THE
ONE-SHOT
LIBRARY INSTRUCTION
SURVIVAL GUIDE

SECOND EDITION

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This book is inspired by the thousands of librarians across the country who regularly teach information literacy in one-shot instruction sessions. We became passionate about supporting one-shot librarians following the overwhelming response to a workshop we taught at an Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) preconference workshop several years ago, which led to the first iteration of this book, and an online class taught for the American Library Association—all about how to teach information literacy effectively and engagingly in one-shot sessions.

The stories we’ve heard from teaching librarians became the outline for the chapters of this book. One-shot library instructors want to be excellent teachers, but they encounter significant barriers to success. The most obvious is the pressure to cover a proliferating amount of information literacy content in a limited amount of time. One-shot instructors often have difficulty engaging students. Their success is heavily dependent on collaboration with course instructors, and they often have little control over the environments in which they teach. Further, despite the brevity of the sessions, they still need to assess their success (or failure).
And now, on top of everything else, teaching librarians are challenged by the *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (ACRL, 2015) to change how and what they teach.

Reaching a common understanding of information literacy is problematic, not just with course instructors, but even within our own profession. The literature is flooded with articles that endlessly debate the concept of information literacy and the best way to deliver it, yet few address best practices for one-shot instruction, which “has become unpopular in the discourse of information literacy in higher education. While there exists some serious consideration of how to deliver one-shot instruction, the trend is to describe programs that transform, extend, or otherwise eclipse the one-shot approach with the assumption that something else—anything is preferable” (Buchanan and McDonough 2015, 85). Embedded librarianship, interactive online tutorials, and credit-bearing information literacy courses are all well and good, but of little use to the librarian who has one-shot library instruction as a major job responsibility and is faced—sometimes on a daily basis—with teaching a diverse range of students in multiple disciplines how to transform a vast amount of information into academic scholarship.

**What Is the One-Shot?**

Instead of serving as the instructor of record for an entire course, librarians typically work with different classes for a single session, generally only 50 to 75 minutes in length. These single sessions are commonly referred to among teaching librarians as “one-shots.” Critics of one-shot instruction object to the generic library orientation or tour, which fits more into the traditional category of bibliographic instruction rather than information literacy instruction. Even in 2016, when reporting data for ACRL, librarians were asked to record the number of “presentations” instead of “classes,” an indicator of confusion even within librarianship about what teaching librarians actually do.

One-shot library instruction does not have to be a dog-and-pony show about library resources and skills. In fact, the *Framework* offers a
range of opportunities for teaching librarians to help students become information-literate. The Framework defines information literacy as “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” (ACRL 2015, 3). Information literacy instruction should be so much more than a library tour, orientation, or scavenger hunt.

It is quite possible that your one-shot library instruction may not have made the transition to true information literacy instruction as described above. Even after a quarter century of professional focus on the concept of information literacy, library sessions may still look more

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bibliographic Instruction</th>
<th>Information Literacy</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. One-shot instruction</td>
<td>Integrated into curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Focuses on learning to use library resources</td>
<td>Focuses on information management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Often not linked to classroom assignments</td>
<td>Integral to course assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Session often focuses on passive learning</td>
<td>Active learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. May lack clearly defined goals and objectives</td>
<td>Goals and objectives are carefully linked to course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Librarian lectures, demonstrates</td>
<td>Librarian and faculty facilitate learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Librarian provides instruction asked for</td>
<td>Librarian and faculty design and implement together</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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like the bibliographic instruction of the past. Seamans (2012) describes this phenomenon as “a tendency to take bibliographic instruction, wave a wand over it, and designate it as information literacy instruction” (230–31). She borrowed Ward’s (1997) chart to answer the question, “How Is Information Literacy Different from Bibliographic Instruction?” (231). Examine table 1.1 and ask yourself: “Which column most accurately reflects my instruction practices?” If the answer is that you are still a bibliographic instructor, don’t be dismayed. The solutions offered in this book will help you to transform your instruction in the desired direction.

**Why Bother?**

One major challenge that all librarians have is the issue of time. Librarians have many other responsibilities in addition to teaching, so the idea of investing additional time in planning and implementing one-shot sessions may seem counterintuitive. Why invest quality time in your one-shots? The most obvious reason is that if you only get one session with a group of students, you want to teach it well and make it relevant and meaningful. Another reason is that your investment in collaboration with the course instructor will develop into a positive working relationship and lead to future endeavors, such as a more integrated model of information literacy instruction. The time you spend reflecting on your teaching after a class session is a valuable investment as well. The more time you spend preparing for and reflecting upon a class, the less stress you will have in the classroom.

**The One-Shot and the Framework**

Shortly after the publication of the first edition of *The One-Shot Library Instruction Survival Guide*, ACRL released an early draft of the Framework. We were thrilled to find that the Framework embraced Hofer, Townsend, and Brunetti’s recommended threshold concepts for information literacy, which we had described in the first edition as an excel-
lent approach to setting relevant, meaningful, and transferable goals for one-shot library instruction. The early draft of the Framework provoked months of debate among the profession. Many librarians wondered, “But what about the one-shot?” The gut reaction by many was that these “big ideas” would not fit in well with a one-shot library session. We disagree—the one-shot is the perfect time to focus on big ideas and students’ potential stumbling blocks. Lauren Wallis said it best in her charming “break-up letter” to the standards. Here is her argument for embracing the Framework:

It’s flexible. It doesn’t insist on teaching information literacy as a linear series of steps. It realizes that learners enter the process of research at different points, depending on their past experiences and the type of questions they’re asking. And it leaves room for change and growth, both in terms of emerging technologies and student needs. (Wallis 2015)

This revised edition of The One-Shot Library Instruction Survival Guide will show you how to take advantage of the flexibility and freedom of the Framework. The chapters will encourage you to use the Framework, and the ideas behind the frames, to discuss expectations with faculty, plan successful one-shot sessions, and incorporate activities that will encourage students to explore, discover, question—and even struggle with—information on the path to becoming information-literate. The Framework is incorporated into each chapter of the new edition. In particular, chapter 3, “But, How Will I Cover Everything?” features descriptions of each frame, along with vignettes from librarians who have successfully incorporated the frame in a one-shot session. As with the vignettes from the first edition, we chose essays from reflective practitioners who developed creative solutions to real-life problems such as difficult assignments from professors or a fear of discussing controversial topics. The vignettes are not recipes, but rather creative efforts to transform the traditional click here, go there instruction model into better, more effective teaching practice.
What to Expect from This Book

If you are looking for a cookbook of ready-made lesson plans or a linear template for your instruction, this is not the book for you. A premise of this book is that meaningful, relevant information literacy instruction begins with the student experience. Since every student or group of students is different, every instructional situation is different as well. Librarians’ situations also vary widely. Have you ever read an article or heard a conference presentation and thought, “That’s nice, but it would never work in my library”? There are no cookie-cutter solutions. You will want to adapt the recommendations in this book to your real life and choose the strategies that work best for your own teaching. It is also understood that there are many things that you cannot control, such as institutional frameworks, resources, or technology; but there are many more that you can control, and those are the focus of this book. If you concentrate on those areas that you can control, your instruction will improve, and chances are you will feel better about yourself as a teacher. In fact, instruction may just become the favorite part of your job.

This book offers invaluable guidance based on decades of classroom experience, wisdom from the literature, and voices from the field. We wrote the book that we wish we had read our first year of teaching. The fact that you have purchased this book attests to your willingness and readiness to improve your instructional practices, so turn the page and begin to become a better, more confident teacher.
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