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# Information Literacy Practices and Perceptions of Community College Librarians in Florida and New York

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## Abstract

An online survey in Florida and New York of community college librarians with responsibility for information literacy instruction provides a snapshot of instructional objectives and practices, including librarians' beliefs about students' information literacy needs, strengths, and weaknesses. Survey results point to the influence of the Association of College and Research Libraries *Framework* in the community college context, the challenges librarians face as they work to implement it, and their successes in doing so. These data reveal opportunities to support and improve instruction and to prepare future librarians to work successfully in community college contexts.

*Keywords:* information literacy, information literacy instruction, community colleges, librarians, ACRL Framework

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## Information Literacy Practices and Perceptions of Community College Librarians in Florida and New York

This study is motivated by a clear need to understand the perspectives of community college librarians, who work in a context that differs significantly from that found in many university contexts, and that has been marginalized in the information literacy (IL) literature. The community college context differs in several ways from university contexts. Community colleges face distinct challenges due to their mission to educate all, the diversity of their students, and the preponderance of part-time faculty. Contrada (2019) noted other characteristics of the community college context, including concern for social justice and student access, a trend toward using open educational resources, and increasing use of online education. The American Association of Community Colleges (2017) recognized that information literacy is critical to the success of community college students. Earlier research showed, however, that these students significantly overestimate their IL abilities and did not learn these skills and concepts without formal instruction (Gross & Latham, 2012). Community college students are also understudied, even though they are a very diverse population whose IL needs are likely to be very different from the needs of students in university contexts. These students have a variety of post-graduation goals, including moving into a trade or profession and transferring to four-year colleges. They are frequently unprepared for college-level studies, are older, and are working in addition to studying (Community College Research Center, n.d.). Many can only study part-time, may need to take breaks in their education, and many will leave without attaining a degree or credential (Dougherty et al., 2017). It is common for community college students to be older, currently employed, responsible for children, have limited economic resources, and need remedial education (Dougherty et al., 2017; Rosenbaum et al., 2016).

The introduction of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL, 2015) *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* fundamentally altered the paradigm of information literacy instruction (ILI) in the United States, including in community colleges. The ACRL (2000) *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* had guided ILI successfully for many years, although it received criticism for its focus on developing skills, rather than guiding learners to understand underlying concepts in a deeper way (Kuhlthau, 2013; Kutner, 2012). The *Framework* recommends that ILI focus on

threshold concepts, expressed through six “frames,” each accompanied by a set of knowledge practices and dispositions. The implementation of the *Framework* has included a growing literature dedicated to supporting librarians in their daily instructional practices (Jacobson & Gibson, 2015), as well as numerous professional development opportunities. There is evidence that implementation of the *Framework* has been effective in many libraries, including community colleges (Julien, Gross, & Latham, 2020). For example, Calia-Lotz (2020) writes about the *Framework* as a pedagogical foundation for a composition class at a community college. There are many who have criticized the *Framework*, however. Battista et al. (2015), for example, argued that the *Framework* fails to address social justice issues, and others have criticized the *Framework* as too esoteric (Jackman & Weiner, 2017).

While a recent survey by Wengler and Wolff-Eisenberg (2020) revealed that most community college librarians enjoy teaching information literacy, those respondents also believed that their community was marginalized during development of the *Framework*, echoing a complaint made by Craven (2016). Reed (2015) and Ludovico (2017), among others, expressed their concerns about the suitability of the *Framework* for community colleges. Nelson (2017) argued that the *Framework* does not address the need in community colleges for instruction appropriate to the information skill set required for students following graduation when they are in workplace contexts. Others, such as Swanson (2014), countered these concerns, maintaining that the *Framework* is appropriate for community college students. This study, therefore, examines the integration of the *Framework* into ILI in community colleges.

While seeking to explore instruction in the community college context, a second motivation for the study comes from previous research that has revealed a gap between the perceptions of librarians and of students with respect to IL, which may have serious consequences for instructional success (Detlor et al., 2011). Thus, this study is motivated by a key change in the IL instruction landscape, expressed concerns about the *Framework* in the community college context, and previous work in the area of ILI. The goals of the study are to examine community college librarians’ ILI practices, to contextualize findings about the *Framework* in a current and broad understanding of ILI (Julien, Gross, & Latham, 2018), and to explore community college librarians’ perceptions of students’ IL needs. The research questions addressed in the study are:

- RQ1. What are the instructional practices of community college librarians responsible for IL instruction?
- RQ2. What are the perceptions of community college librarians about student IL needs?

These research questions differentiate this study from the Wengler and Wolff-Eisenberg (2020) study, which focused on community college librarians' engagement with the *Framework* but did not explore their beliefs about their students' IL needs. Our study was also based on a national survey tracking ILI in the U.S. and Canada over two decades (Julien, Gross, & Latham, 2018); thus, the data reported here can be compared with data from those previous surveys.

## Methods

An anonymous online survey was distributed in fall 2019 to all community college librarians in New York and Florida ( $N = 760$ ), identified through the publicly available information on library websites. Thus, the sample was self-selected. These states were selected because the authors have professional networks within these states, and they are populous states with robust community college systems serving diverse populations in terms of age, race, ethnicity, socio-economic and military status, as well as urban and rural populations (City University of New York [CUNY], 2020; Florida Department of Education, 2019; Kaiser Family Foundation, 2019; State University of New York [SUNY], 2019). The survey was constructed to take no more than 20 minutes to complete, and the researchers did not offer any incentive for completion. Two reminders were sent to potential respondents. The study received human subjects research approval from Florida State University. The survey was based on a recent national survey of IL practices in academic libraries generally, which included universities and community colleges, and asked identical or similar questions of instructional librarians at intervals in multiple contexts for over two decades (Julien, Gross, & Latham, 2018). An advisory board of college librarians from New York and Florida piloted and reviewed the survey. They proposed slight modifications to some wording and response choices to better fit the community college context (see Appendix A).

The survey asked respondents about their instructional practices and objectives, as well as about the influence of technology on their practice, their opinions about their students' information literacy strengths and weaknesses, their own understandings of information

literacy, and their opinions about the *Framework* and if/how it has been implemented. There was no way to compare responses from the same institution; however, the goal of the survey was not to parse consistency of responses from individual institutions. The researchers assumed that respondents answered question items honestly to the best of their knowledge.

## Results

Both quantitative and qualitative (open-ended survey items) data are reported here, focusing on some of the basic questions about instructional practices, perceptions of students' IL, and impact of the *Framework*. Where quotations from respondents' comments are included, they appear as written, without editorial correction. The number of responses to each question varied, and some questions allowed multiple responses. Survey respondents ( $n = 163$ , 21.4% response rate) included general librarians, reference librarians, instructional librarians, and librarians with managerial responsibilities. This response rate suggests that generalizations to the population of community college librarians as a whole are limited. No submitted surveys were withdrawn from the sample. The largest proportion of respondents (46.6%,  $n = 68$ ) worked in colleges with fewer than 10,000 students, while 31.5% ( $n = 46$ ) worked in colleges of 10,000-20,000 students, and 21.9% ( $n = 32$ ) worked in colleges with more than 20,000 students.

### Basic Organizational Aspects of ILI

Responsibility for ILI was split between different types of staff (respondents could select as many categories as appropriate). See Table 1.

**Table 1: Staff with Responsibility for ILI**

Staff	% respondents ( $n$ )
Full-time instruction librarians	48.6 (90)
Reference/public service librarians	45.9 (85)
Other librarians on staff	31.4 (58)
Other staff	16.2 (30)

The vast majority of respondents worked in libraries that offered formal ILI (i.e., pre-scheduled) (93.8%,  $n = 138$ ). One respondent in a library without a formal ILI program

stated, “IL is supposed to be ‘integrated’ into Gen Ed. courses. Librarians are also not faculty here, therefore the belief is that we serve, not teach.” Nearly all respondents (99.3%,  $n = 136$ ) offered informal ILI, including ad-hoc, individualized, point-of-use, subject guides and tutorials. A majority of libraries had a written statement of their ILI objectives (59.3%,  $n = 80$ ). Most respondents were offering instruction on online databases, search strategies, library use in general, citation formats, the catalog/OPAC, and the internet/web (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Topics Commonly Included in Instruction**

Topic	% respondents ( $n$ )
Online databases	70.3 (130)
Search strategies (e.g., Boolean)	66.5 (123)
Library use in general	65.9 (122)
Citation formats	60.0 (111)
Catalog/OPAC	58.4 (108)
The internet/web	53.0 (98)
Library classification system	27.0 (50)
Electronic documents	26.5 (49)
ACRL <i>Framework</i> threshold concepts	26.5 (49)
Other print reference materials	24.3 (45)
Bibliographic management tools	20.5 (38)
Audio-visual materials	20.0 (37)
Scholarly communication	16.2 (3)
Other	9.7 (18)
Citation metrics	5.4 (10)
Government documents	4.3 (8)
Print indexes or abstracts	2.7 (5)
CD-ROM resources	1.6 (3)

Most respondents used a variety of instructional methods, including individualized IL instruction (one-on-one), hands-on IL instruction in a computer lab, one-shot IL instruction, lectures or demonstrations in subject classes, and web-based pathfinders or subject guides (see Table 3).

**Table 3: ILI Methods**

Method	% respondents ( <i>n</i> )
Individualized IL instruction (one-on-one)	64.9 (120)
Hands-on IL instruction in computer lab	63.8 (118)
One-shot IL instruction	58.9 (109)
Lectures / demonstrations in subject classes	57.8 (107)
Pathfinders or subject guides (web)	55.1 (102)
Embedded librarians	39.5 (73)
Group IL instruction focused on particular courses or subjects [in the library]	38.9 (72)
Video recordings (e.g, YouTube videos)	38.9 (72)
Library guides or handbooks (web)	38.4 (71)
Web tutorials	37.3 (69)
Group library tours	31.9 (59)
Library guides or handbooks (paper)	28.1 (52)
Credit course	27.0 (50)
Self-paced library tours	12.4 (23)
Essay assistance (workshops)	11.9 (22)
Pathfinders or subject guides (paper)	10.8 (20)
Flipped classrooms	9.7 (18)
Courseware	8.1 (15)
Social media	5.4 (10)
Synchronous webinars	4.9 (9)
Other	4.9 (9)
Additions to course notes for distance students	3.8 (7)
Posters	3.8 (7)
Non-credit course	3.2 (6)
Workbook program	0

Table 4 shows respondents' current and preferred instructional objectives. While information searching was the primary current objective, respondents would prefer to prioritize information evaluation skills. For most objectives, the difference in ranking of current and preferred objectives were all within one rank.



**Table 4: Current and Preferred ILI Objectives, Ranked**

ILI Objectives	Current, Ranked	Preferred, Ranked
Teach students how to find information in various sources	1	2
Teach students general research strategies	2	3
Teach students how to critically evaluate the quality and usefulness of information	3	1
Teach students how to locate materials in the library	4	5
Teach students how to manage information	5	4
Teach students how databases, in general, are structured	6	6
Teach ACRL Framework threshold concepts	7	7
Teach awareness of technological innovations	8	8

One respondent noted, “We spend more time on evaluating information critically, particularly in the era of fake news than ever.” Another stated, “We have started talking about the IL framework and how we can tie what we are already doing to the threshold concepts. Our learning outcomes for our online credit course have definitely changed and are directly tied to the framework.” Another respondent wrote, “Although we still cover the mechanics of using the catalog and databases, we’re spending more time teaching students how to express their information need, general search strategies to help them find information relevant to that need, and how to evaluate the information they find.” A large majority of respondents believed that they partially or fully meet their teaching objectives (81.8%,  $n = 72$ ), but 13.6% ( $n = 12$ ) did not know. The remainder (4.5%,  $n = 4$ ) did not believe they meet their objectives.

#### Respondents’ Perceptions of Students’ IL Strengths and Weaknesses

Respondents indicated that students’ primary information-literacy related strength was awareness of technological innovations, followed by understanding general research strategies (see Table 5). Some respondents believed that these strengths were more prominent among students who were more career-oriented or who planned to transfer to a four-year institution. One noted, “Those who are planning on transferring to another college or university tend to be more focused and see that research is more relevant. Students who maybe are just fulfilling an AA requirement may be less focused.” Other respondents reported that these strengths could also be found in students who have been

dual-enrolled or recently graduated from high school “are more technologically aware than students who are adults or older adults returning to college for certifications or job advancement.” Another wrote, “I think high schools do a good job in introducing the concepts of critical thinking. Students understand why Wikipedia might not be a good source to cite, and why databases are important.”

**Table 5: Respondents’ Perceived Student Strengths**

Strength	% respondents ( <i>n</i> )
Awareness of technological innovations	29.7 (55)
Understanding general research strategies	16.2 (30)
Knowing how to find information in various sources	14.6 (27)
Knowing how to locate materials in the library	14.1 (26)
Other	9.2 (17)
Understanding how databases, in general, are structured	6.5 (12)
Knowing how to critically evaluate the quality and usefulness of information	6.5 (12)
Knowing how to manage information	4.9 (9)
Understanding ACRL <i>Framework</i> threshold concepts	1.1 (2)

Respondents believed that students’ primary weakness was knowing how to critically evaluate information (see Table 6). One respondent wrote, “Students seem to have very little skills in the above areas when entering the community college, including technology (as a great portion of students do not have technology access outside of the library).” Another stated, “In my experience, students vastly overestimate their research abilities. They think that because they have experience using google, they know how to research.” One respondent noted, “They are the Google generation and need our guidance to understand that all information isn’t good information.” Another wrote, “They consider themselves more capable and knowledgeable of research skills than they can actually demonstrate.” Another stated, “Many students do not realize the library is no longer just books. They are surprised at the variety of formats and sources available and how easy it is to access.”

**Table 6: Respondents' Perceived Student Weaknesses**

Weakness	% respondents ( <i>n</i> )
Knowing how to critically evaluate the quality and usefulness of information	50.3 (93)
Understanding how databases, in general, are structured	35.7 (66)
Knowing how to manage information	35.7 (66)
Knowing how to find information in various sources	34.1 (63)
Understanding general research strategies	34.1 (63)
Understanding ACRL <i>Framework</i> threshold concepts	30.3 (56)
Knowing how to locate materials in the library	26.5 (49)
Awareness of technological innovations	10.8 (20)
Other	4.9 (9)

A majority of respondents believed that knowing how to critically evaluate the quality and usefulness of information and understanding general research strategies were the most critical to students' success (see Table 7). It is interesting to note that respondents ranked "teaching evaluating information" third as a current ILI objective (Table 4), but they ranked "evaluating information" as students' most significant weakness (Table 6) and ranked "evaluating information" as the most important for student success (Table 7). Similarly, respondents focused their ILI on "how to find information sources" (Table 4) but ranked it as relatively low in importance in Tables 6 and 7. These discrepancies between perception and practice reveal some professional tension.

**Table 7: Respondents' Beliefs About Skills/Knowledge Important to Student Success**

Skill/Knowledge	% respondents ( <i>n</i> )
Knowing how to critically evaluate the quality and usefulness of information	56.8 (105)
Understanding general research strategies	51.4 (95)
Knowing how to find information in various sources	47.6 (88)
Knowing how to manage information	35.7 (66)
Knowing how to locate materials in the library	30.8 (57)
Understanding how databases, in general, are structured	27.0 (50)
Awareness of technological innovations	13.0 (24)
Understanding ACRL <i>Framework</i> threshold concepts	9.7 (18)
Other	3.2 (6)

### Respondents' Definitions of IL

When asked what would be included in their personal definitions of information literacy, a majority of respondents agreed on only one point: understanding how to critically analyze and evaluate information (Table 8). The majority of respondents believed that responsibility for teaching these skills and understandings should be shared with teaching faculty.

**Table 8: Elements Respondents Would Include in Their Personal Definition of Information Literacy**

Element	% respondents ( <i>n</i> )
Understanding how to critically analyze and evaluate information	51.4 (95)
Understanding how to locate efficiently and effectively information from many sources	49.2 (91)
Understanding how to use efficiently and effectively information from many sources	45.4 (84)
Understanding that there exists a wide variety of information sources beyond the obvious	40.5 (75)
Knowing how to think critically in general	37.8 (70)
Understanding some ethical, legal, economic, and socio-political information issues	37.3 (69)
Recognizing when information is needed	36.2 (67)
Being able to use of information in creating new knowledge	33.5 (62)
Understanding how information is produced and valued	32.4 (60)
Understanding how information is generated, organized, stored, and transmitted	30.8 (57)
Participating ethically in communities of learning	25.4 (47)
Having a set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information	22.2 (41)
Other	2.7 (5)

### Opinions Regarding the *Framework*

The majority of respondents did not express extreme opinions about the ACRL *Framework*, with a minority of respondents agreeing with statements ranging from critical to supportive (See Table 9). Correspondingly, none of the six frames were selected by the majority of respondents as relevant to student success (see Table 10). Respondents to this survey appeared not to have engaged in learning about the *Framework* to a great extent, either by

reading about it or attending relevant workshops (see Table 11). In addition to the survey answer choices, respondents also mentioned learning from books about implementing the *Framework* and from newly graduated librarians who bring fresh understanding about the *Framework* to their library positions.

**Table 9: Respondents' Opinions About the ACRL *Framework***

Opinion	% respondents ( <i>n</i> )
The ACRL <i>Framework</i> is not well suited for one-shot instruction sessions.	24.9 (46)
It is important for community colleges to integrate the new ACRL <i>Framework</i> into IL instruction.	17.8 (33)
Not all of the frames are relevant for students' learning goals.	17.8 (33)
Two-year programs are too short for students to assimilate the threshold ideas presented in the new ACRL <i>Framework</i> .	14.1 (26)
The new ACRL <i>Framework</i> is not well suited for use in community colleges.	8.6 (16)

**Table 10: Respondents' Opinions About Which Frames are Relevant for Students' Success**

Frame	% respondents ( <i>n</i> )
Searching as Strategic Exploration	39.5 (73)
Research as Inquiry	37.3 (69)
Authority Is Constructed and Contextual	33.0 (61)
Information Has Value	33.0 (61)
Scholarship as Conversation	23.8 (44)
Information Creation as a Process	22.2 (41)

**Table 11: Resources Respondents Have Used to Implement the *Framework***

Resource	% respondents ( <i>n</i> )
Read articles	26.5 (49)
Attended workshop	11.4 (21)
ACRL Sandbox	8.6 (16)
Other	7.0 (13)
Library-provided training	3.8 (7)

Respondents' comments reflected on the limitations of the *Framework* (such as its conceptual focus and use of jargon), time limits for instruction, and the particular constraints of the community college context. One respondent commented:

They are all important and I wish I had more time in class to teach the information cycle but we probably focus on Searching as strategic exploration, research as inquiry, and Info has value the most. We may talk about authority a little when we talk about evaluating info. Scholarship as conversation may come up when we talk about citation but that one probably the least. all are relevant, but limitations of time make it difficult to fully address these.

Another respondent stated, "I didn't even know there was such a thing." Another noted, "In order for the Frames to be adequately introduced to students, other professors would need to buy in and also attempt to convey those concepts in their coursework. The Frames require higher level thinking and more experience working with resources that students generally don't possess at this level." Another wrote, "The frame is an overreaction to the prescriptive nature of the standards. It is more appropriate to university students operating at an existing level of information literacy competence."

When asked to what extent their ILI had been informed by the *Framework*, 21.3% ( $n = 20$ ) of respondents indicated "not at all," 56.4% ( $n = 53$ ) indicated "minor," and 22.3% ( $n = 21$ ) indicated "significant." Among those whose ILI had been informed by the *Framework*, 18.9% ( $n = 35$ ) indicated that it had provided a conceptual underpinning, 22.7% ( $n = 42$ ) used more hands-on, active learning approaches, and 4.3% ( $n = 8$ ) used the *Framework* to facilitate more effective ILI collaboration across campus.

Respondents shared their best success in implementing the *Framework* through an open-ended question. Their comments focused on curriculum design teaching about sources, citations, and plagiarism; increased institutional activity; helping students understand abstract concepts; teaching about the information life cycle; and increasing student engagement. One respondent noted, "For me, it is most useful in thinking about the broader goals of my IL instruction, which can be lost thinking about the immediate needs of an assignment." Another stated, "Since we started aligning our instruction with the ACRL frames, we were able to integrate the College's own assessment strategy, by creating crosswalks between the two. This demonstrated value to the wider college faculty and

administration.” Another commented, “The framework must be understood and internalized so that when I am working with one student or a class, or a professor, I can assess where we are and where we need to focus our energies. Which activities will have the greatest impact on the students? on the learning environment? The framework is that foundation.” Another noted, “When lecturing to students about research, ACRL Framework concept Scholarship as Conversation and Authority is Constructed...seem to be what resonates with their workforce programs.”

Respondents also commented on the challenges they faced when implementing the *Framework*. Responses focused on lack of time and resources, difficulties understanding the *Framework*, its lack of relevance, difficulties integrating it into the curriculum, and a lack of interest by librarians. One commented, “Just because these concepts are what students need, does not mean that faculty and students want me to teach them. They're looking for the shortest way to what they need right now, without realizing that absorbing these concepts will make all their research easier in the future.” Another stated, “Several of the frames are only really applicable to higher level students and are not able to be conveyed in a meaningful way in the limited time I generally get with students (one shots).”

#### Assessment, Marketing, and Support for ILI

A few respondents indicated that implementing the *Framework* had affected student assessment. One stated, “It does help to frame what the ‘big picture’ outcomes should be.” Another wrote, “We have begun to use the framework as a basis for the questions asked in our pre and post testing.” Most respondents noted that teaching faculty and students either were unaware of the *Framework* or did not care about it. However, one respondent commented, with respect to faculty, “Well--many are unaware of it, but for those who have showed an interest in it, they share my belief that it is a useful frame for thinking about their own instruction.” Another wrote, “We have not kept stats on instruction before *Framework* and after *Framework*, but I can say that students are more engaged in IL instruction in recent years than in the past. This could be due to library programming that incorporates ACRL Framework, embedded librarianship, and our libraries participating more in college-wide events and committees.”

Assessment of student learning was reported to be largely informal (Table 12) as was the evaluation of ILI effectiveness (Table 13). Most respondents believed that they are fully or partially meeting their instructional goals (81.2%,  $n = 88$ ).

**Table 12: Methods of Assessing Student IL Learning**

Method	% respondents ( <i>n</i> )
Faculty feedback	21.6 (40)
Formative assessment during class session	15.7 (29)
Quizzes/tests	11.4 (21)
IL assignments	10.8 (20)
Questions and activities integrated into course assignments and exams	10.8 (20)
Comparison of pre- and post-tests	9.2 (17)
Student self-assessment	8.6 (16)
Other	8.1 (15)
None	7.6 (14)
Citation analysis of course assignments	7.0 (13)

**Table 13: Methods Used to Evaluate ILI Effectiveness**

Method	% respondents ( <i>n</i> )
Informally from student feedback	22.2 (41)
Informally from faculty feedback	21.6 (40)
Librarian/instructor self-evaluation	18.4 (34)
Student feedback questionnaires	16.8 (31)
Student learning assessment results	13.5 (25)
Faculty feedback questionnaires	13.5 (25)
None	6.5 (12)
Citation analysis of course assignments	4.3 (8)
Other	3.2 (6)

When asked to comment on the challenges they faced in their ILI, respondents' comments focused on lack of resources, lack of administrative and faculty interest, lack of student interest, and challenges with assessment. One respondent wrote, "We don't have dedicated instruction librarians. Our librarians do instruction, reference, circulation, collection development, and outreach duties, which means lack of time to develop better instruction. Our supervisors also perform instruction, in addition to the rest and managerial duties. Basically, lack of time and not enough staff." Another commented, "We are generally limited to one-shot sessions, which is always a challenge. We also do not have an institutional



mandatory commitment to information literacy with credit classes. Most of our regional campuses do not have dedicated IL instruction classrooms, making the logistics of hands-on information literacy instruction difficult at best.” Another stated, “Faculty do not value the expertise of the librarians in regard to information literacy. It is a chapter in most English I or English II classes—thus the faculty trust that they are more than able to teach this information.” Another noted, “Students tend to be focused on their immediate information needs, so I often feel like I am shoehorning in little IL lessons, but they may or may not have any interest. Students also tend to overestimate their own IL skills and don't believe they have much to learn (though this applies far more to traditional age students than non-traditional).” Another expressed more optimism: “I ask at the end of sessions if students feel better about tackling their research projects now, and everyone puts their hands up, so I think our sessions help to lower stress and lead to better research assignments.”

## Discussion

The findings reported here have provided insights into our research questions, namely, to describe the instructional practices of community college librarians in Florida and New York who are responsible for IL instruction and to explore the perceptions of community college librarians about student IL needs. They are a starting point for comparison with previous work, indicate opportunities for instructional improvement, and point to future research.

### Comparisons with Two National Surveys

Comparing the current survey results with those of a recent national survey of librarians who do instructional work in academic libraries in general (Julien, Gross, & Latham, 2018), it was found that the proportion of full-time instruction librarians was only slightly lower than that reported in the national survey, on which the current survey was based. A slightly larger proportion of respondents to the current survey have a written statement of instructional objectives than was reported in the national survey. Such a statement is an indicator of attention to best practices in instructional design and evaluation. The most important topics of instruction and instructional methods are also the same as was found nationally. However, these data differ from those reported by Wengler and Wolff-Eisenberg (2020), whose recent national survey of community college librarians found that 97% of respondents provide one-shot IL sessions (significantly more than was found in the

current survey) and that 19% of national respondents provide a credit-bearing IL course (less than the current survey).

Interestingly, the survey respondents in Julien, Gross, and Latham (2018) reported that their primary instructional objectives were to teach critical evaluation, then general research strategies, which was also their preferred ranking of objectives. The current survey respondents ranked teaching students to find information in various sources and then general research strategies as their primary objectives but ranked critical evaluation of information as their top preferred objective. Respondents to the current survey identified faculty as the primary group that carries some responsibility for teaching IL, findings reflected in the (Julien, Gross, & Latham, 2018) survey. Informal assessment and evaluation were common in both surveys; despite the lack of formal assessment, a far larger proportion of respondents to the current survey believed they are at least partially meeting their instructional goals. That confidence is a curious departure from that expressed nationally.

In addition, despite the fact that the current survey data were collected three years following the national survey, a larger proportion of current respondents report that the *Framework* has had no or only a minor influence on their ILI, and fewer respondents in the current survey report a significant influence. These differences underscore how the *Framework* has had less influence on the ILI of community college librarians than on academic librarians generally (Julien, Gross, & Latham, 2018). That finding, and the comments that express dissatisfaction with the *Framework* in the community college context, including concerns about the terminology of the *Framework*, as well as its conceptual framing of IL, confirm the concerns raised in the literature to date (Jackman & Weiner, 2017; Ludovico, 2017; Reed, 2015).

In addition, respondents to the current survey reported lower levels of engagement with resources that might assist with the implementation of the *Framework* than did respondents to the Wenger and Wolff-Eisenberg (2020) survey. While none of the six frames were selected by the majority of respondents as relevant to student success, a majority of Wengler and Wolff-Eisenberg's respondents indicated that all six frames are important for their instruction, and most of their respondents had made some alterations to their IL teaching based on the *Framework*. Indeed, Wengler and Wolff-Eisenberg found that 10% of respondents had altered their ILI to a great extent, while 22.3% of respondents in the current survey reported that their ILI has been "significantly informed" by the *Framework*.

Although the two surveys were sent only one year apart, it may be that ILI in community colleges are increasingly modifying their ILI in light of the *Framework*. Respondents in both the current and the Julien, Gross, and Latham (2018) surveys agree that their main challenges include lack of resources, various challenges with students, faculty support, and administrative support. The parallels in results from these two surveys suggest that in many ways instructional practice is not altogether different between university and college contexts, apart from the implementation of the *Framework*.

#### Opportunities for Improvement

The survey results offer both a picture of current instructional practice and highlight opportunities for improvement to instructional work and its outcomes. Indicators of investment in ILI include administrative support, budgetary support, and evidence of best practice in articulating instructional objectives, evaluation and assessment, and professional development. Thus, opportunities suggested by the survey include, for example, providing training and incentives to instructional staff to take the time to write out objectives, to invest in training and thoughtful implementation of the *Framework*, and to thoroughly evaluate their instruction and to assess the outcomes of those efforts. The results of this survey suggest that in all these areas, increased investments could result in improved instructional outcomes. Responsibility for these investments fall on multiple shoulders, including administrators, librarians, and pre-service professional programs. Thus, there are important implications for educators of future librarians who will work in community colleges in the states in which the survey was conducted. Newly graduated librarians should understand the best practices and potential scope of instructional work, as well as the opportunities and challenges it brings.

#### Limitations of the Study

The primary limitation of this study is that it was conducted in two states only; thus, the results are not necessarily generalizable to community colleges across the United States. Although both Florida and New York are states with large and demographically diverse populations, and both have state-wide community college systems that educate large numbers of students, the sample was geographically limited. In addition, although all community college librarians were individually invited to participate in the survey, responding to the survey was a choice; therefore, respondents were self-selected. Their

views may not have been representative of all community college librarians in these states nor in the country.

#### Future Research

It will be necessary to conduct the survey nation-wide in order to confirm whether the data reported here are generalizable. In addition, the researchers have completed a second phase of the study involving interviews with students from the community colleges participating in the survey. It will be especially useful to examine differences between students' and survey respondents' perceptions of student IL needs, weaknesses, and strengths. Another important step may be to interview community college librarians in order to probe further their instructional experiences, particularly with the *Framework*. There is still much to be learned about how to implement the vision of the *Framework* in a context, and with students, who differ in many ways from those found in universities. Future research might also explore how the *Framework* might be modified to ensure good fit with the community college context. Finally, it will be useful to replicate this survey nationally, and at regular intervals into the future, to track progress about if and how community college librarians integrate the *Framework* over time into their instruction.

## Conclusion

Findings from this study provide some insights into current instructional practices, the extent to which the *Framework* is influencing ILI, and the challenges community college librarians face in serving their students. Librarians, particularly those in Florida and New York State, may be able to use these results to learn from peers who are finding ways to offer a variety of useful instructional experiences to students, to identify opportunities for improving ILI (e.g., articulating objectives and linking assessment to those objectives), and to advocate for increased support and investment in ILI (by pointing to the practices of their peers). In addition, educators, principally those in Florida and New York State, can use these data to inform future instructional librarians' professional education, particularly with respect to the *Framework*. Thus, these data can offer some potential for several outcomes, including informing future nation-wide research on best practices in information literacy instruction in community colleges.

## Acknowledgments

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## Appendix A: Survey of Information Literacy Instruction Practices in Community College Libraries in Florida and New York

Welcome,

Are you a community college librarian with information Literacy (IL) instruction responsibilities? If so, you are invited to participate in an online survey aimed at U.S. community college librarians with IL instruction responsibilities. The purpose of the survey is to identify IL instruction practices in Florida and New York community college libraries.

**If there is more than one library for your college, please respond for your campus library only, rather than for your whole institution.**

[Note: branching, dependent on responses, is not apparent in this appendix]

1. What is the size of the student population at your college (number of students, not FTE)?
  - fewer than 10,000
  - 10,000 – 20,000
  - more than 20,000
  
2. What is your job title?
  
  
3. If your library focuses on a particular discipline(s) or subject area(s), please indicate these below.
  
  
4. Does your college library offer formal (i.e., scheduled in advance) IL instruction classes?
  - yes
  - no

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5. Please indicate briefly why you think there is no formal IL instruction program at your library.
6. Does your library have a written statement of the objectives of the IL instruction program?
- yes
- no
7. Does your library routinely provide informal IL instruction (i.e., one-to-one, ad hoc instruction) via subject guides (online and/or paper), online tutorials, point-of-use instruction, etc.?
- yes
- no
8. Who is primarily responsible for IL instruction in your library? (Check all that apply.)
- full-time instruction librarian(s)                       reference/public service librarians
- other librarians on staff                                       other staff, please specify
9. Please estimate the proportion of **all** staff time spent on IL instruction in your library **early** in the academic term, for those staff involved in IL instruction (other than full-time instruction staff).
- 0-25%       26-50%       51-75%       more than 75%
10. Please estimate the proportion of **all** staff time spent on IL instruction **later** in the academic term, for those staff involved in IL instruction (other than full-time instruction staff).
- 0-25%       26-50%       51-75%       more than 75%

11. On which of the following do you commonly provide IL instruction?

(Check all that apply.)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> print indexes or abstracts   | <input type="checkbox"/> other print reference materials  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> audio-visual materials   | <input type="checkbox"/> catalogue/OPAC                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CD-ROM resources   | <input type="checkbox"/> the internet/web                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> government documents   | <input type="checkbox"/> library use in general           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> library classification system  | <input type="checkbox"/> electronic documents             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> online databases   | <input type="checkbox"/> search strategies (e.g. Boolean) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> bibliographic management tools   | <input type="checkbox"/> citation metrics                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> scholarly communication (e.g., open access publishing, open education resources)                         | <input type="checkbox"/> other? _____                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> citation formats   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> threshold concepts as identified in the new ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education |   |

12. Which of the following methods do you use in your IL instruction?

(Check all that apply.)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> web tutorials   | <input type="checkbox"/> credit course                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hands-on IL instruction in computer lab   | <input type="checkbox"/> non-credit course                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> individualized IL instruction (one-on-one)                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> posters   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> courseware  | <input type="checkbox"/> group library tours                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> video recordings (e.g, YouTube videos)  | <input type="checkbox"/> library guides or handbooks                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> self-paced library tours  | <input type="checkbox"/> web? <input type="checkbox"/> paper?            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> workbook program  | <input type="checkbox"/> pathfinders or subject guides (e.g., LibGuides) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> lectures / demonstrations in subject classes                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> web? <input type="checkbox"/> paper?            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> essay assistance (workshops)  | <input type="checkbox"/> one-shot IL instruction                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> additions to course notes for distance students                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> other? _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> group IL instruction focused on particular courses or subjects [in the library] |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> social media  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> flipped classrooms  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> embedded librarians   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> synchronous webinars  |  |

13. On what group(s) does your IL instruction program focus? (Check all that apply.)

- first year students                       adult re-entry students  
 students in certain subject disciplines       teaching staff (faculty)  
 students in remedial programs  
 students in certification programs  
 GED students  
 students in job training programs  
 students in degree programs  
 Dual enrolment students (high school students also enrolled at the college)  
 English language learners (ESOL students)  
 other? \_\_\_\_\_

14. Overall, what proportion of students at your campus is reached by the IL instruction program?

- 76-100%                       50-75%                       fewer than 50%  
 not able to determine       other? \_\_\_\_\_

15. How much has information technology changed the way you **deliver IL** instruction in the last few years?

- not at all                       only slightly                       quite a bit                       a great deal

16. If information technology has changed the way you deliver IL instruction, can you give an example?

17. How much has information technology affected the **content** of your IL instruction in the last few years?

- not at all                       only slightly                       quite a bit                       a great deal

18. If information technology has changed the content of your IL instruction, can you give an example?
19. If information technology has changed the delivery and/or content of your IL instruction, do you think that these changes have increased students' **interest or participation** in IL instruction?
- yes
- no
- don't know
20. Please explain briefly how you these changes have increased students' interest or participation.
21. If information technology has changed the delivery and/or content of your IL instruction, do you think that these changes have **improved** IL instruction?
- yes
- no
- don't know
22. Please explain briefly how you these changes have increased the delivery or content of your IL instruction.

23. What are the objectives (written or not) of your current IL instruction?

Please rank from 1 (most important) to 6 (least important)

	1 most	2	3	4	5	6 least	Not applicable
Teach awareness of technological innovations							
Teach students how databases, in general, are structured							
Teach students how to find information in various sources							
Teach students how to locate materials in the library							
Teach students how to critically evaluate the quality and usefulness of information							
Teach students general research strategies							
Teach students how to manage information							
Teach threshold concepts outlined in the new <i>ACRL Framework</i>							
Other?							

24. Have these priorities changed in the past few years?

- yes, how? \_\_\_\_\_
- no
- don't know

25. How would you like to see the objectives (written or not) of your IL instruction **change**?  
Please rank from 1 (should be most important) to 6 (should be least important).

	1 most	2	3	4	5	6 least	Not applicable
Teach awareness of technological innovations							
Teach students how databases, in general, are structured							
Teach students how to find information in various sources							
Teach students how to locate materials in the library							
Teach students how to critically evaluate the quality and usefulness of information							
Teach students general research strategies							
Teach students how to manage information							
Teach threshold concepts outlined in the new <i>ACRL Framework</i>							
Other?							

26. Please indicate which of the following you think are your students' **strengths** in terms of IL skills and knowledge. (Check all that apply.)
- awareness of technological innovations
  - understanding how databases, in general, are structured
  - knowing how to find information in various sources
  - knowing how to locate materials in the library
  - knowing how to critically evaluate the quality and usefulness of information
  - understanding general research strategies
  - knowing how to manage information
  - understanding threshold concepts outlined in the new *ACRL Framework*
  - Other? \_\_\_\_\_
27. If you think these strengths differ based on students' educational goals (e.g., GED, AA degree, transfer to college or university, pursuing certification, job training, etc.), please describe below.
28. Please indicate which of the following you think are your students' **weaknesses** in terms of IL skills and knowledge? (Check all that apply.)
- awareness of technological innovations
  - understanding how databases, in general, are structured
  - knowing how to find information in various sources
  - knowing how to locate materials in the library
  - knowing how to critically evaluate the quality and usefulness of information
  - understanding general research strategies
  - knowing how to manage information
  - understanding threshold concepts outlined in the new *ACRL Framework*
  - Other? \_\_\_\_\_

29. If you think these weaknesses differ based on students' educational goals (e.g., GED, AA degree, transfer to college or university, pursuing certification, job training, etc.), please describe below.
30. What IL skills or knowledge do **you** think are important to community college students' success? (Check all that apply.)
- awareness of technological innovations
  - understanding how databases, in general, are structured
  - knowing how to find information in various sources
  - knowing how to locate materials in the library
  - knowing how to critically evaluate the quality and usefulness of information
  - understanding general research strategies
  - knowing how to manage information
  - understanding threshold concepts outlined in the new *ACRL Framework*
  - Other? \_\_\_\_\_
31. In your opinion, what IL skills or knowledge do you think **students** think are important to their success? (Check all that apply.)
- awareness of technological innovations
  - understanding how databases, in general, are structured
  - knowing how to find information in various sources
  - knowing how to locate materials in the library
  - knowing how to critically evaluate the quality and usefulness of information
  - understanding general research strategies
  - knowing how to manage information
  - understanding threshold concepts outlined in the new *ACRL Framework*
  - Other? \_\_\_\_\_



32. Which of the following would you include in **your** definition of “information literacy”? (Check all that apply.)
- recognizing when information is needed
  - understanding how information is generated, organized, stored, and transmitted
  - understanding some ethical, legal, economic, and socio-political information issues
  - understanding that there exists a wide variety of information sources beyond the obvious
  - understanding how to locate efficiently and effectively information from many sources
  - understanding how to use efficiently and effectively information from many sources
  - understanding how to critically analyze and evaluate information
  - knowing how to think critically in general
  - having a set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information
  - understanding how information is produced and valued
  - being able to use of information in creating new knowledge
  - participating ethically in communities of learning
  - Other? \_\_\_\_\_

33. What should be the degree of responsibility of community college librarians in teaching the following? (please select the appropriate box)

	None	Full	Partial	If this responsibility is shared, who else is responsible?
a) recognizing when information is needed				
b) understanding how information is generated, organized, stored, and transmitted				
c) understanding some ethical, legal, economic and socio-political information issues				
d) understanding that there exists a wide variety of information sources beyond the obvious				
e) understanding how to locate efficiently and effectively information from many sources				
f) understanding how to use efficiently and effectively information from many sources				
g) understanding how to critically analyze and evaluate information				
h) knowing how to think critically in general				
j) having a set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information				
j) understanding how information is produced and valued				
k) being able to use of information in creating new knowledge				
l) participating ethically in communities of learning				
m) other? _____				

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34. What is your opinion of the new *ACRL Framework*? (Check all that apply.)

- It is important for community colleges to integrate the new *ACRL Framework* into IL instruction.
- The new *ACRL Framework* is not well suited for use in community colleges.
- Two-year programs are too short for students to assimilate the threshold ideas presented in the new *ACRL Framework*.
- Not all of the frames are relevant for students' learning goals.
- The *ACRL Framework* is not well suited for use in the one-shot instruction session.

Additional comments? \_\_\_\_\_

35. Which of the following frames do you think are relevant for students' success? (Check all that apply.)

- Authority Is Constructed and Contextual
- Information Creation as a Process
- Information Has Value
- Research as Inquiry
- Scholarship as Conversation
- Searching as Strategic Exploration

Comments? \_\_\_\_\_

36. To what extent is your IL instruction informed by the new *ACRL Framework*?

- The new *ACRL Framework* does not inform my IL instruction at all.
- The new *ACRL Framework* has had a minor influence on my IL instruction.
- The new *ACRL Framework* has had a significant influence on my IL instruction.

37. How has incorporating the new *ACRL Framework* affected your IL instruction practices?
- I use the *Framework* as a conceptual underpinning for my IL instruction.
  - I use more hands-on, active learning approaches.
  - I use the *Framework* to facilitate more effective IL instruction collaboration on campus.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
38. Please describe your best success in using the new *ACRL Framework*.
39. What limitations or difficulties have you encountered in working with the new *ACRL Framework*?
40. How has the *ACRL Framework* affected your approach to evaluating student learning?
41. How have **faculty** responded to the new *ACRL Framework*?
42. How have **students** responded to the new *ACRL Framework*?
43. What resources have you used to help with implementing the new *ACRL Framework*?
- My library provided training
  - ACRL Sandbox
  - Read articles about the new *ACRL Framework*
  - Attended workshop
  - Other? \_\_\_\_\_

44. Do you believe that your institution effectively meets its current teaching objectives for IL instruction?

- yes
- partially
- no
- don't know

45. How do you assess student learning in **your** IL instruction program?

(Check all that apply.)

- we do not assess student learning
- through student self-assessment
- by comparing pre- and post-IL instruction test results
- through formative assessment during in-class sessions
- through quizzes/tests
- through IL assignments
- through questions and activities integrated into course assignments and exams
- through citation analysis of course assignments
- faculty feedback
- other? \_\_\_\_\_

46. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of **your library's** IL instruction program?

(Check all that apply.)

- we do not evaluate the effectiveness of our IL instruction program
- self-evaluation by individual instructors/librarians
- informally from feedback received from faculty
- informally from feedback received from students
- by reviewing student learning assessment results
- with feedback questionnaires to faculty
- with feedback questionnaires to students
- through citation analysis of course assignments
- other? \_\_\_\_\_

47. Is IL instruction in your library supported by distinct funding in the library budget?

- yes – what proportion of the budget is dedicated to IL instruction? \_\_\_\_\_
- no
- don't know

48. How much non-financial support (e.g., administrative support, recognition, encouragement) does your library administration provide for IL instruction activities?

- full support
- moderate support
- very little support
- no support

49. How do you publicize IL instruction programs in your library?

(Check all that apply.)

- personal faculty contact
- notices or letters to faculty
- notices in campus newspaper
- notices on web
- posters
- email discussion lists
- departmental meetings
- social media
- other? \_\_\_\_\_
- we do not publicize IL instruction in our library

50. What are some of the challenges you face in providing IL instruction (other than those mentioned specifically with respect to the *ACRL Framework*)?

51. Do you have any other comments about IL instruction at your campus?

This concludes the survey. Thank you for your participation.