the topic. The authors conclude by sharing their strategy for fostering faculty involvement in teaching information literacy: communicate, encourage, educate and infiltrate. A thoughtful discussion of each strategy enhanced by practical examples from the authors’ experiences provides the reader with plenty of ideas to experiment with at her institution. AMS

Dempsey, P. R., & Jagman, H. (2016). "I felt like such a freshman": First-year students crossing the library threshold. *portal: Libraries and The Academy*, 16(1), 89-107. <https://doi.org/10.1353/pla.2016.0011>

Dempsey and Jagman describe a study in which they conducted qualitative analyses of students’ reflective essays following completion of an independent library assignment. Almost 100 student essays were collected from a DePaul University first year experience course. The assignment was to find and check out a book or other item on a topic of the students’ choosing, then write an essay reflecting on the experience. The text of the assignment and representative student essays are included as appendices. The essays were initially graded by peer-mentors and only later contributed to the study, so the student authors were not aware at the time of writing that librarians would be analyzing them. What is distinctive about this article is the authors’ analysis and aligning of student responses using the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education. The essays were read and responses coded in areas such as approach to the library task, stumbling blocks, emotional reactions, help-seeking, and learning outcomes related to the Framework. The authors suggest that an independent, reflective assignment such as the one described better meets the needs of incoming students than a typical librarian-led instruction session where information is transmitted to a group of students. Because students encounter and struggle with threshold concepts at their own pace, a self-directed assignment creates an environment where students can struggle and work through issues without a grade being at risk. The collection of anonymized essays that were analyzed are available in the DePaul University institutional repository and provide a rare candid glimpse of incoming students’ library experiences.

RGM

Franzen, S., & Bannon, C. M. (2016). Merging information literacy and evidence-based practice in an undergraduate health sciences curriculum map. *Communications in Information Literacy*, 10(2), 245-263. Retrieved from <http://www.comminfolit.org/index.php?journal=cil&page=article&op=view&path%5B%5D=v10i2p245>

In their article, Susan Franzen and Colleen Bannon draw parallels between evidence-based practice (EBP), a decision-making tool commonly used in the health sciences, and ACRL's two widely-adopted but somewhat controversial information literacy documents for higher education, the Framework and the Standards. Evidencebased practice is described as a set of competencies that encourages health care professionals to gather, evaluate, and use information effectively in order to make informed decisions about patient care and treatment. Through a partnership with teaching faculty at their respective institutions, the authors developed a common curriculum map, which integrated information literacy into several allied health programs. The curriculum map pairs library instruction with specific assignments, and builds on skills taught throughout the program. Making up the bulk of the article, the outline of the map includes descriptions of the research assignments and supporting instruction by semester. Each of the four semesters also includes a chart aligning the assignment and instruction with appropriate IL frames, EBP steps, and Standards.

Franzen and Bannon demonstrate one way that the new Framework can be used alongside the Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education, despite their being rescinded, to form a more complete picture of information literacy expectations. It may bring relief to other librarians who are reticent to give up the competency standards, and it is just one example of information literacy advocates who are using the framework and retired standards together. The authors argue for continued use of the standards due to their strong alignment with EBP steps and similar language to several discipline standards, which helps facilitate collaboration with health sciences faculty.

The authors do a laudable job of explaining health science concepts such as EBP and the PICO method so that any librarian can easily read and understand the article. While there is a focus on health science fields, the methods and curriculum mapping ideas described are also transferrable to other disciplines. RGM

Hess, A. N. (2016). A case study of job-embedded learning. *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 16(2), 327-347.

The author participated in an immersive program offered by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), the 2013 ACRL Teaching with Technology immersion program. This rewarding experience led her to develop a professional learning program for colleagues at her institution, Oakland University. This university, located in Rochester, Michigan, has an enrollment of over 20,000 students. A dozen full-time faculty librarians and several part-time library lecturers have developed a strong library instruction program. These librarians have varying levels of expertise in instructional design and instructional technology. The author formed learning communities to support librarians' learning in these areas. She then collected qualitative data on the impact of the learning community experience on her colleagues. She found that this model

“facilitated librarians’ learning in instructional design and instructional technology in ways that influenced their practices and paradigms.” However, study data also indicated the need for modifications to this professional learning program, including the need for more components focused on assessment and evaluation. This well- documented case study can serve as a starting point for other libraries interested in developing job-embedded professional development programs. DZ

Johnson, B., & McCracken, I. M. (2016). Reading for integration, identifying complementary threshold concepts: The ACRL Framework in conversation with Naming what we know: Threshold concepts of writing studies. *Communications in Information Literacy*, 10(2), 178-198. Retrieved from <http://www.comminfolit.org/index.php?journal=cil&page=article&op=view&path%5B%5D=v10i2p178>

Johnson and McCracken have provided a succinct and yet thorough overview of threshold concepts in the scholarship of composition studies, as presented in the Naming What We Know (NWWK) collection of “short, encyclopedic entries about named concepts.” Selected concepts are presented in the way the authors have interpreted their complementary value to the (more familiar to librarians) document, ACRL’s Framework for Information Literacy. Given the close relationship between information literacy instruction and first-year composition courses in colleges and universities across the United States, this article provides a much needed articulation of the threshold concepts from writing studies, and presents clear explanations of concepts outside librarians’ normal disciplinary domain. The article is ordered around the six ACRL frames and provides selected concepts from NWWK, which can be employed by instruction librarians to increase cross-disciplinary understanding between librarianship and scholars of composition. What makes this a top-twenty article is its refreshing attempt to draw comparisons and parallels between information literacy scholarship and an alternative discipline. Where many articles explore and apply the framework to rigorous library practice, this one sheds light on the work within another field that then illuminates our own practice. SB

Leeder, C., & Shah, C. (2016). Practicing critical evaluation of online sources improves student search behavior. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 42(4), 459-468. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2016.04.001>

In their article, Chris Leeder and Chirag Shah seek to measure the effects of a source evaluation activity on search behavior and results when completing an academic assignment. The authors took care to design an experimental study with random assignment in order to improve internal validity and make the results more generalizable. The end goal is to demonstrate the value of information literacy instruction to both students and teaching faculty.

The literature review seeks to show a general lack of source evaluation by students. This may be attributed to a lack of perceived need and an overestimation by the students of their own abilities. To show the value of improved critical evaluation skills, the authors designed a study to compare two randomized groups. Both groups were assigned to find sources for a market sector analysis report. The control group first reviewed a list of sources that had been chosen by students for a previous research study. The treatment group was prompted to evaluate the same list of sources, judging the quality of the

sources based on provided criteria. The assignment prompts are included in the article appendix, but the student-selected sources are not listed. Questionnaires on cognitive load and research strategy were also given to both groups in the experiment.

Results of the qualitative and quantitative data collected suggest that students in the treatment group conducted fewer searches, viewed more search results and more pages, and bookmarked more pages than students in the control group. They also bookmarked a lower percentage of the pages they viewed, signifying that they were more selective. The authors suggest that the treatment group delved more deeply into their search results. Productivity measures indicate the treatment group used more unique searches to find relevant sources for the assignment, and performed better overall.

This unique study showed a quantifiable improvement in online search behavior for a small sample of students who completed a critical source evaluation task as part of a research assignment. RGM

Rinto, E., Bowles-Terry, M., & Santos, A. J. (2016). Assessing the scope and feasibility of first-year students' research paper topics. *College & Research Libraries*, 77(6), 749–764. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.77.6.749>

This study takes a close-up view of the frequently problematic subject of students' research paper topic selections. Librarians Rinto and Bowles-Terry teamed with Santos, an instructor from the English department at University of Nevada – Las Vegas (UNLV), to systematically analyze student research topics in order to be better equipped to help undergraduates – particularly those in their first year – choose topics with higher “researchability” than those typically selected. Through use of two content analysis approaches, they evaluated English 102 (ENG102) topics for a persuasive research essay assignment. Rinto et al. hoped to detect trends/patterns that could lead to improved ENG 102 library instruction. They wanted not only to help students do a better job of limiting a topic, but to do a more skillful job of selecting a topic in the first place.

An evaluative rubric and Atlas.ti (qualitative analysis software) were used to correspondingly 1) rate the students' research skill development and 2) uncover thematic categories for the topics students selected. Not unexpectedly, students struggled with finding research topics of appropriate scope. Revising original ideas seemed to be especially challenging. Researchers were pleasantly surprised, however, that the qualitative analysis showed that student topics covered a broad range and were not limited to the typical “hot” topics such as gun control or legalizing drugs. These findings led the researchers to expand the coverage of topic development, adding a pre-library session based on the “research as a conversation” model. The categories identified by the Atlas.ti analysis then guided their selection of articles for the library instruction session, asking students to “read for relevance” from an article set whose topics matched the most popular identified themes. Further research on librarian-composition instructor collaboration is called for, as well as additional exploration of the usefulness of the ACRL Framework's “research as conversation” model for effective topic development. PJ

Rush, L. (2016). Use of social networking site consumer training to teach information literacy threshold concepts. *The Journal of Creative Library Practice*, May 31. Retrieved from

<http://creativelibrarypractice.org/2016/05/31/use-of-social-networking-site-consumer-training-to-teach-information-literacy-threshold-concepts/>

The author aids students in understanding and learning information literacy threshold concepts through relating the material to their roles as consumers, specifically of social networking sites (SNS). By first mapping the ACRL's threshold concepts to SNS consumer training, Rush cleverly brings students active and engaging learning experiences. The author describes applications of the threshold concepts and SNS consumer training elements throughout the article, including using "Authority is Constructed and Contextual" and YouTube video view statistics to address how we establish authority for information sources. Another scenario involves teaching the threshold concept "Research as Inquiry" through the SNS consumer training element "ambient awareness" to help students evaluate information through a spin on the game Two Truths and a Lie. The author also created a social gaming experience about information ethics for students through a "simple board game." LC

Squibb, S. D., & Mikkelsen, S. (2016). Assessing the value of course-embedded information literacy on student learning and achievement. *College & Research Libraries*, 77(2), 164–183. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.77.2.164>

Squibb and Mikkelsen used a mixed-method approach to assess the value of integrating information literacy (IL) into introduction to composition courses at University of California Merced. The IL curriculum they developed, along with writing faculty, was designed to help students do a better job 1) locating relevant sources and 2) using them to effectively present evidence and make an argument. Students who received the IL curriculum exhibited greater achievement than the control group in these two areas, although they did not get higher grades/grade point averages. The researchers' curriculum – called TRAIL (Teaching Research and Information Literacy) – had the course instructors introducing students to the research process and IL through a variety of means prior to their meeting with the librarian. A team set up to assess the impact of TRAIL included not only writing program faculty and librarians, but also the university's Principal Research Analyst. This latter member proved invaluable in refining the quantitative design of this research. The action research process utilized by the group, in turn, facilitated such a collaborative revision. Researchers found that their initial hypotheses were too ambitious, considering the level of information literacy found in most freshmen. Benefits from TRAIL were evident, but there was no proof that overall course grades benefited from TRAIL. A meaningful outcome of this assessment project was that librarians were able to enter into a campus-wide discussion of students' information literacy proficiencies. PJ

Stonebraker, I. (2016). Toward informed leadership: Teaching students to make better decisions using information. *Journal of Business & Finance Librarianship*, 21(3/4), 229–238. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08963568.2016.1226614>.

In this article, Stonebraker frames information literacy and research process within a business research methodology called decision management. She argues that our predominant model of instruction, the "one-shot session," while aspiring to include critical thinking and the retrieval of high quality information, often requires the demonstration of acontextual mechanics of online database use. This leads to overconfidence, which impairs decision-making. Stonebraker suggests that an approach called Evidence-Based Management is a form of decision management that can provide librarians with tools to

help undergraduate researchers make meaningful and informed decisions about their research assignments and how they perform online research. Stonebraker provides clear examples of this approach from her own teaching, and makes a powerful argument for the need for a wholly revised assessment practice that emphasizes information use and decision making over information knowledge. This is a top-twenty article for its originality, strength of evidence, and applicability. SB

Tewell, E. (2016). Putting critical information literacy into context: How and why librarians adopt critical practices in their teaching. In the Library with the Lead Pipe, Oct 12. Retrieved from <http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2016/putting-critical-information-literacy-into-context-how-and-why-librariansadopt-critical-practices-in-their-teaching/>

Critical information literacy asks librarians to go beyond functional, competency-based approaches to information literacy instruction -- "how to do the library" -- to include consideration of the political, social, and economic power structures that underlie information production, dissemination, access, and use. How and why librarians make critical information literacy a part of their teaching is the focus of the qualitative study reported on in this article. Tewell starts from his own experience in adopting critical information literacy in the classroom, which he describes as transformative. With his participants, he examines how librarians learn about critical information literacy; how it can be incorporated in the classroom; what classroom methods are used; how theoretical understandings inform practice; how critical information literacy is beneficial; how barriers shape the practice of critical information literacy; and what factors support the practice of critical information literacy. Interest in critical information literacy is blooming within librarianship, and this article provides valuable insights, examples, and advice, such as the importance of finding a community or allies and the value of trying something small to see what works. The article ends with several questions for reflection and an invitation to think critically about our practice and ourselves. EH

Tompkins, E. K. (2016). Application of cognitive apprenticeship model (CA) to library instruction. *College & Undergraduate Libraries*, 23(1), 1–15. <http://doi.org/10.1080/10691316.2014.930334>

Cognitive apprenticeship (CA) is a teaching approach that brings together the tradition of learning through apprenticeship programs with classroom practices such as modeling, coaching, and scaffolding. Tompkins argues that CA offers a flexible framework for planning and implementing library instruction that is particularly helpful for one-shot sessions for students who have little previous library experience. The purpose of using CA is to illuminate the thought processes of an expert for the learners so that they can adopt those processes themselves. The approach has four dimensions: 1) content; 2) method; 3) sequencing; and 4) the sociology of a learning environment. Tompkins discusses each of these dimensions through the lens of her own teaching at a two-year college, and provides instruction strategies in each. For example, under Method she discusses the role of coaching in helping students create search strategies, followed by the fading away of the coach as the students gain mastery. Under Sequencing, she discusses the importance of setting up a chain of tasks to gradually increase complexity and diversity, for example by choosing a small number of databases with simpler interfaces to start. Tompkins believes CA deserves a place in librarians' instructional approaches alongside other student-centered practices such as problem-based learning. EH

Townsend, L., Hofer, A. R., Hanick, S. L., & Brunetti, K. (2016). Identifying threshold concepts for information literacy: A Delphi study. *Communications in Information Literacy*, 10(1), 23-49. Retrieved from <http://www.comminfolit.org/index.php?journal=cil&page=article&op=view&path%5B%5D=v10i1p23>

The introduction of the ACRL Framework has generated vigorous debate in librarianship. Readers who have not fully embraced the Framework or who are still grappling with the complexity of threshold concepts, will appreciate the thorough, but concise, overview the authors provide on threshold concepts and their acknowledgement that although this model, like all models, may be imperfect, it still provides a valid and useful framework for conceptualizing the tacit knowledge of information literacy. In this study, the authors used the Delphi method to expand on their previous research and identify, based on the knowledge of expert practitioners, information literacy threshold concepts. Townsend, Hofer, Hanick, and Brunetti begin by clearly explaining the threshold concept approach and providing context for using this approach within librarianship. A detailed description of their methodology and thoughtful examination of the study's weaknesses lend credibility and authenticity to their findings. Because the authors' resulting list of information literacy threshold concepts closely aligns with those identified in the Framework, their research validates the use of threshold concepts to delineate librarianship's distinct approach to information literacy and reaffirm the expertise of librarians. The precise explanations offered for each threshold concept strengthen the reader's understanding of the ACRL Framework. The authors provide a list of useful references, appendices that illustrate how consensus was reached, and online access to the research data. AMS

Wang, R. (2016). Assessment for one-shot library instruction: A conceptual approach. *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 16(3), 619–648. <https://doi.org/10.1353/pla.2016.0042>

In this excellently researched and well-written article, Wang presents an assessment instrument based on Kuhlthau's ISP (information search process) model. Called the Research Readiness-Focused Assessment (RRFA), the instrument is topic neutral and therefore is applicable to the endless variety of content and assignment-specific practices used in the common "one-shot" library instruction session. Using a pre and posttest, RRFA measures affective feelings, cognitive thoughts, and physical actions regarding research readiness. Wang makes it abundantly clear that the RRFA meets all validity standards for social science research instruments, and she also demonstrates in a sizeable sample that one-shot library instruction has statistically significant results showing student improvement for research readiness. This is a top-twenty article for its unassailable thoroughness in every aspect. Whether it is used by choice at a strategic point in a course, or performed as a necessity in an overcrowded calendar, the "one-shot" session is long established as a common form for teaching IL. This article may prove to be a powerful tool for librarians to demonstrate positive impact on student learning through "one-shot" instruction. SB

Ziegenfuss, D. H., & Borrelli, S. (2016). Exploring the complexity of student learning outcome assessment practices across multiple libraries. *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*, 11(2), 9-27. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18438/B8SG94>

This article reports the results of a multi-phase study of student learning assessment practices at 23 member libraries of the Greater Western Library Alliance (GWLA). Multiple methods were used for data collection. A survey was designed and distributed to GWLA representatives who were familiar with student learning outcomes (SLOs) assessment at their institutions. The next phase of data collection included 20 follow-up interviews with GWLA librarians. These librarians had instruction or assessment expertise and knowledge of assessment practices on their campuses. Interview data was rigorously analyzed to determine themes. This analysis of interview data was done in a collaborative manner, utilizing seven librarians, across six different member libraries. Themes that emerged as important factors for SLOs assessment included the following: “institutional contexts and cultures, campus-wide academic priorities, leadership at the library level, and changing roles of librarians.” These themes were used to plan a GWLA-sponsored symposium on student learning assessment. This well executed study can be used as a model for collaborative qualitative research studies. DZ