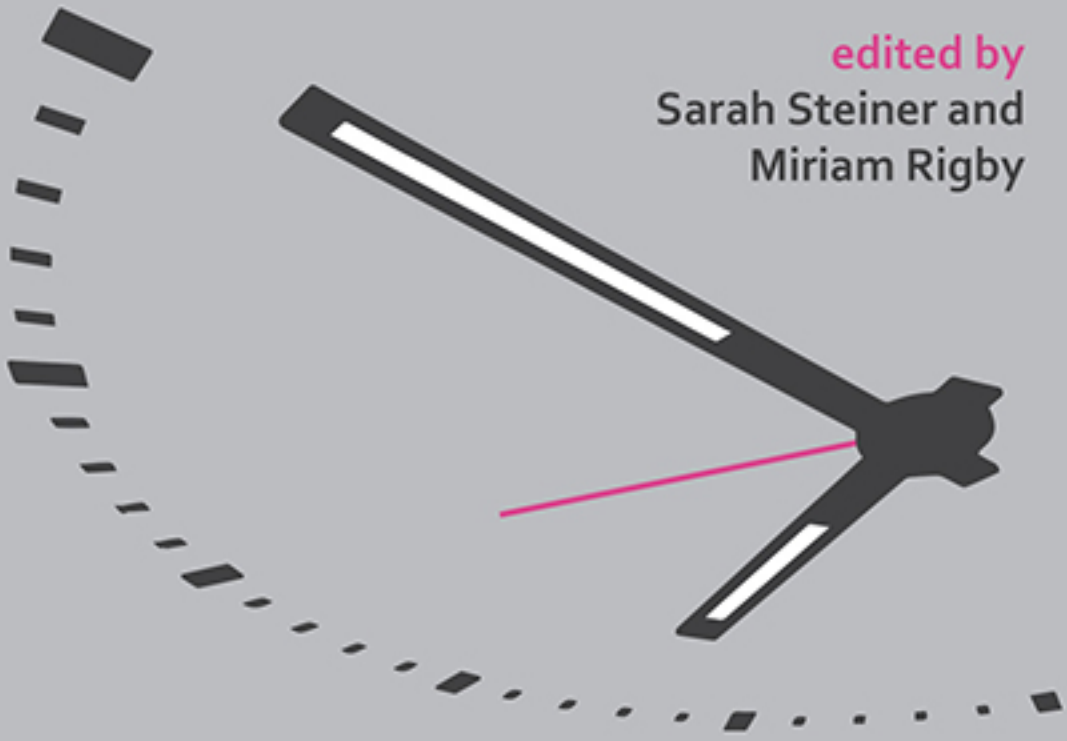

edited by
Sarah Steiner and
Miriam Rigby

Motivating Students on a Time Budget

PEDAGOGICAL FRAMES AND LESSON PLANS FOR IN-PERSON AND ONLINE INFORMATION LITERACY INSTRUCTION

Motivating Students on a Time Budget:

Pedagogical Frames and Lesson Plans for In-Person and Online Information Literacy Instruction

edited by
Sarah Steiner and Miriam Rigby

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INTRODUCTION

Motivating Students on a Time Budget:

Pedagogical Frames and Lesson Plans for In-Person and Online Information Literacy Instruction

A desire to make good grades, the dream of graduation, anxiety about future job prospects: these motivators sit at the foundation of today's education system in many countries, including the United States. But where does that motivation structure leave educators who, by choice or by necessity, do not assign grades or control student matriculation? What about those of us who have only short periods of time with students? As librarians, we often find ourselves outside the traditional structure of our education system. Time limits add another layer of complexity; how can we motivate students to learn when we only see them for an hour or two?

All through primary school, I (Sarah) struggled mightily with math classes. I loathed feeling like I was not smart enough to keep up, so I disengaged, mentally and emotionally. I intermittently tried, but my sense of commitment was low and I carried a sense of internal shame. Then, as I entered twelfth grade, I finally met a math teacher who managed to motivate me, and she did it over the course of just a couple of class sessions. Her style of instruction helped me to embrace algebra with confidence, and it ultimately motivated me to pursue a career in education. She showed me that while long-term courses may offer more time in which to energize learners, motivation can also be built quickly, even with disengaged students. She created a supportive yet challenging learning environment where mistakes were accepted

and where my struggles were a part of the experience, rather than a point of shame. As information literacy leaders, we have an opportunity to do the same.

The editors were inspired to propose and edit this book because, although we found a robust body of literature focused on motivating students to cross information literacy thresholds over the course of a semester or school year, we found little on motivating them in the short-term. While librarians have made great strides in integrating information literacy into long-term curricula, many of us have only one class session to make a difference. Librarians have published extensively on motivation-related instruction topics (active learning being one of the most popular), yet we consider the motivation theory underpinnings of those activities less often. Consideration of human motivational strategies can have a profound effect on our attitude toward and approach to learners and, ultimately, on their levels of engagement, satisfaction, and success. Through the techniques outlined in this volume, we hope you will feel empowered to use motivation research to meet your students where they are, intellectually and emotionally, and empower and inspire them to cross conceptual thresholds critical to information interpretation and use.

Librarians' positions as guests or outsiders in our country's grade-based education system are often lamented, and not unfairly. In this volume, we will highlight the ways in which we can build true intrinsic motivation and honor intersectionality. Arnone, Reynolds, and Marshall note the library "is one of the few locations in schools where informal, self-determined, intrinsically motivated inquiry and learning can occur (and is in fact encouraged)."[1] The intrinsically motivated student pays sustained attention to argument analysis and is able to judge and evaluate information and solve problems—these concepts form the heart of information literacy.[2] While information literacy instructors often face tight time limitations, librarians are free to inspire student imaginations without the limitations of grades or judgment, and if we make a strong connection, students will seek us out with additional queries and ideas. Our goal, broadly, is to inspire students' curiosity and desire to seek information and diverse considerations on topics of interest and ensure they have the confidence and knowledge necessary to locate, analyze, and apply that information to their needs. Studies that consider the efficacy of ranking student effort/success with grades offer competing conclusions, but many argue that environments that privilege grades can undermine intrinsic motivation,[3] while environments that highlight learning goals, evaluative feedback, and autonomy over grades can have a positive effect on long-term intrinsic motivation levels.[4] These studies empower us to reframe our "constraints" as a gift: because we have only a short period of time with our students, we can exist outside the world of performance, tests, grades, and other extrinsic motivators and position ourselves as fellow curious explorers.

Many of the works in this volume embrace the power in shifting control to the students and in accounting for students' situated position both inside and outside of the classroom. Motivation theory meshes well with intersectional approaches to overcoming barriers to learning. Briefly put, the concept of intersectionality stems from the work of critical race theorist Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw[5] and sociologist Patricia Hill Collins[6] in the late 1980s and early 1990s and has become more widely adopted throughout and beyond the social sciences in recent decades. This theory points to the many intersecting aspects of a person's life that affect their relations with others and situate how they encounter the world. Race, class, and gender are the classic aspects, but myriad other influences can be taken into account. Some of these influences fall on a spectrum of changeability, including education level (somewhat able to change) and health and physical abilities (relatively outside of personal control). In shifting control of the classroom to students and working as a fellow explorer, librarians provide students with the opportunity to honor their own needs and life experiences as they develop their information literacy.

This volume begins with a section of research-based, broad-level considerations of student motivation as it relates to short-term information literacy instruction in person and online. The second section comprises activities and lesson plans which highlight specific motivational strategies and pedagogies. Each encourages the spirit of play, autonomy, and active learning in a grade-free environment. As you read, you may find many of the activities and approaches you embed for intuitive reasons have a grounding in motivational theory. We hope you find the chapters useful for your own teaching and learning.

~Sarah Steiner and Miriam Rigby

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