METALITERACY IN PRACTICE

TRUDI E. JACOBSON
and
THOMAS P. MACKEY

Neal-Schuman
An imprint of the American Library Association

CHICAGO 2016

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Foreword

THE CONCEPT OF INFORMATION LITERACY IS NOT NEW. FOR decades, educators—particularly academic and school librarians—have devoted tremendous effort and resources to teaching students how to navigate increasingly complex information systems in the digital age. Their task is to teach students how to be discriminating information seekers and consumers as well as ethical content producers. Their overarching goal is to help students succeed in school and society, so that they remain self-directed, effective, and motivated learners long after graduation.

Despite these widespread efforts, something surprising has *not* occurred: Few have thought to ask what happens to college students once they graduate. For instance, what are the outcomes of training and curricula aimed at producing more-information-literate adults? What critical thinking and information competencies learned and developed in college are adapted and applied by graduates when they join the workplace and continue on the journey of their lives?

These are the types of challenging research questions that Project Information Literacy (PIL) addresses. Our latest research tackled some of these questions when we conducted a two-year federal study of relatively recent graduates from ten US colleges and universities. Our survey results tell us most young graduates do credit college with teaching them how to sort through large amounts of content and synthesize key points. Many also reported

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picking up the finer competencies of evaluation, especially determining bias and establishing the authority and credibility of Web sources.

While these are essential competencies for the digital age, we also found this generation's information-finding savvy may be masking some deep and troubling shortcomings. In particular, fewer than one in three of the graduates we surveyed believed they had developed the ability to formulate questions during college. As one graduate we interviewed as part of the study recalled, "I don't even remember being in any classes ever where I saw students asking professors questions in front of the entire class—but wouldn't that be good if students did? It bugs me every day now—why did I rush to get through college, why didn't I take the time to develop questions of my own?"

This and related findings underscore a gap between the critical thinking and information literacy competencies colleges may be teaching students and the work skills they may need at their first job and to remain competitive in the workplace. One recent study from the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) confirms our suspicions: Critical thinking competencies matter to employers that are hiring today's graduates. When more than 300 executives in US companies and nonprofits were surveyed, nine out of ten agreed that the ability to "think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems" mattered more than the major of a potential hire right out of college.

Moreover, these findings raise serious questions about the nature of higher education that today's students may be receiving. Are colleges and universities turning out curious question-askers who are equipped to solve information problems? Or are they churning out an abundance of "strategic learners" among the digital generation? These are the students who chase the highest grade rather than self-reflection and deep learning, according to Ken Bain, acclaimed educator and author of *What the Best College Students Do*.

Regardless of what you may be thinking as you read these words, one thing is certain. As we face the challenges of educating today's students, we need more class discussions, assignments, and faculty-student and librarian-student interactions that nurture individual discovery and curiosity while fostering students' ability to formulate and ask their own questions. With this approach, graduates are more likely to become what Ken Bain calls "adaptive experts"—those who can tackle unusual problems and generate new solutions, which, few would disagree, are needed in an increasingly complex world. They are also likely to be lifelong learners, an essential ingredient in a democratic society and for living a full and rich life.

This call for improving higher education curricula and pedagogy is a mandate of the highest order. It applies to librarians as much as it does to faculty. But how do academic and school librarians, often working in close collaboration with faculty, pick up the strands of this inevitable educational shift and participate actively in their daily work with students? What new curricular

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ideas exist for helping students think about their own learning styles? What classroom exercises help students understand the information practices they may use every day as collaborative consumers and producers of all kinds of information that enters their lives, whether a book chapter, a *Wikipedia* entry, or a Pinterest board?

Look no further. If you are in need of up-to-date and thought-provoking information literacy curricula and instructional approaches you can use in your teaching, then keep reading. Trudi Jacobson and Tom Mackey, two respected leaders in distance education and library instruction, have brought readers *Metaliteracy in Practice*. As a follow-up to their acclaimed book *Metaliteracy: Reinventing Information Literacy to Empower Learners*, *Metaliteracy in Practice* delivers a compilation of innovative and practical teaching ideas from some of the leading thinkers in library and information literacy instruction today.

What makes this collection different from other curricular guides is this book's focus on *metaliteracy*, which is a powerful reframing of information literacy from its 2000 ACRL (Association of College and Research Libraries) standards. According to Trudi and Tom, metaliteracy retrofits the concept of information literacy so it works better in the Web 2.0 era where information can jump its boundaries and become as transient, free-flowing, and participatory as a Facebook post or a tweet. Moreover, their concept of metaliteracy provides an inclusive and self-referential framework that encompasses, rather than excludes, all the "other" newer literacies, such as digital, visual, cyber, and media literacy.

Each chapter in *Metaliteracy in Practice* takes readers through the process of using the metaliteracy framework in new and exciting ways that easily transfer to the classroom and to work with students. These ideas are grounded in teaching traditional information literacy competencies yet are brought into the twenty-first century with the addition of methods for teaching and learning about metacognition, information creation, and participation in learning communities, too.

Readers will benefit from this collection's practical ideas for teaching students about the importance of format choice, assessing user feedback, creating information as teachers, evaluating dynamic content critically and effectively, and sharing information in collaborative environments. Plus, the case studies contained in *Metaliteracy in Practice* detail the hows and whys of curricular design for metaliteracy, fitting for both beginners and seasoned experts.

Taken together, this collection has some of the most innovative teaching ideas for inspiring librarians and faculty to revise lessons on critical thinking and information literacy, so that their students will graduate from college with the ability to formulate and ask their own questions. The great contribution that a book like *Metaliteracy in Practice* makes is that it gives today's students a better chance at becoming adaptive experts; Ken Bain's phrase for describing individuals who, in his words, "understand the conventional routines, but also

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have the capacity to recognize and even relish the opportunity and necessity for invention."[1]

Alison J. Head

Alison Head founded and directs Project Information Literacy, a national study about today's college students and their research habits.

NOTE

1. Ken Bain, "Deep Learning: Pursuing Questions That Are Important, Intriguing, or Just Beautiful," *Project Information Literacy Smart Talk*, no. 13 (October 10, 2012). http://projectinfolit.org/smart-talks/item/105-ken-bain.

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Preface

THIS BOOK SHARES INNOVATIVE AND EMERGING PRACTICES that represent the influence of metaliteracy in teaching and learning. As we completed our coauthored book, *Metaliteracy: Reinventing Information Literacy to Empower Learners*,[1] we knew that our next project would be a return to editing to engage with faculty and librarians in the field about ways they have started to apply these ideas. The title of this book, *Metaliteracy in Practice*, initially appeared as a heading in our first article introducing this concept, "Reframing Information Literacy as a Metaliteracy,"[2] reinforcing the ongoing intersection between theory and practice. Our own work has reflected the interrelated nature of both approaches: writing and presenting about these concepts while working with colleagues in the Metaliteracy Learning Collaborative on multiple projects. This expanded team led to the development of comprehensive metaliteracy learning goals and objectives, our Metaliteracy .org blog, three massive open online courses (MOOCs), a metaliteracy digital-badging system, and additional open educational resources (OERs) available at our Metaliteracy Learning Collaborative YouTube channel (see http://metaliteracy.org/youtube-channel).

Metaliteracy applies to all stages and facets of an individual's life. It is not limited to the academic realm, nor is it something learned once and for all. Indeed, metaliteracy focuses on adaptability as information environments

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change and the critical reflection necessary to recognize new and evolving needs in order to remain adept. As we know from the groundbreaking work of Dr. Alison J. Head, Director and Principal Investigator for Project Information Literacy (PIL) and author of this book's foreword, the relationship between information literacy and lifelong learning is continuously intertwined in both theory and practice. These connections extend from prior learning and knowledge, to undergraduate education and graduate school, to local communities and workplace settings. Alison's contributions to the field through PIL have been informed by data-driven research, publications, conversations among colleagues, and resources for teachers and learners. The PIL findings and the insights of students who have participated in PIL projects have immeasurably enriched our knowledge and enhanced our effectiveness in advocating for richer, more nuanced opportunities for student learning connected with information literacy. Our own work with metaliteracy is similarly focused on engaging colleagues in the field to think in novel ways about how to involve learners in applying critical thinking across a wide spectrum of scholarly and lifelong learning activities as informed participants in dynamic collaborative spaces. Metaliteracy emphasizes the metacognitive dimension of learning and the active roles we play as producers of original and repurposed information. At times, this takes place through emerging technologies and social media spaces and in the classroom, online, or in community and employment settings. Today's learning environments are networked and collaborative, requiring an understanding of how to connect with others in meaningful ways and to contribute as critical and independent thinkers. In doing so, our learners are also teachers who are empowered to instruct, partner with, and assess peers, and to teach us in the process.

While working on this book we were engaged in our own version of *metaliteracy in practice* with colleagues at the University at Albany, Empire State College, and the University of Buffalo, all within the SUNY system. The metaliteracy model and related learning goals and objectives informed the design of several metaliteracy-inspired learning spaces we have created with colleagues. Recently, we developed two MOOCs that integrated our codeveloped, competency-based, digital-badging content in distinct ways. We developed a Coursera MOOC titled Metaliteracy: Empowering Yourself in a Connected World (www.coursera.org/course/metaliteracy) and a Canvas MOOC called Empowering Yourself as a Digital Citizen (https://learn.canvas.net/courses/591). These projects built on our previous work with the Metaliteracy Learning Collaborative to develop our first connectivist Metaliteracy MOOC (http://metaliteracy.cdlprojects.com) and a metaliteracy digital-badging system that applies these concepts in a competency-based environment and maps the learning goals and objectives in a gamified learning space. These collaborative initiatives were supported with two top-tier Innovative Instruction Technology Grants (IITGs) funded by the State University of New York

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(SUNY) and continue to impact our own thinking about the role of metaliteracy in learning.

This book expands beyond our application of metaliteracy in several interrelated projects to metaliteracy practices developed by our esteemed colleagues in the field. Based on our conversations with librarians and faculty at keynote presentations, conferences, workshops, and webinars, we know that these chapters represent broader changes that are taking place in how information literacy instruction is envisioned and designed through metaliteracy.

While all of this metaliteracy-related activity has been moving forward, we have seen significant changes in the field through the work of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education Task Force. This group, which completed its work in January 2015, was cochaired by one of this book's editors, Trudi E. Jacobson. She and Craig Gibson of the Ohio State University worked with a very strong team to develop what became the ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework).

The approach taken by the *Framework* differs significantly from that of the *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education*, which was adopted by ACRL in 2000 (www.ala.org/acrl/standards/informationliteracy competency). This is immediately apparent in the new definition of information literacy written for the *Framework*:

> Information literacy is the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning.[3]

The similarities to metaliteracy are striking: metacognition, information creation, and participation in learning communities all reflect elements espoused by metaliteracy when it was originally developed to significantly broaden the conception of information literacy that was commonly accepted, at least in the United States, due to the definition in the ACRL *Information Literacy 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[4]

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With this new definition, information literacy has moved much closer to metaliteracy on the spectrum of information-related literacy models.

Metaliteracy's inclusion of the affective domain has its counterpart in the *Framework*'s section of dispositions for each frame. This element has long been noted as an important factor in information literacy, particularly in the seminal work of Carol Kuhlthau[5] and also in the more recent AASL (American Association of School Librarians) *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner*,[6] though it was noticeably absent in the ACRL *Information Literacy Standards*.

Readers interested in the evolution from the *Standards* to the *Framework* might explore a thematic 2013 issue of *Communications in Information Literacy* (http://comminfolit.org/index.php?journal=cil&page=issue&op=view&path[]=14), *Reflecting on the Standards*. The issue was released prior to the completion of the *Framework*, and hence authors were not yet aware of its final form or contents. However, several articles make the connection between metaliteracy and the *Framework*, either implicitly or explicitly. Foremost among these is our lead article, "Proposing a Metaliteracy Model to Redefine Information Literacy."[7] However, metaliteracy is also noted in Marcus Banks's "Time for a Paradigm Shift."[8] Speaking to the need for affective elements are Carol Kuhlthau[9] and Ellysa Stern Cahoy,[10] as well as the concluding piece, "Moving Forward,"[11] based on the work of an earlier task force considering the fate of the *Standards*. Lesley Farmer, a member of the Framework Task Force, contributed "How AASL Learning Standards Inform ACRL Information Literacy Standards,"[12] which provides more detail on this impact.

A second strand of inquiry in the field strongly influences the *Framework*: threshold concepts. Lori Townsend, who, with several colleagues, has researched and written on threshold concepts for information literacy (including one article in the special issue of *Communications in Information Literacy*[13]), was a member of the Task Force. While the Task Force members, informed by an extraordinary response by members of the profession to several drafts, crafted the contents and direction of the six threshold concepts that inform the *Framework*, the work of her research team was an important influence. The integration of threshold concepts marked a distinct shift from the skills-based approach found in the ACRL *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education*. According to Jan Meyer and Raymond Land, "A threshold concept can be considered as akin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. It represents a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress."[14] The threshold concepts underpinning the *Framework* align very well with metaliteracy, as those who are moving from novice toward expert for each concept will undergo transformations that encompass the same domains as found in metaliteracy: behavioral, cognitive, affective, and metacognitive.

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All of the chapters in this volume examine issues relevant to the ACRL *Framework* in relation to metaliteracy. Both are having a transformative effect on the field of information literacy. The chapter authors show why we needed to reframe and reinvent information literacy as a metaliteracy and why a new definition of information literacy was required at this pivotal time in higher education. They all raise issues that reflect today's dynamic information environment and exemplify a shared commitment to learner success in these spaces. This work continues to evolve through the metacognitive reflection of our learners and peers, as we all try to mediate collaborative social environments through active and informed participation.

We have appreciated this opportunity to work with the authors of this text because they are at the forefront of applying the metaliteracy framework in their teaching. This process has had significant impact on their learners and has supported the vital connections between theory and practice. During this past year, the enthusiasm of each author to pioneer such engaging and innovative metaliteracy practices has been an inspiration to us. We have been enriched, informed, and challenged by the ideas articulated here to continuously reflect and think in new ways about the framework we first introduced. We are confident that you will be similarly inspired as you read through each chapter and consider all of the insights and innovations presented in this volume.

BOOK ORGANIZATION

This book starts with a scenario most instructors have faced as they prepared for the first day of class. Donna Witek and Teresa Grettano, both from the University of Scranton, provide us with a real-world teaching situation that reflects the iterative nature of curriculum development, especially in today's dynamic social media world. This first chapter, "Revising for Metaliteracy: Flexible Course Design to Support Social Media Pedagogy," features a collaboration between an information literacy librarian and a professor of rhetoric and composition to develop and teach a 200-level, writing-intensive course, Rhetoric and Social Media, based on metaliteracy. This collaborative process required revisions over time and thoughtful reflections about teaching and learning with social media. The authors effectively demonstrate how theory and practice are interrelated and that metaliteracy is about more than any particular technology because it encourages adaptation to new environments, flexibility, metacognition, and collaboration.

The second chapter, by Lauren Wallis and Andrew Battista, "The Politics of Information: Students as Creators in a Metaliteracy Context," describes their experience teaching an information literacy course at the University of

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Montevallo in Alabama. The course was structured such that it interrogated many of the accepted constructs of higher education teaching. Weaving metaliteracy throughout the course, an emphasis was placed on empowering students and recognizing their roles as creators of information and as teachers.

Chapter 3, "Metaliteracy Learning of RN to BSN Students: A Fusion of Disciplinary Values and Discourses," by Barbara J. D'Angelo and Barry M. Maid, documents an undergraduate research and writing course designed for nursing students at Arizona State University. The authors chronicle course development and detail points of alignment with metaliteracy by connecting the learning objectives of both disciplinary writing and metaliteracy. To be effective in their nursing responsibilities, it is critical that these individuals draw upon relevant resources and share information using ePortfolios and digital media. This chapter includes a strong emphasis on the metacognitive dimension of metaliteracy and models how to revise the curriculum in a way that encourages students to reflect on their learning.

Next, in chapter 4, "Where Collections and Metaliteracy Meet: Incorporating Library-Owned Platforms into Open and Collaborative Library Instruction," Amanda Scull explores metaliteracy in the context of collections and teaching about collections, and she does so specifically related to library-owned content platforms. She delves into the open and collaborative nature of institutional repositories and research guide software that allow students to become content creators and curators. Her chapter illuminates not only the opportunities to engage students to enhance their metaliteracy but also the benefits of enhancing and promoting information owned by the institution.

In chapter 5, "Empowering Learners to Become Metaliterate in a Digital and Multimodal Age," Sandra K. Cimbricz and Logan Rath describe the process of moving from the use of multiliteracies to metaliteracy as the organizing framework in a graduate education course. The course focused on how to teach students in fifth through twelfth grades to be critical, empowered, metacognitive users of digital texts, but the chapter highlights the increasing resonance of the metaliteracy model with the authors and the graduate students in the course as they worked through newly developed assignments. Two of these assignments are examined in detail, illustrating their role in developing metaliterate learners.

Chapter 6, "Metacognition Meets Research-Based Learning in the Undergraduate Renaissance Drama Classroom," by librarian Michele R. Santamaria and professor Kathryn M. Moncrief of Washington College, chronicles the experiences of undergraduate students who were invited in a Renaissance Drama course to work collaboratively with their classmates and their instructors. The project was a digital open access endeavor called the Map of Early Modern London (MoEML). The students therefore took on a role of information producer, rather than just information consumer. They each also wrote a research narrative, encouraging metacognition. Between the contribution to the map and review of the research narratives, the chapter authors were able to

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gauge their students' development as metaliterate learners. A particularly interesting observation in this chapter was that students were using subscription-based library resources to find the information that informed their suggested change to this open access resource.

Student empowerment is a key theme in several chapters in this volume, reflecting the importance of this theme in metaliteracy. In chapter 7, Kristine N. Stewart and David M. Broussard describe a major shift in an established credit-bearing course, Information Use and Student Success. The curriculum was originally based on the ACRL *Information Literacy Standards*, but the authors argue that using material from 2000 is insufficient for a radically altered information environment. "Promoting Empowerment through Metaliteracy: A Case Study of Undergraduate Learning Outcomes" explores changes that focus on understanding the difference between information and knowledge, the integration of multimedia exercises and working in groups, exploring social media sources, and an introduction to online information management.

Chapter 8, "Developing Agency in Metaliterate Learners: Empowerment through Digital Identity and Participation," features the work of Irene McGarrity, coinstructor of a credit-bearing course, Digital Identity and Participatory Culture, at Keene State College, and details the student-centered, collaborative, metaliterate nature of the course. She provides the background on the instructors' efforts to have students develop a sense of agency through the enhanced roles they played in the course. Rather than being the recipients of instructor-selected content and assignments, the students themselves created these key components of the course. The chapter provides details about the successes and challenges of developing a learning experience of this type and clearly ties individual course elements with the metaliteracy goals and learning objectives.

Chapter 9, "Metaliteracy, Networks, Agency, and Praxis: An Exploration," closes the book with an engaging and thoughtful investigation from Paul Prinsloo, who is the research professor in open distance learning (ODL) in the College of Economic and Management Sciences, University of South Africa (Unisa). In this closing chapter, the author situates metaliteracy within a larger theoretical context of literacy itself, while exploring the relationship to praxis, agency, and many distinct theoretical perspectives, including Paulo Freire and Pierre Bourdieu, among others. Prinsloo intentionally opens up the conversation by challenging assumptions and expanding the scope of what we mean by metaliteracy *in praxis*. He contextualizes metaliteracy as agency in networked social spaces that requires more than the development of discrete skills to include the ability to make choices. By doing so, the author opens the unlimited possibilities for metaliteracy in both theory and practice, as the model continues to evolve.

This volume is a complement to our *Metaliteracy* book with nine new chapters that apply the metaliteracy framework in creative and inventive ways. We closed our last book with two case studies about metaliteracy in practice based

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on our teaching, and now we expand the dialogue with contributions from our colleagues in the field. The chapter authors are from multiple disciplines and explore diverse pedagogical issues within higher education related to the theory and practice of this model. Collectively, the chapters represent the exciting work that is happening in the field and are certain to inspire new innovations among readers.

As always, we welcome your thoughts and insights about these ideas and approaches to teaching and learning at our Metaliteracy.org blog, the central hub for all things metaliteracy.

NOTES

1. Thomas P. Mackey and Trudi Jacobson, *Metaliteracy: Reinventing Information Literacy to Empower Learners* (Chicago: Neal-Schuman, 2014).\\i Metaliteracy: Reinventing Information Literacy to Empower Learners\\i0{} (Chicago: Neal-Schuman, an imprint of the American Library Association, 2014.
2. Thomas P. Mackey and Trudi E. Jacobson, "Reframing Information Literacy as a Metaliteracy," *College and Research Libraries* 72, no. 1 (January 1, 2011): 62–78, doi:10.5860/crl-76r1.
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8. Marcus Banks, "Time for a Paradigm Shift: The New ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education," *Communications in Information Literacy* 7, no. 2 (September 12, 2013): 184–88, doi:10.7548/cil.v7i2.256.
9. Carol C. Kuhlthau, "Rethinking the 2000 ACRL Standards: Some Things to Consider," *Communications in Information Literacy* 7, no. 2 (January 10, 2013): 92–97, doi:10.7548/cil.v7i2.232.

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11. Ellysa Stern Cahoy, Craig Gibson, and Trudi E. Jacobson, "Moving Forward: A Discussion on the Revision of the ACRL Information Literacy Standards for Higher Education," *Communications in Information Literacy* 7, no. 2 (October 12, 2013): 189–201, doi:10.7548/cil.v7i2.273.
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