Research is Not a Basic Skill

ALLISON HOSIER

INFORMATION LITERACY LIBRARIAN, UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY, SUNY

GEORGIA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION/CARTERETTE SERIES WEBINAR

FEBRUARY 12, 2020

Welcome to "Research is Not a Basic Skill"!

Allison Hosier

Information Literacy Librarian
University at Albany, SUNY
E-mail: ahosier@albany.edu
Twitter: @ahosier
Blog: studyingresearch.com

Information literacy instruction: Typical skills and concepts

Skills/concepts		
Formats of information		
Evaluating information		
Library databases		
Library catalog		
Plagiarism/citation		
Scholarly vs. non-scholarly		
Other?		

On a scale of 1-10, how proficient do you think students are with these skills?

Skills/concepts	Proficiency	
Formats of information	1	
Evaluating information	3	
Library databases	2	
Library catalog	1	
Plagiarism/citation	2	
Scholarly vs. non-scholarly	1	
Other?		

On a scale of 1-10, how confident are students prior to instruction?

On a scale of 1-10, how confident are students prior to instruction?

Skills/concepts	Proficiency	Confidence
Formats of information	1	8
Evaluating information	3	10
Library databases	2	7
Library catalog	1	7
Plagiarism/citation	2	8
Scholarly vs. non-scholarly	1	9
Other?		

Students' confidence in their research-related skills often does not match their proficiency with those skills.
(Molteni & Chan)
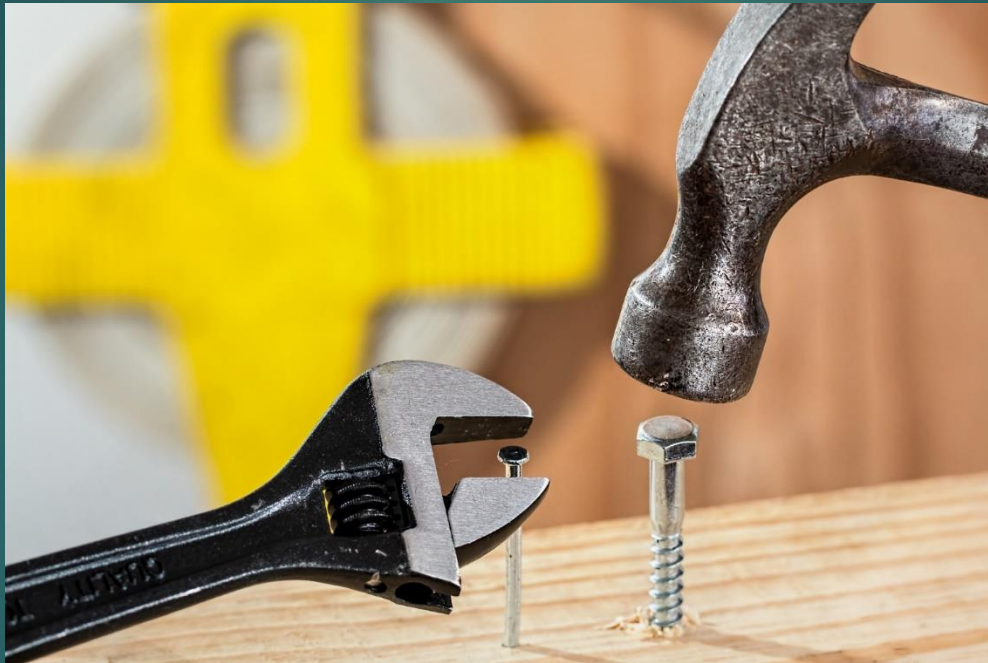
Why does this mismatch exist?

Why does this mismatch exist?

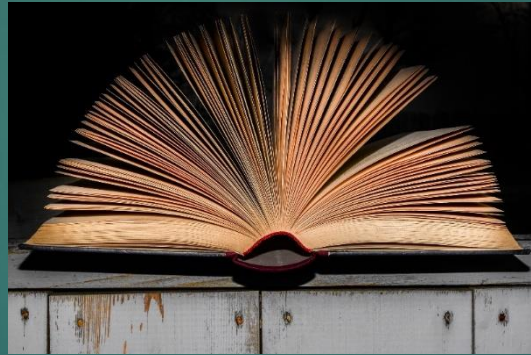# Those skills serve them well in some contexts

But not others

This is also a problem in writing instruction

Outline

▶ Define research

▶ How do we know research is contextual?

▶ The Standards and skills-based instruction

▶ The Framework and the importance of context

▶ Suggested model for incorporating this into IL instruction

▶ Questions

What is research?

Office of Human Research Protections

Research is a systematic investigation intended to contribute to generalizable knowledge.

The ACRL Standards

Research is an investigation that involves the identification of a gap in knowledge, the identification and evaluation of relevant sources, and the ethical use of those sources.

The ACRL Framework

Research is a "reflective discovery of information" which leads to the creation of new knowledge

Information-seeking

A behavior that "arises as a consequence of a need perceived by an information user who…makes demands upon formal or informal information sources or services, which result in success or failure to find relevant information."

Source: T.D. Wilson, "Models in Information Behaviour Research," *Journal of Documentation* 55 no. 3 (1999): 251.

What is research?

Any formal or informal investigation undertaken to fill a gap in knowledge, build on existing knowledge, or create new knowledge.
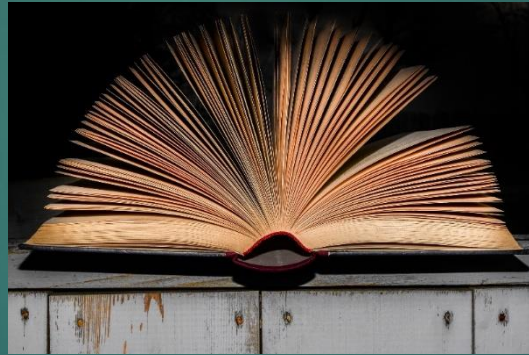
What is research?

Any formal or informal investigation undertaken to fill a gap in knowledge, build on existing knowledge, or create new knowledge.

Often results in a research product of some kind.

How do we know research is contextual?

Research is an activity and a subject of study

Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies
(Adler-Kassner & Wardle)

Writing is both an activity and a subject of study.

Research is an activity and a subject of study

The study of research

Involves the study of the products or processes or research in order to better understand some aspect of research itself.

The study of research

Involves the study of the products or processes or research in order to better understand some aspect of research itself.

Context is often key to these studies.

The study of research in LIS literature

- ▶ How different populations seek or use information in different contexts.

- ▶ Understanding how researchers cite data

- ▶ Common themes in research on a particular subject

- ▶ How the content of one type of research product differs from the content of another type of research product

- ▶ How a population uses a particular collection

- ▶ Usability studies: how the tools of research are used

- ▶ Studies of library space: what research activities take place there

- ▶ Improving the effectiveness of information retrieval systems

- ▶ How and why students choose the tools and sources that they do

The study of research outside of LIS

- The Reproducibility Project (psychology)
- The science of science communication

Context is key

How people search for, evaluate, and use information is not the same in every research situation.

The ACRL Standards

The ACRL Standards

An information literate individual is able to:

- ▶ Determine the extent of information needed
- ▶ Access the needed information effectively and efficiently
- ▶ Evaluate information and its sources critically
- ▶ Incorporate selected information into one's knowledge base
- ▶ Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
- ▶ Understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and access and use information ethically and legally

The ACRL Standards

An information literate individual is able to:

- Successfully carry out the basic steps of academic, library-based research.

The ACRL Framework

Authority is Constructed and Contextual

▶ Information resources reflect their creators' expertise and credibility, and are evaluated based on the information need and the context in which the information will be used.

▶ [Authority] is contextual in that the researcher need may help to determine the level of authority required.

Information Creation as Process

- Experts recognize that information creations are valued differently in different contexts, such as academia or the workplace.

- [Learners who are developing their information literate abilities] monitor the value that is placed upon different types of information products in varying contexts.

Information Has Value

- The value of information is manifested in various contexts, including publishing practices, access to information, the commodification of personal information, and intellectual property laws.

Research as Inquiry

- No explicit reference

Scholarship as Conversation

► [Learners who are developing their information literate abilities] suspend judgment on the value of a particular piece of scholarship until the larger context for the scholarly conversation is better understood.

Searching as Strategic Exploration

▶ Experts realize that information searching is a contextualized, complex experience that affects, and is affected by, the cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of the searcher.

▶ [N]ovice learners tend to use few search strategies, while experts select from various search strategies, depending on the sources, scope, and context of the information need.

Why does this matter?

Putting it all together

▶ Research is both an activity and a subject of study

▶ The study of research relies heavily on context

▶ Teaching students about the contextual nature of research is key to overcoming barriers to learning related to overconfidence

▶ The ACRL Framework gives us a path to do this

A Suggested Model

Topics covered in an 8-week IL course

Week	Topic
Week 1	What is information literacy?
Week 2	Common beliefs about research
Week 3	Information formats
Week 4	Finding and evaluating information
Week 5	Using sources
Week 6	"Real world" case study
Week 7	The ethical use of information
Week 8	Final project (annotated bibliography)

"We expect our students to become master builders while they are still apprentices."

(Sommers & Saltz, 2004)

Common model for composition course

- ▶ Organized by genres of writing
- ▶ Students study examples of these genres
- ▶ After studying examples of genres, students apply conventions in their own work.

Common model for composition course

▶ Organized by genres of writing

▶ Students study examples of these genres

▶ After studying examples of genres, students apply conventions in their own work.

What if information literacy instruction emulated this?

Example units in IL course

Week	Topic
Unit 1	Academic/scholarly research • Study an example research product • Learn the conventions • Learn skills needed to apply those conventions • Create a research product in this genre
Unit 2	Personal research • Study an example research product • Learn the conventions • Learn skills needed to apply those conventions • Create a research product in this genre

Other ideas

Using the annotated bibliography as an "establishing shot"

- Inspired by Julie Lindquist and Bump Halbritter: "Documenting and Discovering Learning"

- Students complete the annotated bibliography at the beginning of the course rather than at the end

- The annotated bibliography receives no feedback from me—they get credit just for completing it

- At the end of the course, students reflect on the work they did using what they've learned in the course

Using the annotated bibliography as an "establishing shot"

- How does your annotated bibliography reflect your experiences as a researcher and information creator as they were at the beginning of this semester/course?

- Look at the sources you used and think back to our module on information formats. What formats of information are represented here (scholarly articles, websites, non-scholarly articles, books, something else)? Why did you choose information in this format/these formats at the time?

- Think about our module on evaluating information. What informed your decisions to choose these sources over other ones you might have used at the time? In retrospect, what criteria did you apply for choosing your sources?

- How did you choose to give credit to your sources? What informed your decision to do it this way?

- Looking back, what role did the context of the research you were conducting play in your decisions about the formats you used, how you evaluated information, and how you gave credit to the sources?

- If you were to do this annotated bibliography over again, how would you use what you've learned in this class to change your work and why would you make those changes? (If you wouldn't make changes, why not?)

- Are there any other changes you would want to make? Why would you make those changes?

Using the annotated bibliography as an "establishing shot"

► Looking back, what role did the context of the research you were conducting play in your decisions about the formats you used, how you evaluated information, and how you gave credit to the sources?

Ideas for one-shot sessions

- Using general versus subject-specific databases
- Evaluating information: which criteria are important in which contexts?
- Types of sources that appropriate for different contexts
- Conventions of college-level academic research (and how they are different from other types of research students have done)
- Giving students an example source and having them examine it in groups to learn what types of sources were used, how they were used, the credit given, etc.

Potential Benefits

Students better recognize the contextual nature of research

They understand that they are experts in some types of research, but novices in others

They learn how to become effective researchers across contexts

Potential Barriers

Collaborating with course faculty

Making a case for a more in-depth IL course

Discomfort with stepping outside discipline-agnostic academic research represented by the Standards: is it our place?

Potential Barriers

We should do it anyway

From here

- Follow-up article locating research-as-subject themes in core LIS literature (currently being revised)

- Study to explore the role of research in creative writing (a genre of research that is starting to get more attention)

- Possible book project exploring these ideas in more depth, with practical suggestions for instruction and non-instruction librarians

- Updates and ongoing conversation: studyingresearch.com

Starting a conversation

I would love to hear from you if…

- ▶ You are interested in putting these ideas into action
- ▶ You have already done something like this
- ▶ You see any connections between this research and your own thinking
- ▶ You are a researcher who studies research

Questions and conversation

Allison Hosier

Information Literacy Librarian

University at Albany, SUNY

E-mail: ahosier@albany.edu

Twitter: @ahosier

Blog: studyingresearch.com

Hosier, A. (2019) "Research is an Activity and a Subject of Study: A Proposed Metaconcept and Its Practical Application." *College & Research Libraries 80*(1) 44-59.

Relevant citations and credits (selected)

▶ Jens B. Asendorpf, Mark Conner, Filip De Fruyt, Jan De Houwer, Jaap J. A. Denissen, Klaus Fiedler, Susann Fiedler, David C. Funder, Reinhold Kliegl, Brian A. Nosek, Marco Perugini, Brent W. Roberts, Manfred Schmitt, Marcel A.G. Aken, Hannelore Weber, and Jelte M. Wicherts, "Recommendations for Increasing Replicability in Psychology," *European Journal of Personality* 27 no. 2 (2013): 108-119.

▶ Julie Lindquist and Bump Halbritter, "Documenting and Discovering Learning: Reimagining the Work of the Literacy Narrative," *College Composition and Communication* 70 no. 3 (2019): 413-445.

▶ Valeria E. Molteni and Emily K. Chan, "Student Confidence/Overconfidence in the Research Process," *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 41 no. 1 (2015): 2-8.

▶ Nancy Sommers and Laura Saltz, "The Novice as Expert: Writing the Freshman Year," *College Composition and Communication* 56 no. 1 (2004): 124-49.

▶ Elizabeth Wardle and Linda Adler-Kassner, "Metaconcept: Writing is an Activity and a Subject of Study," in *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies*, ed. Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2015), 15-16.

▶ T.D. Wilson, "Models in Information Behaviour Research," *Journal of Documentation* 55 no. 3 (1999): 251.

▶ All images are copyright-free and taken from Pixabay: www.pixabay.com

Questions and conversation

Allison Hosier

Information Literacy Librarian

University at Albany, SUNY

E-mail: ahosier@albany.edu

Twitter: @ahosier

Blog: studyingresearch.com

Hosier, A. (2019) "Research is an Activity and a Subject of Study: A Proposed Metaconcept and Its Practical Application." *College & Research Libraries 80*(1) 44-59.