# Faculty Perceptions of the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education

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# Abstract

Applying the *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education (Framework)* to an institutional context can seem like a daunting task, especially for a new librarian. As part of efforts to investigate how these guidelines can best meet student information literacy needs, a librarian at one university surveyed local faculty to learn what role they believe the *Framework's* knowledge practices should play in student learning. Faculty read knowledge practices and indicated their beliefs about the importance, timing, and responsibility for each one. Findings are instrumental in updating the information literacy instruction curriculum and communicating with faculty about information literacy. This research may be useful for those interested in gathering faculty input as they determine how the *Framework* can support the unique needs of students at their own institutions.

Article Type: Research paper

## Introduction

Information literacy (IL), defined as the set of abilities related to the discovery of information, understanding how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge, is vital to the success of student learning and research. For most of the 21st century, the Association of College and Research Libraries' (ACRL's) Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education (Standards) has provided the foundation for IL research and instruction programs across the United States. By 2011, ACRL decided that advances in the information ecosystem as well as shifts in the higher education environment warranted a reevaluation of the Standards. This led to the development of a document that became known as the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education (Framework), which was adopted by the ACRL Board in January 2016.

The *Framework* heralds a major evolution in the world of information literacy instruction (ILI). The Framework is made up of six central concepts, called frames. These include Authority Is Constructed and Contextual, Information Creation as a Process, Information Has Value, Research as Inquiry, Scholarship as Conversation, and Searching as Strategic Exploration. Each of these frames are associated with knowledge practices and dispositions, which are examples of how learners might develop that frame. As examples, these are not intended to be prescriptive or comprehensive. As the introduction to the Framework asserts, "neither the knowledge practices nor the dispositions... are intended to prescribe what local institutions should do in using the Framework; each library and its partners on campus will need to deploy these frames to best fit their own situation... these lists should not be considered exhaustive." The challenge for librarians is to be selective and creative as to how each frame fits into the



Endnotes: The Journal of the New Members Round Table Volume 8, Issue 1, 2017 pp. 26-35 Published by the American Library Association © Retained by the Authors ISSN: 2159-0591 curricula of individual classrooms and institutions.

Stetson University is a private, non-profit university in DeLand, Florida. In the 2015-2016 academic year, approximately 3000 undergraduate students were enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences, School of Business, and School of Music. At Stetson University, IL is a learning outcome of the general education curriculum. Required courses that are tagged with this learning outcome include a first-year seminar and junior seminar. The current learning outcome is closely based on the Standards. It reads, "using technology as appropriate, students know when there is a need for information and are able to locate, evaluate, and effectively and responsibly use that information for the task at hand" (Stetson University, 2015). Responsibility for this learning outcome is not articulated, although the library supports students' development of it by providing ILI. Librarians deliver ILI at the request of course instructors, and this typically occurs as a oneshot 50 or 75 minute session. As part of ongoing efforts to determine how the Framework can meet Stetson students' learning needs in this context, a librarian at Stetson surveyed faculty to learn about their perspectives on student IL needs.

#### **Literature Review**

Faculty perceptions of IL guidelines have made a few appearances in the literature. Gullikson (2006) measured faculty perceptions of the Standards, Dacosta (2010, 2005) examined faculty perceptions of the Society of College, National, and University Libraries' (SCONUL) Seven Pillars of Wisdom, and Stanger (2012) looked at psychology faculty's thoughts on ACRL's Psychology Information Literacy Standards. Overall, faculty generally show high support for the IL skills and concepts described by these guidelines.

More literature examines faculty perceptions of the concept of IL. After noting a failure to seek input from faculty in the development of major IL guidelines, Boon et al. (2007) report findings from interviews with English faculty who were asked to share their own conceptions of IL. The skills noted by respondents were generally similar to those described by major IL guidelines, besides a few discrepancies. Guidelines often note identifying a need for information as an important skill, but at no time did respondents mention it. Furthermore, respondents emphasized the importance of personal development and autonomous learning, which are not addressed by either the Standards or Seven Pillars of Wisdom. Pinto (2016) surveyed faculty the University of Granada on four IL categories. All four were seen as important, although the categories communication and searching were seen as more significant than evaluation and processing. Bury (2016) interviewed faculty at a public research university to discover their conceptions of IL emphasize accessing and evaluating information, and view it as "fundamentally intertwined" with other important academic literacies, such as reading and writing.

Other research describes faculty opinions about ILI without connecting this data to IL guidelines. Meer et al. (2012) found that faculty identify instruction exposing the range of available resources, search strategies, active learning, and instruction tailored to the course as the most beneficial aspects of ILI. Goldenstein and Kearley (2013) describe an interview with faculty who were asked why they had a librarian meet with their classes. Responses reveal that faculty wanted librarians to explain library resources and services as well as search strategies in order to facilitate student success in a research assignment or meet a university requirement, and valued librarian expertise with these topics over their own. Cope and Sanabria (2014) interviewed faculty and discovered that the way they described IL was largely shaped by the college where they taught. This finding is reflected in the Framework's intent to be a flexible set of guidelines that should be tailored to contextual needs, not a prescriptive mandate. A survey of faculty conducted by McAdoo (2008) revealed that faculty believe IL should be integrated throughout the curriculum.

Faculty perceptions of librarians' roles in teaching IL are also described in recent

literature. A common finding is that faculty place high value on the role of librarians in ILI, although it is heavily underutilized (Bury 2011; Cannon 1994; Dacosta 2005; Dacosta 2010; Hrycaj & Russo 2007; Leckie & Fullerton 1999; Meer et al. 2012; Saunders 2012; Singh 2005). Indeed, support for formal ILI is not unanimous. McGuinness (2006) asked faculty how students develop IL skills, and respondents overwhelmingly suggested that students are responsible for learning them on their own. Other studies identify faculty beliefs regarding who is responsible for teaching ILI. Cannon (1994) and Leckie and Fullerton (1999) found faculty to believe library research should either be taught by librarians alone or through facultylibrarian collaboration. Saunders (2012) reports that faculty believe ILI should be a responsibility shared by faculty and librarians, and McAdoo (2008) found that faculty believe all faculty should be engaged in the provision of ILI. Gullikson (2006) found that faculty believe librarians should hold primary responsibility for nine of the learning outcomes included in the Standards, while 25 may be shared by faculty and librarians and the remaining 53 are the domain of faculty alone. Similarly, Stanger (2012) reported that faculty value librarians' role over their own for only one of the eleven Psychology Information Literacy Standards. Stanger (2009) argues that librarians' training is only appropriate for teaching Standard 2 of the Standards, and the remainder are the responsibility of faculty.

The advent of the *Framework* brings an evolved conception of IL, but no study has yet been published that seeks to understand faculty perceptions of IL in the context of the *Framework*. Teaching faculty have a perspective on student learning that librarians typically cannot access, such as the nuanced requirements of specific assignments, discipline-specific conventions, or recurring concerns revealed after a review of submitted work. Understanding their perceptions on IL as presented by the *Framework* is critical for librarians who want to ensure that ILI fulfills student needs.

#### Methodology

An online survey was created to measure Stetson University faculty's perspectives on the importance of each knowledge practice documented in the Framework, their beliefs about when students should begin to develop each one, and who holds primary responsibility for facilitating its development. Response options measuring importance included not, somewhat, or very important. Since the IL learning outcome is currently attached to a required first-year seminar and junior seminar, response options for timing included 1st-2nd year of college, 3rd-4th year of college, and later or never. Finally, the options for responsibility included librarians, course instructors, or students. This survey was influenced by Gullikson's (2006) study that measured faculty perceptions of the Standards. Pilot testing revealed a need to revise the text of the knowledge practices to reduce jargon and split the lengthy 139-item survey into two shorter questionnaires. Survey A measures knowledge practices from the frames Authority is Constructed and Contextual (ACC), Information Creation as a Process (ICP), and Information Has Value (IHV), while Survey B measures those from Research as Inquiry (RI), Scholarship as Conversation (SC), and Searching as Strategic Exploration (SSE). The survey was approved as exempt by Stetson's Institutional Review Board.

Participant selection was not random. A call for participation with a survey link was distributed to a university listserv. The listserv administrator estimated that between 200 and 215 full-time, adjunct, and retired faculty subscribe to the list. The call for participation was sent during the last week of classes in the Spring 2016 semester. A reminder was sent two weeks later and the survey was live for a total of three weeks.

This study was limited in a number of ways. Although the overall response rate indicates that nearly one third of potential participants completed the survey, because the survey was split into two briefer questionnaires with different items, it was not possible to glean data based on participant demographics such as discipline. Because each variable (importance, timing, and

Knowledge Practice	Frame	Mean
Organize information in meaningful ways	RI	2.93
Cite the contributing work of others in their own information	SC	2.93
production		
Synthesize ideas gathered from multiple sources	RI	2.90
Draw reasonable conclusions based on the analysis & interpretation	RI	2.90
of information		
Use various research methods, based on need, circumstance, & type	RI	2.88
of inquiry		
Give credit to the original ideas of others through proper attribution &	IHV	2.88
citation		
Match information needs & search strategies to appropriate search	SSE	2.85
tools		
Utilize divergent (e.g., brainstorming) & convergent (e.g., selecting	SSE	2.82
the best source) thinking when searching		
Use research tools & indicators of authority to determine the	ACC	2.81
credibility of sources, understanding the elements that might temper		
this credibility;		
Determine an appropriate scope of investigation	RI	2.80

Table 1 Knowledge Practices of Highest Average Importance

responsibility) was measured by only three response options, participants were limited as to how they could respond. This was particularly a problem for the responsibility variable. As many participants pointed out in the comments at the end of the survey, responsibility for much IL learning should be shared by multiple stakeholders. Finally, the timing of the survey may have limited the number of participants. At the same time the survey was available, faculty were wrapping up the last week of classes, administering exams, and grading. Selecting a different time of the semester to administer it may have garnered more participation.

#### Results

66 surveys were submitted, including 26 responses to Survey A and 40 responses to Survey B. It is not possible to calculate a precise response rate, since the number of faculty who subscribe to the listserv is unknown. Based on the list administrator's estimate of between 200 and 215 subscribers, between 30.69% and 33% of listserv subscribers completed a survey. Responses to Survey A represent between 12.09% and 13% of listserv subscribers, and responses to Survey B represent between 18.6% and 20%.

#### Importance

Survey participants ranked each knowledge practice in the version of the survey they received as either very important, somewhat important, or not important. These responses were represented in data analysis by 3.0, 2.0, and 1.0, respectively. All responses for each knowledge practice were used to calculate the mean importance score for that knowledge practice. Thus, knowledge practices with a higher mean score indicate that faculty see them as more important. Out of 45 knowledge practices, all received a mean score between 2.0 and 3.0, indicating that all knowledge practices are considered to be at least "somewhat important" by most respondents. The knowledge practice with the lowest importance received a mean response of 2.08, and the highest received a mean response of 2.93. The top ten knowledge practices of highest average importance and their mean scores, which range from 2.8 to 2.93, and come from five of the six frames, are shown in Table 1. Five of these top ten come from one frame, RI. Two come from SSE, while SC and IHV are represented by one knowledge practice apiece, both of which emphasize the practice of citing sources. ACC is also represented by one knowledge practice.

Knowledge Practice	Frame	Mean
Recognize the implications of information formats that contain static or dynamic information	ICP	2.38
Summarize the changes in scholarly perspective over time on a particular topic within a specific discipline	SC	2.38
Assess the fit between an information product's creation process and a particular information need	ICP	2.36
Recognize that authoritative content may be packaged formally or informally & may include sources of all media types	ACC	2.36
Understand that many disciplines have acknowledged authorities in the sense of well-known scholars & publications that are widely considered "standard," & yet, even in those situations, some scholars would challenge the authority of those sources	ACC	2.32
Understand how & why some individuals or groups of individuals may be underrepresented or systematically marginalized within the systems that produce & disseminate information	IHV	2.32
Articulate the purpose & distinguishing characteristics of copyright, fair use, open access, & the public domain	IHV	2.32
Recognize that information may be perceived differently based on the format in which it is packaged	ICP	2.27
Identify barriers to entering scholarly conversation via various venues	SC	2.20
Decide where & how their information is published	IHV	2.20
Recognize issues of access or lack of access to information sources	IHV	2.08

Table 2 Knowledge Practices of Lowest Average Importance

The eleven of the 45 knowledge practices that received the lowest average importance are shown in Table 2. An odd number of knowledge practices is reported here because of ties in the mean score. The knowledge practices of lowest average importance, shown in Table 2, represent four frames: IHV, SC, ICP, and ACC. The mean scores of these knowledge practices range from 2.08 to 2.38. Four come from IHV, three come from ICP, and two each come from SC and ACC. Neither RI nor SSE are represented in this list.

## Timing

Respondents also indicated when students should begin to develop each knowledge practice. Three response options were available, including 1st-2nd year of college, 3rd-4th year of college, and later or never. In data analysis, these responses were represented by 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0, respectively, so knowledge practices with a lower mean score indicate that faculty feel most strongly that students should begin developing them in the early years of college. The majority of respondents indicated that all 45 knowledge practices should initially be

encountered between the 1st and 4th years of college. 33 knowledge practices received an average response of 1st or 2nd year of college, and 11 received an average response of 3rd or 4th year of college. One knowledge practice received equal response rates for both the 1st-2nd and 3rd-4th years. No knowledge practice was indicated as most appropriate for development later or never by more than 29% of respondents. Responses suggest that students should develop all of the top ten knowledge practices of highest average importance (Table 1) during the 1st-2nd year of college. Of the eleven knowledge practices of lowest average importance (Table 2), respondents indicated that all but four should be encountered in the 1st-2nd year, and the remainder in the 3rd-4th year.

The ten of the 45 knowledge practices with highest support for development in the 1st-2nd years of college are shown in Table 3. Among these, five come from SSE and three come from RI. The knowledge practices concerning citation round out the list.

The ten knowledge practices that most respondents believe students should begin developing in the 3rd-4th years of college are

Knowledge Practice	Fram	Mea
	е	n
Synthesize ideas gathered from multiple sources	RI	1.25
Determine the initial scope of the task required to meet their	SSE	1.24
information needs		
Draw reasonable conclusions based on the analysis & interpretation of	RI	1.23
information		
Design & refine needs& search strategies as necessary based on	SSE	1.21
search results		
Give credit to the original ideas of others through proper attribution and	IHV	1.21
citation		
Use different types of searching language (e.g., controlled vocabulary,	SSE	1.18
keywords, natural language) appropriately		
Organize information in meaningful ways	RI	1.18
Understand how information systems (i.e., collections of recorded	SSE	1.15
information) are organized in order to access relevant information		
Cite the contributing work of others in their own information production	SC	1.13
Match information needs & search strategies to appropriate search	SSE	1.1
tools		

Table 3 Knowledge Practices with Highest Support for Development in the 1st-2nd Years of College

shown in Table 4. This list includes four knowledge practices from SC, three from IHV, two from ICP, and one from ACC.

### Responsibility

There was less consensus among respondents regarding who should be responsible for facilitating learning of each knowledge practice. Course instructors were indicated as responsible by the majority of survey respondents for 20 knowledge practices, coming from all frames except SSE. The majority of respondents believed that librarians hold the bulk of responsibility for six knowledge practices. These are shown in Table 5, alongside the percentage of respondents who selected librarian as their response. This list includes two from IHV and four from SSE. Respondents indicated that students should be responsible for facilitating

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Knowledge Practice	Frame	Mean
Summarize the changes in scholarly perspective over time on a	SC	2.00
particular topic within a specific discipline		
Understand the increasingly social nature of the information	ACC	1.92
ecosystem where authorities actively connect with one another &		
sources develop over time		
Decide where & how their information is published	IHV	1.92
Develop, in their own creation processes, a understanding that their	ICP	1.88
choices impact the purposes for which the information product will be		
used & the message it conveys		
Recognize issues of access or lack of access to information sources	IHV	1.88
Identify barriers to entering scholarly conversation via various venues	SC	1.84
Identify the contribution that particular articles, books, & other	SC	1.8
scholarly pieces make to disciplinary knowledge		
Critically evaluate contributions made by others in participatory	SC	1.78
information environments		
Recognize that information may be perceived differently based on the	ICP	1.76
format in which it is packaged		
Understand how & why some individuals or groups of individuals may	IHV	1.75
be underrepresented or systematically marginalized within the		
systems that produce & disseminate information		

Table 4 Knowledge Practices with Highest Support for Development in the 3rd-4th Years of College

Knowledge Practice	Frame	%
Articulate the purpose & distinguishing characteristics of copyright, fair use, open access, & the public domain	IHV	67%
Understand how information systems (i.e., collections of recorded information) are organized in order to access relevant information;	SSE	58%
Match information needs & search strategies to appropriate search tools	SSE	53%
Design & refine needs & search strategies as necessary, based on search results	SSE	53%
Use different types of searching language (e.g., controlled vocabulary, keywords, natural language) appropriately	SSE	45%
Recognize issues of access or lack of access to information sources	IHV	41%

Table 5 Librarian-Responsible Knowledge Practices

their own learning of 18 of the knowledge practices, across all six frames.

Among the most important knowledge practices (Table 1), the majority of respondents said that students were most responsible for their own development of five, course instructors were most responsible for helping students develop three, and one was tied between student and course instructor. Librarians were said to be most responsible for helping students develop one, "match information needs and search strategies to appropriate search tools." Among the least important knowledge practices (Table 2), respondents said that students were most responsible for their own development of four and course instructors were responsible for five. Librarians were said to be most responsible for helping students develop "Recognize issues of access or lack of access to information sources" and "Articulate the purpose & distinguishing characteristics of copyright, fair use, open access, & the public domain."

From the ten knowledge practices with highest support for development in the 1st-2nd years of college (Table 3), none were said to be the primary responsibility of course instructors. Most respondents said that five were students' responsibility and four were librarians' responsibility. One, "give credit to the original ideas of others through proper attribution and citation" was tied between student and course instructor. Out of the ten knowledge practices with highest support for development later in college (Table 4), five were said to be course instructors' responsibility, four were said to be students' responsibility, and one, "recognize issues of access or lack of access to information sources" was said to be librarians' responsibility.

Among the 18 knowledge practices that most respondents said were students' responsibility, four also appeared on the list of knowledge practices of highest average importance (Table 1) and the list of knowledge practices with highest support for development in the 1st-2nd years of college (Table 3). These are shown in Table 6, alongside the percentage of respondents who said students should be responsible for each one. "Give credit to the original ideas of others through proper attribution and citation" (IHV) also appeared on all three lists, but responsibility was tied between

Knowledge Practice	Frame	%
Synthesize ideas gathered from multiple sources	RI	56%
Organize information in meaningful ways	RI	54%
Draw reasonable conclusions based on the analysis & interpretation of information	RI	54%
	SC	46%

Table 6 Student-Responsible Knowledge Practices of Highest Average Importance and with Highest Support for Development in the 1st-2nd Years of College

students and course instructors. In addition, "Utilize divergent (e.g., brainstorming) & convergent (e.g., selecting the best source) thinking when searching" (SSE) appears on Table 1, and another, "Determine the initial scope of the task required to meet their information needs" (SSE) appears on Table 3.

#### Discussion

This data reveals a number of implications regarding Stetson University faculty's perceptions of the Framework. The overarching finding is that Stetson faculty believe all aspects of IL are important and should be developed by students in the span of a four-year undergraduate education. Each knowledge practice received an average response that fell between "somewhat important" and "very important," suggesting that all aspects of IL are valued by faculty at Stetson University. Likewise, each knowledge practice received an average response indicating students should learn it between the 1st and 4th years of college, and the majority of these should be developed within the first two years.

Much overlap exists between the list of knowledge practices of highest average importance (Table 1), and those with highest support for development in the 1st-2nd years of college (Table 3), including three knowledge practices from the frame RI, two that emphasize the importance of citation, and one from SSE: "match information needs and search strategies to appropriate search tools." Four knowledge practices appear among those that should be developed earliest, but not those of highest average importance, and all four of these come from the frame SSE. This suggests that opportunities for students to develop many of the most important knowledge practices, as well as those from SSE, should be emphasized in firstyear and sophomore classrooms and reflected in ILI program scaffolding.

The lists of least importance knowledge practices (Table 2) and those with highest support for development in the 3rd-4th years of college (Table 4) also have a number of overlapping knowledge practices. These include

"recognize issues of access or lack of access to information sources," "decide where and how their information is published," "understand how and why some individuals or groups of individuals may be underrepresented ...," "identify barriers to entering scholarly conversation via various venues," "summarize the changes in scholarly perspective over time on a particular topic within a specific discipline," and "understand that many disciplines have acknowledged authorities...". Many of these knowledge practices have in common an emphasis on disseminating original work and an understanding of discipline-specific conventions. These findings suggest that these knowledge practices may need less emphasis or later focus in the ILI program.

20 of the knowledge practices were thought to be the primary responsibility of course instructors by the majority of survey participants. If students are getting opportunities to develop these knowledge practices from their course instructors, perhaps there is less of a need for librarians to emphasize them in ILI. The six librarian-responsible knowledge practices were no surprise. All were related to the information search process and access issues, which are topics Stetson faculty already frequently request that librarians focus on during ILI. Four of them also appeared on the list of knowledge practices that students should develop earliest, which is also no surprise given that most ILI at Stetson is requested for first-year courses.

The 18 knowledge practices that respondents said were students' responsibility is one of the most significant areas of concern for the ILI program. Are most students actually developing these abilities at all, and if so, how? This is especially alarming for the four studentresponsible knowledge practices that were also said to be among the most important or earliest developed. Where and how do faculty expect students to be developing these apparently critical and foundational skills? This finding conveys a need for a broader conversation about who should have ownership over these aspects of IL. For librarians, perhaps this finding suggests a need to develop more learning opportunities for these specific knowledge

practices, whether through ILI or services students can seek out on their own such as tutorials, research guides, reference, or research consultations.

# Conclusion

The findings described here will be instrumental as librarians work to ensure that ILI meets the unique IL needs of students at Stetson University. This data provided a clearer picture of which aspects of IL faculty think is important for their students, when they think students need them, and who they see as most responsible for helping students develop them. Plans are in place to revise and update the library's ILI program guidelines in the coming months. These findings will be useful in determining which aspects of IL to prioritize and where they best fit in the curriculum. Careful attention will be given to knowledge practices that faculty thought to be most important and those that they believe most strongly were librarians' and students' responsibility, while findings about timing will help determine when to emphasize which knowledge practices.

Although this research project describes the beliefs of faculty at one particular university, this data may be useful for librarians at a variety of higher education institutions who are thinking about how to get faculty input on the Framework as they design or revise ILI programs. This data should not be taken at face value as a definitive statement on faculty beliefs regarding the Framework, but instead be seen as a conversation starter or jumping off point for similar investigations at individual institutions. Future research is necessary to learn more about faculty perceptions of the Framework. Qualitative data with the same population or within specific disciplines may shed more light on this timely topic.

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