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The Perceptions of Academic Librarians on Their Role in Lifelong Learning, Self-Directed

Learning and Heutagogy

Submitted by
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MASTER OF EDUCATION

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Approved by Dr. Carol Ann Sharicz, Faculty

Abstract

This paper uses a qualitative methodology to explore the perceptions of academic librarian on the definition of lifelong learning and their roles in supporting lifelong learning. Existing research on the topic was aligned to the emergent educational model of heutagogy to identify key concepts including self-directed learning, learner agency, and the impact of technology. Heutagogy is a learning model focused on self-determined learning, often in a high technology environment, for mature learners who have high degrees of agency over the entire learning process including identifying learning goals and methods, locating resources, and designing assessments. Using loosely structured interviews of academic librarians who identified instruction as a primary role in their jobs, this exploratory project identified key conceptual themes in defining lifelong learning around the personal attributes of a lifelong learner, the degree of educational formality, and the learner's reason for engaging in lifelong learning. In support of lifelong learning, these academic librarians explored the relation of lifelong learning to specific learning goals they have for students but also described various structural limitations. Several overlapping themes between lifelong learning in academic libraries and heutagogy were found without firmly suggesting it as an appropriate model to apply to lifelong learning in academic library contexts.

Keywords: lifelong learning, academic librarians, library instruction, heutagogy, information literacy

The Perceptions of Academic Librarians on Their Role in Lifelong Learning, Self-Directed

Learning and Heutagogy

Academic libraries support the goals of higher education institutions through both direct reflection of curricular content and support of the broader activities of learning, research, and intellectual exploration. The professional work of academic librarians includes support of explicit curricular goals through activities like provision and maintenance of print and online materials and one-on-one, workshop, and classroom instruction. However, their work also includes many activities that support informal and non-formal self-directed learning opportunities for students, faculty, and often other members of the community (Mahoney, 2017).

The exploration of self-directed learning in library and information studies literature is relatively limited and frequently lumps it into an umbrella concept of "lifelong learning" (Abeyrathne & Ekanayake, 2019). The support that libraries provide for lifelong learning is often considered so central to the library model in English-speaking North America as to make lifelong learning an almost automatic and invisible activity in library spaces (Elmborg, 2016; Mahoney, 2017). Education researchers have explored various aspects of self-directed learning for decades and conversations about lifelong learning have been a significant part of government, organizational, and educational policies for at least as long (Abeyrathne & Ekanayake, 2019; Blaschke, 2012; Head et al., 2015). In 1979, Ronald Gross wrote, "Future Directions for Open Learning: A Report Based on an Invitational Conference on Open Learning," in which he discussed the wealth of existing literature on the topic and stated, "Everything points towards lifelong learning as the new frontier in education" (p. 49). This makes the intersection of lifelong learning and self-directed learning as a concept in libraries and education scholarship a productive space for understanding how academic libraries can enhance their support of self-directed and lifelong learning skills for their patrons.

Heutagogy is a relatively recent framework for the study of self-determined learning as proposed by Stewart Hase and Chis Kenyon (2000). Hase (2015) argues that self-determined learning challenges and extends the conception of self-directed learning, particularly in the focus on learner agency. It has

been proposed that there is an extension of pedagogy to andragogy and into heutagogy that helps learners and instructors identify their roles in relation to the learning process as they become more mature learners (Blaschke, 2012; Kenyon & Hase, 2013; Moore, 2020). Heutagogy is, therefore, a potentially productive framework for academic librarians who are exploring their role in bridging mature learners into a long-term model for self-directed learning. As instruction has become an increasing focus for academic librarians so, too, has the need for academic librarians to be trained in instructional practices, learning theory, and educational models (Bryan, 2016). The goal of this project is to explore how academic librarians are conceptualizing their role in supporting self-directed lifelong learning and whether learning and education models like heutagogy are playing a role in their thought processes.

Literature Review

Lifelong Learning in Academic Libraries

Lifelong learning is enshrined in the American Library Association's (ALA) Core Values of Librarianship. In their key action areas for their Core Values of Librarianship, ALA states that it "promotes continuous, lifelong learning for all people through library and information services of every type" (American Library Association, 2010, A.1.5). The ALA Policy Manual further suggests that "ALA promotes the creation, maintenance, and enhancement of a learning society" and associates lifelong learning with "literacy," but there is no further description or theorization of what constitutes lifelong learning (American Library Association, 2010, A.1.1 & B.8.1.2). ALA is not unique in leaving lifelong learning undefined and ambiguous. In library and information sciences literature, lifelong learning has been referred to as a "catch-all phrase" (Bordonaro, 2018, p. 425), "a multifaceted, often ambiguous concept" (Head et al., 2015, Review of key concepts), "a vague term with highly varied use" (Mahoney, 2017, p. 540), and "a truism" (Elmborg, 2016, p. 535). There is an invisibility to the concept of lifelong learning, such that, in an analysis of 238 citations and 137 full text articles, Megan Hayes Mahoney (2017) found, "It is clear that lifelong learning and information literacy go together in the minds of library science practitioners, but it would also seem that lifelong learning is either a stubborn, indefinite term or one with a definition so obvious that it need not be discussed" (pp. 540-541). The term is perhaps made

"stubborn" in that it is suitable to many interpretations. James Elmborg (2016) points out, "Lifelong learning … speaks to many constituents and viewpoints, pulling them together in one way under a 'big tent,' but, in doing so, disguising and submerging honest disagreements about definitions" (p. 540). Many types and motivations for promoting lifelong learning can co-exist, communicate, and develop their own models and methods under the same umbrella term.

The indistinct concept of lifelong learning as a core value of libraries can be seen as embodying a tension between differing visions of education both in the United States and around the world (Elmborg, 2016; Head et al., 2015). One division is in the ultimate goal of lifelong learning and, therefore, the most appropriate educational models to achieve that goal. In one version, education is programmatic, assessed and measured for indicators of immediate success, and task driven (Elmborg, 2016). This goal nods towards "progress" with underlying messages about economic growth and professional betterment. In another version, education is "problem-posing, one-on-one exploration whose outcomes are fuzzy and may not be measurable for years to come" (Elmborg, 2016, p. 554). Here there is an emphasis on personal and cultural growth with a focus on the democratic citizen. Both the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) released reports in the 1970s that presented visions of lifelong learning with similar divisions. The OECD's laid out an economic and workforce driven vision for lifelong learning while the UNESCO vision "applied a cultural rationale, championing lifelong learning for personal growth and social equality" (Head et al., 2015, Review of key concepts). Mahoney (2017) found that the most common theme from 25 full-text articles that defined lifelong learning, whether from a business or education focus, was "economy" in reference specifically to the workforce. Generally, the vocational or utilitarian approach to education and lifelong learning has clearly dominated, placing the focus of lifelong learning on the (economically) productive, adult citizen (Elmborg, 2016; Head et al., 2015; Mahoney, 2017).

There are other tensions in defining lifelong learning that impact how learning and education models apply to lifelong learning. In Europe, lifelong learning tends to be defined as a "cradle-to-grave"

process while the North American conception of lifelong learning tends to focus on adult education (Head et al., 2015, Review of key concepts). This difference may seem small but is not inconsequential as it both changes the focus of where lifelong learning practices are inculcated in an individual and what educational models and goals are most applicable to that process. In the English-speaking North American context, lifelong learning in libraries is likely to be tied to adult learning needs (such as the economic needs described above) and models. The value of andragogy is gaining increasing attention in library and information studies literature as a model for libraries to understand their role in our patrons' ongoing learning process as well as the concept of the self-directed learner as described by Malcom Knowles (Abeyrathne & Ekanayake, 2019; Bordonaro, 2018). The role of libraries in supporting the lifelong learner is frequently framed through Knowles's definition of self-directed learning as a "process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes" (1975, p. 18, as cited in Abeyrathne & Ekanayake, 2019, p. 14). This provides one potential definitional shape that the support of lifelong learning can be modeled in library practice, with a focus on the self-directed, adult learner with initiative and goals who is seeking materials and learning strategies to support their desired outcomes.

Still, where many European governments have lifelong learning policies, the United States and Canada do not (Head et al., 2015). This is not to say that higher education in the United States has not given considerable attention to lifelong learning. The National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) (2007) includes "foundations and skills for lifelong learning" (p. 3) as one of the sixteen Essential Learning Outcomes for College Graduates and has developed a Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) rubric outlining what they recognize as the core aspects of lifelong learning. These core aspects include curiosity, independence, initiative, transfer and reflection (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2009). This provides another definitional approach to lifelong learning focusing on how academic libraries in institutions of higher education can participate in "prepar[ing] students to be this type of learner by developing specific

dispositions and skills" (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2009, Definition section). These dispositions and skills are, in fact, closely related to conceptions of the self-directed learner as described above, but with a significant focal distinction. Lifelong learning can be defined by who the learner *is* (or is becoming) or by what one *does* to accomplish it. Self-directed learning has similarly been conceptualized both in terms of the learner attributes and in terms of how the learning process is structured and organized (Bordonaro, 2019).

For academic libraries, the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) has had a significant impact on both instructional practice and on the conception of lifelong learning through their guiding documents for information literacy instruction. In 2000, the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education (ACRL Standards) were approved followed by their rescinding and replacement in 2016 with the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education (ACRL Framework). The ACRL Standards (American Library Association, 2000) claimed information literacy as "the basis for lifelong learning" (p. 2) in that it "initiates, sustains, and extends lifelong learning" (p. 4). Further, it identifies information literacy as an "enabler" of self-directed learning (American Library Association, 2000, p.4). The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions' Alexandria Proclamation on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning similarly places information literacy at the "core" of lifelong learning (2005, n.p.). While the ACRL Framework (2015) moved away from the concept of lifelong learning, it has placed a strong focus on reconceptualizing information literacy in relation to "metacognition, or critical self-reflection" and the way in which this is "crucial to becoming more self-directed" (p. 8). This is a direct reflection of the attempt to increase the integration of educational theories and models such as Understanding by Design, transformative learning, and threshold concepts in curricular design into the guiding documents for academic libraries working in information literacy instruction (Association for College and Research Libraries, 2015; Ludovico, 2017). The degree to which this integration has been successful though the ACRL Framework or the design of Master's degree programs for librarians is an ongoing and contentious debate (Bryan, 2016; Ludovico, 2017).

Instruction in information literacy has been an increasing area of focus for academic libraries (Bryan, 2016). However, academic library instruction occurs not just within or as a supplement to courses or in formal trainings, workshops, and seminars, but also through one-on-one reference sessions, online tutorials, videos, and many other informal and non-formal learning situations. Academic instruction librarians are, thus, responsible for the support of both formal (classroom-based) learning and extensive informal/non-formal (non-classroom and self-directed) learning situations. Just as with any other form of instruction, the development of informal and self-directed learning opportunities takes training, experience, and is undergirded by an extensive body of research literature and theory. Yet, excepting when a librarian has had a previous career with an educational or instructional focus, there remains a gap between the training and preparation that librarians receive in teaching and educational theory and the amount and degree of teaching expected of them (Bryan, 2016). The self-conception of academic librarians as teachers and contributors to the scholarship of teaching and learning is, in many ways, still developing and ever shifting. It is, thus, not surprising that the literature for academic libraries contains few mentions of exploring newer theories in self-directed learning such as heutagogy.

Heutagogy

Heutagogy was first proposed by Stephen Hase and Chris Kenyon (2000) as "the study of self-determined learning" (p. 1). They identified it as further extending the concepts of andragogy and the self-directed learner as theorized by Knowles and suggested it as a learning model for a "mature" learner (Hase & Kenyon, 2000). Maturity in this sense is not about the age of the learner but their relationship to learning and is dependent on the learning context, their prior experiences as learners and with the learning content area, the learner's motivations for learning, and much more. A mature learner is ready to take an active role in defining learning goals, methods, formats, pathways, resources, and more (Blaschke, 2012). Hase & Kenyon (2007) believe that andragogy in practice is still "teacher-centric," so they conceptualized a learning model that would truly place the learner in control and derived the name from the Greek word for "self" (p. 112). Since then, various scholars have made a direct connection between heutagogy and lifelong learning (Blaschke, 2012; Eberle, 2013; Green & Schlairet, 2017; Hase, 2016; Moore, 2020).

Rebecca D. Green and Maura C. Schlairet (2017), for instance, explore the flipped classroom model as an approach to heutagogic learning for nursing students and issue the challenge to educators that "it is also important to consider deeper, more nuanced evidence related to student growth in characteristics of lifelong learning, even when students may have negative feelings about a new learning model" (p. 127). Heutagogy is, indeed, a model of learning that is often unfamiliar to learners and requires that the educator prepare the learner to take on roles that they may have previously associated entirely with the instructor.

Heutagogy places primary emphasis on learner self-efficacy and control over all aspects of the learning process, from setting goals, to creating the learning pathway, to identifying the learning materials and format, and even to setting assessment criteria and outcomes. In this way, the self-determined learner takes full agency for the learning situation with the instructional role filled by a guide who, through an in-depth understanding of the learner, is able to create a "psychologically safe environment" (Eberle, 2013, p.148) and help the learner develop their abilities for self-reflection (Mann et al., 2017). The "instructor" assists the learner to shape and expand their learning experience by advising on resources and deliverables, reviewing their progress to encourage and refocus as necessary, and providing feedback (Kenyon & Hase, 2013). The learner is "the major agent in their own learning which occurs as a result of personal experience" (Hase & Kenyon, 2007, p. 112). This requires not only that the learner be in control of the learning process, but that they are self-reflective throughout it.

Learner reflection on themselves and their beliefs, on their process as a learner, on the outcomes of their actions, and the resultant impact on both situations and their beliefs about those situations is an essential part of heutagogy (Blaschke, 2012; Eberle, 2013). Heutagogy borrows the concept of "double loop learning" from Chris Argyris and Donald Schon (Kenyon & Hase, 2001). In double loop learning, the learner does not just reflect on the problem, take an action, and review the outcome (single loop learning), but instead they go farther to review their own beliefs, conceptual frameworks, and assumptions that went into the entire process and to consciously reflect on adjustments they would make (Blaschke, 2012; Eberle, 2013). This reflection process is also essential to the learner's ability to self-

analyze their own learning process and understand themselves as a learner (Blaschke, 2012; Blaschke 2013). Ideally, learners are also engaged in collaborative learning environments such as communities of practice and are able to productively share their own experiences, feelings, and reflections as well as respond to the reflections of other learners (Blaschke 2013; Canning & Callan, 2010). In exploring a shared self-reflection process in heutagogic learning, Natalie Canning and Sue Callan (2010) strove to "move [learners] beyond a reflective discourse, informed by their past experiences to 'presencing', a contemplative practice which involves learning from attention to what is emerging – knowledge that is sensed but not yet embodied in experience" (p. 80). Providing the safe and productive educational space for self-reflection that drives learners past knowledge content and into a space of reflective discourse is a primary role for educators in heutagogic practice.

Given earlier reflections on how critical it is to understand the ultimate educational goal underlying any given conception of lifelong learning, it is also critical to understand that the ultimate goal for heutagogy is for the learner to achieve not just competency but capability. Where competency is the proven acquisition of knowledge and skills, capability is the learner's confidence in their competency and especially their ability to flexibly and reflectively apply their knowledge and skills in new or unfamiliar situations (Blaschke, 2012). Capability can include high self-efficacy, the ability to understand how one learns and to reflect on the learning process, the ability to communicate and work effectively with others, and the creative application of skills and knowledge (Blaschke, 2012; Hase & Kenyon, 2000). Unfortunately, as heutagogy is very much still an emergent rather than established learning model, this is one area where there is very limited research relating heutagogy to the process of applying skills confidently across new situations (Agonács & Matos, 2019). This focus on capability to apply competencies often raises problem solving and work-based education as focal areas for heutagogic learning as these are education models that forefront the application of knowledge and skills towards accomplishing complex and higher-level outcomes (Blaschke, 2012; Hase & Kenyon, 2000). More important, it also suggests the complexities of successfully measuring learning outcomes in heutagogy. Elmborg (2016) identifies a similar issue with lifelong learning in administrative environments of

measurable outcomes focused learning: "From the pedagogical point of view, lifelong learning is translated through great effort into the problem-posing, one-on-one exploration whose outcomes are fuzzy and may not be measurable for years to come" (p. 554). Along with the focus in heutagogy on allowing learners to define their learning outcomes and assessment, this challenge of measurement is one of the more significant issues that heutagogy faces with implementation in higher education.

Web 2.0 and online learning spaces have been strongly associated with heutagogy. Hase and Kenyon (2000) identified heutagogy as a learning model for a world in which "information is readily and easily accessible [and] where change is so rapid" (par. 3). In this environment, understanding the process of identifying and locating the most relevant information is essential to the learning process, technological change is continual and fast-paced, and collaborative communication can occur continually (Blaschke, 2012). Social media, mobile learning, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), virtual reality, augmented reality, and other collaboration and information-rich technologies are highly conductive to heutagogic learning opportunities as they offer extensive opportunities for, and even essentially rely upon, learner self-direction, reflection, and information discovery and aggregation (Blaschke, 2013; Moore, 2020). Heutagogy also aligns well with the active use of media and technology to support learner-generated content (Blaschke, 2012). As higher education engages ever more with online learning spaces, academic libraries find there are ever growing demands from students for supporting the types of information exploration and sharing that is only possible in technology rich environments (Abeyrathne & Ekanayake, 2019). Further, in this kind of learning environment, there is a close tie between a learner's self-efficacy and their ability to navigate the online information landscape. This is precisely why the ACRL Framework (2015) identifies information literacy as a metaliterary that "demands behavioral, affective, cognitive, and metacognitive engagement with the information ecosystem" and particularly an ability to be critically self-reflective so as to become more self-directed in that information environment (p. 8). This is where an emerging learning approach like heutagogy that is learner controlled, reflective, focused on capacity building, and aligned with distributed, technology-driven learning environments is

potentially very fruitful for how academic librarians conceive of and enact their roles in supporting lifelong learning.

Project Aim

The adoption and exploration of heutagogy as a potential framework for understanding self-determined learning has been slow in educational fields and nearly non-existent in library and information science literature but is picking up pace as our learning situations and workplace cultures rely to an ever-increasing amount on continual, self-directed learning practices. At the same time, lifelong learning is a core value of academic libraries and their support of higher education but is simultaneously a tenuous or even tumultuously defined concept. The aim of this project is to examine how academic librarians are conceptualizing lifelong learning and the relation to self-directed learning, their role in supporting these types of learning, and their awareness of relevant learning theories and models such as heutagogy. This project will explore:

- how academic librarians conceptualize lifelong learning and self-directed learning
- what roles they see themselves as playing in lifelong learning
- what degree of awareness they have of recent self-directed learning frameworks like heutagogy

This project is exploratory and descriptive in nature, seeking not to confirm existing conceptions so much as to identify the parameters and outlines of these concepts in relation to academic librarians. Of particular interest is whether or not a common narrative thread about how academic librarians conceptualize either lifelong learning or self-directed learning can be identified. This project is intended to serve as a pilot for a larger research project.

Methodology

As an exploratory project, a qualitative methodology using a small number of interviews was chosen. Participants were selected for both having a high level of experience with the topic and a general representative coverage of the overall population of academic librarians.

Research Sample

An initial convenience sample was done by inviting four currently practicing academic librarians in the United States and Canada whom the researcher knew identified instruction as a primary component of their responsibilities, with three of these invitations resulting in interviews and one non-response. An additional call for interview participants was made through the use of the researcher's Twitter network, resulting in two more invitations, of which one resulted in an interview and one discontinued contact after a scheduling conflict. The librarians were invited (see Appendix A) to participate based on their representation of academic librarianship in some of the significant higher education environments that are supported by academic libraries: public research universities, private teaching universities and colleges, and community colleges. The sample was selected to obtain a wide variety of possible viewpoints and experiences with a small sample set from the specific group of interest – academic instructional librarians.

The Research Instrument

A loosely structured interview instrument (see Appendix B) was developed based on the aims of the project and key concepts from the literature review. The questions were designed to elicit rich narratives from the librarians about their own conceptual bases, practices, experiences, and backgrounds relating to lifelong learning, self-directed learning and learner agency, instructional practices, educational theory, and the intersection of technology and self-directed or lifelong learning.

Interviews and Data Management

The interviews were conducted over Zoom and lasted between 25-40 minutes. Interviews were recorded and saved in the researcher's institutional Zoom account. The recordings were transcribed, with names, locations and other directly identifying information removed during transcription. After coding, all copies of recordings and the original transcript documents with identifying information were deleted. Only the anonymized transcripts were saved on the researcher's personal and work computers.

Ethical Considerations and Positionality

The community of academic instructional librarians is relatively small with a substantial interconnected network of professional connections. Due to this, it is difficult to ensure complete

anonymity when conducting and publishing work involving detailed interviews of community members' practices, experiences, and background. This was communicated clearly to all interview participants along with the option for them to review the manuscript and request alterations or removal of their data prior to any publicly accessible release. All four interview participants opted to review the final draft, and no requests were made to alter or further anonymize the data as reported.

It is also valuable to mention that the very process of designing a research project to ask questions about the concepts of lifelong learning, self-directed learning, and learner agency, as well as librarians' conceptions of their role and experiences with educational theory necessarily involves implicit assumptions about the concept of libraries and librarians, education and academia, the role of the learner and the role of the instructor, and the very process of learning and knowledge acquisition. In almost any research on education topics in the North American context, there is a presumed unequal relationship where one participant (the instructor) has greater authority and power in relation to another (the learner) via being more knowledgeable. This is made more complicated in this project by the role of "service" in which the librarian as instructor is often placed institutionally or in cultural conceptions of the role of librarian (Ettarh, 2018). As an instruction librarian, the researcher is implicitly biased towards interpreting instruction, libraries, and the professional roles of librarians in instruction as meaningful, valuable, and impactful.

Finally, the librarian profession (of which this specific researcher is a relatively typical example) is overwhelmingly white, cisgender identifying, and well educated, with most librarian positions requiring a Master's degree in Library and/or Information Studies, while serving much more racially, culturally, and socially diverse communities (Ettarh, 2018). For this project, conceptions of identities, privilege, and othering in relation to self-directed or lifelong learning was not foregrounded. Unless interviewees chose to foreground these issues in their responses, this choice in research design silences a component of the societal narrative and, thereby, privileges those with a more direct relationship to traditional concepts of power, authority, and learning. Namely, it assumes a universality of experience and understanding (culturally assumed to be white, middle-class, cis-gendered, heterosexual, able-bodied, and neurotypical),

to unpack the amorphous concept of lifelong learning and self-directed learning in the dominant cultural and social landscape (Briscoe, 2005).

Coding and Analysis

The goal of data collection and analysis for this project was not to achieve full saturation at this stage but to ensure conceptual validity of the research area, developing a more focused survey or interview instrument, and identify an initial thematic framework for coding responses on a larger and more inclusive research project. Transcripts were coded in the concept areas of a) defining lifelong learning, b) relation between lifeline learning and self-directed learning/learner agency, c) the librarian's role, d) how education scholarship impacts their work, and e) emerging themes. A first pass using concept coding as described in *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Handbook* (Miles et al., 2020) was done on all four transcripts resulting in a draft code book. The draft code book and research notes were reviewed, and the code book was adjusted for consistency and initial patterns. Several instances were found where codes worked best when aggregated under a broader concept code and then made more granular using subcodes. A second pass at coding finalized the code book including the code definitions and the coding consistency across the transcripts. Finally, the patterns were pulled out and analyzed for each of the concept areas and additionally for patterns that related to heutagogy.

There were two important decisions made regarding coding in relation to the interview instrument (Appendix B). First, the sub-question on awareness of institutional mandates relating to lifelong learning was not coded for separate review but for inclusion in other major concept areas as appropriate. This was due to two factors: a) the interview participants were not asked to prepare for this question and often suggested these mandates existed, but they needed to find them to provide precise descriptions, and b) some of these mandates were specific enough to be identifying factors, jeopardizing the anonymity of the participants. Secondly, the question regarding how technology impacts lifelong learning was added specifically to address a core theme of heutagogy that was otherwise not directly mentioned in the interview instrument and was coded only to explore patterns related to heutagogy.

Results

Sample

In the final interview pool, two librarians worked at institutions classified as Research 1 (R1) universities by the Carnegie Classification for Institutions of Higher Education, one librarian worked at a private, non-profit, teaching university, and one worked at a publicly funded community college. One of the librarians from an R1 university also discussed their prior experiences as a librarian at a community college and at public libraries. Three of the librarians were based in three different states across the mid-west and western United States, and the librarian currently employed at a public community college was based in Canada. The librarians who described current or previous working experience at community colleges and public libraries both discussed lifelong learning opportunities outside of academia and formal schooling, while the other two librarians focused their descriptions of lifelong and self-directed learning almost exclusively on either re-engagement with formal schooling or as habits explicitly developing first out of formal schooling. While the context of these interviews was explicitly exploring lifelong learning in relation to academic librarians, this does suggest that experience in other institutional contexts may impact the librarian's conceptions of lifelong and self-directed learning.

Defining Lifelong Learning

The three major thematic areas in defining lifelong learning were: the individual lifelong learner's personal attributes, mental habits, or activities; the degree of formality in the educational structure; and the reason for engaging in lifelong learning. These themes interrelated in complex and often contradictory ways, reflecting the ambiguous nature of the term lifelong learning emphasized by previous researchers. One librarian stated that "everybody is a lifelong learner" for the simple fact that we have to be in order to navigate our lives, but then immediately circumscribed this statement by noting that, while learning to make bread might appear to constitute lifelong learning, "I feel like that's not what we talk about when we talk about lifelong learning." This is similar to Elmborg's (2016) description of lifelong learning as a "truism" (p. 535) that also allows the hidden convergence of many conflicting viewpoints under one "big tent" (p. 540). Two of the other librarians made explicit statements regarding conflicts between their

sense of what actually occurs as lifelong learning in lived experience versus what might be considered a standard definition of lifelong learning.

Personal Attributes

All of the librarians described various individual attributes of lifelong learners. These attributes included curiosity, critical thinking, and specific cognitive habits or dispositions, with no one descriptor mentioned by more than two librarians. One librarian's primary description of lifelong learning was as an "attitude" that the learner has, emphasizing that this attitude "can be built, and it can be fostered, but it does need to be there in the first place." Another librarian made a passing reference to lifelong learning as an attitude but focused on the tension in lifelong learning between the expectations on the individual as an independent learner versus the crux of learning as an essentially social process. The other two librarians described an individual's cognitive habits as the core of lifelong learning. One described it as "a way of thinking that impacts you lifelong" and specifically related it to "the way you gather, retrieve, process information for knowledge" while the other described it as "someone who actively [uses] the process of, like, identifying gaps in your knowledge or points of curiosity that you want to know more about and finding out ways to ameliorate those to add to your…to your knowledge." Notably these last two tend away from describing lifelong learning as an individual attribute into describing it as a process one engages in, yet they also both used statements that aligned it to an individual's actions or cognitive habits. As will be explored later, expressions of lifelong learning as a process were closely linked to critical thinking and information literacy, but this was explored far more in terms of the librarian's role in relation to lifelong learning than in their definitions of lifelong learning.

By far the most noticeable aspect of these descriptions was the focus on the individual. Two librarians used the term "autodidact," meaning "a self-taught person" (Oxford University Press, n.d), and terms including "self-learner," "self-motivated," "self-growing," "self-taught," "self-directed," "self-control" and "self-awareness" were all used as descriptors. All of the librarians connected lifelong learning to an individual's attributes, habits, or ways of thinking as opposed to describing it as a social or cultural system as one might do with education. This underscores the centrality of the individual to their

conception of lifelong learning. However, one librarian specifically pushed back against this idea by heavily emphasizing the critical importance of fostering opportunities for and habits of engaging in social learning as essential to the learning process. As this librarian noted, "self-directed learning only happens if a person is individually motivated to do it, I think, but, like, if a group of people is socially motivated to do it, I think that helps the dynamic a lot."

Degree of Formality

One of the most interesting areas of tension arose around the degree of formality with regards to formal schooling versus non-formal or informal learning. This aspect of defining lifelong learning was also an essential theme in exploring how self-directed learning and learner agency are connected to lifelong learning. One librarian who had not tied the degree of formality into their original definition of lifelong learning, realized that, when discussing self-direction, they were excluding the possibility of returning to formal education as a form of lifelong learning and then struggled to resolve this tension: "Wait, I'm describing going back to college as not lifelong learning. Which is I don't know that's in a gray area, I guess." This state of confliction played out through the differences in how other librarians connected lifelong learning to the degree of formality. The interviewee who had previously worked as a librarian at a community college and in public library settings identified the societally defined idealized lifelong learner as a person who can be "free from traditional schooling processes" and explored various settings this could develop from including public libraries, GED programs, and prison education. However, another librarian referred to lifelong learning as a cognitive habit that was specifically "something you carry with you after leaving academia," making a tight association between the development of the cognitive habits for lifelong learning and formal schooling.

These contrasts may reflect an inherent tension in this project in that the study group is explicitly embedded in formal learning institutions while exploring a concept that inherently extends beyond (or even potentially problematizes) this context. The community college librarian had the fewest instances of tension when relating lifelong learning and degree of formality, and explicitly stated more than once that formal schooling is not the only way to pursue ongoing learning: "Coming back to college is one way to

do it, but that's not the only way. I think that being an autodidact can be a totally legitimate way to do it." However, they also specified that this required the "autodidact" to have critical thinking skills to select and evaluate information sources and suggested that encouraging the development of these skills is one of the more crucial roles of formal schooling. Another librarian approached this tension with a positive lens, stating, "I think we always think about lifelong learning as something [that], like, happens outside the classroom but I always think of it as in tandem. As something that's kind of in tandem, because, like, you can spark it wherever."

Reason for Engaging in Lifelong Learning

Three of the librarians tied their definitions of lifelong learning to professional goals, though this did not go uncontested. Only one librarian explored how they understood the meaning of lifelong learning to particularly, and perhaps exclusively, refer to professional continuing education even though it conceptually should apply to all learning throughout one's lifetime:

> I think with lifelong learning, generally, it tends to be more specifically professionally focused. As opposed to like, 'I want to know everything about making bread' or something like that. That doesn't feel like it, I mean, on the face of it, it feels like it should fall under lifelong learning, but I feel like that's not what we talk about when we talk about lifelong learning.

This same librarian suggested later that there is a difference between lifelong learning and "responding to a need," specifically implying that there is a degree of sustained attention and curiosity necessary and then connecting it to anecdotes about the difference between solving an immediate workplace problem and preparing for future long-term development as a professional.

For the librarian who defined lifelong learning as a cognitive habit developed through formal schooling, the connection between lifelong learning and professional goals was strong but mostly implied. By focusing on systematic ways of solving problems and processing information and the essential role that formal schooling plays, this librarian implied a perceived value in credentials via formal schooling and professional reasons for lifelong learning. Their overall discussion focused heavily on the educational and practice needs for the specific fields they supported, and they notably struggled with anecdotes of

lifelong learning outside professional goals. Another librarian was more explicit in mentioning credentials as a reason for engaging in lifelong learning, though with the suggestion that this is an area of societal tension by using the term "credentialism." This librarian spoke about a learner's clear and motivating reason for lifelong learning as an essential factor in their success and noted that their institution specifically focused on preparing students for further formal schooling or for getting certifications "to help them get better careers and things like that." Another librarian described experiences of realizing that, like other people, they will use extensive personal time to look up things related to their professional role that spark personal curiosity, because "people who care a lot about their roles do stuff like that. They say, like, 'why didn't this work or why did this work?'" Only one librarian explored the origins of lifelong learning as a term and its cultural meanings as "a neoliberal idea" relating to the "model citizen" and "the best behaviors for engaging in democracy." This explored similar grounds to the conflict Elmborg (2016) explored between programmatic and utilitarian goals for lifelong learning versus personal, cultural, and humanitarian growth.

Self-Direction and Learner Agency

As described in the literature review, there is a powerful relationship between self-direction in learning and lifelong learning. When asked about this relationship, the immediate responses included "pretty crucial," "really closely related," and "very much wrapped into it." However, one librarian noted that, "the whole concept is that, like you know, through enough practice of, you know, self-directed learning someone will magically become a lifelong learner," suggesting that this is a misguided perception. Another librarian explained that "figuring out how to self-direct and learn isn't a given in my mind." This affirmation and confliction over the concept of self-direction played out across all four of the interviews to varying degrees.

The primary themes relating to how lifelong learning related to self-directed learning and learner agency were: the learner's responsibility, the learner's understanding of how to learn, and learner agency. The theme of the degree of formality also played a critical role with regards to this concept, to such a degree that it will be discussed in relation to each of the other themes below. Overall, there were

extensive discussions of self-directed learning in relation to lifelong learning, but there was a noticeable struggle in connecting learner agency or even in understanding the concept of learner agency in relation to lifelong learning. There were more requests by the interview participants to the researcher for clarification on learner agency than for any other question or concept during the interviews.

Learner Responsibility

As noted above, there was a tendency to emphasize the individual attributes for lifelong learning, and this was particularly apparent when the librarians discussed the connections they saw between self-direction and lifelong learning. There is overlap between the concepts of a learner's reasons for lifelong learning and their responsibility, with a clear tendency in the interviews to place a certain onus on the learner where their motivation converts into a form of responsibility. One librarian noted:

> Lifelong learning is always kind of up to the individual and there's all kinds of structures and, you
> know, things that are available to people to continue learning their whole lives. There's, you
> know, public libraries, there's community colleges, there's continuing studies classes. But you
> know, it's a 'you can lead a horse to water' sort of thing.

Another librarian discussed the responsibility of the learner to have "self-control" and be "self-aware" because "sometimes people project an idea of themselves that's not actually who they are, and sometimes that gets in the way of someone learning and having lifelong learning." This was also a focal point for another librarian when discussing the challenge of knowing whether or not to go back for further formal education and the critical importance of self-knowledge in terms of one's readiness for a further intensive educational experience. By contrast, one librarian pushed back on learner responsibility in self-directed learning by stating, "that's not the kind of thing that most people can just, like, get up and do." This librarian focused on the importance of "social support to help people, you know, do lifelong learning right" and through this focus placed more onus on a variety of institutions where formal and informal education opportunities are available, including public libraries, community colleges, and prison systems.

How to Learn

There was a powerful connection between the themes of the learner's responsibility and their understanding of how to learn both generally and specifically for themselves. All of the librarians directly discussed the crucial role that self-awareness about one's own learning habits, skills, and processes has in lifelong learning. One librarian referred to this as the role of "cognitive development" in allowing a learner to select the most appropriate methods and situations for their learning needs, which had similarities to the concept of the mature learner in heutagogy. Another librarian explored how not knowing how you learn can be "problematic or impact your lifelong learning" and that it is essential to understand what types of mental systems you need to solve problems. As will be explored in greater detail below, this became a major focus of the librarian's perceived role in supporting lifelong learning through their goal to enhance critical thinking and information literacy skills. One librarian described the way to support lifelong learning as "fostering that kind of critical thinking and allowing students the space to kind of ask those questions and get the feeling of what it means to really learn something."

Learner Agency

Learner agency was one of the less coherent themes, likely due to the fact that the librarians interviewed struggled with the concept of learner agency. Many of the discussions tied learner agency to formal education and classroom learning, without necessarily relating to lifelong learning. Two librarians did connect learner agency to the degree of formality by affirming the learner's agency in deciding whether or not to return to formal education, although one of them was speaking more about the importance of a learner's self-knowledge regarding of how they learn while the other was explicitly affirming a learner's agency to act as an "autodidact." Another librarian tied learner agency into the later conversation on how technology impacts lifelong learning by noting that they had tried to integrate anonymous methods of discussion into their instruction practices "because I think when people have the opportunity to work anonymously, I think that gives a little more freedom and agency." There was also a brief anecdote from another librarian about having agency to decide when to leave a professional

presentation that was not proving valuable to them. However, these answers were generally not as coherent or confident as the answers were for any of the other questions posed to the interviewees.

Notable, one of the more subtle explorations of learner agency was a discussion of how important a formal schooling situation can be for pushing a learner's attention to foundational knowledge in a field and standardizing skills when that is essential. This librarian emphasized balance by allowing students the intellectual space in a formal learning situation for "self-discovery" and building some of that foundational knowledge through their own work and exploration. They emphasized the role that andragogical formal education can play by "allowing students to have that sort of self-direction within a structure." While explicitly focused on formal education and instructional support, there is an implicit discussion about the development of learner agency and the support of this as a skill relevant to a learner's later practices as a learner.

The Role of Academic Librarians

While there were specific statements aligning the academic librarian role with lifelong learning, there were also a lot of barriers and tension expressed in the interviews. One librarian stated, "there is a lot of explicit cheerleading of lifelong learning that I do." However, they also suggested that librarians often talk about providing people opportunities and skills for lifelong learning, but this talk involves a lot of assumptions about the learner's situations and capacities that may not be true. Generally, in discussing their role in supporting lifelong learning, the librarian's primary focus was on the learning goals in their instructional situations. Specific methods and frameworks were discussed relating to these learning goals, with the ACRL Framework (2015) being the most frequently mentioned as would be expected given its primary role in guiding the instructional goals for academic librarians. The other primary theme had to do with various limitations and barriers on how they as academic librarians or academic libraries in general can support lifelong learning.

Learning Goals

When discussing their role in relation to lifelong learning, all four academic librarians focused on their instructional practices and especially the learning goals they had for students. They closely tied these

learning goals to lifelong learning, with critical thinking and various information literacy skills mentioned by all of the librarians. One librarian described it as wanting to "ease that burden of the information overload with the skills [I teach]" and specified that their goal with students was "letting them know that they can use skills and mindsets and things that I talked about [when they are] outside of class time. Basically, like, use them for whatever makes sense to you." Another librarian repeatedly used phrases such as "plant those seeds for critical thought" and stressed this was a goal that existed in tension with the role they played in assisting students to meet their immediate assignment needs. They summed it up as ultimately their role to help students meet their immediate needs but with a strong sub-goal of teaching critical thinking skills: "I guess how I kind of see that role of the academic librarians to sort of address the immediate need but plant those seeds for critical thought. If I can. If time and space allow."

Often that immediate need relates to locating and selecting literature in support of their assignments, a focus area that librarians have been doing both instruction and reference work on for decades. Given the importance of the ACRL Framework (2015) as a guiding document for instructional librarians, it was not surprising that the components of information literacy identified in that document were readily identifiable in most of these discussions, with a particular concern over evaluation and contextual authority of sources. One describes their main role as teaching "a basic method for searching databases" that could be broadly applied to multiple search situations. Another described it as developing "general mindsets and strategies" in the students relating to finding information needed for their professional practice and, in general, there were repeated mentions of "process," "systems," and "systematic" ways of approaching questions, problems, and information needs. One librarian described the process of helping students think critically about keywords and specifically how the terms we use for people, concepts, and places change over time, that we have to consider all of them when conducting a search, but also that they have underlying implications that can and sometimes should be challenged.

There was some variation in this focus, though. Of the three librarians whose primary learning goal could be aligned with information literacy skills, one of them emphasized the concept of curiosity and the role it plays in information searches. For this librarian, sustained curiosity was the bridge between

information literacy skills and lifelong learning. Another focused on social learning as both a learning strategy and a learning goal. This librarian emphasized that "people are going to have different levels of expertise and knowledge that they're going to bring to the table" so their instructional strategy heavily utilized cultivated social learning opportunities: "I like to be able to set up that social environment wherever I can, or just to be able to have conversations about what we're learning." This was also a learning goal this librarian had for the students related to information literacy because it emphasized co-learning to identify search strategies and work through complicated systems and processes.

Structural Limitations

When discussing their role in relation to lifelong learning, all of the librarians mentioned some type of limitations in achieving learning goals or providing support for lifelong learning. The most common limitation discussed was the expectation by faculty and students that librarians were there to teach specific tools, such as databases, rather than critical thinking and information literacy strategies. One librarian discussed at length the challenge of having the "time and space" to both meet the immediate need that instructors believe the students have (generally in relation to an assignment) with the librarian's learning goals related to helping students develop critical strategies for information searches and evaluating sources. This librarian worried that both faculty and students might be missing the point:

> because if they just leave out of my class being like 'this crazy lady just had us do puzzles the whole time and then threw candy at us'…I mean I'm happy for them to remember me like that, but I would really like them to remember more about that critical thinking idea of 'maybe there's something else I should be looking for here, too.'

This was closely echoed by another librarian who described being in a "weird spot" as a person with a humanities background who was:

> walking in to tell a whole bunch of people with hard sciences backgrounds that they need to think about, like, the human in their [examination/treatment] chair and also the literature, which was written by human beings. And they think that I'm only there for the tools, but…I'm here to talk

about, like, research theory, and I'll talk about the tools for, like, five seconds. What I want them to understand is how they learn.

This librarian mentioned that they will "worry if [students are] getting irritated with me" when they focused the instruction session on cognitive skills for identifying and strategizing around their real information need before using tools rather than just focusing on training students on the mechanics of using the tools. This anxiety that students might be experiencing frustration due to misaligned expectations about the learning goals was a regular component of how librarians expressed this theme.

The other main concept in this theme was a broader concern about the limitations of libraries, and educational institutions more generally, to address the issue of enabling or inculcating lifelong learning. One librarian expressed this as a tension between how educational institutions describe their goals versus what they actually support. For them it seemed "odd" for "a university library to be like, 'yeah, we're gonna be a point of lifelong learning,' and I'm like, 'for whose life?' Like, if you cut off access after four years to your electronic resources, how are you enabling that?" This librarian perceived this tension as becoming acute in the practice of librarians when they focused on teaching proprietary products, such as when "so many institutions will try to teach you one platform to search rather than what the most accessible platform will be." To address this, they talked about having explicit discussions with students about the student's strategies for overcoming the problem of not having access to proprietary information resources after they graduate. They also described a situation where they helped a past workplace integrate information literacy into the general education curriculum with great success, only to find out this initiative withered after they left because the institution was reliant on them to maintain that focus.

A similar concern was raised by another librarian who also worried that "as librarians, we talked about how we give people skills to do lifelong learning, and I sort of feel like that's true ideally if they listen to us and they use them. Which are a lot of 'ifs'." Whether or not students actually both learn and make appropriate use of the strategies that librarians and boarder institutions have as learning goals related to lifelong learning was a noticeable concern. One librarian wondered how higher education

institutions could create viable learning goals related to lifelong learning given the question, "How do we know what they're doing for the rest of their lives? They're only with us for four or five years."

Influence of Education Research and Theory

The major themes expressed by the librarians on the impact of education theory and research on their practices related to lifelong learning were about training experiences and specific theories or instructional research topics that had influenced their practice. All of the librarians affirmed that education theory and research impact their practice, but some focused more on their training in instruction while others discussed specific theories and research that had impacted them. Generally, there was a spectrum of discussion between those who spoke in ways that emphasized theory and those who spoke in ways that emphasized praxis. It is important to note that this does not suggest a greater attention to or skill at instructional practice for any of them along this spectrum but rather a difference in how they spoke about their own experiences with training and education about instruction.

Training Experiences

Two of the librarians focused on their training experiences in instruction, though the topic came up briefly with a third librarian who spoke of the value of sharing instructional experiences in a professional workshop setting. Both of the librarians who spoke more extensively about training programs discussed training provided by their employing institutions or professional development centers they had worked with at their institutions. However, the way they explored this was notably different. One discussed how an initial training program in instructional practices at their workplace had helped them to "think about my role as an educator and how to help students retain information," but this librarian also spoke about their ongoing discomfort with leading discussions during instruction sessions. This librarian described a background in running workshops and training sessions, but not as a librarian or in the formal educational context. They also described a strong personal lifelong learning goal to obtain more training in this area. By contrast, the other librarian spoke confidently about how the training they had received had influenced their practice designing lesson plans and using "foundational documents and foundational theory" in the development of new materials. This librarian spoke of believing that

"everything should be grounded in some sort of instructional theory" with the caveat that professional discretion should be involved. They described a background with an instructional skills course during their Master's of Library and Information Studies degree and subsequent professional workshops. They also laughed about how working at a teaching and student-centered institution had ruined them for other higher education workplaces: "I'll go into [another] university and they'll be like, 'what's your research?' And I'm like, 'I don't care. Where's the students?'"

Specific Theories and Instructional Research Topics

Only one librarian did not mention any specific educational theories, models or research areas that had influenced their practice. However, in many instances, the other librarians mentioned models or theories without tying them directly to lifelong learning or directly to their own instructional practices. The ACRL Framework (2015) was the only guiding conceptual document to be mentioned by multiple librarians and tied directly to instructional practices. Other theories and models mentioned but not explored in depth were active learning, student-centered learning, and constructivism. One librarian also twice discussed specific aspects of their practice that were influenced by their reading of educational theory and philosophy literature but did not mention specific names or titles. Only one librarian explicitly mentioned an educational theorist and their texts and tied them directly to lifelong learning and the librarian's specific practices. This librarian also mentioned their own work connecting education theory to library instruction.

This is not to say that educational theory has not had a significant impact on their work. One librarian noted that reading the literature was "giving me, like, those theoretical frameworks to try to give me a window into what is happening to learning, for learning." This same librarian went on to specify why this is so important by stating, "I feel like that's one of the big questions at the core of an educator's career is, like, how...What can I do to help people learn?" Another librarian spoke about how the importance of educational theory and research was because:

> you have to deal with all of these different types of learners, and so reading into that kind of
>
> literature and developing a praxis around, like, pedagogy towards lifelong learning that will help

people connect to things and connect to other people to understand that learning is a social

activity [is important].

This librarian also mentioned a friend who worked with educational theory who they would

socialize with and discuss instructional praxis and theory. Another librarian noted a spouse who had an

Instructional Design Certification and with whom they discussed education theory. This highlights the

importance of networks in ongoing engagement with education theory and research. As one librarian

stated, "it's been a minute since I have done stuff with educational theory and frameworks and things like

that," to suggest that it had been quite a while since they had last received training in these areas. While

no specific barriers to ongoing professional development in instructional practices were explicitly

mentioned by the librarians, there was also a general sense that training might need refreshing and that

many of them were staying updated via their professional or personal networks.

Relation to Heutagogy

None of the librarians interviewed mentioned either andragogy or heutagogy by name, and, when

the researcher named heutagogy explicitly in response to one interviewee's question, it was misheard as

"pedagogy." Since heutagogy was not specifically mentioned anywhere in the research instrument or

invitations to participate, it cannot be assumed that these librarians had no familiarity with this learning

model, but the lack of library literature on the model suggests there has been little penetration into library

practice. The purpose of connecting heutagogy to lifelong learning for this project was to explore

similarities and differences between the two concepts and the potential for heutagogy to provide insight

into how libraries can support lifelong learning practices.

There are a number of overlapping patterns between the interviews and the heutagogy model.

One of the defining concepts of lifelong learning in the interviews was "how to learn," which focused on

the cognitive development and self-awareness of learners in relation to their own learning practices.

Heutagogy is explicitly aimed at the mature learner who is capable of self-determined learning through

their awareness and reflection on themselves as a learner. In fact, the ongoing development of a deeper

understanding of themselves as a learner is one of the core components of capability development as an

ultimate goal of heutagogic learning. The librarian who differed the most on this theme focused on the social aspects of learning. Canning and Callan (2010) suggested that heutagogy is ideally undertaken in a community of practice or other socially networked learning environment but, while considered by researchers and theorists exploring heutagogy, this was not initially proposed as a core concept in the model. Similarly, awareness of the role of social learning in relation to lifelong learning was not expressed by the other librarians.

A notable difference between heutagogy and lifelong learning as explored in this project is a lack of focus on or awareness of learner agency as a guiding principle in the mature learner's process. While some exploration of learner agency was apparent in the librarian interviews, it tended to focus on the formal learning context and was not explored with depth or as encompassing of a focus as in heutagogy. Reflective practice in learning was also not explicitly mentioned or explored in any of the interviews. Like heutagogy generally, reflective practice and reflective learning require significant modeling for students to accomplish (Canning & Callan, 2010; Green & Schlairet, 2017), and this is often not a form of learning well modeled in traditional formal schooling. It also takes considerable time with students and control over the learning situation to practice, which were both things that the librarians interviewed expressed as a limitation of their practice. Heutagogy also faces a challenge in integrating with higher education due to the focus on learner agency over goal setting and assessment. This is something libraries may be uniquely suited to accommodate as many instructional librarians are not responsible for assessment. However, in the higher education environment, both lifelong learning and heutagogy run into challenges in relation to the standardization of assessments and outcomes measurements (Canning & Callan, 2010; Elmborg, 2016; Moore, 2020). One librarian discussed an experience integrating the AAC&U VALUE Rubrics (2009) with information literacy in a previous job, saying, "the idea of having, like, a rubric for that is so weird to me, but they have it."

All of the librarians reacted strongly to the sense that technology has had an enormous impact on lifelong learning and heutagogy is, in many ways, a response to learning in a technologically rich environment where information access and communication opportunities are immediate and extensive.

One librarian noted, "[technology] has definitely increased accessibility to lifelong learning opportunities" and another described it as having "blown the lid off as the entire lifelong learning thing." Both of these librarians also immediately pivoted to talk about how this has made information evaluation skills more essential by describing how almost anyone can create and share information regardless of their knowledge or intentions, and "it puts a lot of onus on evaluation" for the learner. This is an important area of overlapping concern between librarians and heutagogy, as the learner's ability to identify, select, and access information sources independently is an important part of heutagogy as it is in the framework of information literacy.

Resource selection and management is one of several areas where heutagogy identifies a primary role for a facilitator who can advise the learner, and the librarians interviewed identified this as an important way that technology influenced their practice. Several of them noted that it increased their availability to support students at a distance when they needed that support. As one librarian put it, technology "opened up my accessibility to students and our ability to just like check in…to help them feel like they have support, because I think that support's really crucial in lifelong learning." This was also noted as an area where social norms and expectations are still developing. One librarian recounted an anecdote about this balance between technology increasing support opportunities and identifying appropriate social norms relating to this: "We are teaching students all over the world, and sometimes there are fun things. Like I'll have a student in a meeting, and they'll be, like, it's four in the morning for me, and I'm like, 'Why are you doing this to yourself? Send me an email.'" Immediate and continual access is not viable for either instructors or learners as human beings, which creates a need to balance the constant and overwhelming access to information with the availability of individualized and personal support.

Given that one challenge of heutagogy is the need for considerable guidance in order to help learners understand their role in this learning model and the limitations that these academic librarians expressed with regards to having the necessary time and control to accomplish their existing learning goals, heutagogy may be a challenging model for libraries to actively engage in their practices. Another

concern is that the academic librarians focused primarily on their formal, classroom-based instructional practices, whether due to the structure of the interviews or their perception of their role in supporting lifelong learning. More research would need to be done to determine the reason for this focus, but it suggests a possible alignment to existing formal higher education structures that would make the clear adoption of heutagogic models more complicated to enact and a more notable statement about the library's relationship to the academic institution.

Limitations

Due to the methodology, the results of this project cannot be generalized and applied widely, though they can point to areas for further research focus. It is designed for and intended to serve as an exploratory project to ground more thorough and comprehensive projects.

Further Research

One of the primary reasons for this project was to test the viability of further research in this area, including identifying refinements for future research instruments. From this project, it is apparent that the perceived definition of lifelong learning and the relation to self-direction in academic librarianship is an area with a wealth of ongoing contradictions and implications for practice. By contrast, learner agency is a concept that is possibly not able to be usefully explored by a direct approach with this population or may need to be broken into conceptual components. There was also some tension expressed between how academic librarians and educational institutions talk about their role in supporting lifelong learning and the way this actually plays out for learners. These tensions were expressed both in regards to the librarians' perceptions of their individual roles and on a broader institutional level, suggesting several avenues for further research at both levels. These tensions may also be compounded by variations in faculty status and tenure for librarians at academic institutions, which was not something this project explored. Finally, it was notable that almost no mention was made by these librarians about supporting lifelong learning through the creation and maintenance of learning objects, collections, or other opportunities outside the formal classroom even though library work continually demands this of many, if not most, academic librarians. Support through one-on-one consultations was mentioned or implied but

not discussed in any detail. It was unclear if these omissions were because these were responsibilities the librarians did not associate with their role in lifelong learning or something the research instrument was not designed to accommodate.

Conclusion

The ambiguities of lifelong learning as a concept are part of what makes it such a powerful and flexible terminology for both educational institutions and educational workers. The concept adapts to many situations and environments with differing levels of structural formality, learner agency, and learner self-direction. Generally, academic librarians will use "information literacy" as the primary term for their role in supporting the educational goals of higher education institutions. Changes to the guiding framework documents for library instruction in higher education so that lifelong learning is not explicitly mentioned in the newer ACRL Framework suggest a shift in both terminology and focus away from lifelong learning. The librarians interviewed here clearly saw connections between lifelong learning and information literacy through their roles, but the many ambiguities of defining to whom, when, and where lifelong learning applies create uncertainty around strategies for supporting lifelong learning in academic libraries. Perhaps the most obvious challenge is that academic libraries and the institutions in which they are embedded typically only directly serve the learning needs of specific people during limited times and situations in their lives. Without a consistent model for lifelong learning, it is difficult to identify what skills, attitudes, methods, or resources learners need to engage with to be successful as lifelong learners beyond this limited sphere of influence; nonetheless, how to go about it. On the other hand, using standards and rubrics to define a lifetime process of learning for assessment within a four-year time span typical of undergraduate education reifies the centrality of the formal schooling experience and the programmatic, utilitarian model of education. All of this is not to say that academic librarians are not currently engaged in significant work to support lifelong learning. As one librarian noted, "if you can make it into an academic library and talk through some of the critical thinking with academic librarians, I think it can set students down such a great path."

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Appendix A

Invitation to Participate

I am completing a MEd in Instructional Design from the University of Massachusetts Boston. For my capstone, I am piloting a research project on academic libraries and lifelong learning. I am seeking academic librarians in the United States or Canada who consider instruction to be a primary component of their responsibilities.

For this project, I will be conducting several 30-40 minute recorded interviews via Zoom. The interviews will be transcribed with all personal names, locations, and institutions and other identifying information removed and the recording will subsequently be deleted.

The results of this pilot project will become part of a capstone paper that may be published in the University of Massachusetts Boston Institutional Repository, ScholarWorks. Participants, institutions, and locations will not be identified in the final capstone paper. However, due to the small number of interviews, it is not possible to promise that the resulting paper will be fully anonymized. If requested, I will share the final version of the paper with you prior to submission to ScholarWorks and can alter or remove your data from the paper at your request.

While the results of this project will inform the structure and methodology of a later research project, no data from these interviews will be used in that later project.

This project is not subject to IRB review as it is being conducted for the purpose of a class assignment and is not intended for publication or contribution to generalizable knowledge.

Please let me know if you are interested in volunteering to be interviewed for this project.

Appendix B

Interview Script

Thank you very much for taking the time to talk with me today.

I want to reiterate a few of the thing from my earlier emails:

This interview should take 30-40 minutes. The interview is being conducted as part of my Capstone project for my Masters of Education in Instructional Design from the University of Massachusetts Boston. As such it is being conducted for the purpose of a class assignment and is not intended for publication or contribution to generalizable knowledge and is not subject to IRB approval. I will be recording this conversation via Zoom and saving it into the cloud. I will be transcribing the conversation and then deleting the recording once transcribed. If this is acceptable to you, may I start recording now?

I also want to state that the Instructional Design Program does request that graduates publish their papers in the University of Massachusetts Boston Institutional Repository, ScholarWorks. Interview participants, institutions, and locations will not be identified in the final capstone paper. However, due to the small number of interviews I will be conducting, it is not possible to promise that the resulting paper will be fully anonymized. If requested, I will share the final version of the paper with you prior to submission to ScholarWorks and can alter or remove your data from the paper at your request. Do you want to review the manuscript prior to publication in ScholarWorks?

Lastly, I want to note that the results of this project will inform the structure and methodology of a later research project, but no data from these interviews will be used in that later project.

Questions:

1. How would you define "lifelong learning"?

2. How do you think self-directed learning relates to lifelong learning?

    a. How do you think learner agency relates to lifelong learning?

3. What is your role, as an academic librarian, in supporting lifelong or self-directed learning at your institution?

   a. Are you aware of an institutional mandate or goal related specifically to "lifelong learning" at your institution?

4. In what ways does education theory and research impact your practice as a library educator?

   a. (Follow-up question, if needed) Is there any aspect of education theory or research that specifically impacts your role in relation to lifelong learning or self-determined learning?

5. How do you think technology impacts lifelong learning?