

## Motivational Design and Problem-Based Learning May Increase Student Engagement in Information Literacy Instruction Sessions

Roberts, L. (2017). Research in the real world: Improving adult learners web search and evaluation skills through motivational design and problem-based learning. *College & Research Libraries*, 78(4), 527-551. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.78.4.527>

Ann Glusker

Volume 12, numéro 4, 2017

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1104291ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.18438/B8PQ1K>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

University of Alberta Library

ISSN

1715-720X (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Glusker, A. (2017). Compte rendu de [Motivational Design and Problem-Based Learning May Increase Student Engagement in Information Literacy Instruction Sessions / Roberts, L. (2017). Research in the real world: Improving adult learners web search and evaluation skills through motivational design and problem-based learning. *College & Research Libraries*, 78(4), 527-551. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.78.4.527>]. *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*, 12(4), 259–261. <https://doi.org/10.18438/B8PQ1K>

© Ann Glusker, 2017



Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>



*Evidence Summary*

**Motivational Design and Problem-Based Learning May Increase Student Engagement in Information Literacy Instruction Sessions**

**A Review of:**

Roberts, L. (2017). Research in the real world: Improving adult learners web search and evaluation skills through motivational design and problem-based learning. *College & Research Libraries*, 78(4), 527-551. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.78.4.527>

**Reviewed by:**

Ann Glusker  
Research & Data Coordinator  
National Network of Libraries of Medicine, Pacific Northwest Region  
University of Washington Health Sciences Library  
Seattle, Washington, United States of America  
Email: [glusker@uw.edu](mailto:glusker@uw.edu)

**Received:** 1 Sept. 2017

**Accepted:** 5 Dec. 2017

© 2017 Glusker. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons-Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike License 4.0 International (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly attributed, not used for commercial purposes, and, if transformed, the resulting work is redistributed under the same or similar license to this one.

---

**Abstract**

**Objective** – To determine whether the use of the ARCS (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction) Model of Motivational Design, combined with the Problem-Based Learning approach, improves the skills, confidence, and perception of workshop relevance among non-traditional students in information literacy sessions.

**Design** – Experimental study, one group pre-test and post-test.

**Setting** – Community college in Denver, Colorado, United States.

**Subjects** – 41 community college students.

**Methods** – A convenience sample of three community college student groups each attended an information literacy session. The session was constructed using principles and strategies outlined in the ARCS Model of Motivational Design and the Problem-Based Learning approach. Pre-test and post-test instruments were developed by the author after a literature review. The students were given the information literacy-related pretest before the session. After receiving instruction, the comparable posttest (with different literacy challenges) was administered.

**Main Results** – A comparison of the pre-test and post-test results showed that there were increases in the students' search skills; their confidence in their own search skills; and their

perceptions of workshop relevance in relation to their needs and to real-world situations.

**Conclusion** – This study focuses on the use of motivational design for information literacy instruction. It addresses a gap in the research literature, as it explicitly examines issues of concern regarding the instruction of non-traditional students. The conjunction of the ARCS Model and Problem-Based Learning is considered to be an effective strategy for improving learning and perceptual outcomes for non-traditional students in information literacy contexts. This is important because: 1) information literacy skills are a central aspect of successfully transitioning from the educational setting to the modern workplace; 2) increased confidence can enhance students' sense of self-empowerment and self-efficacy, as well as decreasing "library anxiety"; and 3) establishing a sense of the personal relevance of information literacy engages students with tools that they can and will actually use in work and life situations.

In addition, the author connects these findings to two other areas. One is the new ACRL (Association of College and Research Libraries) *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*; the author notes that "threshold concepts", defined by Roberts as "big picture ideas that are foundational to the field", relate best to teaching techniques such as problem-based learning. The other is the concept of metacognition, which is an aspect of metaliteracy; the author states that the study's information literacy session addressed three of four metaliteracy goals being considered. Future avenues of research and collaboration will include librarians working with learning scientists around the *Framework* content; finding new and engaging methods for teaching literacy concepts and assessing learning; incorporating metacognitive awareness into teaching and assessment; and specifically focusing on transferable skills and knowledge, in the service of preparing non-traditional students for the world of work.

## Commentary

As the modern workplace becomes more complex and information-driven, it is increasingly important that we engage students with improving their information literacy; this is especially the case for non-traditional students. This study makes important contributions: it addresses the gap in the literature regarding non-traditional students, and it tests the unusual combination of the ARCS Motivational Design model with the Problem-Based Learning approach (the author claimed to be the first to do this, but there is an earlier study that also uses these two methods in combination (Chang and Hsu, 2016)).

For this evidence summary, the paper's methodologies were systematically assessed using Glynn's (2006) critical appraisal checklist. A number of issues arise in comparison with the checklist, most of which are included in the paper's limitations section. These include: the use of a convenience sample rather than random selection; the resulting demographic profile of subjects not matching the student population from which they were drawn; the use of only one group for pre-testing and post-testing rather than using a control group; the subjectivity inherent in using self-reporting; the lack of a validated instrument; and the absence of testing the longer-term retention of the benefits reported at the end of the class. In addition, the instrument was only tested in one location, meaning that multiple types of educational settings and types of non-traditional students were not considered. For these reasons, although the author's findings were positive on all outcomes, the title of this summary uses the word "may". Additionally, as Gross and Latham (2013) note, an increase in skills does not necessarily raise students to proficiency; attainment of information literacy is complex, so further work may be necessary to ready students for the workforce.

The author also focuses on two topics that connect with the research; metacognition and threshold concepts (as outlined in the ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher*

*Education*). The focus on metacognition arose from the literature review, but it was not considered in depth in the study, as the study was already testing two other learning models in a detailed way. Therefore, this focus could have been saved for another paper. However, there is still a connection with the ACRL *Framework's* "threshold concepts": better self-cognition leads to better transfer of skills between settings and "transferability" can be considered one of the concepts. Cited author Kuglitsch (2015) explicitly suggests teaching toward transferability of knowledge and skills, so that students can connect the big picture of information literacy to their disciplinary environments. Likewise, cited author Lloyd (2013) exhorts instructors to incorporate the transition to the workforce in student information literacy sessions. Thus, transferability is arguably the "big picture" for Roberts' study. Future work could fruitfully focus on this, perhaps by repeating the study in workplaces, or some similar intervention.

## References

- Association of College & Research Libraries (2015). "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education", American Library Association. <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework> (Accessed December 13, 2017). Document ID: b910a6c4-6c8a-0d44-7dbc-a5dcdbd509e3f
- Chang, N.C., & Hsu, H.Y. (2016). A study on integrating problem-based learning into the innovative teaching in information literacy and ethics. *Journal of Educational Media & Library Sciences*, 53(2), 171-209. <https://doi.org/10.6120/JoEMLS.2016.532/0010.RS.CM>
- Glynn, L. (2006). A critical appraisal tool for library and information research. *Library Hi Tech*, 24(3), 387-399. <https://doi.org/10.1108/07378830610692154>
- Gross, M. & Lathan, D. (2013). Addressing below proficient information literacy skills: Evaluating the efficacy of an evidence-based educational intervention. *Library & Information Science Research*, 35(3), 181-190. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2013.03.001>
- Kuglitsch, R.Z. (2015). Teaching for transfer: Reconciling the framework with disciplinary information literacy. *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 15(3), 457-470. <https://doi.org/10.1353/pla.2015.0040>
- Lloyd A. (2013). Building Information Resilient Workers: The Critical Ground of Workplace Information Literacy. What Have We Learnt? In: In S. Kurbanoglu, E. Grassian, D. Mizrachi, R. Catts, S. Špiranec (eds.), *Worldwide Commonalities and Challenges in Information Literacy Research and Practice. ECIL 2013. Communications in Computer and Information Science*, 397. Springer, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-03919-0\\_28](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-03919-0_28)