

Historically the LOEX Annual Conference falls in late April - early May at a point when many colleges and universities are just finishing their spring semester and it seems fairly stated that many instruction librarians traveling to the LOEX Annual Conference arrive exhausted from the long semester, perhaps needing a small vacation, and ready for the semester to end.

Yet every year like clockwork hundreds of eager librarians from around the United States and beyond ascend to the LOEX registration Web page in early February with all the anticipation of an early spring thaw. To become one of only 300 librarians officially confirmed as having made the list of attendees for that year's conference, the registrant must submit his or her registration on the stroke of 1 PM EST. This right of winter passage has become a seasonal quest for many and is precisely what makes LOEX different from other library-related conferences: the almost cathartic anticipation that the conference brings to instruction librarians who attend.

Why such dedication and anticipation for the LOEX Annual Conference? The life of an academic instruction librarian is an emotional journey, a high-energy intellectual quest filled with constant anticipation, evaluation and change. Few positions in the library profession face such ongoing public scrutiny and evaluation. The LOEX Annual Conference is the drumbeat of this gathering of instruction librarians, directing us to our like-source, to our tribal peers. Collegial professionals who intuitively and practically understand what you go through on a daily basis to do your professional job. It's reassuring, it's enlightening, it's affirming it's liberating and it happens only once a year for two days in early May.

Some of the highlights of LOEX 2009 follow:

Thursday, April 30, 2009

- Pre-conference Tour

This year's 2009 LOEX Annual Conference at the lovely Hyatt Regency Albuquerque hit the floor running on a beautiful, sunny Thursday afternoon. Because of the unique venue and amazing cultural area of Albuquerque, New Mexico, attendees arriving prior to 2 PM were blessed with the opportunity to immerse themselves in a guided tour of the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center where true pre-European, American roots are at the heart of the 19 Pueblo cultures that still exist in New Mexico today. The Pueblo Cultural Center was as beautiful, inspirational, and mind-expanding experience as I've had in many years. <http://www.indianpueblo.org/index.html>

Friday May 1, 2009

- Plenary speaker - Stephen Abram – Information fluency in a virtual world

Mr. Abram, past-president of SLA, former president of the Canadian Library Association (CLA), and current VP of Innovation for SirsiDynix asked Friday mornings packed breakfast gathering to consider how their library serves its public. "Are we giving students the type of information they need or are we giving them text?" Following the development of the Web and digital access, Abram states that libraries were able to adapt from providing holdings to providing access in

what he calls an “article level economy” but argues that the current speed of change is faster than ever and that now we live in a world where YouTube is the number two-search engine, where “context and contact is king”

Abrams is suggesting that libraries must be prepared to provide service in these emerging context and contact arenas in order to remain relevant to students in the future and firmly believes immediate interpersonal contact with students is essential and must be known by student patrons. “Community, learning, and interaction” are the essential components of the current digital environment, arguing that many librarians are not up with the latest changes in user technology and that this lack of knowledge is creating logjams to change, service and learning. Abrams argues that [librarians] must be collaborative and professional and understand how and why Google and Facebook operate the way they do. He states, “We need to accept the fact that the CD and DVD are dead”, meaning libraries must keep up with the changes in digital access to remain relevant and understand the context of that access in order to remain relevant in very-near future.

- Problem-based learning meets Web 2.0: Using a YouTube video to teach information literacy in a problem-based learning format – Frances A. May, University of North Texas

Frances A. May discussed the using of YouTube videos to provide context for a problem-based learning 50-minute library instruction session. She postulated that many people get their information from news via the Web and television, yet have a lack of knowledge of media and visual literacy. May wanted to specifically promote IL concepts with both kinesthetic and visual learners, so she organized her class in groups and had them watch a three minute report produced by the BBC, “China’s grime belt air pollution extreme.”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1DNjJd2YfA>. The assignment required groups to provide an initial statement of the problem based on what they viewed and their prior knowledge of the problem, then research and produce a goal statement as to how they would address the problem, and finally produce a set of actions to facilitate the goal statement (solution). During the session May acted as a facilitator guiding students through their discussion and through appropriate research tools. Comments of students indicated that they appreciated the problem-based to the more tradition approach to library instruction.

- Using student feedback to improve course-specific LibGuides content – Karen W. Brown, University of South Carolina

Karen Brown and her colleagues at the University of South Carolina were using LibGuides <http://www.springshare.com/libguides/index.html> to develop user-centered, intuitive research guides for their traditional students, but were concerned with the lack of feedback on their creations. The basic question they asked, “Were students actually using the guides for their research?” The fall of 2008, Brown and company undertook a LibGuides evaluation based on a senior thesis history course to at least begin examining the question of whether students found

the LibGuides page useful to their study and what they could do to improve content. The results of their study indicated that less than half of the students used the LibGuides page for research, but among those who did use the guide they found it very helpful. Based on student response some of the recommendations for adjusting LibGuides include that a chat widget be embedded on every page of the guide, to pare down the extent and amount of information, to teach to the class the comments feature of LibGuides, to work with faculty to encourage student use and to rebrand LibGuides of the Library Website, making it easy to see and harder to miss.

- Doing it right: Collaboration, shared workspaces, syndication and broadcasting at the Animated Tutorial Sharing Project (ANTS) – Carmen Kazakoff-Lane, Brandon University & Paul Betty, Regis University

ANTS is the leader in shared screencasting tutorials, initially a project of the Canadian consortium Council of Prairie and Pacific University Libraries (COPPUL), ANTS mission is to create a “critical mass of open-source tutorials and to eliminate duplication of creation effort across institutions”. The ANTS motto is “Libraries working together to create open-source library tutorials.” a noble endeavor indeed and one worth looking into for any library wanting to create tutorials, without reinventing the wheel.

The only stipulations in becoming involved with ANTS is that you must create tutorials using Shockwave flash files, standard protocol in Camtasia, Captivate, and many other proprietary and open-source screencasting software, and you should share your creations with the ANTS consortium. For further information on the ANTS project go to the ANTS Wiki at <http://ants.wetpaint.com/?t=anon> to learn about the project, view best practices in screencasting, keeping up to date and getting help, how to contribute, and answers to all your questions.

Poster sessions

- Live and online! Developing drop-in library instruction sessions for distance learners – Robin Miller, Graduate Student, UIUC

Robin Miller’s description of developing synchronous, online instruction sessions for distance education students using Dimdim, a free online meeting program, was the most exciting discovery I made at LOEX 2009. The software “delivers synchronized live presentations, whiteboards and web pages while sharing your voice and video over the Internet - with no download.” Ms. Miller described how she set up instruction sessions with distance students from many locations all heading through the Dimdim Website <http://www.dimdim.com/>. The students can see and hear the Instructor and view instructor’s active desktop. Although the Instructor cannot hear and see the students or their desktop, the instructor can answer student questions with a chat feature provided. The implication is not only to provide synchronous

instruction session, but to provide real-time consultation, office hours for distance learners who would benefit from the human factor provided by real-time librarian availability.

Saturday May 2, 2009

- Plenary speaker – Susan Deese-Roberts – Blazing Trails: Leading student learning

Susan Deese-Roberts, Professor Emerita of University Libraries, University of Mexico expertise in learning style theories and curriculum design systems, shared with the breakfast gather her insights into what students are thinking while we teach them and how to direct that thinking. At Saturday morning's breakfast gathering Deese-Roberts asked us to think about instruction in terms of learning modes of the learners:

- Auditory learners, approximately 34% of all learners, learn through listening.
- Visual learners, approximately 29% of all learners like to see what they are trying to learn. They like color and often take down lots of notes and later decide what information is important.
- Kinesthetic learners, approximately 37% of all learners, learn by doing, moving, and touching. A hands-on approach and physical movement in learning.

Deese-Roberts suggests to us that people can learn in almost any manner, however most have a preference mode that we must address when planning instruction and so while planning an instruction session and we focus on two to three learning outcomes to be achieved by students, we should also consider the auditory, visual, and kinesthetic modes of learning when considering the method of delivery.

Deese-Roberts suggested that we all take a \$10.00 test to discover what kind of learner we are. www.aboutlearning.com She argues that if we know what kind of learner we are we will better understand how we teach, and therefore be in a more knowledgeable position to adjust our instruction design to reach the preferred learning styles we may be missing.

- Information literacy and librarianship in the age of the social web: A critical discourse analysis of ili-l postings – Sarah Polkinghorne, University of Alberta & Cameron Hoffman, Concordia University

Polkinghorne and Hoffman, two Canadian librarian researchers, were interested in studying the concept of social software and IL integration and found that it was not appearing in the literature at the time. Not dissuaded they determined that a discourse analysis framework could be utilized to explore the Information Literacy Instruction Discussion List (**ili-l**) listserv between January through October 2008.

<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/about/sections/is/ilil.cfm>

They chose this source because it is the primary listserv of national conversation with issue of interest to working instruction librarians and so might be a good place to understand the discourses of the time. Polkinghorne and Hoffman's intention was to highlight themes that were emerging from the ongoing discourse of the listserv and to discover what kind of culture was developing the ideas and discourse in the listserv? Some of their observations follow:

- The predominant discourse (theme) was a discourse of control (or the loss of control)
- Both the emergence of the social web and teaching are challenging librarian control
- Concerns of control outweigh seem to the enthusiasm of using the new social web tools. For example, librarians that were enthusiastic about using social web tools were tempered by respondents who were concerned with issues of implementation and operation
- Listserv was full of explicit script writing librarians and database teachers, giving step-by-step recipes on how to teach the tools
- Many questions like followed the line "anyone using" Wetpaint or Facebook etc.? Many posters on the ili-l listserv are afraid of falling behind technologically
- Librarians are identified with the technology of education and less with the use of information
- IL is perceived as technology, with pedagogy missing
- Much fear and anxiety related to teaching was observed. Questions like "What should we do if we are not being paid attention to?" Answered by "Make them respond!"
- The teaching of pedagogical methods has often been overlooked in library school

The follow questions by attendees afterwards were critical of the implication of the research methodology. However, belonging to this particular listserv myself, I remember most of the threads that the researchers uncovered and would agree at least in part, that lack of control, lack of pedagogical training, and the fear of not keeping up with the forward progress of technology are driving many of the concerns of those who are posting on the ili-l listserv.

- Visual and media literacy, the overlooked competencies: How we are influenced by what we see – Frances A. May, University of North Texas

Frances May believes that simply teaching information literacy limits as opposed to multiple literacies is a mistake and that in our visual world we should be paying attention to what she calls media and visual literacies. May attempts to demonstrate during the session that much of what we see is subliminally giving us cues to its intention or content, that images are texts, a shorthand form of communication.

As an example she pulls two rocks out of her pocket that she found on a public way in Albuquerque. She explained to us that she knew that these rocks, which look like ordinary rocks, were in fact imported from another location, another state because she understood the geology of the Albuquerque does not have the type of rocks that they were. The point she was making, I believe, is that if we are not familiar with in this case geology, or the context of a visual object, we have no way of understanding that it conveys information.

May goes on to discuss visual manipulation in media, and how often we are unaware of being manipulated. She proceeded to show us several different images and we were asked to convey our feeling about them. She asked us if there a point being made in their creation and if so what that point is? She suggested that everyone's answer depends entirely on their contextual relation to that understanding.

This means many of us in the audience had slightly different opinions on meaning or intention. On the other hand, some intention of visual imagery was very clearly stated when compared with an earlier interpretation. She demonstrated through side-by-side comparison with old Nazi propaganda film, how George Lucas used Nazi imagery for the evil Empire in his Star Wars movies. Her final determinant was that if you as instructors can bring emotion and mind together the impact of learning will be greater and states that context is essential for information literacy impact.

- Shifting the language of research using problem-based learning – Mark Dibble, Texas Lutheran University

Mark Dibble believes that as instruction librarians we should bring to students the language of the professor, the researcher reflective of how they conduct research. Mark theory is that professors who research are researching problems, not the less defined idea of “topics”. He believes that student are confused as to what research is really about because topics offer no direction because they too large and difficult to limit

Dibble makes the argument for problem-based learning pedagogy that uses a case study analysis. He says the reason problem-base works is because it allows students to describe a problem and then perform research on how to solve the problem. It's student-focused, it's hands on and it is less general and more specific and gets students to think about why they are doing the research.

Dibble also makes the following points supporting problem-based learning:

- Research problems lead to better research thesis
- If you tell students to work certain databases without telling them how specifically to use them, you become an enabler by answering their questions as they occur thus the learning process is more active

- Students build on prior knowledge using the problem-based method and because of this they become more engaged in the problem solving process

Dibble emphasized through his session to shift from the use term topics and to instead think about the research problem because its more in line with what research faculty do, and if the assignment is structured in this manner, you can have students research problems that they actually would like to solve.

- Beating the competition: Librarian as performance artist – Marc Mason, Arizona State University

Here's the story: what does stand-up comedy, performance art, acting, and writing have to do with information literacy instruction? Everything if you're Marc Mason. Mark is an instruction librarian at Arizona State University who understands the dynamics of an audience and that librarians must engage students in ways that are memorable and entertain.

Mar Mason asserts that librarians have to compete with the distractions that students are bombarded with on a daily basis. His theory is if you are more interesting and more compelling than anything else in the student's vicinity, you can engage them to whatever the learning objectives might be. "Change your perspective", Mark demands. "These people are not your students they are your audience...It's no longer enough to be a knowledgeable teacher...you must be a performer, captivating students with wit, creativity, and charisma".

If this sounds impossible to many of our instruction colleagues, Dibble proceeded to get 50 plus instruction librarians to perform an improve routine that is called "Yes, and..." In this improve routine Dibble began by claiming that Godzilla was walking across the New Mexico desert and the person he stated this to was required to say, Yes and...and then fill in more information. Then the next person in line had to pick up the story with a Yes and...and add more content to it as well. This went on and on through 40 people all put on the spot to continue the story. For example, "I heard that Godzilla is walking across the desert, Yes and he still can't remember where he parked his car, Yes and he started heading towards Albuquerque and the LOEX meeting..." This was quite hilarious and everyone came out of his or her shells a bit, some more than others.

Dibble believes that improvisational, acting, performance techniques make for a more unified, engaged audience and helps the librarian in many way crucial to instruction:

- Improves confidence
- Enhances creativity
- Gives audience a positive experience they'll remember
- Will help the instructor be better prepared for the unexpected

LOEX 2009

Blazing Trails: On the Path to Information Literacy

Kent Carrico

Benedictine University Library

As the sun sank slowly into the west Saturday, May 2nd and the LOEX 2009 Annual Conference came to a close, a few very specific themes still remain clearly a part of my ongoing learning experience:

- Research topics are actually problems that must be resolved so stop calling them topics!
- Information literacy is not simply a function of the printed word, but is also of function of visual and media as well as many other forms, and must be addressed where pertinent in information literacy instruction
- Where many librarians are using Web 2.0 tools to engage students, many more speak about lack of control, lack of pedagogical training, and the fear of not keeping up with the forward progress of technology
- “Community, learning, and interaction” are the essential components of the current digital environment, and that many librarians are not up with the latest changes in user technology and that this lack of knowledge is creating logjams to change, service and learning
- Shareware and collaboration are key elements to providing Web 2.0 access to students, and these products/services are in lieu of spending money that many institutions don’t have under current economic. The focus must be on educating librarians how to use them
- Librarians should consider the auditory, visual, and kinesthetic modes of learning when considering the method of delivery
- Librarians have to compete with the distractions that students are bombarded with on a daily basis. If you are more interesting and more compelling than anything else in the student’s vicinity, you can engage them to whatever the learning objectives of the instruction session might be

Interesting sustainable-food for thought don’t you think? Which is exactly why I and hundreds of other instruction librarians from around the country and beyond will again queue up on the LOEX registration Website at 1:00 PM EST next February for a chance to attend LOEX 2010 Annual Conference in the exciting city of Dearborn Michigan. Dearborn Michigan? Hometown of George Peppard, Henry Ford, as well as the ruggedly handsome 70s Medical Center icon, Chad Everett, and just a stone’s throw across the Detroit River from beautiful Windsor, Ontario, Canada. Fly or drive if you’ve never been to LOEX before, you should really think about attending.