

# 37th National LOEX Conference

## Blazing Trails: On the Path to Information Literacy

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### Overview

The conference was held at the Hyatt Regency Albuquerque, Albuquerque, New Mexico, April 30 – May 2, 2008. A reception was held Thursday evening and meals were provided on Friday and Saturday, allowing conferees an opportunity to learn more about each other and practices in other academic libraries. An overview of the conference, abstracts of the presentations, copies of presentations and handouts, if provided, are available at the LOEX 2009 website, <http://www.loexconference.org>. Choose “Program” from the menu on the left. The abstracts and handouts provide a great way of learning more about each session, although the presentations of the plenary speakers were not listed, at the writing of this report.

### Plenary Sessions

The plenary speaker on Friday morning, Stephen Abram<sup>1</sup>, in his talk, “Information Fluency in a Virtual World”, provided an absolutely fascinating glimpse into the evolving role of the library and the necessity to adapt to change to meet the technologies of the new century, such as myriad mobile devices, evolving and ubiquitous web applications such as social networking, and the evolving brain.

The plenary speaker on Saturday morning, Susan Deese Roberts<sup>2</sup> presented a lively presentation: “Blazing Trails: Leading Student Learning”. The speaker related learning modes to the way we deliver instruction on a very practical level... One of the key concepts Roberts talked about, and demonstrated, was that just because everyone can learn by hearing, seeing and doing, the method employed by the instructor does not matter. Ability and preference are not the same. She elaborated on the different learning styles and the necessity to incorporate instruction methods for all of them. Her enthusiasm was catching and here experience was awe inspiring.

### Concurrent Sessions Attended

**Problem Based Learning Meets Web 2.0: using YouTube video to teach information literacy in a problem based learning format<sup>3</sup>:** I am always looking for active learning exercises to teach information literacy, this session sounded like it might provide some ideas. She wanted to incorporate the characteristics of millennial students (visual and kinesthetic learners rather than auditory). The presenter also wanted to incorporate the fact that most Millennials watch news programs rather than use print or radio sources. Capitalizing on these facts, she built a 50 minute session using a BBC news clip, and provided an active group learning experience for them. She created a list

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<sup>1</sup> Friday, May 1, 2009. Presenter: Stephen Abram, columnist and author. See the LOEX 2009 website for his extensive biographical information.

<sup>2</sup> Saturday, May 2, 2009. Presenter: Susan Deese Roberts, Professor Emerita, University Libraries, University of New Mexico. See the LOEX website for more biographical information.

<sup>3</sup> Friday, May 1, 2009. Presenter: Frances A. May, University of North Texas

of questions incorporating information literacy principles they needed to answer after watching the news clip: list the facts, develop a problem statement, determine the information need and construct a search. She kept them on track by walking around the room to answer questions and check their progress. Groups then presented their findings. This activity seems very doable for students to learn the information literacy concepts.

**Using Web 2.0 Tools Such as Google Apps in Library Instruction Sessions with Non Traditional Students<sup>4</sup>:** I was looking for some insight into the experience of non traditional students with a Web 2.0 tool, and information about Google Applications that might be new to me as well as how they might be used to teach information literacy concepts. This presentation was at a high level and did not get into many details. It covered some general statistics about non traditional students and technology. The presenters conducted a survey of their non traditional students which confirmed they were not familiar with Web 2.0 tools. The presenters then described, at a high level, how they were incorporated in instruction and how the instruction staff itself used Google Apps.

**Leaving the Farm: the power of partners and technology<sup>5</sup>** This dynamic duo, a librarian and instructor team, talked about their experience in forging a working relationship to collaborate on information literacy concepts and assignments. The librarian related her experience in working with faculty who had less than satisfactory experiences with library sessions and winning them over with custom designed sessions. The instructor candidly discussed the reasons for her reluctance to incorporate library sessions and how refreshing the experience has been in working with this librarian. Is it possible to forge this type of relationship all the time? I am not sure. Sometimes things just “click” between individuals. However, openness and shared goals go a long way in creating a successful outcome.

**Wikipedia, iPods, and Chickens: an active learning exercise to teach evaluation of information<sup>6</sup>** : The presenters outlined an active learning exercise to teach critical evaluation of books, scholarly journal articles, a magazine article, web pages, Wikipedia and literature online, and a newspaper article. They provided details of how the group exercise works, a teaching guide, a bibliography and a print copy of their webpage on teaching critical evaluation of sources. Their presentation and handouts were very complete and provided a total picture for using the exercise. This looks like a very promising method for teaching the critical skill of evaluation in a 50 minute session.

**Failing to Learn: embracing failure for successful instruction<sup>7</sup>:** Embracing the work of Roger Shank, the presenters used sound bites to emphasize key concepts from his

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<sup>4</sup> Friday, May 1, 2009. Presenters: Alyssa Martin, Jana Slay, and Kent Snowden, Troy University

<sup>5</sup> Friday, May 1, 2009. Presenters: Valla McLean and Carolee Pollock, MacEwan College

<sup>6</sup> Friday, May 1, 2009. Presenters: Latisha Reynolds and Anna Marie Johnson, University Of Louisville

<sup>7</sup> Saturday, May 2, 2009. Presenters: Brent Nunn, DePaul University, and Terrence Bennett, The College of New Jersey

work and how librarians need to change their teaching goals to learning goals. The presenters conducted some group exercises in which the audience participated. The key concept I came away with was that learning occurs with failed expectations and that schools take all the fun out of learning – working towards a grade and memorizing are not learning. We need to incorporate experiences that will motivate students to learn. Now, for more practical suggestions for creating those experiences.

**Visual and Media Literacy, the Overlooked Competencies: how we are influenced by what we see<sup>8</sup>:** As much of the conference is concerned with information literacy, this session provided an opportunity to learn what is being taught about other competencies such as visual and media literacy. This was the second presentation at LOEX 2009 for this presenter (see Problem Based Learning Meets Web 2.0: Using You Tube Video To Teach Information Literacy in a Problem Based Learning Format) Using some clips from such classic films as *Triumph of the Will*, as well as some video clips from Star Wars and covers of Time Magazine of the presidential candidates at two different points in the election process the presenter had the audience actively participate in identifying elements such as camera angle, color, lighting that influence perception.

**Letting the Inmates Run the Asylum: student engagement in the progressive classroom<sup>9</sup>:** This was a very practical presentation of a technique to develop an agenda for a library instruction session based on student input. The presenter commented that while it may sound scary to leave the agenda to chance, the same topics come up repeatedly in the student defined agenda and it is easy to incorporate information literacy principles. The presenter provided enough detail about the techniques to inspire using them.

**Beating the Competition: librarian as performance artist<sup>10</sup>** In this session, the presenter explained the use of “improv” comedy techniques to enliven instruction sessions and increase class participation. One technique was demonstrated using the entire audience and several other techniques with volunteers from the audience. It was lively, fun and entertaining; whether the techniques are adaptable to a classroom might depend more on the personalities involved than the techniques.

**Thank you, LIBRAS, for your continuing support!**

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<sup>8</sup> Saturday, May 2, 2009. Presenter: Frances A. May, University of North Texas

<sup>9</sup> Saturday, May 2, 2009. Presenter: Tracy Mayfield, California State University, Long Beach

<sup>10</sup> Saturday, May 2, 2009: Presenter: Mark Mason, Arizona State University