LOEX 2018 Conference Report: Houston, TX

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The 46th annual LOEX conference was held May 3-5, 2018 in Space City—in the Galleria area of Houston, TX. The conference theme of *New Frontiers: Exploring and Innovating in Uncharted Territory* provided a lodestar for the galaxy of presenters and their sessions. Close to 400 librarians were in attendance to learn from the presenters and each other. After preliminary activities on Thursday, including a tour & tasting at a local chocolatier and a very useful pre-conference workshop on curriculum mapping, attendees blasted off with a Friday morning plenary session and then spent two days exploring 68 breakout sessions and 10 student poster sessions. Some highlights:

Gender and Race Gatekeepers

Dr. Michelle "Mikki" Hebl, the LOEX 2018 plenary speaker, set the tone for the conference by presenting (and demonstrating) her important and relevant research on *Gender and Race Gatekeepers*. She is currently the Martha and Henry Malcolm Lovett Chair of Psychology, with a joint appointment with School of Business, at Rice University, where her areas of interest are diversity and discrimination.

Dr. Hebl began her talk by noting that while bias may feel like a topic librarians already know and see and live, she believes everyone, including herself, has a "bias dial" —so we must try to examine our biases, be aware of them, and then change them.

Though Dr. Hebl's students are usually undergraduates, after the 2016 election and its implications for her research, she opted to do outreach to executive MBAs. The questions this group asked repeatedly as she taught diversity management included: "Why do we need these special programs? Why can't we just operate under principles of meritocracy? Why can't we just let the system work?" The short answer: the meritocracy is a flawed narrative, and Gatekeepers ultimately decide who progresses up the ladder. She then revealed the image of a roller coaster called GateKeeper, whose official tagline states: "Riders will take flight on the wings of a powerful golden griffon, dive-bombing and threading their way through impossibly narrow obstacles like our keyhole towers." Dr. Hebl believes this is profound—only the riders are able to take flight, and life is otherwise "impossibly narrow obstacles." She wanted us to consider—who gets to ride?

A turning point in Dr. Hebl's long career of psychological research began when she conducted an IRB-approved study to look at the difference between formal and subtle discrimination: formal discrimination being "I don't like you because you're X, so I won't hire you" (typically things that are illegal); subtle discrimination being "microtransgressions" (things like less eye contact, avoiding conversation). In the study, Texas students went into retail stores that were hiring and asked questions, while wearing a hat that stated "Texan and Proud" or "Gay and Proud", and they didn't know which hat they were wearing. What Dr. Hebl found: on formal discrimination, there were no differences—students were told at the same rate that jobs were available, and applied and were called back for jobs at the same rate. However, there were big differences on the subtle biases—for people wearing "Texan and Proud," the interactions were longer, there were more words spoken, and there was less perceived negativity. She replicated these results with body type and with women wearing hijabs. Discrimination has many forms: even in absence of overt discrimination, subtle can be present.

Dr. Hebl wanted us to ask ourselves—are you possibly subtly showing bias too, when people come to you and ask for help? Studies show that the outcomes from subtle discrimination have an impact—when someone has to use their cognitive resources to determine if they've been discriminated against, those resources they could be using for other tasks become depleted. She also described various studies she has conducted dealing with gatekeeping regarding gender (e.g., subtle hostility toward pregnant women in the workplace) and race (e.g., the more "stereotypical" features a person who is an underrepresented minority status has, the less likely they were to be recommended for a STEM class).

She then introduced and demonstrated a few bias activities, such as Shepard's Table Illusion, where the same two images of tables (just oriented differently) don't look that they're same, and even when Dr. Hebl "flips" one of them to demonstrate they are, people still want to measure it. This is called a "mindbug," and the point is that even in the face of objective evidence and expertise, people still rely on their perspective. Mindbugs infect everyone and even good-intentioned people have blindspots to biases. She also recruited "stalwart" librarian volunteers, to recreate her study based on the telephone game and teach the concepts of leveling and sharpening. Leveling occurs when we drop details because we can't remember them, or they don't fit our cognitive categories or assumptions; sharpening involves adding details consistent with our values, and they intensify our interpretations. The original study participants leveled and sharpened strongly across gender lines—misremembering, dropping, or making up new details about the man and women in the story, based on stereotypes about gender.

Dr. Hebl concluded by reiterating that gatekeepers are alive and well, the system is based on a biased narrative, and the problems are substantial. Strategies for combating subtle bias include awareness, acknowledgement, ally strategies, organizational strategies, and policies and laws. She emphasized that we each need to do our part to be aware of when we need to change the norms. The GateKeeper is a powerful symbol—we should all be allowed to ride.

Breakout Sessions

In "**Beyond the Library One-Shot: Scaffolding a Relevant and Authentic Foundation for First-Year Student Researchers**," Dr. Donna Harp Ziegenfuss from the University of Utah shared her strategic journey to collaborate with faculty beyond the one-shot, while also helping students see the value in her sessions. Dr. Ziegenfuss fully embraced her campus' official model for course design—Design, Build, Teach, and Revise—and urged librarians to "put on an Instructional Designer Hat" to think about structure and design for one-shots. Does what you do in your session align to your student outcomes?

Dr. Ziegenfuss guided attendees through each stage of the course design model. At the "Revise" stage, she collected pre- and post-comfort-level survey data for all of her one-shots—834 surveys across a variety of courses. Students revealed that their least comfortable areas were physically finding books, using the library catalog, and knowing where to get research help—all of which helped her redesign her instruction. Ziegenfuss emerged with a revamped, more relevant one-shot model called The Top 5 Strategies for Becoming an Effective and Efficient Researcher: 1) Get Organized - Develop a Research Toolbox, 2) Go Broad to Start, 3) Dig Deeper, 4) Mine What You Find, and 5) Ask for Help.

The pièce de résistance, however, is her Alignment Grid template, which can be adapted to any format, level, or audience (http://tiny.cc/loex18). Once she created her grids, she made appointments to discuss her lessons with faculty. The alignment grids linked to learning outcomes and ACRL frames for each specific class, provided options for topics & student-centered active learning activities, classroom assessment techniques, and demonstrated exactly what she could cover in each class (from broad to narrow).

Ziegenfuss introduced attendees a plethora of learning models, particularly the ARCs model for motivating students—Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction—that she uses as guides for her instructional design and alignment grids. She also included a link to a toolkit for attendees to explore their own lesson-building, including a Teaching Guidelines Matrix for designing, implementing, and evaluating library instruction with faculty partners.

In their presentation "**Five Space Stations Use the Framework to Launch At-Risk, First-Year Students into Information Literacy Orbit**," Jessica M. Barbera (McDaniel College), Marianne L. Sade (Washington College), and Samantha S. Martin (Washington & Jefferson College) represented the five small liberal arts institutions that were awarded a collaborative IMLS Sparks! grant. Librarians working on the project were tasked with creating, delivering, and assessing a new way of approaching information literacy instruction for first-year at-risk students. They attended face-to-face collaborative workshops led by experts in the fall and spring, had the summer to work on their plans, and then to implemented and assessed them the following fall.

After much data-gathering and discussion to define "at risk," the data points they finally collected were first-generation status, Pell Grant eligibility, high school GPA, race, gender, and prior access to a librarian. The librarians encouraged attendees to think about who might be the key players on their campuses, and to reach out to voice interest in collaborating on at-risk student support and persistence.

They also asked attendees to brainstorm on the same question that drove the libraries' learning outcomes: "How can we get students, who may have never seen/used a library, to where they can effectively start college-level research?" They then revealed their project's outcomes: 1) Learners will understand that Information Creation is a Process, 2) Learners will apply the Information Seeking Process, 3) Learners can read and interpret search results in order to discern if the results contain items/sources which may meet an information need and 4) Learners will recognize the librarian as a go-to person for research help.

Also shown was a giant spreadsheet of scaffolded learning activities, scripts, templates, and assessment techniques for each learning outcome. They shared a few during the presentation, but the primary goal was to disseminate their entire toolkit (https://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/imls_ilframework/) for attendees to use and adapt for their own situations. While each institution had varying levels of embeddedness and support, ultimately, their year-long collaborative efforts paid off: students at all institutions showed gains in all of the outcomes.

Tricia Boucher and Megan Ballengee from Texas State University presented a fast-paced workshop titled "**Choose Your Own Library Adventure: Gamifying Library Instruction and Training**" with a clever idea: learning to make a game by playing a game. This workshop really succeeded at encouraging librarians to experiment (as game design requires much iteration and assessment) and get comfortable with the potential for game formats. Other important considerations such as learning objectives, time con-

(LOEX 2018 Report...continued on page 13)

(LOEX 2018 Report...continued from page 3)

straints and physical access were also discussed.

According to Boucher and Ballengee, constructing a learning game requires several parts: a learning outcome, a way to win the game, actions, a theme or narrative, format of the game and finally, a way to assess. During the workshop, attendees played a game that consisted of three rounds which when completed, would provide ideas for the theme, format and action of a game.

The game itself consisted of groups of attendees collecting cards by correctly answering trivia questions. Each round defined the parameters of the game that players would later build. In round one, players answered trivia questions about theme music; resulting winning cards from the round would become options for the theme of the game (such as X-Files theme music resulting in an X-Files theme for the game). Round two had the participants coming up with certain "winning conditions" for a game or a game round (e.g., a game where players have to touch other players = tag, two-hand touch football, etc.). Again, the "winning" cards were put aside and became the method for winning the game. Finally, part three utilized principles from "Heads Up!" (e.g., guess the name of a well-known leisure activity, like Clue, based on descriptions of its gameplay) to define the actions of the game. Once again, correctly guessed cards would be used (this time for gameplay specifics) for the attendees' own game.

The rest of the game creation workshop involved a group brainstorming session to create a rough game and then all teams had a lively contest to see which team had the best game idea. The session definitely demonstrated a path forward to create a game that will meet library outcomes.

Katie Strand, Pamela Martin and Teagan Eastman (Utah State University) introduced us to a different, exciting quick game in "**Unlocking Student Engagement: Success and Failure in Redesigning a First-Year Library Orientation**," where LOEX participants took part in a lockbox game (i.e., players discover clues that lead to a four-digit combination).

Utah State University librarians regularly see about 2000 students (in 80 sections) for freshman orientation during 20 to 30-minute workshops. Wanting to add an interactive component, the first revamp created a two part orientation: part one was a mobile phone-based survey with questions about the library website while part two utilized a paper survey that students' filled out while exploring the library's physical layout. This attempt was considered a failure due to technological issues (cellphone "dead zones"), gamification without a real incentive, and an awkward transition from the online survey to the paper survey. After this failure, the planning committee regrouped to create a game that was active, engaging and technologically simple. The goals of the game would be to acquaint students to the library and its services & materials, show how the library could fit their needs, and allay library stereotypes.

A lockbox game found on Pinterest (created by Kathy Schmidt, a middle school librarian) was thought to be an engaging activity and the lockbox prize an incentive. While there were concerns about scalability and that college freshman would find it too childish, the committee decided to go ahead, with a focus on essential things students need to know and age-appropriate clues. While three clues related to the library website, the fourth and final clue required students to explore the library building.

Assessments showed that a large majority of the thousands of students that took part over the last two years thought it made them more likely to ask the library staff for assistance. In the future, the committee members will explore providing more complicated questions for the students and improved evaluation questions.

Takeaways from the entire experience included planning ahead, balance outside criticism with librarian expertise, offer multiple practices and trainings and finally, make sure to learn from mistakes and don't be afraid to try new things.

Points of Significance is an ongoing, multi-year research study at Stetson University exploring the degree to which students acquire, develop and retain essential concepts of writing and information literacy over their undergraduate experience. During their session, "**From Launch Pad to Stratosphere: Following the Trajectory of Student Learning**," librarian Grace Kaletski-Maisel and writing program administrator Megan O'Neil discussed the main topics that they are investigating in their study including what and how are students learning and what kinds of assignments are given during the observation period.

Stetson is a small private liberal arts school located in central Florida. The university has a strong core general education institute and students take a Freshman Seminar during their first semester. The Points of Significance study began with the Fall 2015 freshman students and will continue for four years.

Kaletski-Maisel and O'Neil found that by the end of students' first year, they had an increased ability to reach out to their professors, edit their own work, share work with peers and accept feedback, and were beginning to adapt to more stringent academic requirements.

While year two data indicated that most students were learning introductory skills within their discipline, STEM majors experienced a gap year in learning new information

(LOEX 2018 Report...continued on page 14)

(LOEX 2018 Report...continued from page 13)

or concepts. Still, common skills were acquired including formation of topics into viable projects, refining the process of searching for information, revising written work and somewhat unexpectedly, various reading skills such as strategies to understand and manage their reading as well as how to read within their own discipline.

Utilizing the ACRL Framework as well as the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA) Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing, Kaletski-Maisel and O'Neil found correlations between the student needs and the goals listed in the frameworks.

The session ended with an overview of future studies (e.g., analyzing students' junior year seminar work), along with a question and answer session focused on how and if librarians collaborate with writing centers or instructors to teach students the importance of academic reading, writing and research practices.

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For more information about the conference, and the PowerPoints and handouts for many of the sessions, including from all the sessions listed in this article, visit the website at http://www.loexconference.org/2018/sessions.html

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(Learning to be Lost...continued from page 12)

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