

## LOEX 2012 Conference Report: Columbus, OH

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The 40th annual LOEX conference came back to the Buckeye State for the first time in over twenty years in order to *Energize! Accelerate! Transform!* the instruction librarians in Columbus, OH on May 3-5, 2012. After many attendees on Thursday visited Ohio State University's beautiful, recently renovated main library and later enjoyed a hotel rooftop evening reception, a record-breaking 400 people on Friday and Saturday listened to the morning to plenary speakers before selecting from 61 breakout sessions. Some highlights:

### Reframing Library Instruction: Advocacy, Insight and the Learner Experience

Char Booth's opening plenary didn't mince words. Playing off the conference's *Energize! Accelerate! Transform!* theme, she gave her thoughts on how librarians probably feel: *Exhausted! Annoyed! Taught-out!*. She presented three different frameworks that librarians can use to rework library instruction.

The first framework was a conceptual framework. She asked, "when was the last time we had read ALA's Library Bill of Rights?" That guiding document—with its focus on access, freedom, inquiry and openness—is important for libraries because by focusing on these key concepts rather than library simply as a container or place, we can glean what is at the heart of library service. Librarians play a critical role in this conceptual vision. Through developing and sharing our personalities and experiences with students and faculty we can connect with them on a personal level. Storytelling and narrative are tools that we need to use more actively as we imagine the future of libraries.

Then Char brought to our attention the reflexive framework which was used to focus on how to respond to students. One of the main points was to focus on the users (the students) and focus on their needs rather than your personal agenda. Librarians can accomplish this in part by using instructional literacy to improve their teaching of information literacy and she gave the example of her USER method. The USER method is where you Understand, Structure, Engage, and Reflect on the entire teaching process rather than focusing on a simple goal/outcome for a library class. She also challenged us to think about "failures" and how we can learn from them. Encouraging feedback and inquiry from instruction sessions can also help librarians reflect on our teaching.

The final frame was focused on the structure of library instruction, of impacts, learner experiences, and assessment. Assessment is becoming increasingly important in higher education and libraries need to be actively engaged in the assessment process. Char presented one of the private digital collections at Claremont Colleges which archives all the records and

documents from library instruction classes. She and her fellow brave librarians keep all of the documentation they acquire through teaching experiences, along with notes, so they can see how classes have developed, changed, and adapted over time.

Sometimes one of the hardest concepts to translate to your own work are those "real world" examples. How does one focus on concepts, be more reflexive, or impact learner experiences? Anyone in the room walked away with real examples of how Char makes her role and the libraries successful. If you need help determining where library instruction fits into the curriculum, use [www.mindomo.com](http://www.mindomo.com) to map the curriculum. Try experimental programs like recycling discarded books into works of art to challenge preconceived ideas of the library. Have students adopt neglected Wikipedia pages to help them understand the scholarly process. Char's plenary was truly inspirational. Her slides are here: [www.slideshare.net/charbooth](http://www.slideshare.net/charbooth)

### Quick Change the Channel: Web Enabled Television and the Information Age

R. Brian Stone, Associate Professor in the Department of Design at The Ohio State University, addressed attendees in his Saturday morning plenary session (though he noted, based on his review of the session titles at this year's LOEX, he should have titled it, "What We Can Learn from Food, Zombies, Television, and Design"). Stone, an expert in visual communication design, a practicing designer and researcher, challenged attendees to imagine new ways in which technologies, such as social media and Web-enabled television (WETV), are allowing people to interact with information, with numerous implications for student learning and teaching.

With the understanding that design is a systematic, creative, and purposeful activity that allows us to solve problems, interaction design, information design, and motion graphics will change the way in which students understand and use information. Stone presented numerous examples of ways in which his students applied kinetic typography, which mixes motion and text into a video animation, to visually represent information on complex topics. For example, a student was able to take quantitative data about gas prices, information that is typically stored in charts or graphs, and create a non-linear visual narrative that explored the difference in "high gas prices" between the United States and the rest of the world. Stone stressed that the success of these projects depended on the information sources behind the visualization, which are discoverable with the help of librarians and strong library collections.

Aiming for this sort of student interaction with information beyond the traditional research paper can energize library instruction and transform student learning. Stone stressed that motion graphics shared on the web and mobile apps/websites like Foodspotting and Pinterest reveal a deep

need for information to be communal, universal and accessible; students are begging to be engaged. Web enabled television furthers this desire. Televisions, as Stone argued, are nearly ubiquitous (more so than even mobile phones) with many homes having more than one. There is a shift coming in television from being passive consumption of content to active content creation and interaction. With the development of improved input devices, we will be able to use televisions to personalize content and to make material relatable and interactive. As the information landscape continues to evolve, Stone called for librarians to embrace change, make material relatable, to seek connections with learners, and to take risks.

## Breakout Sessions

In this engaging session, “Create Your Own Cephalonian Adventure,” Amanda K. Izenstark and Mary C. MacDonald (University of Rhode Island) demonstrated how the Cephalonian Method, a presentation method developed by librarians at Cardiff University based upon a technique used by tour guides on the Greek island of Cephalonia, can be used to enliven library tours and instruction sessions. This simple, flexible method involves providing succinct, color coded questions to participants at the start of a tour or class session. The librarian can then request questions from the participants throughout the session based upon the color of the question, creating a conversation that both accommodates multiple learning styles and gets participants to actively engage with the presented information. Additionally, since the librarian developed the questions, there is sufficient structure to ensure all necessary topics are covered and nothing is left out.

This basic method can be modified easily to be high or low tech and/or applied to small or large groups. Perhaps most useful, however, in terms of library tours, is the speed with which other facilitators can be trained in this technique. Izenstark and MacDonald outlined how to begin laying the groundwork for using this method, suggestions for devising questions, and ways in which to expand the method through props, music, or library branding. Participants were then asked to devise their own series of Cephalonian questions, which they discussed with a partner, and were able to submit to a shared question bank, which they could access later for additional ideas.

In the heavily attended session, “500 Students, 55 Raters, and 5 Rubrics Later: What We Learned from an Authentic, Collaborative, and National Assessment Project,” Dr. Megan Oakleaf (Syracuse University), Jackie Belanger (University of Washington – Bothell), Carroll Wilkinson (University of West Virginia), and Ning Zou (Dominican University), shared their findings and perspectives as participants in the first cohort (2010-2011) of the three year, IMLS-funded research project, Rubric Assessment of Information Literacy Skills (RAILS), which is designed to investigate the use of rubrics for information literacy assessment in higher education. This includes developing information literacy rubrics, providing a model for analyzing sources, developing materials for training to get reliable scores when applying rubrics to student learning, identifying indicators of rater expertise for librarians and faculty applying rubrics, and maintaining a website to share results and information on rubric assessment.

Belanger, Wilkinson, and Zou, all Cohort 1 lead librarians at their participating institutions, provided insight into their RAILS experience as they worked to develop rubrics at their individual institutions, provide training to raters through the rubric norming process, and apply their rubrics to student research artifacts. Based upon their experience, the most successful campus collaborations at their individual institutions were achieved by drawing upon existing librarian and faculty collaborations, evaluating a skill common to many partners, such as the legal and ethical use of information, and making sure to include those people on campus excited about IL assessment, as they will be able to promote rubric use across campus. These participants also extensively discussed their challenges, which included norming the rubrics, time constraints, and the length of student artifacts being scored. Despite these challenges, participants from the Cohort 1 institutions reported an improvement in their teaching and greater activity in assessing student learning. More information on this project and the 2011-2012 cohort can be found at [www.railsontrack.info](http://www.railsontrack.info)

One hurdle that first-year students need to overcome is the transition from living at home to living at college. Learning communities (LC), a grouping of students for a year with a defined thematic focus, common courses, and support structure, are a bridge for these students as they navigate that change. Alison Bradley and Stephanie Otis (UNC Charlotte) in their session, “Connecting with First-Year Students in Community: Library Engagement with Freshman Learning Communities” described their experiences working very closely with each of the 16 different LCs on their campus, as involving the library in the LC can be beneficial for both libraries and students.

One example of their work was establishing an in-house library instruction class for Engineering students who lived in a residence hall that had teaching space available. The librarian would go to the classroom to teach students in a drop-in session format. The students liked being able to go to class very close to where they live. This program was successful because these freshmen were now more easily reached at their point of need through library-related outreach, tutorials in course management systems, and library workshops targeted towards their particular curriculum.

There were several challenges when working with LC students, such as understanding the culture and history of each LC or getting responses to their outreach from the LC Coordinators, but the presenters agreed that it was a worthwhile experience for the librarians and students. To make this program better, they will try to: make more connections with those outside the library at every level to facilitate more meaningful interactions with students; emphasize strengths of the program and understand the weaknesses; and focus on demonstrating results in a useful, meaningful way.

In “From Classrooms to Learning Spaces: New and Remodeled Library Instruction Rooms,” Jason Vance and Kristen West (Middle Tennessee State University) provided a detailed overview of trends in library classroom design based upon a survey of academic library classrooms that were newly de-

ment. Are there terms or concepts you do not understand in this assignment? If so, what are they? If you needed assistance, who would you ask to help you? Why would you go to this person for help? How would you feel if you were given this assignment?" The questions cause the students to examine what they already know about research in order to prime them for pattern recognition in relation to the work we'll be doing the rest of the semester.

We then move into the fun part of the assignment where I break students into small groups to use social learning. I have the groups share their individual reflections, then come to a group consensus, and make brief comic strips showing an overview of their collective feelings and reactions to research papers. We use a variety of free web based comic strip creators to create the comic strips including ArtisanCam Super Action Comic Maker (<http://www.artisancam.org.uk/flashapps/superactioncomicmaker/comicmaker.php>), Pixton (<http://www.pixton.com/>), and Make Beliefs Comix (<http://www.makebeliefscomix.com/>). Comic strips are due to me by the end of the class session, and we review them as a class in our next meeting. By asking them to create something after thinking and writing about it, I am able to engage multiple senses in the classroom. The comic strips are always amusing and honest and are a fun and novel way to bring the class together around their shared experiences with research.

### Students' Responses to Brain-based Strategies

Since employing various brain-based strategies in my classrooms, student feedback has been very positive. Students appreciate the positive classroom environment and enjoy the variety of activities used to vary their learning. Classroom evaluation comments have included:

- "I love this class very much. This class is different where we don't get bored and interesting. It's just amazing to be a part of this class."
- "I like when we make the comics, they're always fun to see what everyone did!"

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signed or reconfigured between 2008 and 2011. Through telephone and in-person interviews, a site visit, and a review of both library and higher education literature, Vance and West identified trends in the areas of room configuration, technology, and flexibility.

For room configuration, Vance and West used floor plans and photographs of teaching spaces, as well as direct advice about the planning process gained during interviews, to explore trends such as a re-orientation of the classroom to remove an established, fixed front of the room, allowing the librarian to have greater flexibility in teaching beyond the traditional demonstration or lecture. However, this conflicted somewhat with the fact most classrooms still featured desktops, as opposed to more flexible laptops or tablets, due to many reasons (e.g., cost,

- "The instructor is very engaging, keeping the students attention and motivated. Jennifer is easy to understand and has patience with her students."
- "I like the energy in the room from both the professor and other students; it makes class fun."
- "Very interactive and involves constant participation in order to make sure students are learning and evolving with the material."
- "I liked learning all the different ways of researching and doing all the little group projects"
- "I liked the information I learned and the way Jennifer presented new material to the class. Class was always entertaining and mentally stimulating."

### Conclusion

Through brain-based teaching strategies, I have been able to engage my students in my information literacy classrooms and thus am able to teach them essential information literacy skills. I plan to continue to explore other brain-based teaching strategies in the future as they are rewarding for my students' educational experiences and for me as a teacher.

### References

- Booth, C. (2011). *Reflective teaching, effective learning: Instructional literacy for library educators*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association.
- Tokuhama-Espinosa, T. (2011). *Mind, brain, and education science: A comprehensive guide to the new brain-based learning*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.
- Willis, J. (2006). *Research-based strategies to ignite student learning: Insights from a neurologist and classroom teacher*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

security, screen size). This choice of technology worked well overall, but did create occasional line of sight issues where certain students could not easily see the instructor. They also found that some past technology trends, such as whiteboards, SMART boards, and screen sharing software, continue. The need to accommodate various learning styles with mobile furniture than can be easily configured based on the purpose or size of the class was also discussed. These are spaces, moreover, that need to host non-teaching functions or be open to serve as a lab when not being used for instruction.

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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/2012/sessions.html>