

LOEX 2013 Conference Report: Nashville, TN

Molly Poremski, University at Buffalo
Deborah Lilton, Vanderbilt University

The 41st tour stop for the annual LOEX conference was held May 2-4, 2013 in Nashville, the world-renowned “Music City.” Over 350 librarians were in the crowd to hear some “greatest hits” from the wide-world of information literacy. Nashville was a fun place to have a conference, with librarians partaking in the local honky tonks and other cultural activities, along with attending the Friday and Saturday morning plenary sessions and then selecting from a playlist of 60 breakout sessions. Some highlights:

Decode Academy

Barbara Fister’s opening plenary session, “Decode Academy,” forthrightly assessed the current state of academia by asking some big questions—What are libraries for? What are universities for? What is the value of a college education? What is knowledge for? These questions challenged the audience to analyze underlying assumptions about the role libraries play in university setting. Fister, coordinator of instruction at Gustavus Adolphus College, argued that the library’s purpose is to prepare students to become life-long learners. She further contended that universities needed to be seen as more than places that produce faculty publications, bring in scientific research dollars, and act as glorified job placement services; she proudly declared “the purpose of a university is to promote without prejudice learning and discovery...”. Fister made six outrageous claims to help librarians escape irrelevance and combat “the doom and gloom attitude.”

1. *Research papers should not be a part of the first year experience.*

While a mainstay of most first year experience programs, this assignment requires a **lot** of scaffolding and framework from the professor to be successful. Otherwise, the outcome can do more harm than good, resulting in knowledge being seen as an assembly process and research as a “school thing” and not applicable to everyday life.

2. *We should stop teaching students how to find sources*

Since instruction sessions usually occur at the beginning of the research process, we tend to place emphasis on helping students find resources. This behavior inadvertently teaches students that the goal of research is “finding other people’s stuff” which detracts from the idea that sources are for inspiration and to bounce ideas against, so that the students can make knowledge and meaning.

3. *Citations are very rarely needed*

Oftentimes students overlook the importance of learning to skillfully weave citations into their own papers and instead focus on ‘italicize this, put a comma there’ rules. Because so much emphasis is placed on proper citation format, students tend to rely heavily on direct quotations instead of learning to paraphrase and tell a story. Fister argued that teaching citation formatting should be left for advanced research classes where students are doing research instead of learning how to write.

4. *We should stop policing plagiarism*

She questioned the relationship of libraries to plagiarism and intellectual property rights and contended that “this is not a missed opportunity to add value to the library.” If librarians are the plagiarism police, then this makes the library a place where rules matter more than creativity.

5. *We should stop implying that “scholarly” means “good”*

Fister reminded the audience that scholarly articles have errors too, citing *Retraction Watch* and *Regret the Error* as websites that enumerate scholarly snafus. While faculty want students to learn that primary research matters, they often forget students have not yet learned how to decode scholarly language. Librarians can gently question the logic behind faculty’s pedagogical impulses in order to help faculty teaching improve.

6. *We should spend as much time working with faculty as with students.*

Fister challenged the audience to provide a setting where faculty can interact with librarians and let the conversations flow organically. She warned against instructing or attempting to explain library pedagogy to faculty. She asked the audience to brainstorm about the last time they really had a successful interaction with faculty and work to identify (or if necessary, create) forums for more of these interactions, such as a faculty development program.

Overall, Fister instructed us to resist thinking narrowly about the instruction session. Since we meet students at various times during their college careers we see their relationships to information change dramatically over time. As a result, we as librarians are uniquely poised to help students think critically about these complex activities and influence their life-long learning habits. Consequently, “what students learn to do in libraries may be the most important learning in their undergraduate education.”

Full text of her talk can be found here:
homepages.gac.edu/~fister/loex13.pdf

Creative People Must Be Stopped! Managing Innovation When No One Wants to Change

Saturday morning's speaker, David Owens, Professor for the Practice of Management and Innovation at the Owen Graduate School of Management at Vanderbilt University delivered an engaging talk entitled: "Creative People Must Be Stopped! Managing Innovation When No One Wants to Change." Owens, who has an engineering and organizational behavior background, enthusiastically encouraged the audience to think about what exactly "innovation" means and what it actually entails.

Participants were asked to think about how they have been encouraged to innovate at their own institutions, and what might have stood in their way. He suggested that "thinking outside the box" is something we have been told to do, but true "outside the box" solutions are often resisted for a variety of reasons (e.g., "too expensive!" "too complicated!" "too risky!") and this can limit creativity and progress. Owens discussed six perspectives on constraints to innovation, each of which on its own can kill innovation if it is present and not fixed:

1. **Individuals:** don't generate enough good ideas.
 - ⇒ An individual must enlarge her toolset to generate relevant new ideas.
2. **Groups:** allow negative emotions to derail the process of evaluating and implementing new ideas.
 - ⇒ Groups' culture must support open communication and risk-taking.
3. **Organizations:** designed to produce routine and consistent outputs.
 - ⇒ Organization's strategy must be changed to support risk-taking and the development of new initiatives.
4. **Industry:** oriented toward the needs of today's markets and industry incumbents, and resistant to ideas that might alter the economic status quo.
 - ⇒ The industry must be shown the utility and value of a new idea.
5. **Society:** rejects or regulates new ideas that are inconsistent with prevailing norms and ethics and members' sense of identity.
 - ⇒ Show society how new ideas are legitimate, and do so in terms that it already accepts.
6. **Technology:** new tech takes time, expertise, and resources to develop and will be adopted only once proven effective and reliable.
 - ⇒ Require significant investment in research and development.

As an example of how these constraints intersect, the Segway was highlighted as an innovation that hit all the hallmarks of success (e.g., it had support from its organization and its technology worked as intended), except one: society. When it first came out, the Segway was projected by some to sell more units than the iPhone. However, this hasn't occurred in large

part because it misses the societal acceptance necessary for wide-spread adoption. To put it simply, as one of Owens' students said amongst laughter of agreement in his classroom, it makes you look like a dork." Continuing the amusement, Owens asked the audience to look deep into their neighbor's eyes, and moo like a cow. While the exercise seemed strange at first (especially since the entire conference ballroom sounded like a barnyard), it was an illustration of how dissent from the status quo can be drowned out by the group, therefore killing any creativity and individual might be able to contribute.

Owens also stressed that for meaningful solutions to occur, there must be internal change, and moreover, a *willingness* to change. He used the current healthcare system as an analogy; it's been pretty much the same for the past thirty years. Is it still meeting our needs? Owens went on to stress the utility of value of an investment. If we want to innovate, we have to create scenarios to support it.

Breakout Sessions

Christina Sheldon's session, "Gettin' to the Research Roots: Musical Metaphors for Citation Tracking," demonstrated that creation in scholarship, like music, is interconnected. Sheldon (CSU, Los Angeles) presented an interesting lesson on how one person's creative work can be based on another person's previous work by using musical metaphors. During the session, artists such as Lady Gaga and Michael Jackson's influence and influences were evaluated: for example, Jackson's work could not have existed without the prior works of Frankie Lymon or James Brown, and likewise, Justin Bieber would not be the same artist he is today without the music of Michael Jackson. By providing students with this fun and easily-relatable background information on the cycle of artistic creativity, they can more readily understand the cycle of academic scholarship.

Another way to help students conceptualize this cycle is by pointing out to students how the "similar artists" feature works on the internet radio service Pandora (which students are likely familiar with), and using that as scaffolding to help students understand how a "works cited" section of a scholarly article is created. Also, using such features as the visually-engaging Web of Science's Citation Map, is another successful way to show students the interconnectivity is foundational aspect of scholarly articles.

On Friday morning, Dunstan McNutt (Amherst College) and Mary Moser (Babson College) gave the interactive workshop, "Fostering Discovery: Collaborative Solutions for Teaching with Discovery Tools." It was acknowledged at the beginning of the session that, regardless of the brand of discovery tool, there are similar problems and it seems these problems are here to stay. Tools such as Summon or Primo were marketed to save instruction librarians time because they offer a "one-stop shopping" experience for searching, eliminating the need to show users multiple ways to find information. But, with their individual intricacies and sometimes confusing display, do discovery tools really save instruction librarians time?

(LOEX 2013...continued on page 8)

- Head, A. (2012). *Learning curve: How college students solve information problems once they join the workplace*. Project Information Literacy. Retrieved from http://projectinfolit.org/pdfs/PIL_fall2012_workplaceStudy_FullReport.pdf
- Identifying reliable sources. (2013). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved June 7, 2013, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Identifying_reliable_sources
- Van Hoeck, M., & Hoffmann, D. (2013). From audience to authorship to authority: Using Wikipedia to strengthen research and critical thinking skills. *ACRL 2013 Conference Proceedings*. Retrieved from http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/conferences/confsandpreconfs/2013/papers/VanHoeckHoffmann_FromAudience.pdf
- Wikimedia Foundation. (2013). *Wikipedia Education Program*. Retrieved from http://outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia_Education_Program
- Zickuhr, K., & Rainie, L. (2011). *Wikipedia, past and present*. Pew Internet and American Life Project. Retrieved from <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/Wikipedia.aspx>

(LOEX 2013....continued from page 3)

In this session, participants were assigned common problems associated with discovery tools, and they worked in groups to learn from each other and to develop solutions. Some of the given problems included students being unable to differentiate between types of sources, or students having trouble determining when to consult and then properly select a subject-specific database. Each group was given a worksheet and was asked to write a learning outcome and a student-centered activity that would help address their assigned problem. In the spirit of collaboration, members then shared their work with the rest of the participants. Ideas like searching for an item (e.g., boots) on a well-known shopping site like Zappos and then comparing the site's facet options (e.g., cowboy, comfort, rain) to how facets work in an academic search done in a discovery tool arose from the group. All of the responses have been posted on the following wiki: <https://sites.google.com/site/loexfosteringdiscovery/>

An interactive and thought-provoking session, "Make it Pop: Integrating Visual Literacy into Your Teaching 'Songbook'" used the ACRL Visual Literacy and Competency Standards to demonstrate how to enhance instruction activities. Presented by Kaila Bussert (Cornell University), Ann Medaille (University of Nevada, Reno), and Nicole E. Brown (New York University), this session had three active learning activities that could be used in various levels of library instruction. The first activity showed how the brain processes visual information differently from textual information and introduced the concept of the picture superiority effect. The audience was asked to create a visual representation that correlated to the question: "How many books can you check out?" If the answer is "Unlimited", a slide with a picture of a huge, overflowing stack of books is more meaningful and deeply processed than a slide with just text stating "As many as you need!"

The second activity demonstrated how to use an image to explore culture and historical context as well as introduce students to archival resources. The audience had to interrogate the image and accompanying metadata: "What do I see? What is going on? Why do I think this image was created?" This type of

activity is iterative and question-driven, just like the research process, and thus can be a great warm up for students in a library research instruction session. The final activity involved showing how to analyze the aesthetic qualities of images. Image attributes such as color, line, shapes, composition of objects, use of white space, fonts can all be isolated and studied separately then analyzed as a whole. With this knowledge, students can be better prepared to analyze and create images for their work.

Maureen Williams of Neumann University presented the session, "One Shot? Make It Four! Planning and Assessing a Multi-Session Information Literacy Experiment," in which she discussed expanding the traditional one-shot information literacy session into four separate sessions that are integrated every second or third week into class time during the fifteen week semester. In collaboration with a professor at her institution, Williams developed four information literacy sessions for two different courses. While the two courses differed in subject matter, each course's four sessions addressed the research process in the same way. In addition to learning research skills and applying them in class for their papers, students also spent class time finding, reading, and analyzing articles. Williams also provided handouts for students, with guided information literacy questions, which were part of the graded class assignments.

An informal assessment at the end of the semester showed that students in both courses seemed to enjoy working on research assignments in class. Overall, students indicated that the library research sessions were helpful. Anecdotally, Williams also noted that students seemed eager for one-on-one time with her during class. In the future, Williams would like more one-on-one time with students and better integration into their research into writing assignments.

For more information about the conference, and the PowerPoints and handouts for many of the sessions, including from all the sessions listed in this article, visit the website at <http://www.loexconference.org/2013/sessions.html>