"We're a Little Different:" Business Information Literacy Perspectives on the ACRL Framework

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Abstract

The introduction of the ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education* in 2015 inspired many librarians to rethink how they offer information literacy instruction. This multi-method study, using data from a survey and five focus groups, explores the use of the *Framework* in business information literacy (BIL). The study research questions focus on how librarians engage with the *Framework* in supporting the information needs of business students. Participants indicate that they make implicit, direct, and institutional use of the *Framework*. They also use a variety of tools aside from the *Framework* when designing their BIL instruction. Limitations of the *Framework* include the language of the document and irrelevance to some disciplinary contexts; librarians also struggle with meeting faculty expectations and finding the time for implementation. However, they find "Authority Is Constructed and Contextual," "Information Has Value," and "Searching as Strategic Exploration" to be the most useful frames for BIL instruction.

Keywords: ACRL *Framework*, business information literacy, information literacy instruction, focus groups, survey, librarian perceptions

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Business continues to be the most popular undergraduate major in the United States. In 2018, postsecondary institutions conferred close to 600,000 undergraduate and graduate degrees in business (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019, Tables 322.10 and 323.10). Librarians have long served this student population through information literacy (IL) instruction, collection development, and research support. The introduction of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) *Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education* in 2015 inspired many librarians to rethink how they offer IL instruction, including both integration into general education curriculum and disciplinary-specific applications. This multi-method study aims to explore the use of the *Framework* in business information literacy (BIL), with a focus on specific frames, resources for BIL design, practical applications, and potential limitations of the *Framework*. This study builds on previous research that explored business librarian practices and perceptions of IL guidelines (Cooney, 2005; Guth & Sachs, 2018), and uses focus group interviews to extend and deepen the discussion. The study explores how librarians engage with the ACRL *Framework* while supporting the information needs of business students and is guided by the following questions:

- RQ1: Which frames are the most and least relevant for BIL?

- RQ2: How do librarians use the *Framework* in designing BIL, and at a higher level beyond classroom implementation??

- RQ3: Which other tools do librarians use to inform their BIL instruction?

- RQ4: What are the limitations of the *Framework* for BIL?

- RQ5: What would help business librarians make better use of the *Framework*?

Literature Review

ACRL *Framework*

The evolution of IL in recent years has largely been in response to the adoption of the *Framework for Information for Higher Education,* which replaced the *Information Literacy*

Competency Standards for Higher Education (ACRL, 2000). While the *Standards* were founded on a skill-based understanding of information literacy, the *Framework* takes a concept-based approach, using knowledge practices and dispositions instead of performance indicators and learning outcomes. Librarians' mixed response to the *Framework* has been well-documented, citing issues ranging from philosophical flaws (Rinne, 2017), lack of support for implementation (Bombaro, 2016), issues with jargon used in the document (Jackman & Weiner, 2017), difficulties with assessment, limitations for one-shot contexts, and general resistance from library and faculty colleagues (Gross et al., 2018; Latham et al., 2019). Others appreciated the more holistic approach to IL that the *Framework* offers, and noted opportunities for innovation (Burgess, 2015) and better engagement with critical pedagogy (Foasberg, 2015), and even argued that while the theory behind the *Standards* and the *Framework* are notably different, the difference is less apparent in library practice (Bauder & Rod, 2016).

The *Framework* in the Disciplines

In some disciplines, connections to the *Framework*'s threshold concepts are natural, but they are not so clear in others. This tension between general and discipline-specific IL contexts is not unique to the *Framework*, however, as the *Standards* were also criticized for their limited applications (Foasberg, 2015).

Many scholars have offered tangible ways to bridge the disciplinary divide. Kuglitsch (2015) suggested teaching for transfer as a useful approach for disciplinary application, to enable students to apply skills learned in one setting to other contexts. Miller (2018) discussed her collaborative and reflective approach based on the Decoding the Disciplines process, which aims to uncover gaps in tacit disciplinary knowledge. Godbey et al. provide a range of applications for specific disciplines in their 2017 book, *Disciplinary Applications of Information Literacy Threshold Concepts.* Another more recent title, *Faculty-Librarian Collaborations: Integrating the Information Literacy Framework into Disciplinary Courses* offers case studies and lesson plans to support implementation (Stöpel et al., 2020). Between them, these two books contain only two chapters relevant to the business disciplines.

Many subject-specialist and liaison librarians have explored ways to apply the *Framework* in specific disciplines, with some adopting alternative guidelines for information literacy, and others creating companion documents to the *Framework*. Scholarship related to *Framework* implementation in the disciplines includes: music (Conor, 2016), nursing and health

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sciences (Knapp & Brower, 2014; Schulte & Knapp, 2017; Willson & Angell, 2017; Young & Hinton, 2019), art and design (Meeks et al., 2017; Watkins, 2017), political science (Harden & Harden, 2020) and communication studies (Pun, 2020).

Business Information Literacy and the *Framework*

Business disciplines faced challenges with information literacy implementation long before the *Framework* was adopted, in part due to the unique nature of business research (Cooney, 2005) as well as accreditation requirements (Guth & Sachs, 2018). The work of business faculty and administrators is heavily influenced by these accreditation requirements, leaving little room for a competing set of IL-specific guidelines to be incorporated into the business school curriculum. Guth and Sachs (2018) provide a recent history of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) standards and IL concepts, noting the connections and overlap in values. The *Business Research Competencies,* created by the Business Reference and Services Section (BRASS) of the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA, 2019), serve as a bridge between ACRL IL guidelines and the business disciplines; Howard et al. (2018) used curriculum mapping to illuminate these connections. In spite of these challenges, ongoing efforts to improve BIL have been apparent in the literature (Fiegen, 2011). Some have found that BIL learning outcomes have been shifting from academic to workplace applications (Gilbert, 2017). While BIL is sometimes taught in credit bearing courses (Leavitt, 2016), for the most part librarians have lamented the lack of deep engagement with information literacy in business courses (Gil, 2017; Wilhelm & Valler, 2018) and expressed a desire to move beyond tool demonstration into teaching more complex concepts (Detmering & Johnson, 2011).

The *Framework* in BIL has been addressed explicitly in the literature in a limited way thus far. Jefferson (2017) described the application of threshold concepts in a credit-bearing course and offered business-related lesson plans for teaching these concepts. Leebaw (2018) discussed BIL in liberal arts libraries, noting how the *Framework* can serve to make useful connections between business disciplines and the liberal arts, which can seem to have conflicting goals. Guth and Sachs (2018) conducted a study to explore the BIL practices and perceptions of business librarians soon after the *Framework* was introduced. This study found that business librarians were beginning to engage with the *Framework* and found a "strong relationship between business librarians who engage with 'best practices' such as substantial collaboration and assessment activities and those who have integrated

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professional guidelines (*Standards* or *Framework*) into their instruction" (p. 151). However, a scoping review of BIL literature published between 2000 and 2019 revealed a steady decrease in the number of articles that cite the *Framework* in recent years (Houlihan et al., 2020).

Methods

This constructivist, multi-method study used a scoping review of the BIL literature, an online survey of librarians who teach BIL, and focus groups. The findings of the scoping review have been published (Houlihan et al., 2020) and informed the survey and focus group design for this research project. The researchers used the survey results primarily as background information in developing the focus group interviews. However, the survey responses and findings that illustrate the larger study themes and contribute to answering the research questions are included in this paper. The full survey results will not be published. This study was submitted to and approved by the Institutional Review Boards at the authors' institutions.

Survey

The researchers adapted Cooney's (2005) survey, which asked business librarians about assessment, collaboration, and use of the ACRL *Information Literacy Standards* (see Appendix A for the full survey instrument). The survey was created using Qualtrics and distributed online in the spring of 2019 via five listservs: BRASS, BUSLIB, ACRLFRAME, INFOLIT, and ILI. Respondents were offered an incentive for participation; five names were drawn to receive $50 Amazon gift cards. At the end of the survey, respondents indicated whether they would be interested in participating in a focus group to further explore the *Framework* in BIL.

Focus Groups

The researchers contacted by email the 95 survey respondents who had expressed interest in the focus groups. Due to the time lapse between the survey administration and the focus group invitation and the shift in work life as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the response rate was lower than anticipated. Thus, additional participants were recruited via snowball sampling using recommendations from early focus group participants. The original study design had called for the focus groups to take place at the 2020 American

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Library Association (ALA) Annual Conference; however, the in-person conference was cancelled. Instead, five focus groups were held via video conference in late 2020.

The researchers used Krueger and Casey's (2015) categories of opening, introductory, transition, key, and ending questions in designing the focus group interview guide (see Appendix B for the full guide). Each session included a moderator, note-taker, and from 6 to 10 participants. The five sessions were recorded and transcribed.

The researchers chose focus groups as a method of data collection because focus groups are efficient and cost-effective, collect rich data in the participants' own words, and encourage interactions between participants in which they can build upon one another's ideas (Stewart et al., 2007). In addition, focus groups are an appropriate method for constructivist studies. The constructivist worldview assumes that "humans construct meaning as they engage with the world they are interpreting" and "the basic generation of meaning is always social, arising in and out of interaction with a human community" (Creswell, 2014, p. 9). The researchers intentionally designed the focus group questions to encourage participants to describe how they engage with and interpret their own BIL contexts and to enable participants to share experiences and construct meaning through interacting with others.

Participants

We included survey responses in the analysis if respondents both indicated that they taught BIL and completed the full survey. One hundred fifty-two survey responses met this criteria.

Thirty-six librarians participated in the five online focus groups. Twenty-one of them (58%) held the title business librarian, while 15 (42%) held a more general title (e.g., reference and instruction librarian), but served as liaison to a business school or department. Three-quarters of the participants were new (0 to 5 years post-MLS) or early career librarians (6 to15 years), while one quarter were mid (16 to 25 years) or late career (more than 25 years). The majority (61%) worked at doctoral-granting universities, 33% percent were from master's-level institutions, and just 6% came from baccalaureate colleges.

Analysis

All three researchers collaboratively coded the focus groups transcripts and qualitative responses from the survey. The study design called for a simultaneous coding process using attribute, structural, and descriptive coding as described by Saldaña (2016). The full

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https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/comminfolit/vol15/iss1/2
DOI: 10.15760/comminfolit.2021.15.1.2

codebook is available as supplemental material at
https://repository.belmont.edu/libraryscholarship/10.

Findings

The goal of a constructivist study "is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of
the situation being studied" (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). Thus, this section includes primarily
direct quotations from the participants, who are referred to by pseudonyms of their
choosing. For the purposes of this paper, the names of specific frames will be abbreviated as
follows:

- Authority Is Constructed and Contextual: Authority

- Information Creation as a Process: Process

- Information Has Value: Value

- Research as Inquiry: Inquiry

- Scholarship as Conversation: Conversation

- Searching as Strategic Exploration: Exploration

RQ1: Most and Least Relevant Frames in BIL Instruction

Many focus group participants agreed that Exploration is the most useful frame for them.
Cindy reported encouraging her students to think carefully about their information needs so
they can determine what types of resources they really need: demographic data, market
research reports, in-depth news articles, or something entirely different. Anthony shared
that he has found it easy to incorporate Exploration into instruction sessions. He explained
that ease of use was important to him because using the *Framework* was a required
component of his annual evaluation. Focus group participants acknowledged that this frame
influenced their instruction practices because it aligns nicely with their efforts to encourage
critical thinking and creative approaches to the search process.

Focus group participants also identified Value as a useful and relevant frame for BIL
instruction. They noted that this frame translates well to business students and faculty,
especially because it uses language like "information as a commodity" in the description of
the frame. Some participants discussed how they utilize Value in the classroom through
sharing the annual subscription costs for business databases in their instruction sessions or

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showing the costs of specific market research reports. Fiona mentioned discussing with her students "how much a particular report would cost out in the world to try to show them the value of the information that they are getting." In a discussion about real world application of the frame, Dolly connected BIL to the workplace, asserting that a company is going to "succeed or fail based on the kind of information that its employees can bring to the table." Alexa reported using Value to help frustrated students understand why they are unable to find a specific piece of information, explaining:

> Getting [students] to understand that businesses are not going to tell you every single thing you would like to know because of the proprietary aspect, and they don't want their competitors to know this information. So, trying to [get] them to understand that information really affects businesses and their margins and their profits, and getting them to think about why or why not they would want to share information that's probably internal.

Many participants connected the relevance of Authority with the nature of business research. Melissa mentioned using this frame to encourage students to use multiple sources in their research:

> The people that write these market research reports, even though they were based on numbers and data, it's still an analysis by a person. It still has a little bit of subjectivity mixed in with that and they should consult different resources to see what those other people have to say.

Chloe also brought up that she emphasizes to her students the importance of using a variety of resources in their research, encouraging them to consider the creator and purpose of the information on a company's website, versus a newspaper article, versus an analyst's report.

Responses from the survey align with these focus group findings, with respondents viewing Authority (63%), Value (71%), and Exploration (72%) as "very relevant." See Figure 1 for the full relevance rankings for each frame. Additionally, survey respondents indicated how often they used each frame in their BIL, rating Authority (54%), Value (73%), and Exploration (68%) as "very often." See Figure 2 for detailed survey responses.

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Figure 1: Relevance of each frame for business information literacy instruction (*n* = 78)
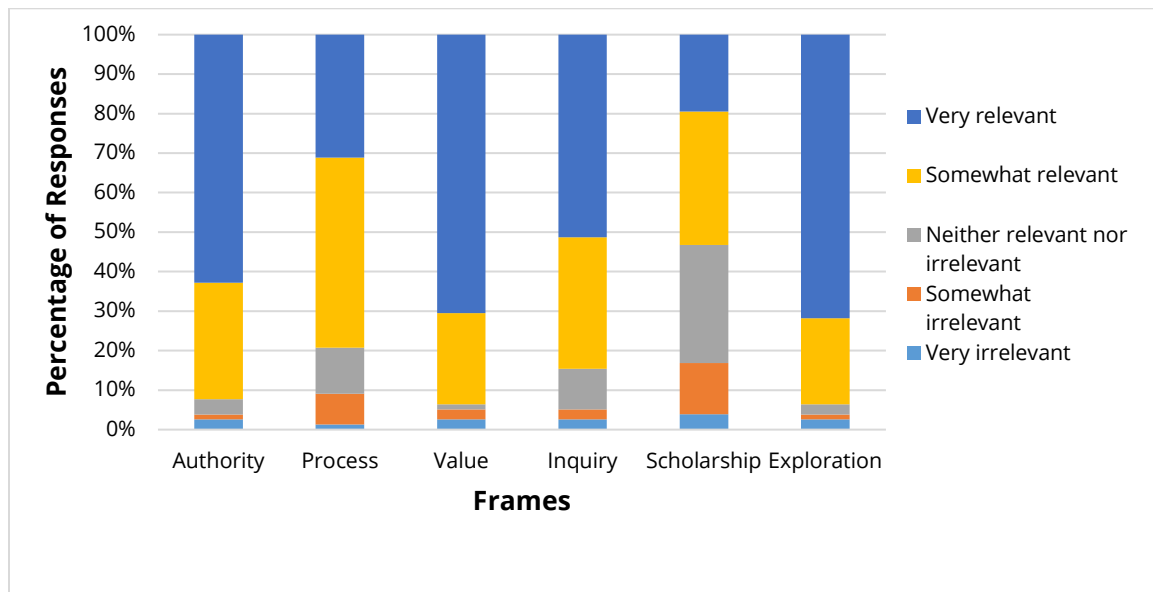
Figure 2: How often each frame is used in business information literacy instruction (*n* = 78)
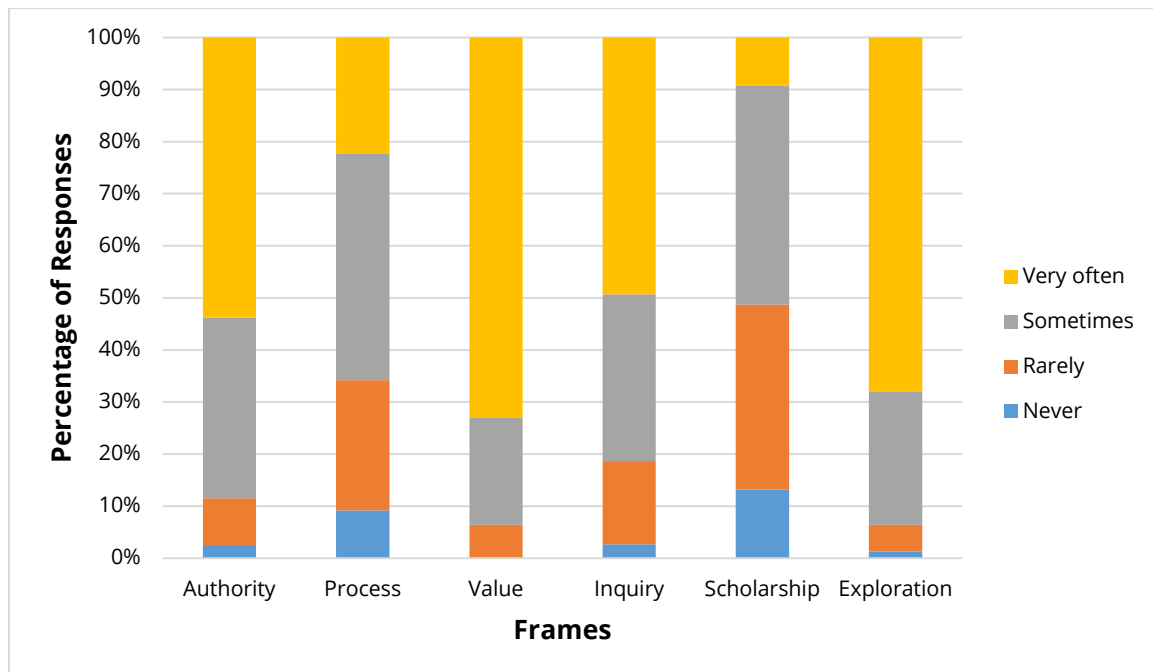
When asked about the least relevant frames for their BIL instruction, focus group participants overwhelmingly identified Scholarship, due to the nature of business research and assignments. Anne pointed out:

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> I think despite my best efforts talking about the Scholarship as Conversation, it is a tough one to get [business students] to buy into. Because they're so strictly goal oriented and product oriented, they don't want to get super deep into the theory or the concepts behind things. They just want to know what the outcome is going to be.

Similarly, a survey respondent commented:

> [O]ften my business students are not writing essays, theses or dissertations, they are building business plans or creating solutions to business problems or cases that do not require scholarly sources; there is really no context in which to bring this up.

Focus group participants also found Inquiry and Process to be less relevant for BIL. Shannon observed of the Inquiry frame: "The assignments that are given to them by their instructors are really narrow and restrict a true sort of curiosity and inquiry." Mary suggested that Inquiry is better suited for reference consultations rather than IL instruction. There also appeared to be some ambiguity around Inquiry and Exploration as related to business research. Sometimes focus group participants would begin talking about Inquiry but then would wonder aloud if they were actually addressing Exploration. As Cindy explained, "Exploration leads to inquiry. Inquiry also requires exploration." Similarly, Arthur commented that it is important for students to understand the search question they are working to answer but questioned whether this topic would fall under Inquiry or Exploration. Mary also felt that Process was less relevant in business than other disciplines. She remarked that students doing business research are less concerned with where they find the information they need or how it came to be; these aspects of the information do not "change the value of the information for them." A survey respondent also pointed out that the Process frame was better suited to the overarching goals that professors have for their students rather than the lesson design and teaching of BIL.

Survey respondents did not have such a strong reaction to identifying frames as less relevant in BIL. Only 17% indicated that Scholarship was "very irrelevant" or "somewhat irrelevant," although 30% called this frame "neither relevant nor irrelevant." In addition, they rated frames by usefulness as well as relevance, identifying Scholarship as the least used frame in BIL. Thirteen percent of survey respondents "never" use this frame, while 78% "rarely" or

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"sometimes" use it. See Figures 1 and 2 for more detail on survey responses to these questions.

The nature of the questions asked in the survey and focus groups could account for the differing perspectives on the frames. Survey respondents were asked to rate every frame for relevance and usefulness, whereas focus group participants responded to open-ended questions about which frames were most and least relevant and were not required to address every frame in their responses.

RQ2: Use of the *Framework*

When asked whether they had incorporated the *Framework* into their BIL instruction, 55% of survey respondents said yes and 45% said that they had not. They also demonstrated a somewhat positive attitude about the *Framework*: 72% either "strongly agreed" or "somewhat agreed" that it "provides more focus to our teaching efforts," and 63% that it has "positively affected the results of our teaching efforts." Focus group participants spoke about implicit, direct, and institutional use of the *Framework*, but implicit use was most common.

Both focus group participants and survey respondents said that the *Framework* influenced their BIL practice informally or was present in the foundations of their teaching. For example, Shannon explained using the *Framework* in this way:

> Perhaps not overtly, but certainly in the background. I think that librarians often have little secret agendas behind our lesson plans and what we have chosen to say verbally and why we have chosen to say those things verbally. And so my secret agenda is usually based upon the *Framework* and other critical engagement sort of theories. It is my own sort of secret project.

Rose described her implicit use of the *Framework* using the language of the *Framework*: "I'm using the *Framework* and I'm maybe not even noticing that I'm using it because I've hit those thresholds and I understand things. I'm just kind of doing it automatically at this point." Similarly, a survey respondent commented about their unconscious use:

> While the *Framework* is important and has value to my instruction practice, in all honesty I do not weave the *Framework* concepts into my instruction in a directed, intentional way. Upon reflection, I see the fingerprints of the *Framework* throughout my instruction.

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Some focus group participants provided specific examples of using the *Framework* in the BIL classroom. Several have used it for lesson planning "match[ing] what the professor wants out of the workshop with some of the frames," according to Alexa, and structuring one-shots and designing active learning activities based on specific frames. Others simply have used the frames to inform class discussion. For example, a discussion about different database resources could lead to a conversation about who creates information and why, highlighting concepts related to the Authority frame. Mary mentioned developing goals for research consultation appointments based on the *Framework* knowledge practices; students select the most appropriate ones when scheduling an appointment online. Survey respondents were not asked explicitly for examples of direct application, but a few indicated using specific frames in the open-ended questions. One commented: "Although I have not done formal assessment, my observation is that spending a couple minutes focused on 'information has value' has been effective in getting business students out of their comfort zone and trying more than Google searches."

Focus group participants and survey respondents also referred to institutional use of the *Framework,* as opposed to individual use. Mary noted that her institution used it to inform the development of their own in-house core competencies, which are used when tracking instruction statistics. In fact, several focus group participants mentioned that they are required to select frames used in instruction when tracking instruction statistics. A survey respondent also noted that their university "took the *Framework* and crafted it into a customized core competencies document." Promotion and tenure issues also emerged. Anthony explained, "I'm putting the frames at the top of all my lesson plans, and that way when people examine my lesson plans for tenure and promotion, it's all a narrative. It all looks good."

RQ3: Other Tools Used for BIL Instruction

Focus group participants were asked to discuss what other tools aside from the *Framework* they use to inform their BIL instruction. Tools and resources included other professional standards or competencies, course documents, and colleagues. The most commonly used tool was BRASS's *Business Research Competencies.* Holly described how they helped her better communicate with business faculty:

> The *Business Research Competencies* are definitely something that I'm pulling in, and even when they were in draft format and the preceding version, using those when

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> talking to the faculty was a huge tool for convincing them that what I wanted to do in class was actually going to help the students. Those were big.

A survey respondent said of the *Framework*, "I just haven't needed it. I prefer to use the BRASS *Standards* if I apply universal standards at all."

Several librarians rely on different standards and competencies. Both the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB International) and National Career Readiness Competencies (NACE) were used to inform instruction. A few librarians used institutional competencies that are based on the *Framework*. Cindy reported:

> There's some information literacy components that are in that curriculum that we're trying to tie to our libraries' information literacy outcomes. And, so, I think going forward, that it's going to be a little more front of my mind, as I start planning for instruction in the fall and in the spring with my business classes, is not only thinking about the goals, the immediate goals, but then you know keeping the *Framework* in mind here and now, it's going to be an additional layer of connecting that to the new curriculum.

Although survey participants were not asked specifically about other tools for designing BIL, these findings were echoed in several responses to the open-ended question asking respondents to share anything else about their use of or thoughts about the *Framework*.

Course documents and syllabi were commonly used by participants to create lesson plans and assignments. Joy shared, "The information I use most when designing my instruction is taking a look at the assignment break down, the grading criteria, the learning outcomes for the course, so you know what the students are expected to learn."

Some librarians lean on their colleagues and peers for advice and inspiration. Alexa mentioned looking to the ACRL Instruction Section for updates and advancements in the field, while Larkin noted getting support through a regional academic business librarians group. Several specific business librarians were named as excellent resources and mentors. Others review LibGuides and online learning objects from other institutions and rely on the BUSLIB and BRASS listservs for assistance. They also make use of online repositories including Project CORA and the ACRL Sandbox. A full list of tools and resources referenced by focus group participants and survey respondents is available as supplemental material at https://repository.belmont.edu/libraryscholarship/10.

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RQ4: Limitations of the *Framework* for BIL Instruction

In response to various prompts, focus group participants and survey respondents cited barriers to implementation of the *Framework*, including the language used, time limitations, and faculty expectations.

Many survey respondents ($n = 93$) indicated they had not incorporated the *Framework* into BIL instruction. When asked why they had not done so, 10% indicated they were not familiar with the *Framework*, 11% did not agree with it, and 17% had no plans to incorporate it in BIL. See Figure 3 more detailed survey responses.

Figure 3: Reasons for not incorporating the *Framework* in BIL instruction ($n = 93$)
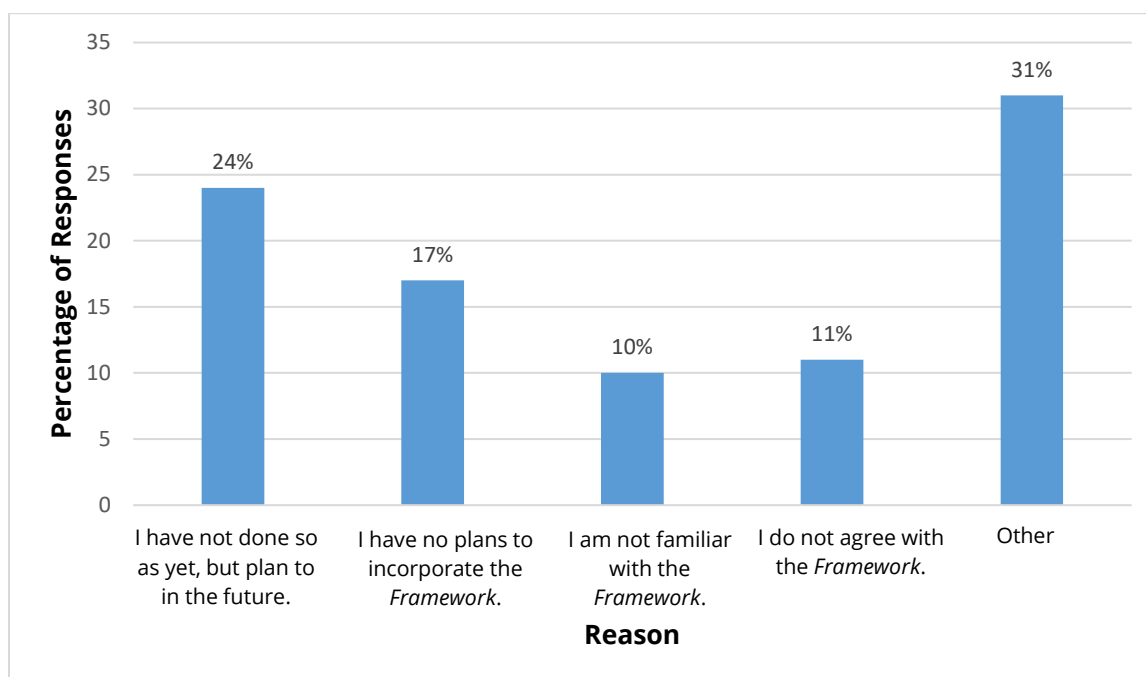
Focus group participants and survey respondents repeatedly voiced hesitation about using the *Framework* as a communication and outreach tool due to language concerns. Joy remarked:

> I don't find it to be a particularly helpful way to think about information literacy nor is it a good communication tool to use with faculty when lesson planning along with faculty. I think this is a librarian language that's very alienating and ostracizing to teaching faculty and if you don't use their language when you're planning lessons with them, you won't get invited back.

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Similarly, a survey respondent stated, "The wording of the concepts is overly complex and unintelligible. It needs to be reduced to fewer concepts and these need to be stated in practical terms."

Time was often cited as a barrier to implementation. Many librarians expressed concern over their liaison portfolio and additional duties that limited their ability to focus on BIL, as well as limited classroom time. A survey respondent stated, "I have a severe lack of time to revise my instruction. This is something I would like to focus on this summer. Also, business is not my sole area of responsibility. I support other disciplines as well."

Additionally, Monica observed:

> I think for the context where a lot of us are teaching one shots, it's really, really hard to do the *Framework,* any real proper justice, in this sense, and you're probably always developing learning outcomes that are like very surface level.

Time limitations also tie directly to faculty expectations, which was seen as another barrier. Librarians often teach BIL in one-shot instruction sessions on topics and resources that faculty request, and the librarians have little time to incorporate the *Framework* into their lessons. Jordan voiced a desire to have a few additional minutes to address the *Framework* in her one-shots, while others expressed a need for additional instruction sessions so they can meet the faculty members expectations as well as incorporate the *Framework.* A survey respondent explained, "[T]he business-related library instruction I provide is hands-on and pragmatic and is delivered in one-shot sessions." Fiona also has felt pressure to provide practical instruction, saying:

> We're a little weird, odd, different, special. I think sometimes the debate that I've had with my instruction colleague is that she would be talking about these grand concepts and I say, 'I just need to show them a database because that's what the professor wants me to do.'

Survey respondents and focus group participants addressed the complex nature of business research, which often requires students to use information resources to make decisions, rather than rely on information resources to locate specific answers. Melissa remarked:

> I think a lot of it has to do with the fact that their curriculum just doesn't require it of them, they're not writing papers or capstones in the sense that scholarly

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conversation would require looking up scholars and what they've said and building upon what they say.

Additionally, a survey respondent explained, "Business [research] doesn't work the same way. Discovery over time is not something a faculty would ever encourage. Gather your data, review the literature, analyze, and go."

Some focus group participants also made observations about business student characteristics, focusing on their approach to research methods and strategies. Anne noted that these students tend to be "goal oriented and product oriented" which can cause them to overlook additional resources; they do not necessarily want to "delve into theory and concepts." In a conversation about the Scholarship frame, Anthony explained, "I have found that students aren't especially interested in the intricacies of peer review. They just want to know that it's one of the top sources that they can use for their paper." A survey respondent observed, "Most undergrad and MBA students I work with are not too concerned about academic research, more about practical application for company/industry or entrepreneurial efforts."

Sometimes concerns about the *Framework* illustrated the overlap between these limitations. For example, Dolly demonstrated the relationship between disciplinary knowledge and limited time:

> A one-shot experience makes it a challenge to dive into some of these [*Framework*] topics...I can't get enough time because the students are like, 'I've never heard of IbisWorld. What's an industry report? What's a NAICS code?'

A survey respondent drew the connection between the language used and faculty expectations:

> I can't sell the *Framework* to business faculty. I'm not saying it's not a factor in how I conceptualize my work, but it's not relevant to business instruction specifically and it's a horrible communication tool for faculty. I can't even use the phrase "information literacy" with the business faculty.

RQ5: Making Better Use of the *Framework*

We asked focus group participants to discuss what would help them make better use of the *Framework*. It is clear that resources and professional development opportunities would be

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helpful. When asked if they had implemented the *Framework* into BIL instruction, 11% of survey respondents said that they were not familiar with the document. A full 1/3 of the respondents selected 'Other' for this question, and many explained that they were uncertain with how to proceed with implementation. Several survey respondents explained that the *Framework* was incorporated in general undergraduate courses, but many were unsure of how to incorporate it into business instruction. Librarians identified the need for disciplinary examples, including lesson plans that pair well with specific frames.

Some focus group participants expressed interest in peer partnerships and professional development opportunities that would help develop the relationship between the *Framework* and BIL. They suggested that discussion groups could help match frames to BIL lesson plans, assignments, and classroom activities. Grace proposed, "I'd love to see some sort of professional development opportunity for business librarians, or anybody interested in working with economic data, for us to try a lesson plan or something together and just get peer feedback."

In addition, Larkin observed:

> I think our best opportunity is to band together and advocate through AACSB to create some kind of document that is specialized to business that is an outcome that can be assessed, and I don't think we're going to really find anything that helps us until we can do that.

Focus group participants also called for additional research and resources on business faculty views of the *Framework*, curriculum mapping, and drawing connections between the BRASS *Research Competencies* and the *Framework*.

Discussion

Changing Perspectives on the *Framework*

Despite the limitations of the *Framework* described by study participants, acceptance appears to have increased in recent years—at least by one measure. Guth and Sachs (2018) used an updated version of Cooney's (2005) survey to explore business librarian perspectives on the *Framework* in 2015. At that time, 52% agreed that the *Framework* provided "more focus to our teaching efforts" and only 35% agreed that "it positively affected the results of our teaching efforts." Four years later, our study showed that 72% agreed with the first statement and 63% with the second. In 2015, 39% of the survey respondents had

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incorporated the *Framework* into BIL; this number rose to 55% in 2019. Almost three-quarters of the respondents in the Guth and Sachs study indicated that their top frames for use in BIL were Inquiry and Exploration. However, 2019 survey respondents identified Value and Exploration as the most used and relevant frames for BIL. In 2015, business librarians found Process to be the least used frame, whereas in our study both survey respondents and focus group participants clearly view Scholarship as the least useful. While these two studies are not directly comparable, as they differed in study design and sample, the findings indicate that librarian views of the *Framework* in BIL have shifted as familiarity with the document has increased.

The *Framework* as Guiding Document

It is clear from this study that use of the *Framework* tends to be implicit for business librarians. The majority of participants agreed that the document impacted their understanding of the larger information literacy goals that underpin day-to-day teaching and learning efforts. The frames are foundational for their overall work. Grace explained, "I do use the *Framework* as I'm designing my one-shot. It is the underlying foundation and helps keep me focused and set intentions." This perspective is evident in the literature and not unique to business librarians. In a study of academic librarians, Latham et al. (2019) found that "the *Framework* is providing a structure and a guiding ideology for teaching information literacy" and noted that "rather than making explicit use of the frames, most of the librarians are using the frames as a subtext for teaching while still providing primarily skills-based instruction" (p. 390).

Some participants expressed a sense of guilt when admitting that they have not yet incorporated the *Framework* into their teaching. But this sense of inadequacy is unfounded. The *Framework* is not a perfect fit for BIL—or perhaps any professional discipline—but it does not need to be a perfect fit. In fact, the language of the *Framework* itself encourages flexibility and contextual awareness. It is "based on a cluster of interconnected core concepts, with flexible options for implementation, rather than on a set of standards or learning outcomes, or any prescriptive enumeration of skills," and "each library and its partners on campus will need to deploy these frames to best fit their own situation" (ACRL, 2015). This study demonstrates that business librarians use many tools and resources to plan instruction sessions, identify learning outcomes, and assess teaching. No single document, tool, or framework provides everything that is necessary to create high quality BIL

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instruction. Librarians can identify the individual pieces from a variety of sources, including the *Framework*, and put together their own toolkits. As Elle said, "We can take ownership of the document. We can do a lot with it, but it doesn't necessarily need to be overt."

Beyond Lesson Plans

This study indicates that while some librarians do directly apply the *Framework* when designing BIL lesson plans, it is also common for it to affect their work outside of the classroom. Discussions around direct application of the *Framework* in BIL led to several conversations related to requirements for tenure and promotion. Several participants noted that their use of the *Framework* was strictly for promotion and publishing opportunities. Other academic librarians share this perspective. In their recent survey of community college librarians, Wengler and Wolff-Esienberg (2020) found that a majority of respondents somewhat or strongly agreed to the statement "incorporating the ACRL *Framework* into my information literacy instruction is important to advancement, promotion, or contract renewal in my current position" (p. 74). In addition, Latham et al. (2019) found that the *Framework* helped tenure-track librarians by providing research opportunities.

Several focus group participants referenced their departmental efforts to create core competencies or programmatic learning outcomes based on the *Framework*. Oftentimes, these efforts revolved around simplifying language and slimming down content, in hopes that faculty and students are better able to understand the frames. Librarians are interested in using the *Framework* for outreach to faculty, but worry that the language is too vague, lofty, academic, inaccessible, or inappropriate for business disciplines. An early opinion piece published in *College & Undergraduate Libraries* warned that the *Framework's* jargon would "not resonate with the multitude of cross-sector organizations and agencies that need to understand how information literacy can benefit them and their constituencies" nor would it be "conducive to promoting information literacy practice among diverse, lay populations including students, faculty, and higher education administrators" (Jackman & Weiner, 2017, p. 18-19). Indeed, a study that surveyed faculty —including business faculty— about the *Framework* found that they were concerned about the use of jargon, wordiness, and required reading-level (Guth et al., 2018).

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Resources for Making Use of the *Framework*

Fortunately, some work has been done that aligns with the focus group participants thoughts about how they might make better use of the *Framework*. For example, Howard et al. (2018) provided guidance for curriculum mapping projects using the BRASS *Business Research Competencies*. As many participants expressed appreciation for this document as well as a need for more guidance in using the *Framework*, a project to align the *Framework* with the *Business Research Competencies* would clearly be welcome. Participants are eager to learn from colleagues and share ideas about BIL instruction. In fact, several focus groups ended with librarians expressing appreciation for the opportunity to discuss the *Framework* and related issues with one another. One focus group participant noted that the conversation on the popular BUSLIB listserv tends to focus on reference questions and wondered why there is not more discussion of instruction. Recently published books about the *Framework* in the disciplines have few examples for business. It seems clear that librarians who teach BIL will have to depend on each other when it comes to ideas about *Framework* implementation. Organizing and communicating through communities of practice would likely be a helpful strategy. In fact, a recent book chapter outlines how librarians can create communities of practice to support understanding and implementing the *Framework* (Pittman et al., 2020).

Limitations

This study did not use random sampling to recruit survey respondents or focus group participants. Every librarian in the study responded to broad calls for participation. Thus, the findings cannot be considered representative of business librarian perspectives. However, we have attempted to ensure the transparency of the research process, so that readers are able to determine whether the findings might apply in their own contexts.

Collecting data via focus groups also comes with the risk of particularly outspoken participants influencing the responses of others, causing their own views to be overrepresented (Stewart et al., 2007, p. 43). In addition, data on the use of the *Framework* was self-reported by focus group participants and survey respondents. No confirmatory evidence was collected. Since focus participant findings indicate a strong desire for information-sharing among business librarians, future research might focus on gathering specific lesson plans, exercises, and other pedagogical materials related to the *Framework* in BIL.

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Conclusion

This study was designed to better understand the opportunities and challenges related to implementation of the *Framework* in BIL instruction. Findings show that while some business librarians are interested in and pursuing ways to integrate the *Framework* into their teaching practice, others express a preference for disciplinary and other professional standards that are more suited for this work. Due to challenges related to faculty expectations, the nature of business research, and time, explicit and overarching *Framework* implementation has not been widely achieved. However, it is clear that the *Framework* has changed the way information literacy is viewed and has spurred some shifts in how and what is taught.

The results of this study lead to several recommendations for business librarians who are struggling to fit the *Framework* into the work that they do. First, business librarians should develop rich descriptions of their instruction and learning contexts so that they can identify which frames might be most appropriate. Second, it is important to seek out and become familiar with other resources that support teaching and explore how these resources complement each other. Finally, the business librarian community abounds with supportive and engaged professionals; those striving to provide innovative BIL instruction are not alone in these efforts and should reach out to others for support.

Acknowledgement

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Appendix A. Survey Instrument

For the purposes of this survey, business information literacy instruction will be defined as specific programs and practices that your library utilizes to help business students develop "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."

1. Do you provide information literacy instruction to business students?

    ___ yes
    ___ no

2. How is information literacy instruction provided to your business students? Please check all that apply.

    ___ In a general (non-discipline specific) information literacy program
    ___ In on-demand instruction sessions to business classes
    ___ Integrated in core business courses
    ___ Integrated in other (non-core) business courses
    ___ In a business information literacy course (for credit)
    ___ In a business information literacy course (no credit)
    ___ Via online resources (e.g., tutorials, LibGuides)
    ___ Other,(please specify)

3. For which business students is information literacy instruction provided? Please check all that apply.

    ___ First-year students
    ___ Sophomores
    ___ Juniors
    ___ Seniors
    ___ Graduate students
    ___ Other (please specify)

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4. Would you describe the business information literacy instruction as a collaborative effort between your library and the business faculty at your institution?

    ___ Yes
    ___ No
    ___ Sometimes

5. Which of the following would describe your collaborative efforts?

    ___ Some collaboration
    ___ Quite a bit of collaboration
    ___ Full collaboration

6. Which of the following would apply to your collaborative efforts? Please check all that apply.

    ___ Jointly developed information literacy-related assignments
    ___ Jointly graded information literacy-related assignments
    ___ Jointly developed goals and objectives for business information literacy instruction
    ___ Other collaborative efforts (please specify)

7. Have you incorporated the *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* into your business information literacy instruction?

    ___ Yes
    ___ No

8. Which frame(s) do you use in your business information literacy instruction? Please check all that apply.

    ___ Authority is Constructed and Contextual
    ___ Information Creation as a Process
    ___ Information Has Value
    ___ Research as Inquiry
    ___ Scholarship as Conversation
    ___ Searching as Strategic Exploration

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9. Please indicate the relevance of each Frame for business information literacy instruction in your opinion.

	Very relevant	Somewhat irrelevant	Neither relevant nor irrelevant	Somewhat relevant	Very relevant
Authority is Constructed and Contextual					
Information Creation as a Process					
Information Has Value					
Research as Inquiry					
Scholarship as Conversation					
Searching as Strategic Exploration					

10. Please indicate how often you use each Frame in business information literacy instruction.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Very often
Authority is Constructed and Contextual				
Information Creation as a Process				
Information Has Value				
Research as Inquiry				
Scholarship as Conversation				
Searching as Strategic Exploration				

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11. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
The Framework provides more focus to our teaching efforts.					
The Framework makes the assessment process easier.					
The Framework provides a good means to measure student learning outcomes.					
The Framework has positively affected the results of our teaching efforts.					

12. If you do incorporate the *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* into business information literacy instruction, what have you found?

    The *Framework* provides more focus to our teaching efforts
    ___ yes ___ no ___ undecided
    The *Framework* makes the assessment process easier
    ___ yes ___ no ___ undecided
    The *Framework* provides a good means to measure student learning outcomes
    ___ yes ___ no ___ undecided
    The *Framework* has positively affected the results of our teaching efforts
    ___ yes ___ no ___ undecided
    Comments:

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13. You indicated that you have not incorporated the *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* into your business information literacy instruction. Why is that? Please check all that apply.

    ___ I have not done so as yet, but plan to in future.
    ___ I have no plans to incorporate the *Framework.*
    ___ I am not familiar with the *Framework.*
    ___ I do not agree with the *Framework.*
    ___ Other (please specify)

14. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your use of or thoughts about the Framework?

15. Do you assess your students' business information literacy?

    ___ yes
    ___ no

16. How often do you assess business information literacy skills?

    ___ Each time they are provided information literacy instruction
    ___ Many times when they are provided information literacy instruction
    ___ Sometimes when they are provided information literacy instruction

17. How do you assess your students' business information literacy? Please check all that apply.

    ___ Pre-test
    ___ Post-test
    ___ Rubric
    ___ Tests or exams (other than pre-test or post-test)
    ___ Final project
    ___ Assignments (please specify)
    ___ Other (please specify)

18. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your assessment practices?

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19. Does your institution have a dedicated business librarian or business liaison?

    ___ Yes, a dedicated business librarian
    ___ Yes, a business liaison
    ___ No

20. What is your title?

21. Type of institution:

    ___ Doctoral University
    ___ Master's College/University
    ___ Baccalaureate College
    ___ Specialized
    ___ Other

22. On average, how many business information literacy sessions do you teach per academic year?

23. How many librarians provide business information literacy instruction at your institution?

24. How many FTE business students are enrolled at your institution?

25. Type of institution:

26. Would you be interested in participating in a focus group interview follow-up to this survey? Please enter your email address.

27. Do you want to be entered in the drawing for one of five $50 gift cards?

    ___ Yes, here is my email address:
    ___ No

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Appendix B. Focus Group Questions

1. [Intro] Please introduce yourself, your position, and institution.

2. [Transition] What do you consider to be your biggest success in outreach to the business students and faculty you support?

3. [Transition] Which frame is the most relevant for the business IL instruction? Which is the least relevant?

4. [Key] How have you used the ACRL Framework in business IL instruction?

5. [Key] What other tools do you use, aside from the Framework, to inform your business IL instruction?

6. [Ending] What would help you make better use of the Framework in business IL?

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