Review: Envisioning the Framework: A Graphic Guide to Information Literacy

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Abstract

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Since the adoption of ACRL's *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* in 2016, teaching librarians have faced the ongoing challenge of providing relevant instruction that aligns well with the concepts presented in the *Framework*. One aspect of this challenge is balancing the desire to teach all six concepts while acknowledging the limits of time when librarians may see a group only once or twice. In *Envisioning the Framework: A Graphic Guide to Information Literacy*, editor Jannette L. Finch has assembled a diverse array of chapters that work to speak to this challenge and to offer some sense of balance. Through the intersections of literacy and information literacy, and data visualization, the chapters work together to make the abstractions of the *Framework* widely teachable.

Envisioning the Framework aims to hone librarians' skills in effectively communicating, navigating, managing, and explaining information literacy. Finch argues that though many aspects of the *Framework* are already important considerations by researchers at all experience levels, utilizing illustrations helps to move their abstract nature beyond symbol. That is, representations of the *Framework* are key tools to explaining those critical information concepts. This volume explores several symbolic visualizations for the *Framework*. By collecting these various "lines, squiggles, circles, boundaries, enclosures, and maps" (p. 9), this book increases understanding of the *Framework* to be inclusive of several perspectives, lenses, practices, pedagogies, and learning styles. In short, *Envisioning the Framework* offers ways for teaching librarians to augment their teaching portfolios and to increase the efficacy of their teaching.

This volume does a great deal of work to make visual sense of the *Framework*. In addition to offering valuable discussion on using *Framework* representations in instruction contexts, each chapter includes at least one relevant and useful graphic, ranging from hand-drawn sketches to Venn diagrams to text-filled tables. Furthermore, the chapters offer plenty of ideas for librarians to incorporate into their instruction, as well as strategies for libraries to implement program-wide changes for utilizing *Framework* concepts in their instruction programs. To this end, there is great potential for practitioners to adapt chapters into lesson plans, strategic plans, and curriculum overhauls, as each chapter is openly licensed and available for such uses.

As explained in the introduction, the chapters in *Envisioning the Framework* fittingly align to the schemas for how children practice and understand drawing. Within this organization, four broad topics emerge from this collection: overarching discussions of data visualization and pedagogy, specific classroom-based practices, programmatic and partnership strategies, and non-traditional instruction opportunities. The following four paragraphs summarize significant pieces of the chapters in this book, within each of the broad topics that run through the chapters.

The more theoretical chapters in this volume speak to the overarching importance of information literacy in librarianship. These chapters cover more traditional aspects of library instruction, especially connecting course content to library instruction through the relationships between the frames and identifying the challenges of trying to teach all the frames at once, an important reminder from Bernhardt and Neel (Chapter 17). Library instruction, argue Wimberley and Johnson (Chapter 3), can also borrow from innovation studies, incorporating design thinking and human-centered pedagogy to involve students as end users and elevating instruction efforts. Furthermore, Jacobson, Mackey, and O'Brien (Chapter 9) broaden library instruction to attach metaliteracy to praxis, encouraging the growth of *Framework* dispositions among students. But these more theoretical chapters, especially Finch's own contribution (Chapter 1), also recognize the changing library landscape to include data visualization, and this book includes a helpful primer on this relationship.

Perhaps most immediately useful and applicable to readers of this volume are the chapters on library classroom instruction. Johnson, Kane, and O'Dell (Chapter 10) discuss their efforts to utilize data visualization in credit-bearing library classes, and they reflect on the challenges of assessing understanding through an infographic. Relatedly, misunderstandings of frame concepts reinforce the importance of teaching threshold concepts to students, as Collier, Rand, and Hinchliffe (Chapter 4) contend. Demonstrating frame concepts through subject-specific visualization can be particularly effective, as Juhl and Brown (Chapter 6) write, though it requires more intensive planning on the part of teaching librarians. Additionally, practicing creative expression of abstract concepts, Harper and Tuma (Chapter 12) argue, requires a reframing of the library classroom as a safe, bounded space. Finally, Finch, Van Arnhem, and Fairchild (Chapter 13) present one-shot classes as potential locations for illustrating the frames in action, analyzing effective scaffolded instruction, and enhancing the relationships between frames and ongoing learning.

The several chapters that examine library instruction programs center curriculum mapping and partnerships. Within this topic, Kamper, Gray, and Jackson (Chapter 5) discuss mapping frame concepts with skill levels in the development of a strategic plan, including documentation of instructional practices. Relatedly, Lowe and Piper (Chapter 15) narrate the transition to new general education requirements that point to information literacy as a key concept and the challenges to promote library instruction through visualizations that convey profiles of learning outcomes and the resulting deepening relationships between the library and academic departments. Developing these relationships is critical for effective library instruction, and Schneiderman, Dent, Belanger, and Nichols (Chapter 8) describe a day-long workshop that teaches instructors about information literacy, the *Framework*, and the connections made in library instruction. But the broadest is Arensdorf's (Chapter 7) discussion around interdisciplinary education, as the skills taught in library classes are largely transferrable, transdisciplinary skills.

Non-traditional instruction can take place in and outside of classrooms, to students and non-students, and with a variety of tools. One of these tools is LibGuides, which Duffy, Maluski, and Levitan (Chapter 2) utilize to contextualize frame concepts and critical thinking in ways that make sense to students asynchronously outside of classrooms. Similarly, Kannegiser, Meky, and Piekart (Chapter 11) match learning objects to the *Framework* through backward design, demonstrating effective teaching and promoting learning through diverse means. Ding and Karras-Lazaris (Chapter 16) consider the advantages of presenting the research process as individual journeys, finding that international students especially benefit and situate this knowledge into a global context. Finally, Harris, Van Kampen-Breit, Bryan, Joy, and Kempa (Chapter 14) examine student workers in libraries as learners, whose work benefits from an increased understanding of libraries in research processes.

The most significant throughline of *Envisioning the Framework* is that representations of abstract concepts are valuable to understanding those concepts. Several contributing authors address this directly, writing about the way(s) students learn Framework concepts through illustrations, which connect concepts to each other and to dispositions and research habits. But other authors demonstrate the importance of representation for instruction, as they reflect on their using illustrations in classrooms and in other settings for teaching information literacy, as learning objects created for and by students. In this respect, *Envisioning the Framework* offers a deepening consideration for what matters in representing abstract concepts, who can create such representations, and how they might be best utilized.

In pondering these considerations, librarians can effectively teach information literacy and come to a better understanding themselves of the intricacies and complexities it contains.

Envisioning the Framework succeeds most as it contributes many illustrations of the *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education.* Each representation of one frame concept, or of the relationship between frame concepts, or of student engagement with the *Framework* can spark some re-evaluation of the *Framework*, illuminating a nuance in a way that text simply cannot. Certainly, the chapters that comprise this volume work together to create a mosaic that complicates the meanings of library instruction while offering guides to help teachers make sense of it all. And when librarians use those guides, they help to make sense of a complex information landscape for all.