
PAPERS

Christian Worldview in Academic Information Literacy Instruction

Survey Results and Discussion

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ABSTRACT This paper compiles responses and provides analysis for a survey on librarians' efforts in and opinions about the integration of faith into information literacy instruction. Additionally, it introduces information literacy faith integration efforts at the presenter's institution. Attendees at the presentation were invited to discuss theories informing this approach to information literacy instruction and to share their views on, approaches to, and experiences with faith integration in information literacy at their institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Information literacy is defined by the American Library Association's (ALA) college division, the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL), 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" (American Library Association 2015, 8).

The scholarly literature offers guidance on teaching students to think about information in higher education classrooms (e.g., Mattson and Oberlies 2018; Young and Hinton 2019), and on incorporating Christian principles across academic disciplines (e.g., Dockery 2012; Smith and Smith 2011). The question posed across this author's scholarly efforts involves the intersection of the two pedagogical discussions: How can Christian educators equip students to navigate the information ecosystem of a fallen world with a Christ-centered perspective? (Young 2023). Finding little on this topic in the scholarly literature, a proposal was submitted into the canon and a survey was designed to query the librarians involved in this work across the nation.

METHODOLOGY

A visual synthesis of the ACRL Framework and the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities' (CCCU) three educational commitments (Council for Christian Colleges and Universities n.d.) was presented via poster at Atla Annual 2022. The call for proposals queried if an interactive element would be included, and as this poster was going to be presented virtually if accepted, an online survey was proposed. Following acceptance for the poster session, a survey developed on the Qualtrics platform entitled "Information Literacy at Christian Colleges and Universities (Survey)" was submitted to the Samford University Internal Review Board (IRB) for review in April 2022. The IRB approved the survey as exempt, and the survey was linked anonymously in the poster via QR code. No identifying metadata was collected on responses and respondents were instructed to feel free to opt out of any question they did not wish to answer.

Poster session participants were invited to share their efforts in and thoughts on the integration of faith into information. A QR code was provided to complete the survey, and the survey was also disseminated to Atla and ACL listservs and at the author's academic library. The survey posed demographic questions, institutional questions, and programmatic and theoretical information literacy instruction questions.

The survey was open for approximately one month in Summer 2022. A total of 86 respondents completed questions on the survey. Results have been tabulated on the Qualtrics platform and are detailed below.

RESULT

A total of 86 respondents completed the survey. The survey first queried demographic characteristics. The standard demographic block in Qualtrics was selected and respondents were welcomed to opt out of any question they did not choose to answer.

On question 1 regarding age, 87% (75/86) of respondents opted in. This question was selected from the Qualtrics demographic block for general interest purposes regarding the age ranges of librarians participating in Christian librarian listservs. Should a respondent have selected the Under 18 category, their response was to be deselected from the dataset to protect minors as is required under [author's state/blinded] state law. Responses followed a traditional bell curve, with roughly 10% on the younger end of the spectrum, one third of respondents falling within the 45–54 age bracket, and 24 representing the down-curve ranges of 55–64, 65–74, and 75–84.

On question 2 regarding race, 86% (74/86) of respondents opted in. This question was selected from the Qualtrics demographic block for general interest purposes regarding the self-identified races of librarians participating in Christian librarian listservs. The overwhelming majority of respondents selected “white” (96%).

Question 3 queried location of respondent’s institution. Regions were based in the continental United States, with additional options for Hawaii, Alaska, and outside of the US. 84% (72/86) of respondents opted in on this question. Leading regions selected included the Midwest (35%) and the Southeast (29%). There were no respondents from Hawaii or Alaska, but 7% of respondents indicated institutional locations outside of the US.

Question 4 queried the type of institution at which respondents worked, and 87% (75/86) of respondents opted in. Skip logic was incorporated on this question; if respondents selected “I am not affiliated with an academic institution of higher learning” (n=1), they were taken to question 14. Leading institution type, with one third of respondents selecting it, was 4-year through Ph.D. or professional doctorate.

Question 5 queried respondent’s role at their institution; 92% (78/85 after one participant was redirected via skip logic) opted into this question: 65% reported being library faculty; 19%, library staff. This distinction is only minimally meaningful due to the varying faculty status of librarians across institutions, with many degreed librarians holding the role of staff.

Question 6 queried whether the respondent's institution had a religious affiliation. Of the 85% (72/85) of respondents, 97% indicated yes. Skip logic was incorporated on this question; if respondents selected "no" (n=2), they were taken to question 14.

For respondents who indicated a religious affiliation, Question 7 queried denominational affiliation: 84% (72/83 after two participants were redirected via skip logic) of respondents opted in on this question. Nearly a quarter of respondents (24%) indicated Baptist, but a decisive majority (59%) indicated "Other." A response box correlated to a response of "other" was not offered, which is now recognized as a weakness in this study's design.

Question 8 queried respondents' institutions' membership in the CCCU. 84% (70/83) of respondents opted in on question 8. This question was designed to gauge both institutional membership in CCCU and librarian familiarity with CCCU membership. Approximately 40% indicated that their institution was a CCCU member. Approximately 30% responded "no" or "I am not sure."

Question 9 queried whether respondents' institutions ascribe to a Christian-centered mission, set of values, or student learning outcomes. 84% (70/83) of respondents opted in on question 9, and all respondents indicated "yes."

Question 10 queried offering of/format of information literacy instruction at respondents' institutions. 78% (65/83) of respondents opted in on question 10. Of these respondents, 94% indicated that their library offered information literacy in both class-based and individual formats: 2% indicated only class-based, and 5% indicated only individual consults. None of the respondents indicated that library instruction was not offered at their institution.

Question 11 queried the information literacy standards with which respondents' institutions align; 83% (69/83) of respondents opted in on question 11. This question was designed to gauge the theoretical framework upon which respondents' libraries base library instruction. The ACRL has offered in the twenty-first century two theoretical/practical models for information literacy instruction at the higher education level, the Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education adopted in 2000, and the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education adopted in 2016: 17% of respondents indicated institutional library alignment with the Standards, 52% indicated alignment with the Framework,

15% indicated alignment with another standard, and 16% indicated they did not know.

Question 12 hearkened back to question 9, which queried if respondents' institutions ascribe to a Christian-centered mission, set of values, or student learning outcomes. Question 12 asked for respondents who responded yes to indicate if the Christian mission is incorporated into library instruction or information literacy discussions. Respondents were instructed to select all that apply from four options: "yes, programmatic;" "yes, individual incorporation;" "no;" and "I am not sure." A nearly even number of respondents indicated programmatic and individual incorporation (34 and 35 respondents, respectively). Six respondents indicated that Christian themes are not incorporated or are not welcome, and five indicated they were not sure.

Question 13 asked participants to expand in short answer format on their institutional library's library instruction as it related to Christian world view. Twenty-nine respondents provided feedback.

Question 14 queried librarians regarding the theoretical intersections between the three CCCU institutional commitments and the six ACRL Frames. Participants were asked to rank the difficulty of integration of the educational commitments with the information literacy frames, with 1 being the most difficult and 3 being the least difficult. This was the skip destination question for the two questions above incorporating skip logic (questions 4 and 6).

Respondents deemed the most difficult integration to be between the ACRL Framework and the CCCU commitment "Vocation as Gospel vehicle." The CCCU educational commitment that was ranked as second hardest to integrate was "Moral and spiritual formation of students." The commitment deemed the least difficult integrate was "Spiritual truth throughout the academic enterprise."

The final question in the survey, question 15, asked respondents to share in short answer format if they saw a natural pairing between library instruction/information literacy discussions and institutional Christian missions, values, and goals, and asked for their reasoning; 42 respondents completed this short answer question.

Analysis of these 42 responses finds 11 out of 43 respondents indicating that there is a possible pairing, qualified by the following statements:

- Hard to say, because it is not explicit as such, for the training could apply to any research. Examples used are usually biblical/theological.

- I am in the middle. There are some connections in that Christians seek the truth but much of the foundational beliefs of information literacy do not align with Biblical truths at least not the way the majority of people discuss information literacy.
- I definitely see a natural pairing. Our institution, however, does not subscribe to the CCCU educational commitments, so it is an easier “sell” to match the Framework to our Christian values.
- I’ve never thought about them that way and it’s a little hard for me to make the connection without examples, but I would love to see those and try to incorporate them.
- It can be done, but I am not sure that it is always “natural.” Partly this is due to the tension between time to cover content and time to connect what we do to Christian-centered outcomes of the class or institution. But I think it can be done.
- Sometimes. It depends on the topic of research and the individual’s faith tradition.
- The CCCU pairing is a bit of a stretch; however I do see how IL fits with the academic /scholarly development of our students. And being academically fit provides a vehicle for being a light to our world. And we must be ready to be that light.
- This is an interesting framework that I hadn’t considered before. I can see the links but it would be useful to have concrete examples on how to approach each ACRL concept through the lens of the CCCU educational commitments.
- While Biblical truth is taught, it is not adequately backed up with outside facts (apologetics). Librarians need to help a lot in this area.
- Yes, but I think much of it comes back to epistemology — that is, how we see knowledge. There has not been sufficient work in aligning pedagogy with a firm Christian epistemological base. I do feel that the works of Esther Meek (“Loving to Know”) provides a foundation for Christian epistemology which empowers alignment between a Christian mission/vision and information literacy.
- Yes, but not in the kind of explicit way that these commitments above would seem to imply. I have worked in more

than one Christian higher Ed institution, and with instructional sessions almost always being one shots, there wasn't time to develop relationships or to make those connections. But we absolutely saw information Literacy as essential for our students to be able to go and do the things our institution as a whole was trying to prepare them for.

One respondent indicated an inability to respond to the question, and the remaining 31 respondents indicated a clear, unqualified “yes” to the question. Thematic analysis of responses in this subset of unqualified yesses revealed the following parallels identified by respondents between library instruction/information literacy discussions and institutional Christian missions, values and goals:

- Accuracy and its impact on witness (2)
- Apologetics (1)
- Authority (1)
- Information literacy as foundation for Biblical literacy (1)
- Christ-centeredness/whole person instruction (2)
- Commitment to truth (12)
- Connection to Christian values and attributes (5)
- Diversity of voices (1)
- Ethics (5)
- Ministry of study tradition (1)
- Value of information (1)

DISCUSSION

As “Vocation as Gospel vehicle” was the CCCU commitment deemed most difficult to integrate by survey respondents (48%), this integration offers promise for future research and leadership. More in-depth surveying would be a natural next step for advancing this discussion as qualitative research would unlock the specific mechanics that respondents perceive as both natural and stymying.

Roughly one third (32%) of respondents who answered the information literacy alignment question indicated that their library used an instruction standard other than the ACRL Framework. Over half of this subset indicated the ACRL Standards, rescinded in 2016 by the ALA/ACRL, and the remaining respondents do not align with ei-

ther of the ALA/ACRL twenty-first century standards and instead list “other.” Continued investigation into this slow adoption rate should include a question clarifying what standards comprise the “other” responses in this survey. Might our segment of the library profession explore an increase in adoption of the ACRL Framework? Are there perceived barriers to its adoption specifically at Christian institutions of higher learning?

Additionally, this survey points to progress that can be made in increasing awareness of CCCU membership at member institutions. Current CCCU library programming is directed at library leaders; responses to this survey indicate library faculty interest in this topic that could be harnessed by CCCU through dialogue and programming.

INFORMATION LITERACY FAITH INTEGRATION EFFORTS AT SAMFORD

This research was borne out of professional efforts in my role of Instruction Coordinator to align two assessment pillars: the ACRL Framework (library instruction) and the CCCU Basic Educational Commitments (Christian higher education). Using critical information literacy as theoretical vehicle, an argument was drafted that institutions of higher learning ascribing to Christ-centered missions, values, and institutional/student learning outcomes should encourage students to evaluate information with a Christ-centered perspective (Young 2022). Reflection prompts were drafted pulling each of the assessment pillars together and were published and also added to the library instruction toolkit as resources for Samford library faculty and teaching faculty use. An instruction option of IL faith integration was added to the instruction menu, and three out of 195 total instruction requests for AY 2022-2023 requested this. (Nowhere but up from here!) The Library is engaging in faith in learning discussions on campus and sharing the resource with interested teaching faculty. An information literacy digital badging pathway set to launch Fall 2023 incorporates these reflection prompts in the third and final tier of microcredentialing that students must complete in order to earn badges for the six ACRL Frames and two special topics: ethical use of AI and evaluating open Web information for trustworthiness.

The Samford Library is also developing a virtual course for Christian librarians to engage in Christ-centered information literacy discussions, with hopes to launch Summer 2024. This work is being

undertaken prayerfully and with excitement about all we stand to learn from our colleagues engaging in this edifying work at their institutions.

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