Emergent Academic Literacies, Special Issue

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It is a fact that anyone who claims to be able to predict the future should be summarily dismissed as delusional. When discussing our human propensity to anticipate, former Director of the Hawaii Research Center for Futures Studies, Jim Dator, emphasized the plural – there are indeed multiple “futures” ahead of us. Once we accept this premise, we can balance the imperative, simultaneous tasks of engaged observation and active participation. One benefit of all this effort is to notice what is emerging.

This special theme issue on emergent academic literacies grew from a curiosity around the implementation of the new ACRL Framework. The Framework is refreshingly un-prescriptive, challenging libraries to appreciate the intellectual and social arc of information. Libraries must recognize emergent theory, ideas, and paradigm shifts, along with their practical and logistical manifestations. The converse is be to implicated as responders instead of innovators. What are libraries facing as they implement the framework? Are there academic libraries that are implementing the Framework in innovative ways? More importantly for this special issue, are there new literacies that have emerged as a result of the Framework?

Our contributing authors are risk takers. We declare this because they responded to a call around the idea of emergence. We would also argue that they value agility in libraries. The thoughtful, intentional application of a emergent literacies is a capacity to be valued and encouraged in academic libraries. The articles in this issue demonstrate that libraries are embracing the challenge. Carlito tackles multimodal literacies in library instruction, claiming that “composition, argument, and idea delivery are no longer the property of pen and paper (or keypad and printer); students must now be able to create and understand in more than one modality.” With a tight focus on media literacy, Goforth, Hammer, and Metz examine visual and digital literacies in relation to communication and narrative. Their article discusses digital media productions. Kappel and Schmidt offer a conceptual article around newspapers of record, arguing that news media literacy for students in all disciplines is an urgent need and must incorporate both visual and content literacies.

Several articles explore the layered and nuanced nomenclature of emergent literacies. Emergent terminology for individuals with disAbilities is the topic of Pionke’s article. How can the use of the term “functional diversity” be employed to empower library users? Barefoot confronts the social justice and cultural literacy concepts within the Framework. Library literature has not yet studied these essential concepts in conjunction with teaching information need. Her case study presents a lesson plan that could be applied in library classrooms to teach both cultural literacy and information need concepts. Continuing along the track agency, Bynoe and Katz present a case study on critical literacy skills related to reading. Discipline specific, attention to reading instruction is on the rise. Drawing on a series of interactive discussions with pre-service education students, critical literary analysis is applied towards building and improving information analysis.

The changing demographics of higher education demand a response from libraries. There is an increased demand for terminal degrees at the Masters level. This emergent population is entitled to library services. McDaniel asserts that libraries can build on their position as intellectual and
learning commons to garner a leadership role in enhancing graduate student success. She writes about the implementation of a peer-tutoring model. As our world debates the emergent effects of environmental change, an understanding of science is no longer an optional. Kuglitsch writes that for non-scientists, a critical scientific and information literacy is important to effectively make choices in a democratic society; for nascent scientists, a grasp of both literacies is necessary to become an informed, empathetic scientist able to communicate to the public. The issue concludes with a literature review of space theory and spatial literacy. Gray, Burel, Gallacci, and Graser select resources that address the increased need for space to function in multiple, interchangeable structures, and dimensions.

Fresh ideas can impact our attitude toward change. The *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* is a challenge to change our practices and adopt an agile, responsive, and relevant library practice.

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