

LOEX 2011 Conference Report: Fort Worth, TX

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The Lone Star State was the location for LOEX's 39th annual conference, "Fiesta de Excelencia: Celebrating Excellence in Library Instruction" in beautiful Fort Worth, TX on May 5-7, 2011. After many attendees on Thursday visited Fort Worth's renowned museums and Stockyards and an evening reception, 300 attendees on Friday and Saturday listened during the morning to plenary speakers before choosing from 49 breakout sessions. Some highlights:

Instruct, Engage, Influence: How Educators Can Become Agents of Organizational Change

Melanie Hawks, the Learning and Development Coordinator at the University of Utah's J. Willard Marriott Library, kicked off LOEX 2011 with a fascinating discussion of how librarians and educators can effect change in their organizations, even if they do not hold positions of power or authority. For those individuals who want to be influential, important personal characteristics include having a long-term commitment to change and being willing to invest time in projects that may not have immediate payoff since results might not be seen right away (if ever). Librarians must also be willing to adapt to the environment and pay attention to the organizational culture. Barriers may arise, so a circuitous route is sometimes necessary. Furthermore, librarians can't always predict results and must also balance lofty goals with realism or, as Hawks put it, "I'll take it-ism." Regarding those in an organization who don't "get it" (i.e., don't deal well with change), it is important to remember that not everyone will get it, but most people standing in the background are willing to go along. Finally, the "serendipitous benefit of being there," that is, being where people in power are, must always be kept in mind.

Why are instruction librarians poised to influence people across the campus? Hawks pointed out that they serve as bridges to other constituencies on campus, especially since instruction is a primary marketing tool for the library—an opportunity to market **all** library resources. Instruction librarians are involved in a great deal of campus work and get appointed to many committees. They build relationships with faculty and help make students and faculty successful. Thus, when working outside the library, if librarians really want to influence people, they must give them something. Librarians should approach faculty and administrators with an attitude of "I have something for you," rather than "I want something from you."

Hawks said that two stages of the ADDIE model of instructional design (Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, Evaluate) can be exploited by those wanting to be change agents:

- Analyze: Librarians must assess and understand their audience; they must know when to stop appealing to people who have dug in their heels and focus instead on people who are on the fence. They should use methods or arguments tailored to a given person/audience and figure out how to tap into their motivation: what is most important to them? Also key is knowing one's objectives: what is crucial for the audience to know, feel, or do? Librarians should prioritize these actions because change is difficult for many people since it may mean displaying vulnerability or ignorance. Behavioral change often comes when the goal is made easier or more convenient, so being clear about objectives is important, as is staying focused on behavior more than knowledge or feeling. Behavior can often be motivated by payoff or rewards, for example, a prize. However, it is sometimes more important to connect with people's values (e.g., make a guaranteed donation to a food bank for every library survey that is completed) or to meet common goals (e.g., nudge people toward completing training in shorter time frames in an all-staff meeting rather than in separate meetings).

- Design: Design elements should be easy and/or intuitive, and they should serve a purpose. They should also be aesthetically appealing; try to adhere to design principles that hold true across the board. Hawks then discussed what she called "vital behavior." For example, many behaviors contribute to safe driving, but wearing a seat belt is the greatest factor in saving lives—it's a vital behavior. If drivers wear seat belts, other safe behaviors will naturally follow. It is crucial to communicate that one thing that is the vital behavior in one's goal. It must be simple, clear, direct, and purposeful, and there must be some kind of payoff. Librarians must say or ask for what they want, and make it easy for their audience to do. Images, data, stories, or experiences can be used to humanize and personalize the goal.

Hawks concluded her talk by urging the LOEX audience to "put the boat in the water and go!" Librarians must get to the right place at the right time and screw up their courage to put their foot in the water.

The Role of Library Leadership in Advocating for Information Literacy

Carol Everhart, Director of Library Services at Tarrant County College, Dr. Ellen Safley, Director of Libraries at the University of Texas at Dallas, and Pat Van Zandt, Assistant Dean of Scholarly Resources and Research Services at Southern Methodist University addressed LOEX attendees in the Saturday morning plenary panel. These local library leaders work at different types of institutions—a community college, a mid-sized public university, and a smaller private

university—but agreed that the library must reach out to students and faculty, market their services, and recognize their unique position in regards to information literacy while respecting the campus as a whole.

All three library directors answered questions from the moderator and then addressed a few questions from the audience. When asked about what is happening in the world of information literacy on their campus, they all cited collaboration and partnerships with faculty as a positive development, then further discussed librarians' roles in curriculum development, on campus-wide committees, and as liaisons to different departments. On the other hand, they recognized that challenges and barriers to information literacy remained. Everhart noted that information literacy still needs to be embedded in every discipline and institutionalized across campus. Safley concurred and added that librarians cannot control all barriers, such as changes in administration, but she said they should avoid creating additional barriers for themselves, like speaking in library jargon when interacting with other departments on campus. Meanwhile, the three directors also stressed assessment, particularly, as Safley noted, on campuses that are more “quantitative” and “data-driven.” Van Zandt agreed, saying assessment is a solid way to get support from university administrators as well as more reticent library supervisors.

The session wrapped up with questions concerning the relationship between library administrators and instruction libraries. When asked what librarians can do to make their job easier, Everhart and Van Zandt stressed that librarians should do their jobs well and be the best teachers on campus, while Safley suggested being mindful of knowing when to pass a problem along to an administrator. All three agreed, however, that in light of a difficult economy and competition for resources, preserving and valuing staff is the most important priority.

Breakout sessions

In the session, “Incorporating Mobile Technology into Information Literacy Instruction: Opportunities and Challenges,” Chad Crichton (University of Toronto) and Robin Canuel (McGill University) challenged participants to value mobile technology and gain a better understanding of the current state of mobile services in relation to academic libraries. Crichton and Canuel posed several questions, including:

- What does it mean to “go mobile”?
- Is mobile technology changing what it means to be information literate?
- What are the best ways to incorporate mobile technology into an information literacy instruction question?

Participants broke into small groups, brainstormed about some of these answers, and shared personal experiences of mobile technology use in libraries and classrooms.

Meanwhile, Crichton and Canuel also addressed concerns about whether patrons will continue to use libraries in light of what they call a new paradigm – the possibility of never seeing your patrons in person in the future. Backing up their viewpoints with plenty of statistics, current anecdotes, and research, they stressed that when it comes to mobility, the only way you can fail is not doing anything at all. Likening the mobile revolution's impact to that of the advent of the Internet, they said librarians should be proactive and ahead of the curve on reaching out to patrons through mobile sites, apps, and augmented reality.

In the fun and energetic session, “You Oughta Be in Pictures: Using Video in Library Instruction to Engage Students,” Lori Mardis (Northwest Missouri State University) started with her argument for using videos in the information literacy classroom, stating that they can provide an emotional connection and trigger recall later, among other positive attributes. She showed an information-packed two-minute clip of a spirited discussion from *Glee*, which she uses in a first-year composition class, and showed attendees how she uses it to prompt students to come up with synonyms and other information that librarians can use to help students learn how to find topics and build searches.

Mardis then proceeded to discuss an assignment that she usually gives during library orientation classes: students record their own videos, giving an overview of what the library has and helpful things they can find there. One specific point she made is that librarians should not assign students to do a scavenger hunt. She spends just a couple of minutes showing the students how to use a Flip camera and gives them a handout with questions their group must answer for their assigned library floor in their video. Some benefits of this exercise are: 1) students answer the questions in their own words; 2) it is an active learning exercise, about as active as one can get; 3) the assignment is highly motivating and engaging; and 4) it enables them to work independently. Students have 25 minutes to film their videos and then reconvene in the classroom and have 25 minutes to show them. Mardis showed a couple of clips from student-made orientation videos and noted that the students have a great deal of fun with the assignment, and although the videos are not works of art, they are often imaginative, lively, and informative.

For “Ignite the SPARK: Fire up an Information Literacy Program for Faculty,” Seneca College Information Services Librarians Mara Bordignon and Kathryn Klages outlined the background, purpose, and implementation of the SPARK program they use to foster professional development in their faculty. SPARK, or Short Practical Academic Research Knowledge, was created in 2008 and has grown since then to serve hundreds of faculty members in three main ways: face-to-face classes and workshops, self-directed Blackboard modules, and Newsbytes, which are columns and podcasts that outline new library services.

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velopment. Library staff later visited other departments at CityU to advise on best practices in SharePoint, such as defining clear document hierarchies and naming conventions. At the same time, librarians noticed the trend towards designing instruction materials within Blackboard learning units, which are more widely adopted and used by faculty than previous document-based instruction materials. This give-and-take between the library and both faculty and staff has encouraged the effective use of two widely-used software programs to create customizable and scalable instruction materials within a centralized curriculum.

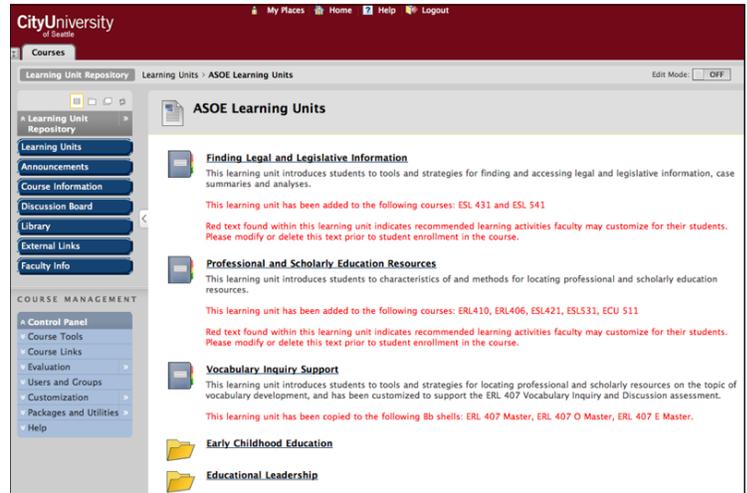


Figure 2: Snapshot of Blackboard Repository

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Bordignon and Klages said they choose their topics with their audience in mind, sometimes highlighting new technologies or library resources and services, other times troubleshooting or addressing questions that require more in-depth explanation. They continually assess their “branded-type product” and said SPARK has become popular with faculty because of its accessibility, applicability, as well as their own aggressiveness in promoting the service. While outlining challenges such as maintenance and workload, Bordignon said SPARK was worth the effort because they’ve learned that while serving the faculty, they are ultimately serving the students as well.

Ashlynn Wicke from University of Houston – Clear Lake began her highly valuable interactive session, “Rethinking the Instruction Session Handout,” by noting that handouts can serve many purposes: an outline for instructors, a place for students to take notes, a way to make instruction less passive for students, part of the historical record of a library, and a reference for students after the session. Wicke asked LOEX attendees to discuss what they liked to see on handouts and to critique a “before” and “after” handout from her library. General principles were discussed, such as 1) avoiding a “wall of text”; 2) using headings, bullet points,

and graphics appropriately; 3) making sure the purpose of the handout is readily apparent; 4) leaving room for notes; and 5) always clearly listing learning outcomes and the librarian’s contact information.

Wicke also pointed out a few more useful elements for handouts. One of the best ideas was to replace the boring list of relevant databases with a comparison table that lists databases in the leftmost column and database features as column headers. Cells in the table could be checked off by the librarian when she prepares the handout, or students could figure out which databases have which features as an in-class activity. Handouts could also feature screenshots of database or catalog searches, ice-breaker activities (e.g., library trivia), flow charts, etc. Wicke noted that sometimes librarians try to cram too much onto one handout and suggested that they prioritize by deciding on the top three things they want students to remember and reflecting that in the handout.

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/2011/program/sessions.html>

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One word of warning: everything in moderation! Use these techniques in moderation to avoid watering-down effectiveness. Remember, if you try to make everything stand out, *nothing* will. When in doubt, a quick tip for evaluating

the visual hierarchy of your design is to squint at the design. If you can still make out the important content, you’re on the right track.