

Annie Armstrong

New models for instruction

Fusing the ACRL Framework and Roles and Strengths of Teaching Librarians to promote the lifelong learning of teaching librarians

The ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education's¹ emphasis on curiosity, creativity, engagement, and metacognition can guide librarians in designing meaningful learning experiences for students. Inspiring students to learn is arguably contingent upon our sustained engagement as teachers. Can we facilitate and inspire learning without building and expanding our skills and harboring a certain *joie de vivre* for teaching? To put it bluntly, don't we have to put on our own masks first? How do we establish habits of mind that nourish our skills and our spirits so that we can remain engaged throughout our teaching lifespans?

While librarians typically use the Framework as a tool to shape and promote student learning, it can also be used to develop our skills as teachers when it is tweaked and turned inwards towards our own praxis. The language of selected knowledge practices and dispositions in the Framework could help illuminate how to approach teaching with a mindset of reflection and renewal when it is combined with guidance gleaned from ACRL's Roles and Strengths of Teaching Librarians.²

Roles and Strengths of Teaching Librarians and the Framework

Before proposing how the Framework itself can serve as a lens through which to examine and inspire teaching, one must recognize the utility of the Roles and Strengths of Teaching Librarians document, which provides librarians with aspirational competencies affixed to numerous domains of our teaching prac-

tice. Approved by the ACRL Board of Directors in 2017, Roles and Strengths of Teaching Librarians replaced the former Standards and Proficiencies for Instruction Librarians and Coordinators document, a shift parallel to the rescinding of the Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education and their replacement by the more holistic, less prescriptive Framework. Written after the Framework and with the Framework in mind, the Roles and Strengths document acknowledges our evolving profile—elevated from instruction to teaching librarian—in the realm of academia and identifies eight varied roles we might take on in this expanded milieu: advocate, coordinator, instructional designer, leader, lifelong learner, leader, teacher, and teaching partner.

Of these eight roles, the role of lifelong learner aligns most closely with the idea of establishing and sustaining enthusiasm for teaching. As stated in the document,

The teaching librarian as lifelong learner is curious, open, and flexible, seeking out new opportunities for continuous learning. Throughout the lifelong learner's professional career, the librarian maintains enthusiasm for

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teaching through reflective practice and exploration of new approaches to instruction.

It should not go unnoted that this sentence presumes a cause-and-effect relationship between reflecting and exploring new approaches with the ability to maintain enthusiasm.

The strengths supporting this role delineate specific behaviors to characterize lifelong learning: engaging in professional development to refresh teaching skills; maintaining currency in pedagogy; participating in discussions on teaching and learning; demonstrating openness to new ideas, pedagogical practices, and instructional technologies; and joining professional associations. The document further suggests that the teaching librarian “demonstrates enthusiasm for teaching and learning and a commitment to professional development, lifelong-learning, and reflective practice.”

The Roles and Strengths document promotes continued lifelong learning and provides concrete examples of the practices of a lifelong learner in relationship to the Framework.

As stated in the introduction to the Roles and Strengths document,

The roles of the teaching librarian cannot be fully understood without engagement with the concepts, knowledge practices, and dispositions outlined in the Framework, which sets out ‘foundational ideas about the information ecosystem’ in which librarians work and students learn.

The combination of these documents may help us recognize how we can use the Framework to strengthen our role as lifelong learners by applying the Framework’s concepts to our own praxis.

Does the Framework itself hold clues as to the beliefs or activities of a sustained, curious, open, and flexible lifelong learner applicable to learners and teachers alike? Given that the Roles and Strengths document was created after the development of the Framework, one would expect a synergy between the documents and

that the Framework would impart further insights into lifelong learning. To what extent can we harness the wisdom of the Framework and mimic its language to help fuel the flames of our teaching? Building new “teaching frames” from the bones of the Framework could amplify the goal of lifelong learning for teaching librarians by making it more explicit and situating it within the context of the Framework itself.

Modification of frames for teaching and lifelong learning

By swapping out the term *research* with *teaching* in multiple instances in the Framework, we might conceive of frames, dispositions, and knowledge practices to promote our own lifelong teaching. The following examples demonstrate how selective language modification within the overarching structure of the Framework can create parallel frames with an audience of teaching librarians in mind. While there are countless loci within the Framework that relate to both teaching and learning, the frames, knowledge practices, and dispositions are highlighted in particular because they reinforce the lifelong learning role in the Roles and Strengths document.

Research as Inquiry becomes Teaching as Inquiry

The first sentence of the Research as Inquiry frame states that “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.” When applied to the field of teaching information literacy, the teaching librarian views teaching as an iterative process that is never “resolved” due to the complex and dynamic learning environment in which teaching occurs. New teaching opportunities, students, disciplinary shifts, and changes to the information landscape pose new questions which in turn require renewed investigations to develop effective teaching interventions. The teaching librarian who regards teaching as inquiry critically analyzes new teaching situations and develops new approaches rather than over-relying on tried-and-true, recycled

approaches that might lead to inadequate, outdated, or stagnant instruction. Viewing teaching as inquiry enlivens and renews practice.

Teaching as Inquiry: Proposed Knowledge Practices

Teaching librarians who are developing their lifelong learning strengths

- formulate questions for new teaching situations based on information gaps or on reexamination of existing, possibly conflicting information;
- use various teaching methods, based on need, circumstance, and type of learning involved;
- monitor their teaching approach and assess for gaps or weaknesses;
- organize teaching in new and meaningful ways; and
- synthesize ideas gathered from multiple sources to integrate into their teaching.

Teaching as Inquiry: Proposed Dispositions

Teaching librarians who are developing their lifelong learning strengths

- consider teaching as open-ended exploration and engagement with learning and pedagogy;
- value intellectual curiosity in developing questions and new approaches to teaching;
- value persistence, adaptability, and flexibility and recognize that ambiguity and risk-taking can benefit teaching;
- seek multiple perspectives in planning and assessing teaching; and
- seek appropriate help and perspectives from colleagues, mentors, and professional organizations, when needed.

Scholarship as Conversation becomes Teaching as Conversation

The Scholarship as Conversation frame describes research as “a discursive practice in which ideas are formulated, debated, and weighed against one another over extended periods of time.” The teaching librarian seeks out and engages with new perspectives on teaching gathered from myriad sources and

voices, both those that are established and those that are new. Entering into a teaching conversation with a diverse array of sources and experts prepares the teaching librarian to make creative and impactful contributions to teaching, both locally and beyond. By regarding teaching as a conversation, teaching remains a living, mutable entity rather than a rote task, thus sustaining lifelong learning.

Teaching as Conversation: Proposed Knowledge Practices

Teaching librarians who are developing their lifelong learning strengths

- contribute to the teaching conversation, through local or national venues, whether in person or online (e.g., discussions, conferences, committees);
- critically evaluate contributions made by others in participatory teaching and learning environments;
- identify and acknowledge the contribution that particular articles, books, and other scholarly pieces contribute to their teaching and learning knowledge;
- recognize the changes in teaching and learning perspectives over time; and
- recognize that a given work, scholar, expert, or teacher does not represent the only—or even the majority—perspective on a particular issue.

Teaching as Conversation: Proposed Dispositions

Teaching librarians who are developing their lifelong learning strengths

- seek out teaching conversations taking place that are relevant to their teaching context;
- see themselves as contributors to the field of teaching rather than only learning from others;
- recognize that teaching conversations take place in various venues;
- suspend judgement on the value of particular pedagogies or learning theories until the larger context of the teaching conversation is understood; and
- recognize that educational systems privilege authority and that not having a fluency

in the language and process of teaching and learning disempowers their ability to participate and engage.

Searching as Strategic Exploration becomes Teaching as Strategic Exploration

The Searching as Strategic Exploration frame describes the process of searching for information as nonlinear and iterative, “requiring the evaluation of a range of information sources and the mental flexibility to pursue alternative avenues as new understanding develops.” Teaching librarians must adapt to a range of learning situations with flexibility, expanding their expertise throughout their careers as they adjust to different learners, and constant shifts in how information is produced and disseminated. The frame further states that “[e]xperts realize that information searching is a contextualized, complex experience that affects, and is affected by, the cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of the searcher.” Likewise, the cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of learners call upon teachers to adapt their approaches to teaching throughout their careers. Accepting and embracing the inevitability of change and the need to adapt propels the lifelong learning of the teaching librarian. Just as novice learners tend to use few search strategies and experts select from various search strategies, teaching librarians who exhibit lifelong learning strengths amass a repertoire of teaching strategies throughout their careers that allow them to be sufficiently dexterous in varied settings and meet the learning needs of diverse users.

Teaching as Strategic Exploration: Proposed Knowledge Practices

Teaching librarians who are developing their lifelong learning strengths

- match teaching strategies to learner needs;
- design and refine teaching strategies as necessary, based on student learning;
- understand varied student learning needs in order to provide relevant and effective instruction; and

- use different pedagogies effectively (e.g., active learning, lecture, discussion, small-group learning, team-based learning).

Teaching as Strategic Exploration: Proposed Dispositions

Teaching librarians who are developing their lifelong learning strengths

- exhibit teaching flexibility and creativity;
- understand that first attempts at teaching do not always produce adequate results and modify approaches, as necessary;
- realize that learning needs vary greatly and that different contexts call for different teaching approaches;
- recognize the value of flexibility, spontaneity, and risk-taking in teaching; and
- persist in the face of teaching challenges, and develop assessment techniques to know if students are learning or if additional interventions are needed.

Further considerations for promoting the lifelong learning of teaching librarians

Experimenting with how the Framework can be adapted and fused with the Roles and Strengths of Teaching Librarians document can provide a new lens through which to reflect on the role of lifelong learning in developing and sustaining meaningful teaching practice. For the sake of limiting scope, this article demonstrates how three frames could be transformed into teaching frames. However, one could easily continue this exercise, modifying the remaining frames and selected knowledge practices and dispositions as follows: Authority is Constructed and Contextual becomes *Teaching is Constructed and Contextual*, Information Creation as a Process becomes *Teaching as a Process*, and Information Has Value Becomes *Teaching Has Value*. Such an exercise would uncover additional insights into how the Framework can guide lifelong learning for teaching librarians. While this article is directed towards an audience of librarians, one could also propose teaching frames to guide the lifelong

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Notes

1. See <https://www.crl.edu/events/frankfurt2017symposium>.

2. See <https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blogs/the-scoop/ala-and-german-library-association-sign-agreement/>.

3. For a good overview of this new model, see Kizer Walker, "Re-Envisioning Distributed Collections in German Research Libraries—A View from the U.S.A.," *Bibliothek Forschung Und Praxis* 39, no. 1 (April 2015): 7–12, <https://doi.org/10.1515/bfp-2015-0008>.

4. See <https://beta.historicum.net/home/>.

5. The detailed program, video recordings of the panel presentations, and poster abstracts are available at: <https://www.crl.edu/program>.

6. For additional information on this symposium, see these articles and blog posts: Richard Hacken, "The 2017 Frankfurt International Symposium and Book Fair," WESS Newsletter 41, no. 2 (Spring 2018), https://wessweb.info/index.php/The_2017_Frankfurt_International_Symposium_and_Book_Fair (accessed May 15, 2019).

Heidi Madden, Sarah How, and Sarah G. Wenzel, "Wenn alle Wege nach Frankfurt

führen: Bibliothekare aus zehn Ländern diskutieren Möglichkeiten internationaler Kooperation auf dem Frankfurter Symposium," BuB: Forum Bibliothek Und Information 70, no. 1 (January 2018): 56–60, an English translation is available at <https://wessweb.info/wessimages/4/42/2018BuBarticle.pdf>.

Kristen Totleben, "Frankfurt: New Directions for Libraries, Scholars, and Partnerships," *American Libraries Magazine* (blog), October 25, 2017, <https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blogs/the-scoop/frankfurt-symposium-new-directions-libraries-scholars-partnerships/>, accessed May 15, 2019.

7. See <https://www.crl.edu/events/sharing2020>.

8. See <https://www.crl.edu/call-participation>.

9. Questions about proposals or the Fiesole conference in general can be directed to Sarah Sussman, ssussman@stanford.edu.

10. "ASC21 Statement: The Value of International Travel for Area Studies Librarians," International and Area Studies Collections in the 21st Century, November 16, 2016, <https://sites.utexas.edu/iasc21/2016/11/16/iasc21-statement-the-value-of-international-travel-for-area-studies-librarians/>, accessed May 16, 2019. *ZZ*

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learning of a much broader audience of educators beyond the library realm.

Contextual and structural factors could obviously support or impede teaching librarians in their quest for sustained engagement. In making a case for the abolishment of the one-shot model in favor of more sustainable approaches to integrating information literacy, Melissa Bowles-Terry and Carrie Donovan argue that "the more that librarians teach within this context, the fewer challenges they face," a pattern that results in "perpetuating a cycle of librarians as reactive problem solvers and guest lecturers rather than curriculum developers and campus change agents."³ If this is true, then librarians and coordinators need to continue to focus on strengths outlined in the Advocate and Leader roles of the Roles and Strengths document, pushing for new models of information literacy that allow librarians

to expand their teaching skills and approach teaching and curriculum design with agency, authenticity and unbridled creativity.

Notes

1. ACRL's "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education," accessed March 21, 2019, www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework.

2. Standards and Proficiencies for Instruction Librarians and Coordinators Revision Task Force, "Roles and strengths of teaching librarians," www.ala.org/acrl/standards/teachinglibrarians.

3. Melissa Bowles-Terry and Carrie Donovan, "Serving Notice on the One-Shot: Changing Roles for Instruction Librarians," *International Information & Library Review* 48, no. 2 (2016): 137–42, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10572317.2016.1176457>. *ZZ*