

## Embracing the whole SELF: Social Emotional Literacy Factors and culturally-sensitive information literacy instruction

**INTRODUCTION:** Old Dominion University (ODU) and Texas Woman's University (TWU) request \$369,376 in support of a three-year LB21 grant. This Applied Research project aims to prepare academic and school library professionals to integrate social-emotional literacy and cultural humility into information literacy instruction. The fields of library and information studies (LIS) and education have increasingly recognized the importance of integrating psychosocial, emotional, and cultural factors into both professional practice and higher education curricula. However, information literacy (IL) instruction models have not historically integrated either social-emotional factors or cultural humility. Accordingly, the research questions for this project are RQ1) To what extent are faculty addressing psychosocial, emotional, and cultural factors of IL within LIS curricula?; RQ2) To what extent are current K-12 and academic library practitioners addressing psychosocial, emotional, and cultural factors in IL instruction?; and RQ3) What resources and training provided in LIS curricula would assist LIS practitioners in integrating a theoretical model of IL that addresses these factors? This project supports the LB21 Goal 3, Obj. 3.2 in enhancing the training and professional development of the library workforce to support the needs and wellbeing of their communities. The intended outcomes of this project are: 1) a theoretical model of IL instruction addressing psychosocial, emotional, and cultural factors; 2) best practice recommendations applying the model for both LIS curricula and current K-12 school library and academic IL instruction practitioners; and 3) directions for developing open-access content modules that can be shared across institutions.

**PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:** The early framing of IL as a purely cognitive evaluation has been challenged by the epistemological crisis created by social media and the proliferation of information it supports ([Crockford, 2023](#); [Ramos & Nycyk, 2020](#)). The COVID-19 pandemic and accompanying "infodemic" have only worsened this crisis ([Cinelli et al., 2020](#)). Today's information professionals need to incorporate a more holistic perspective of information as a psychosocial, cultural, and emotional phenomenon ([Oliver et al., 2021](#)) to facilitate more productive interactions, particularly with patrons who may be coming from different cultures and emotional states than themselves. This reframing of information and IL can encourage information professionals to approach IL instruction with a cultural competency/humility lens informed by intellectual empathy ([Linker, 2015](#)). Although little research has considered how information professionals might incorporate these factors into models of IL and IL instruction, the fields of both K-12 and higher education have increasingly emphasized social-emotional learning and cultural competency/humility in their instructional models. Accordingly, information professionals working in school and academic libraries may have important experiential knowledge in bridging these disciplines that can be used to better prepare future professionals.

**PROJECT WORK PLAN:** *Personnel:* Each of the PIs on the project brings experience in the areas of IL, psychosocial factors of information behavior, and cultural competence/cultural humility. PI Dr. Rea Simons' (ODU) research addresses preparing information professionals to serve diverse communities (e.g., [Simons, Fleischmann & Roy, 2020](#)) and integrating DEIA and cultural humility within LIS curricula (e.g., [De La Rosa, Simons, & Elkins, 2021](#)). PI Dr. Elizabeth Burns (ODU) investigates LIS instruction using a cultural competency lens (e.g., [Burns, 2023](#)) and IL instruction for LIS professionals across various information settings (e.g., [Burns, Gross & Latham, 2019](#)). PI Dr. Aaron Elkins' (TWU) research investigates how psychosociocultural factors influence interactions with information (e.g., [Hollister et al., 2020](#)). PIs Elkins and Burns have extensive knowledge of K-12 library curricula and practice, including belonging to professional networks. One MLIS student will be recruited from ODU to assist with this project in years one and two. An assessment expert from ODU will be contracted to serve on the advisory board and assist in evaluating project progress and outcomes.

*Theoretical and methodological approach:* PI Simons and PI Elkins have developed a preliminary theoretical framework integrating cultural humility and psychosocial information behavior into IL ([Simons & Elkins, 2023](#)); this project offers an opportunity to further develop that framework and investigate how it aligns with current LIS curricula and practice. Given the investigative nature of the research questions and lack of prior research in this area, the overall methodology will consist of a constructivist, modified Grounded Theory approach ([Cutcliffe, 2005](#)).

*Schedule: Year 1:* The team will focus on RQ1: understanding how psychosocial, emotional, and cultural factors of IL are currently being addressed within LIS curricula. The team will first conduct a thorough literature review in the

intersection of these areas, while selecting an advisory board consisting of members from a diverse range of backgrounds and institutional types (including institutions that primarily serve marginalized populations). Advisory board members will include individuals with expertise in Social Emotional Learning, information behaviors, cultural humility, and research assessment and evaluation. Drawing on the expertise of the advisory team, a survey will be developed. This survey will be distributed through LIS faculty listservs and to LIS program directors, with in-person or online follow-up interviews conducted. Follow-up focus groups with faculty will be scheduled to coincide with professional conferences (e.g., ALISE annual meeting). Faculty will also be asked to share relevant syllabi or reading lists used in LIS courses. Open-ended survey responses, interviews, and any collected syllabi/reading lists will be analyzed using thematic analysis ([Braun & Clarke, 2022](#)). **Year 2:** The team will investigate RQ2: how current K-12 and academic library practitioners are addressing psychosocial, emotional, and cultural factors in IL instruction—as well as how they could be better supported by LIS curricula and professional development opportunities. Surveys aimed at both K-12 and academic library practitioners will be distributed through professional networks and organizations (e.g., AASL and ACRL). Quantitative data will be analyzed using statistical analysis (particularly to note any significant differences within and between practitioner populations) and qualitative data by thematic analysis. Follow-up interviews and focus groups with K-12 and academic practitioners will be conducted at relevant professional conferences (e.g., AASL, ACRL, ALA, VLA, TLA) or online. Interview and focus group questions will be informed by survey data and use critical incident technique ([Chell, 1998](#)) to guide practitioners in describing specific instances involving psychosocial, emotional, and cultural factors of IL; data will be analyzed thematically. **Year 3:** The team will focus on comparing and synthesizing results from the first two phases of the project to address RQ3 and refine a theoretical model of how psychosocial, emotional, and cultural factors influence IL instruction. Using this model and specific examples from the project results, the team will develop best practice recommendations for current K-12 and academic library practitioners. Recommendations will also be developed for LIS curricula to prepare future professionals. Finally, the team will generate suggested future directions for developing content or content modules that can be shared across institutions for both LIS curricula and professional development.

**DIVERSITY PLAN:** This project addresses LB21 Goal 3 related to improving both the field's and individuals' ability to serve diverse communities in a culturally, emotionally, and psychosocially sensitive manner. The project will highlight the needs and experiences of diverse practitioners and underserved/marginalized communities. Participants will be recruited from a range of K-12 and postsecondary institutions, including Minority-Serving Institutions, rural and urban institutions, and community colleges. The advisory board will consist of members from these diverse institutions and from historically underrepresented groups; one important task of the advisory board will be to ensure that the project successfully includes these perspectives. Finally, as part of the effort to recruit and retain members of marginalized groups into the field, preference will be given to hiring graduate assistants from such groups (and offering full tuition support).

**PROJECT RESULTS:** This project has three areas of expected results: 1) A developed theoretical model of IL instruction that includes psychosocial, emotional, and cultural factors; 2) Best practice recommendations in applying the theoretical model; and 3) Future directions for developing LIS curricula to support social emotional & cultural humility information literacy instruction. The framework will prepare LIS educators and information professionals to conceptually understand and practically address social-emotional literacy and cultural humility within IL instruction. The framework will guide recommendations for preparing current and future professionals to approach IL for diverse groups of patrons/users in a culturally, emotionally, and psychosocially sensitive manner. Findings and recommendations will be shared broadly through publications and professional presentations in the LIS field. Professional organization networks appropriate for a wide range of higher education institutions and of current sites of IL instruction (ALISE, AASL, ACRL) will provide opportunities to present findings. The advisory board will also assist in planning and implementing dissemination.

**BUDGET SUMMARY:** A preliminary budget of **\$369,376** is requested. Direct costs of \$265,139 include: \$42,152 of salary support for PI and Co-PIs (3 years) and \$50,750 graduate student salary for years one and two (\$13,826 fringe); \$7,500 support (\$2,500 each of the three years) for the advisory board for consulting; \$1,500 for focus group meals, and \$500 for interview incentives; and \$32,500 support for travel to conduct focus groups and disseminate research; \$20,638 in tuition costs for the GRA; and \$95,773 for a subaward to TWU. Indirect cost total: **\$104,237**. There is no cost share.