

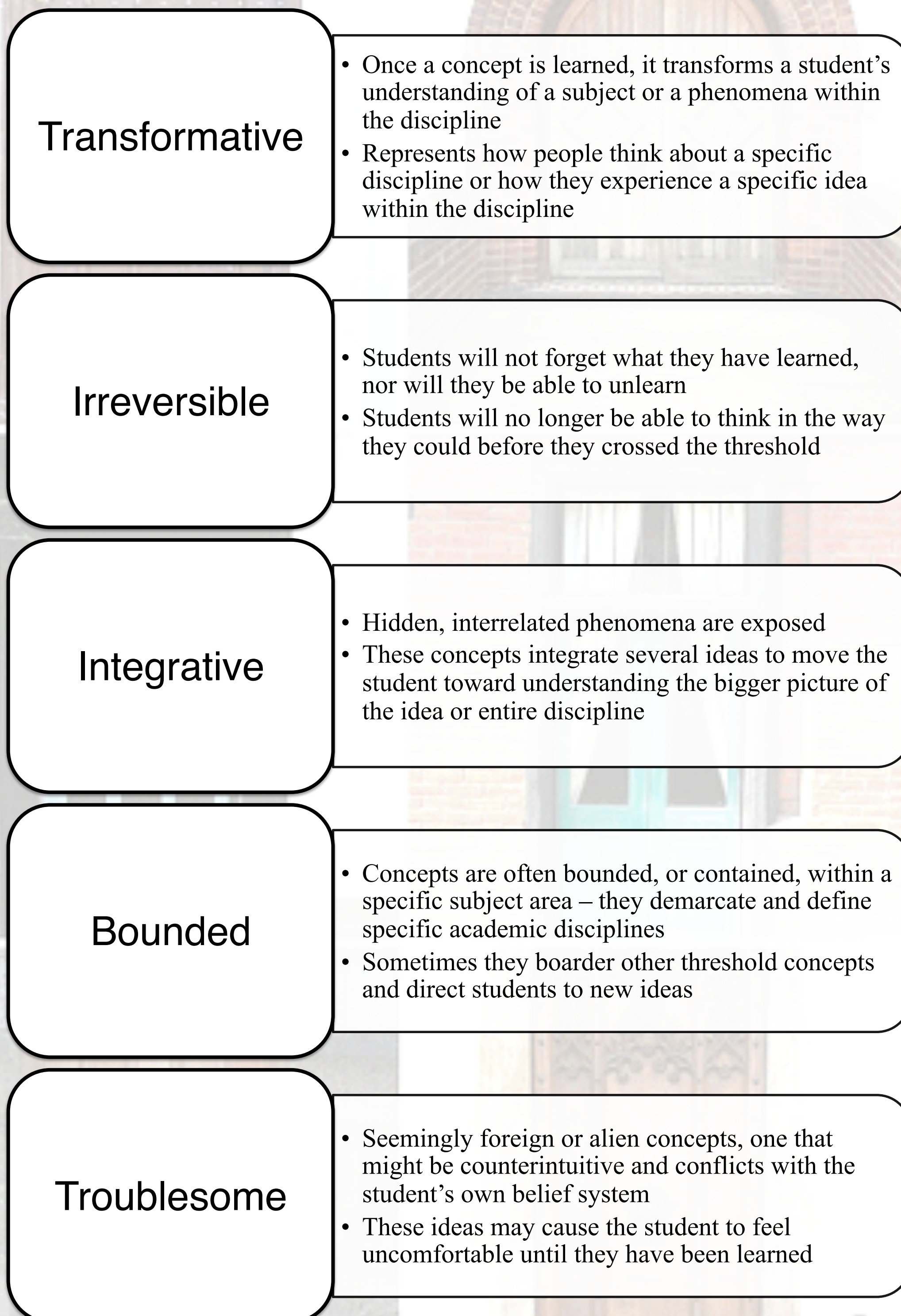
Threshold Concepts for the Information Profession

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What are Threshold Concepts?

Threshold Concepts are specific ideas within an academic discipline that require the student to cross the threshold of liminality in order to better understand an idea within a discipline or the entire discipline itself.

A threshold concept is typically described as having five different characteristics:



Where else have I heard about Threshold Concepts?

In February the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education Task Force released the first draft of the *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*. This taskforce is charged with reviewing and making recommendations to improve the Information Competency Standards. The first draft of the framework contained three Threshold Concepts for information literacy. The second draft contained additional Threshold Concepts and sample scenarios.

The drafts highlight changes in higher education since the first set of standards were created in 2000, including changes to the demographic landscape of higher education and academic culture. Trends noted in the report include the rise of collaboration in student work, an increase in student creation and publication of research products and presentations at conferences. Other trends focus on various aspects of pedagogy including a heightened presence of information technology and hands-on, collaborative approaches to learning.

Information Literacy Threshold Concepts

- Scholarship is a Conversation
- Research as Inquiry
- Format as Process
- Authority is Constructed and Contextual
- Searching is Strategic

For more information on the new ACRL standards and the taskforce see <http://acrl.ala.org/ilstandards/>

Why Threshold Concepts?

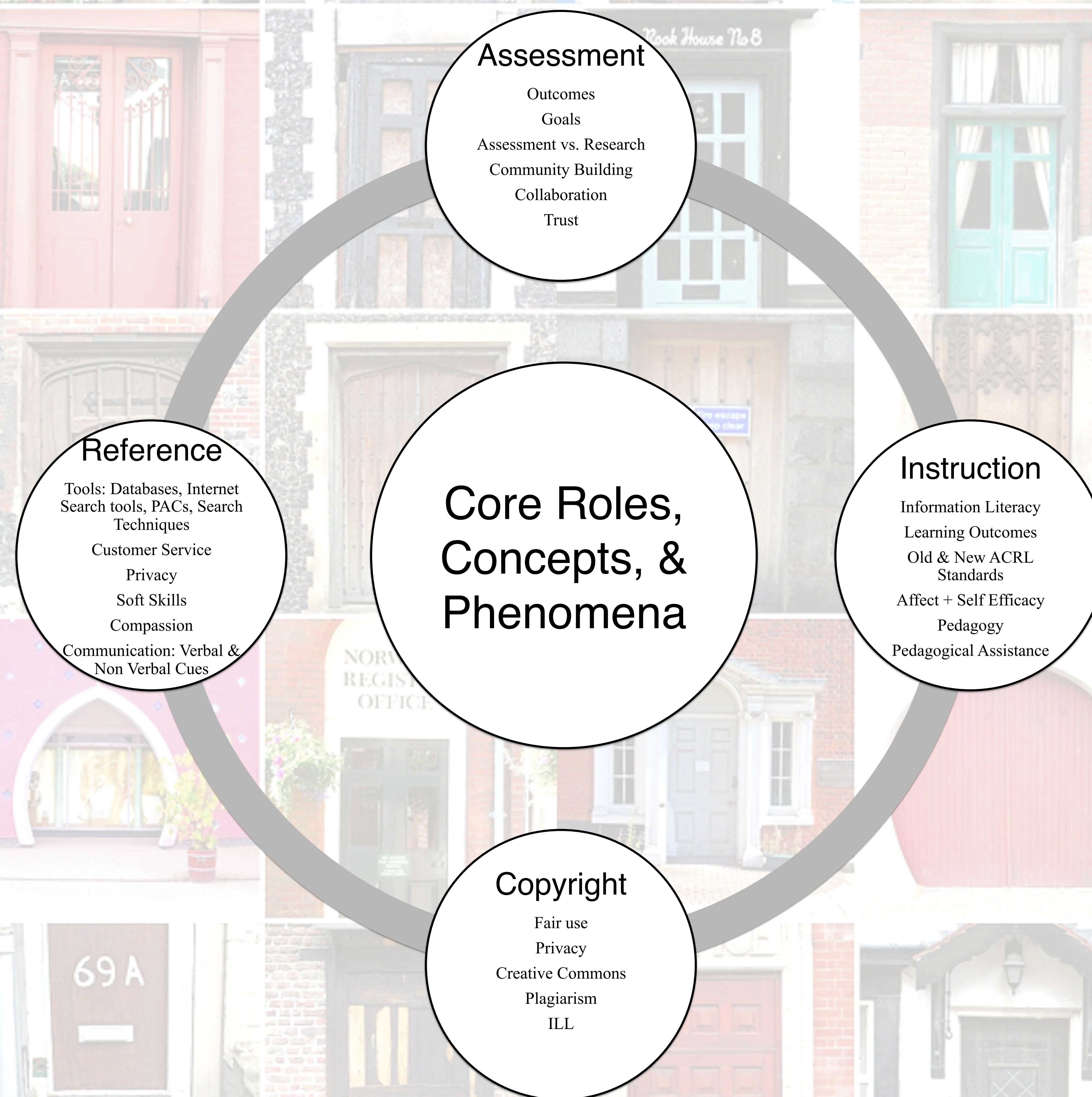
In 2011 R. David Lankes published *The Atlas of New Librarianship* outlining the profession of librarianship, reaffirming our roots, and showing us new ways of thinking. His ideas include openness, participatory librarianship, and knowledge creation.

I believe “new” librarianship is represented with Threshold Concepts, phenomena that structure our profession – the CORE concepts. These are the building blocks in which we learn our discipline, and ideas that transform each of us as we become professionals. They are the keys to our discipline, unlocking the doors to ways of thinking and the community of practice that is librarianship.

Purpose

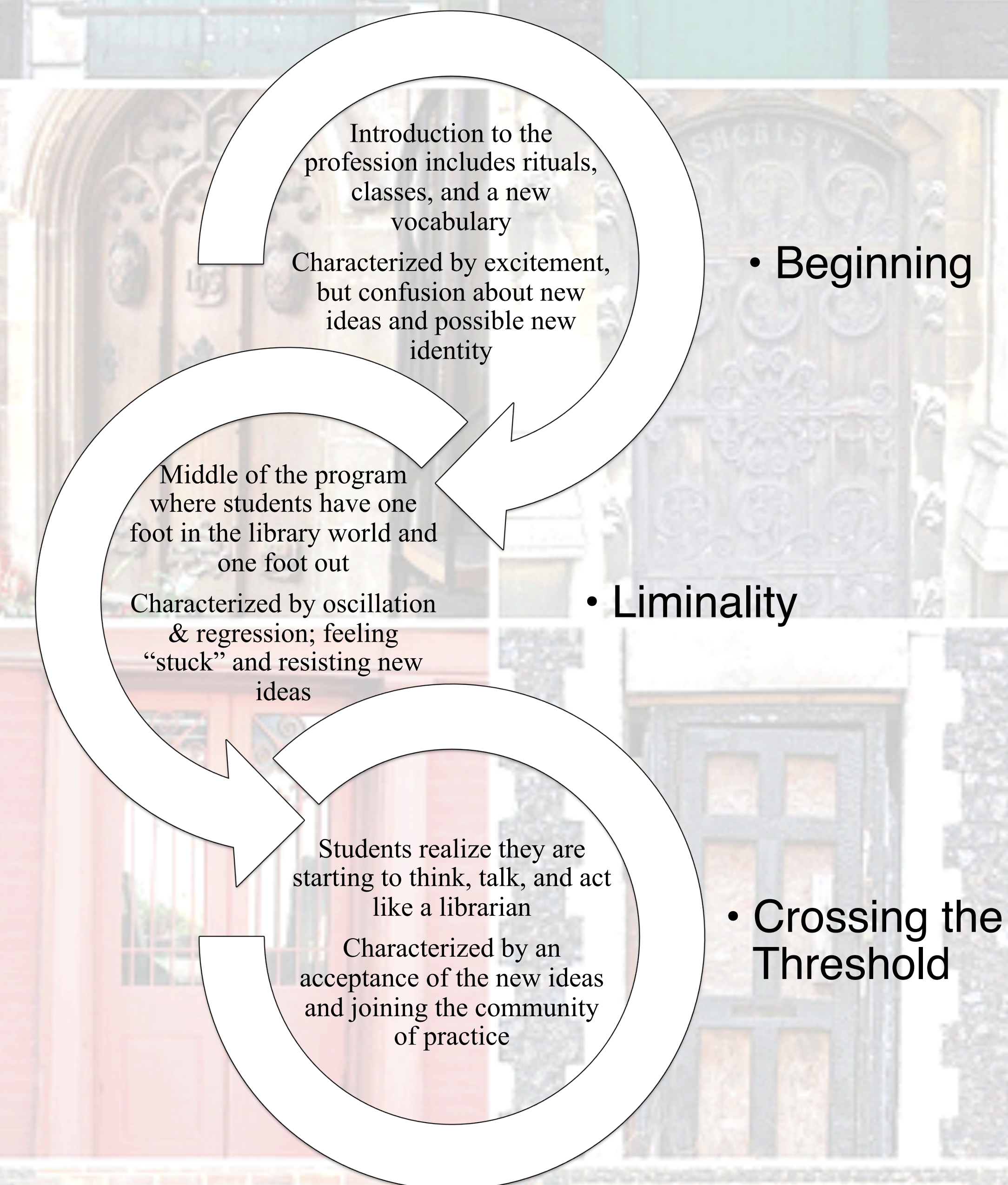
The purpose of this work is to identify Threshold Concepts in librarianship through dialog with other professionals. According to Peter Davies, “ways of understanding a phenomena are generated through reflection by communities on those phenomena and the creation of a new way of understanding may be influential in establishing a new sense of community identity” (Davies 2006, p 71). As a profession, if we identify and agree on what threshold concepts structure our profession, then we can produce better librarians and increase the value of the library profession.

Threshold Concepts for Information Professionals



Teaching Threshold Concepts to the Information Profession

The LIS Student Learning Experience



Continuing Education

- Moving from “traditional” library paradigm to a new, active librarianship model with new roles, concepts, and phenomena
- Threshold concepts are the keys that unlock communities of practice, and the world of librarianship is very much a thriving community with its own standards, phenomena, and vocabularies
 - These new roles and concepts confirm that we need new ways of teaching LIS students and current professionals
 - This may be troublesome because current knowledge both in LIS programs and held by established professionals may be ritualized, inert, conceptually different or alien

How do we cross the threshold?

- Librarians must form a new identity
- Welcome new grads into the practice through professional and social channels by giving them the keys to the door – Threshold Concepts
- Create a fluid “liminal environment” rather than a static “holding environment”
 - Space to allow professionals to take risks, learn, and grow
 - Threshold concepts operate at a high level of abstraction; this environment connects abstract concepts to real-world situations
- Engage new and current professionals through mentorship
 - Librarians are more likely to think and practice like professionals if they are explicitly assisted rather than left to their own devices to figure out how to cross thresholds on their own
 - Create a professional dialog about what should be taught, and learned in LIS programs – involve current professionals who hire new grads
 - What do we need to know?
 - What knowledge are we not graduating with?
 - How can we better think and practice like a librarian?
- Mentorship is a reciprocal relationship allowing new and current professionals to learn from each other

Share your ideas by taking the survey!

