

LOEX 2022 Conference Report: Ypsilanti, MI

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The 50th annual LOEX conference was held May 5-7, 2022 in our hometown of Ypsilanti. The conference theme of *We Can Do It! Retooling Library Instruction for Today's Learning Environments* was apropos for an event that took all of our skill to make sure it came off well—it wasn't sufficient to just 'do it' as we did pre-COVID, but also with increased thoughtfulness, inclusiveness and safety. About 275 librarians were in attendance to discuss the latest in library instruction and information literacy. After prelims on Thursday—including a tour in nearby Ann Arbor of UM's Clements Library and its Museum of Art, and a pre-conference workshop on Living Servant Leadership—we stepped up to the line with a Friday morning plenary session and then spent two days attending 59 breakout sessions. Some highlights:

Information as Experience

The constant, sometimes overwhelming, flow of information and “fake news” has added increased strain on instruction librarians who are constantly working on how to best teach critical thinking and other information skills to students—what are the most effective teaching strategies in this rapidly changing information landscape? Mike Caulfield brought a relevant and timely discussion to the plenary session with his talk titled “**Information as Experience: Propagandized Events and Online Information Literacy.**” Mike is a research scientist leading the University of Washington's Center for an Informed Public's rapid response efforts. He has worked with various organizations on digital literacy initiatives to combat mis- and dis- information including the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' American Democracy Project, making him a great resource for instruction librarians looking to incorporate strategies into their instruction sessions that help students sort fact from fiction and everything in between.

Caulfield opened with a discussion of his work surrounding digital literacy and fact checking that used several real-world examples. He has developed and refined over the past decade the [SIFT method](#) for fact-checking which stemmed from his and colleagues' work teaching information literacy and source evaluation to students. SIFT stands for Stop, Investigate the source, Find better coverage, and Trace claims—each a step that the reader should take when needing to check the facts of material they are reviewing. This is an alternative to the still much-used CRAAP (Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, Purpose) Test, which—as most librarians attending LOEX know—has issues that arise if one relies solely on CRAAP when evaluating source material. Caulfield argues that students don't struggle so much with critical thinking but instead struggle with the steps that lead up to critical thinking because students will hedge their critical analysis (especially if they are going through an exhaustive battery of questions, such as with CRAAP) and end up with half-truths. An incorrect model of fact checking is one that is deceptively simple—in it people compare the representation of something to the reality of something and see how much it does or does not match. However, representation is just that, a representation, and it does not typically match *exactly* with reality, leading to half-truths—so how should a fact checker (student or otherwise) reconcile this?

The solution to this conundrum, Caulfield argues, is for people to first check their reaction to a piece of news or information, not the item itself. When people see a piece of information, they always have a reaction to it—whether it is anger, surprise, happi-

ness, or a different emotion. Because of this, people should refrain from initially focusing on whether “Is this true?” but rather “Was my initial reaction appropriate?”. Caulfield argues that we often see emotion and feeling in our decision making as a negative or that emotion makes us irrational and unable to see the facts. However, emotions or a gut reaction can also be helpful in conducting a personal fact check of information. Caulfield proposes moving to a framework where a person reacts, then seeks context for that reaction (which may or may not change that reaction), and then examines the difference between the initial reaction and new reaction. The difference between these reactions is the level of initial misunderstanding.

Caulfield pointed out that we already do this in our day-to-day life and provided an example: a coworker is short with you; your initial reaction might be that the coworker is rude, but as the day goes on you find out additional information, e.g., their sister is sick, and they are distracted. You would likely think “if I had known this at the time, I would have felt differently initially...”. If there is a great difference between your initial feeling and how you feel once you have more context, it is a measure that initial information was wrong in a way that matters. As Caulfield notes, “Your reaction to the thing initially isn't the shovel but it sort of shows you where to dig” meaning that as you think about your reaction it will show you what you care about it and those things that are important about it to you are the things that you need to investigate further for additional context.

Caulfield also introduced the concept of “compellingness”, which can be thought of with the questions “Why am I reacting to this thing and not the others? Why am I sharing this thing and not others?”. Compellingness can be tricky to approach in class because it requires context or something for people to connect with and draw out an emotional reaction. In order to have students practice fact checking their initial reaction to information, any information or prompts that instructors create will need to elicit reactions. Caulfield notes that highly contentious material is not needed for in-class work but the material does need to be compelling to students, so instructors will need to be thoughtful about how to provide information or create prompts that meet this goal; compelling prompts will likely be different between classes or even groups within the same class. This work is vital to effective fact checking practice because without an emotional reaction to drive their investigations and inquiry, Caulfield contends that “students become very Spock-like about these things” and fall back on simple, checklist type reviews (e.g., like CRAAP) that lack depth and critical thinking and that ultimately hedge on whether information is true or accurate or not.

In closing, Caulfield reiterated that fast thinking or the gut reaction should not be ignored but rather partnered with the more long-term slow cognition, making slow cognition more effective. The fast thinking shows you what you care about and “where to dig” while the slow cognition allows us to question our reactions and gain context about the information or the situation. The addition of the gut reaction and the concept of compellingness has profound implications for our pedagogy as well as for equity in the classroom. Different prompts will spark compellingness with different groups of students meaning that instructors will need to be strategic and intentional about their approaches to digital information literacy in class so that critical analysis and digital literacy skills can be imparted to all students.

Breakout Sessions

Catherine Lantz, Annie Armstrong, and Glenda Insua from University of Illinois Chicago began their interactive breakout session, **Reading Remodel: Revamping Information Literacy Instruction to Encompass Critical Reading**, by acknowledging that reading—really reading—is hard. Instructors have long assumed students know how to read critically, though research and experience both prove otherwise; students stress over academic texts and experience anxiety when trying to analyze what they do not understand. Lantz, Armstrong, and Insua believe instruction librarians can help students learn how to read critically by incorporating the necessary skills into their instruction sessions.

To understand how students go about reading their assigned work, the presenters surveyed 15 students and 15 instructors to assess the reading habits of students. Some themes they came across showed students did not have a specific time of day or location they preferred to read in, and while most of them read online for convenience, they preferred print format for comprehension. The students regularly encountered obstacles, such as struggling with time management, keeping attention and focus, understanding vocabulary and context, and managing feelings of frustration.

As a result, Lantz, Armstrong, and Insua designed various activities for the students to partake in to strengthen their skills. First-year writing students were given the first page of an article on a Google form where they could annotate and identify valuable information, become familiar with skimming/re-reading, and ask questions with anonymity. They created another activity where they distributed pieces (different sections of a printed-out article) around the classroom and had the students piece them all together in a sequence that made most sense to them. They found the students experienced more comprehension and less stress after reorganizing the articles in an order different from how they are usually laid out: conclusion, findings, introduction, and discussion.

The rest of the breakout session was followed by an interactive activity where each table of LOEX attendees constructed their own activities by choosing one reading challenge to examine, articulating outcomes by referencing Bloom's Taxonomy, and designing an activity walkthrough. Attendees were able to walk away with their own critical reading activities to integrate into their information literacy curriculum.

Stacy Brinkman and Samantha Hilton at the University of California, Irvine, found continuous trouble with student engagement in online library tutorials. Inspired by a "What Kind of Researcher are you?" BuzzFeed quiz, and a walkthrough of a "Choose your own adventure" book, the two decided to approach tutorials in a whole new way, which they shared in their workshop, **Choose your own Research Adventure: Using Design Thinking to Build an Online Tutorial Focusing on Research as Inquiry**.

Brinkman and Hilton targeted the ACRL (Association of College & Research Libraries) frame "Research as Inquiry" by developing a "Choose your own adventure" tutorial to roadtest on a year-long asynchronous humanities course. They were honest and described their process as tedious and strenuous, but the feedback being well worth the effort. They illustrated their "design thinking" with a presentation including photos of their progress. They used the Python system Twine (an open-source online tool for telling interactive stories) to develop the non-linear pathways and used both online and physical concept boards to visualize the different outcomes that would result based on user decisions. The adventure proposed that the user would be drafting a research paper on the sexist and racist tendencies found in Tarzan, both the book by Edgar Rice Burroughs and the 1999 Disney film adaptation. The adventure then provides different paths for the user to

take depending on their decisions and provides applicable tools from the library to help assist the user in their actual research. Purposeful dead ends were incorporated throughout the adventure as well, where they would recommend booking a research consultation with the department librarian.

The pilot year when the first prototype was tested, after having multiple test-runs with other librarians and Humanities faculty, had 112 students complete the adventure. After reviewing the feedback from this first year and making edits, over 600 students used the second, even more successful, version that launched the next year, which used LibWizard to provide certificates of completion for the students.

Brinkman and Hilton concluded their presentation by providing attendees direct access to a website they curated to walk visitors through how they developed their tutorial at <https://sites.google.com/oxy.edu/loex> allowing attendees to interact with their website and play the tutorial themselves.

Annie Dempsey (College of Wooster), Lisa Morrison (Denison University), Elizabeth Sullivan (Oberlin College), Shannon Simpson (Kenyon College), Alonso Avila (Oberlin College), and Elizabeth Lang (Ohio Wesleyan University) facilitated an interactive workshop, **"Who's Got the Power?": Claiming and Distributing Power Through Design Justice**, identifying what Design Justice is, and how librarians can use it to "reimagine our learning spaces based in anti-racism and decolonization." The presenters, all librarians based in Ohio, began the session by asking questions such as "Who gets to design? Who benefits from the design? What values are being reproduced?" and decided they wanted their institutions to work towards a more equitable distribution of design's benefits and burdens, along with fair and meaningful participation in design.

This informative workshop was used to demonstrate how librarians do have power, whether they recognize it or not, and how they can then use that power and privilege to incorporate Design Justice into all aspects of information literacy. The working theory of design is it "reproduces, is reproduced by, and/or challenges the 'matrix of domination.'" According to the Design Justice Network, "Design Justice rethinks design processes, centers people who are normally marginalized by design, and uses collaborative, creative practices to address the deepest challenges our communities face."

Once Design Justice was defined, the presenters facilitated breakout group discussions where attendees identified lack of Design Justice at their own institutions or within their own communities and provided fellow attendees with context and ideas on how to implement Design Justice where possible. Hopefully, by identifying these gaps and shortfalls, attendees would have a starting point to act in their workplace and community.

In **Just in Case: Utilizing Case Based Instruction to Team Information Literacy**, Alyson Vaaler and Jillian Eslami (Texas A&M University) shared how they adapted case-based learning by using mini case studies to advance information literacy instruction at their institution. This approach to information literacy instruction comes from the constructivism theory which states that students construct knowledge rather than passively taking it in. This session focused on case-based learning but other types of constructivist approaches to learning include inquiry-based learning and problem-based learning. Case studies, a common tool in business instruction, are usually in-depth and detailed examinations of a particular issue or problem within real-world context.

Elements of good case study teaching include diversity in the cases, both in their inclusion of people but also the issues that they

The best internet hoaxes and misinformation out there stir up emotions and makes us feel something. But if we can empower students to pause after reading something that triggers them, we may be able to disrupt the cycle of misinformation. Pause. Breathe. Let your emotions regulate, let all the chemicals that just flooded your nervous system dissipate. Then, evaluate the information before you. This is similar to the increasingly popular SIFT method by Mike Caulfield (2019) where the first step is “Stop.” In my research study, I found that for several of the posts, students would mark that they were likely to share the information while being very unconfident that the information was accurate. In fact, on a viral post about the MoMo challenge, authored by a personal Facebook account, 46% of participants marked that they were very or somewhat likely to share the post, but 37% marked that they were somewhat or very unconfident that the post was accurate. If students could remember to simply pause before deciding to share or not share, paired with their repeated exposure to evaluating authority and their increased social responsibility, they could radically change their social media experience.

Conclusion

Through my research in students evaluating authority within social media posts, I came away with three predominant implications for teaching information literacy and the ACRL frame, Authority is Contextual and Constructed: these included having stu-

dents assess their information needs, expanding information literacy instruction across the curriculum and outside the classroom, and empowering students to claim their social responsibility on the social internet. These findings are research-informed and will hopefully spark further ideas to both reinforce the importance of understanding authority as well as mitigate some of the challenges regarding teaching this frame. I enthusiastically share these findings but also posture myself as a learner; I strongly encourage readers to experiment with these techniques as well as other methods of discussing authority with students.

References

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For **Appendix A** and **B**, see: https://bit.ly/484-491_Appendices_Abdeljawad

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present. Additionally, a good case tells a story while also provoking conflict, at the very least providing something that needs to be solved. Finally, a good case is relevant to students and ties into the work they are doing in class such as their readings, assignments, or needed skills. Advantages of using case-based learning in the information literacy classroom include that cases put information literacy and research concepts into realistic context for students; additionally, using cases is a form of active learning since students are actively engaged in solving the problems presented to them. As with any classroom instruction it is also important to consider assessment and think about how instructors will know that students have accomplished learning. Vaaler and Eslami recommended three types of assessment for case-based learning: performance-based assessment (e.g., how successful they were in finding an answer?), peer assessment (e.g., can students guide their peers to the answer?), and classroom observation (e.g., what are instructors seeing from watching students work?).

This was an interactive workshop, so small groups were each given examples of an IL-focused case study to analyze, such as topics like needing to locate a last-minute citation, conducting market research after graduation, and conducting research before signing a government petition. The groups reviewed their case and answered a scaffolded set of questions where they were asked to think critically in order to identify how they thought students might approach “solving” each case study, the resources they would need to be successful, as well as the challenges that the students would face when approaching the case.

Jennifer Ditkoff (Community College of Baltimore County) and Virginia Seymour (Savannah College of Art and Design) introduced attendees to the concept of signature pedagogies in their interactive workshop, **Trading Spaces: Re-imagining Library Instruction Using Disciplinary Signature Pedagogies**. The presenters cited Shulman’s 2005 work on signature pedagogies which defines them as “the types of teaching that organize the fundamental ways in which future practitioners are educated for their new

professions.” The presenters put forth that librarians often teach information literacy in ways that are very similar to the way in which librarians were first taught—a mix of lecture, demonstration, and guided exploration. However, other disciplines do not conduct instruction in these same ways leading to a mismatch of expectations and learning objectives.

Ditkoff and Seymour point to potential benefits of leaning on signature pedagogies when librarians are conducting subject specific instruction. One benefit is that utilizing a discipline’s specific pedagogy will allow students to lower their cognitive load thereby increasing their learning potential. Cognitive Load Theory holds that learning potential is impacted by the working memory available while completing a task so if students have to first adapt to a new method of classroom instruction during a library session, they are using more working memory before a librarian’s lesson even starts. Additionally, utilizing signature pedagogies allows students room to enact information literacy principles with the familiar context of their discipline. Finally, applying signature pedagogies also raises the potential of students connecting the relevance of important information literacy concepts to their work both inside and outside of a classroom.

This workshop allowed participants time to think critically about typical pedagogies for a variety of disciplines (e.g., creative arts students typically learn in a studio setting; nursing students are coached to find a “best answer” in a clinical setting) compared to what a typical library lesson might look like for students in those disciplines. Group discussion was also incorporated to allow participants time to discuss how various IL skills and the Framework for Information Literacy might be best applied to help impact students’ abilities to reach relevant target skills for specific disciplines.

 For more information about the conference, and the PowerPoints and handouts for many of the sessions, including from the plenary session mentioned in this article, visit the website at <https://loexconference.org/2022/breakout-session-materials/>