

TEACHING FUTURE LIBRARIAN EDUCATORS USING THE ACRL FRAMEWORK: A NEW GRADUATE-LEVEL SCHOOL TEACHING CERTIFICATE

Most librarians learn how to teach on the job, finding support informally or through education offerings, standards, and guides from professional associations. Master's programs in library and information science have been slow to recognize and respond to the need to prepare librarians for teaching. In a recent survey of LIS syllabi, Saunders¹ found that among the 55 ALA-accredited schools there were only 73 standalone courses in instruction for students other than those in school library media programs. Only 17 programs offer two courses, three offer three, and one offers four courses.² In our own research on the topic to develop our program's teaching certificate, the authors examined the ACRL Instruction Section website, "Library Instruction Courses Offered by Accredited Master's Degree Programs in Library and Information Studies." From this data, we found that of those programs listed, 39 offer at least one course for students other than those in the school library media program. Fourteen offer two or more courses, and three offer specializations—University of Missouri, San Jose State, and now the University of Arizona.³

Where do librarians believe that they should learn how to teach?

Douglass;⁴ Cooke and Hensley;⁵ Hensley;⁶ and Julien, Tan, and Merillat⁷ strongly assert that teaching librarians to teach is the job of graduate library programs and most schools are not doing it very well. A survey by Westbrook and Fabian⁸ suggests that the majority of teaching librarians feel that instruction is a core function of the library, and that this is something LIS library Master's programs need to better represent. An Ithaka survey of academic library

directors and deans indicates that these employers believe instruction is important and should be provided by Master's programs.⁹ Saunders adds to this argument stating, "...even students in programs that do have instruction courses are usually limited to one such course, and actual practice in designing and delivering instruction sessions is usually limited to one or two opportunities within these courses."¹⁰ More needs to be done to prepare future information professionals to teach.

Based on this literature and our knowledge of a gap in MLIS program instruction curricula, the authors determined that a greater educational offering should be provided within the Master's program at University of Arizona iSchool. Nicole Pagowsky and Yvonne Mery of the University of Arizona Libraries joined with Carla Stoffle and Bruce Fulton (faculty in the iSchool), to develop a certificate in instruction. This certificate entails coursework based in theory and practice to build abilities as an educator in order to teach patrons of all types of libraries. It is offered to three audiences: for current students as an option within their MA program, for librarians already possessing an MA as a continuing education option, and for library workers with a Bachelor's who wish to further develop their skills as a standalone option.

Why a certificate?

At the University of Arizona, Graduate Certificates are a means for professionals with advanced degrees to update their knowledge and skills and to provide additional depth and experience to the graduate program for current students. They are designations added to transcripts to demonstrate that a student has participated in a systematic and coherent learning program to gain

advanced knowledge and skills in a subject area. Certificates can vary in the number of credit hours involved from 9 to 18.

For certificates to be approved at the University of Arizona, the Graduate College requires the proposers to document the job demand for such a program. The authors reviewed the literature documenting a growing demand for librarians with teaching skills. In the summer of 2017, we then reviewed a sample of academic and public library job ads in ALA JOBLINE. We looked at all jobs advertised over a two-week period and eliminated any jobs that were administrative in nature or did not require an MLS, leaving a sample of 120 ads. This sample revealed that 44% of jobs advertised during that period required instructional expertise. A similar sample of jobs advertised on the Arizona State Library Jobline website and the job advertisement websites of six surrounding states, revealed that 56% of the jobs advertised required instructional duties. A sample review of job ads by Douglass in INAJL found 50 positions in all types of libraries specifying a need for instructional skills.¹¹ Based on her review of job ads, she concluded, “teaching occurs across LIS professions. While MLIS students may anticipate a certain level of teaching in public or academic libraries or museums, a short case study of Maryland institutions indicates a need for teaching skills throughout the information field.”¹²

While data was being collected, it was decided that the Graduate Certificate in Instruction and Teaching for Librarians and Information Professionals would require 12 credit hours and that it would be designed to build the knowledge and skills needed to create and deliver culturally sensitive, evidence-based, and innovative information literacy instruction. To ensure strong connections between theory and practice with application to current professional discourse, it

was decided that the program would be designed around the ACRL *Framework*, as this is also what is used by the University of Arizona Libraries' Instruction Program, of which Pagowsky is Instruction Coordinator. Librarians Mery and Pagowsky then established the certificate's learning goals, selected appropriate course designations, identified instructors, and established assessment and evaluation mechanisms. We discuss our rationale behind use of the *Framework* and its application to LIS students interested in a variety of library environments—not only academic—in the following sections.

What are the courses required by the certificate?

The courses required for the certificate are:

- LIS 581 – Information Literacy and Pedagogy (3.00 units)
- LIS 583 – eLearning for Librarians and Other Information Professionals (3.00 units)
- LIS 586 – Learning Design for Librarians and Other Information Professionals (3.00 units)
- LIS 693 – Internship (3.00 units)

OR

LIS 698 – Capstone (3.00 units) Whichever of these options is selected, the student will coordinate the placement and subject with the certificate advisor and develop an experience focused on developing and delivering instructional material. The related instruction should be information literacy focused, but there is flexibility based on students' projects, teaching environments, and goals.

What are the overall goals of the certificate?

The overall student learning outcomes for this program are that students will be able to:

- Organize and manage different components of pedagogy in order to develop their own instructional identity and path.
- Implement instructional design models into their own teaching in order to link best practices with appropriate teaching scenarios
- Design, deliver, and evaluate inclusive information literacy lessons for diverse learners that incorporate the latest educational theories, standards, and educational technologies
- Evaluate their teaching philosophy, situated in diverse, learner-centered needs through a critical lens in order to develop inclusive learning objects.

How is the Framework incorporated?

Incorporating the *ACRL Framework* into this certificate, through both subject matter and pedagogical approach, provides a more holistic structure for teaching. Frameworks are flexible, encourage dialogue, and provide an overarching philosophy to our teaching. Although we are more focused on using teaching-related material from ACRL, not all of our students are interested in academic libraries: we have a wide variety of students either earning the instruction certificate or taking the courses separately as electives. Teaching with the *Framework* for all students can help provide grounding in common instruction approaches; and students focused on public, school, and special libraries have made apt connections between how the *Framework* functions and how it can aid in their own future (or at times, current) work. There is no formal documentation for teaching in public libraries with a set of standards or connections to the *Framework*, and so aspects of the framework can support various modes of instruction, regardless of environment. School librarians have their own set of standards through AASL, and this is included as a supplemental reading.¹³

At the University of Arizona Libraries, we adapted the *Framework* for our instruction program in line with our own set of outcomes, applicable to our campus. Our specific outcomes based on the frames include: Scholarship is a Conversation; Research Evolves; Authority is Contextual; Knowledge is Co-constructed; and Information is Power.¹⁴ We use both an outcomes-focused approach, as well as an alternate “big questions” approach, derived from Wiggins and McTighe.¹⁵ We wanted to apply the success of our campus-wide instruction program to our classes in the iSchool Instruction Certificate; this was evident through our focus on providing context for students to understand the research process, to experience productive failure, and to seek more socially just approaches to engaging in research. We made these connections because they are grounded in sound pedagogical theory, and we want our students to be well versed in professional discourse and practice. Likewise, we hope our students will identify more strongly as educators through earning this certificate and be poised to take on greater leadership roles.

Regardless of teaching environment, librarians have struggled with an identity problem, particularly within teaching, as library instruction is essentially a double-feminized field.¹⁶ Burgess explains the importance of moving more toward leadership in our instruction,

In adopting the *Framework*, academic librarians have an opportunity to take a greater and more active role in shaping our (often questioned) identity as leaders in IL education. I believe librarians’ identity as instructors might be more clearly pronounced and unmistakable if we challenged ourselves to expand our collaborations with faculty.¹⁷

In all types of libraries, regardless of subject matter, age group, and collaborations, we can focus on sound pedagogy and owning our expertise in teaching information literacy. We have scaffolded use of the *Framework* between our foundations course LIS 581: Information Literacy Pedagogy, and LIS 583: eLearning for Librarians and and Other Information Professionals. Regarding overall certificate progression, it is a requirement to take the foundations course first at this point in time, and the subsequent courses and internship/practicum can be taken in any order.

Theory and discussion of praxis in LIS 581 sets students up for practice to explore, seek questions, and begin to own growing expertise.

LIS 581: Information Literacy Pedagogy

The foundations course for the certificate, LIS 581, is structured as a seminar course and incorporates a great deal of reflection and revision. The certificate program is fully online, so designing a course based heavily on discussion in this format can be complicated. However, giving students opportunities to explore, reflect, and interact in a less-structured environment is a powerful way to encourage them to make new connections between course material and lived experience. As Couture and Ladenson point out in their discussion of using the frame Research as Inquiry in a women's and gender studies course, "While librarians have traditionally focused on helping with finding answers, the process of developing questions is central to critical information literacy."¹⁸ Students engage in the process of developing questions in LIS 581 through the peer-led discussion; and are not only tasked to come up with questions for peers to

respond to, but are also encouraged to question the course material and ingrained ways of thinking. By using the *Framework* as both pedagogy and content (for *all* students, and not solely aspiring academic librarians) the goal is to expand connections to course material and critical information literacy. Ward explains, “We discover the complexity and subtlety of an infinitely mysterious world. Information literacy is not a set of competencies; it is a way of being that comes from living the question.”¹⁹ Ideally, all students will have a common agreement as to what information literacy is and how it functions in any type of library through the foundation of the *Framework* and its related educational theory and pedagogical praxis.

The course learning outcomes, noted in the syllabus, include:

- Interpret and organize different components of pedagogy in order to develop your own instructional identity and path for lifelong learning
- Engage in and critique ongoing professional conversations surrounding information literacy instruction in order to position yourself as a librarian educator
- Evaluate your own teaching philosophy in order to align with evidence-based, learner-centered approaches
- Examine pedagogy through a critical lens in order to develop inclusive learning environments and objects
- Appreciate the value of both theory and practice in pedagogical approaches, engaging in praxis²⁰

As this course is a pedagogy-focused course, each week students engage in pedagogy by teaching their peers as discussion facilitators. Cooke and Hensley highlight the importance of

both reflection and experiential learning in the teacher training of future librarians.²¹ Student facilitators are tasked to complete the readings early, and to unpack difficult questions and knowledge gaps in order to engage their peers in conversation. As other students respond, the facilitator must reply, reflect, and draw out deeper conversation. This can help students become more comfortable with admitting what they do not know and learning in collaboration with their peers, all while in the role of teacher. A particularly apropos strategy to this design is phrased as “thinking with,” in which Magnet, Mason, and Trevenen invoke Haraway’s strategy. The authors explain,

[T]his pedagogical strategy works in opposition to a neoliberal academy concerned only with pedagogy through competition. Rather than placing scholars firmly on one side or another, “thinking with” refuses neat disciplinary divides.²²

Power dynamics in the classroom can be tricky; however, they are something the *Framework* can help navigate, particularly considering the frames Authority is Constructed and Contextual, as well as Information has Value. Power exists on a few levels. First, between peer scholars, or peer students, there can feel like there is a sense of competition. Encouraging “thinking with” and uncovering questions and gaps together with the focus on Research as Inquiry, and Scholarship as a Conversation, can help lessen anxiety that might surround discussions. Second, there are power dynamics between teacher and student: both between instructor of the course and students, as well as between student-serving-as-teacher each week and their peers. In a review, Lund criticizes well-known critical pedagogy scholar, Shor, in his model of student empowerment via perceived dissolution of instructor control. He states,

In a bold move for a university instructor, Shor seeks students' input on the reading list, assignments, seating, and evaluation. For me, this experiment raises a number of questions. How many students desired this additional role? Might any of them resent being asked to help construct a reading list for a professor they assume to be an expert in the field?²³

This is something that was taken into account in the design of this course: how much true power should an instructor give students, and how much power is actually beneficial to their learning? Beatty provides a deeper reading of Freire and makes the distinction between Freire's intent and how first world librarians have read his work regarding power and authority. Beatty explains that we have conflated authority and authoritarianism. He highlights that "the teacher has authority in the classroom because they have achieved a mastery of their particular subject. And this authority manifests itself as the right and responsibility to limit the student's freedom."²⁴ Beatty notes how, unfortunately, in our enthusiasm for rejecting authoritarianism, we tend to reject also the teacher's authority.

In this course, students have limited authority and become assigned experts for the week. By completing readings before their peers and leading discussion, they gain authority for the temporary allotment of time. This does not diminish the course instructor's authority, as this is earned expertise, and helps structure student learning. We are better able to explore topics of critical pedagogy, equity, and inclusion in teaching by having this contained structure that values teacher authority. This additionally ties in to encouraging students to value their own expertise

and take on leadership roles regarding information literacy in their future library environments; here we see Authority is Constructed and Contextual; Information has Value; and Scholarship as Conversation. Authoritarianism is subverted by examining questions together and having a class-level agreement to navigate difficult conversations.

Discussion is the main focus of the course, as noted in its seminar-style design. Direct engagement with the *Framework* is limited to a one-week deep-dive of discussion surrounding reading the *Framework* document, as well as associated readings. Students also have chosen to look more closely at the similarities and differences between the *Framework* and the *Standards*, as well as teaching with Big Questions instead of focusing on skills. All discussions are encouraged to include reflection on previous readings, and so tie-ins are regularly made between the *Framework* and subsequent readings in the course. There are other assignments, however, which reinforce the pedagogy of the *Framework*. Students craft a teaching philosophy that they revisit and revise during the course, using course readings and their learning to craft an argument as to why they made the changes they did. Students also write a cover letter and reflect on their skills and expertise in teaching (including reflections related to the *Framework*), and the final project includes an instruction toolkit that students compile of readings and sources related to each week's course content to help support their future engagement as educators. Students, however, are not required to focus heavily on the *Framework* in their teaching philosophies and approaches because not all will be required to be directly connected to it in future work: this course sets students up with baseline knowledge for approaches to pedagogy, and the *Framework* is included as an approach.

By incorporating the *Framework* in course design, non-competitive learning, inquiry, and valuing information and expertise become apparent in both pedagogical approaches and content. Throughout the course, we also examine what makes a good teacher, the role of librarians as educators, image and self-perceptions, facets of successful instructional design schemas, educational technology's ability to both democratize education and also derail it through private interests, and how to work with other groups and entities in designing instruction. This historical and theoretical approach to content in this foundations course sets students up to begin applying what they've learned in subsequent coursework, such as in LIS 583.

LIS 583: eLearning for Librarians and Other Information Professionals

Once students attain the foundations of the *Framework* and learning theories, they move onto the e-learning course. This course gives students the practical skills needed to develop high-quality online multimedia learning objects. The course is focused on designing and developing stand alone, skills-based tutorials and not on teaching online via learning management systems or another similar environment. Course outcomes include the following:

- Use an instructional design model to design an effective online tutorial
- Implement sound pedagogy and multimedia principles in tutorials
- Describe and later implement the characteristics that lead to engagement and motivation in online tutorials
- Create effective online assessments for tutorials
- Examine and evaluate different multimedia tools and tutorials

- Use a multimedia tool to develop an effective and engaging online tutorial
- Apply usability techniques and universal design principles to improve your own tutorial
- Review and critique several online tutorials

Although students work extensively with the *Framework* in the foundations course, it can be difficult for them to transfer this knowledge to a practical, teaching setting. Bombaro²⁵ and Wilkinson²⁶ researchers and librarians have noted the *Framework's* lack of accessibility and usefulness. Thus, the e-learning course allows students to develop readily usable teaching materials that are aligned with the *Framework*. Starting from a cognitive processing framework where students learn how new knowledge is gained, they then examine evidence-based learning principles and how they are applied to online multimedia materials. Students explore the latest multimedia technologies including content authoring tools, rapid e-learning tools, and video, audio and graphic tools. Course topics include application of learning theories, graphic design principles, interactivity, gaming, and engagement. Additionally, usability, accessibility, and universal design are studied along with an understanding of the *Framework* and how it can be used in developing e-learning tutorials.

Two course assignments focus on developing teaching materials using the *Framework*. Each week students must locate, review, and evaluate online tutorials from across disciplines and skill sets including at least two tutorials that directly address information literacy. Students are asked to share their review with their peers and to address how the tutorial is aligned with the *Framework*. They must specify the frame, the knowledge practice, and the disposition to which the tutorial is aligned. They are also required to evaluate the extent to which the tutorial teaches the intended concepts addressed in the different frames. Because many tutorials were created

before the *Framework* was widely adopted, they often do not focus on the threshold concepts the *Framework* emphasizes directly. Thus, with this assignment students must identify frames on their own and are able to gain a better understanding of how the *Framework* can be used to teach concepts via online tutorials.

As a final project, students are required to complete a full-length tutorial in the e-learning tool of their choice. As students design their tutorial, they must first identify a frame and corresponding knowledge practices and dispositions that they will address in their tutorial. Students are then required to write at least five learning outcomes that are aligned with the frame they have chosen. They must also discuss why they chose a particular frame and how it is aligned with the learning outcomes they wrote. Part of the grading considerations for this final project include the extent to which students have understood the *Framework* as determined by the learning outcomes they write. They are also graded on the extent to which the tutorial teaches the *Framework* and the learning outcomes they have identified.

Conclusion

The University of Arizona's Graduate Certificate in Instruction and Teaching for Librarians and Information Professionals was created to meet the needs of librarians who are required to take on the role of educator, in a variety of forms and settings. The certificate provides students with the skills, background, and theory needed to become effective instructors across teaching environments. The *Framework* is used throughout the certificate as both subject matter and pedagogical approach, and is scaffolded between theory and practice. The *Framework's*

flexibility and focus on threshold concepts allows students to critically explore big questions within information literacy through discussions, teaching assignments, and practical application. The certificate is fully online and available to students currently enrolled in an MLS program, to those who have completed an undergraduate degree and work as paraprofessional staff in libraries, and to current librarians wanting to learn more about pedagogy and improve their own teaching. It was approved in late 2017, and was officially offered starting in 2019. The individual courses, however, have been available since 2016, and the authors assess student learning each semester to compile into a certificate-wide evaluation in order to expand and improve the reach of the courses and program.

¹ Laura Saunders, "Education for Instruction: A Review of LIS Instruction Syllabi," *The Reference Librarian* 56, no. 1 (2015): 8.

² Ibid.

³ Association of College and Research Libraries Instruction Section, "Library Instruction Courses Offered by Accredited Master's Degree Programs in Library and Information Studies," ACRL Instruction Section website, September 2018, <https://acrl.ala.org/IS/instruction-tools-resources-2/professional-development/library-instruction-courses-offered-by-accredited-masters-programs-in-library-and-information-studies/>.

⁴ Courtney Douglass, "Making the Grade: Should MLIS Programs Prepare Information Professionals for Success as Educators?" In *Re-Envisioning the MLS: Perspectives on the Future of Library and Information Science Education*, edited by Johanna Percell, Lindsay C. Sari, Paul T. Jaeger, and John Carlo Bertot, *Advances in Librarianship* 44B. UK:Emerald Publishing Limited, 2018: 218.

⁵ Nicole Cooke and Merinda Hensley, "The Critical and Continuing Role of Library and Information Science Curriculum in the Teacher Training of Future Librarians," *Information Research* 18, no. 3 (2013).

⁶ Merinda Kaye Hensley, "Improving LIS Education in Teaching Librarians to Teach," *Proceedings of the ACRL 2015 Conference*, Chicago: ACRL 2015.

⁷ Heidi Julien, Maria Tan, and Shannon Merillat. "Instruction for Information Literacy in Canadian Academic Libraries: A Longitudinal Analysis of Aims, Methods, and Success/L'enseignement visant les compétences informationnelles dans les bibliothèques universitaires canadiennes: Une analyse longitudinale des objectifs, des méthodes et du succès obtenu." *Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science* 37 no.2 (2013): 81-102.

⁸ Theresa Westbrook and Sarah Fabian. "Proficiencies for Instruction Librarians: Is There Still a Disconnect Between Professional Education and Professional Responsibilities?" *College & Research Libraries* 71 no.6 (2010): 569-590.

⁹ Matthew Long and Roger Schonfeld, "Ithaca S+R US Library Survey 2013." *Ithaca S+R2*, 2014. <https://doi.org/10.18665/sr.22833>.

¹⁰ Saunders,18.

¹¹ Douglass, Making the grade, 219.

¹² Ibid., 218.

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