



# ***Empowering Minds & Bridging Gaps: The Crucial Role of Information Literacy***

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# Welcome!

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**Does the  
information  
literacy (IL)  
work of  
school  
librarians  
make a  
difference?**

**The lasting  
impact of our  
efforts remains  
largely  
unknown and  
unvalidated**



#### Project Citation:

Joyce Valenza, Cara Berg, Brenda Boyer, Rebecca Bushby, Leslin H. Charles, Heather A. Dalal, Joan Dalrymple, Megan Dempsey, Ewa Dziedzic-Elliott, and Gihan Mohamed. First Years Meet the Frames. School of Communication and Information, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. 2022.

<https://comminfo.libguides.com/FirstYearsFrames/>

#### Project Background

##### Purpose/Specific Aims

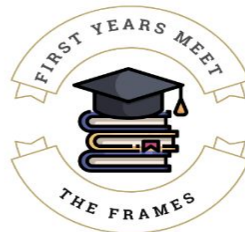
This project seeks to explore the value of certified school librarians in providing resources and instruction to bridge situations of inequity, information poverty and identify gaps relating to academic preparedness among first-year students in New Jersey colleges.

##### Objectives

Across our country, students are differently and inequitably prepared for the challenges of academic work. Notably, in cities like Philadelphia, Chicago, and Los Angeles, which have largely eliminated their school librarian positions, students graduate from high school without the information literacy foundation and opportunities for inquiry-based learning and professionally curated digital and print materials and technologies built by a robust K-12 school library experience as defined by the American Association of School Librarians' (AASL) [Definition of an Effective School Library Program](#).

We have three major objectives:

#### Logo



<https://comminfo.libguides.com/FirstYears>



Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)


## The Journal of Academic Librarianship

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/jacalib](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/jacalib)



### “First years' information literacy backpacks: What's already packed or not packed?”

Joyce Kasman Valenza<sup>a,\*</sup>, Heather Dalal<sup>b</sup>, Gihan Mohamad<sup>c</sup>, Brenda Boyer<sup>d</sup>, Cara Berg<sup>e</sup>,  
Leslin H. Charles<sup>f</sup>, Rebecca Bushby<sup>g</sup>, Megan Dempsey<sup>h</sup>, Joan Dalrymple<sup>i</sup>, Ewa Dziedzic-Elliott<sup>j</sup>

 The team found that **students with prior high school research experiences (non-novices), especially those followed from schools identified as having certified librarians (alumni non-novices), felt more prepared for academic research and performed at a higher level** relating to their understanding and use of research tools and strategies. **The results point to equity concerns and suggest that students require differentiated attention at the college level.**



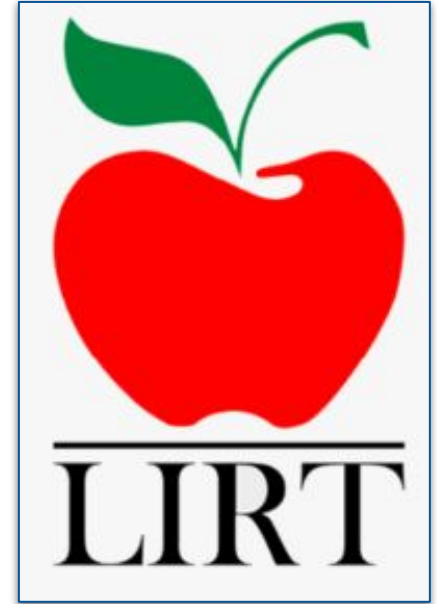
# The Journal of Academic Librarianship

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## What I had, what I needed: First-year students reflect on how their high school experience prepared them for college research ☆

Brenda Boyer<sup>a</sup>  , Ewa Dziedzic-Elliott<sup>b</sup>



*Top 20 Library Instruction Research article*

*2025 AASL Research Grant Award*





# Research Questions:

- **What information literacy skill gaps remain largely unmet for first-year college students?**
- **Instructional design implications?**



## Key Findings (participants at end of 1st year of college)

While the **top 3 things** first-years named as **most important things they learned in high school** included:

***Citing sources (46%), source evaluation strategies (39%), importance of peer reviewed articles (33%), database usage strategies (26%), and seeing the library/-ian as resources (22%)***

***These percentages point to a larger population of learners who did not name these as skills they had “packed” for college.***





## Key Findings (participants at end of 1st year of college)

While **70%** of the **top differences in finding and using information** from high school to college focused on **resources**

*e.g. requirements and/or restrictions regarding, peer reviewed, written at an academic level, etc.,*

only **23%** reported finding and using information harder or more challenging



## Key Findings (participants at end of 1st year of college)

Rated their confidence level in performing 18 **specific IL skills** that fell into 3 broad categories (Information Management, Critical Thinking, and Metacognition):

e.g. Slightly over half (54.9%) were confident in accessing full text, and fewer (39.2%) believed they could read and understand a database record components

-speaks to not a failing on K12, but more so to the lack of school librarians, high quality resources available to learners



## Key Findings (participants at end of 1st year of college)

Rated their confidence level in performing 18 **specific IL skills** that fell into 3 broad categories (Information Management, Critical Thinking, and Metacognition):

Higher order thinking skills are not as readily recalled as needed skills

First-years lacked the terminology to describe them (as opposed to the mechanics of information management)

Regard research *as a **highly mechanical, step-by-step process, rather than a thinking process.***



## Key Findings (participants at end of 1st year of college)

Rated their confidence level in performing 18 **specific IL skills** that fell into 3 broad categories (Information Management, Critical Thinking, and Metacognition):

**Critical thinking needs** (analysis, synthesis, developing research questions and a thesis and evaluating trustworthiness of sources) that were among the **most mentioned skill gaps also correspond with some of the lowest confidence skills for both novices (39.1%) and non-novices (61.9%)**

Earlier research instruction focused more on the mechanics or operations of research rather than the thought processes that accompany research skills

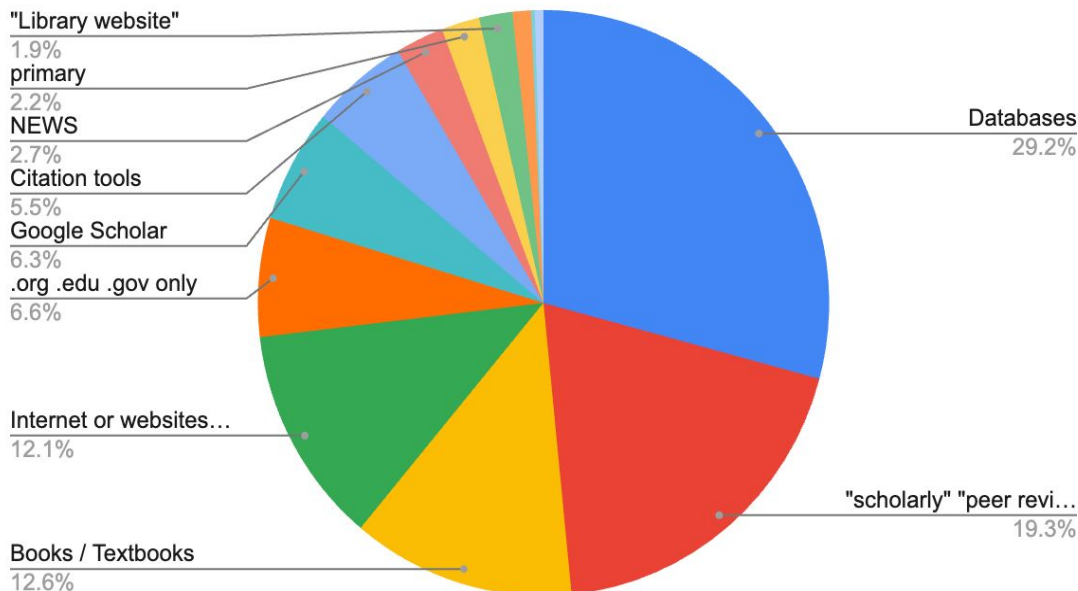


## Key Findings (participants at end of 1st year of college)

What types of research resources were recommended to them by their teachers and librarians:

For analysis, resources were grouped as academic or non-academic. 78% of the total responses were regarded as academic resources, 21% were non-academic resources.

Teacher/librarian recommended sources





## Key Findings (participants at end of 1st year of college)

Subject area teachers who contributed to their high school research instruction other than a school librarian:

34% English language arts teachers

21% Social studies

17.5% Science/STEM

6% Math

6% Art, drama, music, visual and performing arts teachers

6% World language



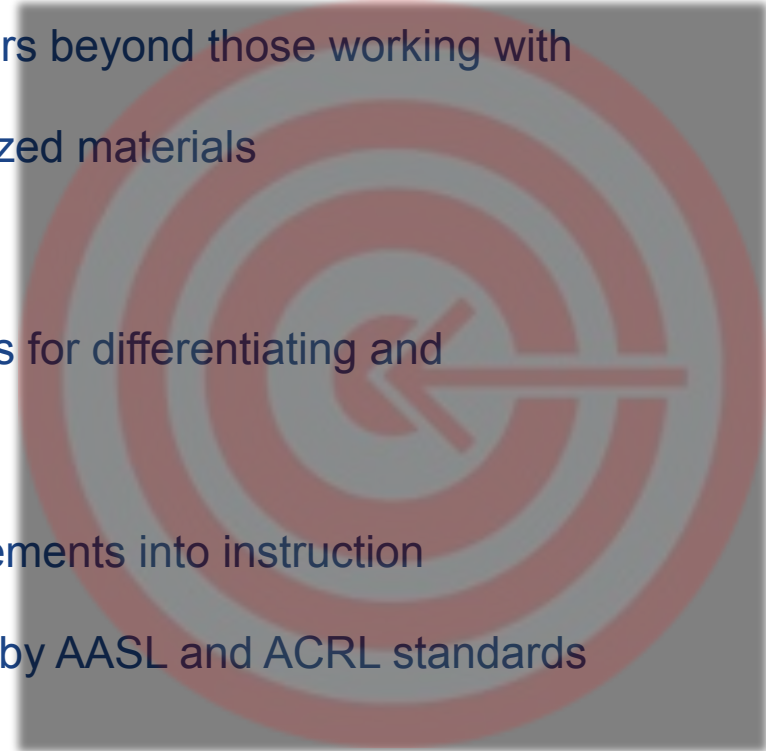


## Key Findings (participants at end of 1st year of college)

11 terms majority learned in HS	6 terms majority learned in college	12 terms still unknown to majority	5 terms everyone familiar with
Catalog	Abstract	Citation chaining/citation trailing/citation chasing/cited reference search	Bibliography/References/Works Cited
Copyright	Bibliography/References/Works Cited	Conference proceedings	Copyright
Database	Intellectual property	Controlled vocabulary	Index
Index	Peer reviewed	Creative Commons	Journal
Journal	Open access	Fair use	Keyword
Keyword	Reference Sources (almanacs, dictionaries)	Discovery, One-Search or Quick Search (the library's one-box search)	
Advanced Search		Full-text	
Subject heading/descriptor		Database thesaurus	
Primary source		Preprint	
Secondary source		Link resolver	
Scholarly source		DOI	
		Interlibrary loan	

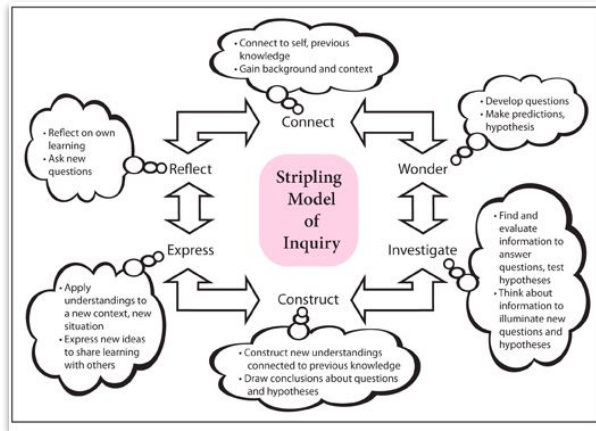
# Recommendations for IL Instructional Design

- Developing ongoing collaborations with professors beyond those working with first-year students; deeper integration of specialized materials
- Taking an instructional design approach
- Leveraging online learning management systems for differentiating and personalizing IL learning
- Integrating critical and metacognitive thinking elements into instruction
- Finding strategies for measuring IL skill mastery by AASL and ACRL standards

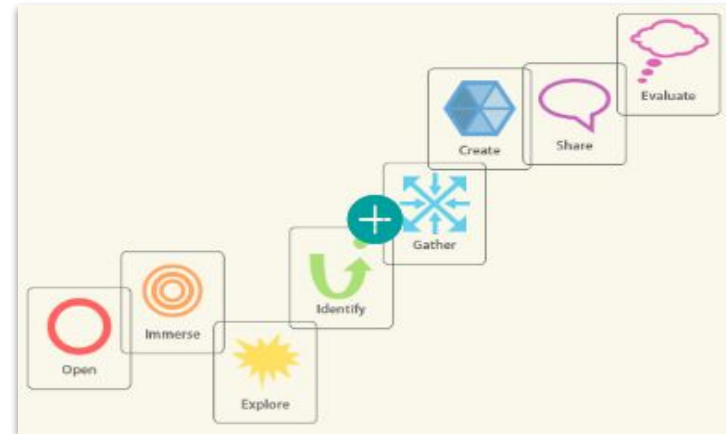


## Integrating critical and metacognitive thinking elements into instruction

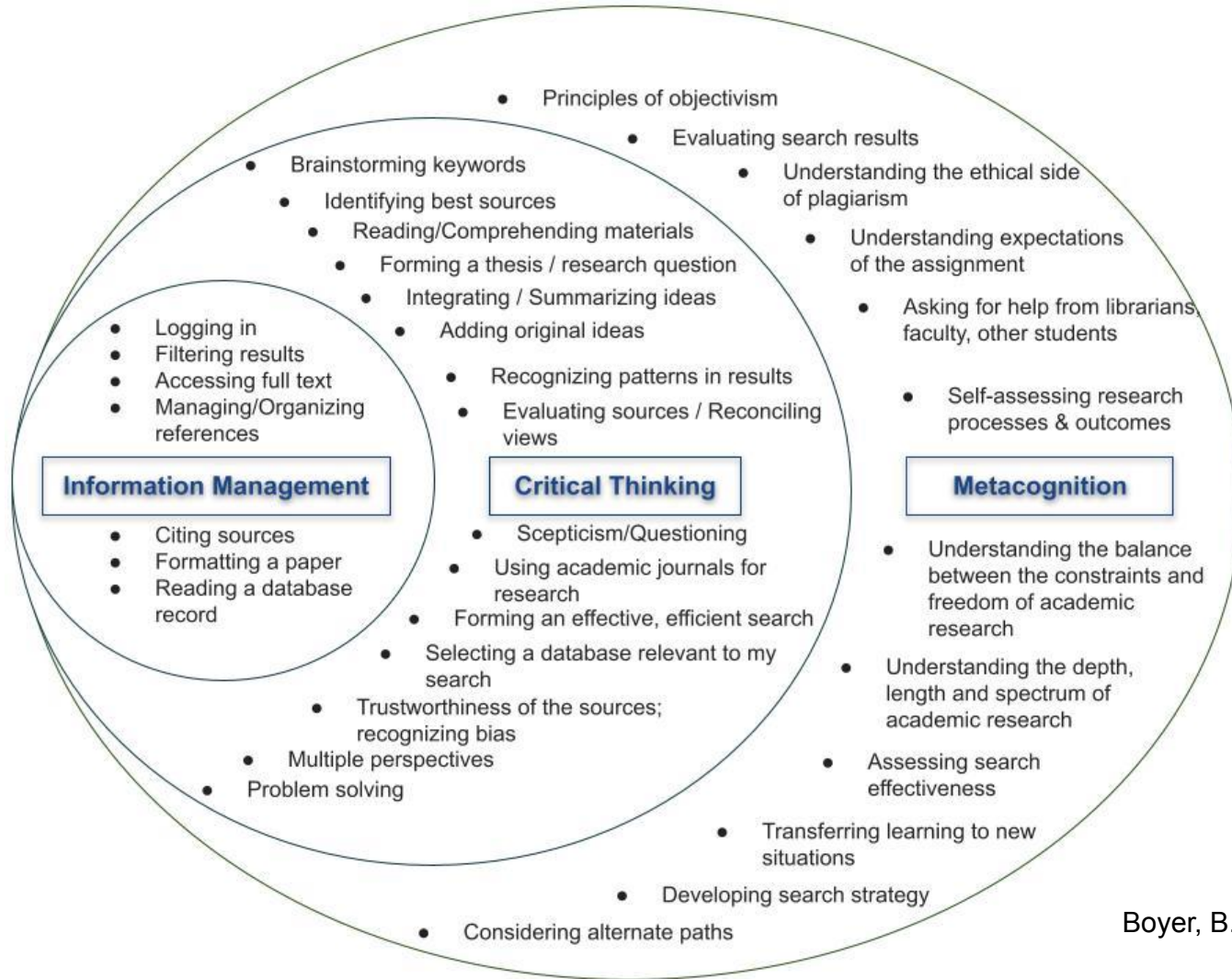
- IL taught in relevant, practical ways and not in isolation.
- Explicit teaching of critical thinking strategies
- Integrated gradually and more frequently and not held in reserve for large capstones
- Use an inquiry model with metacognitive features



**Stripling Model**  
Stripling



**Guided Inquiry Model**  
Kuhlthau



# Recommendations

- School educators/librarians and academic libraries collaborations
- Research skills/IL mini credentials
- Teacher prep and school admin prep programs
- Strategic instructional design approach that integrates information management, critical thinking and metacognition into our instruction
- Refer to
  - [JL legislation with definition of IL](#)
  - [STAMP NJDOE](#)
  - [LLNJ Niche Academy](#) and [Teaching IL](#)



# Public Testimony

## **The Southern Regional Public Hearing will be held at:**

Camden County College,  
200 College Drive,  
Blackwood, NJ 08012

in the Connector Building, Room 105, Civic Hall

**11 a.m, Tuesday, January 13, 2026.**

Members of the public seeking to testify in person may register online by noon on Thursday, **January 8, 2026.**

## **The Northern Regional Public Hearing will be held at:**

Essex County Donald M. Payne Sr. School of Technology  
498-544 West Market Street, Newark, NJ 07107

in the Father Edwin D. Leahy Auditorium

6 p.m. on Wednesday, January 28, 2026.

Members of the public seeking to testify in person may register online by noon on Thursday, **January 22, 2026.**

## **The Central Regional Public Hearing will be held at the**

Department of Education  
100 Riverview Plaza

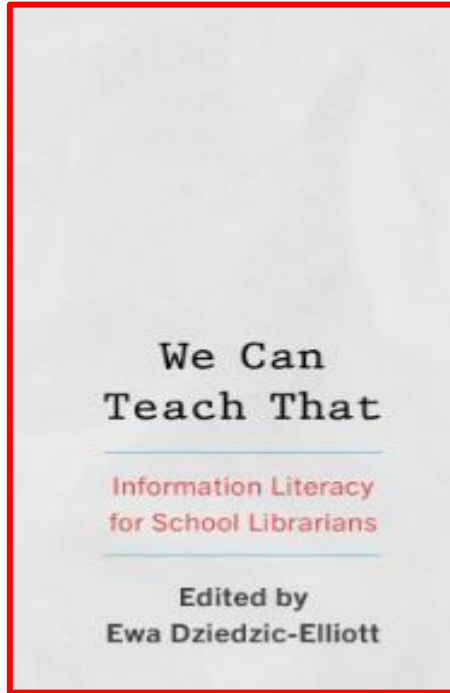
Trenton, NJ 08625

in the first floor conference room at **1pm on Wednesday,**

**February 4, 2026.**

Members of the public seeking to testify in person may register online by noon on Thursday, **January 29, 2026.**





When do we start teaching information literacy?  
How do we teach it? How does it affect our students at their education level? How does it prepare them for their post high school adult life? Does it impact their transition to college or career?

Dziedzic-Elliott and her collaborators provide a range of best practices and concepts that inspire thinking about teaching information literacy at all levels.

ROWMAN &  
LITTLEFIELD

# FIRST YEARS MEET THE FRAMES

## Thank You!



See our LibGuide: <https://comminfo.libguides.com/FirstYearsFrames/>

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