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LIBRARIAN USE OF THE KNOWLEDGE PRACTICES AND DISPOSITIONS IN THE ACRL FRAMEWORK

Abstract

This poster details the findings of an investigation of US academic instruction librarians' use of the knowledge practices and dispositions in the *Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education* from the Association of College and Research Libraries (2016). The *Framework* is a departure from the previous set of standards, but is often critiqued for being too theoretical and therefore not relevant to practice. In order to investigate the extent to which academic librarians use this theoretically-grounded document in practice, a questionnaire and interview study was conducted. This questionnaire explored librarian preparation in library science and education; familiarity with the frames, knowledge practices, and dispositions; examples of how, if at all, the knowledge practices and dispositions are implemented in information literacy instruction; and barriers with implementing the *Framework*. Follow up interviews investigated more deeply how various parts of the *Framework* were implemented in librarians' daily work.

Introduction

Information literacy is vital to combat misinformation in all areas of life. In postsecondary education, information literacy instruction is a core service of academic libraries worldwide. In the United States, academic librarians are guided in their information literacy instruction by the *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2016). This document also appears popular in Canadian academic libraries. The *Framework* is comprised of a set of six threshold concepts (Meyer & Land, 2006) that are thought to be pertinent to understating the nature of information literacy. The *Framework* then situates uses these six concepts as frames through which instruction librarians are meant to deliver their instruction. Under each threshold concept are sets of knowledge practices and disciplines. According to the document itself, "the knowledge practices ... are demonstrations of ways in which learners can increase their understanding of these information literacy concepts, and [the] dispositions [are], which describe ways in which to address the affective, attitudinal, or valuing dimension of learning" (p. 2). Through their use of "practice" instead of the word "skill," the *Frameworks* explicitly acknowledges that information literacy is socially situated as theorized in information science (Limberg et al., 2012; Rath, 2022; Tuominen et al., 2005). However, it remains to be seen the extent to which an understanding of these theoretical concepts from information science is present in academic librarians' practice. For instance, the

Framework recommends that instruction librarians use the frames as the basis for generating both programmatic and lesson-specific goals for an instruction session; however, there is much literature that shows a direct substitution of the frame titles as de facto learning objectives (Hsieh et al., 2021). The salient research question for this study is: How do experienced academic instruction librarians make use of the knowledge practices and dispositions (KP&D) as part of the *ACRL Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education*?

Literature review

The shift from the *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* to the *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* was not universally well received by practitioners (Beatty, 2014; Bombaro, 2016; Foasberg, 2015). Many librarians expressed frustration with having to develop or update learning objectives based on a document that is viewed as more theoretical than practical (Gross et al., 2018; Hsieh et al., 2021). The *Framework* was seen as an answer to critiques that the *Standards* did not include social or political aspects of information literacy (Foasberg, 2015). The information science literature, however, has addressed these issues for at least 30 years (Hjørland & Albrechtsen, 1995; Limberg et al., 2012; Tuominen et al., 2005). This weak relationship between the work of researchers and library practitioners has been well documented (Pilerot, 2016). Lloyd's (2017) midrange theory attempted to show that researchers and practitioners are exploring different areas of the same information literacy landscape, but needs further empirical study for support.

Method

This study design constituted a questionnaire with follow-up interviews of academic librarians in the United States. The questionnaire included eight closed answer and five open ended questions in addition to questions on participant demographics. Participants were recruited via professional listservs via the American Library Association, open to both members and non-members alike. Participants who completed the questionnaire opted to be contacted for follow-up interviews. Interviews took place via Zoom and lasted approximately one hour. 14 interviews have been completed. After the interviews, automatic transcripts were corrected and then analyzed using inductive coding (Saldaña, 2016) as well as qualitative content analysis (Julien, 2008).

Findings & discussion

Analysis of the questionnaire show that 71 individuals responded to at least one question, with most questions being responded to by 45 individuals. Respondents were mostly white (96%) and mostly female (91%), reflecting the demographics of librarianship in North America. Thirty respondents (67%) acknowledged having some form of educational theory training in addition to their library training. An initial analysis showed that individuals are most familiar with individual frames, then the knowledge practices, then with the dispositions. When questionnaire respondents described if the *Framework* was related to their day-to-day work, 33 (75%) responded in the that it was, 4 (10%) responded with that it somewhat did, and 6 (14%) responded that it did not relate to their daily work. A review of text responses showed evidence of using the frames as learning objectives and a lack of perceived practicality in the document. These themes align with the existing scholarly literature. When asked about difficulties

implementing the *Framework* derived from previous research by [Author B], 98% of respondents were able to check at least one option. The poster will showcase data from both the questionnaire and interviews but is not being presented in the abstract for this submission.

Conclusion

This study provides insight into how the knowledge practices and dispositions are incorporated into the instructional practices of academic librarians. While the *Framework* itself is the subject of much scholarly discussion, it is clear at this point that there is not as much understanding of the nuances of the document beyond a cursory understanding of the frames themselves. This study will help to identify opportunities for more support to librarians who are tasked with interpreting the *Framework* and applying it to their practice. Additionally, this work may play a role in the revision of the *Framework* by ACRL. Finally, study results may provide additional insight to strengthen the relationship between the investigations of researchers and the practice of librarians.

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