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DiYing Your Own Framework:

Partnering with a CTL to Construct Local Learning Outcomes

Amy Fyn and Jenn Marshall Shinaberger

Introduction

The adoption of the *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*¹ by the Association of College & Research Libraries' (ACRL) executive board in January 2016 motivated library instruction programs to deeply explore the *Framework* and carefully evaluate its impact on a local level. A coordinator of library instruction and the director of a Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) used Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) as a method to investigate designing learning outcomes for a library instruction program that incorporates the ACRL *Framework*. The authors trace the design process followed by Kimbel Library and the Center for Teaching Excellence to Advance Learning (CeTEAL) at Coastal Carolina University (CCU). They argue that a SoTL framework can be used by academic librarians as a model for contextualizing the ACRL Frames and designing local learning outcomes.

SoTL as Professional Development

The ACRL *Framework's* Appendix² noted that the frames provided opportunities for librarians to collaborate with other colleagues on their campus when developing instructional content for information literacy. One of the opportunities suggested by the ACRL *Framework* document is SoTL research. SoTL research is inquiry that is context-based, systematic, and evidence-based, follows ethical practice and shares findings publicly for colleagues to review, critique, and use.³ The characteristics of SoTL research provided

a valuable model within which the authors began their research. As scholar-practitioners, the authors grounded an examination of the ACRL frames in SoTL research to contribute to professional dialogue around information literacy. The authors used the SoTL inquiry process, drawing upon two instructional design models, Understanding by Design (UbD) and Idea-Based Learning (IBL), in addition to evidence-based practice, in order to design professional development workshops for instruction librarians.

Faculty development that occurs around significant change within a profession and discipline, such as the adoption of the ACRL *Framework*, can benefit from examination through the SoTL lens. In this case study, the authors found several advantages to this approach: taking SOTL research to the program level, partnering with one another, and making our work public, in the SoTL tradition, so that others could benefit from our experiences.

Elton⁴ discusses the important connection between continuing professional development and SoTL. Using SoTL as professional development allows practitioners to stand at “the intersection of content and pedagogy that brings together the wisdom of practice on a topic-by-topic, idea-by-idea practice.”⁵ Weimer sets out two broad categories of SoTL research in which practitioners engage: wisdom-of-practice scholarship and research scholarship. The wisdom-of-practice scholarship classification, called the “how-to literature of teaching” contains four entries: personal account of change, recommended practices reports, recommended-content reports, and personal narratives.⁶ This case study is a recommended practices report within the wisdom-of-practice classification and relies on the experience of the authors, evidence-based research, and reflective practice and is within the recommended-practice approach to SoTL.

Project Background

This case study is written from the point of view of an academic librarian and a faculty developer who brought together their background and experiences to work on the issue of localizing the ACRL frames. The authors used a SoTL inquiry process as a guide to apply evidence-based practice to development workshops for librarians through which they examined the ACRL frames. This case study is positioned at the crossroads of several distinct fields: information literacy and library instruction, educational (faculty) development, and instructional design.

The authors of the ACRL *Framework* recommended that academic libraries collaborate with their campus Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) to implement the *Framework* and to share their instruction materials with other librarians. The challenge faced by information literacy programs is that the ACRL *Framework* document, unlike the rescinded *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* (2000),⁷ lacks a standardized set of learning outcomes which libraries can draw on to determine competency in a set of skills. No longer given a one-size-fits-all model developed by a professional organization, librarians and information literacy programs were tasked with determining how the ACRL *Framework*'s concepts applied at their own institution.

ACRL provided little initial guidance for implementing the *Framework* beyond recommending discussions with partners who support or contribute to curricula initiatives on college campuses. To date, presentations and publications about implementing the *Framework* have focused on changes made to one-shot sessions⁸ and individual courses or assignments,⁹ with little published about the process used by information literacy programs that have successfully implemented the *Framework* at a program level. This case study addresses this gap in the existing library literature and practice. In the next section, the authors detail how one library partnered with a CTL to address the problem of constructing local learning outcomes for novice and expert learners using SoTL as inquiry and professional development.

DiYing the ACRL *Framework*: A Case Study

Coastal Carolina University (CCU) is a mid-sized, public liberal arts institution in the southeast Atlantic region with approximately 10,000 students, primarily undergraduates. CCU's Kimbel Library has a dedicated instruction program that works with faculty to provide course-integrated one-shot sessions to all levels of students and offers a set of credit-bearing research courses available to undergraduate students. CeTEAL is CCU's faculty development center and provides professional development for effective teaching, scholarship, and service.

Kimbel Library's instruction program is modeled in part on professional guidelines such as the *Characteristics of Programs of Information Literacy that Illustrate Best Practices: A Guideline*.¹⁰ Following the recommendations from the ACRL *Framework's* supporting materials, instruction librarians at CCU's Kimbel Library prepared to explore the *Framework* and consider its relevance to the local community by engaging in discussions. The description, knowledge practices, and dispositions of one frame were reviewed each month during instruction meetings. Librarians shared how they addressed aspects of a frame within existing one-shot research sessions, and they individually and collectively considered how, when, and even if each frame had a place in their work with students. Librarians recognized that their instructional approaches should adapt in some ways in response to the ACRL *Framework*, moving away from teaching skills and moving toward guiding learners as they approach threshold concepts so they can produce, collaborate, and distribute information. In the next section, the authors describe the decisions made in the design of the in-house workshops.

Designing Professional Development Workshops for the ACRL *Framework*

Librarians at CCU have a strong relationship with the campus's faculty development center, CeTEAL. To expand the library's community of practice developing around the ACRL *Framework*, the coordinator of library instruction partnered with the director of CeTEAL to

design workshops that would address some of the challenges presented by the *Framework*. The primary goals of this professional development workshop series were to develop learning outcomes for the library's information literacy program based on the *Framework* and to create a sense of ownership of the new focus within the department. The plan was to expand on the conversational approach of the previous year to more intentionally discuss and develop local outcomes for multiple levels of students.

Figure 24.1 shows the steps of the SoTL research cycle the authors used as a guide for developing a research question, gathering evidence-based models and approaches, implementing professional development workshops, adjusting the workshops, reflecting with lessons learned, and disseminating the results.



Figure 24.1. The SoTL research process showing how evidence-based practice and professional development were used by a coordinator of library instruction and a faculty developer.

The SoTL research cycle requires that research is rooted in evidence-based methods. The authors explored several design models and approaches in which to ground the development of local learning outcomes including Understanding by Design (UbD) and, for the second workshop, Idea-Based Learning (IBL).¹¹ The director of CeTEAL recommended the use of UbD, as the development of the ACRL *Framework* was informed by elements of backward design.

UbD is a curricular design model which uses the backward design approach, beginning with the end and asking what students should be able to do as a result of the instruction. The first stage of UbD—Key Design Elements—contains six steps:

1. Unpacking goals
2. Identifying big ideas
3. Developing essential questions
4. Developing understandings
5. Considering misunderstandings
6. Identifying key knowledge and skills

Using UbD as an evidence-based practice, the authors applied Stage 1 to develop learning outcomes for the information literacy program. UbD allows for entry into the design model at any point but seems to presume that unpacking goals or outcomes is the first step as most of the examples in the UbD text begin with state standards in K-12 education. The authors found UbD's focus on unpacking learning outcomes first conflicted with the ACRL *Framework's* directive to develop local learning outcomes as the end result. They decided to enter the UbD model at the second step, "Identifying big ideas," since there were no outcomes to unpack, and ended at the "Unpacking goals" (student learning outcomes in this case) step of Stage 1 in the UbD model.

The authors worked through steps of Stage 1, using the frame Information has Value to conceptualize how this process would play out in the workshop setting. The CeTEAL director identified relevant templates from the Key Design Elements in Stage 1 of UbD¹² that would guide the participants in engaging with individual frames, and the coordinator gave feedback on which would work best to apply to the *Framework*. The next section discusses the first professional development workshop and adjustments made as a result of participant feedback.

Creating Program Outcomes: Understanding by Design

Six instruction librarians and the director of the faculty development center met to consider implications of the ACRL *Framework's* approach to information literacy programs. The instruction coordinator set the expectation that the participants would complete activities leading to the creation of learning outcomes to complement or replace the ACRL Information Literacy Standards-based outcomes of the library's information literacy program. The CeTEAL director led the workshops so all librarians, including the instruction coordinator, could grapple with larger questions inherent in localizing the *Framework*.

The CeTEAL director began with a brief overview of the day's plan and introduced how to apply an instructional design process to the *Framework*. Next, she explained each of the Key Design Elements before guiding the librarians through Stage 1 of UbD. Using the Information Has Value frame as the example, the group considered their experiences working with students both in instruction settings and during reference desk interactions. They identified "big ideas" related to Information Has Value, developed "essential questions,"

framed “big ideas” and “understandings,” and listed the “misunderstandings” often observed when working with students in regard to the value of information. The group completed the remaining parts of UbD by “identifying knowledge and key skills.” At the end of these steps, they drafted several potential learning outcomes for Information Has Value, ranging in ability from novice to expert. Next, the librarians were split into two groups to repeat the backward design process for an additional frame, again starting with a description of “big ideas.” At the end of the workshop, the group had drafted several outcomes related to three of the six frames.

During the professional development workshops, the authors encountered mixed feelings from the participants toward working with the frames, which is representative of the response the ACRL *Framework* received from the broader community of academic librarians. By the end of the session, some participants were confused or disengaged, while the process resonated with others who were enthusiastic. One librarian expressed disappointment that after all this work, the group drafted some knowledge and skills very similar to the ACRL *Information Literacy Competency Standards*. Feedback from participants noted that the UbD process was time-consuming and may not be worth the effort since most of the library instruction sessions are fifty minutes, while the process took much longer than fifty minutes. Librarians struggled with the abstract nature of the first steps of UbD. The authors noted that there were two new concepts—the frames **and** UbD—which posed significant challenges. Nevertheless, the group put forth an incredible amount of effort to participate in the workshop. Conversations and work shared in group reports indicated conscientious interaction with the *Framework* and with each other were ongoing.

The authors recognized the need to clarify the goals of the professional development series in order to encourage further engagement with the ACRL *Framework* and library instruction goals. Based on the results, a new theoretical approach was also needed to fully meet the needs of the instruction program. Since SoTL inquiry is an iterative process, the authors reflected on the first professional development workshop and made adjustments for the second workshop. Planning began immediately to improve the method used before the next workshop to gain more buy-in from participants.

Creating Program Outcomes: Idea-Based Learning

For the second workshop, the authors reevaluated their strategy in order to address some of the participant disconnect observed in the first workshop. The authors also changed their overall approach to the workshop, leading with a much more structured agenda. To provide additional context for the workshop, the coordinator of library instruction emphasized that the purpose of the series was not only to develop program-wide learning outcomes that incorporated the ACRL *Framework*, but also to reflect on current teaching practice as part of professional development and growth. After a brief review of the previous workshop’s outcomes, the CeTEAL director introduced Idea-Based Learning (IBL) as an alternate method.

Like UbD, IBL is a backward design model. As shown in figure 24.2, IBL differs from UbD in that it is written by a faculty developer for a higher education audience. Idea-Based course design is inspired by UbD but takes into account how college and university faculty design courses.

Understanding by Design (UbD) : Stage 1 Steps—Key Design Elements	Idea-Based Learning (IBL) Stage 1 Steps—Identify Desired Results
Step 1. Unpack Goals	
Step 2. Identify the Big Ideas	Step 1. Big Ideas
Step 3. Develop Essential Questions	
Step 4. Develop Understandings	Step 2. Enduring Understandings
Step 5. Consider Misunderstandings	Step 4. Student Background—Identify where students struggle the most with the course
Step 6. Identify Key Knowledge and Skills	
	Step 3. Create Learning Outcomes

Figure 24.2. A comparison of the Stage 1 steps of Understanding by Design (UbD) and Idea-Based Learning (IBL).

IBL begins with developing “big ideas,” creating “enduring understandings,” creating “learning outcomes,” and identifying “areas where students struggle the most in a course.” Step 3 of IBL differs from UbD in that there are not always goals or contents standards as there are in the K-12 education. The final step of Stage 1 in IBL, considering “student background” is similar to “considering misunderstandings” in the UDL method.¹³

As there is overlap between UbD and IBL models—both are rooted in backward design—the CeTEAL director recommended using IBL for developing potential program outcomes based on the remaining three frames. To transition materials from the UbD approach of the first workshop to the new IBL approach, the CeTEAL director transferred the UbD steps from the first professional development workshop—“identifying big ideas,” “enduring understandings,” “essential questions,” “misunderstandings and learning outcomes”—into an IBL template detailed in figure 24.3. Librarians filled gaps within the design matrix as the first activity of the second workshop. This bridging activity was designed to acknowledge the work completed in the first workshop before introducing IBL.

Big Ideas	Enduring Understandings	Learning Outcomes	Common Misconceptions	Essential Questions
Citation Practices	Citation is important because _____.	Locate and retrieve citations from databases.	Information practice doesn't carry into real life.	Why cite? Why bother? Why do library databases have value?
Commodification of Information	Information has value and commodification of information.	Recognize the need for value of information.	Information is easily accessible. No one cares about my personal info.	Why use or don't use Google?
	Value of info changes with the context.	Recognize the value of curated library resources.	All information is valued the same.	You can find an objective source. What kind of info do you value or trust?
	Author/ creator has value.	Recognize the value of one's own contribution and contributions of others.	Teacher/ creator won't know if I use it. Information is free and easily accessible. Info has no author.	What is an example of plagiarism? Why is plagiarism a bad thing?
	Responsibility of the consumer, creator, and owner.	Recognize the rights and responsibilities of the creator, consumer, and contributor.		How would you respond if you created _____?
		Identify a plurality of history in primary sources.	Everyone has a voice and is heard.	What groups or voices did you find (or not find)?
	Not all have access to info dissemination and creation resources/ discovery resource.	Articulate societal factors that may systematically marginalize or are underrepresented.		What are some barriers to info access?

Figure 24.3. Example of an Idea-Based Learning (IBL) design plan from a professional development workshop exploring the ACRL frame, Information Has Value.¹⁴

Next, the six librarians paired up and were assigned one frame to reflect on and draft suggested outcomes for novice and expert learners. Some pairs combined elements of a frame's knowledge practice with a disposition as a starting point to writing an outcome that either fit current students or represented a future goal for them. The authors observed that librarians were more engaged in drafting potential outcomes when beginning with the ACRL *Framework* language. This activity wrapped up the program-level portion of the workshop, and the outcomes were recorded for future incorporation into the program-level assessment plan.

Changing Directions: Using the SLO-Frame Grid

The workshop then shifted focus from abstract, big-picture thinking toward a specific strategic focus of the information literacy program. First-year programs are the foundation of Kimbel Library's instruction program, which historically provides research instruction to over 90 percent of first-year composition courses. The established standards-based learning outcomes for these courses, ENGL 101 and ENGL 102, were updated prior to the workshops as part of an earlier project to acknowledge the program needs. In this segment of the second workshop, librarians reconsidered each learning outcome for the first-year composition program through the lens of the *Framework* by using a student learning outcome grid modeled after Wohlmutter's SLO-Frame Grid.¹⁵ In this grid, learning outcomes are given on one axis, and the other axis lists each frame (see figure 24.4). Participants reflected how

INFORMATION LITERACY FRAMES	<i>Novice Level</i> ENGL 101 SLO 2: Students should be able to develop keywords and synonyms
<i>Authority is Constructed and Contextual</i>	In order to
<i>Information Creation as a Process</i>	In order to
<i>Information has Value</i>	In order to
<i>Research as Inquiry</i>	In order to
<i>Scholarship as Conversation</i>	In order to
<i>Searching as Strategic Exploration</i>	In order to
Framework Workshop Worksheet 1 August 2017 From Wohlmutter, P., <i>Meeting Your Class at the Crossroads: Using SLO/Frame Grids to Tailor Information Literacy Instruction</i> . Information Literacy Advisory Group of Oregon (ILAGO). Oregon IL Summit 2017. < https://ilago.wordpress.com/oregon-il-summit-2017/ >	

Figure 24.4. Example of an SLO-Frame Grid used to explore the relationship between a library learning outcome for a first-year composition course and the ACRL frames.

each first-year composition learning outcome could be viewed through the lens of each frame. Participants applied each frame to the established learning outcomes by adding the phrase “in order to” and completing the sentence by writing a statement related to each frame. The end result was student learning outcomes which had each been individually considered in relation to each frame. The librarians much preferred this approach due to its direct, practical application to their daily work in comparison to developing program-wide outcomes. This activity concluded the second workshop.

Lessons Learned

SoTL requires reflection upon the research process. The authors offer several considerations based on the development and implementation of the professional development workshops. Librarians had varying levels of familiarity with the ACRL *Framework*, which was expected. The group also had different levels of buy-in, both for the *Framework* and for considering the program-level outcomes, based on personal interest and experience with library instruction at CCU. In a sense, the small group was representative of the conversations about the *Framework* taking place on professional listservs and blog posts. Based on the experiences of the two workshops, the authors recommend the following:

- Emphasize the professional and local goals in terms of how this work will benefit individuals and the program to bridge any gaps in creating the initial community.
- Discuss the professional obligation of participating in the discussion of how the frames apply locally.
- Model an activity first to set expectations for any independent or group work. Skipping this step leads to different understandings and work product for each group.
- Take the time to provide a firm grounding in backward design models. Not all librarians are familiar with instructional design, yet they need to learn enough about the theories in the field of instructional design in order to fully apply ACRL recommendations for tailoring the *Framework* to local interests.
- In retrospect, the director of CeTEAL determined that the UbD design model was too rooted in K12 standards-based education. She recommends IBL as the better model for higher education.
- Consider demographics when designating pairs or groups for activities. Mixing experienced and novice librarians and varying levels of instruction backgrounds creates solid group dynamics and allows for the participants to learn from each other.
- Scheduling professional development workshops facilitated by a CTL gives librarians the time and space away from the typical daily schedule to have appropriate time to consider the implications of the frames in a local context and permits librarians to serve as subject matter experts during the design process.

- The more concrete approach of examining existing outcomes for courses with one-shots commonly taught by librarians and considering them through the lens of the frames was the most successful portion of the workshops. Program-level outcomes presented a greater challenge.
- Be flexible in planning. If one approach or model does not work with a group, find another model that fits better.
- Use change as an opportunity to reflect on professional practice and teaching practice for scholarship and intellectual contributions. SoTL methods of investigation provide opportunity for research during times of change.

The SoTL research cycle used to contextualize the ACRL *Framework* facilitated a deeper conversation as librarians considered ideas, questions, understandings, and misunderstandings related to information literacy. On a program level, the SoTL-based workshops resulted in a retooling of instruction meetings to place more focus on pedagogy and teaching demonstrations, based on librarian feedback. On an individual level, librarians have used elements of the *Framework* to develop student learning outcomes and activities for one-shot sessions, spoken about the *Framework* with faculty in other disciplines, and used and considered distributing lesson plans in SoTL outlets such as Project CORA and the ACRL Sandbox. These are all promising steps toward further integration of a SoTL mindset to enhance library instruction research at the one-shot and program level.

Conclusion

This case study has discussed the experiences of a library partnering with a CTL to design professional development workshops to consider how the ACRL frames can be applied to a local context. Work undertaken in the partnership between librarians and the Center for Teaching Excellence to Advance Learning at Coastal Carolina University points to the need for further research into design models that can be used to assist library instruction programs in creating meaningful local learning outcomes based on the ACRL frames. The authors used SoTL to guide their process so their experiences could serve as an example for other academic libraries to develop professional development workshops to localize learning outcomes. SoTL provides an invaluable model for academic librarians to develop a reflective and evidence-based practice approach to improving teaching and learning and can inspire them to disseminate their research as a way to contribute to professional dialogue in their field.

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