Communications in Information Literacy

Volume 8 | Issue 2 Article 3

12-29-2014

How We Got Here: A Historical Look at the Academic Teaching Library and the Role of the Teaching Librarian

Susan Andriette Ariew
Universityof South Florida, sariew@usf.edu

Recommended Citation

Ariew, S. A. (2014). How We Got Here: A Historical Look at the Academic Teaching Library and the Role of the Teaching Librarian. *Communications in Information Literacy, 8* (2), 208-224. https://doi.org/10.15760/comminfolit.2014.8.2.167

Volume 8, Issue 2, 2014 [ARTICLE]

HOW WE GOT HERE

A historical look at the academic teaching library and the role of the teaching librarian

Susan Ariew
University of South Florida

This paper outlines a brief history of the academic teaching library and, in consequence, it examines the changing role of librarians. As part of that history, the paper also discusses distinctions among various terms used to describe instructional activities in teaching libraries, such as "bibliographic instruction" and "information literacy." Finally, amidst the renewed debates about the changing definition of information literacy and the proposed *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education,* it attempts to answer the question, "What is a teaching library?"

Communications in INFORMATION LITERACY

INTRODUCTION

Academic libraries evolved from passive, custodial organizations to more proactive, engaged institutions; this evolution began in the 1960s. Discussions about the "teaching library" have offered a way to contrast libraries of the past with the more progressive libraries of today and tomorrow. The question to be addressed is, "What is a teaching library?" This entails asking, "What is the role of the teaching librarian?" The history of the teaching library mirrors the changing roles of academic libraries and librarians as it provides insights about what type of libraries or organizational cultures, both past and present, foster strong information literacy programs. Thus, in reviewing the past, the aim of this paper is to identify characteristics of successful teaching libraries and strong teaching roles of librarians in order to inform the present and the future.

THE LINK BETWEEN SEMANTICS AND PRACTICE

Phrases such as "bibliographic instruction" (or BI), "user education," "library instruction," and "information literacy" have been used interchangeably to describe activities that librarians have engaged in with regard to instruction. However, the connotations of these phrases are very different; the progression of their use over time reflects significant changes in the development of the teaching library. Bibliographic instruction (BI) has been associated with an earlier period of library instruction which focused on library orientations that were "short-range, library centered, print-bound instruction" (Murdock, 1995, p.27).

Jeanne Murdock describes BI in terms of changes throughout three decades:

> the first generation of the 1970s viewed BI as library orientation; the second generation, the 1980s, saw the development of ideas and methods of bibliographic instruction and a growing trend toward defining BI as a way of teaching patrons how to use research resources; and in the 1990s we are seeing a shift from print-oriented library services toward information profusion in various formats, including multimedia for diverse user groups (1995, p.26).

We see a transition from BI to IL as early as 1981 when "a movement arose to teach problem solving techniques that can be used from one research project to another" (Salony, 1995, p. 44). Hopkins (1982) similarly points out tension between those who wanted to teach problem-solving skills versus those who wanted to focus on "general access skills and technical bibliographic tools" (Hopkins, 1982). Breivik (1989) and Rader (1990) suggest that bibliographic instruction was a forerunner to information literacy and that most BI programs evolved into information literacy programs. However, Rader and Coons (1992) stress the differences between them when they state: Information literacy is not a synonym for bibliographic instruction…Information literacy adds another dimension by representing a broader approach and offering the opportunity to produce students who understand the importance of information and who have the competence to locate, evaluate and manage it" (p. 118).

https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/comminfolit/vol8/iss2/3
DOI: 10.15760/comminfolit.2014.8.2.167

Information literacy encompasses both the research and the writing process itself in academics since it has been defined by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) as a user's ability to identify an information need, access, locate, evaluate, and cite or use that information appropriately (ACRL, *What is information literacy*, 1996-2013). Information literacy is considered to be more complex than BI because it has always been associated with ambitious lifelong learning goals, whereas BI seems to be more associated with narrower training goals. (Radar & Coons, 1992). Part of the ACRL definition of the term states "information literate people are those who have learned how to learn because they know how knowledge is organized, how to find information and how to use information in a way that others can learn from them" (ACRL, *Information Literacy Defined*, 1996-2013).

Early Teaching Libraries

Libraries have been offering basic bibliographic instruction since before the American Civil War (Salony, 1995). However, if one looks closely at the history of academic libraries, one can see that, in most cases, teaching was not considered a central role for those libraries or a primary role of their librarians until much later. Gunselman and Blakesley (2012) describe a rousing debate about the role of librarians in teaching bibliographic instruction in the early 1900s between two major figures, librarian John Cotton Dana and Vassar history professor Lucy Maynard Salmon. The debate between Dana who advocated BI, and Salmon, who felt that librarians should not teach at all, is a paradigm for the continuing debate about the teaching role of academic libraries and librarians, as it describes issues about boundaries between academic faculty and librarians, issues that echo into the next century.

In the 1920s and the 1930s librarians began promoting bibliographic instruction programs and advocating cooperation with faculty in creating those programs (Salony, 1995). Bennett (2009) explains that the teaching and learning mission in academic libraries changed, based on the need to navigate large print collections. In the early days of academic libraries, collections were small and thus library spaces were created for readers and their reading experience. But as collections grew and became more unmanageable, "book-centered" library spaces were given over to housing massive collections squeezing out spaces for students and reading (Bennett, 2009, p. 192). Universities with large collections such as Harvard, Michigan, and land-grant institutions saw a need for "bibliographic instruction" which then became part of the public services landscape (Salony, 1995, pp. 34–36).

In the late 20th and early 21st century, as digital materials became available, bringing a need for IT support for library patrons, libraries moved beyond library-as-repository to become centers supporting teaching and learning. This trend included creating classrooms in the library for library instruction, adding collaborative learning areas, study rooms, cafes, and student-centered spaces encouraging learning. Bennett (2009) states, "In the twenty-first century, we need constantly to affirm that the most important educational function of physical library space is to foster a culture of intentional learning" (p.192). He goes on

to emphasize that librarians, too, need to "think more like educators and less like service providers," moving from a supporting role to an active one in fulfilling the learning mission of the university (p. 194).

The trend from bibliographic instruction designed to help students navigate print collections to more curriculum-centric information literacy instruction emerged in the mid 1960s and early 1970s as experiments that originated at many liberal arts colleges. Earlham College in particular emerged in the library literature as a pioneer in librarian/ faculty collaboration as well as course-integrated library instruction as a core of its academic programs and curricula for more than forty years (Ver Steeg, 2000). Other liberal arts college libraries followed the Earlham Model including St. Olaf College Libraries and Gustavus Adolphus among them:

> A Gustavus librarian from 1944 to 1973 believed strongly in the educational mission of the library. As early as 1956 she described the library as 'an instrument of instruction' and in a 1965 planning document she wrote 'The library is primarily a teaching library' (Hutchins, Fister & MacPherson, 2002, p. 6).

Both libraries were ahead of their time in terms of the role of the teaching librarian and the collaborative work they accomplished with academic faculty. Both schools later on, too, made a conscious effort to transform their BI program into more robust information literacy programs (Hutchins et al., 2002).

Similarly, in 1971 Swarthmore professor and librarian John Williamson (1971) described a proposal to transform its traditional "custodial" library into a "teaching library" (p.203). The early teaching library of that day "aimed at providing the student with the library skills and bibliographic sophistication for life-long independent work" (Williamson, 1971, p.204). The teaching library proposal for Swarthmore was also seen mostly as a service for undergraduates and that, like Earlham, a philosophy of collaboration between librarians and teaching faculty would be a key factor. Swarthmore's teaching library concept included a recommendation to hire two "Divisional Librarians," one for the social sciences and one for the humanities. These new librarians would "implement the use of library materials as an integral part of courses of instruction" (Williamson, 1971, p. 205). The humanities and social sciences were targeted as the place to incorporate a stronger teaching of "library skills" in the curriculum for these programs, perhaps because of the emphasis on liberal arts.

In the late 1970s into the mid-1980s, the teaching library became a part of a growing number of institutional profiles. Robert Spencer (1978) describes Sangamon State University Library (now the University of Illinois at Springfield) as a teaching library. Following the characteristics of Swarthmore, he describes a liberal arts college that is "more of a teaching institution than a research institution" (p. 1022). He reiterates the theme of lifelong learning emphasizing that "the library must support students becoming very practical life-long learners through library usage" (p. 1022). Even though 1977 had not yet seen

https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/comminfolit/vol8/iss2/3
DOI: 10.15760/comminfolit.2014.8.2.167

the emergence of the World Wide Web and electronic resources, Spencer recognized the important role librarians played in helping students and faculty make sense of the information universe: "More than most, librarians recognize the fragmentation of the scholarly world and the student's quest for coherence, for meaningful theory and understandable methodologies" (p.1024). Spencer (1978) also stresses the importance of librarians as peers to the teaching faculty so that students and faculty will take the library seriously.

Another visionary from the mid to late 1970s was Patricia Senn Breivik (1978), who described the "teaching library" from an administrative perspective. She asserted that library collections are almost worthless without users who know how to use them. She asks, "What is the value of good collections if most students cannot or will not use them?"(p. 2047). Breivik also describes new responsibilities that the librarians would need to assume. She describes librarians with expertise that matched curriculum areas. These professionals could set instructional objectives, create appropriate instructional activities, and serve in "expanded educational roles" (p. 2048). If you add technology skills into this description you would have Bell and Shank's (2004) "blended librarian" of today—i.e., "an academic librarian who combines the traditional skill set of librarianship with the information technologist's hardware/ software skills, and the instructional or educational designer's ability to apply technology appropriately in the teaching-learning process" (p. 374). Breivik (1978) points out that, "Teaching libraries are those that are fully integrated into the educational mainstream and strengthen the educational missions of their institutions" (p.2048).

TEACHING LIBRARIES IN THE 1980S

In 1979, Guskin, Stoffle, and Boisse enter the conversation about teaching libraries as they look toward the future of academic libraries. Like Spencer, these authors recognize that the teaching role of the academic library strengthens its prominence on college campuses. They write:

> [One] major way in which the library can respond to the present challenges of higher education, maintain itself as a viable campus unit, and realize its potential is to become a 'teaching library' which is itself actively and directly involved in implementing the mission of higher education (Guskin, Stoffle, & Boisse, 1979, p. 283).

The teaching library described in 1979 and expanded by the same authors in 1984, still included the goal of creating lifelong learners, but also included a commitment to the surrounding community (1979). The authors outlined a comprehensive bibliographic instruction program that embraced a stronger teaching role than was mentioned in any of the prior discussions about teaching libraries; this role included evaluation of instructional programs and activities, as well as recommendations for curriculum analysis to determine where bibliographic instruction would be most needed.

Along with the changes in the development of the teaching library in the late 1970s into

the mid-1980s, one can also see expanded roles for librarians. Rader (1984) describes the attributes of the teaching librarian as someone who displays a total commitment to the concept of the teaching library and librarians who see themselves as educators interested in new technological developments (p. 236). Rader goes on to write about the teaching library and the "electronic age" in 1986, describing the use of "microcomputers" in the library with librarians who offer "discipline specific applications of microcomputers" which includes online database searching, and using the library's online automation system (p. 403).

The 1990s: Assessment, Instructional Improvement, and Student Learning

The scope of the teaching library changed dramatically with the advent of desktop computer use for research and teaching, electronic databases, networked information resources and the explosion of the Internet in the late 1980s to the mid-1990s. Despite the fact that the term was first coined in 1974, it was in the 1990s where the term "information literacy" came into its own. In analyzing the usage of the term and how many times it is used in library literature, Bawden (2009) states, "Information literacy maintained a low volume throughout the 1980s, expanding considerably in the 1990s" (p. 230). He points out the controversy surrounding the phrase when discussing ACRL's attempt to grapple with the term. He writes:

> [The] former Bibliographic Instruction Section of the US Association of College and Research Libraries, in its search over more than ten years for a more appropriate, inclusive, and modern name, eliminated 'information literacy' as a suitable new name early in its considerations, indicating its lack of general acceptance" (Bawden, 2009, p.236).

The teaching library of the mid 1990s and into the first decade of the 21st century changed dramatically when academic libraries developed assessments of student learning and evaluations for their instructional programs. Libraries created more student-centered collaborative learning spaces in the form of information (or learning) commons. Academic libraries began forming stronger strategic partnerships on campus with other academic units such as writing centers and tutoring and learning services. Edward Owusu-Ansah (2004) refers to the change in focus on student learning as pervasive in the 1990s when he writes: "Whatever methods were being employed, the library's instructional activities had become so ubiquitous that by the 1990's all reference job ads in the United States required instructional knowledge" (p.23). In light of the developments in both technology and the changes in academic library priorities with regard to information literacy, in 1995, Stoffle and Williams redefined the teaching library. They describe the teaching library as a "transformed library" that would do the following:

- Focus on teaching as both a direct activity and a support activity for other disciplines—all units are involved and all staff see themselves as educators

https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/comminfolit/vol8/iss2/3
DOI: 10.15760/comminfolit.2014.8.2.167

- Focus on user needs by continual assessment of data
- Create tools to facilitate knowledge creation
- Offer a physical environment conducive to teaching and independent and collaborative learning
- Create strategic partnerships to facilitate teaching and learning (1995, p.64).

Users and their needs were now the focus of the teaching library and no two libraries would have exactly the same programs, organizational structure or physical arrangement because services would have to be customized. Common goals include:

- Creating an information literate undergraduate
- Supporting and facilitating a learning-centered curriculum and research programs for specific disciplines
- Improving the quality of teaching materials and assignments
- Improving campus understanding of and participation in local and information policy development
- Conducting research and evaluation to improve programs and advance knowledge about and access to information (Stoffle & Williams, 1995, p. 67).

Absent from the discussion is the priority of service to the surrounding community, the library as cultural center, and the term "bibliographic instruction." Instead, the emphasis moves to offering quality teaching, providing user-centered environments, and reframing the role of libraries as central to the teaching and learning process. Evaluation, assessment, and research were all activities that had been added into the description of teaching library goals; implied, but not stated, in these goals would be librarian skills that included use of emergent technologies. However, information literacy at that time still appears to be viewed as something mostly for undergraduates and not part of the agenda of graduate level instruction. It is only after the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* (2000) were written, published, adopted, and implemented that academic libraries and librarians turned to creating more in-depth, discipline specific standards that applied to upper level undergraduates and graduate students.

THE ACRL *INFORMATION LITERACY COMPETENCY STANDARDS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION*

The ACRL Standards Committee's creation of the *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education,* written at the end of the 1990s, was a milestone in the development of teaching and learning in academic libraries. The document defines information literacy and frames its place with regard to technology, higher education, pedagogy, and the use of the standards for librarians. By detailing five major standards and twenty-two performance indicators, the document served as a guideline for librarians and educators in assessing information literacy skills and creating curricular content. In many ways, the

Standards legitimized information literacy and its place in the academy for librarians and library administrators; they became the foundation for programs, credit courses, and assessments that followed. For example, in 2003, the reference and instruction librarians at Oregon State University used the *Standards* as a "framework for an initial self-study of our instructional practice and for promoting the concept of information literacy at our institution" (Davidson, McMillen & Maughan, 2002, p. 97).

The *Standards* were not without their critics, however. Owusu-Anash complains that the *Standards* include "excessively exhaustive aspirations" that step "beyond boundaries of what could be expected of librarians" (2003, p.219). Thus, as librarians assumed broader and more central teaching roles within the academy, the profession debated about the practicality and legitimacy of their taking on expanded instructional roles. Hofer, Brunetti and Townsend (2013) support Owusu-Anash when they point out that the *Standards* caused "an overload problem" (p.110), leaving new librarians confused about how to identify manageable instructional priorities. The *Standards*, they say, is a combination of both practical and aspirational goals that contribute to "mission creep and overreach" (Hofer, Townsend & Brunetti, 2013, p.111). Kuhlthau (2013) points out a number of different flaws associated with the *Standards* in that they are too "simplistic, positivist, one-right-answer for all" in their approach (p.94). Kuhlthau's (2013) view of the research process itself is that it is complex and recursive, which would recommend a holistic approach to teaching students information literacy strategies (p. 94). Critics who subscribe to a "critical information literacy model," call for an even broader and more inclusive definition of information literacy and standards that take into account such things as sociopolitical ideologies and understanding how knowledge is socially constructed (Kapitze, 2003; Troy, 2004).

Despite complaints about their limitations, the *Standards* helped many institutions to re-think their mission, re-evaluate their programs, and communicate more clearly to academic faculty and administrators the value of information literacy instruction. Because of the *Standards*, information literacy was not just a nice notion a few institutions and experts embraced; it became an important movement in changing the paradigm for academic libraries. Along with programmatic impact at institutions, the *Standards* also had a dramatic impact on how individual librarians regarded teaching and learning practices in their own classrooms; the *Standards* became a touchstone for creating learning goals, assessments, and classroom activities for teaching information literacy as seen by the growth of standards-based books and articles about effective teaching and learning (Burkhardt & Rathemacher, 2003;Neeley, 2006; Cook & Cooper, 2006).

ACRL'S STRONG LEADERSHIP THROUGH IMMERSION

When creating the *Information Literacy Competency Standards*, ACRL also recognized the need for instructional improvement for librarians. Most library schools did not view information literacy instruction as a core competency for library science programs and many professionals

https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/comminfolit/vol8/iss2/3
DOI: 10.15760/comminfolit.2014.8.2.167

needed help improving their instructional skills. As Walter (2008) notes in discussing issues of librarianship and teaching, "while librarians (especially academic librarians) find themselves increasingly called upon to act (and to think of themselves) as teachers, few are provided with any training in how to teach as part of their professional education" (p.56). Walter also points out that "the place of teacher training as part of the professional education for pre-service librarians remains marginal" (p.56). In response to the need for teacher training, since 1999 ACRL's Institute for Information Literacy Immersion Program has selected 90 participants to join a team of nationally recognized information literacy experts, offering a teacher and program track at various locations annually in order to fill the gap in training librarians to teach (Pullman, 2006, p. 631). Immersion helped librarians improve their classroom techniques, knowledge of learning theory, leadership skills, and assessments related to information literacy instruction. The program track focused on "developing, integrating, and managing institutional and programmatic information literacy programs" with a view towards identifying best practices in terms of "institutional outcomes assessment, scalability, and integration of teaching, learning and technology" (Pullman, 2006, p. 633). Like the *Standards*, Immersion was instrumental in creating a culture of leadership that impacted the library profession significantly by improving instruction.

Despite the tremendous progress made regarding the role of teaching in academic libraries both in the 1990s and in the early part of 2000s, there were still skeptics who felt that it was the wrong path to take. Hutchins et al. (2002) embraced information literacy but cautioned readers about the acceptance of the term "information literacy": "If library faculty are not careful to take a disciplinary perspective when discussing developmental research skills [with academic faculty], the use of 'information literacy' may be off-putting and viewed as jargon" (p.12). Another skeptic, Stanley Wilder (2005), wrote an anti-information literacy polemic in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, complaining that teaching information literacy was completely wrong-headed because the assumption that students would want help from librarians was faulty and that "information literacy would have librarians teach students to be more like them" (p. B13). Wilder (2005) claimed that developing effective information literacy programs "would require enormous and coordinated shifts in curricular emphases and resource allocation, none of which is either practical or politically realistic" (p. B13). In other words, the task of creating information literate undergraduates was too difficult, so why try? Thus, despite the emergence of the *Standards* and the influence of the Immersion Program, information literacy and the role of the teaching library was not quite on solid ground in the early part of the 21st century; it was still subject to the politics of administrative support, somewhat ambivalent attitudes towards the role of academic librarians, a lack of understanding about the teaching mission of the academic library, and a disagreement about what content should be taught by librarians, if indeed they were teaching at all.

In contrast to Wilder's dismissal of the value of information literacy instruction and

teaching libraries, many educators argued that information literacy is so important that it can and should be developed as a separate academic discipline and taught in its own right. Jane Kemp (2006) outlines controversies over the role of academic librarians teaching credit-bearing courses, saying "there is disagreement within the profession whether it [librarianship] is to be thought of as a 'service profession or an academic discipline" (p.21). While Kemp (2006) argues the value of librarians teaching classes, she cautions: "While meaningful and valuable for the library and the academic librarian, classroom teaching is secondary to their core responsibilities" (p.21). Several academic libraries and library science programs have offered credit classes related to information and research skills at the undergraduate and graduate levels, some related to specific disciplines, some more generic (Burke, 2012). Bill Badke (2005) has written extensively about the need to establish discipline-specific information literacy courses over one-shot, point-of-need training. He writes:

> The most promising and relatively new approach is to embed credit-bearing information literacy courses within departments. The intention is to give such courses homes within subject disciplines, where they can be informed by the content that students with majors require, while at the same time having flexibility to include a broader philosophy of information as well as the skills to do informational research beyond a single subject (p. 74).

Badke (2008) himself has followed that example, having written a textbook and taught discipline-specific, information literacy credit courses.

What is encouraging is that whether librarians teach information literacy in face-to-face or online classes for academic faculty or whether they teach it by means of credit- earning courses, assessment of student learning has become the gold standard for best practices and characterizes the teaching library. This is evidenced by Scott Walter's (2007) edited volume*, The Teaching Library: Approaches to Assessing Information Literacy Instruction*. The book highlights adaptable information literacy assessment practices from teaching libraries across the country. Walter (2007) emphasizes the importance of the teaching library when he writes, "If libraries are to continue to be recognized as vital organs of the body academic worthy of significant and ongoing financial support, then we must be prepared to demonstrate our direct contribution to student learning in ways consistent with those that have been accepted as valid across our campuses" (p.6).

More recently, we see national-level research on information literacy through efforts such as Project Information Literacy (PIL). Project Information Literacy was a collaborative, large-scale, national study (begun in 2008 with a final report released in 2012) about the information seeking behaviors of college students, investigating how they conduct "everyday research" (Head, 2012). The final report delineates information literacy competencies of college graduates as well as gaps in their education, as these students transition from college to the workplace.

https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/comminfolit/vol8/iss2/3
DOI: 10.15760/comminfolit.2014.8.2.167

Many of the findings of this research have informed teaching libraries about what skills are needed for students to be successful as lifelong learners (Head, 2012).

The Debate Continues—Information Literacy, the *Standards* and the *Framework*

After years of debate about the usefulness of information literacy, the library profession has embraced its importance. Librarians work to develop authentic assessments of student learning, using the ACRL *Standards* as a guide. That being said, the definition of information literacy and implementation of teaching continues to be a moving target. Currently, in 2014, ACRL is in the process of replacing the *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* (2000) with the *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (2014, June 17). ACRL plans to "sunset" the *Standards* one year after the new *Framework* document is finalized and accepted for use (*Framework*, *Appendix 3*, 2014, June 17, lines 1213–1214). The new ACRL *Framework* thrusts the academic library and librarians more emphatically into the teaching and learning role of academic institutions. In *Appendix I*, The Task Force outlines the paradigm shift from students-as-consumers of information to students as "creators and participants in research and scholarship" (lines 708–709). The 2000 *Standards*, though specific and clear, are considered problematic because they are old-fashioned and because they "focus attention on the objects of scholarship as mostly textual ones." (lines 779–780). They are also characterized as decontextualized with a "limited, almost formulaic approach to understanding a complex information ecosystem" (lines 776–777). The hierarchical structure of the *Standards* appears to be one-size-fits-all because, according to the *Framework*, it "conveys a fixed conception of how information literacy can be realized in varied curricula" (lines 778–779). The *Framework* criticizes the *Standards* as being too librarian-centric by not explicitly acknowledging the importance of librarian-academic faculty collaboration. They "valorize the 'information literate student' as a construct of imagined accomplishment, at the endpoint of a set of learning experiences, without the involvement of peers, tutors, coaches, faculty advisors, or other collaborators." (*Framework*, *Appendix 1*, 2014, June 17, lines 789–791).

The *Framework* seeks to remedy some of the limitations in the *Standards* identified by the ACRL *Framework* Task Force. For example, the *Framework* emphasizes information literacy as a collaborative effort, not one that is bifurcated or separate from other academic pursuits. Therefore one sees the use of the words "integrated learning," with courses, the curriculum, digital projects, etc. as a major theme of the document. Thus, information literacy mostly exists within the contexts of disciplines, professions or what is referred to as the "information ecosystem" and not as a discipline unto itself (*Framework*, *Appendix 1*, 2014, June 17, lines 823–825 & 835–837). The revised definition of information literacy is the place where the new direction begins:

> Information literacy combines a repertoire of abilities, practices, and dispositions focused on flexible

> engagement with the information ecosystem, underpinned by critical self-reflection. The repertoire involves finding, evaluating, interpreting, managing, and using information to answer questions and develop new ones; and creating new knowledge through ethical participation in communities of learning, scholarship, and practice. (*Framework*, *Appendix 1*, 2014, June 17, lines 848–852).

This revised definition of information literacy emphasizes the importance of discourse communities within academic disciplines and the need for placing information literacy in the proper context within those communities. Instead of the specific, prescriptive *Standards*, one sees "foundational" or "core concepts" which should "position information literacy on a higher plane, as an integral part of the learning process within disciplines and across them" (*Framework*, *Appendix 1*, 2014, June 17, lines 875–876). Because of the emphasis on collaboration with many stakeholders outside the library, such as academic faculty, information technologists, instructional designers and other partners on campus, the implication is that academic librarians' roles, need to include strong subject expertise and understanding of how research is conducted and disseminated in specific academic disciplines, along with a clear sense of where information literacy instruction fits into the "information ecosystem." This is a tall order for librarians, particularly if those librarians are generalists rather than subject specialists.

In place of identifying specific performance indicators and learning outcomes, the new *Framework* embraces a broader, more holistic approach and intends to use threshold concepts as a vehicle for accomplishing it. Ultimately, the *Framework* states that the goal is no longer to create information literate undergraduates but instead to teach information literacy through six threshold concepts, which are defined by the document as "'gateway' or portal concepts within a discipline, profession or knowledge domain" (*Framework*, *Appendix 1*, 2014, June 17, lines, 889–891). It is with threshold concepts that the *Framework* has thrust the library community into unknown territory and it is the theory behind threshold concepts that has met with the most criticism from the library community.

Lane Wilkinson (2014) characterizes the theoretical underpinnings of the Framework as "intentionally vague, conceptually muddled, agent-relative, and reductionist" (n. p.). First, there is the question of whether disciplines have a unified body of knowledge around which you can determine those "portal concepts" or not. As Wilkinson (2014) puts it, "even within a single discipline, there are often radically incompatible views held among practitioners." He goes on to argue that reducing disciplines to threshold concepts implies that there is only one reputable school of thought within that discipline and that whoever controls the dominant narrative within a discipline decides threshold concepts. Just as critics of the *Standards* pointed out that they were fashioned around some idealized information literate undergraduate student, Lane Wilkinson (2014) points out that "threshold concepts have a way of reducing our students to a single idealized student

https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/comminfolit/vol8/iss2/3
DOI: 10.15760/comminfolit.2014.8.2.167

who learns a particular way" (n. p.). Clearly, since the *Framework* is under development, it is not yet determined how much it will influence the library and academic community until is reviewed, approved, and finalized by ACRL. How it is embraced and implemented by librarians and academic faculty is yet to be decided. What is encouraging when looking at the debates about information literacy instruction is that it has come to be viewed as essential to higher education across the disciplines and their curricula. Despite the fact that initially information literacy is viewed as having been "a librarian-driven process, often without explicit buy-in from academic departments" (*Framework*, *Appendix 1*, 2014, June 17, lines, 981-982), it is now the subject of intensive discussions about implementation across the curriculum and how to accomplish that.

CONCLUSION

In a presidential proclamation, President Obama named October 2009 National Information Awareness Month, saying: "Though we may know how to find the information we need, we must also know how to evaluate it. Over the past decade we have seen a crisis of authenticity emerge" (2009, p.1). These points are reinforced in the 2010 report, *The Value of Academic Libraries*, which presents survey data collected from over 80,000 respondents between 2005 and 2012. It answers the question of what services and resources are important to academic library constituents, how well do organizations deliver them, and how effectively libraries communicate with campus constituencies (Oakleaf, 2012). The "student learning" section of the document emphasizes that libraries are in the midst of a paradigm shift from the past role as repositories of information to a more active role involved in teaching and learning, requiring librarians to become collaboratively embedded into the curricula and to assume strong teaching roles within their institutions (Bennet, 2009; Lewis, 2007; Oakleaf, 2012). It appears that, despite debates about how information literacy concepts are organized and taught in the academy, information literacy instruction is here to stay along with the role of academic librarians as active stakeholders in the teaching and learning mission of their institutions. Finally, if one looks at the past and present trends, one can define the teaching library, at the most basic level, as a library that values collaborative integration of information literacy instruction into curricula, the use of evidence-based assessments to measure student learning, and an acceptance of librarians as teachers and partners who bring much value to advance student success within academic communities.

ENDNOTES

1. The Australian and New Zealand Institute for Information Literacy (ANZIIL) similarly define information literacy using language that is almost identical to the ACRL definition (Bundy, 2004). The UK Society of College, National, and Universities Libraries (SCONUL) defines the phrase when they state, "Information literate people will demonstrate an awareness of how they gather, use, manage, synthesise [sic] and create information and data in an ethical manner and will have the information skills to do so

effectively" (Bent & Stubbings, 2011).

2. For a look at the emergence of the earliest references to bibliographic instruction in the library literature, see Hopkins (1982) and Salony (1995).
3. The shift to a broader, focus was considered controversial by some librarians even in the early 1990s; they did not see the point of teaching information literacy concepts as students struggled to navigate mostly print sources in a world where computers, CD-ROM indexes, and newly-formed online library catalogs were unfamiliar territory (LaGuardia, 1992). LaGuardia (1992) complains about "concepts first" BI as being too difficult and impractical. Her discussion reflects the tension and shift from teaching local tools and collections as opposed to teaching broader IL concepts as seen in earlier discussions in the early 1980s.
4. It is interesting to note that in a recent article, Wilder (2013) backtracked quite a bit in his acceptance of information literacy and the teaching role of librarians.

REFERENCES

Association of College & Research Libraries. (June, 17, 2014). *Framework for information literacy for higher education draft 2*. Retrieved from http://acrl.ala.org/ilstandards/wp- content/uploads/2014/02/Framework-for-IL-for-HE- Draft-2.pdf.

Association of College and Research Libraries. (2000). *Information literacy competency standards for higher education.* Retrieved from http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/standards/standards.pdf

Association of College & Research Libraries. (2000). *Information literacy defined*. Retrieved from http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/standards/standards.pdf

Association of College & Research Libraries. (2000). *What is information literacy? Introduction to information literacy*. Retrieved from http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/standards/standards.pdf

Badke, W. B. (2004). *Research strategies: Finding your way through the information fog* (2nd ed.). New York: I-Universe, Inc.

Badke, W. B. (2005). Can't get no respect: Helping faculty to understand the educational power of information literacy. *Reference Librarian,* (89), 63–80. doi:10.1300/J120v43n89_05.

Bawden, D. (2001). Information and digital literacies: A review of concepts. *Journal of Documentation, 57*(2), 218–259. doi:10.1108/EUM0000000007083.

Bell, S. J., & Shank, J. (2004). The blended librarian: A blueprint for redefining the teaching and learning role of academic librarians. *College & Research Libraries News, 65*(7), 372–375. Retrieved from http://crln.acrl.org/content/65/7/372.full.pdf.

https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/comminfolit/vol8/iss2/3
DOI: 10.15760/comminfolit.2014.8.2.167

Bent, M., & Stubbings, R. (2011). The SCONUL Seven Pillars of Information Literacy: Core Model for Higher Education. SCONUL Working Group on Information Literacy. Retrieved from http://www.sconul.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/coremodel.pdf.

Bennett, S. (2009). Libraries and learning: A history of paradigm change. *Portal: Libraries & the Academy, 9*(2), 181–197. doi: 10.1353/pla.0.0049.

Breivik, P. S. (1978). Leadership, management, and the teaching library. *Library Journal, 103*(18), 2045-2048. Retrieved from http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/.

Brevik, P.S. (1989). Information literacy: Revolution in education, in *Coping with Information illiteracy: Bibliographic instruction for the information age.* In Mensching, G. E., & Mensching, T. B (Eds.), *Papers presented at the seventeenth national LOEX library instruction conference* (pp. 1–6). Ann Arbor: Pierian Press.

Bundy, A. (2004). Australian and New Zealand information literacy framework. *Principles, standards and practice.* Retrieved from http://www.literacyhub.org/documents/InfoLiteracyFramework.pdf.

Burke, M. (2011). Academic libraries and the credit-bearing class. *Communications in Information Literacy, 5*(2), 156–173. Retrieved from http://www.comminfolit.org.

Burkhardt, J. M., MacDonald, M. C., & Rathemacher, A. J. (2003). *Teaching information literacy: 35 practical, standards-based exercises for college students*. Chicago: American Library Association.

Cook, D., & Cooper, N. (2006). *Teaching information literacy skills to social sciences students and practitioners: A casebook of applications*. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries.

Davidson, J. R., McMillen, P. S., & Maughan, L. S. (2002). Using the ACRL information literacy competency standards for higher education to assess a university library instruction program. *Journal of Library Administration, 36*(1), 97–121. doi:10.1300/J111v36n01_07.

Gunselman, C., & Blakesley, E. (2012). Enduring visions of instruction in academic libraries: A review of a spirited early twentieth-century discussion. *Portal: Libraries and the Academy, 12*(3), 259–281. doi: 10.1353/pla.2012.0027.

Guskin, A. E., Stoffle, C. J., & Boisse, J. A. (1984). Teaching research and service: The academic library's role. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, no. 18,* 3–14. doi: 10.1002/tl.37219841803.

Guskin, A. E., Stoffle, C. J., & Boisse, J. A. (1979). The academic library as a teaching library. *Library Trends, 28*, 281–296.

Head, A.J. (December 5, 2013). *Learning the Ropes: How Freshmen Conduct Course Research Once They Enter College*. Project Information Literacy Research Report. Retrieved from: http://projectinfolit.org/images/pdfs/pil_2013_freshmenstudy_fullreport.pdf.

Hofer, A. R. 1., Brunetti, K., & Townsend, L. (2013). A thresholds concepts approach to the standards revision. *Communications in Information Literacy, 7*(2), 108–113. Retrieved from http://www.comminfolit.org.

Hutchins, E. O., Fister, B., & MacPherson, K. H. (2002). Changing landscapes, enduring values: Making the transition from bibliographic instruction to information literacy. *Journal of Library Administration, 36*(1), 3. Retrieved fromhttp://www.tandfonline.com/toc/wjla20/current#.Uyc15YWn7JI.

Kaptizke, C. (2003). Information literacy: A review and post structural critique. *Australian Journal of Language & Literacy*, *26*(1), 53. Retrieved from http://www.alea.edu.au/publications.

Kemp, J. (2006). Isn't being a librarian enough? Librarians as classroom teachers. *College & Undergraduate Libraries, 13*(3), 3–23. doi:10.1300/J106v13n03_02.

Kuhlthau, C. (2013). Rethinking the 2000 ACRL standards. *Communications in Information Literacy*, *7*(20), 92–97. Retrieved from http://www.comminfolit.org.

LaGuardia, C. (1992). Renegade library instruction. *Library Journal*, *117*(16), 51–53. Retrieved from http://lj.libraryjournal.com/.

Lewis, D. (2007). A model for academic libraries 2005 to 2025. Paper presented at "Visions of Change," California State University at Sacramento. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/1805/665.

Murdock, J. (1995). Re-engineering bibliographic instruction: The real task of information literacy. *Bulletin of the American Society for Information Science, 21*(3), 26. Retrieved from http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1002/(ISSN)1550-8366.

Neely, T. Y. (2006). *Information literacy assessment: Standards-based tools and assignments*. Chicago: American Library Association.

Oakleaf, M. (2010). The value of academic libraries: A comprehensive research review and report. Chicago: American Library Association. Retrieved from: http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/issues/value/val_report.pdf.

Obama, B. (2009). *National information literacy awareness month 2009: A proclamation*. Retrieved from http://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/2009literacy_prc_rel.pdf.

Owusu-Ansah, E.K. (2003). Information literacy and the academic library: A critical look at a concept and the controversies surrounding it. *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 29(4), 219–230. doi: 10.1016/S0099-1333(03)00040-5.

Pullman, E. (2006). Experiencing ACRL's immersion program: Learning outcomes for future participants. *College & Research Libraries News, 67*(10), 631-–633. Retrieved from http://crlnews.highwire.org/content/67/10/631.full.pdf+html.

Rader, H. (1990). Bibliographic instruction or information literacy. *College & Research Libraries News, 51*(1), 18–20.

https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/comminfolit/vol8/iss2/3
DOI: 10.15760/comminfolit.2014.8.2.167

Rader, H. B. (1986). The teaching library enters the electronic age: Microcomputer technology for user instruction and access. *College & Research Libraries News,* (6), 402–404.

Rader, H. B. (1984). The teaching library: Myth or reality? In Dodson, S.C. & Menges, G. L. (Eds.) *Academic libraries: Myths and realities. Proceedings of the Third National Conference of the Association of College and Research libraries* (pp. 234-–237). Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries.

Rader, H.B& Coons, W. (1992). Information literacy: One response to the new decade. In Baker, B. & Litzinger M.E. (Eds.), *The evolving educational mission of the library* (pp. 118-128). Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries.

Salony, M. F. (1995). The history of bibliographic instruction: Changing trends from books to the electronic world. *The Reference Librarian, 24,* 31–51. doi: 10.1300/J120v24n51_06.

Spencer, R. C. (1978). The teaching library. *Library Journal 103,* 1021–1024.

Stoffle, C. J., & Williams, K. (1995). The instructional program and responsibilities of the teaching library. *New Directions for Higher Education,* (90), 63–75. doi: 10.1002/he.36919959007.

Swanson, T. (2004). A radical step: Implementing a critical information literacy model. *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*, (2), 259–273.

Ver Steeg, J. (2000). Earlham College: Collaboration through course-integrated instruction. In Raspa, R. & Ward, D. (Eds.) *The collaborative imperative: Librarians and faculty working together in the information universe* (pp. 41–50). Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries.

Walter, S. (2008). Librarians as teachers: A qualitative inquiry into professional identity. *College & Research Libraries, 69*(1), 51–71.

Walter, S. (2007). *The teaching library: Approaches to assessing information literacy instruction*. Binghamton, NY: Haworth Information Press.

Wilder, S. (2005). Information literacy makes all the wrong assumptions. *The Chronicle of Higher Education, 51*(18), B13.

Wilder, S. (2013). A reconsideration of information literacy. *Communications in Information Literacy (7)*2, 150–153.

Wilkinson, L. (2014, June 19). The problem with threshold concepts. *Sense and reference: A philosophical library blog*. Retrieved from http://senseandreference.wordpress.com/2014/06/19/the-problem-with-threshold-concepts/#comment-1773.

Williamson, J. G. (1971). Swarthmore college's 'teaching library' proposals. *Drexel Library Quarterly*, *7*, 203–215.