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# Lost in Translation: How Non-library Faculty Members' Perceptions of Information Literacy Shapes Information Literacy Collaboration & Practice

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**Lost in Translation:  
How Non-library  
Faculty Members' Perceptions of  
Information Literacy Shapes  
Information Literacy Collaboration &  
Practice**

Georgia International Conference on Information Literacy  
August 23, 2013

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# We know how we define Information Literacy...



Image from Los Angeles Public Library photo collection [www.lapl.org](http://www.lapl.org)

# Questions driving our study

In what ways does disciplinary specialization influence how non-library faculty conceptualize Information Literacy?

How do non-library faculty members' perceptions of Information Literacy differ from Library and Information Science's?

# Intellectual influences

Elmborg, J. (2006). Critical information literacy: Implications for instructional practice. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 32(2), 192-199.

Simmons, M. H. (2005). Librarians as disciplinary discourse mediators: Using genre theory to move toward critical information literacy. *Portal: Libraries & the Academy*, 5(3), 297-311.

# Previous studies

Bury, S. (2011). Faculty attitudes, perceptions and experiences of information literacy: A study across multiple disciplines at York University, Canada. *Journal of Information Literacy*, 5(1), 45-64

Weetman-DaCosta, J. (2010). Is there an information literacy skills gap to be bridged? An examination of faculty perceptions and activities relating to information literacy in the United States and England. *College & Research Libraries*, 71(3), 203-222.

# Previous phenomenological studies

Boon, S., Johnston, B., & Webber, S. (2007). A phenomenographic study of English faculty's conceptions of information literacy. *Journal of Documentation*, 63(2), 204-228.

Bruce, C. S. (1997). *The seven faces of information literacy*. Adelaide: Auslib Press.

# Previous phenomenological studies

Boon, S., Johnston, B., & Webber, S. (2007). A phenomenographic study of English faculty's conceptions of information literacy. *Journal of Documentation*, 63(2), 204-228.

- 20 Interviews with English faculty.
- Interviews conducted in the United Kingdom.
- Interviews limited to one discipline.



# Previous phenomenological studies

Bruce, C. S. (1997). *The seven faces of information literacy*. Adelaide: Auslib Press.

- Australian study.
- Large multidisciplinary sample size.
- Dated due to changes in Information Literacy.

# Methodology

Phenomenology - A close examination of how subjects relate to and discuss a particular object. Common in anthropology.

Open-ended questions to allow for free-flowing conversation.

Phenomenological analysis of interview transcripts about non-library faculty members' conceptions of Information Literacy.

# Features of our study

20 interviews (of 25 to 45 minutes each) of non-library faculty members at two City University of New York colleges.

**College of Staten Island** - (Comprehensive college with associate, bachelor's, and master's programs).

**The Bronx Community College** - (Two-year institution with associate and trade programs.)

# Features of our study

Disciplinary sample from: Humanities, English and Literature, Nursing, Biology, Math, Media-Studies, Health Education, and vocational related disciplines.

# Number of interviews

Comprehensive College - 9

Community College - 11

Biology - 2

Communications - 2

Communication Arts and Sciences - 2

Education - 1

English - 3

Finance - 1

Linguistics - 1

Health, Physical Education,  
and Wellness -1

History - 2

Mathematics and Computer  
Science -1

Nursing - 3

Psychology -1

Student Affairs -1

# Limitations

Limited sample size.

Non-random sample.

All interviews at two institutions.

# Main Findings

The non-library faculty interviewed are more influenced by institutional, curricular, and student-specific issues than by disciplinary background or academic training.

Addressing fundamental literacies and introducing students to academic inquiry was more important than teaching discipline-specific forms of Information Literacy.

Non-library faculty members' conception of Information Literacy differs primarily in how it is applied (i.e. contextually, textually, empirically).

Non-library faculty members'  
conceptions of applied Info. Lit.

**Contextual Theme**

**Textual Theme**

**Empirical Theme**





# The Contextual Theme

“It’s not about the volume of information that you have, it’s about the ability to use the resources, and to use the resources you have to have context.

If you don’t have any context of what this (information) is, how to read it, what it says, what it tells you... giving them more, which is what the Internet does, is absolutely useless because they have no ability to classify it, organize it, turn it into some sort of structure.”

“It’s not that there’s too much information; it’s that the silos between different kinds of information have merged...

(Students) need to know what the different informational silos in the world are. But they need to be able to break those down and mix those up when needed. They need to know the hierarchy of information so well that they can go beyond it.”

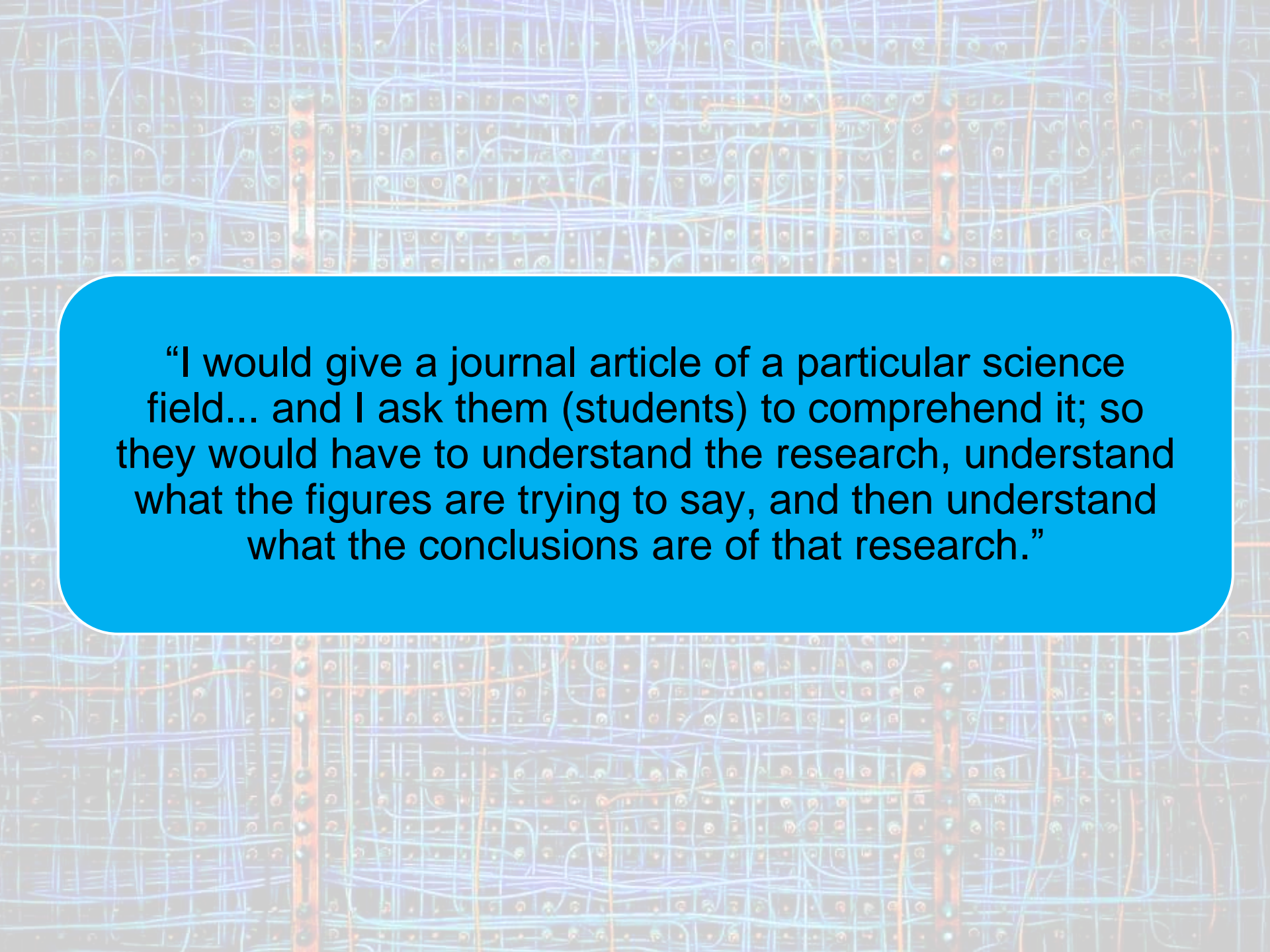


# The Textual Theme

“I think that some of the obstacles have nothing to do with information literacy... but just have to do with literacy frankly.

Some... students are still having a lot of trouble just reading in general. So then when you move them from the primary text that you are looking at in class to looking at outside sources... (students will need) literacy skills and close reading skills to be able to understand this outside source.

So I would say information literacy has to do with a greater kind of literacy issue by the time they (students) hit my classes”



“I would give a journal article of a particular science field... and I ask them (students) to comprehend it; so they would have to understand the research, understand what the figures are trying to say, and then understand what the conclusions are of that research.”



# The Empirical Theme

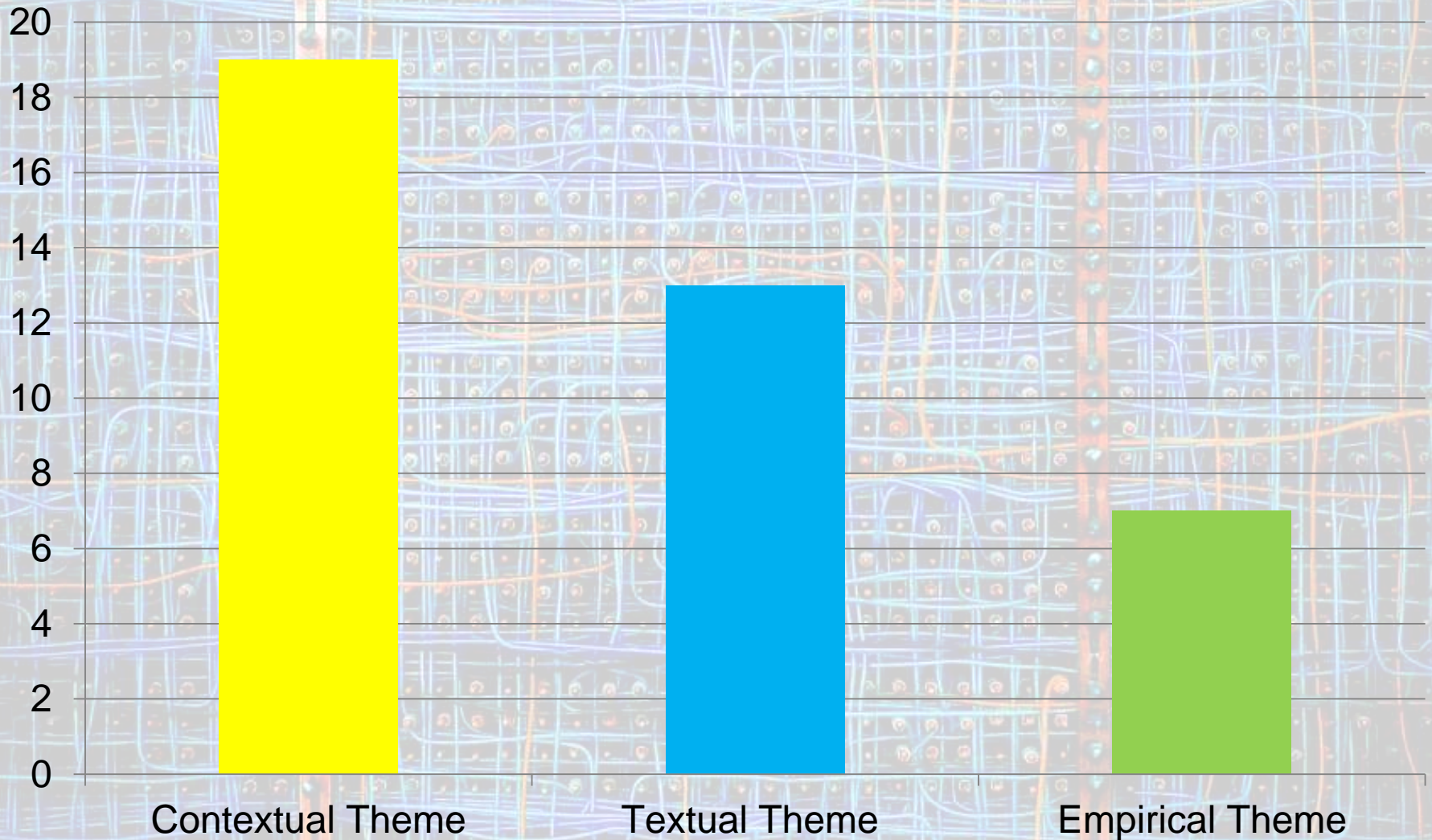
“This automatically takes me to scientific research... we go and follow the scientific method, which is pretty much before you do anything, you have to have a reason to do research...

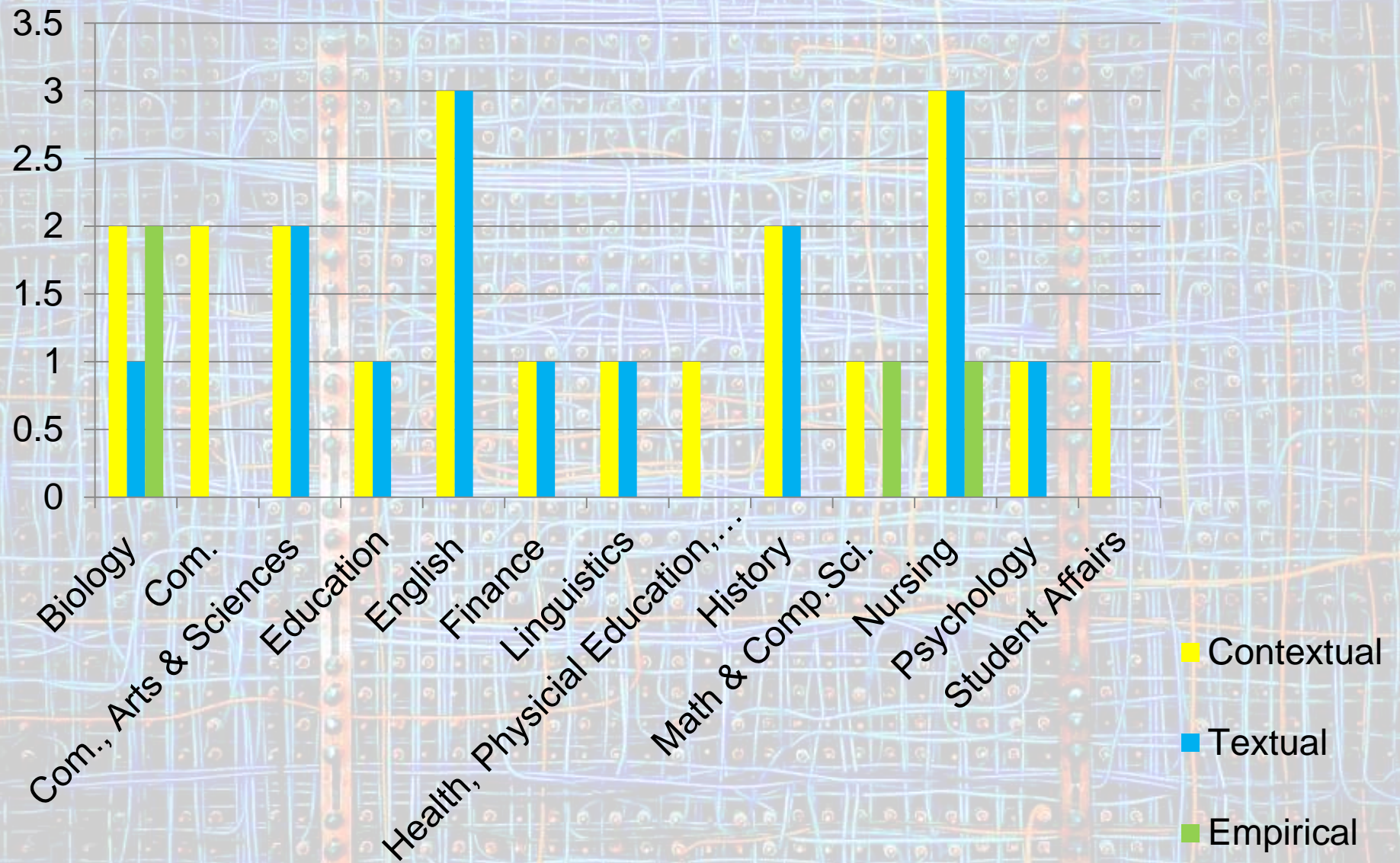
We didn't do it because we are out of our minds and have nothing else to do, because it's expensive, it takes time, money and all kinds of resources... you have to be very clear on your goal, objective, why you're doing it and why is it important.”



“For nursing, thinking on their feet (is a major obstacle). They go into a bedside: they notice this, they notice that. How significant is that? Does that need to be reported now? Can it be reported later? Or not noticing something at all that should’ve been noticed: like the patient’s breathing tube was migrating out of their throat...”

## Number of interviews in which each theme was mentioned





# Questions driving our study

How does academic disciplinary specialization influence how non-library faculty conceptualize Information Literacy?

How do non-library faculty members' perceptions of Information Literacy differ from Library and Information Science's?

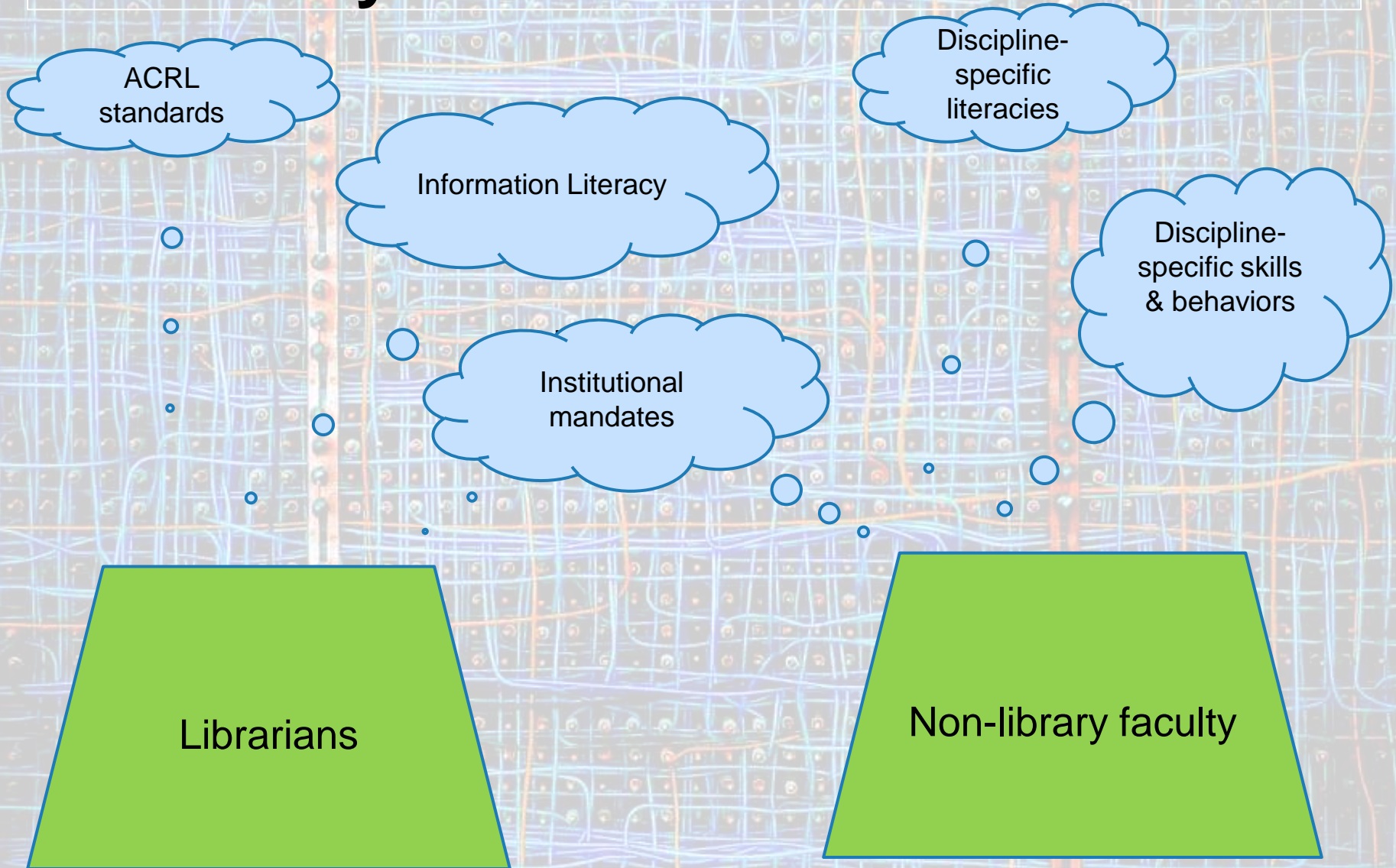
# Main findings

The non-library faculty interviewed are more influenced by institutional, curricular, and student specific issues than by disciplinary background or academic training.

Addressing fundamental literacies and introducing students to academic inquiry was more important than teaching discipline-specific forms of Information Literacy.

Non-library faculty members' conception of Information Literacy differs primarily in how it is applied (i.e. contextually, textually, empirically).

# Which elements of Information Literacy may be lost in translation?



ACRL  
standards

Information Literacy

Discipline-  
specific  
literacies

Discipline-  
specific skills  
& behaviors

Institutional  
mandates

Librarians

Non-library faculty

# Questions? Comments?

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