

Library Anxiety and Institutional Literacy

ADDRESSING POTENTIAL BARRIERS TO
INFORMATION LITERACY

BRAD DOERKSEN, STUDENT SUCCESS LIBRARIAN
UNIVERSITY OF REGINA

Library Anxiety and Institutional Literacy

AGENDA:

- What is institutional literacy?
- How does it relate to library anxiety?
- How does a personal librarian program try to address this?
- Questions and feedback

What is Institutional Literacy?

Practices that are promoted, supported, and structured by dominant institutions.

(Iorio, 2016, p. 167)

What is Institutional Literacy?

Practices that are promoted, supported, and structured by dominant institutions.

Practices that function to separate insiders and outsiders of various domains, resulting in insiders who are literate in a set of actions, vocabulary, ways of communicating, and other practices that govern how things are done.

Habitus

A set of ingrained dispositions and ways of being and doing that are generally invisible to the person, generally appearing to us as common sense or what comes naturally.

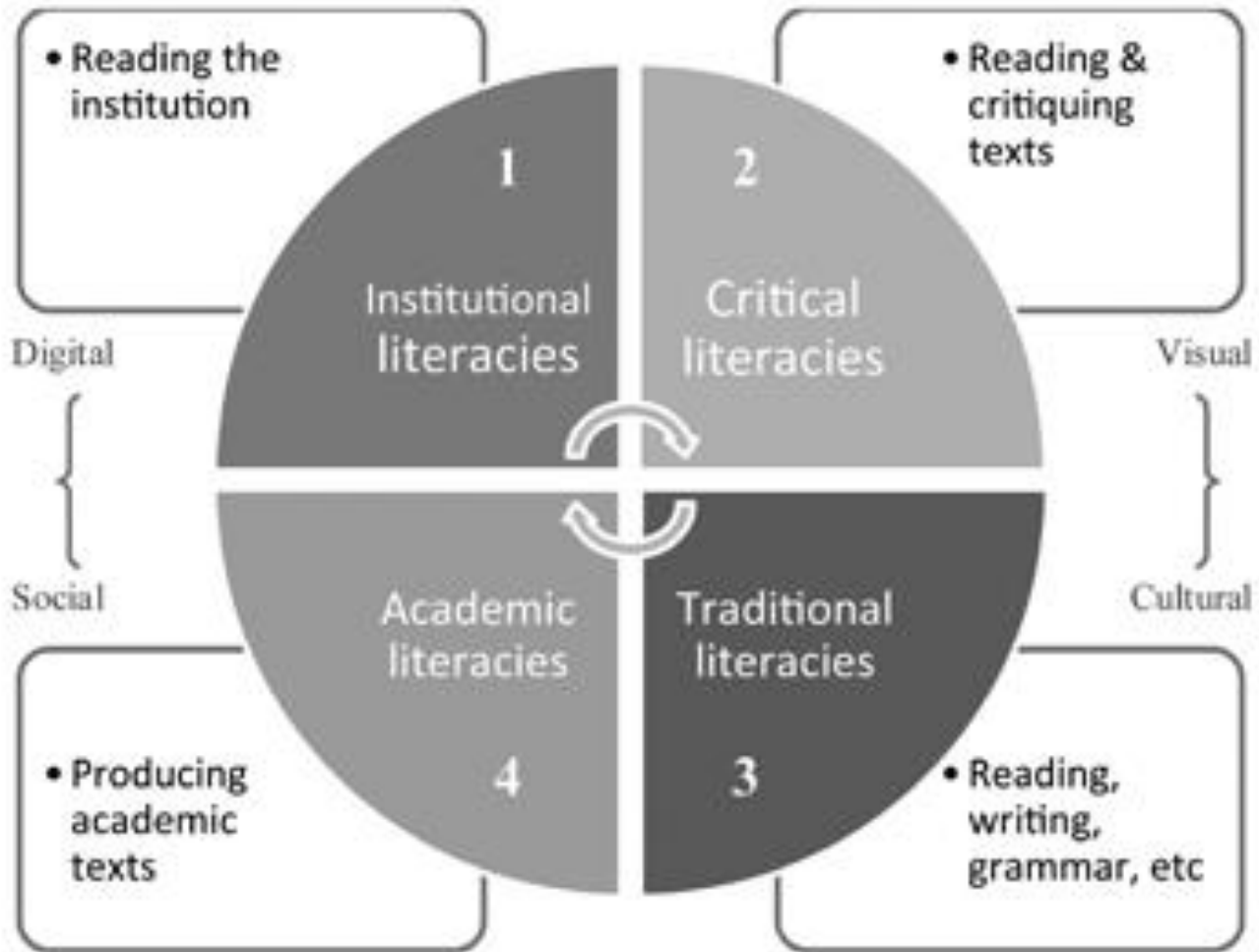
(Darity et al eds., 2008, p. 404-406; Weber, 2013, p. 173)

Multiliteracies and Student Success

A range of literacies required to participate in a range of overlapping literacy contexts; in this case, the university system, the subject area, and the world at large.

(Miller and Schulz, 2014 p. 78)

Multiliteracies and Student Success



(Miller and Schulz, 2014, p. 79)

The Institutional Literacy Barrier

Students don't lack institutional literacy, they lack literacy in our institution(s).

The feeling of being able to enter the socially and culturally rarefied space of a library will be a pertinent dimension of inequality.

(Weber, 2013, p. 175)

1. Reading and navigating the institution (i.e. understanding layouts, structures, hierarchies, policies, timetables, values, etc.)
2. Knowing the spoken and unspoken rules of participation (e.g. procedures, processes, protocols, etc.)
3. Respecting and tolerating social and cultural differences and alternative perspectives
4. Using non-discriminatory discourses and behaviours in university settings and topic assignments
5. Locating and accessing institutional facilities and personnel (e.g. admissions, enrolments, health, counselling, student services, libraries, scholarships, child care, parking, accommodation, employment, etc.)
6. Accessing academic and professional staff (e.g. administrators, coordinators, lecturers, tutors, librarians, mentors, etc.)
7. Understanding the role and function of lectures, tutorials, workshops, seminars, practicals, examinations, etc.
8. Making and following timetables (e.g. enrolment deadlines, year planners, semester dates, class registrations, tutorial and lecture times, exam timetables, etc.)
9. Balancing commitments between family, work, leisure, and study
10. Understanding assessment processes (e.g. policies, procedures, due dates, extensions, exemptions, etc.)
11. Accessing digital resources: library catalogues, academic databases, email facilities, staff contacts, online resources, topic forums, university policies, lecture recordings, etc.

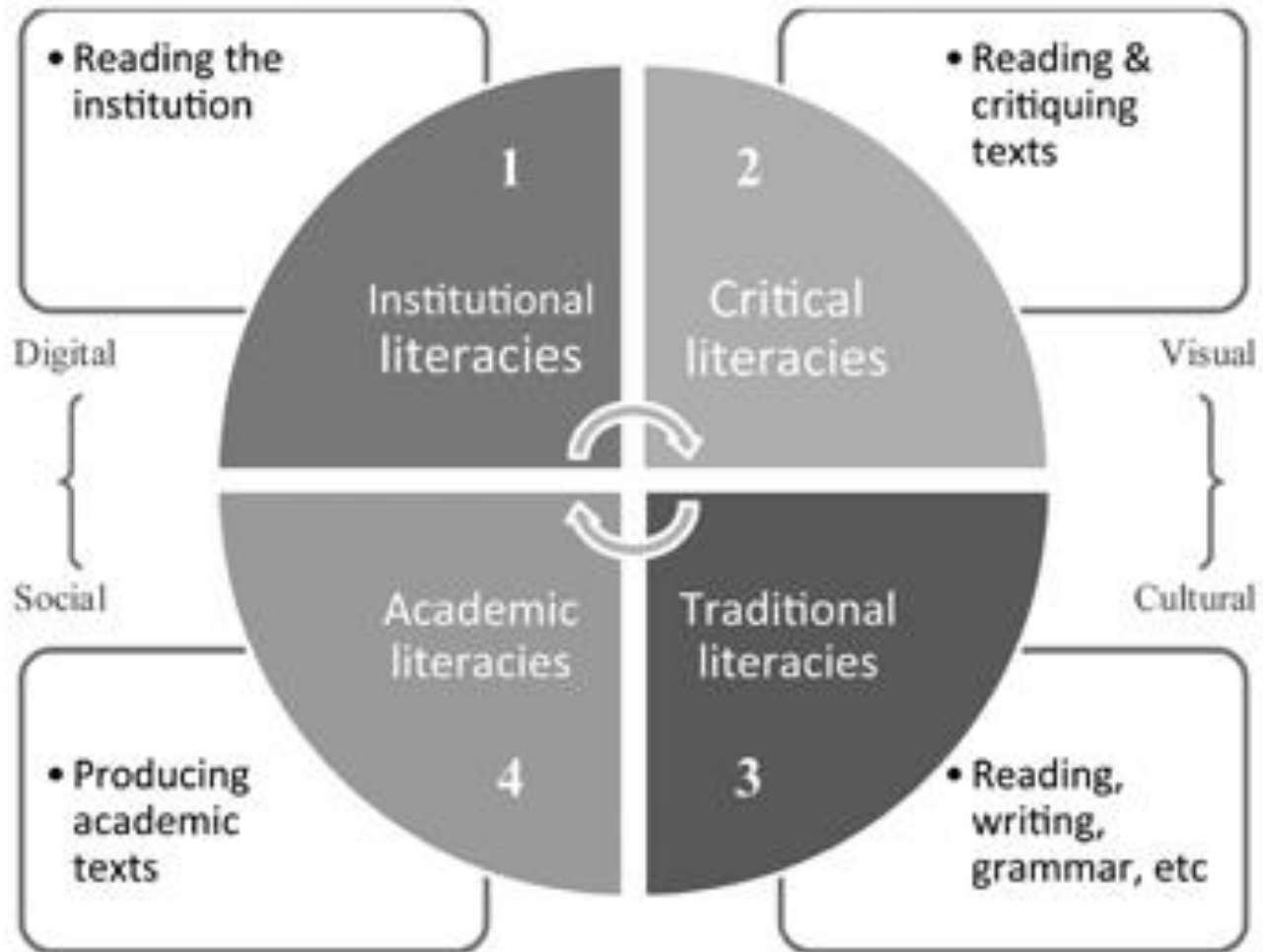
(Miller and Schulz, 2014 p. 79-80)

The Institutional Literacy Barrier

Students will ... employ different literacy practices, and switch to different ways of thinking and writing in different disciplines, and ... somehow gain an understanding of how to do this by osmosis.

(Thies, 2012, p. 16)

Multiliteracies and Student Success



(Miller and Schulz, 2014, p. 79)

Institutional Literacy and Library Anxiety

The perception of the academic library as an intimidating place, which makes students feel uncomfortable, is generally accepted in the literature as being the primary source of library anxiety.

(Mellon, 1986), (Carlile, 2007)

Institutional Literacy and Library Anxiety

Institutional literacy practices easily provoke feelings of powerlessness. This can be exacerbated when feelings of exclusion and powerlessness have been confirmed by years of living in a situation of precarity or when mental health issues are contributing to social isolation.

(Papen and Thériault, 2016, p. 190)

Institutional Literacy Mediators

The need for literacy mediation often arises in a context where an individual or a group has limited experience with institutionalized literacy practices through which access to resources and information are channeled.

Negative emotions limited access to resources and opportunities

A change in young people's confidence and attitudes ... allowed them to change their practices and acquire new skills.

(Papen and Thériault, 2016)

IL and the Personal Librarian

Rather than developing programs aimed just at addressing institutional literacy, it should be a consideration in the design and implementation of all our programs.

One example: Personal Librarian Program at U Regina

The Personal Librarian as IL Mediator

The literacy mediator acts as a guide: one who is familiar with the terrain/location leading those who are not.

Provides the personal touch by offering an individual person, not just a big building full of strangers.

Normalizes the feeling on not knowing my way around.

The Personal Librarian as IL Mediator

Hello again {first name},

I hope you have enjoyed your first couple of months here at the University of Regina and that your studies are going well. I would like to make sure you know about some of the helpful resources available to you at the library. I have highlighted three of these below. I would be happy to meet with you if you have any questions about these, or other library services. You can contact me at brad.doerksen@uregina.ca or 306-337-2927. Or you can always drop by the help desk any time the library is open.

All the best,
Brad Doerksen
Student Success Librarian



Have you noticed that sometimes university is a strange place? People here have their own way of doing things and often seem to be speaking a different language. For the last 18 years my personal goal has been to help new college and university students make sense of this strange new world you have entered.

The Personal Librarian as IL Mediator



Library Help Desk

Remember our friendly help desk staff are here to answer your questions and direct you to resources. There are a wide array of things that our help desk staff can assist you with, why not come over to the library and say hello.

[About/Contact Us](#)

Student Success Centre

Need a few resources to shake off the winter fog? The Student Success Centre is a good place to start, it offers free writing support to students at all levels and in all disciplines. Tutoring, personal consultations, and a variety of workshops are also available for students of all stages of study and all learning styles.

[Student Success Center Website](#)

Laptop and Tablet Loans

Did you know that you can borrow a laptop or a tablet from the library? If you need a



The Personal Librarian as IL Mediator

Mere exposure: a person's attitude toward something can be changed if that person has been exposed to the object repeatedly.

(Muszkiewicz, 2017, p. 226)

Librarians are able to reorient students by providing bearings and modeling behavior in the physical and virtual spaces of the library because they have a relationship with them.

(Melançon and Goebel, 2016 p. 189)

The Personal Librarian as IL Subversive?

The process of changing perspectives, of adopting an emic viewpoint and alternating it with an etic angle, allows literacy brokers to develop a critical stance of institutional language and to recover the loss of affective discursive experiences.

(Mihut, 2014 p. 59)

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