The Quarterly Interview: Nancy Goebel

Augustana Campus, University of Alberta
-Edited Transcript-

LOEX: *Where do you work? What is your job title and main responsibilities? How long have you been in this position?*

Goebel: I work at the Augustana Campus Library of the University of Alberta (UofA) in Camrose, Alberta, Canada. I am the Head Librarian and my main responsibilities are administrative. Augustana is, however, a campus which focuses on quality teaching as a priority so the library has the pleasure of working closely with teaching faculty. We work with them on projects, teaching and assignments, and the collection in that context! I have been at Augustana since 1990.

What would you say is your teaching philosophy?

My teaching philosophy is a hybrid: over an almost 25 year career, I have been lucky to witness some excellent experienced teachers and also some librarians interested in looking at approaches differently. I believe I have learned from all of them and we benefit most when we talk about the many ways we can approach teaching. I think that it is a growing challenge to meet our desire to share information in our teaching (we have *so* much to share!) while also dealing effectively with the many learning preferences of students (e.g., text/graphic/audio) and with individual and group work. In the end, I think one needs to remain flexible and be creative so that students are engaged and interested. It has been my desire to develop a range of IL-related experiences for our students. So, they have many different kinds of in-class experiences but our IL initiatives are an extension of that teaching. Students are taught in many contexts to consider their information need, to find appropriate information and then to use that information. So my end goal in teaching and the IL initiatives, be it a one-shot or in a credit-bearing class, is to foster skill development in creative ways, to build student confidence in these skills, and to create spaces and opportunities in which to explore the ways these skills can be acquired and used.

What three books or articles influenced you?

I found the following to be rather foundational and find myself pointing people to them in my work:

1) Booth, Char. *Reflective Teaching, Effective Learning: Instructional Literacy for Library Education*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association, 2011.

2) Burkhardt, Joanna. *Teaching Information Literacy: 50 Standards-based Exercises for College Students*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association, 2010.

3) Oakleaf, Megan. Anything :)

You work at the "Augustana Campus." How does that campus fit with the University of Alberta system? Does it have separate admissions, separate faculty, separate library, etc than other parts of the system?

The Augustana Campus Library is one of eight UofA Libraries. The Augustana Library is different from the others in that it is located one hour away from the other libraries in the rural city of Camrose, Alberta. Augustana was a private liberal arts and science college for its first 95 years until 2004 when it merged with the publicly funded research institution, the UofA. Even after the merger, however, Augustana has maintained its identity and mission of providing a highly personal liberal arts and science undergraduate degree experience.

Augustana has different degrees than the other faculties at the UofA. Also, Augustana's admissions processes are structured within the UofA's processes but we have a completely separate complement of teaching faculty and programs for students.

An interesting aspect of Augustana is that it has a lot of interesting information literacy activity. One example is its two annual IL awards: a Teaching Faculty Award and a Student Award. Please talk a bit about how those awards came about, how the selection process works and how do you sustain the awards year after year?

Augustana has long had highly engaged teaching faculty leadership as well as students demonstrating the acquisition of information literacy skills increasingly and we thought both should be acknowledged. So we started the two awards almost 10 years ago:

A) The Teaching Faculty Award for the Support of Information Literacy is an "annual award given to an Augustana teaching faculty member who has contributed consistently and notably to the support and promotion of information literacy at Augustana" (http://www.library.ualberta.ca/augustana/infolit/awards/#faculty). We have found that this award is great way to acknowledge those faculty who go above and beyond in their teaching to incorporate information literacy and the use of library resources in their courses and activities. Faculty are nominated by students, faculty, staff or administrators and a committee of librarians and the previous year's winner select the winner.

B) The Student Award for Library Research is an "annual award of $500 acknowledging, rewarding, and celebrating current and convocating students of

the Augustana Campus whose research makes extensive use of the services, resources, and collections of the Library. (http://www.library.ualberta.ca/augustana/infolit/awards/#student). Providing this award is a great experience as the variety and quality of paper submissions is excellent and it is rewarding to see the students demonstrating their acquired skills and using the resources that the library provides. The $500 for the award is raised through donations from teaching faculty each year.

You've spent some time recently in Africa. What were the reasons behind that trip? What have you accomplished so far, and what (if anything) do you hope to still accomplish?

In the fall terms of 2011 and 2012, I had the privilege of visiting Nairobi, Kenya to work with librarians from the Aga Khan University (the librarians were from Kenya, Uganda, Pakistan and Afghanistan). In 2011, we focused on developing a shared base of information literacy skills including to use of IL standards; librarian as teacher; and, assessment strategies. It was an amazing experience and I learned so many things!

I returned to Nairobi again in the fall of 2012 to work with a subset of the 2011 Aga Khan University librarians. Together we developed some foundational teaching resources for them to share as a core curriculum for their teaching including teaching resources and associated lesson plans, in-class activities, assignments, and handouts. We used Google Docs so that they could access the resources between their countries.

I did these trips with Margaret Law (Associate University Librarian for International Relations). While the work was clearly a professional endeavor, we personally have become engaged in supporting this area of Kenya. Margaret became passionate about the idea of building a library in Kenya, so we have been working hard to do that! Here are some *Coins for Kenya* pics (http://tinyurl.com/coins4kenya) and here is the start to the library in Kenya (http://tinyurl.com/ndwaralibrary).

WASSAIL, your award winning open-source tool for managing question and response data, has now been "in the field" for almost five years. What do you see as its greatest success so far and where do you see the tool going in the next 2-3 years?

When we first began developing our 20+ credit-bearing discipline-specific information literacy courses in the late 1990s we knew that we wanted to be able to measure the growth of student learning as a result of the courses (as best as we could anyways). So we developed an online software called WAS-SAIL (http://www.library.ualberta.ca/augustana/infolit/wassail/) to facilitate our pre- and post-tests for our courses. Over the years the tool has grown immensely and we released it in 2009 as open source software. In 2010, WASSAIL won the ACRL Instruction Section Innovation Award. WASSAIL is now used all over the world by many libraries. I believe that

its strengths rest in its flexibility for local installation, customization of questions, and pre-test and post-test data analysis. That it is open source and, therefore, free helps too! We have identified areas when WASSAIL could be stronger or more and the interface and/or features improved and we continue to work on those improvements. WASSAIL's scope is intentionally reasonably narrow and in that I think it maintains its usefulness for information literacy assessment.

Additionally I am currently involved with other librarians at Alberta colleges/universities in an initiative called ILAAP (Information Literacy Assessment Alberta Pilot— http://ilaap.blogspot.ca/). ILAAP uses WASSAIL to survey student learning post-instruction. We have together developed an inventory of qualitative and quantitative assessment questions which we have mapped to ACRL Information Literacy Standards. As a result we are able to better understand where our teaching efforts rest, the impact of the teaching, student learning (and areas they express they need more instruction) and a resulting strengthened culture of assessment at our institutions.

Yet another long-running Augustana IL activity is the annual Augustana Info Lit Workshop. What was the reason for starting this workshop? What do you consider its best attribute?

2013 will mark the 13th Augustana Information Literacy in Academic Libraries Workshop (http://www.library.ualberta.ca/augustana/infolit/workshop/). Each year, the workshop has brought 1 or 2 quality, high-profile speakers to Augustana to facilitate a 1- or 2-day workshop on a timely topic related to information literacy. Each year a number of Augustana's teaching faculty participate as well which adds an interesting dynamic to conversations which are (too often?) essentially librarian focused. I first started the workshop to get people together to work on the issues of importance in the area of information literacy in college and university libraries and, 13 years later, the reason is the same! The workshop is limited to about 75 persons each year so the more intimate environment is great for meeting new colleagues from across North America in a more meaningful and comfortable way.

Where do you see IL going in the next 5-10 years?

There are many IL models out there that are appropriate for the many contexts that also exist. I believe that successful models clearly reflect their local needs and mandate, and the model is developed around that understanding. I believe there is no one, two, or even three IL models that fit all contexts. Institutions are complex, their curricular needs are complex, and this is a time of tight budgets and seemingly endless pace of technological change. So the name of the game is flexibility, constant communication, and did I mention flexibility?