From the Desk of…

When I think about our section since the last newsletter, what really stands out to me are the ways in which instruction librarians come together; how much we have in common.

We are passionate: we care about students, about learning, about our professional principles.

We are practical: very few of us are detached scholars who rarely cross paths with a student - rather, we are in the classrooms, at the desks, in the consultations, even in the meetings, where we find ways to turn ideas into actions, to connect our profession’s goals to our learning objectives for the day, to choose the words we will say in a classroom, to design the activities we will use.

We are committed: we want to improve, know more, do good work, and make a difference.

We are centered: even when we disagree about how best to serve the students, we remember that the students are our purpose - a purpose that is easier to forget than it should be, but that librarians remember.

The last six months have included a lot of (mostly) productive discussion about information literacy and where we are heading as a profession. And as you participate in the discussions, read the comments and questions, attend presentations, and read articles, I hope that you will see what I see: our shared passion, practice, commitment, and center. This is a group I’m proud to be a part of, and I can’t wait to see how we continue to grow.

Mentoring Benefits Mutually

Submitted by Alexandra Hauser, on behalf of the ACRL Instruction Section Mentoring Program Committee

The IS Mentoring Program continued this year with 25 pairs of mentors & mentees! Participants are emailed each month with a discussion prompt related to aspects of library instruction and working within a professional setting. Prompts from this year have included: setting goals both for your mentoring relationship & overall professional development, networking with faculty, and technology use in instruction. Participants are free to discuss the monthly theme however, they feel most comfortable; conversations happen through email, online hangouts, phone calls, and even in person.

Participants are also surveyed at the end of the program year to determine what has and has not worked and general opinions of the program. Overall opinions from previous participants have been positive with all respondents saying they would participate in the IS Mentoring Program again and would recommend that their colleagues participate. One past program participant working as a mentor wrote: “Since I’ve moved into management positions, I’ve found this experience to be an important part of keeping myself grounded in the challenges & changes impacting librarians newer to the profession and at other institutions.” Another participant, a mentee, wrote, “I think the most valuable part of the program was when I could meet up with my mentor in-person at a conference and she was able to help me network.”

While this session of the mentoring program is wrapping up, another call for participants, both mentors and mentees, will go out in Autumn 2017 so be on the lookout! We are always looking for more mentors to participate and ask that you please consider volunteering your time. You do not need to be an expert on everything, just willing to discuss and work through your own thoughts on and experiences with libraries, the Instruction Section, and library instruction.

Did You Know?

ACRL members can view full contact information for all ACRL section committee rosters by logging into the ACRL website

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Tough Crowd

Submitted by Ginger Williams, Instruction & Reference Librarian, John F. Reed Library, Fort Lewis College

This semester, I’ve really worked hard to try to make our freshman-level composition classes more engaging. Students shop for shoes online. We read a satirical article together about solar panels causing global warming. We talk about fake news, how it goes viral, and if that matters. Sometimes we even use Twitter’s advanced search to see who is talking about fake news.

Sometimes students laugh at the “alternative facts” in the satirical piece. Many have been excited to share the shoes they found (and demonstrate their search strategy) with the class. Surely, what matters is that they leave with more knowledge than they brought into my classroom. But I am putting a lot of energy into entertaining them, too, and it’s hard not to take it personally when a class just isn’t having it. When you can feel the torpor hang over the room like a fog. And about a third of the time it does feel like I’m tanking.

So, what makes the difference? What makes my performance bomb sometimes when other classes are eating it up? I thought I might find something helpful about comedy in the scholarly literature outside of librarianship. Teaching faculty deal with this every day.


A few of McCarron and Savin-Baden’s suggestions (angering students in order to engage them) go too far for me, but many are useful. We can embrace “improvisation, rather than preparation” (p. 359). If we abandon our lesson plans and even deliberately seek out our own ignorance, we will open up room for our students’ contributions and room for improvisation.


Straussman discusses building a repertoire in order to give a flexible performance that is responsive to the audience. We should use a combination of four humorous elements: seemingly incongruous connections between ideas, disparaging remarks, visual characterizations of humans, and aggressive ideas presented in a lighthearted way. The key is refining when and how to use each element based on students’ reactions.

The act of improvisation these authors suggest seems obvious, but they helped me identify my biggest challenge. In order to standardize content in these classes, we use a PowerPoint-driven presentation. When a class bombs, it is probably because it feels too “canned” to students. I think it is likely that the more successful classes I’ve taught have been the ones that have run off the rails a bit and strayed from the slides. Now that I realize where my problem is, I have to find a way to standardize content so other librarians deliver roughly the same information while giving us all the freedom to improvise. This is exactly the kind of challenge that keeps me excited about teaching.

Don’t Get Faked by the News

Submitted by Lesley S. J. Farmer, ICT Literacy Project, California State University

Recently California State Assemblyman Gomez introduced AB 155, which states: “This bill would require the Instructional Quality Commission to develop, and the state board to adopt, revised curriculum standards and frameworks for English language arts, mathematics, history-social science, and science that incorporate civic online reasoning, as defined.”

The impetus of this bill is the proliferation of fake news, as evidenced in 2016. While fake news has always been part of the (dis)information picture, social media and campaign documents have highlighted its impact. The 2016 Stanford report on evaluating information found that most students, even in higher education, have difficulty discerning online media such as fake news.

Higher education need to insure that their students become information and communications technology (ICT) literate. Especially as fake news and other misinformation can occur in all parts of the curriculum and daily life (e.g., get rich scams, science, fad diets), critical thinking should be integrated strategically into their program’s scope and sequence. As information professionals, librarians are well positioned to help their academic communities become ICT literate. Some basic strategies that students should practice include:
From headline to photograph, a fake news masterpiece

story by Scott Shane in the

helping students become discerning news consumers.

Here are some specific resources that may be useful in

Literacy bookmark collections such as

contains resources and training, and links to relevant

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As part of my work, I manage California State University’s

ICT Literacy Project, which facilitates faculty incorporation of ICT literacy into the curriculum. The home base of this project is MERLOT, which collects learning objects and fosters educational community. The ICT Literacy portal contains resources and training, and links to relevant bookmark collections such as Fake News and Media Literacy.

Want to get the ball rolling with your faculty? Share this story by Scott Shane in the New York Times Jan. 18, 2017: From headline to photograph, a fake news masterpiece

Here are some specific resources that may be useful in helping students become discerning news consumers.

- University of Washington LibGuide on evaluating fake news.
- DeWitt, P. (Nov. 22, 2016). Do educators need media literacy as much as students do? Ed Week

As part of my work, I manage California State University’s ICT Literacy Project, which facilitates faculty incorporation of ICT literacy into the curriculum. The home base of this project is MERLOT, which collects learning objects and fosters educational community. The ICT Literacy portal contains resources and training, and links to relevant bookmark collections such as Fake News and Media Literacy.

One thing I learned through this deep dive into assessment is that there’s no need to reinvent the wheel: you can use materials you’re already using.

Use What You Have. Librarians design booklets for use during information literacy instruction, which have been well-received by both students and faculty. We decided to use them to collect data from students attending information literacy instruction sessions.

Students’ in-class work (via their booklets) was evaluated with a rubric. We looked at their ability to analyze their paper topics and brainstorm keywords; search for and access relevant materials; and reflect on their topics and search strategies. The students’ strongest performance area turned out to be their ability to analyze their paper topics and brainstorm keywords.

Few students documented what they found; even fewer reflected what changed as a result of exploring their topics via research. I suspect this is due to: (1) the convenience of emailing yourself articles may make the task of writing down bibliographic information seem unnecessary/redundant; and (2) too much material to cover in 75 – 100 minutes.

Lessons Learned. We gained useful insights into assessing what students learned and areas for improvement:

Faculty Buy-In. The booklets we used to collect data were a product of intense collaboration between librarians and English faculty. As a result, participating faculty immediately saw the utility and value of the booklets and our instructional approach.

Depth, Not Breadth. While we tried to limit the number of learning outcomes (and therefore, things to assess) to three, even this was too much to cover. After reviewing student booklets, we realized we were mostly interested in how students analyzed their topics and reflected on any changes they experienced.
Roll with the Punches. It’s impossible to anticipate every possible problem and plan for them in advance. Also, you may never feel fully comfortable conducting assessments. That doesn’t mean there’s no value in doing it anyway! Just remember to be flexible, and know that it’s OK to stray from your game plan if the situation calls for it (for example, we scrapped the assessment lesson plan in favor of something that would be more beneficial for students in two participating sections – and we firmly believe we made the right call).

Ultimately, the answer to the question, “Why assess?” is that we want to see what we can do differently to help students learn. With this goal guiding us, we can be confident that we will act in ways that benefit our students. And isn’t that why we instruction librarians do what we do?

How Do They Do It? Talking with Melissa Bowles-Terry about UNLV’s Successes

Submitted by Nicole E. Brown and Carolyn Radcliff on behalf of the Information Literacy Best Practices (ILBP) Committee

The Information Literacy Best Practices Committee recently talked with Melissa Bowles-Terry, Head of Educational Initiatives at UNLV Libraries, to gain insights and advice to help instruction librarians improve their practice. The UNLV Libraries is an exemplary program in these categories: Mission, Goals & Objectives; Planning; Pedagogy; and Collaboration. Excerpts of the interview are presented here. For the full interview, including a discussion of the UNLV Libraries Faculty Institutes, Melissa’s advice for increasing collaboration with campus partners, and highlights of effective teaching practices please go to the ILBP’s Exemplary Programs website.

PRIMO Projects

Submitted by Bill Marino, Online Learning Librarian, Eastern Michigan University, on behalf of PRIMO

The Peer-Reviewed Instructional Materials Online, PRIMO Committee, of the Instruction Section of ACRL is pleased to announce that the following projects were accepted into the PRIMO database during its fall review cycle:

1. Online Library Orientation for Distance Graduate Students Anthony Tardiff, Theresa Kappus, Elaine Radmer of Gonzaga University
2. Inform Your Thinking Matt Upson, Tim O’Neil, Cristina Colquhoun, Nina Thornton, Jarllyn Lau of Oklahoma State University
3. Berkeley College Library Orientation Matt LaBrake, Amanda Piekart, & Matthew Regan of Berkeley College
4. Y Search Elise Silva & Leanna Balci of Brigham Young University
5. Scholarship is a Conversation New Literacies Alliance
6. Search Strategies New Literacies Alliance
7. Pollak Library Finding Articles and Databases Lindsay O’Neill, Adolfo Prieto, Jon Cornforth, Joy Sage of California State University Fullerton

Congratulations to all! Please visit the PRIMO database to explore these projects and others.

Teaching Methods Committee Rocks Assessment

Improve your instruction with classroom assessment techniques: A conversation with Melissa Bowles-Terry and Cassandra Kvenild 🎧 Recording

Got Professional Development?

Participate in Management & Leadership Committee’s opportunities:
- Accessibility in teaching with technology 🎧 Recording
- Developing an effective mentoring program May 17 - Register
- Critical reflection to improve and grow as librarians who teach Jun 2 - Register

On Fire for Teaching, Innovation, & Student Learning?

Check out the Teaching Methods Committee’s Featured Librarian interviews since October: 🎉
Caprice Roberson, College of Southern Nevada
Michael Stoepel, American University of Paris
Christina Holm, Kennesaw State University
Nominate yourself or a colleague today!
Instruction Section Innovation Award

Susan Gardner Archambault
Head of Reference & Instruction
Loyola Marymount University

Lindsey McLean
Clinical Training Associate III – Instructional Designer
AbbVie, Inc.

Archambault and McLean receive 2017 Innovation Award for their work on Project CORA: Community of Online Research Assignments.

Instruction Section Ilene F. Rockman Publication of the Year Award

Kelly McElroy
Student Engagement & Community Outreach Librarian
Oregon State University

Nicole Pagowsky
Associate Librarian & Instruction Coordinator
The University of Arizona


New ACRL Books

ACRL publishes a range of books to assist academic librarians in developing their professional careers, managing their institutions, and increasing their awareness of developments in librarianship.

Framework Forward: Support and Illumination on the ACRL’s Framework for Information Literacy

ACRL Framework for Information Literacy Sandbox

Submitted by Susan Miller, on behalf of the ACRL Framework Advisory Board (FAB)

The ACRL Framework Sandbox: sandbox.acrl.org is accepting contributions!

The Sandbox is a place of discovery and sharing that provides opportunities for collaboration and innovation in approaches to the Framework, both in the classroom and in terms of professional development.

Searching is freely available to everyone - you don't need a login to start searching. And since the content of the Sandbox comes from you, the most important way you can celebrate the recent launch of the Sandbox is to contribute your Framework-related materials by creating a contributor account.

Newest features of the Sandbox:

- Download count - for each of your contributed resources in the Sandbox, you can see how many times the resource has been downloaded
- Share button on resources - allows the user to share the URL of the resource to social media platforms and email

Bring an ACRL Roadshow to Your Campus with an ACRL licensed workshop
Community College Librarians Using the ACRL Framework: Free Webinars

Submitted by Sheila Stoeckel on behalf of the ACRL Student Learning & Information Literacy Committee

ACRL SLILC Framework for Information Literacy: A Community College Showcase 🎬 Recording

Framework Freak-out: How to Stop Worrying and Learn to Live With the Framework
Jun 1 - Register

Speaker: Meredith Farkas, Faculty Librarian, Portland Community College, Sylvania Campus

Description: Librarians greeted the adoption of the Framework for Information Literacy with mixed emotions. Some discussions around the Framework make it seem like it has either doomed us all, requires a total reboot of our instruction programs, or that we need additional degrees in philosophy and instructional design to even understand it. The reality is not nearly so dire. In this presentation, Farkas, a pragmatist and longtime instruction coordinator, will talk about how the Framework has enriched her work as one of many tools she relies on to inform her teaching, outreach, and assessment. She will also discuss approaches she and colleagues at Portland Community College have taken to embrace aspects of the Framework, particularly around outreach to disciplinary faculty.

IS Preconference: Going with (and Growing with) the Framework: Teaching Information Literacy with a Social Justice Lens
Jun 23rd  9am – 4pm  |  Info & Registration
Add to your Schedule

IS Program: To Teach or Not to Teach
Discovery Tools: Balancing Practical Instruction with the ACRL Information Literacy Framework
June 24th  1 – 2:30pm   |  Info
Add to your Schedule

How Are We Doing?

In an effort to make the IS newsletter more vibrant and relevant to ACRL Instruction Section members, we once again seek your candid input on the IS newsletter. Results will be used by the Communications Committee to measure the success of recent changes and to further improve content. Access the survey until May 17, 2017.

Disclaimer:

Opinions published in the newsletter are those of the submitters, and should not be assumed to reflect the opinions of the editors or of the Instruction Section.