

ACRL National Convention
Pushing the Edge: Explore, Engage, Extend
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By far the most memorable experience for me at this year's conference was the keynote address by Rushworth Kidder on Moral Courage, also the title of one of his many books on ethical decision making. He forced me to look at ethics in a whole new light. Instead of the clear-cut choices between right and wrong that most of us think of when we think about ethics, he examines those much more common choices we make between two right options, each of which would benefit or satisfy someone. What's a person to do? While not providing a roadmap for life's decisions, he did provide his listeners with a new framework within which to make those decisions.

I took home the most useful information from the very last breakout session I attended, "The Right Tool for the Job: Picking the Best Method for Information Literacy Assessment." The three speakers, Deb Gilchrist, Megan Oakleaf, and Carolyn Radcliff, each presented from their areas of expertise: Integrated Assessment, Knowledge Tests as Assessment, and Rubrics Assessment. I have attended many assessment sessions during the past ten years, but still headed for Seattle not feeling qualified to do assessment. These speakers managed to clarify all of those ideas and philosophies of assessment with some concrete examples of effective tools and techniques. Oakleaf offered a wealth of tips on how to write effective test questions that don't confuse the student and result in useful assessment information. Example: Don't try to fool students with various arrangements of multiple choice answers. They'll usually figure out your pattern anyway. Alphabetize all answer choices and there will be no other pattern for them to figure out; mere chance will dictate that the correct answer will not follow a pattern. Deb Gilchrist has long been a proponent of Integrated Assessment – collaborating with professors to include information literacy assessments within the course assignments in a meaningful way. The classic example is to require a brief evaluation of each resource included in an annotated bibliography, in addition to the summary of the content. According to Radcliff, Analytic Rubrics describe student learning in two dimensions, criteria and level of performance. They are used to judge quality, not quantity. They translate the messy into something understandable. Example: Rubrics can be used to evaluate the sources used in a works cited list.

The workshop "Beyond the Entertainment Factor: Integrating Multimedia into Library Instruction Projects and Activities" introduced the ADDIE format for instructional design: Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation. Analysis and Evaluation are both tied to assessment; Analysis is used to determine students' gaps in skills and knowledge at a broad level, Evaluations tests their acquisition of that knowledge and skill through your instruction. Between those two points occur Design – your blue print for teaching and learning; Development – the teaching and learning applications, which include outcomes (the what and why) and objectives (how outcomes will be achieved); Implementation – the actual teaching and learning.

As with all conferences, the key is to find time to implement all the wonderful ideas gained! Thanks to LIBRAS for funding my registration.