

# Librarian Collaboration Tip Sheet

By Robin Kear, University of Pittsburgh, for NeMLA 2017, [rlk25@pitt.edu](mailto:rlk25@pitt.edu)

## Build Your Personal Campus Network with Librarians!

- We *want* to hear from you.
- We can offer expertise in research, information literacy, technology tools, and our collections (print and digital).

## What we can do:

- We believe that a critical thinker needs to know how to find, organize, and evaluate information.
  - Independently of or dependent on the student's level of knowledge of the discipline (generic or subject specific)
- We can complement the class curriculum or the research assignment by...
  - Helping students learn to systematically approach new topics...and/or...
  - Showing the students discipline-specific tools
- We should clearly communicate what we can cover for your class and any options for delivery or method.
  - Not all critical thinking skills can be covered in one session.
- We are connectors who know what else is happening around campus, relevant resources, and/or people.

## Librarians are working within Six Threshold Concepts:

Threshold concepts are defined in our professional framework as "ideas in any discipline that are passageways or portals to enlarged understanding or ways of thinking and practicing within that discipline." The six frames below consist of concepts at the core of information literacy and show definitions from the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education document. Each frame also includes knowledge practices and dispositions of students learning about the concepts.

1. *Authority Is Constructed and Contextual*: Information resources reflect their creators' expertise and credibility, and are evaluated based on the information need and the context in which the information will be used. Authority is constructed in that various communities may recognize different types of authority. It is contextual in that the information need may help to determine the level of authority required.
2. *Information Creation as a Process*: Information in any format is produced to convey a message and is shared via a selected delivery method. The iterative processes of researching, creating, revising, and disseminating information vary, and the resulting product reflects these differences.
3. *Information Has Value*: Information possesses several dimensions of value, including as a commodity, as a means of education, as a means to influence, and as a means of negotiating and understanding the world. Legal and socioeconomic interests influence information production and dissemination.
4. *Research as Inquiry*: Research is iterative and depends upon asking increasingly complex or new questions whose answers in turn develop additional questions or lines of inquiry in any field.
5. *Scholarship as Conversation*: Communities of scholars, researchers, or professionals engage in sustained discourse with new insights and discoveries occurring over time because of varied perspectives and interpretations.

6. *Searching as Strategic Exploration*: Searching for information is often nonlinear and iterative, requiring the evaluation of a range of information sources and the mental flexibility to pursue alternate avenues as new understanding develops.

### **Realities, Perceptions, and Questions to keep in mind:**

- We know you are busy. We appreciate your reaching out.
- There are different kinds of librarians, including specialists in digital scholarship, archives, special collections, outreach, communication, or technology. Start with your primary liaison librarian but ask about specialist roles.
- If you are reluctant to give up a class session, there are still things we can do.
- Different terminology for similar concepts exists between faculty and librarians.
  - What you call critical thinking, we may call information literacy or threshold concepts.
  - What you call inquiry based learning, we may call active learning.
- You may believe students are already information literate or can pick it up on their own or from other classes. We find this is not the majority of students.
- Do you equate information literacy with technological literacy or digital literacy?
- Subordinate role of librarians within institutional hierarchy, even those librarians with faculty status
- Ambiguous role of librarians in teaching information literacy
  - Different librarians explain things differently
  - Varies across institutions

### **Further Reading**

Albitz, R. S. (2007). The what and who of information literacy and critical thinking in higher education, *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 7(1), 97-109

Association of College and Research Libraries. (2015). Framework for information literacy for higher education. Retrieved March 21, 2017, from: <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>

Brevik, P. S. & McDermand, R. (2004). Campus partnerships building on success. *College & Research Library News*, 65(4), 210-212, 215.

Krebs, P. (2014). Why you should talk to the librarians. *Chronicle Vitae*. Retrieved March 21, 2017, from: <https://chroniclevitae.com/news/673-why-you-should-talk-to-the-librarians>

Mazella, D. & Grob, J. (2011). Collaborations between faculty and special collections librarians in inquiry-driven classes. *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 11(1), 467-487.

Raspa, D. & Ward, D. (Eds.). (2000). *Collaborative imperative: Librarians and faculty working together in the information universe*. Chicago: ACRL.

### **Random Quote**

“If you haven't spent a good few hours going over your syllabi with a librarian trained in your subject area, you're shortchanging your course and your students (and yourself). Librarians keep up with the technology in your field. They know the campus holdings and can order better texts for you if they know what you're teaching.” –

See more at <https://chroniclevitae.com/news/673-why-you-should-talk-to-the-librarians>

--- Paula Krebs, Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Bridgewater State University, August 22, 2014