Research, Writing, and Writer/Reader Exigence: Literate Practice as the Overlap of Information Literacy and Writing Studies Threshold Concepts

Jerry Stinnett—Duquesne University
Marcia Rapchak—Duquesne University

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Information literacy and the skills learned in first-year composition classes have been traditionally linked both conceptually and as a matter of pedagogical design. This pairing springs not only from the fact that many of the conventions of academic writing involve the acquisition and literate manipulation of information but also from the fact that both writing and research have traditionally been figured as universal, remedial skills that function discretely and can be taught apart from the context of their use. Librarians and faculty who teach writing have collaborated in a number of ways to teach students information literacy skills relevant to researched writing. Perhaps the most common are one-time sessions, termed "one-shots" in the library literature (see Houlson; Radom and Gammons; Rinto and Cogbill-Seiders; Swoger; Watson). Online modules that faculty integrate into their courses paired with face-to-face instruction provide another method of integrating information literacy instruction into writing courses (see Kraemer, Lombardo, and Lepkowski; Shields). More developed collaboration models include librarians and writing instructors collaboratively creating learning goals and lesson plans and then team-teaching toward these goals (see Brady, Singh-Corcoran, Dadisman, and Diamond; Bowles-Terry, Davis, and Holiday; Deitering and Jameson; Patterson and McDade), as well as linking writing courses with for-credit research courses (see Alfino, Pajer, Pierce, and Jenks; Burgoyne and Chuppa-Cornell; Rapchak and Cipri). In some cases, librarians teach information literacy concepts to writing instructors, who then integrate these concepts into their own class instruction (see Sult and Mills; White-Farnham and Gardner). The most common collaborative arrangement, though, separates information literacy taught by a librarian from writing skills taught by a composition instructor. The librarian-led content, regardless of the collaboration method, is typically skills-based research strategies of identifying appropriate library resources, constructing searches, evaluating sources based on an established checklist, and citing sources correctly.[1]

The notion that writing and research are simple skills or even represent a single set of practices has long been challenged by many of those who study and teach writing and information literacy. Writing practices and the pursuit, selection, and use of information have been recognized as highly rhetorical activities that depend for their form and content on the specificities of the situation in which they occur. As a result, those who teach writing and those who teach information literacy have

increasingly turned from teaching students isolated skills and have attempted instead to identify and teach those knowledges and practices that transfer across multiple contexts. In many instances, this necessarily means teaching students about writing and information literacy and how they function in context. Taking such a perspective on research and writing implicitly challenges traditional methods since "[a] fifty minute face-to-face session can focus on information retrieval but not on the more broad and complex concepts of seeking background information, identifying key terms and the exploration needed to complement the writing process in a recursive manner" (Mery, Newby, and Peng 369). Regardless, skills-based instruction, where both composition instructors and librarians discuss sources based on their attributes rather than their content, and in which students must find a certain type (generally scholarly) and often a certain number of sources, limits the ability of students to engage with the content of those sources (Bowles-Terry, Davis, and Holliday 226; Holliday and Rogers 267-68). This instruction often does not reflect the actual practice of researched writing.

Threshold concepts in writing studies and information literacy have seemed particularly promising in supporting students' development of more sophisticated, transferable views of research and writing as these concepts typically represent what is true about writing and information literacy across all contexts. Teaching students the threshold concepts of writing studies supports learning transfer in first-year writing courses in large part because learning about composing from a disciplinary perspective represents knowledge about the rhetorical character of writing. Instead of learning a few narrowly-applicable skills or conventions, students learn disciplinary concepts and research methods that function as a form of metacognitive generalization about writing that allows student to engage in the "self-reflection, explicit abstraction of principles and alertness to one's context" (Downs and Wardle 576) that makes transfer of learning from FYC courses possible. Since "the study of writing involves consistent analysis of relationships between contexts, purposes, audiences, genres, and conventions," when students "learn to conduct that analysis, they are both participating in the epistemological practices of the discipline and [are] likely . . . to be more adaptable writers" (Adler-Kassner, Majewski, & Koshnick para. 3). This approach has taken various forms in writing studies pedagogical scholarship but has been advocated in some shape by a number of prominent scholars and teachers including Elizabeth Wardle and Doug Downs, Rebecca Nowacek, Mary Jo Reiff and Anis Bawarshi, Kathleen Blake Yancey, Liane Robertson, and Kara Taczak among others.

The disciplinary expectations for information literacy appear in the Association of College and Research Library's (ACRL) *Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education*, which proposes six frames that allow students to shift from novice to expert researchers. This framework was inspired by the work of Thomas P. Mackey and Trudi E. Jacobson on metaliteracy, as well as the Delphi study on information literacy threshold concepts identified by Lori Townsend, Amy Hofer, Silvia Lu, and Korey Brunetti, and encompasses the set of information literacy competencies that students of higher education should perform. The frames used to organize these competencies are:

- Authority is Constructed and Contextual
- Information Creation as a Process
- Information Has Value

- Research as Inquiry
- Scholarship as Conversation
- Searching as Strategic Exploration

Like writing studies' threshold concepts, the frames necessitate an instructional approach that engages higher-order thinking. No longer adequate is the one-shot session where librarians cover as much information as possible about database searching, using the catalog, and identifying search terms. The IL threshold concepts preclude traditional IL instruction. Librarians must collaborate with teaching faculty on revised IL instruction that emphasizes deep engagement with information sources in a discipline. And yet, given a variety of barriers, many librarians may find that providing instruction integrated throughout the curriculum, or even instruction that reaches every student through workshops and one-shots, is impossible (Sult and Mills 370).

Such circumstances point to the need to identify overlaps between the threshold concepts of writing studies and the ACRL Framework in order to develop pedagogies that most effectively can help students acquire the higher order conceptualizations of research and composing that these new approaches support. While in their article "Threshold Concepts and Information Literacy," Townsend, Brunetti, and Hofer argue that threshold concepts demonstrate that information literacy represents distinct content knowledge (858), recent scholarship suggests that the threshold concepts of the ACRL Framework are inextricable from many of the threshold concepts of writing studies. The overlapping threshold concepts of IL and CS are explored in the monograph *The Future Scholar: Researching and Teaching the Frameworks for Writing and Information Literacy*, edited by Randall McClure and James P. Purdy. One chapter describes how a rhetoric and writing instructor and a teaching and learning librarian worked together at the University of Colorado Boulder to develop learning goals in their first-year writing curriculum that integrated both the ACRL Framework and the WPA Framework, creating a program focused on inquiry and rhetorical choice (see Albert and Sinkinson). Johnson and McCracken trace the way that the frames integrate and, in fact, "ground" the threshold concepts of writing studies (182) and then briefly consider the implications of these for writing instruction. But more work on how one might approach teaching these intersecting threshold concepts must be done. As Rolf Norgaard states,

> "*We argue that coordinating writer and reader exigence functions as a practice that folds together multiple threshold concepts of both writing studies and information literacy and thereby exploits their overlaps but simultaneously reduces their acquisition to a single idea, making learning more manageable for students to learn and employ in contexts beyond the initial learning space.*"

> If libraries continue to evoke, for writing teachers and their students, images of the quick field trip, the scavenger hunt, the generic stand-alone tutorial, or the dreary research paper, the fault remains, in large part, rhetoric and composition's failure to adequately theorize the role of libraries and information literacy in its own rhetorical self-understanding and pedagogical practice. (124)

In this article, we argue that this work can best be accomplished by teaching students about coordinating writer and reader exigence. We argue that coordinating writer and reader exigence

functions as a practice that folds together multiple threshold concepts of both writing studies and information literacy and thereby exploits their overlaps but simultaneously reduces their acquisition to a single idea, making learning more manageable for students to learn and employ in contexts beyond the initial learning space. To demonstrate this, we begin by discussing threshold concepts generally and then identifying overlaps between the threshold concepts of writing studies and information literacy. Drawing from the work of Lloyd Bitzer, Keith Grant-Davie, and others, we then define coordinating writer and reader exigence as those aspects of a text's form, content, materiality, and circulation that signal to potential readers that a particular text is most likely to address their reasons for seeking discourse in specific situations. Helping students learn to attend to reader exigence in the collection and distribution of information as well as in the design of the texts that deliver information helps students understand a number of the threshold concepts of writing studies and information literacy by linking the concepts that guide literate consumption and production (Johnson and McCracken 191) as part of the same practice.

The Need for Expert Definitions of a Literate Practice

The focus on teaching threshold concepts in writing studies and information literacy classrooms reflects an effort to improve students' ability to write and conduct research by helping students develop a rhetorically sophisticated view of these practices. Indeed, Downs and Robertson note that one of the two primary goals of a course teaching the threshold concepts of writing studies is to challenge students' misconceptions about writing (105).[2] In writing studies, this takes the form of teaching students concepts *about* writing and *how* it works as a rhetorical phenomenon derived from the researched knowledge of the discipline. Downs and Wardle describe teaching concepts of writing studies as a move from "acting as if writing is a basic, universal skill to acting as if writing studies is a discipline with content knowledge to which students should be introduced, thereby changing their understandings about writing and thus changing the ways they write" (553). In a similar way, the ACRL Framework supports such a change of perspectives by reframing concepts found in the now-defunct ACRL standards like "credibility" and "finding sources" in more socially contextualized and rhetorically complex ways (i.e., "Authority is contextual and constructed" and "Research as inquiry"). By taking on the expert view represented by threshold concepts, students can excise misconceptions about research and writing that limit their understanding of and effectiveness using these practices.

Teaching threshold concepts is particularly useful for accomplishing the work of reframing student perceptions because threshold concepts represent the key or pivotal conceptualizations that define and thus represent acquisition of expertise in a given disciplinary community of practice. David Perkins describes threshold concepts as reflecting perspectives that "appear counter-intuitive, alien (emanating from another culture or discourse), or seemingly incoherent" (Perkins, "Faces" 9). As part of the particular, expert perspectives of a disciplinary community of practice, threshold concepts often challenge "commonsense" or popular ways of understanding a particular subject or practice. Rather than belonging to a discrete set of particular skills, a threshold concept is "the way in which such concepts are related, the deep-level structure of the subject which gives it coherence

and creates a shared way of perceiving that can be left unspoken" (Davies 71). Threshold concepts thus represent "gateways" through which new learners may gain specialized expert knowledge (Perkins, "Constructivism" 43), meaning that, "[a]s a consequence of comprehending a threshold concept there may thus be a transformed internal view of subject matter, subject landscape, or even worldview" (Meyer and Land, "Introduction" 3). By gaining this "transformative" knowledge, learners do not simply grasp a few new random concepts but experience a shift of perspective that alters their worldview in relation to a number of contexts and phenomena.

Equipped with the more expert views on writing and research represented by the perspectives of scholars of writing and information literacy, the thinking goes that students are better able to take up writing as a rhetorical act and adapt more effectively to the multiple and various writing and research situations they face in the university, the workplace, or in social and political life. But if acquiring the concepts leads to a change in practice, this means that, taken together, the concepts imply a distinct practice we would like students to embrace. We might even say, then, these concepts define researching and composing scholarly texts in very specific ways. A scholar with a complete understanding of "scholarship as [a] conversation" (ACRL Frame #5) may take up a range of approaches to research: reading scholarly sources as interconnected and responding to one another; reading academic articles with an eye for how they situate themselves within a given scholarly exchange; reading sources to determine gaps in existing scholarly exchanges on a given subject so that she might identify opportunities to make meaningful interventions in the existing discourse; or all of these. The understanding of this particular concept carries implicit suggestions about effective practice of research and writing. In other words, acquisition of threshold concepts of writing studies and acquisition of the ACRL Framework implicitly define the rhetorical practice of composing and the rhetorical practice of information literacy respectively.

This dynamic carries important implications for threshold concept pedagogies and for constructing pedagogies that make the most of the overlaps between the concepts of writing studies and information literacy. Insofar as we teach concepts to alter practice, then, students are likely to alter their practice only to the extent that they understand and can apply the concepts we are trying to help them acquire. But the character of literate practice means that a limited understanding of those concepts does not simply translate into a less polished rhetorical practice; the rhetorical deployment of information in composing is not something one can partially acquire and still practice effectively across contexts. Similarly, a student cannot recognize that information has value without understanding how the process of creating information contributes to its value, how inquiry determines the information creation process, and how this all contributes to the construction of a contextualized authority. The development of literacy is a more holistic process as Anne Beaufort has observed:

> Even beginning writers must wrestle with writing process, with rhetorical/social contexts, and with genre demands, vocabulary, sentence structure, etc. These data reinforce the need

"Insofar as we teach concepts to alter practice, then, students are likely to alter their practice only to the extent that they understand and can apply the concepts we are trying to help them acquire."

to take into account all of the knowledge components embedded within literate acts, no matter what level or social context of writing development is being examined. (24-25)

The demands that writing situations put on writers, even new writers, means that a given student's inability to acquire fully an expert perspective does not result simply in a slightly less effective but still fully rhetorical approach to writing and research. Rather, a failure to acquire a full understanding of such concepts invites a failure to approach writing and research from the rhetorically complex perspective necessary for effective composing.[3]

The problem is that threshold concepts are difficult to learn. As counterintuitive, alien perspectives, threshold concepts represent what Meyer and Land, drawing on the work of Perkins, refer to as "troublesome knowledge" ("Introduction" 4). The very transformative nature of threshold concepts means that, more often than not, their acquisition requires a sweeping alteration of perspective on the part of new learning involving not simply cognitive shifts, but shifts of ontological perspective that require changes to existing relationships with phenomena and even persons and involve significant cognitive and affective strain (Cousins 4). Acquiring threshold concepts involves potentially extended periods of liminality during which students cross conceptual thresholds, revert back to previous understandings, and cross over again (Meyer and Land, "Epistemological" 377). Students acquiring threshold concepts must have time not only to take up the challenging cognitive and affective work of comprehending troublesome knowledge but must have the time to pass through the extended liminality of such acquisition. As a result, it is not possible to teach all or even most of the threshold concepts of writing studies (Adler-Kassner and Wardle 8) and likely difficult even to teach students to fully grasp the 7 frames of the ACRL Framework in the short amount of time typically available for explicit literacy instruction in higher education.

Threshold concept pedagogies possess the potential to radically change students' perspectives on, and thus practices of, research and composing but also carry a high risk of not accomplishing the work for which they are intended.[4] Even if we do this work, students must still identify and articulate the practice implied by these concepts, itself a challenge that requires more than simple mastery of the concepts themselves but an ability to deploy them to create new knowledge. So students must transform themselves *and* identify the practice implied by this transformation. That we hope to help students learn the relevant threshold concepts of writing studies and the ACRL Framework (and they are all relevant) and then work them together to improve their development and practice of disciplinary-specific writing seems like a very tall order, even for the most innovative institutional or pedagogical approach to this issue. The cognitive and affective strain of acquiring threshold concepts suggests that students will leave the course with significant limitations on their perspectives of research and composing which, because of the very nature of writing's complexity, suggests limitations for how much they are able to continue to develop those perspectives once they complete their introductory composition and/or information literacy courses.

To support student learning and transfer most effectively, then, we need to identify a means of providing students with a perspective on research and composing practice that represents a fully expert understanding but which they can acquire sufficiently during the time available to allow them to continue developing that perspective as they research and write after their introductory courses.

Fortunately, such a means is suggested by the dynamics of threshold concept approaches themselves. If teaching threshold concepts carries the potential to change students' practices of research and writing, and if a thorough acquisition of all of the threshold concepts of writing studies and the ACRL Framework would result in a genuinely rhetorical understanding of information literacy and composing in their full complexity, then an expert definition of a fully rhetorical practice of research and composing would represent the threshold concepts of writing studies and information literacy respectively. In other words, it might be possible to teach the expert perspectives necessary to ensure a fully adaptable, transferable approach to rhetorical research and writing by more explicitly teaching the outcomes that we want threshold concepts to achieve—that is, an expert definition of the literate practices of research and writing.

Such a description of the practice would need to be one that emerges from and can account for what the ACRL Framework and the threshold concepts of writing studies tell us is true about the effective practice of research and composing. Like the threshold concepts themselves, such an expert definition would need to be applicable to any and all research or writing situations. More importantly for our purposes here, such an insight suggests that we may connect the teaching of writing studies threshold concepts and the ACRL Framework by identifying and expertly defining a single literate practice implied by both. Inasmuch as the perspectives represented by the threshold concepts of writing studies and the ACRL Framework relate to an alteration of student practice, they amount to emphases on different aspects of the same literate practice. Consumption and production of discourse are not discrete acts that must be woven together artificially but are, in fact, inseparable when conceptualized rhetorically. So instructors can teach the overlap by identifying the practice that the threshold concepts of writing studies and the ACRL Framework together imply, one that attends to the conceptualization of an effective practice of research and writing that these concepts represent. We identify that practice as constructing the resolution of writer exigence through the construction of reader exigence. We will turn now to explaining what we mean by this definition and how it connects composing and research.

The Literate Practice of Constructing Exigence

While it is not only beyond the scope of this essay but also unnecessary to address each individual concept in turn when drawing out an expert definition of the practice implied by the ACRL Framework and the threshold concepts of writing studies, it can be helpful to provide an initial example to suggest the origins of the choice of expert definition affirmed here.[5] For our purposes, the first concept of information literacy of the ACRL Framework, "Authority is Constructed and Contextual" will serve. To identify the practice implied, we can ask why it is important for a writer to establish his authority in the first place. The answer, from a rhetorical perspective, is that effectively constructing one's authority as an author in a highly contextualized way amounts to demonstrating to a particular reader that the author is someone the reader should listen to on a particular subject, someone able to address whatever caused the reader to take up the text in the first place. And, of course, the reason an author would want the reader to perceive him as an authority to be listened

to—to meet the reader's "expectations of authority on the topic under discussion" (Johnson and McCracken 189)—is to ensure that the author will be able to achieve his purpose in writing. To couch this in more technical rhetorical terms, constructing authority is the literate practice of establishing the exigent character of a text and its author for a particular reader in order to move that reader to address or resolve the writer's exigence for creating that text. To address how the other concepts imply this same practice, it is first necessary to define the rhetorical concept of "exigence" more explicitly. While readers may be quite familiar with the concept of exigence, we take up the concept in some detail below to emphasize those aspects of the concept that are most important for the approach we forward here.

Broadly speaking, exigence is the reason or motivation for producing and consuming discourse. Lloyd Bitzer influentially defines exigence as "an imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be" (6).[6] In rhetorical situations, this obstacle, problem, issue that demands attention can only be addressed through the production of discourse. Rhetorical exigence in writing situations is thus defined as an issue for the writer that demands the help of the audience of readers in some fashion for its resolution or mitigation. A protest sign is likely not produced simply as an expression of the protester's views but is typically created to convey a message to those in power or other members of the populace because these other rhetorical actors are necessary for effecting the change the protester desires. The exigence leading to the production of discourse is a policy or political event the protester wants to be addressed or altered but that requires the action of others to be involved.[7] This example gestures to the importance of the temporal character of exigence, explained by Keith Grant-Davie when he defines exigence as answering the questions of "what has prompted the discourse, and why *now* is the right time for it to be delivered" (268, original emphasis). Exigence is the demand for the production of discourse in the present moment.

The exigence identified by the writer does not simply move the writer to produce discourse, but is, in fact, constitutive of the entire rhetorical situation that results (Vatz 157; Consigny 177). The very perception of the exigence by the writer is itself a means of defining the rhetorical situation to be addressed. Agents do not so much encounter rhetorical situations as they construct them from perceptions of particular exigencies. Grant-Davie suggests as much, describing exigence in broad terms as involving what the discourse is about, why it is needed, and what it is trying to accomplish (266-69). *How* one perceives the problem or issue needing to be addressed identifies *who* it is that is able to help address or resolve that problem or issue. For instance, if we wish to do something about people ignoring the ban on smoking within 25 feet of building entrances on campus, how we frame that problem will determine the rhetorical action to follow. Contacting the central administration to do more to enforce the ban reflects a perception of the issue that naturalizes the behavior of those ignoring the ban as inevitable, meaning that rules and enforcement are the only way to address the situation. If, however, we do not frame this behavior as inevitable, we can address those who smoke directly, suggesting incentives or appealing to their sense of fairness that the majority who does not smoke should not have to pass through it on the way to class. Exigence, then, is not simply something that exists externally to the writer but results from the writer's interpretation.[8] This interpretive

character places exigence "at the core of [the] situation" (Miller 157).

But while much of the scholarship on exigence focuses on the rhetor's experience, the rhetorical character of writing situations involves audiences as well who, as readers, play a role in every part of those situations. As Grant-Davie notes in his discussion of teaching writing as a rhetorical act, "reading and writing may be seen as parallel activities involving negotiation of meaning between readers and writers. If reading is a rhetorical activity too, then it has its own rhetorical situations" (272) and these "may have their own exigences, roles, and constraints" (272). Readers, then, also have exigencies for attending to discourse, which are likewise based on perception and on external circumstances producing the need to consume discourse. These may very well be different from the perceived exigence motivating the rhetor, even when the discourse is successful. But if exigence as it pertains to the rhetor is the perception that discourse is needed and needed now—i.e. that the production of discourse will meet some need of the rhetor's—it reflects this same character for audiences, that consuming the discourse will meet some need the audience has (required information, emotional excitement, show of respect or formality, entertainment, etc.). Written texts that accomplish the rhetor's intentions—insofar as they require the reader's action to accomplish those intentions—have framed the writer's exigence for writing in terms of one or more of the reader's exigencies for reading.[9] But if we understand writing as a radically situated phenomenon, exigence for reading becomes far more specific than a perceived need for discourse on the part of the audience. Exigence for reading is as highly specified as it is for writing. Exigent texts meet the reader's need for *this* text, produced by a writer having *these* qualities, addressing *this* subject, appearing in *this* form. We can go further noting that audiences are likely to look for discourses addressing a specific need in particular places meaning that even *this* path of circulation and *this* mode of delivery might be important exigencies for a given audience.

Texts, of course, signal this kind of information in a host of ways including style, formatting, the use of specific lexis, the emphasis on particular content, design elements, location, and even material composition among other things. For example, while waiting for a dental appointment, a patient reaches for a magazine to alleviate her boredom of waiting. Being a Pittsburgh Penguins fan, she reaches for the *Sports Illustrated* because she knows that its content is more likely to include information capable of alleviating her boredom than the *Better Homes and Gardens* lying next to it on the table. But she also sifts through the three different issues of *Sports Illustrated* to find the most recent one, as she has been following the Penguins and knows she is more likely to find something she does not know about their current run for a sixth Stanley Cup—something of real interest to her—in the most recent issue. Because the author's work appears in the latest edition of *Sports Illustrated*, the reader is willing to, at least initially, allow that the author is capable of resolving her exigence (i.e., alleviating her boredom by providing relevant, reliable information about the current NHL hockey season to which she might not otherwise have access).[10] The text the reader is most likely to consume in that particular reading situation is the one that most likely meets her exigence for reading in that situation.[11]

It is important to note, however, that while the circulation and delivery have done some of the initial work of framing the author's identity and the text as capable of addressing her exigence

for reading, the text itself must continually establish and re-establish this exigence throughout. As the *SI* article enacts the conventions of the sports column, it indicates to the reader that the author and the text are capable of addressing her exigence—that the text is exigent to the reader. Those conventions include, of course, terminology, style, formatting, and other features including subject matter and content knowledge (Beaufort 18). The fact that content is one of the features that indicates exigence suggests that other features not commonly recognized as part of establishing exigence—like arrangement and logical and stylistic transitions—are important considerations as well. Each point made by the author must indicate its connection to the exigence(s) that have drawn the reader to consume the text (or which the author has demonstrated are exigent to the reader through the text) or risk the reader dismissing the points or turning away completely. Suddenly taking up the subject of global warming in an article on the NHL playoffs will be likely not to seem exigent to the reader unless the author makes evident the connection between global warming and the NHL playoffs or the reader also finds this topic exigent.[12]

Defining the practice of research and composing as addressing writer/reader exigence thus accounts for the concepts of the ACRL Framework and those identified in *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies*. As writers go through the process of constructing exigence for the reader, they pass through a number of practices that tacitly affirm the concepts of the ACRL Framework. Defining research as part of the practice of resolving writer/reader exigence necessarily figures "research as strategic exploration" (Frame #6), since within this description of literate practice, research is taken up to define the exigence for writing and identify the audience's likely exigence for reading. In academic contexts, framing the subject matter in terms that are exigent for the reader requires identifying the topics relevant to a particular community which means identifying the most relevant ways in which those topics have been discussed (Frame #5, "Scholarship as conversation"). Intervening in a way exigent to a particular disciplinary audience requires developing sufficient knowledge not only to conduct such interventions but to claim the authority to do so (Frame #1, "Authority is constructed and contextual"). Since this process demands attending to the knowledge and ways of framing that knowledge that are exigent for a particular community—i.e., recognizing that (Frame #3) "information has value"—such work requires learning about not only the knowledge itself and the sources that matter in its distribution, but also the intended audience, their values, concerns, and history. Such an approach figures research not only as an effort to support one's own position but also necessarily frames the practice of (Frame #2) "information creation as a process" and the practice of (Frame #4) "research as inquiry."

Writers who take up the effort to address their exigence by using a text that they have made exigent for a particular reader understand without having to explicitly articulate that:

- writing is a social and rhetorical act (Roozen 17);
- writing addresses, invokes, and/or creates audiences (Lunsford 20);
- writing expresses and shares meaning to be reconstructed by the reader (Bazerman 21);
- writing mediates activity (Russell 26);
- writing represents the world, events, ideas, and feelings (Bazerman 37);
- writing enacts and creates identities and ideologies (Scott 48);

- writing is linked to identity (Roozen 50);
- writing provides a representation of ideologies and identities (Villaneuva 57);
- text is an object outside of oneself that can be improved and developed (Bazerman and Tinberg 61);
- and reflection is critical to a writer's development (Taczak 78).

This list names only the most immediately apparent concepts in the definition offered here. Approaching research and composing as the process of constructing reader exigence to address writer exigence not only teaches students *that* writing works a particular way, but also *how* and *why*. The questions "what is my exigence for writing?"; "who can help me resolve that exigence?"; "how can I construct a text that is exigent to that audience?" guide student researcher/composers to consider continually what matters to the writer, who is the audience who will care about and can address that matter, what kind of person and text does that audience recognize as capable of addressing their exigence for reading, etc. Though student writers may not articulate these concepts explicitly, they must take them up conceptually because of the ways in which defining composing in the terms we advocate here reframe the practices of research and composing themselves as metacognitively reflective acts.

Integrating IL in FYC Through Writer Exigence Constructing Reader Exigence

This integration of the ACRL Framework and the threshold concepts of writing studies through the emphasis on exigence provides not only a method of covering multiple, difficult threshold concepts in a first-year writing course but also solves some pedagogical issues with information literacy instruction as well. Rather than separating IL from WS as its own course, which divorces the threshold concepts from the practice, or providing a superficial overview of research in a composition course, which means that students cannot grasp all the information literacy threshold concepts, teaching the practice allows for a deeper understanding of how the threshold concepts of both IL and WS are inextricable. Creating such an overlap through this kind of definition of literate practice seems likely to improve student understanding as suggested by Davies who writes that "understanding of a threshold concept might be assisted by helping students to recognise (sic) the way in which subject thinking about two quite different contexts (e.g. 'gains from trade' and 'investment appraisal' [in economics]) is based on a common foundation" (81). Students, when focusing on the commonalities between writing and researching

> *"Teaching this practice moves first-year writing and information literacy into a course that is pedagogically feasible but also transformative.."*

through the practice, can more readily comprehend the threshold concepts of each discipline because the two now represent different emphases on the same practice—constructing reader exigence to resolve writer exigence.

By teaching to the practice rather than the concepts, the desired change in students' approach to composition and research for writing is explicit rather than implicit. This focus lessens the work

of teaching difficult and troublesome threshold concepts that can only be understood in practice. Asking students to adopt this practice and then asking them to metacognitively reflect on the choices they made as a writer constructing reader exigence reduces cognitive load. Students who learn the practice of constructing reader exigence may make sophisticated rhetorical choices in both how they research and how they compose. When we start with the definition of composing practice as we have described it here, genre is encountered as a malleable concept because it has been framed as serving the purpose of constructing exigence. Thus, whatever best serves to construct reader exigence in a way that addresses writer exigence is what the writer must do. Genres necessarily represent stable-for-now constructs inasmuch as such a concept matters for practice. Teaching this practice moves first-year writing and information literacy into a course that is pedagogically feasible but also transformative. While not required to become compositionists or librarians, students adopt an understanding of writing and research for writing as a process of creating the reader's exigence for reading, which can apply to different disciplines and different situations. This approach is neither remedial nor too ambitious, but instead students grasp threshold concepts through deduction rather than induction. Students learn concepts as part of the practice, allowing them to recognize how scholarship is a conversation, writing enacts and creates identities and ideologies, and other overlapping concepts from writing studies and information literacy. The practice is apprehensible, and the information literacy and writing studies threshold concepts that follow are necessary, integrative, and comprehensive.

Teaching writing as constructing reader exigence requires expertise in both writing studies and information literacy. Information literacy threshold concepts do not encompass all that is required to be an expert in librarianship (for example, they do not include information related to the organization and categorization of information, program and project management, assessment, or the development of technologies), so instructors do not need to be librarian-compositionists; instead, because of the interrelationship between producing and consuming texts, compositionists' expertise allows them to be fluent in both threshold concepts. While instructors may require librarian-led professional development in order to teach the practice in a way that draws out information literacy and writing studies threshold concepts, the praxis of a compositionist requires fluency in both.[13] If we rely on non-experts to teach first-year writing, they may tend to focus on writing and research for a particular discipline. For example, those experts in literary studies may focus their courses on academic essay writing and researching, even when the topics do not lend themselves to the genre or research strategies. A compositionist understands how teaching the practice requires writers to reflect on the context-specific nature of writing and researching, and that literacy itself, including information literacy, is situational.

While we argue that information literacy should be and is an essential element of teaching first-year writing, given institutional realities, librarians and compositionists must work together to prepare instructors to teach the practice of writer exigence constructing reader exigence. Auten and Thomas argue that creating "metaliterate instructors" who can assist students in developing their writer-researcher identity should be the goal of professional development for first-year writing instructors (Auten and Thomas, 139). In a study of first-year writing instructors who were teaching

an information literacy course, Stinnett and Rapchak (forthcoming) found that those instructors felt that their experience with research was not adequate preparation for teaching information literacy. Asking instructors to reflect on their practice increases their metacognitive awareness of the ways in which their researched writing lives out the overlapping threshold concepts. From this perspective, they can begin to introduce students to the practice of writer exigence constructing reader exigence. Along with engaging in professional development of first-year writing instructors, librarians can play a role in crafting learning outcomes, developing curriculum, providing materials, and conducting assessment that reflect the overlapping threshold concepts.

Teaching the practice acknowledges the disciplinary knowledge needed to be a compositionist without requiring that first-year students become compositionists themselves. In integrating the IL and CS threshold concepts, teaching the practice elevates first-year writing education and information literacy instruction to focus on transferable knowledge. While a first-year writing course cannot create students who are experts, we may be able to better ensure that students will be equipped to continue developing ever more sophisticated views of writing and research by teaching them an expert definition of composing and of information literacy that accounts for the ACRL Framework and the threshold concepts of writing studies.

Acknowledgment

Notes

[1]See Reid's annotated bibliography, "Updating the FYC-Library Partnership: Recent Work on Information Literacy and Writing Classrooms" for more resources on these collaborations.

[2]The other primary goal of teaching threshold concepts, related to the first, is to support the transfer of new knowledge across diverse contexts (Downs and Robertson 105).

[3]This is not to suggest that such acquisition is a simple, discrete act accomplished once and for all. The acquisition and application of threshold concepts is strongly characterized by liminality (Cousins 4), meaning that neophytes cross back and forth over the threshold of understanding of such concepts potentially for an extended period of time before acquisition can be said to be complete. Thus, FYC pedagogies supporting concept acquisition will likely never appear complete. But there is a difference between students' liminal acquisition of a fully sophisticated concept and a truncated understanding of such concepts that limits the sophistication of practice even in a post-liminal state of acquisition. Indeed, successfully teaching truncated concepts seems likely to extend the duration of liminality because of the slippage between the resulting limitations in the sophistication of student understanding and the complexity of actual writing situations.

[4]It is not our intention here to deny that existing research indicating that teaching students threshold concepts supports learning and learning transfer better than more traditional methods of writing. While such research suggests that teaching a form of disciplinary expertise is useful, our contention here is that exceeding what can be accomplished in a traditional writing course does not in itself indicate that teaching threshold concepts is the most effective method for teaching rhetorical perspectives on writing or supporting learning transfer.

[5] Johnson and McCracken provide a thorough exposition of the intersections of the ACRL Framework and *Naming What We Know*, along with what these intersections convey about expectations for student practice.

[6] Richard Vatz and Scott Consigny have both noted the way in which Bitzer's definition of exigency oversimplifies the concepts by presupposing the objective existence of rhetorical situations. While we generally agree with this critique (as we detail below), Bitzer's definition of exigence itself is a useful starting point for how we understand the concept as initiating discourse.

[7] This example of political rhetoric provides a fairly straightforward case of the connection between exigence and the production of discourse, though even this example is more complex than can be addressed here. But more subtle exigences work on the same dynamic—even a text that is, say, intended only to inform readers of something requires the action of readers to accomplish its task. One cannot inform readers without readers' participation.

[8] This interpretive quality of exigence goes further even than we indicate here. The very perception of having to pass through second-hand smoke as something to be avoided reflects deeply-held, culturally-specific values.

[9] Of course, writers cannot always know what exigencies draw readers to a particular text nor are those exigencies necessarily set or immutable even if they can be generally understood. The point here is not that writers must already have this knowledge to write. Rather, writers make best guesses about what is exigent for their intended audience in the face of the radical indeterminacy of writing situations. But successful texts are those in which the alignment of exigences occurs as a result of this guesswork, design, and even chance.

[10] Like the writer, the reader may—indeed likely has—numerous exigencies for reading, some of which drive the initial act of engaging a text and others that develop while consuming the text. In the example discussed here, the dental patient's primary exigence may be to alleviate boredom, but once the *Sports Illustrated* is spotted, additional exigencies like arming herself for the next friendly sports

argument with a friend may come into play. As these exigencies emerge, they guide what texts the reader likely will and will not spend time consuming.

[11] The common emphasis on "audience" in composition pedagogy is useful for helping students take a rhetorical perspective on writing, but the circumstances described here demonstrate the need to focus on "exigence" instead. As part of the writing/reading situation, audiences do not objectively exist prior to the perception of a situation that is initiated through a perception of exigence. The perception of a text as exigent creates the role of audience that the reader may then fill.

[12] But even if the new topic is one that is exigent to the reader, the author, genre, path of circulation, etc., may now no longer work to indicate that the writer is capable of addressing that particular exigence. In other words, even a reader concerned about global warming may not find a column in *Sports Illustrated* on the subject worth reading (i.e., capable of addressing the reader's exigence in relation to that subject). The features and situation of the text may undermine the reader's sense that the text is exigent despite its exigent subject matter.

[13] This is not to suggest that collaboration between librarians and writing instructors is unnecessary or undesirable. Certainly librarians and writing studies experts can do much to support each other's work. Rather, the point we hope to drive home here is that an emphasis on exigence in writing instruction requires expertise in writing studies and thus still supports the ways in which teaching disciplinary perspectives to students affirms the academic legitimacy of writing instruction labor and the compensation and institutional standing associated with such legitimacy. For more on the relationship between labor, legitimacy, and disciplinary content, see Downs and Wardle (2007) and Scott (2016).

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