

Instruction for All: Applying the Universal Design for Learning Framework to Information Literacy

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What is Universal Design for Learning (UDL)?

Guidelines that aim to make instruction more **accessible** for students **of all backgrounds, experience, and ability levels.**

UDL provides multiple options for instruction that consider variability in how students learn.

Information Literacy

The ACRL Framework looks at the “why” of information literacy and encourages students to **think critically** about the information they consume through **six threshold concepts**.

Critical Information Literacy encourages librarians to incorporate critical content to engage students further with their understanding of information.

Why Combine UDL and ACRL?

The ACRL Framework is the perfect vehicle for using UDL instructional methods, as the Framework is suited for adaptation and threshold concepts allow for flexibility in instruction.

- 11 % of undergraduate students report having a disability
- Many students don't disclose or are undiagnosed
- Librarians should be familiar with manifestations of certain disabilities and know how to provide the best instruction for students of all ability levels.
- There is little research on UDL with the ACRL Framework, and on UDL in information literacy instruction

Scope

Undergraduate students in North American universities

Focus on in-person instruction, though online tools can be useful in this setting

Main UDL resources: *Universal Design for Learning: Theory and Practice* and CAST's UDL Guidelines

The UDL Guidelines

Multiple Means of Engagement

UDL: Learners differ in the ways in which they can be engaged or motivated to learn, becoming more reflective and self-regulated.

ACRL Framework: Foster enhanced engagement with the core ideas about information and scholarship.

In practice

- Set up the room in a way to allow for collaboration and groupwork
- Give a lot of time for students to work on the material, allowing for mistakes
- Build relationships, as “a talkative class is a learning class”
- Be available for individual meetings since not all students are comfortable speaking in class

“Teaching students to formulate and articulate their own questions is a singularly empowering pedagogical practice.”

Scott, 2016, p. 133

Multiple Means of Representation

UDL: Learners differ in the ways that they perceive and comprehend information that is presented to them

ACRL Framework: Dispositions of each threshold concept are “ways in which to address the affective, attitudinal, or valuing dimension of learning.”

In practice

- Remove library jargon
- Don't assume all students have similar background knowledge
- Provide a multimedia glossary for definitions with images, phonetic spellings, or audio
- Use multiple formats for presenting material, such as PowerPoint and handouts
- Turn on closed-captions when showing videos
- Provide multiple options for audio: recording lectures, screencasts of PowerPoints, recommendations for relevant podcasts

“When applying UDL it is important to recognize that merely adding a text-reader function or closed-captioning a video is not a significant way to address disability and diversity.”

Rogers-Shaw et al., 2018, p. 27

Multiple Means of Action & Expression

UDL: Learners differ in the ways that they can navigate a learning environment and express what they know

ACRL Framework: Knowledge practices of the Framework are “demonstrations of ways in which learners can increase their understanding of these information literacy concepts.”

In practice

- Use active learning techniques, which engage students in the research process
- Incorporate games in learning, such as relay races for information searching activities or “Boolean Simon Says”
- Use kinesthetic learning, for interactive, hands-on activities
- Students can demonstrate and practice their knowledge at their own pace with click-through online interactive tutorials such as on Flash Catalyst
- Use or practice ideas by creating concept maps or online practice tests

“When instructors develop group activities that engage students visually, auditorily, and kinesthetically, students will learn best.”

Zhong, 2012, p. 44

Conclusion

Implementation of accessibility is not an end-goal that can simply be accomplished once it is done.

This is an iterative process that needs regular communication with the community it is serving, and constant re-evaluation.

For bibliography see zotero.org/groups/udl_acrl