Sources: Metaliteracy: Reinventing Information Literacy to Empower Learners

Ann Agee, San Jose State University
are growing up in an increasingly global world: “Twenty-first century American citizens must get used to meeting the rest of the world halfway by being exposed to other cultures and developing a tolerance for multiple points of view. There is no better group to start with than the very young” (5).

Part II takes an alphabetical trip around the world, with chapters highlighting Africa and the Middle East, Asia, Australia and New Zealand, Canada, Europe, and finally Latin America and the Caribbean. Within these chapters, books from or about these regions are arranged by country. Not every nation is represented, but the representation is broader than one might expect. Interstitials appear in each chapter and profile illustrators and writers, from the well-known (such as Mem Fox and Mitsumasa Anno) to the up-and-coming (Islo). With its dual focus on an impressive list of titles and analysis of artistic style and themes, Global Voices is both a useful reader’s advisory tool and a fine text for an undergraduate survey course on picture books.—Sarah Hannah Gómez, Library Services Specialist, Castilleja School, Palo Alto, California


School librarians who would like to improve or revamp their reference materials, reference area, and reference practices will find a wealth of information in this book. Farmer takes the reader through many different aspects of reference and information services (RIS), including today’s school library, community needs, information behaviors at different ages and levels of maturity, collection development, physical access, reference interviews, legal considerations, and management issues. The book exhibits a natural progression, starting with a needs assessment and progressing to collection development (both physical and virtual) and ongoing management of the library’s reference services. Farmer includes information to consider when working with various ages and special populations and provides a wealth of sources that support librarians and librarianship.

The beginning of the book provides an overview of what information gathering looks like for today’s K-12 students. Farmer also defines the terms included in RIS and provides questions to guide a needs assessment. Some of the information included in these first few chapters might be overwhelming for solo school librarians or those new to their campus; however, it does serve as a useful starting point. The collection development chapter includes a helpful list of core titles for elementary, middle, and high schools. The chapter on reference interactions is helpful to everyone who staffs a reference desk or answers reference questions at any type of library. Finally, the last chapters focus on teaching instruction sessions, providing materials, and managing legal issues.

This book is full of useful information, and its clear, logical structure suggest that it would be an excellent textbook for a library science course. Library coordinators and supervisors would also find Farmer’s book valuable when considering physical layouts of libraries, purchasing print and electronic materials, and providing reference and information services. This is a solid text for librarians, even for those who do not work in a school library.—Melanie Wachsmann, Reference/Teen Librarian, Lone Star College-CyFair Branch, Cypress, Texas


Intellectual freedom is a concept that is widely debated but frequently misunderstood. The American Library Association’s Library Bill of Rights outlines core policies for libraries in promoting intellectual freedom, but as anyone who has dealt with this concept in practice knows, its application is nuanced and ever-evolving. Rather than a guide on day-to-day issues of intellectual freedom in libraries, this collection of essays explores the idea of intellectual freedom from historical, philosophical, legal, and practical angles. Despite its title, this work takes a more comprehensive than library-specific approach to intellectual freedom; topics addressed span its early historical origins in Athens to contemporary issues, including the open access movement and government secrecy and censorship. This is not to suggest that the book is not useful to practicing librarians; most of the collection’s more lofty writings, including a piece on Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci’s work, discuss how their ideas are applicable to libraries, and Loretta Gaffney’s “Intellectual Freedom and Libraries” is a remarkable reflection on how the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA) prompted the American Library Association to reconsider its stance on Internet filters in libraries. However, most of the essays in this book assume that readers are familiar with First Amendment law and relevant political and social philosophies, and those who are not will have a difficult time making sense of their topics. This collection would be thought-provoking reading material for a graduate level course on libraries and intellectual freedom, so long as its ideas are actively discussed and clarified. At times, the breadth of information covered in these essays seems overwhelming, which is perhaps a testament to how intellectual freedom as an idea is too often oversimplified and misunderstood. While the essays in this collection are not always accessible, they treat this complex topic with the depth it deserves. This volume will appeal most to scholars and graduate students with an interest in political and social theory.—Allison Embry, Access Services and Distance Learning Librarian, Rogers State University, Claremore, Oklahoma


Transliteracy, visual literacy, media literacy, digital literacy, mobile literacy—there has been a struggle for years to define
how technology changes the way people understand and use information. For academic librarians, information literacy has been the approach of choice. In one-shot sessions and semester-long courses, we teach students how to determine what information is needed and how to find it, evaluate it, and use it ethically. In *Metaliteracy*, the authors argue that information literacy as a concept needs to be updated because it does not reflect the effects that social media and open learning have had on students and their interactions with information. Students no longer are mere consumers of information, and metaliteracy recognizes this. It reaches beyond information literacy to encompass the skills students demonstrate when actively participating in online communities, such as collaborating with others, producing information, and sharing the results.

The opening chapters provide the theoretical context for metaliteracy. These sections are meticulously researched, and the authors’ scholarship in this area is evident. These chapters might not be easily accessible to the general reader, but they provide a thorough background for subsequent chapters. The authors follow the transformation of the information environment by social media and open learning and explain how this transformation led them to articulate the metaliteracy concept. They explore how metaliteracy relates to its antecedent literacies, such as transliteracy and digital literacy, and they compare the characteristics of each to the scope of this new form of literacy. Most importantly, the authors define learning goals for the metaliterate learner. These goals are designed to help students become lifelong learners prepared to adapt to technology’s frenetic pace of change and its effects on how information is created and used.

The latter part of the book demonstrates how metaliteracy can be applied in the classroom. Case studies follow the evolution of traditional information literacy courses as they incorporate the participatory possibilities of social media and media-creation tools, such as Prezi and Animoto. Having students create media in the classroom and interact online are not new ideas, but some creative approaches—such as having students investigate the rationale behind removing a YouTube video for copyright violations—provide some interesting twists.

Author Trudi Jacobson is co-chair on the task force currently working on the new *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* being created by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), and for those following the process, *Metaliteracy* will provide a solid grounding in some of the principles incorporated in the framework. As a whole, the book could have benefitted from using more accessible language to clarify this new approach to thinking about information, but the exhaustive research that went into its writing allows it to serve as a reference resource for this reimagining of what literacy means. —*Ann Agee, School of Library and Information Science Librarian, San Jose State University, San Jose, California*

---

*SOURCES*


  Teen librarian and lifelong mystery lover Amy J. Alessio draws upon her years of experience with teens to create this themed guide for readers’ advisory and programming. This books lists 179 different titles from both YA and adult literature, and although the majority of the titles are fiction, nine nonfiction and true crime books are also cited. The author notes that this book should not be considered “a comprehensive overview of all teen mysteries” (viii); instead, she crosses genre boundaries to seek out less rigidly defined works with similar elements and appeal.

  The first part of the book focuses on readers’ advisory, and entries are coded into six main subgenres: “Realistic Mysteries,” “High-Tech Whodunits,” “Thrillers,” “Fantastic and Paranormal Mysteries,” “Mysteries in Time and Place,” and “Romantic Suspense.” These subgenres are then further divided into more specific topics, under which many titles are cross-referenced. Entries contain grade level, awards received, and a descriptive annotation. Each subgenre category also includes two book-talking examples, suggestions for covert marketing, and interviews with prominent authors. The three appendices list “Titles and Series by Subgenre,” “Titles and Series by Author,” and “Mysteries in Graphic and Illustrated Novel Formats.” However, the appendices’ usefulness is limited, as they merely relist the titles from the first part of the book, and no page numbers are included for quick reference to the full annotations.

  The guide’s second part details a variety of “mysterious” programming ideas, ranging from a simple classic movie series to a fully scripted murder mystery. One chapter details how to start a teen mystery club and describes many different issues that the club can investigate, such as secret codes or FBI profiling. Book discussion questions are also listed for ten different titles, and Alessio suggests creative marketing ideas, such as hiding puzzle pieces or bookmarks throughout the library. In total, more than 40 different programming ideas are described, and librarians looking for inspiration will definitely find it here.

  Additional indexing would have made the book slightly more user-friendly, and further editing would have prevented minor errors, such as *Michael Vey: The Prisoner of Cell 25* being cross-referenced under a nonexistent subsection. But these small issues are greatly outweighed by the wealth of content contained within this deceptively slim volume. Although the guide’s very specific theme may limit it to merely a supplemental purchase for some libraries, it is a must-read for teen librarians working with mystery lovers (or hoping to create some). —*Jackie Thornton, Children’s Librarian, East Baton Rouge Parish Library, Baton Rouge, Louisiana*