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Information creation as a process
With an emphasis on creation

Much attention has been paid to the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education since it was adopted two years ago, though the frame "Information Creation as a Process" has not received as much consideration in the literature as other frames. "Scholarship as a Conversation" and "Authority is Constructed and Contextual" are more prevalent topics, and I suspect that is because "Information Creation as a Process" seems straightforward by comparison.

Much of what librarians had been doing regarding format (pre-Framework) falls neatly within the knowledge practices of this frame: the differences between web and library resources, scholarly journals versus other types of publications, and where Wikipedia fits into the mix, to name a few.

While these approaches to information creation and format are undoubtedly useful and necessary, I believe that this frame provides librarians with more potential than is currently being recognized. The information environment today contains emails, press conferences, discussion boards, Facebook videos, and many other formats that students will encounter and use in both their academic and personal pursuits.

The emphasis given by the Framework to students as creators—rather than just consumers, as was the focus of the Standards—also means that we can encourage new ways for students to learn by doing.

It is important for students to understand what goes into the publication of a peer reviewed article and what implications that creation process has for their research. Most students will never write one themselves, and can't easily even mimic the process, so their participation in that discourse will unavoidably be limited. There are many other formats that they can create and consider the creation process while they do so. They can then apply the dispositions learned in that process to considering creation processes that they can only observe.

In spring 2018, I taught a course called History of Recorded Information as part of the information studies minor at Keene State College. Students explored the creation, dissemination, and storage of information over time, from oral traditions through the digital age. For each information format, students grappled with the same questions, including:

- What makes this information format unique from others in its creation and consumption?
- What are the benefits to choosing this format over another for creation, dis-

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semination, and consumption? What are the challenges?

- How has the use of this format changed over time?

I have written before about archives and special collections librarians, and the ways in which those folks often use the unique and interesting collections available to them in innovative ways to support their teaching, and I drew on that body of work in designing the projects for the course. Because of its historical element, we spent a fair amount of time working with archival materials, while I remained constantly aware of the need to connect the relevance of the work to the students' present day.

Only a handful of students in the class were enrolled in the information studies minor. Most were taking it for elective credit, and I found that the best way to engage them—as any librarian who has ever stood in front of a first-year writing course will find—was to make the content matter to their present.

Below I detail three projects that students completed in History of Recorded Information, which opened new avenues for conversation about information creation. I preface this with a statement of understanding that teaching credit-bearing courses that are content driven is not the situation in which most librarians work. However, I see opportunities for librarians to mold and adapt these ideas into projects suitable to an embedded librarian situation, an ongoing information literacy collaboration with a departmental faculty member, or portfolio work for interns and independent study students. In each section I have provided some ideas for adaptation.

Oral history

Thanks to the Internet, oral history is an easily accessible format for students to explore. Examples provided to students in this course came from NPR's Story Corp, the USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive, and the Andrews Inn Oral History Project, though this is hardly an exhaustive list. The library also hosted a timely Human Library event during this course that some students participated in.

Assignment

Each student was assigned to a volunteer from Cheshire Academy for Lifelong Learning, a continuing education program at Keene State for people who are in retirement and interested in taking courses. The students each scheduled a one-hour appointment to interview their assigned volunteer. We worked together in class on writing questions, determining scope, interview techniques, and etiquette. I was on hand during the interviews to manage the audio equipment and provide support as needed.

Each student turned in a five-minute audio clip, a two-page transcript of a section of the interview, and a reflection paper in which they discussed those two artifacts as information (the process of selecting and creating them, and how well each represented the information collected in the interview) and the interview as an information source overall.

Rationale

Though we don't call it "oral history" in our day-to-day lives, people are a constant source of information that students will encounter. From press conferences to interviews to college lectures, information that is verbally transmitted (and sometimes presented via transcription) is prevalent in the information landscape today. Students often don't think of a person as a "format" of information, and this project allowed them to expand their definition of an information source and assess the process of creating and using information in this way.

Through reflection and discussion, students considered such issues as validity

and bias in first-person information, the information provided by nonverbal cues, and the implications of translating verbal information into written form.

Adaptation
Example situation: A political science course in which students are considering political speeches, interviews, and press conferences as information sources.

Students could complete a miniature version of this by interviewing one another during class or being assigned to interview a friend or family member outside of class. Any smartphone, tablet, or computer will allow students to record the interview, and it could be assigned to be only ten or so minutes. The recording will be necessary so that they can use it to write their transcript.

The comparison of the audio and the transcript as information sources can occur either as a class discussion or as a reflection paper, as done here.

Serials
Serialized fiction was a popular form of publication in the mid-to-late 1800s, a format in which a story was published in pieces over several installments. There are a few organizations that have digitized some of the Charles Dickens' serials (as his work is probably the most well-known), and students used those examples when considering this format.

Assignment
Students could choose any topic that related either to the class or to their own field of study. They conducted research on the topic and presented their research in the form of three serials of four pages each, turned in one at a time, over three class meetings. They were required to include at least five sources, two images, and two fictional advertisements relevant to the subject matter over the course of the three submissions. The reflection on the process was done as a class discussion at the end.

Rationale
Print is not obsolete, despite what the tech journalists want us to believe. It is alive and well and is created in very particular ways. It is static, it requires attention to color and layout, and, as in this case, it is often not created quickly or all at once. Of course, creating print material in 2018 involves creating it digitally first and then printing it—since most of us don't have access to a Gutenberg press—but the idea that the printed version is "finalized," static, and will therefore be used in a particular way, still resonates.

Through the experience and discussion, students considered the implications of distributing a static information source, the role of graphics and design in imparting information, and what type of information is and is not suited to the format.

Adaptation
Example scenario: A business class in which students are considering the pros and cons of information shared through various marketing efforts.

While in this project the students created serials, they could just as easily have created a brochure, a handout, a poster, or any other deliverable. A key to this project was the print element, which distinguishes it from the website project I will discuss next. If it is possible to do both activities with a class, the format comparison really comes into focus for students.

Website
The third project brought us to the web. One of the challenges with "Information Creation as a Process" is that while we can define format in terms of the type of material—a peer reviewed journal ar-

ticle versus a web article versus a blog—students of usual college age take for granted that all this information will be available to them digitally. It can be difficult to engage them in the work of considering analog formats, simply because they do not encounter them enough on a daily basis.

By the time students in the course reached the website assignment, they had already created two nondigital projects and evaluated the benefits and challenges to using those. Therefore, they arrived at the website assignment with a framework for that evaluation that wasn't simply set to "this is digital thus it is best."

Assignment
Like the serial assignment, students were told that they could choose a topic of interest about which to conduct background research and create a website. Most students used Wix or Weebly, so there was no need for knowledge of coding practices. We discussed basic web design principles and copyright in preparation for the assignment.

Students' websites had to include at least five cited sources, two hyperlinks to related content, and two copyright-free images properly attributed. Assessment of the creation process was part of the final exam, in which students wrote an essay comparing and commenting on the three projects.

Rationale
Students are more likely to create content on the web than they are in any other format, and the web can also encompass most other formats (e.g., oral history projects available on the web). Creating information online has implications, such as the ease with which a creator can get into trouble for copyright infringement and how the ability to change information later affects the consumption of it, so learning to engage with this creation process in a supervised space can really serve them later.

Students transferred what they learned about presenting information in the serials project, and, through reflection and discussion, considered their own choices in how they approached each project.

Adaptation
Example scenario: Any class.

In this course any one of these projects could have been replaced with a research paper, and probably the website most of all. This makes it the most adaptable, if the faculty member you are working with agrees, students can create a website instead of writing a paper. The audience changes, and the presentation changes, but much of the research and writing process remains the same.

Conclusion
Librarians are just beginning to scratch the surface of opportunities that the Framework presents. In addition to mapping existing instructional practices to the Framework, we should interpret its approach to knowledge practices and dispositions broadly—something that the Standards allowed less room to do—and embrace the possibilities for students to be creators within every frame.

The feedback on all three of these projects was overwhelmingly positive, and, in a final paper giving an overall comparison of the three activities, students did an excellent job articulating the "capabilities and constraints of information developed through various creation processes."[1] They also had a great time, got to be creative, and walked away with some unique portfolio pieces.

Note
1. "Information Creation as a Process," ACRL 2015, www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework#process. ✌