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Curation in Education: Implications for Adult Educators in Teaching and Research

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Curation in Education: Implications for Adult Educators in Teaching and Research

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Abstract: This literature review examined curation in education with implications for adult educators in teaching and research and adult students in learning. Major themes include curation expansions and building communities.

Keywords: curator, curation, adult education, teaching, research

Advances in computing power have accelerated the growth of human knowledge. While some view the increasing quantity and availability of information as no- or low-cost access to the most current subject matter expertise (Kooy, 2016), others warn users may lack the information literacy skills to discern quality sources and make appropriate decisions about how to use information (Taylor & Dalal, 2017). Higher education strives to grow human knowledge through teaching and research. Colleges and universities face opportunities and challenges resulting from technological advances and new methods for knowledge production and dissemination (Benson & Trower, 2012).

As instructors and researchers, faculty work at the intersection of accelerated human knowledge, exponential information growth of varied quality, and institutional opportunities and challenges. Curation offers solutions and opportunities. Traditionally, curators collected, tended, and managed (Betts & Anderson, 2016) artefacts in a museum or zoo (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Today, however, curators share knowledge and add value by helping others makes sense of individual pieces in a wider context (Betts & Anderson, 2016). Applied to higher education, faculty help students, colleagues, and others make sense of learning content and research findings in theory and practice. The purpose of this literature review was to examine curation in education. Six research questions guided the study: Within the context of education during the last decade, who curates, what is curated, and where, why, and how is curation happening? To answer these questions, we conducted a literature review.
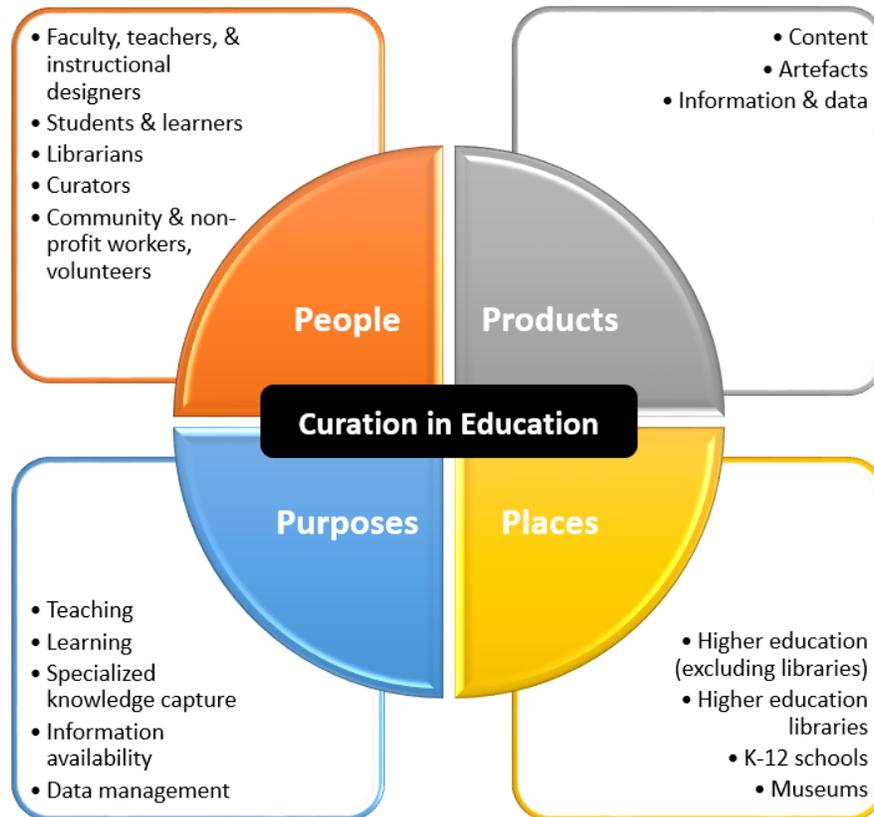
Integrative Literature Review Methods

Integrative literature reviews contribute to the knowledge base (Torraco, 2005). To identity potential articles examining curation in education, we systematically searched the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) database for peer-reviewed, full text articles in English, querying CURAT* in any field, excluding the unrelated term of curative for peer-reviewed articles published in the last 10 years. The initial search results totaled 165 published pieces but decreased to 60 peer-reviewed journal articles after eliminating duplicates, non-peer-reviewed pieces, and articles mentioning, but not discussing, curation, as evidenced by four or fewer mentions.

Structured data collection systems enhance the rigor, quality, and clarity of a literature review (Torraco, 2005). Therefore, we used the matrix method (Garrard, 2014) to create an Excel spreadsheet to capture data with each row summarizing an article and each column capturing data related to the journal, article, and, if applicable, underlying study. For data analysis, we began by reviewing the data in their entirety, next focused on data specifically related to curation, and coded for each research question. For reliability and validation strategies

(Creswell & Poth, 2017), we met weekly to test and reach intercoder agreement, used peer debriefing, and identified findings.

Findings

Findings comprise panorama, people, products, places, purposes, and processes. As *panorama*, the review comprised 60 articles, published in 46 journals, during the last decade, with over 60% in the most recent five years. See the Figure for major findings related to *people, products, places,* and *purposes*. Although 17 article mentioned curation tools, a curation *processes* was generally missing in the literature.

- Faculty, teachers, & instructional designers
- Students & learners
- Librarians
- Curators
- Community & non-profit workers, volunteers

- Content
- Artefacts
- Information & data

People

Products

Curation in Education

Purposes

Places

- Teaching
- Learning
- Specialized knowledge capture
- Information availability
- Data management

- Higher education (excluding libraries)
- Higher education libraries
- K-12 schools
- Museums

Figure. Curation within the context of education—people, products, purposes, and places; curation processes were generally lacking in the literature.

Discussion of Findings

Major themes illustrate the changing landscape of curation in education. According to Merriam-Webster (n.d.), a curator "has the care and superintendence of something especially one in charge of a museum, zoo, or other place of exhibit" (¶1). The first three themes illustrate expansions of curation from traditional, narrower foci to include newer, broader foci. Perhaps as the result of such expansions, in the fourth theme, curation in education bridges communities. Here we highlight findings related to adult educators.

      Expansions of Curation. In the first three themes, curation expanded from artefacts to include content and data, from non-formal to include formal learning contexts, and from individual to include collaborative curation. In addition to traditional *artefacts*, people curated

content and data. *Content* curation includes numerous examples of instructional content for teaching or learning (see formal contexts, below). Outside of academia, content curation includes faculty as public scholars in social curation and open educational practices and resources (Perryman & Coughlan, 2014), digital learning champions helping communities curate online content (Knight, 2012), and curating social network profiles with topic resources (Rajagopal, van Bruggen, & Sloep, (2017). *Data* curation examples include faculty as researchers creating and maintaining data (Shen, 2016) and using digital collections (Green & Courtney, 2015). In higher education libraries, data librarians play a key role in knowledge transfer (Thomas & Urban, 2018). In 2012, the *Journal of Web Librarianship* published an entire issue devoted to data curation.

Curation traditionally occurred in non-formal contexts, such as zoos and museums. Today, curation has expanded to include formal learning contexts, such as higher education. As examples, faculty curate course content (Deschaine & Sharma, 2016; Raghunath, Anker, & Norcliffe, 2018), and students learn through assignment requiring curation (Paskevicius & Hodgkinson-Williams, 2018; Schrand, Jones, & Hanson, 2018). Curation in higher education also includes capturing specialized knowledge (Charman, 2015; Jacobs, 2012), data management to meet institutional needs (Green & Courtney, 2015; Shen, 2016), and making information accessible (King, 2017; Thomas & Urban, 2018).

Lastly, curation has expanded from individual activities to include collaborations. As examples, faculty and students respectively and individually curate courses and assignments. However, faculty also collaboratively curate with students and learners (Hickling-Hudson & Hepple, 2015; Simpson, & Twist, 2016) as well as professional peers, research partners, and community partners (Cotterill et al., 2016; Marsee & Davies-Wilson, 2014). Similarly, students and learners also collaboratively curate with peers and community partners (Hornik, deNoyelles, & Chen, 2016; Innella, 2010; Mihailidis & Cohen, 2013). Additional collaborative curations include partnerships between librarians and researchers (Thomas & Urban, 2018), community partners (Kenyon, Godfrey, & Eckwright, 2012), and faculty (Hickling-Hudson, & Hepple, 2015). Together, curated content and data, curation in formal learning contexts, and collaborative curation illustrate the expanding role of curation in education.

Bridging Communities. Perhaps as the result of expanded breadth, curation often bridges communities. For example, museum curators use virtual journeys, stories, and exhibitions to build bridges between real and virtual worlds for learners (Sinker, Giannachi, & Carletti, 2013). Professional curators build bridges between resources and community organizations, museums, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations through improved access to open-licensed materials (Cotterill et. al, 2016) and open educational practices and resources outside academia (Perryman & Coughlan, 2016). Through data services, librarians build bridges to research centers, the private sector, government agencies, and non-profit organizations (Kulhavy, Reynolds, Unger, Bullard, & McBroom, 2017; Thomas & Urban, 2018); and with researchers and scholars for data curation and management processes (Bardyn, Resnick, & Camina, 2012; Scaramozzino, Ramirez, & McGaughey, 2012). Within organizations, integrated open curation and collection development practices build bridges among departments and units (Petrides, Goger, & Jimes, 2016). Curation bridges workplace learning and Open Education Resources (OER) communities (Simpson & Twist, 2016) and brings together peers engaged in professional development (Whitworth, Garnett, & Pearson, 2012). Collectively, the expansion of curation and bridging communities has implications for adult education.

Implications for Adult Education Theory and Practice

The findings offer implications for adult education theory and practice and inform future research. For theory, this work adds an integrative literature review on curation across the field of education. In addition, the review adds curation to education in formal as well as non-formal learning in higher education, communities, nonprofits, and workplaces.

For practice, the findings have implications for adult educators in teaching and research as well as adult students in learning. In teaching, adult educators help students make sense of learning content (e.g., readings, podcasts, videos, and websites) in the wider context of a course and learning outcomes. Curation offers solutions for instructional design related to vetting existing resources and creating new learning content to provide current, relevant information and meet the needs of different learning preferences. The findings present librarians, community partners, and others as subject matter experts for course content and guest facilitators. No longer limited to zoos and museums, curation happens in classroom and training rooms, learning management systems, and community organization and on websites. Adult learners will benefit from adult educators who vet existing and create new content. Assignments requiring students to curate, provide learning opportunities and sharpen skills for study, work, and life. Some curation projects even bridge the gap among higher education, communities, workplaces, and other learning and work spaces.

The findings also have practice implications for adult educators conducting and disseminating research. Adult educators help others makes sense of new knowledge in the wider context of fields, disciplines, and literature. In publishing and grant writing, curation offers tools and strategies for authors, grant writers, reviewers, editors, and funders to assess and advance knowledge. For example, editors in the field of adult education curate articles within journals and chapters within books, thus shaping the conversation and direction of the field. We propose adult educators often curate people and ideas, introducing and connecting people with common research interests or complimentary knowledge, skills, and abilities. Future research opportunities include studying curation by interviewing adult educators to more deeply examine how and why they curate for teaching and research. Such research might also include curation for student learning through assignments and projects. Individual and collaborative curation also merits further research as faculty expand knowledge through teaching and research.

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