



# Framing Our Work: Mapping Threshold Concepts to the Reference Interview

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2023 RUSA Virtual Forum



First, quick questions about your experiences...

[pollev.com/sarahkantor](https://pollev.com/sarahkantor)

Polls

# Who are we?

## Research Help in Academic Libraries (RHAL)

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- The Reference Services Section (RSS) represents the interests of librarians and library support staff engaged in all aspects of reference and information services including the delivery, management and evaluation of reference and user services in all kinds of libraries.
- In 2020, RSS formed RHAL to study, promote, and support the role of reference and user services in academic libraries.
- In 2022, RHAL began working on a project that connects the ACRL Framework knowledge practices and dispositions to research help.

We wondered:

How does the ACRL Framework inform our reference work?

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Six frames and broad examples from the reference interview

- Research as Inquiry: General topic or area of curiosity >> narrower focus
- Searching as Strategic Exploration: Keywords and subject headings; not one & done
- Information Creation as a Process: Resources/production time differ among sources
- Authority Is Constructed and Contextual: Expertise in the field, as a writer/communicator, and/or based on lived experience
- Scholarship as Conversation: Citation searching to find related sources; locating research based on news article or other media
- Information Has Value: Explaining paywalls and subscriptions; using ILL

# So, just why does this matter?

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Tying reference work to the Framework can help us communicate the value of services like ready reference and consultations to our campuses. Specifically, faculty and administration who may be accustomed to theoretical and pedagogical descriptions may find threshold concepts more illustrative than general reference statistics.

The language of the Framework also helps us explain to students why parts of the research process are important and relevant to their work.

Making these connections can also help in training or retraining efforts for reference services by giving a rationale for aspects of the reference interaction.

# For example:

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*For the Frame: Research as Inquiry*

*With the Knowledge Practices:*

- *determine an appropriate scope of investigation;*
- *deal with complex research by breaking complex questions into simple ones, limiting the scope of investigations*

The research interaction may be something like this:

**Student:** Hi! I need help **finding peer reviewed articles** for my research paper. The topic is genocide.

**Library Worker:** I can help with that. Let's talk about the scope of this project. I think it would be helpful to break this topic down a bit. **Is there a particular genocide** you are interested in researching? Or a **particular angle you are interested** in, such as causes, or consequences, or international reaction, or something else?

**Student:** I'm interested in the **Rohingya genocide**. I want to know about what is happening with **all the refugees**.

**Library Worker:** OK, great! We can start in one of our article databases and look for what we can find on the Rohingya genocide and the resulting refugee crisis.

Try it! Brainstorm prompts or questions that connect with the Framework



[bit.ly/framesrusa](https://bit.ly/framesrusa)

What do you think?

What are the obstacles to or advantages of incorporating the frames during research interactions?

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Comments? Thoughts?  
Add them in the chat.



Join the conversation on [ALA RUSA RSS RHAL Connect](#)! This discussion group is a space for librarians and library staff to ask questions, seek solutions, and share knowledge specific to reference/research help in academic libraries.

[bit.ly/rhalconnect](https://bit.ly/rhalconnect)



# RSS: Research Help in Academic Libraries (RHAL)

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