

LOEX Conference Report Dearborn, MI April 2010

As with every LOEX conference I've attended, I found the conference to be an exciting and refreshing source of ideas about library instruction, assessment, and embedding information literacy into program elements. I'm using this report to summarize the highlights of the conference.

Dr. Brian P. Coppola, a chemistry professor at the University of Michigan began the conference with his keynote address calling for student-centered learning that occurred around active groupwork and having all students, even beginning ones, focus on tough questions without easy (or possibly any) correct answers. I found his description of the chemistry program thought-provoking and fascinating. How much can we place students in charge of their own education, especially in library sessions? Would closer collaboration with faculty allow students to tackle even harder projects, inspiring even more excitement with their research?

As always, technology was a focus of the conference; I learned that some librarians had begun to use Wordle (word cloud software) to assess student learning, and learned about building a widget that highlighted library materials and reference services into Moodle. As North Park University is switching to Moodle next fall, I was particularly interested in the second session, and I'm hoping I may be able to adapt something like that here.

Active learning was another major theme of the conference. After the initial keynote address on the second morning, which provided interesting details about libraries overseas, I attended two sessions that focused on active learning. The first discussed a lesson plan method that focused on teaching using the ARCS method: catching the students' attention, proving the relevance of the topic at hand, reinforcing student confidence, and allowing the students to leave with a sense of satisfaction. The fun of creating the lesson plan, combined with the presenter's use of free online polling software, left me excited to try this method. Another session, focused on ice breaker exercises with active library learning, provided a helpful bibliography about teaching and learning, as well as fun sample icebreakers that would get students thinking creatively and critically.

The final theme that emerged was the theme of assessment and accountability. While most presenters included information about how they assessed the impact of their work, other presentations focused on how to assess our work in total. One presenter discussed how close attention to the Proficiency standards (by having librarians self-assess their strengths and weaknesses) had led to the formation of information literacy retreats and brownbag lunches where librarians discussed old and new teaching techniques for library instruction.

As always, thanks to LIBRAS and North Park University for funding this travel; I look forward to exploring the ideas I began to develop during the conference.

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