

This month I attended the Program Track of the ACRL Institute for Information Literacy's Illinois Immersion '07 at Illinois State University in Normal, Illinois. The conference focused on information literacy and offered academic librarians methods to enhance instruction at their institutions while recognizing that different institutions are at different stages of this process and also move at different paces. Immersion was an intense and informative experience. I have highlighted two parts of the conference below.

During the Opening Plenary, we watched an ABC Nightline episode about an innovative design company known as IDEO. In this episode, IDEO was designing a better shopping cart, and the design team used a whole host of creative techniques, known as deep dive techniques, in order to do so. After viewing the clip, we were asked which techniques seemed the most useful. On our list, my group included the following: brainstorming without criticizing any resulting ideas during the brainstorming session, establishing a community of trust and confidence, allowing many failures in order to succeed more quickly, and observing and interviewing actual users during the design process. These techniques allowed for the generation of creative ideas that otherwise might not have happened and provided helpful data about what features users really wanted.

One of the topics we discussed at the conference in significant detail was assessment. The Immersion faculty recommended starting small but starting now. Assessment is not just large exit surveys for graduating seniors. Assessment can (and should) occur at many different levels, including during a fifty-minute instruction session. The Immersion faculty also indicated that librarians should determine what type of assessment data is required by their institutions' accreditation organizations. This information can then be utilized in the design of assessments. Immersion emphasized that developing specific learning outcomes is key to assessment. While

preparing to teach a class or while developing an information literacy program, librarians need to ask themselves, “What do I want students to be able to do?” Instructors need to know specifically what they want students to learn in order to assess whether the learning occurred. The discussions of deep dive techniques and assessment were highlights of my Immersion experience.

Carmen Ifkovits
Associate Librarian/Reference
Donnelley and Lee Library
Lake Forest College
ifkovits@lakeforest.edu