Connecting and Reflecting: Transformative Learning in Academic Libraries
Abstract

This literature review is intended to examine transformative learning within the context of academic libraries and its applications for librarians. While the main audience is academic librarians who facilitate student learning, it may also be of interest to other practitioners and researchers who are interested in applying transformative learning across the disciplines. We analyzed relevant works on transformative learning from fields such as education and library science. The paper provides a history and definition of transformative learning and examines parallels between transformative learning and existing library and information research. Potential applications of transformative learning to instruction and reference services are examined. Transformative learning is an important theory in higher education with which librarians should be familiar. The new ACRL Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education implements several ideas related to transformative learning. The theory may help librarians connect with diverse, adult learners.

Keywords: information literacy, transformative learning, instruction, reference
Origins, Definitions, and Defining Characteristics of Transformative Learning

Transformative learning is a theoretical framework in adult education that is applicable to many areas, including information literacy, briefly defined as the ability to “recognize when information is needed and . . . locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information” (ALA, 1989). Although information literacy skills are relevant to all areas of study, they are explicitly referenced most often by librarians. Teaching librarians who used to offer “bibliographic instruction” are now more likely to label their work “information literacy instruction.”

This article will give an overview of the history and theory of transformative learning, relate it to existing theories in library science, and explain why it is relevant to library instruction. It will also look at some ways librarians can integrate transformative learning theory with information literacy instruction, and some potential barriers to this. We have attempted to provide some foundational information on transformative learning since the primary audience for this paper is other academic librarians, many of whom may not be familiar with transformative learning. This paper may also be of interest to adult educators who are curious about the application of transformative learning theory across disciplines.

Transformative learning has been gaining traction for several decades amongst educators who feel that it is essential to acknowledge learners’ prior knowledge, experience, and background, since these affect the integration of new knowledge (Mezirow, 2000). Indeed, Taylor (2007) called transformative learning “the most
researched and discussed theory in the field of adult education” (p. 1). In 2003, Sage began publishing this peer-reviewed *Journal of Transformative Education*. The University of Central Oklahoma publishes a *Journal of Transformative Learning* and hosts an annual conference on the topic. Meridian University also hosts an international conference through their Center for Transformative Learning.

In the 1970s, Jack Mezirow’s (2000) observation of his wife’s experience as an adult learner led him to conduct a “comprehensive, national study of women returning to community colleges” (p. 90). His research and ideas coalesced in his foundational works, *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood: A Guide to Transformative and Emancipatory Learning* (1990) and *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (1991). In 1994, Patricia Cranton built on his books in *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning: A Guide for Educators of Adults*, which, in 2006, came out as a second edition. Taylor (2007) noted that, early on, there was a dearth of peer-reviewed studies on the effectiveness of transformative learning. This is changing as researchers are now using a variety of methods and methodologies to explore transformative learning, and many of these studies focus on nurturing transformative learning in higher education settings.

Transformative learning is attracting interest from domestic and international scholars, as well as teachers within many disciplines.

Paralleling transformative learning’s eschewal of standard, uniform learning, there is no standard, uniform definition of transformative learning (O’Sullivan, 2002, p. 1). Even Mezirow’s own definition morphed over time. In 1990, he defined transformative learning as, “The process of learning through critical self-reflection, which results in the reformulation of a meaning perspective to allow a more inclusive,
discriminating, and integrative understanding of one’s experience. Learning includes
acting on these insights” (xvi). Over a decade later (2003), he had expanded his
definition, asserting that if learners identify and jettison “problematic frames of
reference” they can become not just more inclusive and discriminating, but also
“emotionally able to change” (pp. 58-59).

Like all theories, transformative learning builds on preceding theories of learning. The movement owes a debt to the constructivism and its problem-based approach to
education. Mezirow (1990) acknowledged the influence of John Dewey and William
James on his work (p. 6). Mezirow borrowed Habermas’s theory of three types of
knowledge: technical, communicative, and emancipatory. It is the latter with which
transformative learning is most concerned. Mezirow saw Paulo Freire’s successes in
educating laborers in South America as an example of the ability of adult educators to
catalyze emancipatory learning. Later transformative learning researchers referenced
Freire and his critique of the banking model of education, in which educators make a one-
way transfer of knowledge into students’ minds (Johnson-Bailey, p. 266). Like Freire,
transformative learning theory advocates for two-way learning that values the
experiences of all learners. In a later work, Mezirow (2009) also named consciousness-
raising in the women’s movement as an inspiration, as well as the thoughts of
philosophers and a psychiatrist. Boyd and Myers (1988) noted that the theory was
influenced by depth psychology and the concept of personality transformation.

Transformative learning is also situated in and parallels another body of literature
on adult learning: andragogy. The very construction of this word emphasizes the teaching
of adults rather than children. Cooke (2010) did a thorough job of linking andragogy,
originally developed by Malcolm Knowles, to information literacy. Andragogy shares the student-centered approach of transformative learning, but focuses more on self-direction and the life experience of adult learners. Transformative learning theory, by comparison, emphasizes critical self-reflection, which is likely self-directed but which may or may not have an experiential component (Cranton, 2006).

Scientists and environmentalists employed transformative learning to set in motion the modern-day environmental movement, argued Walter (2013). Other disciplines have used transformative learning to encourage students to overcome cynicism concerning their coursework (Duarte, 2010). Transformative learning has helped students who have already been practitioners in their field to reconcile their “real world” mentality with the theoretical underpinnings of their subjects (Duarte, 2010).

There has been research on transformative learning in health sciences (Goss, Cuddihy, & Muchaud-Tomson, 2010), English (Carter & Poole, 2010), feminism (Miles, 2002), ecological education (Clover, 2002), spirituality (Sefa Dei, 2002), art (Knowles & Cole, 2002), and even the scholarship of teaching and learning (Cranton, 2011).

While most research on transformative learning is based on face-to-face classrooms, a few scholars have applied it to online environments, as well (Taylor, 2007, p. 175). Zieghan (2001) notes that critical reflection—an important step in personal transformation—may, in fact, be promoted by the written format and slower pace of asynchronous, online communication (p. 146). As with face-to-face transformative learning, the instructor’s role in the online environment is more that of a facilitator than a lecturer—fostering an open, safe environment and asking disorienting questions that provoke thoughtfulness (p. 149). Since the applications of transformative learning are
practically endless, it would behoove librarians to take notice and apply it to our own work.

**Transformative Learning Theory Parallels with Research on Information Use**

When we set out to write an article about library instruction in higher education and transformative learning, we were surprised to find few publications that make these explicit links. However, much of the theory behind transformative learning parallels important studies by key researchers in library and information science, such as Carol Kuhlthau, Joan Durrance, Karen Fisher, and Patricia Dewdney. Kenney (2008) made these links in his dissertation, which focused on the transformative experiences of public library users.

Patricia Dewdney collaborated with Brenda Dervin to apply Dervin’s concept of sensemaking to the reference interview. When a library user discusses their research with a librarian, whether it be at a reference desk, over email, through chat, or on the phone, the librarian must demonstrate approachability, express interest in the question and the user, listen carefully, and only then ask a series of questions to help the user clearly identify their information need and find relevant resources. Users are encouraged to return as their information needs evolve (RUSA, 1996). Many librarians see reference interviews as a form of information literacy instruction. Reference interviews are complex interactions, and Dervin and Dewdney (1986) believed sensemaking could be a helpful approach. Users seek reference help because they have encountered a barrier in their cognitive or physical movement. Put another way, this barrier might be seen as a “gap,” “a lack of sense,” or simply “an occurrence that raises questions” (Dervin & Dewdney, 1986, p. 2). These gaps are highly specific to the individual and their
situations. This concept of a gap parallels the “lines of action” people tend to follow automatically until they encounter a disorienting event (which might also be gradual) that spurs the opportunity for transformative learning (Mezirow, 1990). If learners’ meaning perspectives are not challenged somehow, they will not alter their points of view through critical reflection (Cranton, 2006).

Sensemaking, like transformative learning, is a constructivist theory. It rejects the concept of information as a real object that can be stored and shared at will, instead envisioning it as a construct unique to each person. Thus, as experienced reference librarians know, the “right” answer to a question may differ depending on who is asking it and for what (Dervin & Dewdney, 1986, p. 4). This certainly parallels Mezirow’s (1990) assertion that transformative learning - a type of emancipatory learning - involves critical self-reflection - a reassessment of individual “frames of reference” developed within the broader context of one’s family and culture. Taylor (2007) noted the theory’s focus on “the meaning making process” (p. 174). This concept is reflected in the Association of College and Research Libraries’ (ACRL, 2015) Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education, covered in more depth later, in the frame “authority is constructed and contextual.”

Durrance & Fisher (2003) looked at public library missions to analyze to what extent libraries meet these missions. Much like transformative learning, the benefits that public libraries provide are not easy to quantify. Durrance and Fisher (2003) cited Evanston Public Library’s goal to “promote the development of independent, self-confident, and literate citizens” as typical of library mission statements (p. 308). This mission statement parallels Mezirow’s (1991) belief that the world needs people who are
“autonomous and responsible,” capable of “full citizenship in democracy” (p. 7). Durrance and Fisher recommended contextual, qualitative evidence of library effectiveness rather than uniform outcomes. Transformative learning, like library effectiveness, exists in the realm of emotions and values more than rubric-ready skills. It makes sense that its benefits are also best described through grounded theory, phenomenology, and case studies.

Like facilitators of transformative learning, librarians want to enhance and enable not just an individual’s skill set, but her or his sense of self and ability to relate to the world. The goal, though, is not to prescribe a way of being, but to motivate through and build upon on each individual’s unique life experience. Because of these lofty goals, both disciplines find it challenging to demonstrate what they truly do through standardized measurements and tests.

**Transformative Learning and Standards-Based Information Literacy**

In the transformative learning paradigm, reflection and critical thinking pave the way to learning (Mezirow, 1991). Sometimes, when librarians attempt to insert information literacy into a general education program or other university-wide initiative, they name it critical thinking or critical evaluation. The term “information literacy” does not necessarily resonate with faculty members or students, while critical thinking is a term they have heard before and to which they can relate.

Transformative learning may be gaining traction among educators, but it is still not a mainstream concept, and conflicts with major movements in education. Outcomes-based education - with outcomes largely determined by testing - is becoming more popular in both K-12 and higher education. In the information literacy world, this
movement was reflected in the *ACRL Information Literacy Standards for Higher Education*, (ACRL, 2000) which were criticized as being overly-focused on cognitive learning and ignoring the affective domain (Schroeder & Cahoy, 2010). Outcomes-based education and transformative learning appear to be at odds in several ways. First, because outcomes generally focus on skills rather than emotions. Second, because the acquisition of knowledge is often “internal and invisible” (Kenney, 2008, p. 39). Third, because teaching to the test may alter students’ learning process in an unhelpful way. As Mezirow (1990) said, “We learn differently when we are learning to perform than when we are learning to understand what is being communicated to us” (p. 1). Finally, transformative learning, with its emphasis on the diverse and unconscious “meaning perspectives” and awareness of “relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race, and gender” could problematize the very notion of instructors, administrators, and politicians assigning learning outcomes and standards to students (Morell & O’Connor, 2002, p. xvii). From a transformative perspective, both students and instructors have both goals and prior knowledge. Conversely, institutions that rely on outcome-based education may shy away from transformative education because, based on current research, “there is little understood about the impact of transformative learning on learner outcomes” (Taylor, 2007, p. 187).

**Beyond Standards: The Association of College and Research Libraries’ Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education**

Since we began writing this paper, ACRL released the *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (ACRL, 2015). This new document moves away from the rigid, specific standards towards six frames based upon threshold
concepts. The introduction states that the Framework is “based on a cluster of interconnected core concepts, with flexible options for implementation, rather than on a set of standards, learning outcomes, or any prescriptive enumeration of skills” (ACRL, 2015). The Framework introduces two terms that fit well with transformative education: *threshold concepts* and *dispositions*. The document defines threshold concepts as,

> Core or foundational concepts that, once grasped by the learner, create new perspectives and ways of understanding a discipline or challenging knowledge domain. Such concepts produce transformation within the learner; without them, the learner does not acquire expertise in that field of knowledge. Threshold concepts can be thought of as portals through which the learner must pass to develop new perspectives and wider understanding.

Not only does this definition sound very compatible with a transformative learning model, but, in fact, ACRL (2015) credits Meyer, Land, and Baillie’s (2010) book *Threshold Concepts and Transformational Learning*. In the preface, the authors note that crossing a threshold involves leaving the familiar for the unknown, which can sometimes be frightening and troubling: “learning thresholds are often the points at which students experience difficulty” (pp. ix-x). This parallels the gap, internal confusion, or disorienting event that triggers critical reflection or sensemaking. Meyer and Land coined the term “threshold concept” in a 2003 report, and Townsend, Brunetti, and Hofer’s (2011) article (also referenced in the Framework) applies the threshold concept to information literacy. It is promising to see a concept that has a transformative dimension and parallels becoming an established part of ACRL’s “constellation” of ever-evolving information literacy documents.
Meyer and Land (2006) note that the transformative aspect of a threshold concept shares similarities with Mezirow’s ideas because “in such instances transformed perspective is likely to involve an affective component—a shift in values, feeling or attitude” (p. 7). It is notable that the Framework focuses not on specific skills or outcomes, but on knowledge practices and dispositions. The Framework (ACRL, 2015) defines a disposition as “a cluster of preferences, attitudes, and intentions.” Thus, the Framework takes into consideration the affective domain so essential to the transformative learning model and lacking in the Standards. So, the Framework seems to indicate that transformative learning—or at least ideas compatible with transformative learning—are making an impact in the information literacy universe.

**Can We Connect in One-shot Instruction Sessions?**

While the new Framework is a positive step that seems to be more applicable to a transformative model, the current way information literacy is integrated in the curricula at most colleges and universities still presents some challenges. When students see librarians in a fifty minute one-shot instruction session once during the semester, the focus of the class is often how to do research for their specific assignment. This system is evolving, slowly but surely, to include embedded librarianship, credit-bearing information literacy courses, and other forms of library instruction. Library literature has focused on constructivism for many years (Johnson, 2007). Library instruction as envisioned by the professional organization, the Association of College and Research Libraries at the Immersion Program (http://www.ala.org/acrl/immersionprogram), emphasizes teaching to all learning styles and incorporating major learning theories such as behaviorism, constructivism, and connectivism.
The one-shot library instruction model has been shown in library research to be problematic (Mery, Newby, & Peng, 2012; O’Maley, 2009). Some have even shown that there is negligible impact of library instruction on students’ final grades (Coulter, Clarke, & Scamman, 2007). Of course, the trouble with only measuring impacts such as grade point average, when looking at instruction through a transformative learning lens, is that other changes made through learning are not taken into account. Certainly, one-shot library instruction may not allow students to grasp more than the core skills they need for the assignment they have been given.

Ideally, librarians would like to instruct students in the research process and help them break down some of their assumptions about research in the 21st century, including the common assumption that everything is available online through Google. Another assumption is that if information is found using a library resource - the catalog, a database, etc. - it is trustworthy. Mezirow (1991) mentioned that “distorted assumptions . . . can cause logical and methodological errors in the problem solving involved in instrumental learning” (p. 118). A big influence on assumptions is culture. According to the Pew Research Center, 64% of American adults have a smartphone (Smith, 2015). When the majority of adults and our students have Google in their pocket, it can be difficult for them to move up Bloom’s taxonomy to critically evaluate information and multiple studies have shown that students are often over-confident in their information skills (Colón-Aguirre & Fleming-May, 2012; Sillipigni Connaway, Dickey, & Radford, 2011).

Wyss (2005) addressed a different problem for adults returning to library research: the many changes in the library since they have used it. However, Wyss
asserted that his students had a transformative experience learning to use library resources in the span of two weeks. Transformative learning can help cynical students engage with the material at hand. Students of any age often have beliefs about the library that keep them from fully engaging, and shifting paradigms through critical thinking is at the very heart of transformative learning.

There is some evidence that rules, a focus on task completion, and rigidity stand in the way of the transformative learning process (Taylor, 2007, p. 183). Yet how many times have we tried to teach students to perform as many tasks as possible in a 50-minute session? We want them to be able to find books, create database searches, or paraphrase a sentence. There is sometimes no getting around a “point-and-click” instruction session, during which the librarian instructor is taking students step-by-step through using a specific database to find the resources they need to complete an assignment. The flipped classroom is a popular concept that may allow librarians and students to discuss paradigms rather than search steps. By creating videos and other instructional materials that address the nuts and bolts of library research, librarians can then focus on engaging with student attitudes about the library in their precious 50 minutes.

**Pedagogical Entry Points and Point of Need**

One of the challenges of applying transformative learning to information literacy is that often librarians do not engage with the same students over an extended period of time. Mezirow (1991) asserted, “Ideally, learners will meet as a group over an extended period of time to assess action steps taken throughout the transformative learning process” (p. 357). Thus it is difficult for librarians to have “an acute awareness of student
attitudes, personalities and preferences over time, and as signs of change and instability begin to emerge, [to] respond accordingly” (Taylor, 2007, p. 187).

Transformative learning theory would therefore indicate that one-on-one consultations with librarians are essential. Students are most likely to learn when they are at a crossroads or crisis - “at the edge of their knowing” (Taylor, 2007, p. 183). Taylor also framed these crises as “pedagogical entry point[s]” (p. 187), and, for most students, they are unlikely to occur during a 50 minute, or even 120 minute, library session. Librarians must be able to identify students in crisis, and be available to support them by empathizing with their struggles. Mezirow (1991) saw the role of an adult educator to be that of an “empathetic provocateur,” a “role model for critical reflection and the ethical idea of caring,” and “to serve as a committed co-learner and occasional guide” (p. 360). Taylor (2007) found evidence that this sort of help is essential if we want students to translate their learning into their lives (p. 183).

A liaison system is one potential way of creating an environment where librarians are available to students at their points of need. If a librarian is the liaison to a department and works with students throughout their tenure at a college or university, she or he may be able to identify such students and offer further support. Working with a student on her or his research certainly allows us to inhabit this role of being a teacher by provoking and facilitating, rather than leading, the student’s journey of reflection.

Many academic librarians engage with their users online, and some work in exclusively online environments. Subject or course guides are one major way librarians educate online. Alison Hicks (2015) criticizes the one-way transmission of knowledge that is inherent in this wide-spread practice:
Ultimately, when we construct LibGuides around the resources that the librarian thinks the student should know about in order to ace their research paper, we attempt to simplify the processes of research. Yet, as Freire points out, this is problematic because it positions research as a transferral of information, rather than as an act of exploratory and liberatory meaning-making. (para. 9)

Another way librarians often engage with students online is by being “embedded” in their branch libraries, face-to-face courses, or online courses. Drewes & Hoffman (2010) note that there are many ways that librarians can be embedded, but the core of the concept is that embedded librarians “become part of their user’s culture” and “actively engage in relationship-building” (p. 76), which is also a common feature of liaison librarians’ roles. Drewes & Hoffman identify communication and social bonding as the transformative aspect of embedded librarianship (p. 79-80). In an online environment, such interactions may happen via IM, chat, social media, or discussion boards. As we noted in the earlier discussion of Zieghan (2001), embedding librarians in online environments like learning management systems will be transformative to the extent that the librarian takes on the role of a facilitator, provoking critical reflection, rather than lecturer, transmitting one-way knowledge.

**Adult Learners: The Importance of Self-Reflection and Direct Experience**

Cranton (2006) pointed out that Mezirow and others believed that the self-reflection necessary for transformative learning is most likely to be found in adults (p. 8). Taylor (2007) believed that transformational experiences can help learners to develop “greater self-directedness, assertiveness, self-confidence and self-esteem” (p. 184). Change in self-concept, Cranton (2006) noted, is at the heart of transformative learning
While critical reflection is a central concept of transformative learning, Taylor (2007) emphasized that, once learners’ perspectives have changed, they must still acquire skills relevant to their new perspectives and receive “ongoing institutional support” for transformation to fully occur (p. 187). Universities that have included information literacy, or perhaps critical thinking, into their general education program, have institutional support for students to acquire this skill or set of skills. Librarians should be looked to, then, to instruct students in that knowledge area or skill set and can work to change students’ perspectives.

Another way that colleges and universities are getting to changes in self-concept is through experiential learning. Defined by Kuh (2014) as a “high-impact practice,” service or community-based learning, also called experiential learning, gives students the chance to “apply what they are learning in real-world settings and reflect in a classroom setting on their service experiences.” Cranton (2006) described this part of adult-learning specifically,

If being practical or experiential is a definitive characteristic of adult learning in terms of adults having immediate problems they wish to solve . . . transformative learning does not necessarily meet this prerequisite . . . the process itself may be driven by critical self-reflection, exploration, and intuition with no further reference to the world outside the self. (p. 7)

Undergraduate research and information literacy within first-year seminars are also touted as high-impact practices by Kuh (2014) and the initiative Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP). Transformative learning has more of a chance of
occurring during these high-impact practices because they emphasize active learning and encourage students to be participants in their own learning.

Taylor (2007) cited several studies emphasizing the importance of direct experience. Direct experience allows students to explore the importance of a situation or concept on their own, while also experiencing an emotional impact. Instruction librarians are already utilizing direct experience in much of their work. For example, hosting a workshop where students research their topics, allowing them to experience the thrills and frustrations of finding relevant materials in the library databases. Direct experience seems easier to integrate with certain parts of the information literacy, such as retrieval of information. How would we make the concepts of intellectual property and plagiarism avoidance more experiential? Taylor indicates that many different media, from romance novels to online fora, can give students material on which to critically reflect.

**The Authentic Librarian**

Cranton and King (2003) also noted that transformative learning, with its focus on adult learning, has clear implications for faculty professional development. Teachers themselves can engage in critical reflection on their experiences as a form of self-directed professional development. By questioning our praxis, our roles in organizations, and our relationships with our students, we can become more authentic, and therefore better able to relate to our students. Cranton and Carusetta (2004) build on this idea, asking that teachers move beyond generic guidelines, because,

> When we bring our sense of self into our teaching . . . we are able to critically question that which is right for us from the literature, develop our own personal style, and thereby communicate with students and others in a genuine way. (p. 6)
Librarians are used to working within many types of organizations, from library associations to university committees. We should question the assumptions we acquire from these layers of socialization in order to remain authentic and self-reflective individuals who can connect with learners who do not share these assumptions. We should also combat the pop culture persona of the unsympathetic, rule-bound librarian, since this may also interfere with our ability to truly connect with students.

**Positionality and Critical Librarianship**

As previously mentioned, Mezirow and those who built on his theories have referenced the important work of Freire. At the same time, Mezirow’s theories make many assumptions indicative of his bias as a white American male: rationality is assumed to be superior to intuition; the individual is prioritized over the community; educators are assumed to be beneficent, and power dynamics are not explicitly discussed (Johnson-Bailey, 2012, p. 266). While Freire writes about emancipation from oppression, even he, in Johnson-Bailey’s opinion, does not sufficiently address positionality (p. 267). But, as Johnson-Bailey points out (p. 70), the need for transformative learning theory to become more inclusive does not invalidate it or mean that only certain populations can use it. Rather, practitioners and theorists must be open to change.

Librarianship has its own troubled relationship with diversity and inclusivity, and a sub-field called critical librarianship is an emerging that addresses many of these deficiencies. It focuses on reflexivity, identifying power imbalances, promoting diversity, and questioning exclusionary cultural concepts and practices in librarianship. Much of the new wording in the ACRL Framework (i.e., authority is constructed and contextual)
is reflective of this emerging awareness (Garcia, 2015). We hope that critical librarianship and transformative librarianship will continue to inform one another.

**Conclusion**

We posit that in our changing world, the lens of transformative learning has much to offer to teacher librarians, and indeed to all teachers. Transformative learning, like information literacy, has broad applicability across disciplines and within interdisciplinary topics. Since it is not confined by delivery model, it applies to distance education as well as face-to-face education. Transformative learning focuses on adults. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2013), in 2011, there were 8.7 million students in colleges over the age of 25, compared to 31.1 million in the traditional age bracket of 18 - 24. Even traditional-aged undergraduates are emerging adults, and deserve to be treated as such. And higher education is becoming more diverse in other ways, too. Between 2000 and 2011, the number of Hispanic and Black students rose as well (NCES, 2013). Not only are learners of different ages in our classroom, but learners from an array of cultures and backgrounds. Transformative learning reminds us that our students come from different places, and have different attitudes and ideas about libraries and research. Before we dive into the skills, we may want to consider if students are even motivated or open to learning them, and, if we want to further challenge ourselves, how we can encourage them to develop this openness.

This paper is merely a literature review, meant to introduce librarians to the field of transformative learning and consider how it might apply to information literacy in higher education. The authors look forward to primary research in which questions are asked from a transformative learning framework. We recommend future studies in the
application of transformative library instruction (both in-person and online), further exploration of the ACRL Framework as it fits into a transformative learning context, and work that combines critical librarianship and transformative learning to question the assumptions we have about users’ prior knowledge and current information needs. A great deal of this work will most likely be qualitative, since transformative learning is notoriously hard to quantify.

Transformative learning is a caution that uniform curricula and standards may not serve the needs of diverse learners. It is a renewed admonition for librarians to get out from behind the lectern and the reference desk and listen to their students’ frames of reference, and be aware of their point of need. It is a call for us to be wary of our professional boxes and strive for the authenticity that allows us to connect, and allows us to change.
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