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Conference corner

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Chan, L. et al 2002. *Budapest Open Access Initiative*. New York: Open Society Institute. Available at: <http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read.shtml> [Retrieved 22 January 2007].

Association of College and Research Libraries Conference, Portland, Oregon, 25-28 March 2015

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1. The Framework at ACRL

Nearly 3,400 librarians convened in Portland to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) at its 2015 conference. Posters, presentations and workshops covered all facets of academic library work - from facilities design to programming assessment. My focus was on information literacy (IL) and particularly on the new Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education filed by ACRL in February 2015. Work on this ranged from high-level discussions of theory to practical guides for addressing a particular frame in single courses.



Jad Adumrad's keynote. Copyright: Gayatri Singh

Some of the key sessions I participated in included:

- Donna Witek, Danielle Theiss and Joelle Pitts: *Shifting our focus, evolving our practice: a collaborative conversation about the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* <http://www.slideshare.net/donnarosemary/shifting-our-focus-evolving-our-practice>. This could have been called Framework 101 as it incorporated exactly the kind of information on instructional design, assessment, and collaboration that many of us were looking for. It brought together aspects of learning theory and very practical advice for working with the new perspectives brought by the Framework.
- Jessica Critten and Kevin Seeber: *Process, not product: teaching and assessing the critical process of IL* <http://kevinseeber.com/ACRL2015.pdf>. The presenters brought the Framework into conjunction with critical IL, another underlying theme of many discussions among librarians. They led a vigorous discussion of the opportunities for deepening students' understanding of information creation and consumption. Critical librarianship was also the topic of an unconference held before the start of ACRL 2015.
- Sharon Mader and Merinda Kaye Hensley: *Putting the Framework for IL in HE into action: next steps*. Sharon has recently taken a post as ACRL Visiting Program Officer for IL, and Merinda has been a member of the Framework's Task Force since its inception; both are actively fostering the implementation of this initiative. This was a session to develop ideas for supporting teaching and research with the new Framework. ACRL has set up a listserv at <http://lists.ala.org/sympa/info/acrlframe> and there are plans for a larger site to share information and resources. ACRL will be talking to other organisations in higher education to develop awareness of the Framework beyond libraries. At the session there was also a call for sharing information on research projects around the Framework as well as more practical activities and assessments.

Ideas about the Framework percolated through a number of other presentations, and permeated informal discussions throughout the conference - on Twitter, over beverages across the city, and long after the conference was over. After the conference, I asked two presenters, Donna Witek and Merinda Kaye Hensley who I have followed on Twitter throughout the development of the Framework, for their perspectives on its development.

Merinda Kaye Henley said: "For me, the main takeaway from the Framework is that it is time for us to start teaching the larger context of using and creating information with our students". Donna Witek noted how discussions of the Framework had gone beyond IL and offered "practitioners and researchers in all areas of our profession a series of concepts and ideas about the field to test against their work". Both wrote about their excitement to be engaging in conversations and building communities of practice as we "explore what this means for student learning and our classrooms and our collaborative relationships" (Merinda) and "create the future of IL in our particular contexts" (Donna).

2. Beyond the Framework

While much of the IL work presented at ACRL related to the Framework, plenty of other topics were also represented. There were sessions on supporting librarians as researchers and on librarians as the subjects of research. These included posters by Deborah Lee on Indigenous librarians in academic settings and by Antonia Olivas on motivations for leadership. Collaboration within and across institutions was a hot topic, and I was particularly interested by

Kelly McCallister's, Margaret Gregor's and Deborah Joyner's work to bring librarians at two- and four-year institutions together to better serve the needs of transfer students who come in at third year and are often left out when IL is focused at the first-year level. More on their work here: http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/conferences/confsandpreconfs/2015/McCallister_Gregor_Joyner.pdf .

I was only able to attend a fraction of the events and so asked colleagues at the conference for their insights and highlights. The following section includes contributions from Don MacMillan, Sara Sharun, and Madeleine Vanderwerff:

- Sessions and posters on data management and scholarly communication had an overriding note of understanding scholars' workflows both as users and creators of data. While there may not have been explicit connections to instruction, clearly this understanding can inform how we teach students.
- Assessment was discussed both in relation to the Framework and more broadly. A workshop by Carrie Donovan and April Cunningham examined institutionalising IL and spreading responsibility for it more broadly among faculty. It had participants brainstorm strategies to meet challenges related to differences in assessment cultures in academic institutions. Also, at the institutional level, Char Booth presented a very thorough process for mapping IL activities across the curriculum to move from tacit understanding of what was going on to more explicit knowledge; she provided a useful template for this work: <http://Bit.ly/Ccl-template> .
- Other hot topics were discipline-specific instruction, increasing involvement of students in academic library planning, and technology, with sessions on everything from ebook usage to Google Glass. Another key theme was reading: recreational, academic, technology-enhanced and/or fostered through programing,

Of the three keynotes, the presentation by RadioLab founder Jad Adumbrad (<http://www.radiolab.org/>) really stood out for me. An experienced broadcaster, who works to increase our understanding of science and the human experience, he described solving information problems in creating these documentaries. In particular he talked about 'gut churn' - the visceral uncertainty felt at various stages in the process, usually just before a breakthrough in understanding. For me this resonated with everything from Kuhlthau's model (https://comminfo.rutgers.edu/~kuhlthau/information_search_process.htm) to the troublesome learning aspects of threshold concepts. The conference caught IL discussions in what Kuhlthau might recognize as the formulation stage: between exploration with its uncertainty and collection with its renewed confidence and sense of direction. It certainly marked an interesting time in IL's evolution.

Many of the papers, presentations and handouts from the conference are available on the ACRL website (<http://www.ala.org/acrl/acrl/conferences/acrl2015/papers>, http://s4.goeshow.com/acrl/national/2015/conference_schedule.cfm) and [#acrl2015](#) provides a great entry to some of the conversations that happened on Twitter before, during and after the conference.