

The Quarterly Interview: Nancy Gibson

Austin Peay State University

-Edited Transcript-

LOEX: *Where do you work? What is your job title and what are your main responsibilities? How long have you been in this position?*

Gibson: I joined Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, Tennessee, in 2004 as an instruction librarian. Since then, I have had a few title changes, and in 2018, I became the Social Sciences Librarian due to campus curriculum changes. As an instruction librarian of various stripes with liaison responsibilities, I provide instruction for about 15 sections of our First-Year Experience course (which includes both general and college-specific sections) each year and work with faculty in my liaison areas to provide instruction for their courses, particularly foundational, research methods, and capstone courses. As with many universities, most of our in-person instruction is one-shot, while our online and hybrid classes often allow for a more sustained presence. In addition, through various liaison assignments and team teaching, I have had a chance to work with the majority of university departments to provide information literacy instruction, often co-teaching with colleagues. Last but not least, as a tenured, full Professor, I've published and presented across a spectrum of topics (the most recent being a case study of MOOC collaboration) and served on campus, state, and national committees to benefit our students, our institutions, and ourselves as we provide sustaining instruction and service.

You just completed your term serving as convener of the ACRL Contemplative Pedagogy Interest Group. What is contemplative pedagogy, and how did you become interested in it?

I think an excellent explanation of contemplative pedagogy (CP) is this one from the [Contemplative Pedagogy Network](#), "Contemplative pedagogy shifts the focus of teaching and learning to incorporate 'first person' approaches which connect students to their lived, embodied experience of their own learning. As a result, students are encouraged to become more aware of their internal world and connect their learning to their own values and sense of meaning which in turn enables them to form richer, deeper, relationships with their peers, their communities and the world around them." You'll also hear the terms contemplative education and contemplative practices used in the literature and by various organizations, such as the Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education (ACMHE).

What are the benefits of using contemplative pedagogy? And, what are the potential risks?

"Research confirms that these contemplative forms of inquiry can offset the constant distractions of our multi-tasking, multi-media culture. Thus, creative teaching methods that integrate the ancient practice of contemplation innovatively meet the particular needs of today's students."

This quote on the Montclair State University's Contemplative Pedagogy Program page captures CP's why (and benefits). Most of us already have some tools and skills for bringing CP into the classroom using metacognitive and reflective learning activities such as the muddiest point and 1-minute papers.

Keep in mind that contemplative practices are not a cure-all and may feel strange to students at first. But, like many new things, start small (think James Lang and *Small Teaching*) and build from there. Even then, you still may have to fly under the radar as not all departments or faculty may be receptive to CP, as Daria Pizzuto reports in their 2018 dissertation, *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education: Examining Faculty Perspectives*. The less than collegial reception is often due to misconceptions by other faculty that contemplative pedagogy is not scholarly, that mindfulness is solely comprised of meditation or that the pedagogy is religious. Yet, Pizzuto concludes that the faculty she interviewed see tremendous value in CP and would like to see more institutional support and community building.

What are some different types of contemplative pedagogy practices that could be used?

When we think of contemplative pedagogy and contemplative practices, meditation and yoga are probably the ones that first come to mind. The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society (CMind) has a beautiful visual called [The Tree of Contemplative Practices](#), with seven branches representing different practice groups from familiar stillness practices to lesser-known relational and active practices. The generative branch may be of particular interest to instructional librarians as it includes practices that involve our senses around an object, such as Beholding and Visualization, which could be used with archive images and objects, while Contemplative Reading encourages readers to slow down by focusing on a selected passage and reflecting on it to gain a deeper

(Interview...Continued from page 12)

awareness and could be used with problem-solving scenarios. The practices are not meant to be all-inclusive; rather, CMind members identified them as valuable in their work and teaching.

What are some areas of contemplative pedagogy that you'd like to explore more?

Since I'm still relatively new to CP, I plan to slowly weave contemplative pedagogy into in-person and embedded course instruction. For in-person classes, I may start to do more grounding exercises (taking a moment to think where we are at the moment physically and emotionally, taking a few deep breaths, etc.). For all classes, I'd like to include a mixture of activities around topic selection and database searching that help students visualize their topics and projected research path paired with questions that help students reflect on both the cognitive and affective aspects of their research journey.

What do you wish that academic librarians would change regarding the way they think about and teach information literacy?

I think this is a hard one, especially as we're still in the twin health and social injustice pandemics and trying to do our best to keep our heads above water. I think our professional and personal priorities have become clearer and more focused after the past year and a half. I know for me, it can be hard to be intentional about my overall teaching when all my assignment-driven one-shots might not seem to be related. One of my goals this year will be to reflect on this year's instruction to see if I can figure out common threads, challenges, and successes. This might also mean reflecting more intentionally after each session in written form, and the good news is that we just revised our peer review process to include this reflective piece.

I also think we'll become better advocates out of necessity for our students and ourselves in how, what, and why we teach information literacy, especially in the light of the vast spread of disinformation we've witnessed and been affected by. On the positive side, I think we may get more buy-in from faculty for incorporating information literacy into their courses to help students deal with disinformation and become more discriminating consumers and producers of information.

You were an Instructional Technology librarian for about a decade, and now, a couple job titles later, still use technology in your teaching (like all librarians). What one or two new technologies or software (outside of the now ubiquitous Zoom) have you found particularly useful, even in a small way, over the past two or three years?

I like to keep it simple, and use a lot of free and widely known tools such as Trello to stay organized with creating digital learning objects and projects; LibGuides and New Google Sites for website creation; Google Slides for course integrated presentations and embedding in LibGuides; Slide Carnival and Canva for presentation design; YouTube for hosting and creating closed captions; and our learning management system Canvas. Another tool that some librarians in North Carolina and the instructional design world are using is [H5P](#), which we used in our research tutorial revamp. For sustainable use, it's best to host your H5P content on your institution's server through something like a Wordpress plugin, but it's easy to use and design interactive tutorials, videos, and questions that can easily be embedded within a website or LMS.

You co-authored a much-cited article a decade ago on "The librarian's role in combating plagiarism" that surveyed librarians about their institutional role of in plagiarism prevention and how they collaborate with instructors. What have you observed about how things have changed, if at all, in the decade since? ?

Since co-authoring the article, the university has taken a significantly more systematic approach to plagiarism education and handling of cases when the new Dean of Students was hired. Before the pandemic, our library worked with the Dean of Students to provide workshops and activities centered on academic integrity, including plagiarism prevention and citing sources in common citation styles. They also began publishing the student code of conduct in the student planner provided free to students each fall. Our university also implemented Turnitin in our Learning Management System several years ago, so we see fewer faculty coming to us with questions about whether a student has plagiarized a paper or project. Additionally, the Dean of Students usually hosts a session during our fall faculty pre-semester activities to present the past year's cases, review procedures, and respond to questions.

(Interview...Continued on page 10)

(Student-Athletes...Continued from page 9)

NCAA Eligibility Center. Spring 2020. "2020-21 Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete." *NCAA*. http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/eligibility_center/Student_Resources/CBSA.pdf

Rifenburg, J. Michael. 2018. *The Embodied Playbook: Writing Practices of Student-Athletes*. Logan: Utah State University Press.

Wimmer Schwarb, Amy. Summer 2019. "A Bridge to Prosperity." *NCAA Champions Magazine*. <http://www.ncaa.org/static/champion/a-bridge-to-prosperity/>

Wong, Melissa. 2020, September 14. "Extensions for everyone: Syllabus Policies that Center Accessibility." *Critical Librarianship & Pedagogy Symposium*. <https://clps.arizona.edu/registration-schedule>

(Interview...Continued from page 11)

What books or articles have influenced you?

I highly recommend checking out *Recipes for Mindfulness in Your Library: Supporting Resilience and Community Engagement* (2019) by Madeleine Charney, Jenny Colvin, and Richard Moniz as an introduction to how contemplative practices might be woven into teaching, library services, and professional interactions. With fifteen short chapters, this is a practical way to wrap your mind around the different possibilities, from the least intrusive to the most proactive. I became aware of this book when one of the chapter's authors, Katia Karadjova, did a presentation for CPIG earlier this year on the Brain Booth at Humboldt State University, which is a physical space in her library that introduces students to mindfulness through interactive devices and activities. I first skimmed the chapters to get an overview and then went back to the ones that particularly intrigued me, such as "Mindfully Managing Library Teams."

As we've seen, there are both opportunities and challenges for incorporating CP into your teaching. I think the perfect companion to this is *Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts* (2018). This book builds on Dr. Brené Brown's grounded theory research on vulnerability in a very approachable and actionable way. I plan to reread the book and complete activities, such as defining your square squad, where you create a shortlist of people whose opinion matters to you. Another activity that appealed to me is choosing two essential core values to guide your decisions, as Dr. Brown provides helpful examples of how her two values guide her actions.