



Instruction

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Section

NEWSLETTER

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From the desk of the Instruction Section Chair

Library Instruction Communities of Practice



Attendees at ACRL's Leadership Council meeting this past summer at Annual Conference in Chicago had the privilege of learning more about the concept of "communities of practice" directly from Etienne Wenger, one of the scholars who coined the term. In their 1991 book *Situated Learning*, Wenger and Jean Lave used the term "communities of practice" to describe learning that occurs through practice and participation within a specific community. Wenger later expanded upon the concept in his book *Communities of Practice* (1998). At Annual, he explained that communities of practice are self-governed learning partnerships among people who:

- Share challenges, concerns, passions, or interests revolving around something they do.
- Want to improve their ability to do what they care about.
- Interact regularly.
- Learn from and with each other.

Moreover, communities of practice are not defined and regulated from without, but rather they are shaped by the interests and needs of the community. As such, communities of practice are also flexible and open to change, as interests shift and new needs and challenges arise. This also means that they don't necessarily last forever, and that communities will dissolve once their objectives have been met or their members no longer feel like they have something to contribute to and/or gain from them.

Wenger's presentation encouraged me to think about the degree to which our section as a whole as well as our committees and task forces specifically function as communities of practice. Have we been successful in our efforts to offer people with similar instructional and information literacy interests and challenges the opportunity to come together to learn from and with each other in order to improve their teaching and enhance student learning? Are our members still passionate about the work of their committees? Do they find their charges meaningful? Are the documents they produce still relevant and useful? Do members feel like they have the chance to pursue their passions and to help define the objectives and work of their committees, or do they feel like these are primarily imposed from without? And how can the Executive Committee help to ensure that our committees continue to function as dynamic learning communities that engage in work that is meaningful and useful not only to the members of the committee specifically but also to the larger library instruction community?

In responses to these questions, I'd like to encourage all academic librarians interested in instruction to think about and share with the Instruction Section's Executive Committee the kinds of instructional and information literacy issues and challenges that are important to *you*. What topics and concerns would you be interested in learning more about with other librarians in an effort to improve your practice? For those of you who are serving on one of our committees or task forces, I'd like you and your committees to examine your charges and think about whether the specific committee work you are charged with is still meaningful. Is it something that you and others are passionate about? Do you still feel like you are learning from and contributing to the community? If the answer is "sort of," or "no," think about and then share with the Executive Committee how you think the work of the committee could be revised or altered to facilitate its transformation into a true community of practice.

Midwinter Conference

It's hard to believe, but the Instruction Section has been holding virtual Midwinter meetings for five years now! Meeting virtually has proven to be an effective way not only to accomplish our work but also to maximize involvement, allowing librarians with limited travel budgets to participate meaningfully in the work of the Section. The Instruction Section holds its virtual meetings prior to the actual Midwinter Conference, generally in November and early December. This time frame allows the Executive Committee to review committee reports and to address committee questions and concerns at our Midwinter meetings. The Executive Committee will meet face-to-face again this winter, but we are making plans to transition to virtual meetings starting in 2015.

All Instruction Section meetings, virtual or in-person, are open to all (with the rare exception of meetings marked as closed, such as Awards), although it's always nice to contact the committee's chair to let him/her know in advance that you'd like to participate. Virtual meetings will be announced at least ten days in advance, and the agendas will be posted to ALA Connect. If you do plan to attend the in-person Midwinter Conference, I invite you to join us at the Instruction Section Soirée, an informal gathering where you can chat with other instruction librarians and learn more about the section. The soirée will take place on Friday from 5:30-7:00 p.m. Check the Instruction Section web site for location details.

Thank You!

Finally, I want to thank Instruction Section members for their dedication and enthusiasm. I'm so grateful that I've had the opportunity to work with and learn from so many of you over the years. Our community of practice continues to inspire me to explore issues revolving around information literacy teaching and learning and to improve my pedagogical practice. I have no doubt that the dedication and innovative spirit of our volunteers will ensure that the Instruction Section continues to provide productive spaces for instruction librarians to learn from and with each other for many years to come.

Christy Stevens, Chair
Instruction Section
2013-2014

IS Discussion Forum Goes Virtual for ALA Midwinter 2014

The Discussion Group Steering Committee is trying something new this year: Now you can attend the IS Discussion Forum without attending ALA Midwinter in person.

This year's forum will take place online, using Adobe Connect as the virtual meeting platform. Whether or not you can make it to Philadelphia, we'd like to encourage you to join us online on Wednesday, January 15, 2014, at 2:00 p.m. Central Time to discuss **"Teaching the art of academic dialog: a discussion on threshold concepts."**

Kathleen Langan, Humanities Librarian at Western Michigan University, will lead a lively virtual discussion on the value of using threshold concepts to shape information literacy instruction. We'll discuss the importance of teaching students the "whys" of research rather than just the "how-to's" and learn how this shift in curricular focus can help librarians impart a meaningful and lasting understanding of research.

Details on connecting to the virtual discussion will be announced in late fall on the ILI-L Listserv and the [IS web site](#). Should you have questions regarding the Discussion Forum, please contact the Discussion Group Steering Committee co-chairs, Veronica Arellano Douglas (varellano@gmail.com) and Jennifer Knievel (Jennifer.Knievel@colorado.edu).

The IS Discussion Forum will take place in person at the 2014 ALA Annual Conference. A call for proposals will be issued in February 2014.

From the desk of the Vice-Chair



It is my distinct pleasure to write to you all as the Vice-Chair of the Instruction Section! The Instruction Section has been my professional home within ACRL for more than a decade now, and I can't imagine my career without the advice and wisdom that so many of you have imparted to me during that time. Your accomplishments – whether through [Section activities](#) or your own research – never cease to amaze me, and continually inspire my own work.

As a member of the Committee Assessment Task Force, I also want to thank those you who have provided feedback about the future of the Section, either through the survey we administered earlier in the year or during the forum at Annual in Chicago this summer. Over the next few months, the Executive Committee will begin implementing some changes that we think will help move IS forward, so stay tuned. This is an exciting time to be part of the Section!

For those of you who are new and would like to become more involved, volunteering for a [committee or task force](#) is an excellent way to meet other professionals who share your passion for teaching and learning. As Vice-Chair, I have the honor of making appointments to these committees and task forces, and so I would welcome any questions you might have. Talking to committee chairs or members is also a great way to learn more about the work that they do.

If you're interested in volunteering, please complete [a volunteer form](#) by February 15, 2014. I will start making appointments shortly after that and will continue through the spring. The term for each appointment will begin right after the 2014 ALA Annual Conference.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch with me (szarko@mit.edu) if you have any questions about volunteering or the Section in general. I'm looking forward to working with you!

Mark Szarko, Vice-Chair
Instruction Section
2013–2014

Report from the First Year Experience Liaison

Every three years, the Instruction Section appoints the new ACRL Liaison to the National Resource Center on the First Year Experience and Students in Transition (NRCFYE). For the last year, I've had the pleasure of serving ACRL in this role. Based at the University of South Carolina, the NRCFYE "serves education professionals by supporting and advancing efforts to improve student learning and transitions into and through higher education."

The NRCFYE sponsors and conducts a wide range of useful research studies on students in transition—from incoming freshmen to graduating seniors—and they sponsor a variety of conferences and other professional development opportunities each year. Last February, I attended the 32nd Annual Conference on the First-Year Experience in Orlando, Florida. I reported on data gathered by Debbie Malone, who was ACRL liaison to the NRCFYE from 2009–2012. This project represented the first national survey of information literacy programs for first-year students. A white paper with highlights from this project will soon be available on the [NRCFYE website](#). I also gave a second presentation on a qualitative study of my own that examines how undergraduate students use tablet devices.

This was my first visit to the Annual Conference, and it was a wonderful experience. The conference has a great deal to offer academic librarians, particularly those who work with first-year students: pedagogical discussions, innovative approaches, and the opportunity to network with other librarians, faculty, and student affairs professionals. If you have the interest, I strongly recommend joining me at the 33rd Annual Conference on the First-Year Experience in beautiful San Diego on February 15–18, 2014.

If you have any questions about the conference or the NRCFYE (or about the experience of being an ACRL Liaison), feel free to ask (anne-marie.deitering@oregonstate.edu).

If you're interested in first-year students and their transition to college, there are some great resources available from ACRL. Consider joining the new [ACRL FYE Discussion Group](#), formed in 2013 by Carissa Tomlinson and currently convened by Rob Snyder. And, of course, the Instruction Section's Teaching Methods committee maintains a wonderful [bibliography of essential readings and resources](#).

Anne-Marie Deitering
ACRL Liaison to the National Resource Center on the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition

Bring the ACRL Standards Workshop to You

Bring the one-day workshop, “*Planning, Assessing, and Communicating Library Impact: Putting the Standards for Libraries in Higher Education into Action*,” to your campus or consortia. The workshop is led by one or two expert presenters at locations across the country upon request. Libraries in higher education are increasingly required to demonstrate their value and document their contributions to overall institutional effectiveness. The [Standards for Libraries in Higher Education](#) is a framework for library planning and assessment that can be used for a variety of circumstances including annual planning, program review, and accreditation self-study. Through presentation, discussion, and group activities, you will learn how to use the Standards to communicate your library’s impact. Contact Margot Conahan, Manager of Professional Development, at mconahan@ala.org; 312-280-2522, to discuss dates and locations, pricing, and for complete workshop details.

Apply for ACRL Immersion ’14 (Teacher and Program Tracks)

ACRL is currently accepting applications for the Information Literacy Immersion ’14 Program ([Teacher](#) and [Program](#) tracks) to be held July 20-25, 2014 at Champlain College in Burlington, VT. [Immersion ’14](#) provides four-and-a-half days of intensive information literacy training and education for academic librarians. Immersion allows you to embrace your educational role by embarking on a path of teacher development and pedagogical inquiry in a community of practice for academic librarians devoted to collaborative learning, individual renewal, and instructional effectiveness.

Acceptance to Immersion ’14 is competitive to ensure an environment that fosters group interaction and active participation. Complete program and track details, along with application materials, are [available online](#). The application deadline is **December 6, 2013**, and notifications will be issued in February 2014. Questions concerning the program or application process should be directed to Margot Conahan at (312) 280-2522 or e-mail mconahan@ala.org.

Submit a Proposal for ACRL 2015!

The Call for Participation will be available November 2013. Watch the ACRL website for details!



News

IS Awards Committee: Nominations Sought

1. Instruction Section Innovation Award (\$3,000 cash prize)

The Instruction Section Innovation Award recognizes a project from within the previous two years that demonstrates creative, innovative, or unique approaches to information literacy instruction or programming. The creators of the winning project will be awarded a \$3,000 cash prize donated by ProQuest. Past awards have recognized well-known programs and initiatives such as the WASSAIL Information Literacy Assessment Project and the Guide on the Side software. Nominations must describe how the nominated project meets the award criteria and include a letter of support and additional documents to present the project's purpose, content, impact, and innovative aspects.

A complete description of this award, including eligibility and selection criteria, submission requirements, and past recipients, is available on the IS web site at <http://www.ala.org/acrl/awards/achievementawards/innovationaward>.

2. Instruction Section Ilene F. Rockman Instruction Publication Award (\$3,000 cash prize)

The Ilene F. Rockman Instruction Publication of the Year Award honors the late Dr. Ilene Rockman, a nationally recognized leader in information literacy. The Rockman Award recognizes an outstanding article or book on instruction or information literacy in an academic library environment, published within the last two years.

Publications are judged on the basis of relevance to the field of instruction in academic or research libraries, originality, timeliness, and quality of writing. Winners are awarded a \$3,000 cash prize donated by the Emerald Group.

Nominations must include a complete citation, a letter of support explaining how the publication meets the award criteria and, whenever possible, a copy of the publication.

A complete description of this award, including eligibility and selection criteria, submission requirements, and past recipients, is available on the IS web site at <http://www.ala.org/acrl/awards/publicationawards/publicationyear>.

Submission Deadline for Both Awards: December 6, 2013

All submissions must be received electronically.

Send the nomination to the IS Awards Committee Co-Chairs, Lori DuBois (lori.a.dubois@williams.edu) and Susanna Eng-Ziskin (susanna.eng@csun.edu).

Call for Nominations: Miriam Dudley Instruction Librarian of the Year Award

Do you know the next recipient of the Miriam Dudley Instruction Librarian of the Year Award?

The Dudley Award subcommittee is now accepting nominations for the Miriam Dudley Instruction Librarian of the Year Award, which honors a librarian who has made a significant contribution to the advancement of instruction in a college or research library environment. For more information about the award criteria, please see the Miriam Dudley Instruction Librarian Award web page: <http://www.ala.org/acrl/awards/achievementawards/miriamdudley>

To submit a nomination for the Dudley Award:

- Please send Dudley Award nominations to Susan Miller at susanmiller123@gmail.com.
- Electronic submissions are required.
- Nominations must include the name, mailing address, email address, and telephone number of the nominee with a letter of support detailing the nominee's qualifications for the award.
- Additional letters of support are encouraged; up to three will be considered.
- Nominators: Please include your name, mailing address, email address, and phone number.

Nominations are due **December 6, 2013**.



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