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# What role can affect and emotion play in academic and research information literacy practices?

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## Abstract

While significant progress has been made in broadening information literacy's (IL's) scope, its conception of the user and their relationship to information remains painfully limited. This is particularly evident when the affective or emotional factors of information seeking behaviour are considered. Thus far, IL's models and discourses have failed to acknowledge emotion's fundamentally disruptive nature and have either ignored, repressed, or misrepresented users' emotions. This has resulted in a deeply limited and inaccurate conception of the user's information needs, and this has a particularly harmful impact on marginalised users and users engaging with affectively fraught information. This article seeks to address this oversight, initially by outlining the origins of IL's repression of emotion and then examining the consequences of this repression in the standardised IL models; specifically in Carol C. Kuhlthau's Information Search Process and the ACRL's *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*. Subsequently, this essay will examine several critical models of librarianship and IL—including Holocaust librarianship and Indigenous conceptions of relationality—in order to illuminate models of IL that adopt a relational perspective that enables an engagement with the affective elements of the user's information needs. Finally, this essay will suggest that these relational perspectives facilitate the adoption of an ethics of care that helps address the insufficiencies inherent to our current conceptions of IL.

## Keywords

academic libraries; affect; critical information literacy; emotion; holism; Holocaust librarianship; indigenous epistemologies; information literacy; information literacy models; relationality; UK

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## Introduction

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire (1968/2017, p. 44) foregrounds the “fundamentally narrative character” of the “teacher-student relationship at any level, inside or outside the school,” before going on to state that “education is suffering from narration sickness.” This suggestion, that the stories we tell about education have a constitutive impact on the way we teach and that changing those stories is a prerequisite to any kind of educational reform, is repeatedly echoed in discussions of critical information literacy (CIL). For example, Annemaree Lloyd (2005, p. 87) has stated that “how we think of information literacy is dependent upon the discourses and contexts in which we interact and the way in which information is located within those contexts.” This foregrounding of information literacy's (IL's) narratives and discourses is hardly surprising. Indeed, it can be suggested that IL as a mode of instruction is primarily aimed at bringing a self-reflexive or metacognitive awareness to the often-invisible narratives which frame education, information, and learning in order to facilitate or otherwise renegotiate those constitutive narratives. As such, it would be strange if IL's own narratives went unremarked upon by those involved in their creation and, while such efforts can occasionally descend into knotty, incomprehensible examinations of the way we think about the way we think, vital insights can be gained by investigating the various ‘narration sicknesses’ which circumscribe our discipline.

This article will focus on one such ‘narrative sickness’, arguing that current models of academic IL are insufficient because of their exclusion of, or inadequate engagement with, users’ affects and emotions. In other words, the fact that “emotion is still treated cursorily” within IL literature, and “is often seen as purely having a negative impact on information seeking performance” has created an IL narrative that is not fit for purpose and these inadequacies must be interrogated if an engaged and holistic conception of the user within IL is to be established (Hicks & Lloyd, 2021, p. 6). I will argue that an intervention into this cursory treatment of emotion is necessary not only because of the more general repression of emotion within IL discourse but also because of the inadequate nature of the few attempts to explore the relationship thus far. While other attempts to engage with previously neglected factors in users’ information seeking behaviour have often sought to incorporate them into, and thus expand, our preexisting conceptions of IL, users’ emotions have almost always been treated as a uniquely disruptive and uninformative factor within the research process; a force which must be disciplined and corrected in order to properly facilitate research. I will argue that this misrepresentation of affect and emotion creates an incomplete conception of the user which this article will aim to interrogate and expand.

This repression or misrepresentation of emotion within epistemological and pedagogical contexts is not unique to IL; as Alison M. Jaggard (1989, p. 161) states, “Western epistemology has tended to view emotion with suspicion and even hostility” and “the influence of emotion is usually seen only as distorting or impeding observation or knowledge.” Sara Ahmed (2014, p. 3) echoes this point, highlighting the common “association between passion and passivity” and the consequent assumption that “to be emotional is to have one’s judgement affected: it is to be reactive rather than active, dependent rather than autonomous.” Furthermore, Simon J. Williams (2000, p. 562) has argued that such analyses have meant that “the conventional or orthodox approach, dominant in Western culture, is one in which a wedge is firmly driven between reason and emotion - the latter banished to the margins of Western thought and practice.” Given how foundational and ubiquitous such approaches are within epistemology, pedagogy, and information studies, it is unsurprising that IL would also follow suit in erasing emotion from its frame of reference or else relegate emotion to a subordinate position in its conception of the learner. Indeed, interrogating these base assumptions, many of which are “traceable to an Enlightenment ideology” of rationality and dualistic doctrines of mind and matter, can seem to destabilise the very structure of IL (Pawley, 2003, p. 422). Yet so much is lost when these erasures occur, as such lobotomising misrepresentations of the learner elide the bountiful possibilities and insights that can be gained by attending to, rather than attempting to correct, “the intense interconnection between thought and feeling” (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 1). This adjustment of perspective is deeply necessary because, as Jessie Loyer (2018, p. 155) states, “we do not do research only mentally; emotional, spiritual, and physical health must be factors in how we teach students about accessing information.” In this vein, I will argue that emotion must not be erased from or distorted to fit the standardised narrative of IL but must be taken on its own disruptive, passionate terms and that doing so will enable a crucial re-narration of IL.

Indeed, when emotion is engaged with in an IL context, a profound shift in perspective and practice can result. This is evident in the CIL practices of Holocaust librarianship and Indigenous research methodologies, both of which attend to the emotional dimensions of research and both of which illuminate a relational understanding of IL that is inextricable from the practice of care. These relational, caring practices offer one example of the ways in which librarians can fully attend to the emotional, spiritual, and physical factors which Loyer foregrounds as equally essential to users’ research and provide alternative ways to conceptualise IL outside of research’s purely mental elements.

## Emotion and IL

As aforementioned, this topic was selected because, although the vital need for a better understanding of the relationship between emotion and IL has become increasingly recognised within IL literature, the ensuing engagements with emotion have, thus far, been hazardously insufficient. This is evident both in the limited range of emotions discussed, the deeply flawed positioning of these emotions as ‘good’ or ‘bad’, and the subsequent efforts to correct, alter, or otherwise discipline students’ emotions. These insufficiencies are perhaps best summarised by Miriam L. Matteson’s 2014 article, ‘The Whole Student: Cognition, Emotion, and Information Literacy.’ While Matteson (2014, pp. 862–871) is undoubtedly correct that, “a central component to new thinking in IL is the need to widen the lens to consider the whole student” and that “even the most thoughtfully created IL content, delivered with the most dynamic teaching methods, seamlessly integrated into a core curriculum, may not ultimately result in successful learning if students’ cognitive, emotional, and social characteristics have not been considered,” she frequently positions students’ “negative affects”, which are mostly understood in terms of the feelings of uncertainty, anxiety, confusion, and frustration laid out in Carol C. Kuhlthau’s Information Search Process (ISP), as an impediment that must be corrected through “emotional intelligence” training.

Similarly, Ellysa Stern Cahoy and Robert Schroeder (2012, pp. 76–77) seek to address the fact that “emotions remain muddled and difficult to teach, understand and quantify” through the implementation of “specific, unambiguous, and measurable” “affective learning outcomes.” Such an approach is clearly at odds with their acknowledgement of emotion’s muddled unquantifiability, as an attempt to fix or specify emotion’s muddled nature will only ever result in a distortion and misconception of the very affective needs such learning outcomes seek to meet.

Rather than broadening preexisting IL models or providing a deeper understanding of ‘the whole student’, these arguments moralistically misunderstand emotion as intellect’s wayward cousin; as something which must simply be corrected or disciplined in order to bring it properly in line with normative academic standards. As such, these framings reaffirm the limitations they attempt to dismantle; namely, the dichotomous understanding of emotion and intellect and the subsequent subordination of the former by the latter. In so doing, they strip emotion of its fundamentally instinctive, subjective, irrational, uncontrollable, and messy nature; in other words, they erase the very components which, if considered, might enable a broader and more ethical conception of the learner, IL, and information seeking behaviour.

Such failures are deeply disappointing in their affirmation of the very ‘narrative sicknesses’ they attempt to address. Indeed, one of the most painful limitations of Matteson, Cahoy, and Schroeder’s arguments is their attempt to fold emotion unproblematically into the preexisting models of IL. Rather than taking users’ emotions on their own, passionate terms or incorporating emotion as a distinct yet vitally interrelated lens through which to view and understand IL, these arguments neuter emotion as a factor by submerging it within the “techno-administrative language” which Christine Pawley (2003, p. 426) identifies as “the prevailing style of LIS [library and information studies] discourse” and, in so doing, preserve IL’s dichotomous, atomistic status quo. This elision, most evident in their focus on ‘emotional intelligence’ and ‘affective learning outcomes’, contributes to the construction of a singular, authoritative model of IL that fundamentally misrepresents the relationship between emotion and IL.

Kimmo Tuominen (1997, pp. 367–8) argues that such discourse adopts “a monologic master voice” which rigidly defines “the identities of librarians and users”, meaning “there is no easy way out of the web of discursive power.” Indeed, the adoption of a monologic master voice in IL discourse runs the risk of “a certain epistemological imperialism”, as “to include, to speak as, to bring in every marginal and excluded position within a given discourse is to claim that a singular

discourse meets its limits nowhere, that it can and will domesticate all signs of difference” (Butler 1993/2011, pp. xxvi, 25). The “preservation of the outside, the site where discourse meets its limit, where the opacity of what is not included in a given regime of truth acts as a disruptive site of linguistic impropriety and unrepresentability” is, in this sense, of crucial importance (Butler, 1993/2011, p. 25). In other words, IL’s various ‘narrative sicknesses’, such as its inadequate or exclusionary conception of emotion, should not be corrected through the assumption of another, equally all-encompassing narrative, one which will inevitably misrepresent vital components of the user and information seeking behaviour. Rather, these ‘narrative sicknesses’ should be addressed through the struggle against perfect communication and the attendant proliferation of multiple, multifaceted narratives that better capture the endlessly complex relationship between information, the user, and their information needs. As Tuominen (1997, p. 368) suggests, “even if it is not possible to escape discursive power, it is possible to try to develop alternative discourses: competing ways to make sense of information seeking and use.”

Engaging with emotion’s relationship to IL is particularly useful in this regard because emotion’s fundamentally passionate nature means that it cannot be accurately approached through such discourses without disrupting them. The importance of attending to emotion’s disruptive potential and the unique forms of knowing this disruption can solicit has been repeated by various writers, particularly those concerned with qualitative research (Rager, 2005), archiving (Douglas et al., 2022), and feminism (Blakely, 2007). Among them is anthropologist Gregory Bateson (1987, p. 315), whose definition of information as “a difference which makes a difference” has been widely adopted by IL researchers. Bateson (1987, p. 470) states that “the attempt to separate intellect from emotion ... is monstrous” and argues that “the reasonings of the heart” can provide vital insights into “matters of relationship, by which I mean love, hate, respect, dependency, spectatorship, performance, dominance, and so on.” Similarly, in her discussion of her role as a researcher investigating rape, Rebecca Campbell (2002, p. 10) suggests that “the emotional experience of feeling rape” can serve as “a resource for thinking about rape” and that “emotions can provide intellectual, substantive insight and therefore can be a valuable tool for social research.” In other words, the dismissal of emotion from research also dismisses the unique kinds of thinking that paying attention to emotion engenders and thus creates a deeply circumspect and impoverished narrative of research and IL.

It should be noted that emotion is a definitionally unstable concept. Indeed, there are “countless definitions of emotion” and, “despite the long history of inquiry into the nature of emotion there is an apparent lack of consensus and uniformity within the scientific community on what emotions are and how we can represent them” (Lopatovska & Arapakis, 2011, pp. 576–577). Indeed, one group of psychologists have identified the “six major affective phenomena” as “emotion,” “feeling,” “mood,” “attitude,” “affective style,” and “temperament” while also acknowledging that such attempts at categorisation will always be insufficient (Davidson, Scherer, & Goldsmith, 2003, pp. xiii). In the midst of this “terminological tangle”, it could be suggested that any attempt to examine and, moreover, affirm the importance of the relationship between emotion and IL is at risk of disappearing into a diffuse mist of endlessly shifting meanings (Savolainen 2015, p. 177). Yet I argue that it is the very difficulty of establishing a fixed definition or otherwise delimiting emotion that will facilitate the kind of plastic, non-monologic re-narration that IL so sorely needs. This article will not attempt to replace IL’s standardised models and fixed discourses with other forms of fixity; an act which would inevitably replicate the very problems I am attempting to address. Rather, I will aim to sketch out and proliferate alternative discourses and models, primarily by engaging with forms of librarianship and archiving that acknowledge emotion’s lack of fixity, and, as such, attempt to re-narrate and thus utilise this definitional tension.

Moreover, I will primarily attend to instances where emotion’s impact and influence on information seeking behaviour is most apparent, such as when researchers are engaging with

particularly traumatic or upsetting material. However, I hope that this article’s exploration of the relationship between emotion and IL will be applicable throughout academic librarianship.

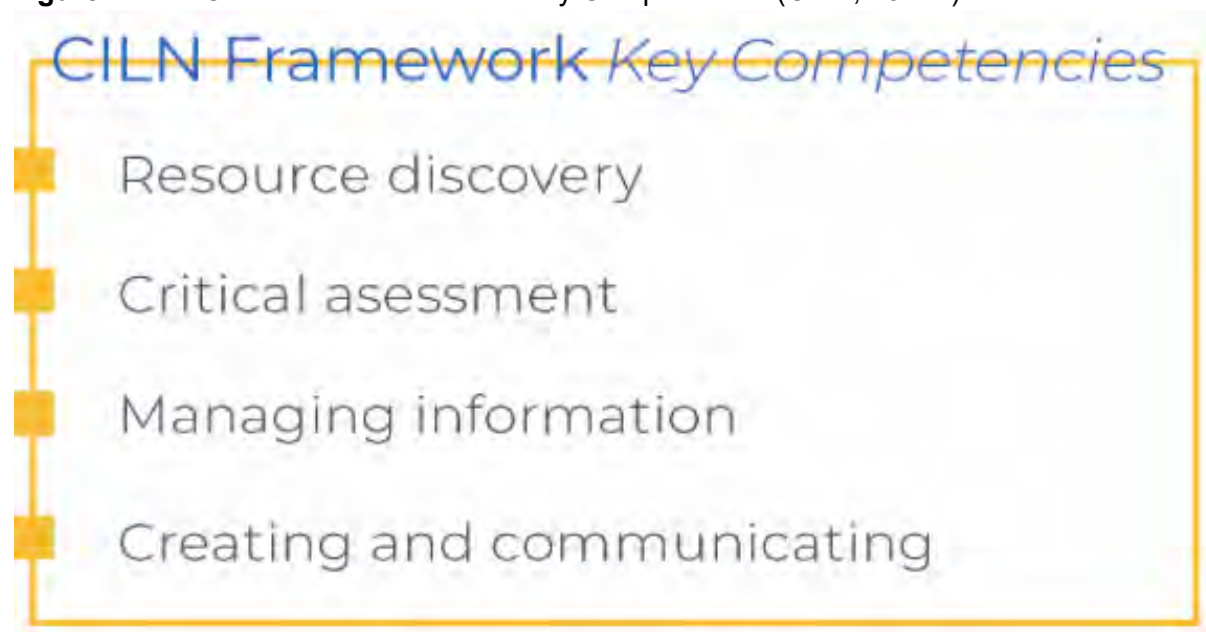
## The standardised IL models

The need for IL’s re-narration is especially evident when the standardised models are considered, as they have played “a fundamental role in shaping information literacy discourse within the HE sector” (Hicks & Lloyd 2020, p. 2). I will primarily focus on two IL models—specifically, the Information Search Process (ISP) developed by Carol C. Kuhlthau and the ACRL’s *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (2016)—which were selected because, unlike many other models and frameworks, both models have attempted, with varying levels of success, to include user affect and emotion in their conception of IL. However, I will initially examine a contemporary IL model—specifically, the *Cambridge Information Literacy Framework* (2021)—which excludes user affect and emotion entirely in order to explore the consequences of such exclusions.

The *Cambridge Information Literacy Framework* (2021) was composed “by a dedicated group of library staff, adapting the ACRL framework to the Cambridge context” (CILN, 2022a). Indeed, ACRL’s influence is discernible in its use of “four competencies to outline the key elements” of IL (see Figure 1), its emphasis on lifelong learning, its insistence that its IL instruction “is specific to the context and environment in which students are learning,” and its assertion that its IL competencies “are not intended to be addressed in a linear manner, but to be allied closely to academic subject skills and individual student development” (CILN, 2021, pp. 1–2).

This constructivist focus on ‘individual student development’—one which “challenges the idea that students are a ‘blank slate’ to be filled with content knowledge” and, instead “views learning as a process of building and adjusting the structures in the mind through which we hold knowledge”—is an especially welcome development within IL, particularly in its echoing of Freire’s critical pedagogy and CIL more generally (Mathieson, 2014, p. 65). While the constructivist approach of CILN’s *Framework* and other recent models should be celebrated for their flexibility and for facilitating a more holistic conception of the user, however, they also enact similar insufficiencies to those found in the preexisting IL literature; namely they fail to

**Figure 1:** The CILN Framework’s Four Key Competencies (CILN, 2022b).



include or otherwise fully engage with users' emotions. The CILN *Framework* constructs a completely affectless image of the ideal "learner", who is here conceptualised as an individual who can "develop practical skills to manage the range and variety of information sources they employ" and flexibly "pursue alternative avenues as understanding develops" in a calm and dispassionate manner, remaining unruffled by their own emotional states (CILN, 2021, p. 2). This inevitably means that CILN's *Framework* can only provide a partial image of IL as emotions have a significant impact on information seeking behaviour.

As a brief illustration of the limitations of entirely affectless models such as CILN's *Framework*, it is worth considering how researchers' experience of emotions such as ecological grief are misunderstood and misread through such models. Defined as "the grief felt in relation to experienced or anticipated ecological losses", ecological grief has become an increasingly prevalent phenomena among environmental scientists and researchers (Cunsolo & Ellis, 2018, p. 275). This group is additionally burdened with "the pervasive illusion that scientists must be dispassionate observers" and "are presented with few opportunities to address this grief professionally", which has led many researchers to "respond to degradation of the natural world by ignoring, suppressing, or denying the resulting painful emotions while at work" (Gordon, Radford, & Simpson, 2019, p. 193). This failure to engage with environmental scientists' emotional response to their research not only disavows, and thus deepens, their experiences of "burnout, anxiety, grief, and depression"; it also ignores the potentially vitalising and activating force of those emotions (Cunsolo et al., 2020, p. 261). In other words, the failure of models like the CILN *Framework* to pay attention to the learner's emotional response to information and the emotional factors of their information seeking behaviour erases a crucial component of their personhood, one which might engender new lines of inquiry if properly acknowledged and addressed.

In light of such insufficiencies, it is unsurprising that many IL researchers have turned to Kuhlthau's ISP (see Figure 2). Indeed, in her discussion of the need for more holistic conceptions of IL, Loyer (2018, p. 148) highlights the ISP as one example of an IL model which "embraces [the] affective elements of research, incorporating the management of feelings like uncertainty and anxiety into information seeking." Indeed, it could be suggested that "Kuhlthau's contribution" to IL research is her assertion that the "emotion aspect has to be given thriving attention in information search and information literacy research" (Bapte, 2017, p. 288). This is certainly a vital contribution. In moving away from what Kuhlthau (1991, pp. 361–362) describes as the "bibliographic paradigm" of "information systems", which centres "on collecting and classifying texts" and promotes "a view of information use from the system's perspective ... rather than responding to user's problems", to the "new approach", which centres on the "user's problems in the process of sense-making", the ISP endeavours to provide "a model to address a wider, holistic view of information use." A crucial component of this wider, more holistic view is the assertion that "affective aspects, such as attitude, stance, and motivation, may influence specificity capability and relevance judgements as much as cognitive aspects, such as personal knowledge, and information content" and that, "by neglecting to address affective aspects, information specialists are overlooking one of the main elements driving information use" (Kuhlthau, 1991, p. 363). In this way, the ISP goes some way in establishing the "holistic view of

**Figure 2:** The Information Search Process (Kuhlthau, 1991, p. 367).

Stages in ISP	Feelings Common to Each Stage	Thoughts Common to Each Stage	Actions Common to Each Stage	Appropriate Task According to Kuhlthau Model
1. Initiation	Uncertainty	General/Vague	Seeking Background Information	Recognize
2. Selection	Optimism			Identify
3. Exploration	Confusion/ Frustration/ Doubt		Seeking Relevant Information	Investigate
4. Formulation	Clarity	Narrowed/ Clearer		Formulate
5. Collection	Sense of Direction/ Confidence	Increased Interest	Seeking Relevant or Focused Information	Gather
6. Presentation	Relief/ Satisfaction or Disappointment	Clearer or Focused		Complete

the information user” that Loyer argues for; one which encompasses “affective experience as well as cognitive aspects” (Kuhlthau, 2004, p. 7).

However, as Loyer (2018, p. 148) also notes, “much of the research on students’ emotion in information literacy focuses on research anxiety” to the neglect of other states and affects and the ISP is no exception. Tuominen (1997, p. 356) echoes this critique in his discussion of the ISP, stating that “the affective symptoms” Kuhlthau considers “are mainly dependent on cognitive factors.” In other words, the range of emotions the ISP includes is limited to those which have the most obvious connection to the cognitive factors of information seeking behaviour, such as the “anxiety and confusion” students may experience when receiving “new information incompatible with the user’s constructs” (Tuominen, 1997, p. 356). This slender scope not only excludes a vast range of emotions that have a profound impact on the cognitive elements of research, such as feelings of distress or grief or embarrassment or joy; it also primarily conceives of the emotions it does include as factors which inhibit the cognitive aspects of information seeking behaviour and subsequently positions these emotions as ‘symptoms’ which need to be diagnosed, treated, and corrected.

The ISP’s limited scope and diagnostic approach renders the model a deeply incomplete image of the affective factors influencing users’ information seeking behaviour. For example, Jesse Thistle’s (2015) description of the “vicarious trauma” he experienced while researching the “historical trauma within Batoche Métis populations”, which included various “health flare ups” and deep “emotional pain” and “harm”, could not be understood through the lens of the ISP without being grossly distorted and misunderstood. Thistle’s research did not begin with feelings of uncertainty which neatly progressed to a sense of satisfaction or relief. Rather, it was



motivated by a deep commitment to documenting his ancestors' history and gaining a better understanding of the "intergenerational trauma" which affects his community, all of which was conducted without "a safety net that helps researchers and historians deal" with the emotional impact of his research (Thistle, 2015). Research like Thistle's demands a model of IL which makes space for these kinds of affective and somatic factors and experiences, and while the ISP goes some way to acknowledging that users' search for and interactions with information is not a purely cognitive experience, the limited nature of its holistic efforts renders it keenly insufficient.

These limitations can be understood through Tuominen's (1997, p. 356) suggestion that "even though, from the user's point of view, cognitive and affective factors interweave in a complex mosaic, they are kept separate" in the ISP. Tuominen (1997, p. 357) suggests that the ISP's separation of affect, cognition, and action is indicative of the model's conception of the user as a "self-disciplined monologic subject" who possesses "a relatively coherent identity, with clearly separable physical, cognitive, and affective sides." A crucial component of this monologic conception of the user is its adoption of "the subject-object dichotomy according to which an individual is distinct from the objects of his actions and observations" and, moreover, from their own emotions, through its devalued placement beneath the individual's intellect (Tuominen, 1997, p. 357). In other words, "the monologic intellect is seen as capable of controlling unpredictable emotional impulses and desires" (Tuominen, 1997, p. 357). As mentioned above, this monologic model of the individual, which María Puig de la Bellacasa (2017, p. 62) similarly describes as a "bifurcation of consciousness" involving "the splitting of affective involvements from the researcher's experience", is pervasive in IL literature; indeed, the ISP can be partially understood as an attempt to correct such fragmentary bifurcations. Yet the ISP's separation of feeling, thought, and action into distinct, if interrelated, categories and the contingent separation of these factors into discrete, individual stages replicates the fragmentary conception of the user which the model attempts to broaden and unify. Thus, affective and somatic factors may be included in the ISP, but they are included in a manner which strips them of their specificity and disruptive potential.

Much like Kuhlthau's ISP, the ACRL's *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* was partly composed as a response to the insufficiencies of preceding models; primarily, the ACRL's own *Standards* (2000). Indeed, in moving away from "regimented learning outcomes and skills that students must meet in order to be deemed 'information literate'", the *Framework* has been praised as a holistic example of the influence of critical IL "upon the profession at large" (Tewell, 2015, p. 36). As Ian Beilin (2015) states, "many librarians who are committed to critical librarianship ... see the *Framework* as more liberating pedagogically than it is constricting", particularly in terms of "its great flexibility as a tool for enabling dynamic and creative IL instruction, and its emphasis on collaborative learning." This flexibility renders the *Framework* a cogent example of a model which has the greatest capacity to meet the concerns this article raises, particularly as the *Framework* does not consider itself an "exhaustive" model of IL (ACRL, 2016, p. 8). In other words, the *Framework's* arrangement as a non-exhaustive, almost limitless space of ideas or threshold concepts—understood here as "abstract ideas that are core to a particular discipline but that tend to be difficult for students to grasp"—within which educators can facilitate independent student inquiry and investigation means that the *Framework* is capacious and adaptable enough to include the affective and emotional frames which this article argues are so crucial to IL (Bauder & Rod, 2016, p. 252).

Indeed, the *Framework* does endeavour to include affect in its conception of IL. The core ideas of the *Framework* were conceived in-line with "the concept of metaliteracy" which the ACRL (2016, 8) states necessitates "behavioural, affective, cognitive, and metacognitive engagement with the information ecosystem." Thus, much like the ISP, the *Framework* endeavours to present a more holistic model of the student, and this is primarily achieved through the addition of a set of "dispositions, which describe ways in which to address the affective, attitudinal, or

valuing dimension of learning” (ACRL, 2016, p. 7). These ‘dispositions’ have been highlighted as a useful acknowledgement of “the role of affect in information literacy”, particularly through their use of verbs “like motivate, value, realise, and persist” (Mabee & Fancher, 2020, p. 487). However, much like the ISP, the *Framework’s* attempt to acknowledge the affective dimensions of IL through its list of ‘dispositions’ is deeply insufficient. It is often difficult to detect where exactly affect or emotion is located within the *Framework’s* listed ‘dispositions’ and, when it can be located, the affects considered are very similar to those described in the ISP. For example, the need for students to “motivate themselves”, “develop and maintain an open mind”, and “question traditional norms” closely echoes the “sense of direction”, “doubt”, and “confidence” listed in the ISP as three of the six feelings which users are likely to encounter in their research (ACRL, 2016, p. 13). Certain admissions are made as to the potentially difficult or taxing nature of research in the assertion that the literate user will “seek appropriate help when needed” but, beyond this single ‘disposition’, the range of affects and emotions considered in the *Framework* are overwhelmingly cognitive (ACRL, 2016, p. 19). In other words, the *Framework* primarily considers emotion as it relates to the cognitive elements of information seeking behaviour and thus, much like the ISP, excludes a vast range of crucial affects.

Moreover, the ‘dispositions’ laid out by the *Framework* can be understood to constitute a disciplinary force through their construction of an ideal student who values “persistence, adaptability, and flexibility” above all else (ACRL, 2016, p. 19). Over and over again, the *Framework’s* ‘dispositions’ suggests a user who is as endlessly flexible as the *Framework* itself, someone who accepts ambiguity but who is constantly interrogative of authority and persistently motivated in their pursuit of accurate information. These are definitely admirable qualities in a student and it could be argued that they are, in fact, necessary components of any successful researcher’s disposition. Yet a perniciousness persists in the *Framework’s* establishment of this kind of ideal in relation to students’ affects and emotions, however central flexibility and adaptability are to that ideal. Indeed, it formulates “a vision of personal freedom achieved, paradoxically, through constant self-regulation”; a vision which is completely at odds with emotion’s reality (Emre, 2021). Affect and emotion cannot be disciplined or corrected; in fact their value as factors within the research process is precisely their disruptive, disobedient nature, and any efforts to smooth over or otherwise efface this nature are inevitably detrimental and fruitless. In this sense, the ideal image of the user established by the *Framework* shares much in common with that established by the ISP; a monologic yet fragmentary individual whose intellect has complete control over their unruly emotions (of which only a select scope is acknowledged) and who is thus able to align themselves to the set of ‘dispositions’ most suitable for research and learning. Such an ideal is “unnecessarily confining and of limited value”, particularly in the sense that using such “brittle” and “rigid methodology” effectively restricts “the possible in the face of the wild and unpredictable information landscape” (Morgan, 2015, pp. 190–191). It also inevitably excludes a wide range of researchers, such as Thistle and others like him, or else presents these researchers as failures. Indeed, it can be suggested that the *Framework’s* “narrative of progress is totalising in its insistence on the fundamental sameness of learners and institutions” (Seale, 2016, p. 85). In other words, its construction of a homogenous ideal of the learner’s affective states through its ‘dispositions’ decontextualises, and thus misrepresents, the reality of the learner’s emotions. This exclusionary distortion of the impact emotion and affect can have on intellectual labour renders the *Framework*, much like the ISP, both an insufficient image of the relationship between emotion and IL and an illustrative example of the inadequacies which result when an attempt is made to understand emotion in purely cognitive terms.

Thus, the *Framework’s* attempt to foster adaptability in students is definitely an admirable endeavour. However, “when freedom is assumed to be achieved through the correction of behaviour”, the opposite effect is often created (Hicks & Lloyd, 2020, p. 8). In this sense, the positioning of adaptability as an ideal to aspire to has its own repressive and constricting effect;

one which introduces metrics of failure and success that have the capacity to undo the very capaciousness which is the *Framework's* key contribution to IL.

Critiquing both the ISP and the *Framework* for their flexibility and their holism may seem at odds with this article's central argument, which is that IL's exclusion of emotion from its conception of information seeking behaviour must be addressed through the adoption of a more flexible and holistic approach. Multiple critical pedagogy and IL researchers have echoed this argument and, indeed, holism appears "most often in arguments for doing things differently, [conveying] an aspiration for the growth of epistemological and ontological alternatives that have yet to be centred in our discipline" (Polkinghorne & Given, 2021, p. 1264). For example, Lloyd (2017, p. 101) positions her Landscape Model as "a holistic way of understanding IL as practice", Loyer (2018, p. 153) has argued that "a sense of holistic care and radical love" is required to build "student's research capacity", and bell hooks (1994, p. 14) has advocated for a "holistic approach to learning" that regards students as "'whole' human beings, striving not just for knowledge in books, but knowledge about how to live in the world." Thus, it can be suggested that both the ISP and the *Framework's* attempts to create "a holistic view of the information user" are, in actuality, conducive to the forms of IL the above writers are advocating for (Kuhlthau, 2004, p. 7). Yet I would argue that these models fail in this regard not because of their content but because of their structure. In other words, their attempts to conceive of the user holistically fail because of their existence as definitive and defining models of IL that inevitably create "a kind of mythology of information literacy, in which an ideally descriptive model actually creates the world it was meant to describe" (Morgan, 2015, p. 188). As such, they are exemplary of the dangers inherent to such models and "the need to avoid fortifying positivist, reductionist impulses, such as aspiring to craft grand holistic models that objectively explain all possible complexity within any given phenomenon" (Polkinghorne & Given, 2021, p. 1268). Within such universalising, standardised, ahistorical, decontextualised structures, a holistic conception of the user is impossible.

Thus, the ISP or the *Framework* are not "worthless", but neither are they "the sole answer to the problems of information literacy and library instruction within higher education" (Seale, 2016, p. 89). Instead, they must be decentred and recontextualised. Rather than positioning them as authoritative models of IL, they must be repositioned as simply one type of model among many and placed in conversation with other, alternative, even antithetical conceptions of IL; conceptions which might eschew the idea of modelling IL in any kind of schematic or delineative manner entirely. Indeed, this is often the case in research which considers the relationship between emotion and IL, as emotion's fundamentally non-rational messiness generally disrupts the linearity and categorisations such models depend on, particularly because "emotions are relational: they involve (re)actions or relations of 'towardness' or 'awayness'" (Ahmed, 2014, p. 8). In other words, emotion's relationality disorders the neat boundaries that structure the standardised models, and thus its inclusion within our conception of IL requires alternative approaches. Such approaches can be found in other critical models of librarianship, many of which are deeply attuned to the emotional aspects of information seeking behaviour and, thus, afford the opportunity to establish a simultaneously contextual and holistic conception of the user.

## **Alternative models of librarianship**

While it is not possible within the scope of this article to fully explore all of these critical models, I will briefly mention several examples which illuminate IL practices that are both attuned to users' emotional responses to information and engage with those responses as useful tools in their own right.

Holocaust librarianship is one example which offers "a model for considering the emotional and spiritual caretaking elements of librarianship" and "a more holistic stewardship of information

literacy” (Loyer, 2018, p. 147–148). Such practices are evident from the earliest days of such institutions. For example, in her description of the formation of the Arolsen Archives, an archive which can be used by Holocaust survivors, their families, and families of victims to research their family history, Silke von der Emde (2020, p. 156) positions the Archives, also known as the International Tracing Service (ITS), as an “archive of feelings”, stating that “affects are encoded in the ITS documents not only in their content but also in the practices that surround their production and reception.” Emde (2020, pp. 156, 165) foregrounds both the work of the ITS’s early archivists, many of whom had been displaced or otherwise affected by the Holocaust, in the attempts to “keep the affective essence of the millions of documents collected in Arolsen in constant view”, and the role the archive itself played in providing “a support system and even a substitute family for many [displaced persons] in Arolsen.” In this way, the ITS can be understood “as a community of people who created the conditions for their own recovery and healing by keeping the affective essence of the documents in constant view” (Emde, 2020, p. 171).

Similarly, in his history of the Wiener Holocaust Library in London, the “world’s oldest institution founded specifically for the collection and dissemination of information about Nazi Germany and its attack on European Jewry”, Ben Barkow (1997, p. xi) argues that the Library was a vital source of support and community for survivors. Indeed, “the importance of the Library as a social centre and as a place to which severely traumatised people could turn for validation cannot be overestimated” (Barkow, 1997, p. 122). Thus, as both the Wiener Library and the Arolsen Archives demonstrate, Holocaust librarianship has always made space for, and often foregrounded, emotion and affect in its practices, and these space-making practices are particularly instructive when engaging with the relationship between emotion and IL.

Such practices are powerfully delineated in Paul Howard Hamburg’s article, ‘Closing Circles, Opening Pathways: The Reference Librarian and the Holocaust’ (1998), which describes his experience at the Simon Wiesenthal Centre Library & Archives and which repeatedly emphasises the necessity of engaging with users in a multifaceted, caring, and holistic manner. Hamburg (1998, pp. 235–236) states that the work of Holocaust librarianship involves both “closing the circle of uncertainty with regard to loved ones who perished at the hands of the Nazis and their collaborators” and acting as a “facilitator for future generations in learning about the Holocaust and coming to terms with the past” and positions both of these tasks as an “ongoing emotional and intellectual process.” This “Janus-like function” of outreach education, stewardship, and community caretaking is a repeated theme within Holocaust librarianship literature, as is the importance of emotion to these functions (Gantt & Meier, 1998, p. 57). Because of the disparate and multifaceted information needs of Holocaust library users and the central role emotion plays in those needs, it can be suggested that attempting to conceptualise a Holocaust library user through the standardised IL models would create a nonsensical distortion of their reality, something Hamburg repeatedly affirms. Throughout the article, Hamburg (1998, pp. 236–238) foregrounds the affective dimensions experienced by the Library’s “wide, but unique spectrum of patrons”, such as the “intense pain” displayed by the families of survivors, and the “sacred work” he performs in guiding patrons in their searches. As he states,

mention must be made of the role of the reference librarian in dealing with the trauma of the Holocaust. While not trained in therapy, the reference librarian is very often called upon to listen to the experiences of survivors and their relatives. Moreover, the teaching of the Holocaust requires confrontation with the realities of the Holocaust and both teachers and students must be prepared to read emotionally difficult materials, view disturbing footage and photographs (Hamburg, 1998, p. 242).

This dual focus, both on Hamburg’s therapeutic engagement with survivors and their relatives and the confrontational yet care-informed reference services necessitated by the handling of the

Library's emotionally difficult material, gestures towards IL practices which foreground and make space for users' emotional responses. Such space-making practices are crucial because, if a user's information need is engaged with by a Holocaust librarian without consideration of its full context, then that need cannot be properly met. Even in the models which do acknowledge affect, such as the ISP and the *Framework*, the diagnostic, circumspect, or idealised approach to emotion will painfully inhibit both the user and the librarian. The Holocaust librarian does not need to correct the user's emotions, they simply need to acknowledge them, make space for them, and provide care if needed. Holocaust librarianship is obviously a very specific drastic example of this fact. Yet the lessons it imparts, particularly with regards to librarians' obligation to attend to users' emotions, are applicable to academic librarianship as a whole.

Much can also be gained from attending to the epistemologies and research methodologies delineated by Indigenous scholars. Such practices have become increasingly central elements in the growing calls to decolonise our libraries; as Jess Crilly (2019, p. 6) states, as "decolonisation has become a critical topic of discussion in UK universities", there has also been both "an increasing recognition of indigenous forms of knowledge and research methodologies" and an effort to decentre and recontextualise Western epistemologies. A fundamental component of these "epistemological decolonisation" efforts has been an engagement with the "fundamentally relational" nature of "indigenous knowledge" (Botha, Griffiths, & Prozesky, 2021, p. 52). Indeed, it has been suggested that relationality is what fundamentally "distinguishes Indigenous ways of knowing from western knowledge" and, thus, that "centring relationality is a decolonising technique that allows Indigenous ontologies to emerge in otherwise colonial institutions" (Littletree, Belarde-Lewis, & Duarte, 2020, p.416, p. 423). In other words, the demand to decolonise our knowledge practices provides an opportunity to engage with Indigenous conceptions of relationality, which can here be understood as the premise that "we all exist in relationship to each other, the natural world, ideas, the cosmos, objects, ancestors, and future generations, and furthermore, that we are accountable to those relationships" (Littletree, Belarde-Lewis, & Duarte, 2020, p. 414).

The need to pursue such alternatives is particularly evident when the emotional impact of researching Indigenous history is considered. As the above discussion of Thistle's research demonstrates and as Loyer (2018, p. 147) states, "to research as an Indigenous scholar is to confront horrific stories, many of them directly tied to my own experiences or the experiences of people I love." As such, users' emotions cannot be excluded from IL's conceptions of them. Indeed, the exclusion of emotion is antithetical to the holism common to many Indigenous worldviews, which can be understood here as "an Indigenous philosophical concept referring to the interrelatedness between the intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical realms to form a whole, healthy person" (Littletree, Belarde-Lewis, & Duarte, 2020, p. 418). In other words, "from an Indigenous view, particularly from a *nêhiyaw* perspective, it is harder to delineate the borders between mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual components of self" (Loyer, 2018, p. 147).

Engaging with Indigenous ways of knowing should not simply be understood as a way to ameliorate the difficult feelings and harm that colonisation has caused, however. Indeed, within the context of IL, centralising Indigenous concepts of relationality and holism illuminates an abundance of realignments and readjustments that have the capacity to profoundly reshape our practices. By conceiving of knowledge-making as a "fundamentally relational" process, one which prioritises "the roles of the relationships among actors, artefacts, and spaces in the construction of knowledge", a "networked relational knowledge-making model" becomes possible (Botha, Griffiths, & Prozesky, 2021, p. 53). As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2021, p. 16) states, Indigenous research methodologies

approach cultural protocols, values and behaviours as an integral part of methodology. They are 'factors' to be built into research explicitly, to be thought about reflexively, to be declared openly as part of the research design, to be discussed as part of the final

results of a study and to be disseminated back to the people in culturally appropriate ways and in a language that can be understood.

Such an approach renders universal or standardised methodologies or epistemologies nonsensical as, “by insisting on knowledge as rooted in a specific location and in the embodied history of dwelling in that place, indigenous knowledges cannot conceive of universals” (Botha, Griffiths, & Prozesky, 2021, p. 53). Rather, knowledge becomes fundamentally immanent and contextual, and thus multiple, pluriversal, and endlessly specific. In this way, a relational understanding of reality “creates relationships between ideas or entities” and highlights the emotional elements of research by acting as an “affective force that compels us to not just understand the world as relational, but feel the world as kin” (Tynan, 2021, p. 600). Moreover, this relational framework also extends to the conception of the researcher, as the “logical dialectic” of Western epistemologies is abandoned in favour of a “‘trialectic space’ of body-mind-soul” understanding (Botha, Griffiths, & Prozesky, 2021, p. 53). In this sense, adopting an Indigenous model of IL that conceives of the library, the user, information seeking behaviour, and the research process relationally allows the emotional elements of research to be acknowledged and engaged with in compelling and multifaceted ways.

Engaging with this holistic conception of the user, as well as a relational research methodology, necessitates a shift in the librarians and instructors’ responsibilities; a shift which can perhaps be best summarised as the adoption of an ethics of care. In other words, the pastoral elements of academic librarianship come to the fore when these models are considered, and a crucial component of this must be “creating capacity in student researchers for self-care” (Loyer, 2018, p. 155). Indeed, “much can be learned from other professions in which distressing circumstances are commonplace, such as health care, disaster relief, law enforcement, and the military”, all of which have “well-defined organisational structures and active strategies exist for employees to anticipate and manage their emotional distress” (Gordon, Radford, & Simpson, 2019 p. 193). Learning from these contexts, foregrounding the importance of self-care, and offering examples of potential self-care strategies are crucial steps in providing users with “information on the potentially emotional nature” of the research process (Rager, 2005, pp. 25–26).

This approach is perhaps best exemplified in Campbell’s (2002, p. 123) model of “emotionally engaged research”, which is “guided by an ethic of caring - caring for the research participants, caring for what becomes of a research project, and caring for one’s self and one’s research team.” Elsewhere, the trauma-informed pedagogic principles outlined by social workers Janice Carello and Lisa D. Butler (2015, p. 264) offers a method of instruction which is “informed by and consistent with the implications of the content we teach” and enables an active engagement with students’ emotional responses to information. Finally, Michelle Caswell (2014, pp. 308–309) outlines a “survivor-centred approach” to the management of archives “documenting human rights abuse” which closely echoes Carello and Butler’s principles and which similarly pays attention to the structure or framework of information’s maintenance and conveyance, suggesting that information must be “linked to the contexts of [its] creation.”

A proper engagement with these writers’ models and practices is beyond the scope of this article, but it should be noted that, despite their origins in vastly disparate disciplines, all of the aforementioned models and practices—whether they originate in feminism, Holocaust studies, decolonial or Indigenous ways of knowing, critical pedagogy, trauma-informed social work, survivor-centred archiving, qualitative research methodologies, and CIL—deeply echo and reflect each other. To a certain extent, this can be understood as a consequence of interdisciplinary influence, particularly with regards to CIL, which explicitly draws upon a wide range of other influences. Yet the similarities in approach are still astounding. To varying degrees, all of the above models reject standardisation, pay close attention to information’s contexts and structures, advocate for a mutual, anti-hierarchical, relational methods of

instruction, adopt a holistic conception of both the user and the instructor, acknowledge information's inherently political and ethical dimensions, foreground the affective elements of research and learning, and engage with an ethics of care. This is somewhat of a generalisation and there are certainly interesting differences between these approaches. Yet, collectively, these models delineate an ethics of care which, in the context of IL, has the capacity to enable a holistic engagement with users' affective responses to information.

## Conclusion

As this article demonstrates, emotion stands as a bothersome and thorny force in IL. Yet it is this very thorniness that renders emotion a force worth paying attention to, as engaging with the challenges it presents to IL's foundations has the capacity to spark new and dynamic lines of thought and practice, such as those presented by Holocaust librarianship and Indigenous research methodologies.

Such efforts are vital, as the need for new models of IL and new ways of thinking about information has never been more apparent. As Barbara Fister (2021) suggests, the state of our "broken informational environment", disrupted as it is by conspiracy theories and disinformation, demands "serious inquiry into why decades of trying to make IL a universal educational outcome hasn't prevented a significant portion of the population from embracing disinformation while rejecting credible journalistic institutions." A thorough engagement with the role emotion plays in online disinformation and the importance of including affect within digital literacy instruction is beyond the scope of this article. Furthermore, it should be noted that Fister's analysis is somewhat simplistic, particularly in its erasure of the systematic devaluation librarianship has faced as a discipline in recent years. However, I think it is evident that, in order to tackle these very real and pressing problems, problems which IL seems ideally placed to disentangle, we need to think about information in new, transformative ways and emotion must be a vital part of that process.

Indeed, IL's repression of emotion has profound political and ethical consequences, particularly when the needs of marginalised students are considered. As this article has demonstrated, neglecting the affective elements of users' information needs inevitably privileges a very specific, Enlightenment model of IL that will result in users of colour, Indigenous users, women, and, more broadly, any user who has a history of trauma or whose information needs require an engagement with affectively fraught or potentially upsetting material receiving a profoundly inadequate service. In this sense, IL can be understood as an access issue and broadening our conceptions of IL to include contextual factors such as affect can help increase users' access to information. However, emotion's inherently irrational disruptiveness means that there will never be one definitive, authoritative method of incorporating it into our epistemologies, methodologies, and IL models. Indeed, this disruption and its consequent demand to constantly shift and adapt the manner and frame of our thought is perhaps emotion's greatest gift, particularly in the sense that it enables us to endlessly unsettle and reframe the 'narrative sicknesses' that circumscribe IL.

In *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice*, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (2018, p. 21) asks, "what does it mean to shift our ideas of access and care (whether it's disability, childcare, economic access, or many more) from an individual chore, an unfortunate cost of having an unfortunate body, to a collective responsibility that's maybe even deeply joyful?" To rework this question for this article's conclusion: what would it mean to shift our conception of emotion from an inconvenient disturbance in IL, an irrational intruder that must be repressed or disciplined, to an endlessly compelling and multi-faceted factor in information seeking behaviour that librarians have a collective responsibility to attend to and learn from? This article represents one attempt to engage with that question, but I hope that the argument presented here will ultimately spark the proliferation of alternative discourses and models that I believe emotion's joyfully

confounding nature demands; discourses and models which have the capacity to re-frame and re-write IL's current narrative sicknesses.

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