Book review

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The *ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*, published in 2015 as a replacement for the *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education*, marked a significant shift in approach and received a mixed reception. The 'standards' which had guided librarians, faculty, and administrators for 15 years, emphasised practical skills with explicit benchmarks. In contrast, the Framework introduced a conceptual approach, focusing on: '...a cluster of interconnected core concepts, with flexible options for implementation, rather than on a set of standards or learning outcomes, or any prescriptive enumeration of skills' (ACRL, 2015, p. 2).

However, its abstract ideas and vague language led to criticism, with a 2018 survey revealing that 41 percent of librarians reported the Framework either did not inform or only partly informed their practices, while 31 percent found it significantly influenced their work (Julien et al., 2018, p. 187). These critiques likely stem from perceptions that the Framework is "too theoretical, too open to interpretation, and too lacking in active verbs" (Julien et al., 2020, p. 163). This book, published five years later, serves as a response to the original mixed reception, offering practical case studies that address concerns of impracticality and demonstrate how the Framework can be effectively implemented in diverse contexts.

The book is easy to navigate and is structured in three segments that address important aspects of implementing the ACRL Framework. Part 1: *Preparing to Use the Framework*, gives foundational strategies for integrating the Framework into teaching. Some, like *Strategies for Mapping Information Literacy Threshold Concepts to Course Objectives in Political Science* by Mohamed Berray, focus on mapping the threshold concepts of the Framework to course

objectives for a specific discipline. Others, like *Faculty Workshops* approach collaboration in order to embed information literacy (IL) into undergraduate curricula by teaching faculty separately. Articles like *Finding Expertise in Your Own Backyard* point out the function of communities of practice in helping educators make meaning of and deploy the Framework. These articles inform the reader of how the Framework can help foster collaboration between faculty and librarians.

Part II: *Case Studies of Instruction Using the Framework*, presents the practical application of the Framework in multiple circumstances. *Teaching the Framework Using an Online Tutorial* by Leanna Fry Balci and Peter J. Rich demonstrates how the digital tool can effectively communicate IL concepts, while others, such as *Designing a First-Year Foundation Program Around the Framework* show its integration into foundational courses. Other contributions, such as *The Framework and the Context: Refocusing Information Literacy at a Caribbean University* by Paulette A. Kerr and Jessica C. Lewis, show the tailoring of the Framework to needs of particular institutions or regions. Altogether, these case studies show the flexibility and contextual appropriateness of the Framework in a wide variety of educational settings.

Part III: *Educating for the Framework*, puts the emphasis on professional development and future directions. Articles such as *Flexible Frameworks, New Paradigms* by Andrea Baer, examine how beliefs about the Framework inform teaching practices and how tackling those beliefs can lead to better instruction. *Extending the Framework for the Benefit of Praxis* looks at its application in diversity education. Others, like *Rethinking the Reference and Instruction Curriculum* discuss integrating it into librarian training programs. This section demonstrates how the Framework can not only guide student learning but also inform educator development and institutional practices. Taken together, these three sections provide an in-depth exploration of the theoretical roots, practical applications, and professional implications of the ACRL Framework.

The book is aimed at librarians in higher education who are familiar with the Framework and IL jargon. This is because the book is written largely by librarians for members of the IL and higher education community. One of the considerations of the book is that an understanding of the Framework is a prerequisite for reading the book as it provides no in-depth introduction to the Framework. This may be because of its intended audience; however, someone who is unfamiliar with IL may struggle to understand the book if they do not have prior knowledge of the Framework itself.

For a librarian in higher education the book will be a fruitful resource. It provides case studies from a range of circumstances and is a good source of inspiration for someone in the information science field. For example, Chapter 1 discusses integrating the Framework into a political science course by partnering with faculty while Chapter 2 discusses running separate workshops for faculty to learn from. Chapter 11 discusses using the Framework in the Caribbean while Chapter 14 discusses using it in a community college. The range of situations and methods makes the book a helpful resource for a librarian looking to incorporate the Framework into their institution, no matter their situation.

The book will also be helpful to those who were initially disenchanted by the new Framework. It highlights how the flexibility of the Framework and its overarching threshold concepts can be used effectively. This is evident in Chapter 12, where Liza Oldham recounts her journey of

adopting the Framework to enhance history students' understanding of threshold concepts in IL. Adopting the Framework did not just help students overcome threshold concepts but also helped her as a librarian develop a 'truly unique research curriculum.' This chapter is helpful because it provides a personal perspective on how to adapt the Framework, even when facing initial challenges with it.

The book briefly mentions ways that the case studies were not effective; however, few attributed this ineffectuality to the Framework itself. Jillian Collier in her article *Pick Your Battles: Re-examining the Framework for community colleges* mentions:

> Engagement with the Framework, however, has been unenthusiastic among community college librarians. According to a recent survey, 'only eleven percent of respondents strongly agree with the statement: "I am very familiar with the frames, knowledge practices and dispositions in the ACRL Framework" and only 37 percent say that it is 'easy to integrate' into community college instruction. Open-ended responses from the same survey included no positive comments on the Framework's relevance to community college campuses specifically. (Collier, 2019, pp. 494–5)

This highlights that there are some instances where the Framework has not been received well. Although the book explicitly states that it is about successful implementation, a less biased approach feels needed. The lack of conclusion reflects this, which could have acknowledged that, although largely positive, the Framework has still not been well received in community college libraries. The preface mentions the challenge librarians face when interpreting the Framework but there is a lack of articles in the book addressing this directly.

Overall, the book will be helpful to those who want inspiration as to how to use the Framework in a range of environments. It is clear, methodical, and the authors have been generous in sharing their experiences. A conclusion is lacking, which could have given further acknowledgment of how the Framework has not been effective in some circumstances. Despite this, I still recommend this book to anyone in the Information Science field looking for ways to incorporate the Framework into their institution no matter their circumstances.

References

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