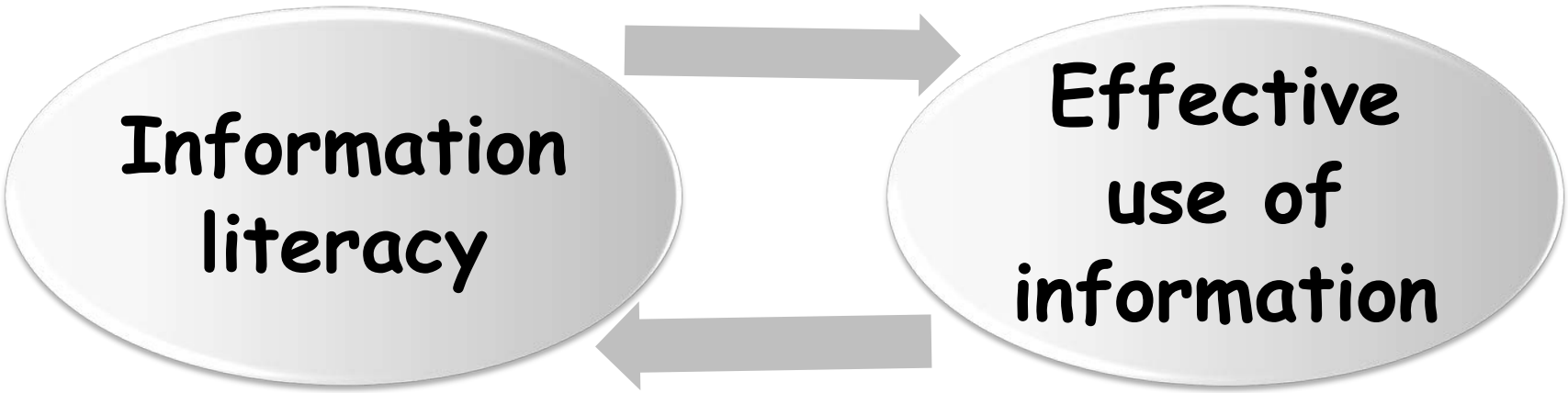

Always were connected – but,

today in the digital world even more so

& the connection is ever more critical

Information literacy in the United States: Contemporary transformations & controversies

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creative commons

What?

- ... overview of library efforts toward information literacy in the United States
  - ... evaluation of the 2014 official suggestion by the American Library Association (ALA) for a new **framework for information literacy for higher education**

> "Ultimately, information literate people are those who have learned how to learn."

Historically speaking: United States

- Long history:
  - Started at the end of 19th & beginning of 20th century – *bibliographic instruction*
  - Transformed into **information literacy** by 1980s
  - American Library Association (ALA): **National Forum on Information Literacy** – 1989
  - Linking to impact of **Information Age**

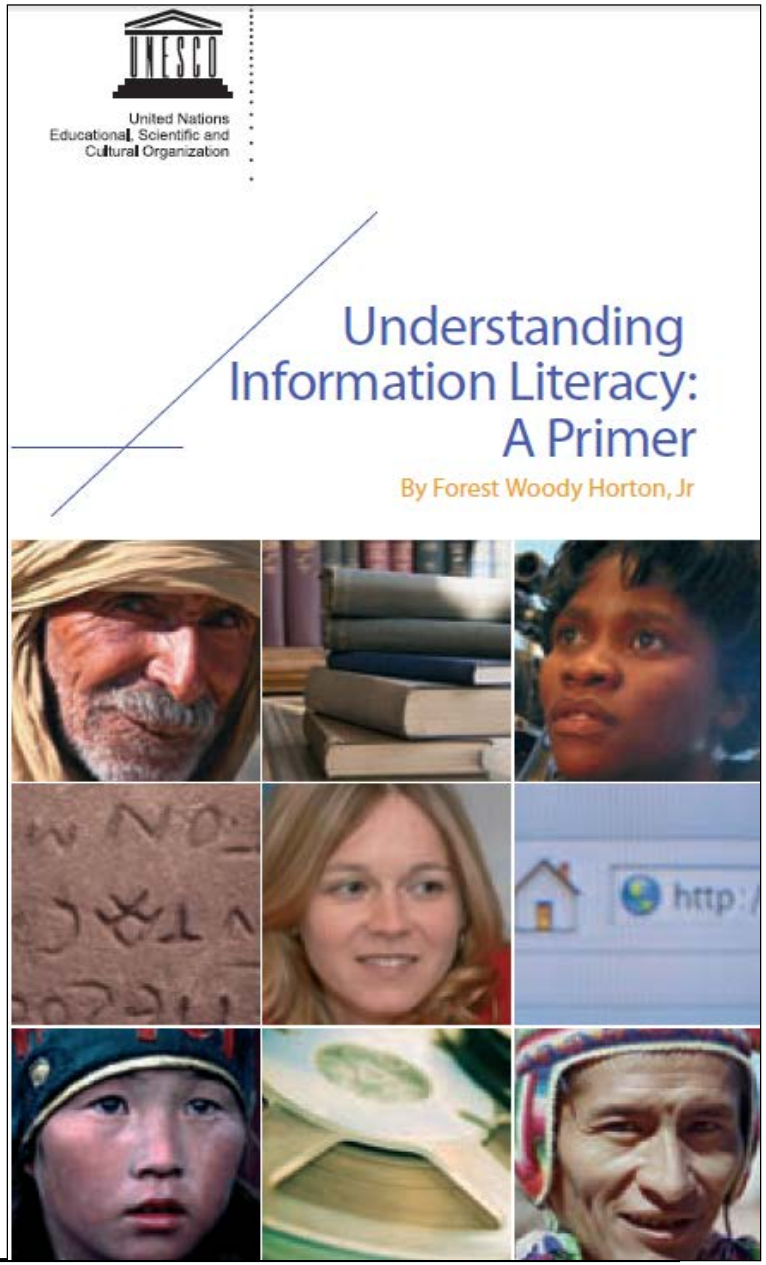
Also became global

IFLA World Library and Information Congress 2014

Information Literacy Section Satellite Meeting

Facing the Future:

Librarians and Information Literacy in a Changing Landscape

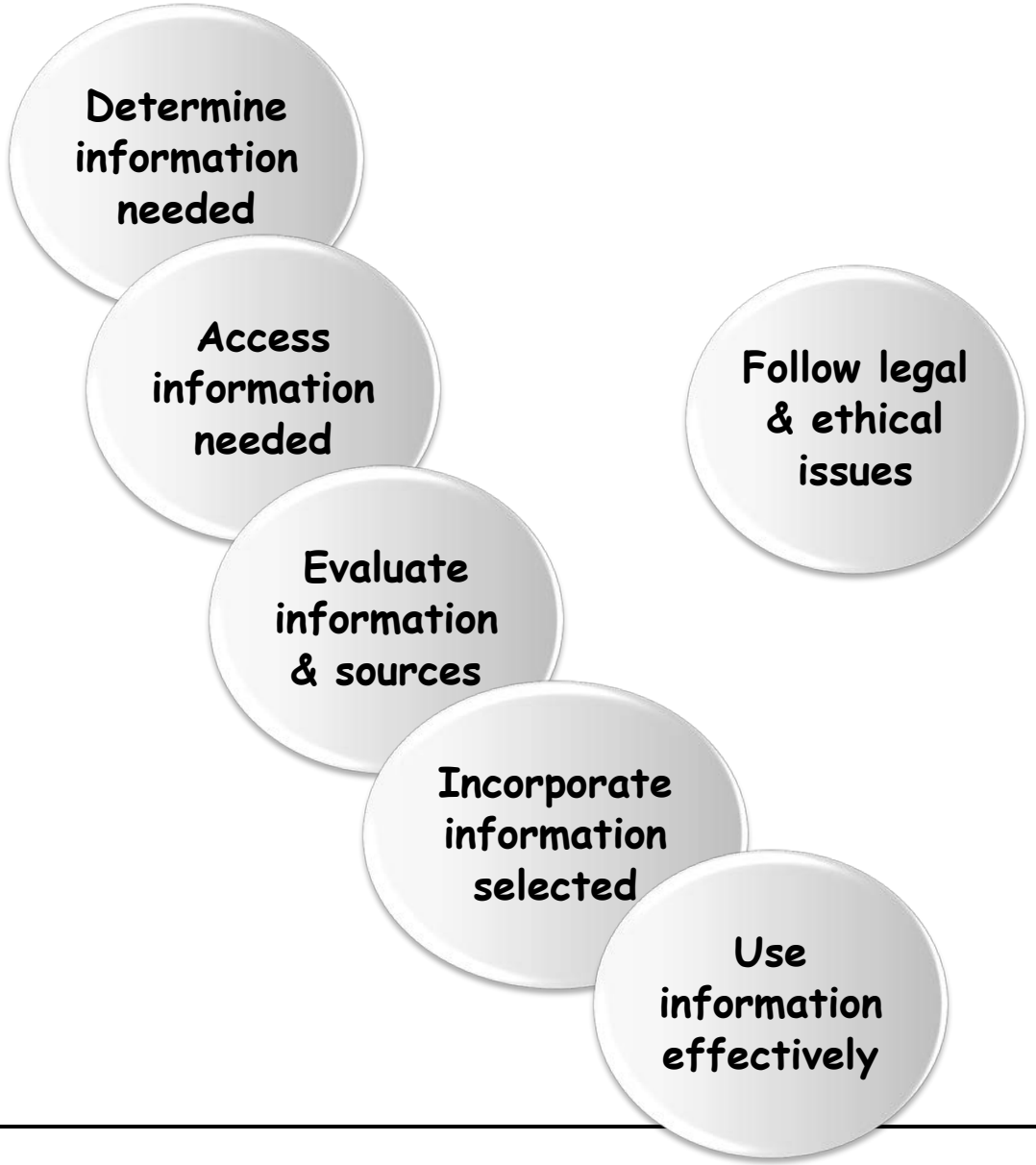


Information literacy ... as well ... Kenya

and application

Information literacy – definition & process

The ability to use libraries & other information resources to locate, evaluate, & use needed information effectively



Information literacy – by any other name...

"A rose by any other name would smell as sweet"
Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet

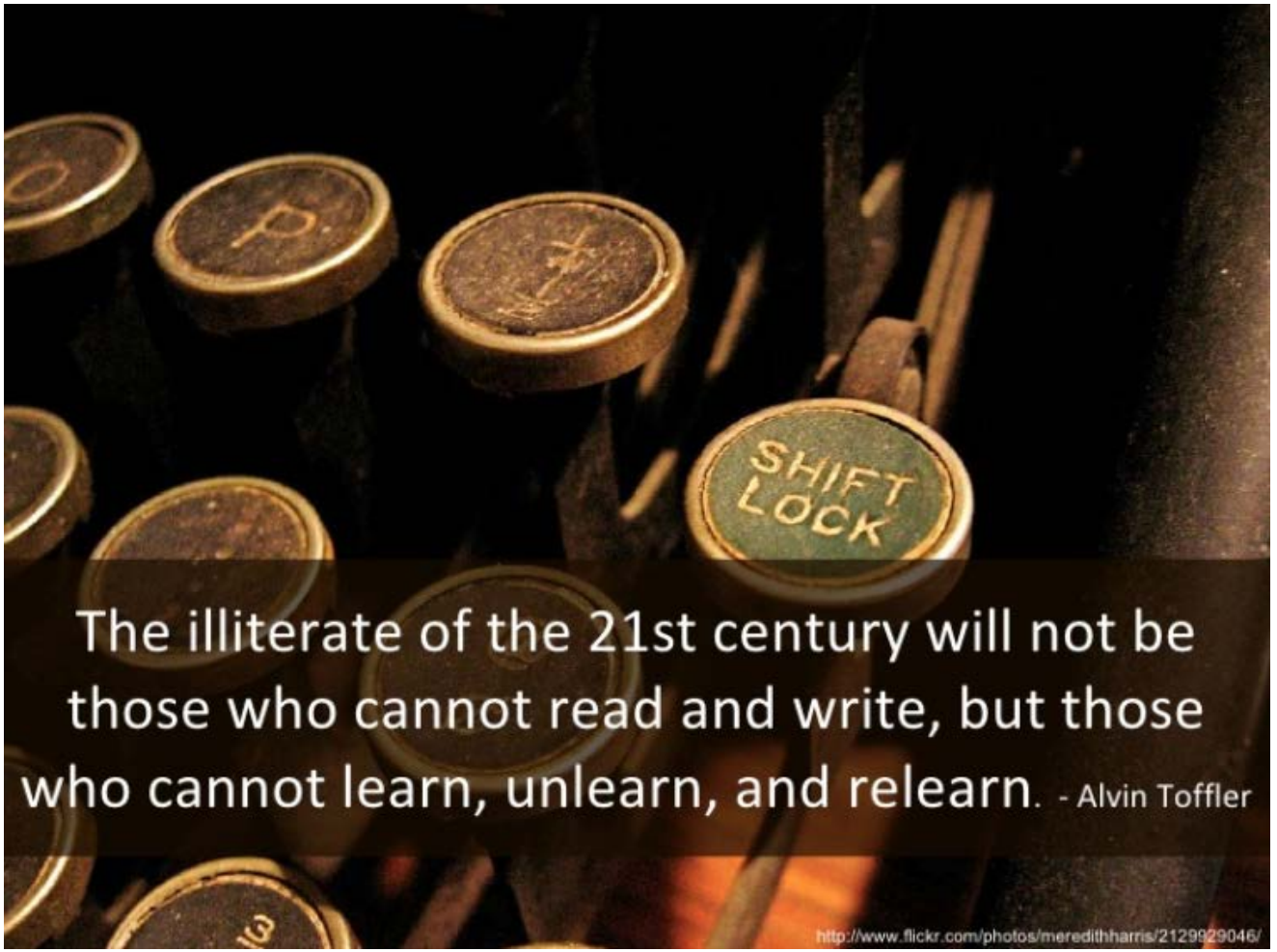
- Umbrella term: Encompasses many different activities & names

  computer literacy; digital literacy; network literacy; information resource literacy; research literacy; library skills; critical thinking skills; media literacy; transliteracy; metaliteracy; information ethics ...

  - connotations, concentrations differ

  but the basic concept is still information literacy

Broader context



From: Bobbi Newman. **Introduction to Transliteracy for Libraries**
http://www.slideshare.net/librarianbyday/introduction-to-transliteracy-for-libraries?related=2

Back to the United States

- **1989:** Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL): *Presidential Committee on Information Literacy: Final Report*
  - information literacy "a survival skill in the Information Age"
- **2000:** ACRL: *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education*
  - provided "a framework for assessing the information literate individual"

2000 Standards & applications

- 5 standards & 22 performance indicators
  - focus: (a) needs of students in higher education & (b) assessing outcomes in progress toward information literacy
- Widely applied: in many libraries (most in education) & fields (e.g. nursing); & guidelines
- Also many countries, organization used them for own standards – Australia, IFLA

Proposed new framework for information literacy

- **2012:** ACRL Board resolution: 2000 Standards should be significantly revised
- **2014:** Task Force report: ***Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education***
  - first draft Feb. '14; second June '14; third expected Nov. '14; final vote Jan. '15
  - Comments, feedback invited
  - Discussions, surveys, meetings, blogs ...

Why? Need & vision

- Developed "for a world that has changed radically since the turn of the 21st century"
  - "shift in higher education landscape since 2000"
  - more complex "information ecosystem"
  - changes in technology & technology use

"This *Framework* ... grows out of a belief that information literacy ... will realize its potential only through a richer, more complex set of core ideas."

Somebody broke
my Facebook!

New definition

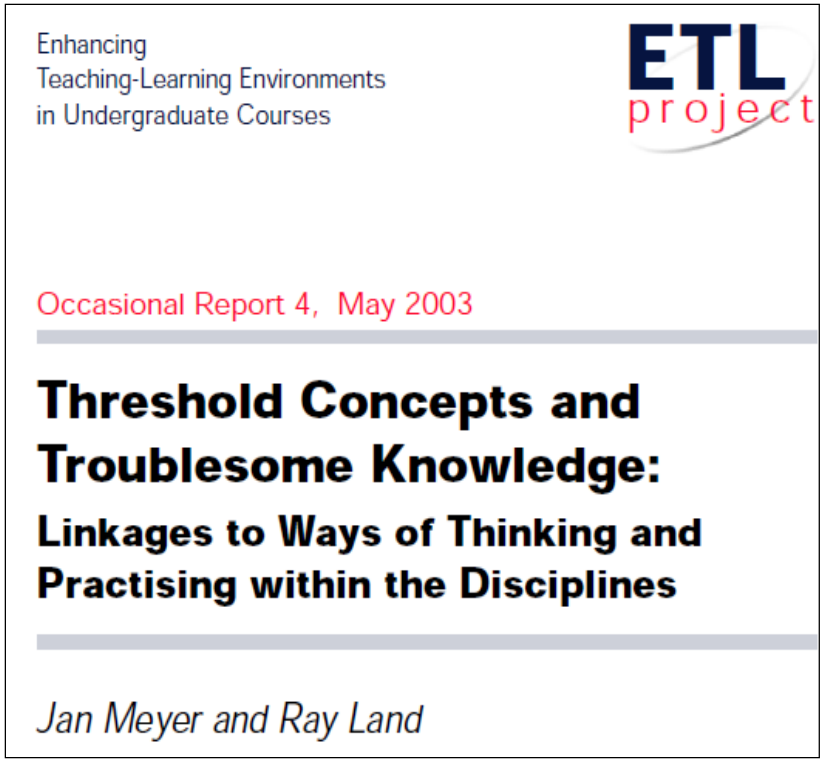
"Information literacy combines a **repertoire** of abilities, practices, ... focused on expanding one's understanding of the information ecosystem with the **proficiencies** of finding, using and analyzing information ..., to answer questions, develop new ones, and create new knowledge, through **ethical participation** in communities of learning and scholarship."

[bold in the original]

Basis for new Framework: Threshold concepts

- Grown out of pedagogical research for education in economics in the UK:

- to be used “in the design of effective learning environments within disciplines and to indicate the linkages to ways of thinking and practising within these disciplines.”


Enhancing
Teaching-Learning Environments
in Undergraduate Courses

ETL project

Occasional Report 4, May 2003

Threshold Concepts and Troublesome Knowledge:

Linkages to Ways of Thinking and Practising within the Disciplines

Jan Meyer and Ray Land

No definition given – but instead a metaphor:

"A threshold concept can be considered as akin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. It represents a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress."

- Same "akin to a portal" description used in the proposed *Framework*

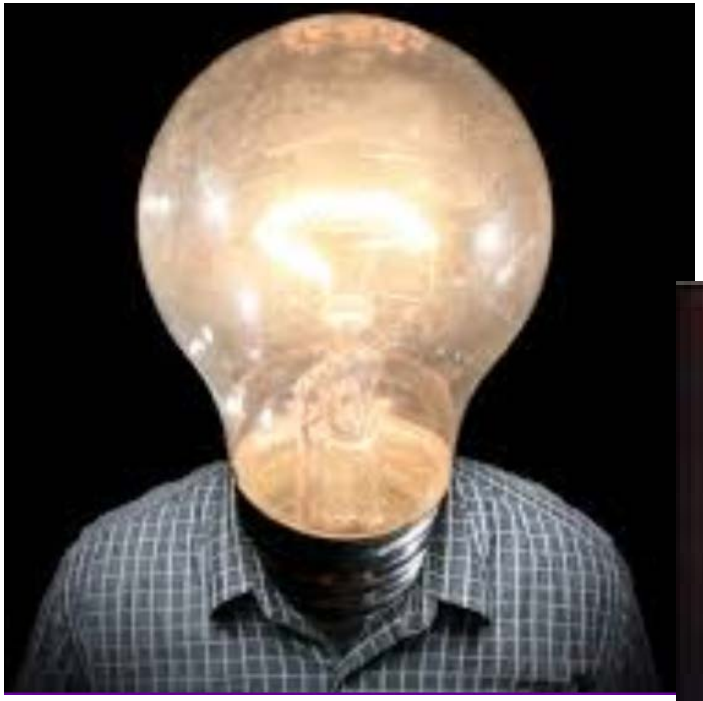
Characteristics of threshold concepts

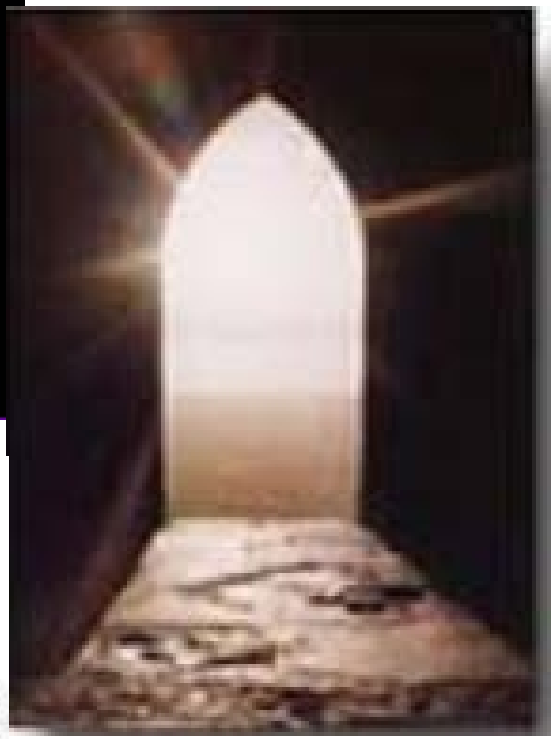
1. (likely to be) **transformative** - a significant shift in the perception of a subject
2. (probably) **irreversible** - unlikely to be forgotten
3. (has the capacity to be) **integrative** - exposes the previously hidden interrelatedness
4. (possibly often) **bounded** - any conceptual space will have terminal frontiers
5. (potentially & possibly inherently) **troublesome** - such concepts often prove problematic or 'troublesome' for learners

Threshold concepts:
Applications, reactions, critiques

- Literature growing – resonated with many academics; most literature descriptive, repetitive
- But applied in a few fields for description of education needs
- Reactions mixed: both praise & questioning
- Threshold concepts are hard to apply; unclear; inappropriate

Some results from a search for threshold concepts - Images:





Critique from one article*

- Rigor of discussion not high
- Important questions remain unanswered e.g.
  - how many of the five characteristics should a concept possess to be regarded as a threshold concept?
  - are some characteristics more important than others?
  - if a concept is troublesome and integrative but not transformative, is it still a threshold concept?

* Barradell, Sarah (2013). The identification of threshold concepts: a review of theoretical complexities and methodological challenges. Higher Education, 65:265–276.

2014 *Framework* is organized into six Frames

"...each consisting of a threshold concept that is central to information literacy:

1. Scholarship is a Conversation
2. Research as Inquiry
3. Authority is Contextual and Constructed
4. Format as a Process
5. Searching as Exploration
6. Information has Value."

Frames have *explanation* & a list of *Knowledge Practices (Abilities)* & *Dispositions*

Example explanation for Frame 2:

"Research as Inquiry refers to an understanding that research is iterative and depends upon asking increasingly complex questions whose answers develop new questions or lines of inquiry in any field." [bold in the original]

Example Frame 2 (cont.)

“Knowledge Practices (Abilities)

Learners who are developing their information literate abilities: Conduct research through the lens of inquiry in order to enhance the impact of their work.

Dispositions

Learners who are developing their information literate abilities: Value persistence, adaptability, and flexibility, and recognize that ambiguity can be beneficial.”

A good – even funny – comparison

The problem with threshold concepts
June 19, 2014 by Lane Wilkinson

"I suppose the simplest way to understand the change is to think of the previous standards as the authoritarian gym coach yelling "here are the five things you need to be information literate–learn them" the new standards are more like the hippie English teacher saying, "hey guys, here's some stuff to think about, but interpret it whatever way works best for you."

Conclusions

- In the US: basic thinking about information literacy is changing
  - in recognition of a very different world now than it was at the start of previous Standards
- Process for official change is underway
  - end seems predetermined
- Discussion in library profession is not wide
  - as yet no reaction elsewhere

Conclusions (continuing & ending)

- The proposed 2014 *Framework* for information literacy in the US is **not** based on any evidence, observation or experience at all
- It is based on threshold concepts which are **not** an appropriate & fruitful approach for achieving a pragmatic framework for information literacy

Why?

- **Theory:**
  - threshold concepts are not a scholarly theory – not testable
- **Evidence:**
  - there is no evidence-based practice of threshold concepts in any discipline
- **Applications:**
  - exercises in several fields, but with no pragmatic effect anyplace

Implications

- Most likely, proposed changes will be adopted
- With considerable effect on libraries in the US
- And the library community globally

Hvala!

Thank you!