

REPORT ON THE INAUGURAL FRAMEWORK OF SKILLS FOR INQUIRY LEARNING (FOSIL) SYMPOSIUM



DARRYL TOERIEN

Darryl Toerien is Head of Inquiry-Based Learning at Blanchelande College, Guernsey, Channel Islands, UK. He is a member of the UK School Library Association (SLA), the International Association of School Librarianship (IASL), and the School Libraries Section (SLS) of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). He is also originator of FOSIL (Framework Of Skills for Inquiry Learning, 2011) and the FOSIL Group (2019).

FOSIL 2025 Symposium Report by Darryl Toerien

The inaugural FOSIL 2025 Symposium – Engaging and Empowering Inquirers – on Saturday 8 February drew together more than 200 colleagues from over 25 countries, with Australia being most strongly represented outside of the UK. This international collegiality was reflected in [the programme](#), with Dianne Oberg joining us live from Canada to open revolutionary proceedings at 2am (local time), followed immediately by Joanne Bleby and Lee FitzGerald joining us live from Australia to further foment revolution at 8:15pm!

By way of introduction to this report, I begin with [my concluding remarks](#) from the Symposium:

What an extraordinary and humbling day in the presence of such aspirational and inspirational colleagues using technology to share so freely – a powerful example of the [augmentation of human intellect](#). This [hard work of engaging and empowering inquirers] is the revolution that will not be televised because it does not sell, but is the revolution that our children most need us to bring about. I have no doubt that there is a wealth of equally aspirational and inspirational work being done by colleagues that we were not able to share today. So, while it is too early to begin planning the next Symposium, it is definitely not too soon to start dreaming. Thank you, may you be blessed in your revolutionary intent and activity, and I look forward to our next gathering.

There were two dimensions to the day, namely, the programme of revolutionary musing and practice, and three major FOSIL developments, which I will report on first.

Three major FOSIL developments

Firstly, Barbara Stripling and I have been contracted to write a book for Bloomsbury Libraries Unlimited, titled, *Teaching Inquiry as Conversation: Bringing Wonder to Life*. FOSIL was adapted in 2010 from the New York Information Fluency Continuum (NYCIFC, 2009), which was then endorsed by New York State as the Empire State Information Fluency Continuum (ESIFC, 2012 and reimaged in 2019). Since 2020, Barbara and I have been meeting weekly, and the book is an exciting opportunity to draw our work more closely together, and to develop important aspects of it further, which is reflected in the first part of the title. The second part of the title has a double meaning: bringing wonder [and puzzlement] to life for our students in school,

where it is likely withering in a harsh, or even hostile environment; enabling our students to bring that wonder [and puzzlement] to life for themselves outside of school.

Secondly, the [foundation of an independent Institute for the Advancement of Inquiry \(IAI\)](#), which will be based at Blanchelande College to ground it in the reality of a PK-12 school. The purpose of the IAI is to initiate and support efforts that foster the development of school-age children as engaged and empowered inquirers, and that support is free to educators at their point of need. The IAI has so far been [formally endorsed by](#): the Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta, the Chair of Librarianship at the University of Zagreb, the Director of Library Services for New York City Public Schools / New York City School Library System, and the President of the School Library Systems Association of New York State. Formal endorsements of the IAI are pending from Dr David Loertscher, Professor at San José State University's School of Information, and Dr Luisa Marquardt, Professor at Roma Tre University's

Department of Education Science and current Chair of the IFLA School Libraries Section. I am honoured to Direct the activities of the IAI, all the more so with support so far from Barbara Stripling and Dianne Oberg on the Advisory Board. Fittingly, [the IAI logo](#), which is in its final stages of development, was designed by a Grade 12 student, Lara, as an artefact for her [EPO](#) inquiry.

Third, the Creative Commons release of the [rebooted Heroic Inquiry Cycle](#). Inquiry is a learning process *that is embodied*, which means that it has cognitive and meta-cognitive, emotional, social and cultural dimensions. Heroic Inquiry makes this explicit by aligning the stages of the FOSIL Inquiry Cycle with stages in the [Hero's](#) Journey. Heroic Inquiry (2.0 | 2025) is our first attempt to make Heroic Inquiry (1.0 | 2021) more inclusive and diverse, and is an invitation for colleagues to adopt or adapt as necessary, and so to shape this work-in-progress.

Lara's winning AIA logo



The FOSIL Symposium Programme

There is great diversity in the educational contexts of the presenters, as well as in the focus of their presentations. For reasons of time and space, I will list only their titles and focus in this report, but we have prepared a [more detailed discussion of the presenters and their educational contexts](#).

- **Dianne Oberg's** [revolutionary musing](#) opened proceedings with a very warm welcome from Canada, especially on behalf of Dr Jennifer Branch-Mueller, current President of the International Association of School Librarianship, and Dr Jennifer Tupper, Dean of the Faculty of Education, who have endorsed the Institute for the Advancement of Inquiry. **Key takeaway:** Inquiry, like anything meaningful and worthwhile, takes time
- **Joanne Bleby** and **Lee FitzGerald:** [The revolution will not be televised](#), with a practical inquiry focus on History at [Loreto Kirribilli](#). **Key takeaway:** Inquiry is good for exam results, but also for the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, *and* students realising their full potential as human beings.
- **Mary-Rose Grieve's** [revolutionary musing](#) from [Hartland International School](#) took inspiration from *Artificial Intelligence*, the deeply thoughtful picture book by David Biedrzycki. **Key takeaway:** "We shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time." (T. S. Eliot, *Little Gidding*)
- **Ruth Maloney:** [The revolution will not be televised](#), with a practical inquiry focus of integrating skills into an inquiry process at [Tonbridge Grammar School](#). **Key takeaway:** FOSIL provides a unifying vocabulary that facilitates purposeful collaboration between library-based teachers and classroom-based teachers.
- **Jannath Khanom:** [Introducing Inquiry through the Literacy Curriculum](#) at [Connaught School for Girls](#). **Key takeaway:** Lead by example and ensure all work is shared with line managers.

- **David Harrow, Faye Marland** and **Nick O'Loughlin:** [The revolution will not be televised](#) with a practical inquiry focus of celebrating students as inquirers at [AKS Lytham](#). **Key takeaway:** Don't forget the joy in/ of learning.
- **Barbara Stripling's** [revolutionary musing](#) closed proceedings with a reflection on how much revolutionary progress we have made, with much yet to be done. **Key takeaway:** It's on us - we have to be the revolutionary leaders our students need.

The Symposium proceedings are now available at tinyurl.com/FOSILForum2025. Like everything on the FOSIL Group website, they are openly and freely available. However, participating in the Forum discussions, which are not limited to FOSIL, requires you to be a registered member, which is also free. If you do register, please remember to subscribe to the sub-Forum in order to be notified of updates to the Topics.

There is also a YouTube playlist of the recordings at tinyurl.com/FOSIL2025.