Resilient Practices in High Impact Information Literacy Learning: What and How to Teach

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Abstract

High impact learning in higher education is commonly understood as course assignments and projects show to benefit students and increase student retention. In addition, high impact learning has also been shown to result from pedagogy and information literacy learning outcomes that serve to positively change students' behaviors in the areas of health, civic engagement, and personal finance. In this session, six categories relevant to high impact library instruction will be shared and discussed: everyday life information skills; information-related practices that cross contexts; holistic instructional practices and pedagogies; critical community engagement; searching and selection of resources; and information literacy learning outcomes that address students' personal challenges and prepare them for quality of life.

Keywords

high impact learning, information literacy, instructional librarian, library instruction

Cover Page Footnote

INTRODUCTION

Librarians' involvement in teaching has long been a library and information science (LIS) topic plagued with controversies. Do librarians design lessons and teach classes? Can a librarian develop an identity as a teacher? What is the difference between teaching and presenting? What is the librarian's teaching area of expertise? Today there is significant research-based evidence that librarians should be involved in library instruction and formally prepared for teaching roles. Library schools are doing a better job of preparing students for instructional roles than in past decades (Lund et al., 2023; Lund et al., 2021; Valenti & Lund, 2021). While some improvement is good news, simply doing better in preparing individuals with information literacy skills is not enough in today's knowledge society. The time has come to turn the page, once and for all, on controversies surrounding librarians' roles in teaching and to embark on a new era of intentional teaching of information literacy skills. New priorities should be consistent with the assertion by Benjes-Small and Miller (2017) that it is necessary for LIS faculty and librarians to "[p]articipate in and contribute to research surrounding teaching and learning" (p. 165) and the premise by Julien et al. (2022) that teaching is a core aspect of librarianship.

With the goal of librarians teaching information literacy skills, a new open educational resource (OER) book titled *High Impact Instructional Librarianship: Teaching Information Literacy Skills in All Library Types* (Dow & Hovious, 2024) is freely available and discoverable online including in the social science, library section of the Open Textbook Library (https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/). This OER book brings educational theory and LIS best practices together to address what to teach and how to teach information literacy skills to library patrons of all ages and with many kinds of information needs. The book was used for the first time with great success in the *Library Instruction and Information Literacy* Master of Library Science course offered in summer 2024 at the School of Library and Information Management, Emporia State University.

HIGH IMPACT LEARNING IN LIBRARIES

The high impact learning premise influencing this Dow and Hovious's (2024) OER book is based on findings from a meta-analysis (Dow, 2024) conducted using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) Group guidelines (Moher et al., 2009) of significant reports of research published in education journals from 2000-2023. Selected publications indicate that enrolled students experienced significant, positive behavioral changes resulting from their enrollment and participation in college courses in the area of health, civic

engagement, and personal finance. It extends research by Kuh (2017, 2016, 2013, 2008), which describes high impact learning in higher education as course assignments and projects shown to benefit college students and increase rates of student engagement and retention, by asserting that in addition to course assignments and projects, high impact learning in higher education is that which:

- integrates information literacy skills in various post-secondary areas;
- emphasizes library partnerships across campuses and outcomes assessment, and
- occurs in content area courses shown to benefit college students by significant, positive behavioral changes in areas of everyday life information seeking (Dow, 2024).

Dow's (2024) systematic review, which was continuously conducted over five years, revealed many details about authentic learning situations that are interpreted in six categories relevant to high impact instructional practices in libraries of all types. The six categories are named and briefly described below.

EVERYDAY LIFE INFORMATION SKILLS

Findings in the Dow (2024) study highlight the presence of everyday life information seeking behaviors within higher education content areas of health, civic engagement, and personal finance. Everyday life information seeking behaviors as described by Case and Givens (2017) and Savolainen (1995, 2010, 2023) are those used when undertaking non-work related free-time exercises that are problem-specific and prompted by information needs likely to occur throughout life. Without the assistance of instructional librarians when completing course assignments in these and other academic areas, students may not have the benefit of accessing and utilizing the best authoritative sources, and they are likely instead to opt for using easy to locate sources of low or no quality. For many college students, quick use of Google or Chat Generated Pre-trained Transformer (ChatGPT) may be the norm putting them at high risk of using and spreading information of low or no quality. For college students to become information literate, they need librarians who teach the power and reach of information, avoidance of plagiarism, and how to become cautious of creating an unwanted digital legacy for themselves.

INFORMATION-RELATED PRACTICES THAT CROSS CONTEXTS

Using the lens of the theory of information worlds (Jaeger & Burnett, 2010), it was clear that the information behavior of students enrolled in health, civic participation, and personal finance areas was likely to be influenced by friends, family, co-workers, and trusted information sources from the small worlds in which they live, as well as larger social influences by public sphere institutions, including

media, technology, and politics. As Hovious (2018) pointed out, when academics such as librarians are focused on authoritative sources and rationalized searches practiced across multiple databases and other electronic tools, they must be careful not to miss opportunities to teach college students skills for engaging in information-related practices involving decision making and problem solving such as how to use, avoid, and share information.

HOLISTIC INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES AND PEDAGOGIES

In the three academic areas investigated in the Dow (2024) study, it was found that college students engage in many holistic learning experiences that occurred in- and outside classrooms. Holistic learning experiences (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Lipka, 2020) are particularly important in subject areas that cross contexts such as home, college, workplace, and recreation activities. Instructional librarians should be prepared to be collaborators with campus faculty in providing holistic instruction by guiding students as they are involved in:

- achieving course learning outcomes;
- self-reflection;
- interactions with diverse peer groups;
- information literacy skills instruction;
- differential learning by doing, modeling, inspiring, challenging, and enabling and encouraging;
- informational campus activities and programs;
- opportunities to develop personal relationships and strong networks; and
- engagement with faculty and other campus personnel who model stainability lifestyles that minimize environmental degradation.

CRITICAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

When higher education participation by enrolled students results in positive behavior changes as was found in the Dow (2024) study, students' experiences across campus are likely key factors in transforming lives, building peace, eradicating poverty, and driving sustainable development. College students benefit from active learning that according to Coles-Ritchie et al. (2022) emphasizes community engaged learning wherein learning involves participation in activities of personal and public concern that benefits the student's life and the community. This is consistent with the ACRL (2016) description of information literacy as a set of abilities for information inquiry and central to the specialized teaching skills of instructional librarians.

SEARCHING AND SELECTION OF RESOURCES

Even though many college students today have grown up with computers and use many different devices, they may still struggle to acquire, reflect on, engage with, and actively apply information. Many do not know how to use the library's resources available on and off of campus. This explains at least in part why it is important to know and respect the learning characteristics of today's college students. Yarnykh (2021) alerts educators that Generation Y and Z college students demand short programs and course sessions, content must be practical, and instruction must be well understood in terms of how skills will be practiced and specific to their future work. These educational needs can be successfully addressed through information literacy curriculum and instruction designed when considering the information needs of this target audience.

INFORMATION LITERACY LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR QUALITY OF LIFE

Instructional librarians must be hypersensitive to the importance of designing instruction with learning outcomes that not only target knowledge, skills, and values outcomes, but also learning outcomes that address college students' common personal challenges with the goal to improve quality of life. For example, college students can benefit greatly from learning to read, evaluate, and use evidence published in health science journals relevant to making informed decision about healthy life choices and about illness, disease, and treatment options. Throughout their lifespan, it will be important for today's college students to learn from scientific sources relevant to prevention of infectious diseases and much more.

OER TEXTBOOK CONTENT AND FEATURES

The University Class Resource Affordability Initiative Grant (CRAIG, 2023) from the Emporia State University, University Libraries and Archives is an example of prioritizing needs of college students. The CRAIG is awarded to ESU faculty who are willing to work to increase the adoption, adaption, compilation, and creation of OER or low-cost resources for college students. The authors of this book understand and apply LIS and best practices in librarianship as indicated in the American Library Association Core Competences of Librarianship (2022), the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions Foundational Knowledge Areas (Chu et al., 2022), the American Library Association Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Service Providers (2023), and the American Library Association Core Values of Librarianship (2024). This OER, organized in eight chapters, is intended to facilitate and guide pre- and in-service librarians to know and use theory and models from many academic disciplines to inform the teaching of various information literacy skills, develop excellent instructional design skills, and express high confidence as instructional librarians no matter what position they hold in any library types. As an electronic

book that begins each chapter with essential questions, the format offers features not possible in a paper-based book. This includes screen readable text, hyperlinked resources, clickable charts, videos, and example instructional documents.

CONCLUSIONS

To be resilient in today's quickly changing world, librarians must have intellectual and physical strength when there are information needs in society that can negatively impact members of the library's community. In librarianship, professionalism is strengthened through strong relationships and networks. High impact instructional librarianship can be realized through interactions with colleagues who are motivated and persistent. This LIS research and writing is an example of persistent and focused collaborative for the greater good. By reminding each other of the purpose and meaning of the professional work of instructional librarianship, it is possible to rebound from complicated times and setbacks in recent years. With high impact instructional practices as emphasized in this new OER textbook as the intent, instructional librarians will carve paths forward for others as they contribute to excellence in higher education.

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