

Information Literacy Instruction Redux: What Are Instruction Librarians Doing Now?

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An online survey of U.S. academic librarians with responsibility for information literacy instruction gathered data about instructional topics, practices, and challenges. Results are compared with data from an earlier survey. The results show some change over time, partly arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as consistent challenges, including insufficient resources, complicated relationships with teaching faculty, and structural barriers impeding full implementation of the ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (2015). The data have implications for library managers and for programs preparing future instructional librarians.

Introduction

Information literacy instruction (ILI) is a significant and ongoing focus for academic libraries in the United States and globally. Particularly at a time when societal concern for misinformation and malinformation remains heightened and following the global COVID 19 pandemic (a period when these issues took on particular relevance), the role of academic librarians in promoting information literacy (IL) became even more critical. The efforts of librarians, as well as their success in achieving their instructional goals, are thus key to assuring librarians' relevance in this context. Indeed, the practices of instructional librarians have long been a focus of interest, both to researchers who seek to understand and strengthen librarianship, and to practitioners who seek to improve their practice. Broad-based understanding of the information literacy instructional practices of academic librarians has been promoted through research conducted in several countries, including the United States (Julien et al., 2018), New Zealand (Julien, 1998), and Canada (Polkinghorne & Julien, 2018). This paper presents the latest data set in that series.

Furthermore, understanding longitudinal trends in practice, particularly in an area of academic librarianship so central to the field (i.e., information literacy), is critical to track progress and to identify both opportunities for more effective practices and the support required for ensuring effectiveness. Building a base of evidence upon which to make positive change

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requires the periodic gathering of baseline data, such as that collected in this study. Thus, the research questions addressed by this study are:

- What are the instructional practices of academic librarians in the U.S.?
- What challenges do they face in their instructional roles?
- What are some of the opportunities for improvement in ILI practice?
- What changes have occurred in these practices and challenges since 2016?

Related Literature

While there are many definitions of information literacy, academic librarians are guided by definitions developed by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) in their teaching work. In 2015, ACRL made a major change to the official definition of information literacy, rejecting the old skill-based definition (ACRL, 2000) and replacing it with a more conceptual view guided by the attainment of six threshold concepts and related knowledge practices and dispositions (ACRL, 2015). The change was paradigmatic, complicating the performance of the ubiquitous “one-shot” instruction in which students are given the grand tour of information literacy skills in one sitting. Threshold concepts are meant to be developed over the course of a student’s program of study, and they are more difficult to assess. Another challenge is that faculty often prefer that librarians teach skills. While some faculty embrace the teaching of threshold concepts, others are more concerned with students being able to complete the class assignment.

How information literacy is taught and assessed is the topic of many papers in the professional literature. However, the literature has lacked a full-scale look at what instructional librarians do, how they see the challenges of their job, and how they think ILI can be improved. The first large-scale survey of instructional practice in the United States was reported in 2018 (Julien et al., 2018), just a few years after the adoption of the ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education (Framework)* (2015). Data collection asked about pedagogical methods, client groups of focus, assessment activities, marketing instructional objectives, incorporating the framework into instruction, the role of technology in instruction, the importance of relationships with faculty and administrators, as well as challenges faced by librarians. While the respondents in the survey were self-selected, participation was strong ($n = 622$). The data provided a baseline idea of the professional work of ILI librarians, demonstrating that ILI is a fundamental professional practice. The findings from this initial study provide a point of comparison to the new data collected in this study. Similar data has been collected in Canada (Polkinghorne & Julien, 2018) and Israel (Aharony et al., 2020), making it possible to observe trends in opinions and activities and issues over time. This project seeks to build on previously collected data to construct a longitudinal view that will demonstrate progress and that will identify the challenges and solutions librarians experience in seeking to support student success in school and beyond.

It should be noted that in 2020 two surveys targeting instructional librarians at community colleges were undertaken (Gross et al., 2022; Wengler & Wolff-Eisenberg, 2020). While these surveys focus on a subset of higher education, their findings also provide a snapshot of the professional work of these librarians. Wengler and Wolff-Eisenberg’s national survey of community colleges reports on data collected from 1,201 librarians concerning the integration of the *Framework* into ILI. They found that integration of the *Framework* was not widespread. Many of the respondents had not read the document all the way through, while 10 percent said they altered instruction to include the *Framework*. One-shot instruction continues as the norm, and the *Framework* does not fit this format. These librarians are interested in

professional development and would like to see a *Framework* tailored to their environment and to see community college leadership take a role in facilitating adoption of the *Framework*.

The studies (Gross et al., 2022; Julien et al., 2020) revealed significant differences between the work of community college librarians and those librarians who responded to the original national survey (Julien et al., 2018). These community college librarians' primary objective is to teach skills, particularly the ability to critically evaluate information. The conclusion was that the *Framework* is not having the same level of influence on community college librarians as on academic librarians generally (Julien et al., 2018). Assessment continues to be a challenge, as do issues such as a lack of resources and of faculty and administrative support; these findings have persisted through previous surveys of ILI across higher education (Julien et al., 2018).

Methods

The research questions were addressed using an online Qualtrics survey composed of 33 closed-response and open-response items (see Appendix 1). The survey was nearly identical to the 2016 survey (Julien et al., 2018), with minor updates to language suggested by two academic librarians at this study's authors' affiliated institutions. The survey included questions focused on respondent demographics, library context, pedagogical practices, instructional objectives, evaluation and assessment practices, marketing practices, support for instructional activities, and challenges faced. Respondents were also asked about their opinions on the definition of information literacy, who should take responsibility for teaching IL, and the impact of the *Framework*. The survey was distributed via the ACRL Instruction Section list on the American Library Association Connect platform in February 2024. The survey remained open for six weeks, and multiple reminders were posted to the list prior to closure of the survey. The call for participation asked that librarians with instructional responsibilities working in U.S. academic libraries complete the survey. Consent was implied by survey completion. Responses were anonymous; all data was confidential and maintained in password-protected, secure cloud storage. The study was given ethics approval by the University at Buffalo Institutional Review Board. While the total number of potential respondents is unknown, 229 usable surveys were submitted and included in data analyses. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS and Excel. Chi-square test calculations were used to compare 2016 and 2024 results to highlight changes over time.

Limitations

The study is limited in its geographic focus on the United States; thus, the efforts and experiences of librarians outside of this country are not included. In addition, the survey respondents are self-selected and could therefore be unrepresentative of the overall population of U.S. librarians.

Results

Respondents' Insights from 2016 and 2024

In 2024, the total number of respondents was 229, fewer respondents compared to the 2016 study ($n = 622$). Respondents could opt out of any question(s), and thus the item-level participation varied in both studies. The population size is similarly unknown, and therefore this was not a probability sample. Data from 2016 (Julien et al., 2018) was used to compare and identify changes in instructional practices.

In both 2016 and 2024, respondents described similar workplace associations. Table 1 shows that the largest proportion of respondents worked in universities in both 2016 (60%, $n = 227$) and 2024 (68%, $n = 135$), while the second-largest proportion worked in colleges or technical institutes in both 2016 (39%, $n = 148$) and 2024 (28%, $n = 55$). Also, the largest proportion

of respondents worked in institutions with fewer than 10,000 undergraduate students in both 2016 (62%, $n = 237$) and 2024 (60%, $n = 118$), while the second-largest proportion worked in institutions with 10,000 to 20,000 students in both 2016 (23%, $n = 88$) and 2024 (20%, $n = 39$).

TABLE 1
Respondents' Workplace

Longitudinal Timeline	2016	2024	
Your library is associated with a:	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	$\Delta\%$, Sig.
College/Technical Institute**	148 (39)	55 (28)	-11, .008
University*	227 (60)	135 (68)	8, .043
Other ^a	6 (2)	8 (4)	N/A
Total Respondents^b	381 (101)	198 (100)	
Size of Undergraduate Population	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	$\Delta\%$, Sig.
Fewer than 10,000	237 (62)	118 (60)	-2, .567
10,000 – 20,000	88 (23)	39 (20)	-3, .356
More than 20,000	57 (15)	41 (21)	6, .081
Total Respondents^b	382 (100)	198 (101)	

Note. Differences in the percentages were tested using a chi-square test for independence.

^aSample was too small for a chi-square test.

^bTotal exceeds 100 due to rounding.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

The diversity in respondents' job titles did not change from the previous study. In both 2016 and 2024, respondents' job titles contained the phrase "information literacy" or "instruction." Examples of other job titles specified by respondents include "social sciences librarian" and "director of teaching and learning." Additionally, respondents reported no changes in how their institutions support different disciplines (e.g., art, engineering, and social sciences).

Regarding primary responsibilities for instruction at their institutions, respondents' reported patterns differed between 2016 and 2024. In 2016, reference/public service librarians were reported as the largest proportion (63%, $n = 226$), followed by full-time instruction librarians (55%, $n = 196$). In 2024, this pattern inverted, and full-time instruction librarians were reported as the largest proportion (73%, $n = 128$), followed by reference/public service librarians (39%, $n = 68$) (see Table 2).

TABLE 2
Instruction Staffing

Longitudinal Timeline	2016	2024	
Primary Responsibility for Instruction	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	$\Delta\%$, Sig.
Full-time instruction librarian***	196 (55)	128 (73)	18, <.001
Reference/public service librarians***	226 (63)	68 (39)	-24, <.001
Other librarians on staff	101 (28)	59 (34)	6, .089
Other staff, please specify*	43 (12)	31 (18)	6, .041
Total Respondents^a	381	176	

Note. Differences in the percentages were tested using a chi-square test for independence.

^aTotal exceeds 100 because respondents could choose more than one answer.

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

Time spent on instruction by non-full-time staff at the academic term start versus the rest of the year differed between 2016 and 2024. In 2016, non-full-time staff spent up to 25% at the start of the academic term (41%, $n = 137$), while in 2024, non-full-time staff spent 26% to 50% at the start of the academic term (39%, $n = 67$). Respondents reported similar answers for the remainder of the academic year in both 2016 and 2024, that is, that non-full-time staff spent up to 25% of their time on instruction in both 2016 (59%, $n = 199$) and 2024 (55%, $n = 96$). Respondents reported that staff spend 51–75% of their time on instruction at the start of the academic term in both 2016 (20%, $n = 66$) and 2024 (22%, $n = 39$); this decreased for the rest of the year in both 2016 (9%, $n = 30$) and 2024 (8%, $n = 14$). None of these differences reached statistical significance (see Table 3).

TABLE 3
Instruction by Non-Full-Time Staff

Longitudinal Timeline	2016	2024	
Staff Time on Instruction (non-full-time; start of term)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	$\Delta\%$, Sig.
0–25%	137 (41)	62 (36)	-5, .209
26–50%	123 (37)	67 (39)	2, .674
51–75%	66 (20)	39 (22)	2, .463
More than 75%	10 (3)	6 (3)	0, .772
Total Respondents^a	336 (101)	174 (100)	
Staff Time on Instruction (non-full-time; rest of year)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	$\Delta\%$, Sig.
0–25%	199 (59)	96 (55)	-4, .379
26–50%	107 (32)	63 (36)	4, .322
51–75%	30 (9)	14 (8)	-1, .736
More than 75% ^b	0 (0)	1 (1)	N/A
Total Respondents	336 (100)	174 (100)	

Note. Differences in the percentages were tested using a chi-square test for independence.

^aTotal exceeds 100 due to rounding.

^bSample was too small for a chi-square test.

Instructional Practices in 2016 and 2024

In both 2016 and 2024, most respondents indicated that teaching information literacy is a shared responsibility between faculty and the students themselves for many of the various concepts. However, most respondents conceded in 2016 (39%, $n = 98$) and in 2024 (49%, $n = 68$) that understanding how information is developed, structured, stored, and disseminated is a full responsibility of academic librarians. Likewise, in both 2016 (16%, $n = 39$) and 2024 (17%, $n = 23$), respondents agreed that understanding the legal and ethical implications of information is a full responsibility of academic librarians. Lastly, the largest proportion of respondents in both 2016 (60%, $n = 151$) and 2024 (60%, $n = 83$) indicated that understanding how to adequately search for information with different data structures is a full responsibility of academic librarians. Table 4 shows the perceived distribution of responsibility among various concepts essential for proficiency in information literacy.

TABLE 4
Respondents' Views on Academic Librarians' Level of Responsibility for Various Aspects of Information Literacy

Longitudinal Timeline	2016	2024
Recognizing when information is needed:	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
Not responsible	15 (6)	7 (5)
Partially responsible	114 (45)	116 (84)
Fully responsible	25 (10)	15 (11)
Other	98 (39)	N/A
Total Respondents	252 (100)	138 (100)
Understanding how information is generated, organized, stored, and transmitted:	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
Not responsible	2 (1)	2 (1)
Partially responsible	99 (39)	68 (49)
Fully responsible	98 (39)	68 (49)
Other	52 (21)	N/A
Total Respondents^a	251 (100)	138 (99)
Understanding some ethical, legal, economic, and sociopolitical information issues:	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
Not responsible	2 (1)	5 (4)
Partially responsible	131 (53)	110 (80)
Fully responsible	39 (16)	23 (17)
Other	77 (31)	N/A
Total Respondents^a	249 (101)	138 (101)
Understanding that there exists a wide variety of information sources beyond the obvious:	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
Not responsible	1 (0)	1 (1)
Partially responsible	105 (42)	90 (65)
Fully responsible	84 (34)	46 (33)
Other	60 (24)	N/A
Total Respondents^a	250 (100)	137 (99)
Understanding how to locate efficiently and effectively information from many sources:	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
Not responsible	0 (0)	1 (1)
Partially responsible	65 (26)	54 (39)
Fully responsible	151 (60)	83 (60)
Other	34 (14)	N/A
Total Respondents	250 (100)	138 (100)
Understanding how to use efficiently and effectively information from many sources:	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
Not responsible	2 (1)	4 (3)

TABLE 4
Respondents' Views on Academic Librarians' Level of Responsibility for Various Aspects of Information Literacy

Longitudinal Timeline	2016	2024
Recognizing when information is needed:	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
Partially responsible	113 (46)	94 (68)
Fully responsible	62 (25)	40 (29)
Other	70 (28)	N/A
Total Respondents	247 (100)	138 (100)
Understanding how to critically analyze and evaluate information:	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
Not responsible	0 (0)	0 (0)
Partially responsible	130 (52)	111 (80)
Fully responsible	39 (16)	27 (20)
Other	79 (32)	N/A
Total Respondents	248 (100)	138 (100)
Knowing how to think critically in general:	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
Not responsible	22 (9)	14 (10)
Partially responsible	139 (55)	115 (83)
Fully responsible	9 (4)	8 (6)
Other	81 (32)	N/A
Total Respondents^a	251 (100)	137 (99)

Note. No item was required for participants to answer, which accounts for the varying sample size from item to item. The 2016 data has an "Other" category because participants could choose to enter a free-text comment instead to answer the question, "Who else should be responsible?"

^aTotal percent may vary from 99-101% due to rounding.

Comparison of Groups of Focus

The second-largest proportion of respondents in 2016 (85%, $n = 279$) focused on assisting undergraduate students in certain subject disciplines, while in 2024 (92%, $n = 157$) respondents indicated this category as their largest proportion. A chi-square test showed significant differences in the focuses of undergraduate students between 2016 and 2024 ($\chi^2(1) = 5.70$, $p < .016$). Respondents reported the lowest proportion of assisting communities outside their institutions in 2016 (12%, $n = 38$) and 2024 (8%, $n = 14$) without any significant differences.

Respondents reported minimum changes in relation to their institutions offering formal instructional opportunities (scheduled in advance) between 2016 (92%, $n = 349$) and 2024 (91%, $n = 180$). Respondents working at institutions not offering formal instruction reported similar reasons for this in both 2016 and 2024: understaffing, feelings of burnout, short amount of time for teaching, and a sense that information literacy philosophies were not valued by faculty and administrators. Only 52% of respondents in both 2016 ($n = 179$) and 2024 ($n = 84$) indicated they had a written statement of objectives for their instruction.

Table 5 shows the distribution of topics covered by the respondents in 2016 and 2024. Respondents reported in 2016 that databases (94%, $n = 322$), search strategies (88%, $n = 301$), and library use in general (84%, $n = 287$) were the leading topics of instruction. Comparably,

the largest proportion of respondents in 2024 indicated that databases (98%, $n = 167$), search strategies (95%, $n = 162$), and library use in general (91%, $n = 155$) were the most prominent topics. The topic of generative artificial intelligence is not associated with this longitudinal study as this novel technology has become commonplace only in recent years. However, 21% ($n = 35$) of respondents reported this topic is part of their instruction in 2024. One respondent indicated, “We’re starting to think about how to address AI chatbots.” Future studies can measure the trend for instructing on this technology in academic libraries.

TABLE 5
Instruction Topics

Longitudinal Timeline	2016	2024	
Topics	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	$\Delta\%$, Sig.
Print indexes or abstracts	21 (6)	10 (6)	0, .914
Audio-visual materials	51 (15)	22 (13)	-2, .556
CD-ROM resources ^a	1 (0)	1 (1)	N/A
Government documents	52 (15)	26 (15)	0, .968
Library classification system(s)	103 (30)	52 (31)	1, .897
Online databases*	322 (94)	167 (98)	4, .028
Bibliographic management tools	174 (51)	99 (58)	7, .109
Open access resources	93 (27)	56 (33)	6, .171
Other print reference materials***	111 (32)	31 (18)	-14, <.001
Catalogue/OPAC*	264 (77)	114 (67)	-10, .016
Internet/world-wide-web	230 (67)	109 (64)	-3, .508
Library use in general*	287 (84)	155 (91)	7, .021
Electronic documents***	128 (37)	127 (75)	38, <.001
Search strategies (such as Boolean)**	301 (88)	162 (95)	7, .007
Citation metrics	95 (28)	42 (25)	-3, .471
Generative artificial intelligence ^b	—	35	—
Other, please specify	53 (15)	30 (18)	3, .525
Total Respondents	343	170	

Note. Differences in the percentages were tested using a chi-square test for independence.

^aSample was too small for a chi-square test.

^bGenerative AI technology is disseminated to the public after 2016.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 6 shows the methods of instruction employed by respondents between 2016 and 2024. There was a decrease in the reported hands-on instruction in computer labs between 2016 (87%, $n = 299$) and 2024 (80%, $n = 136$). A chi-square test showed significant differences among the responses for using hands-on instruction in the computer lab between 2016 and 2024 ($\chi^2(1) = 4.535$, $p < .033$). The proportions using essay assistance (workshops) also decreased among respondents between 2016 (20%, $n = 66$) and 2024 (12%, $n = 20$). A chi-square test identified a statistically significant association among the responses for essay assistance (workshops) between 2016 and 2024 ($\chi^2(1) = 4.554$, $p < .033$). Also, respondents reported an increased proportion of the use of video recordings (such as YouTube videos) between 2016 (53%,

$n = 182$) and 2024 (62%, $n = 106$). A chi-square test showed significant differences among the responses for using video recordings (such as YouTube videos) between 2016 and 2024 ($\chi^2(1) = 3.985$, $p < .046$).

TABLE 6
Methods of Instruction

Longitudinal Timeline	2016	2024	
Methods	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	$\Delta\%$, Sig.
Web tutorials	177 (52)	91 (54)	2, .681
Hands-on instruction in computer lab*	299 (87)	136 (80)	-7, .033
Individualized instruction (one-on-one, in-person)	298 (87)	157 (92)	5, .065
Courseware	49 (14)	22 (13)	-1, .678
Video recordings (such as YouTube videos)*	182 (53)	106 (62)	9, .046
Self-paced library tours	42 (12)	24 (14)	2, .551
Workbook program ^a	4 (1)	1 (1)	N/A
Lectures / demonstrations in subject classes	277 (81)	148 (87)	6, .075
Essay assistance (workshops)*	66 (20)	20 (12)	-8, .033
Additions to course notes for distance students	30 (9)	11 (6)	-3, .371
Group instruction focused on courses/subjects in the library	207 (60)	113 (66)	6, .178
Social media	48 (14)	14 (8)	-6, .060
Flipped classrooms	94 (27)	43 (25)	-2, .787
Embedded librarians	143 (42)	72 (42)	0, .886
Credit course	78 (23)	33 (19)	-4, .389
Noncredit course	26 (8)	9 (5)	-3, .334
Posters	20 (6)	13 (8)	2, .430
Group library tours	112 (33)	53 (31)	-2, .736
Library guides or handbooks web format	175 (51)	81 (48)	-3, .472
Library guides or handbooks paper format	72 (21)	25 (15)	-6, .087
Other	17 (5)	14 (8)	3, .142
Total Respondents	343	170	

Note. Differences in the percentages were tested using a chi-square test for independence.

^aSample was too small for a chi-square test.

* $p < .05$.

Role of Technology: A Comparison in Instructional Practices

Respondents' views on the impact that technology has on their instructional delivery and content were diverse in both 2016 and 2024. In 2016, the largest proportion of respondents indicated that technology has affected the delivery of their instruction quite a bit (42%, $n = 134$), while in 2024, the vast majority reported that technology has affected their delivery only slightly (47%, $n = 76$). The second-largest proportion of respondents in 2016 indicated it only slightly affected them (33%, $n = 106$), while in 2024, they reported it has affected them quite a bit (34%, $n = 5$). Regarding the impact that technology has on the content of their instruction, the largest proportion of 2016 respondents reported it affected them only slightly (41%, $n = 128$), while the highest percentage of 2024 respondents indicated it affected them not

at all (43%, $n = 66$). Even though the delivery of instruction in computer labs (in-person) shifted to Zoom meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, respondents reported positive attributes related to this technology. In 2024, respondents reported that the COVID-19 pandemic and the advancement of videoconferencing features contributed to a remote practice in which students could work on their own time (i.e., asynchronously). One respondent indicated there was “more use of instructional objects such as videos, lesson plans, or other digital objects that can be reused across locations.” Another respondent reported that “there were certain class activities (handouts, worksheets, etc.) that had to be rethought and reimaged for the online format.” Other respondents referred to other aspects of instruction; as one noted: “since the pandemic and especially since ChatGPT’s existence, we have shifted to a greater focus on mis/disinformation and authority-related topics when it comes to information literacy.”

Respondents were asked whether changes to technology have influenced student interest or participation in ILI. In the 2016 data, respondents felt that students were more engaged with hands-on practices that included technology (mobile devices to assess learning), relative to 2024 data (33%, $n = 131$ versus 26%, $n = 38$, respectively). A chi-square test showed significant differences between the survey years, specifically that advancement of technology was less influential on student engagement in 2024 ($\chi^2(1) = 14.572$, $p < .001$). Only 14% ($n = 55$) of respondents in 2016 reported that technological changes have not increased the interest of students compared to 33% ($n = 48$) in 2024 ($\chi^2(1) = 10.669$, $p = .001$). Also, the largest proportions of respondents reported that these technological changes improved their instruction in both 2016 (64%, $n = 182$) and in 2024 (47%, $n = 67$). However, in 2016 respondents were more likely than 2024 respondents to answer this question affirmatively ($\chi^2(1) = 11.501$, $p < .001$). In 2016, respondents believed that technology allowed them to reach more students as they used different learning tools. They believed that this allowed librarians to interact more with students and cater to their personal needs. In the 2024 data, respondents reported the development of new applications (e.g., Canva) and videoconferences (e.g., Zoom and Microsoft Teams) that helped them to organize and deliver adequate online instruction. Librarians suggested that online content is more accessible to students who often need to learn in an asynchronous environment. However, respondents mentioned that students’ emotions in videoconferences might not be easy to identify. Only 9% ($n = 25$) of respondents in 2016 reported that technology changes have not improved their instructions compared to 20% ($n = 29$) in 2024 ($\chi^2(1) = 11.330$, $p < .001$). From 2016 to 2024, instruction evolved to incorporate more online resources, became more influenced by technology, catered more to students’ needs for flexible schedules, and adjusted more to the specific needs that arose from the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2024 survey specifically asked about the effects of the pandemic. Respondents noted that onsite computer lab interactions shifted to online resources and videoconferences. And, as one respondent wrote, “it has forced us to reevaluate and update practices that hadn’t been assessed in quite some time.”

Table 7 compares the instructional objective perceptions of academic librarians in 2016 and 2024, ranked from most to least important. In 2016, respondents allocated the highest-ranking average to “teach students how to critically evaluate the quality and usefulness of information” (2.36), while in 2024 their highest-ranking average was to “teach students how to find information in various sources” (1.66). The second highest ranking in 2016 was “teach students general search strategies” (2.48), while in 2024 it was to “teach students how to

critically evaluate the quality and usefulness of information" (1.75). Also, in 2024 respondents indicated a high-ranking average for the "other" category; however, additional comments were not stipulated.

TABLE 7 Instructional Objectives Identified by Librarians		
Longitudinal Timeline	2016	2024
Objectives (ranked from 1, most important, to 6, least important)	Ranking Average	Ranking Average
Teach students how to critically evaluate the quality and usefulness of information	2.36	1.75
Teach students general research strategies	2.48	1.82
Teach students how to find information in various sources	2.64	1.66
Teach students how to locate materials in the library	4.10	2.59
Teach students how databases in general are structured	4.38	2.82
Teaching users how to manage information	5.03	3.13
Teach awareness of technological innovations	5.99	4.29
Other, please state and include ranking	4.36	1.94
Total Respondents	273	156

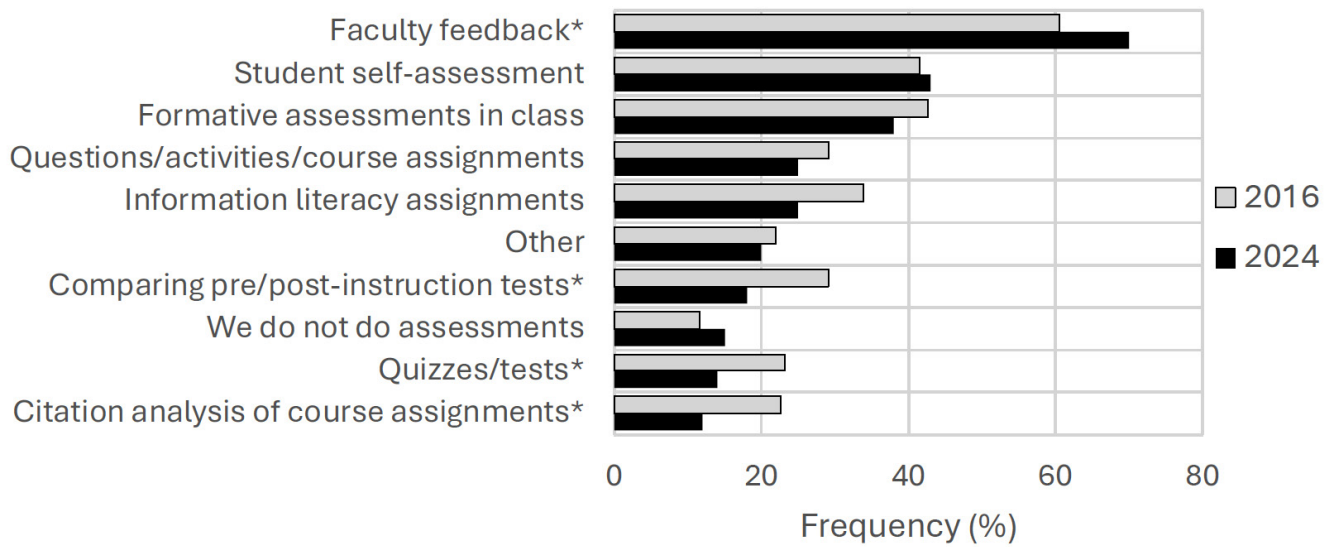
Note. Rank order is presented based on respondent's preferred instructional objective from 2016.

From 2016 to 2024, the focus of instruction was on the critical analysis of information due to the abundance and accessibility of different data types. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for students to use critical thinking about information sources. Responses to other survey items related to instructional objectives indicate that about half of the respondents similarly perceived that they were meeting their objectives in 2016 (49%, $n = 121$) and 2024 (49%, $n = 68$), while 23% ($n = 57$) in 2016 and 28% ($n = 39$) in 2024 did not know.

Figure 1 displays the differences in assessment of student learning between 2016 and 2024. The largest proportion of respondents reported that they assessed students through "faculty feedback" in 2016 (61%, $n = 152$) and 2024 (70%, $n = 98$). A chi-square test ($\chi^2(1) = 3.127$, $p = .077$) suggested that this type of assessment varied significantly between 2016 and 2024. The lowest proportion of respondents in 2016 and 2024 assessed the learning of their students "by comparing pre/post-instruction test" (29%, $n = 73$ versus 18%, $n = 25$), "through quizzes/tests" (23%, $n = 58$ vs. 14%, $n = 20$), and "through citation analysis of course assignments" (23%, $n = 57$ vs. 12%, $n = 17$), respectively.

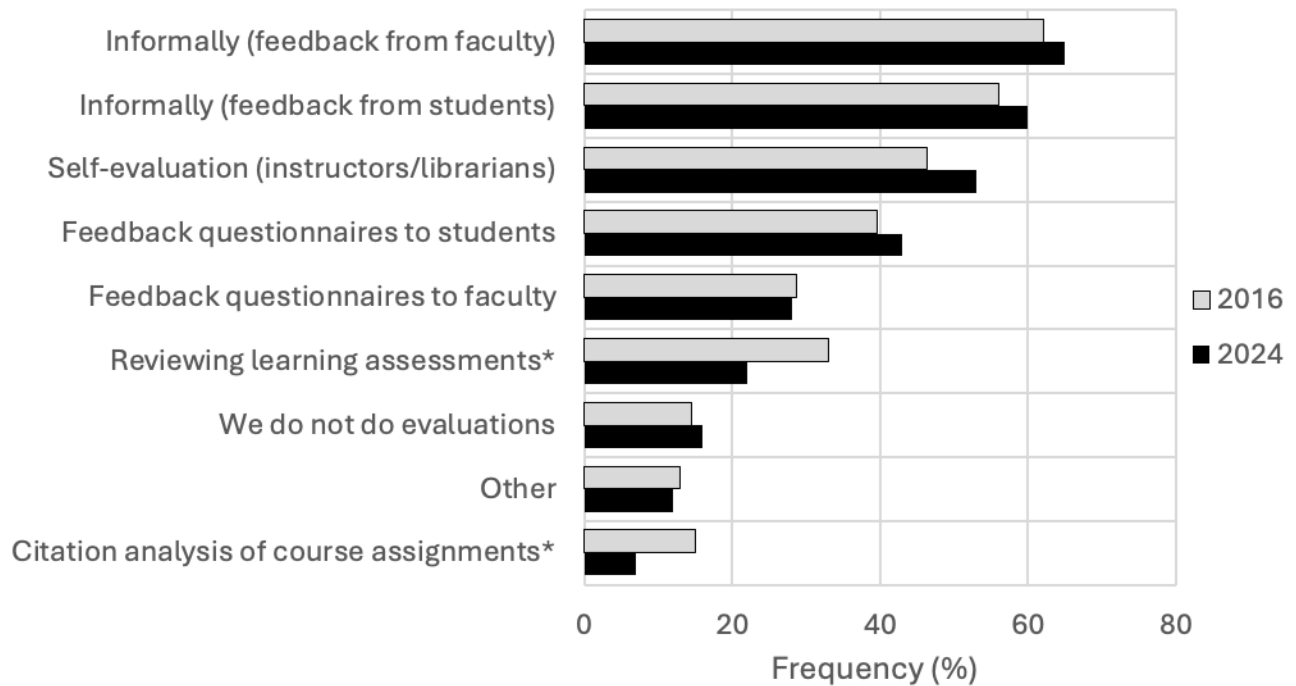
Figure 2 displays the differences in evaluations between 2016 and 2024. There were no significant differences in the largest proportion of responses, and most respondents reported informal feedback received from faculty. The lowest proportion of respondents in 2016 and 2024 evaluated instructional success "by reviewing learning assessment results" (33%, $n = 82$ versus 22%, $n = 30$) and "through citation analysis of course assignments" (15%, $n = 37$ versus 7%, $n = 10$), respectively.

Also, the smallest proportion of respondents reported that the *Framework* did not inform their instruction at all in 2016 (12%, $n = 20$) and 2024 (4%, $n = 6$). A chi-square test ($\chi^2(1) = 5.601$, $p > .018$) identified a statistically significant difference, indicating that their perception



The asterisk (*) indicates statistically significant difference ($p < .05$).

Figure 1. Assessment of Student Learning



The asterisk (*) indicates statistically significant difference ($p < .05$).

Figure 2. Evaluation of Instructional Practices

of the *Framework* differed between 2016 and 2024. Most respondents reported that the *Framework* had a significant influence on their instruction in 2016 (43%, $n = 74$) and 2024 (54%, $n = 76$); however, there was no statistical significance in this pattern. Respondents reported that the *Framework* has helped with the content and structure of instruction, and it supported the evolution of their teaching ideas and methods. However, they felt there was not enough time in one-shot sessions to teach all these concepts. The *Framework* was not adaptable for short sessions (i.e., one-shots) in which they needed to teach other fundamentals (e.g., searching, web navigation). In addition, respondents felt that students are accustomed to a Google search engine model and therefore they lack the necessary search skills for databases. Meanwhile, the *Framework* expects those skills to have been previously acquired. One respondent wrote, “the sunseting of the original information literacy standards was frustrating,” while another stated “we don’t have much time or opportunity to do ALL of them [the frames] well. I would prefer some of them also to be better defined and more skills related.”

Respondents reported limited support for instructional activities. In both 2016 and 2024, funding for instruction varied considerably between institutions. Respondents reported that when funding was available, it was assigned to technology (e.g., devices, subscriptions) for instruction. Overall, respondents reported that the amount allocated for instruction was too limited. Respondents to both the 2016 and 2024 surveys utilized similar methods to publicize their instruction, including letters (75%, $n = 187$ versus 76%, $n = 106$), professional development meetings (57%, $n = 143$ versus 58%, $n = 38$), social media (33%, $n = 82$ versus 26%, $n = 37$), flyers (17%, $n = 42$ versus 18%, $n = 25$), and personal faculty contacts (94%, $n = 234$ versus 91%, $n = 127$), all respectively. In the 2016 data, respondents were more likely to report direct personal contact with faculty to publicize instructional programs, in comparison to respondents in 2024 who reported that communication occurred often in professional development meetings. However, there was no statistical significance in this pattern in any of these methods.

Discussion and Conclusions

Respondents reported similar challenges to their instructional practice in 2016 and 2024. Respondents reported a lack of faculty engagement and sometimes respect (Becker et al., 2022; Cox et al., 2023), low student attendance and participation, limited instruction time, language barriers, and toxic work environments. Also, they highlighted excessive workloads due to understaffing, not knowing students’ learning outcomes, and the absence of adequate technological resources. One respondent commented “I can’t believe this is where we’re still at 24 years after the IL standards came out. If anything, the library has less standing and respect at the university than it did then.” These pressures, exacerbated by resource challenges led another respondent to note, “the library is also understaffed, with only one full-time librarian at each location (two campuses), which makes it much harder to promote instruction when the librarian is wearing all the hats.” Respondents reported feeling stuck and indicated that they wanted to do a better job but needed more support from their institutions to accomplish this goal. Stated one respondent, “I do not feel like it is valued by higher administration.” The expectations librarians place on themselves for ILI, as well as those placed on them by campus administrators and faculty, are clearly not matched by the limited resources and perceived respect provided. This challenge is longstanding and deeply resented. There are multiple reasons for this ongoing conundrum, including the neo-liberal environment that prioritizes short term outputs over investments in activities, such as ILI, that could have significant positive long-term impacts for students’ working and personal lives. Other

challenges include campus politics relating to credentialing (e.g., faculty generally hold PhDs, while librarians generally do not), and gendered power relations (Julien & Pecoskie, 2009).

The COVID-19 pandemic and rapid advances in technology catalyzed the adoption of online pedagogical methods and topics of focus. This is a clear indication to MLIS programs to ensure appropriate preparation for future instructional librarians. MLIS programs also need to prepare future instructional librarians for the challenges they may face in the workplace, particularly complex relationships with faculty, challenges engaging students, and limited campus support for instructional work. In addition, some librarians continue to experience the *Framework* as limited in its usefulness; therefore, a thorough understanding of the *Framework* and practical guidance on how to implement it are needed, both for future librarians, and currently practicing ones. The study points to multiple opportunities for improvement to practice, including articulating formal learning objectives, formally assessing student learning, and evaluating the success of instructional efforts. Such opportunities have been apparent for the nearly 30 years that these general surveys have been conducted in North America. Thus, this study makes clear that instructional librarians need support to meet their professional goals. Library leaders have a responsibility to ensure that preparing students to meet the academic, professional, and personal challenges awaiting them is a goal that remains at the heart of campus libraries. That goal needs support: instructional librarians need the time, the training, and the resources to meet those goals. In addition, librarians need to identify opportunities to push back against the structural barriers impeding their goals (Latham et al., 2025); invoking the *Framework* may provide such opportunities.

Instructional practices and their context should be regularly surveyed to track progress and to identify opportunities for change. There are undoubtedly variables of interest to the field which have not been included in this survey, and areas of specific interest that merit more in-depth investigation. Some of this research must include interviews with instructional librarians (e.g., Julien et al., 2022), and with the library administrators who facilitate their work to explore these findings more deeply. The perspectives of faculty, with whom librarians have complicated relationships, also need further exploration, as do the voices of students who are the intended beneficiaries of ILI. While these kinds of studies exist, they should be conducted periodically, to track progress and to identify new challenges that hinder instructional success.

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