
Finalized in early 2015, the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education was created by ACRL to provide a roadmap for librarians working to reimagine their approach to information literacy. The Framework seeks to move what librarians teach from the “how” of information literacy skills to the “why” of information creation and use. This is where “threshold concepts” enter in as the six core concepts identified in the Framework as the key to students’ information literacy: Scholarship as Conversation; Research as Inquiry; Authority is Constructed and Contextual; Information Creation as a Process; Searching as Strategic Exploration; and Information has Value.

Teaching ideas rather than specific skills is a challenge, and Teaching Information Literacy Threshold Concepts models how this can be done with detailed lesson plans for each of the core concepts. Most lesson plans follow a template that includes learning goals; anticipatory sets (ways to engage the students’ attention and help them focus on the topic being taught); lesson objectives; input/modeling (how to present and demonstrate the concept); checks for understanding; guided practice; and independent practice. The lessons themselves typically run from thirty to sixty minutes in length and were contributed by academic librarians from across the United States.

Some of the thirty-four lessons will be familiar to librarians who have been using the Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education that the ACRL created in 2000. These include recognizing plagiarism, identifying scholarly versus non-scholarly sources, and developing a research question. Others will be more novel, such as “Crafting a Credible Message,” which helps students understand how information is interconnected. All of the lessons, however, are conceptual rather than skills-based, designed to teach students the “why” of research. This means the lessons easily can be customized by subject-specialist librarians to the specifics of a particular discipline. The hour-long lessons presented here will be helpful to librarians working on campuses with robust information literacy programs in place, and the shorter lessons can be incorporated by those limited to the ubiquitous one-shot classes.

In the appendixes, the editors provide lesson handouts (also available online) as well as a list of lessons that present more than one threshold concept in the course of the class. Also included are the full text of the ACRL’s Framework and a recommended reading list of articles and books that explore threshold concepts in more depth.

The Framework and its six threshold concepts have been embraced by some librarians and dismissed by others. By providing this collection of detailed lesson plans, Teaching Information Literacy Threshold Concepts helps clarify how the Framework can be put to use to teach information literacy in the classroom.—Ann Agee, School of Information Librarian, San Jose State University, San Jose, California


Tim Wadham brings his considerable expertise in children’s literature to the table in Wordplay for Kids. Previously a youth services coordinator of the Maricopa County Library District in Phoenix, Arizona, Wadham is the director of the Puyallup Public Library in Puyallup, Washington and author of a picture book, The Queen of France. Wadham developed the public library programs presented in this book as a result of his work with school librarians Katie Blake and Cynthia Daniels.

Through Wordplay: A Sourcebook of Poems, Rhymes, and Read-Alouds, Wadham addresses the need for quality programs for the elementary or “tween”-age child. The programs continue the learning of concepts begun in preschool story time. They have the familiar feel of PLA’s early literacy program Every Child Ready to Read. The book presents two models for shared reading: Shared Warmth, a parent and child reading program; and Wordplay for Kids. Wadham discusses the development of these programs through his work as a youth librarian in both public and school libraries. Wordplay presents the models for these two programs that develop a love of language in school age children. The first chapter details the process of creating and implementing the Shared Warmth program. Two additional chapters follow: Wordplay for five- to seven-year-olds and Wordplay for eight- to twelve-year-olds. By following the program template discussed in these two chapters, librarians are “helping develop a ‘literary ear’: artful language patterns, correct and
interesting language usage and a large and rich vocabulary" (xi) The program consists of six weekly hour-long programs of choral reading, reading aloud, reciting poetry, and focused activity. Wadham encourages the use of age-appropriate classic folklore and fairy stories, fables, and Greek myths, as well as picture books, easy readers, and fiction chapter books as the read-alouds. Included in each chapter are recommended poems and nursery rhymes, either in their entirety or as first lines with a list of where the entire poem or rhyme can be found. Also included are extensive bibliographies of books for each category listed above. Some of the classic books he recommends are out of print but available through interlibrary loan. Sample program planning calendars and sample programs are shared for each age group. The book ends with a chapter devoted to a bibliography of works Wadham likes to share with children.

Is this a book for your library? By report, this was a successful program both in school and public libraries, but it will require great marketing and a strong commitment by the public librarian to maintain an audience. Wadham states that it could be adapted to be used as a curriculum for homeschoolers, which would make it an option for bringing homeschool families to the library. Libraries should explore this program if they are committed to providing programs that instill the love of language in older children. Although aimed at public libraries, this program could be used by anyone who loves to encourage and develop children's love of reading. Public librarians, school librarians, teachers, and parents could have success in following this model.—Jenny Foster Stenis, Coordinator, Readers Services, Pioneer Library System, Norman, Oklahoma