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# Review of Visual Literacy for Libraries: A Practical, Standards-Based Guide

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# Review of Visual Literacy for Libraries: A Practical, Standards-Based Guide

## **Abstract**

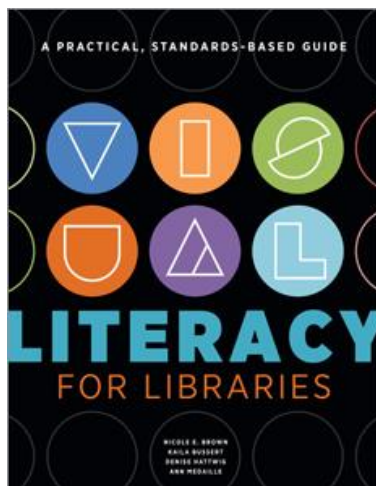
In six chapters, *Visual Literacy for Libraries* explores the seven ACRL Visual Literacy Competency Standards through a series of exploratory questions and hands-on activities. As the first guide of its kind, this volume is a significant resource and valuable addition to the literature on library instruction and visual literacy. The book is highly organized and clearly written, easily accommodating cover-to-cover readers as well as those jumping in to focus on a specific topic.

## **Keywords**

visual literacy, visual resources, information literacy, ACRL Framework

## **Author Bio & Acknowledgements**

Hannah Marshall is an Implementation Manager at Artstor | ITHAKA and serves as Production Editor for the *VRA Bulletin*. Her research interests include visual resources and digital cultural heritage.



In six chapters, *Visual Literacy for Libraries*<sup>1</sup> explores the seven ACRL (Association of College and Research Libraries) Visual Literacy Competency Standards through a series of exploratory questions and hands-on activities.<sup>2</sup> As the first guide of its kind, this volume is a significant resource and valuable addition to the literature on library instruction and visual literacy. The book is highly organized and clearly written, easily accommodating cover-to-cover readers as well as those jumping in to focus on a specific topic.

The chapters have topical emphases that do not map as directly to the Standards as the reader might expect:

Chapter 1: *Interpret and Analyze Images* (Standard 3)

Chapter 2: *Find the Right Images* (Standards 1 & 2)

Chapter 3: *Create and Use Images* (Standards 4-6)

Chapter 4: *Ethical Use of Images* (Standard 7)

Chapter 5: *Cite and Credit Images* (Standard 7)

Chapter 6: *Images and the Research Process*.

It purports to be “A Practical, Standards-based Guide,” and the practicality of the guide as a teaching instrument is clear in its structure.

Each chapter opens with “Foundational Questions” followed by several topical overviews that contextualize each question. There are “Coffee Break” activities included for librarians seeking to build their own visual literacy, and “More to Explore” lists that act as jumping-off points for readers who wish to delve into a topic in greater depth. At the end of each chapter, the reader will find three to five activities that can be used in visual literacy workshops or instruction sessions. References provide additional select resources for those wish to do more reading or learn from a variety of perspectives.

A thoughtful introduction explores some of the challenges associated with visual literacy and its instruction. This exploration is aided by a diagram created by the authors which illustrates the activities and learning outcomes that comprise visual literacy. The authors include a “How to Use this Book” section at the end of the introduction which makes it clear that the guide is meant to be utilitarian. The reader will also find an index at the end of the volume, as well as the ACRL Visual Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education included as an appendix.

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<sup>1</sup> Image source <http://www.alastore.ala.org/detail.aspx?ID=11543>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/visualliteracy>

The organization of the chapters builds logically to a final chapter that seeks to connect visual resources back to the *ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*.<sup>3</sup> The authors open this chapter by articulating the significance of visual literacy as part of general information literacy:

*“Images can prompt inquiry and discovery and help students move from their concrete personal experiences into the more abstract area of library research. A deeper and richer understanding of visual content empowers students to think about ways to use images as part of their everyday iterative research processes. Teaching image research and evaluation alongside traditional bibliographic tools is a natural fit.” (147)*

The final chapter synthesizes the intersection of both frameworks through topics like: “Using Images to Further Research,” “Visualizing a Topic,” “Evaluating Visual Characteristics of Sources,” “Evaluating Images and Their Sources,” and “Images and Information Literacy Threshold Concepts.”

Born of the ACRL Visual Literacy Task Force, this guide aims to “help academic librarians learn to apply, teach, and promote visual literacy.” (ix) The guide is a valuable tool for any librarian or visual resources professional responsible for information and visual literacy instruction. Overall, the guide is an exciting tool that has been superbly executed for maximum usability. It is highly relevant to the work of most visual resource professionals and will very likely become a staple of visual literacy instruction.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>