We're All in It Together: Professional Development Linking Multi-Type Libraries with Information Literacy Instruction Across One State

Cheryl A. McCarthy

Mary C. MacDonald

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WE'RE ALL IN IT TOGETHER: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT LINKING MULTI-TYPE LIBRARIES WITH INFORMATION LITERACY INSTRUCTION ACROSS ONE STATE

CHERYL A. MCCARTHY AND MARY C. MACDONALD

INTRODUCTION AND GOALS

Two information literacy leaders from the University of Rhode Island, Cheryl A. McCarthy, Professor in the Graduate School of Library and Information Studies and Interim Dean of University Libraries, and Mary C. MacDonald, Professor and Head of Instruction in the University Libraries, collaborated with colleagues across the state to present a multi-type library professional development (PD) workshop sponsored by the Rhode Island Office of Library and Information Services (OLIS). With the creation of a panel of librarians from multi-type libraries, librarians shared best practices in information literacy instruction across one state. In this paper, we will discuss how a panel of academic, high school, public, and special librarians collaborated to present examples of best practices teaching information literacy and created a LibGuide to curate resources. We will share the goals of the PD workshop and how participants interacted in round table discussions to find synergies in programs. We will also identify the outcomes of this collaboration for sustainability and continued professional development for instruction in libraries with the formation of an Information Literacy Action Round Table (ILART, 2014).

When the OLIS Multi-type Library Reference Advisory Group in Rhode Island decided to hold a statewide professional development workshop on information literacy in the spring of 2013, they asked Cheryl McCarthy to be the keynote speaker, but she requested that the group consider a panel of experts in information literacy instruction across Rhode Island who could share best practices. After the panel was formed, panelists brainstormed approaches and strategies to present a cohesive program. Cheryl A. McCarthy moderated the panel and created a LibGuide with one page for each presenter to create her presentation and to curate resources. The distinguished panel included Professor Mary MacDonald, Head of Instruction and Information Literacy Librarian at University of Rhode Island Libraries; Jennifer Thomas, Director of Library and Technology Integration at Bishop Stang High School; Julie Holden, Information Services and Emerging Technologies Librarian at Cranston Public Library; and Amanda Richman, Public Services Librarian at Rhode Island Hospital/Lifespan.

The four goals of the PD workshop were identified as:

1. To present best practices of information literacy instruction in all types of libraries.
2. To engage participants in round table discussions with librarians from multi-type libraries to find synergies in our information literacy instruction programs and topics.
3. To create summaries of the round table discussions and to share these on the LibGuide for future access.
4. To share ideas for future PD collaborations in order to embrace teaching information literacy and to enhance lifelong learning for all Rhode Islanders.

LibGuide for Collaboration and Access

The panel agreed that it takes a village to create information literacy instruction in Rhode Island to ensure lifelong learning for all in our state. Each panel member shared examples of best practices during their presentations by using one LibGuide with a page for each presenter. The LibGuide offered opportunities to collaborate, to curate resources, and to share information and ideas as well as to provide cohesive presentations rather than individual PowerPoint presentations. Examples of best practices in teaching by the panel across a variety of libraries in RI can be viewed at http://libraryschool.libguidescms.com/alltogether (2014).

In addition to the panelists, the OLIS Committee provided facilitators and note takers for each round table. After the panel presentations, participants rotated around the room to share ideas in an unconference format. Facilitators helped focus the conversation around the essential questions for each topic for participants to share their ideas and best practices. The outcome of these round table sessions included summaries of ideas by note takers who then added these pages to the comprehensive LibGuide.

Some key people on the OLIS Multi-type Library Committee were also facilitators or note takers. Professor Patricia Brennan from Rhode Island College Library and Professor Amanda Izenstark from URI University Libraries wrote the summaries of the round table discussion sessions and posted them to the LibGuide. Therefore, this interactive PD workshop provided opportunities for engagement as well as future access on a LibGuide to both the panel presentations and the summaries of round table discussions.

Participation and Round Table Discussion Topics

By rotating around the room to participate in discussions of five topics led by facilitators, participants were engaged and empowered to share ideas and also to view the summaries on the LibGuide. The five round table discussions were:

Round Table #1, *Information Literacy Continuum K-20*, was facilitated by three librarians: Jamie Greene from an elementary school, Rosanne Trissler from a high school, and Mary MacDonald from an academic library. How can we or should we articulate the key skills at each level with the stages of development and context? All along the K-20 continuum, information literacy was addressed as a process but applied at different depths at each level. Participants felt that these skills should be transferable along the K-20 continuum, but that librarians need to continue the dialogue to ensure how this can be implemented by extending the discussion statewide during Rhode Island's Information Literacy Month, October 2013. On October 15, 2013, Mary MacDonald announced the formation of the Information Literacy Action Round Table by the Rhode Island Library Association at the Information Literacy Social event. (See RILA, Constitution, Article XI, 2014)

Round Table #2, *Are You Ready for Common Core?* was facilitated by Cheryl A. McCarthy. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were discussed as the focus of K-12 education in RI, as these standards are meant to ensure that students are college or career ready and proficient in high stakes tests as one of the RI graduation requirements. CCSS are developmental and have anchor standards that apply to information literacy instruction, especially in reading and writing standards with a focus on informational texts and writing persuasive essays. CCSS will require a higher degree of preparedness regarding information literacy standards integrated into the curriculum, with critical thinking and acquiring knowledge at increasing levels of complexity K-12. Participants wanted more knowledge about CCSS and especially the role of school and public librarians in helping students succeed. (RIDE, 2014 and CCSS, 2014)

Round Table #3, *Free & Cool Tech Tools*, was facilitated by Amanda Izenstark who took pictures of the easel sheets with the notes shared by participants. She later added live links to each site listed on the LibGuide for future access.

Round Table #4, *Finding and Evaluating Health Information*, was facilitated by Mary Zammarelli from St. Joseph Hospital Health Services. Participants recognized that health information literacy has special requirements and asked whether patrons know what information they need and whether they can understand and evaluate medical information. They discussed the use of Medline Plus as compared to Medline. Participants recommended publications of the Medical Library Association, including "*Deciphering MedSpeak*," "*Diagnosing Websites*," and "*Rx Riddles Solved,*" which can be found on the MLA website at https://www.mlanet.org/resources/medspeak/. (2014)

Round Table #5, *Marketing Your Invisible Resources,* was facilitated by Karen Mellor of OLIS and Shane Sher of Providence Community Libraries. Participants discussed ways to market the statewide databases provided through OLIS on AskRI at http://www.askri.org. (2014)

INFORMATION LITERACY ACROSS RHODE ISLAND

We now know that teaching information literacy skills does exist in all types of libraries in RI, but we were unaware of exactly who, what, when, where, and how they were being delivered before this PD workshop. We discovered the synergies among various types of librarians for embracing the role of teaching information literacy in their library communities even if they used other terms such as research or inquiry skills. In Rhode Island we are fortunate to be able to collaborate because we are geographically and demographically small with 11 academic libraries, 39 cities and towns that all have school libraries and public libraries, and a variety of special libraries including hospital, law, corporate, historical, museum, and other special libraries.

This PD workshop incorporating panelists presenting best practices about teaching in a variety of settings as well as participants sharing ideas in round table discussions created an opportunity for librarians to gain insights into the common goals, missions and actions of Rhode Island librarians. As each panel member told her story of the information literacy efforts of their organization, we could begin to see the life of the average Rhode Islander unfold in terms of information literacy instruction. Opportunities abound at each age level to define information needs by accessing, locating, evaluating and using a broad range of information in a variety of formats in K-12 schools, academic, public, and health information libraries in our state. In addition, the University of Rhode Island's Graduate School of Library and Information Studies program prepares future librarians to teach information literacy skills with specialized courses in information literacy instruction, providing candidates with opportunities to collaborate and to teach in K-12 schools and in the URI University Libraries.

OUTCOMES: SUSTAINABILITY

Following the panel presentations, each of the five round table discussion groups repeated their program twice in order to generate as much sharing and brainstorming by participants as possible. As the decibel level in the event room grew, a groundswell of interest was evident and it became clear that this one event would not suffice to satisfy all of the ideas and questions raised. Panel members and round table conveners alike agreed that we needed to find a format that could both sustain and nurture the ideas generated by this one day event. Soon after the OLIS event, one panel member began the search for models that might serve our needs and purposes. *Informed Transitions: Libraries Supporting the High School to College Transition* (2013) edited by Kenneth J. Burhanna, provides examples of groups across the country that foster interest and collaboration of librarians who are engaged in the high school to college transition. In the spring of 2014, Mary MacDonald was able to visit the College Readiness Dialogues (2014) event coordinated by Ken Stewart of Blue Valley High School in Stillwell, Kansas, and Laurie Hathman, Library Director at Rockhurst University in Kansas City, Missouri. Other collaborative IL groups offer a broader approach to information literacy by covering more than the high school to college transition, such as PA Forward/Information Literacy (2014), the Oregon Information Literacy Summit (2014) and the Illinois Information Literacy Summit (2014). The work of these groups provided inspiration and models for creating a similar group in Rhode Island.

OUTCOMES: ILART

In order to establish a statewide information literacy group, Mary MacDonald requested that the Rhode Island Library Association (RILA) allow the formation of a round table. Fortuitously, she was already working with the President of RILA to propose the second annual proclamation for Information Literacy Month in October 2013, so she was also easily able to discuss the possibility of a round table. In fall 2013, a petition to establish a round table group within RILA was circulated and proposed to the RILA Executive Board for approval. After approval in October, this group became the Information Literacy Action Round Table (ILART) of RILA, and was announced at the October 2013 Information Literacy Proclamation Social hosted at the University of Rhode Island and jointly sponsored by the Rhode Island Library Association and the School Librarians of Rhode Island. As is now stated in the RILA Constitution:

The Information Literacy Action Round Table (ILART) was established under the governance of the Rhode Island Library Association in order support two goals:

1. To build a collaborative network across library types (school, public, academic, health, and special) to promote information literacy as critical set of skills and understandings for full participation in society and therefore an essential component of library service;
2. To provide a forum for discussion and communication of information literacy-related strategies, activities, and programs for all types of libraries and librarians throughout the state to support the needs of Rhode Islanders.

The information needs of Rhode Islanders in the 21st century are ever changing. The Information Literacy Action Round Table will identify areas of action and develop strategies that librarians can use to reach out to all Rhode Islanders to raise awareness and facilitate education in all aspects of information literacy: information and technology, civic and social, health, and financial

literacy. As people need to become 'transliterate' in today's society, libraries of all types need to be prepared to play a key role in this skill building, at all levels. Therefore this roundtable will contribute to the development of library practices and programs that effectively support these needs. (RILA, Constitution, Article XI., 2014)

ILART has held three events since its inception. While the broader goal is to address information literacy needs of all Rhode Islanders, these first gatherings have addressed the high school to college transition. The use of Common Core State Standards in RI and the proposed revision of ACRL Information Literacy Standards have been the driving force for topics discussed including: "What Do Professors Expect?" and "Building Bridges," which included a report on the online participation of an ILART member in the 2014 ALA Midwinter online discussion of the Library Instruction Round Table (LIRT, 2014). At one event, we created an activity generated from our reading of "*A Transition Checklist for High School Seniors*" by Patricia Owen (2010). The most recent spring 2014 gathering covered a wide range of ideas and strategies for using the proposed ACRL Framework for Information Literacy by addressing the "Threshold Concepts" from Draft Parts 1 and 2. (ACRL, 2014) Participants grappled with defining these concepts in small groups and shared how these concepts can be implemented in school and academic libraries, as well as discussed synergies with AASL standards. (AASL, 2010) A Google Doc was created for participants to continue to share ideas.

In conclusion, developing a capacity for ILART will depend on continued interest from RI librarians and on identifying and sustaining leadership for the group. Initial feedback tells us that members prefer to attend short, late-afternoon gatherings focused on one topic. This has proven to be manageable for both school and academic librarians because the gatherings are located at an institution geographically central in RI. The three gatherings held so far have attracted a dedicated and committed group of school and academic librarians. Our next steps are to establish a leadership framework and to discuss our goals and plans for the coming year. Long-range plans may include addressing broader metaliteracy issues, (such as information in a variety of formats, as well as digital, civic, social, health, and financial literacies). In addition, participants indicated that they were interested in a daylong statewide summit. We plan to continue to look at the success of similar regional and statewide organizations, as we know that our future is promising with the commitment of librarians to collaborate and work together to ensure lifelong learning for all Rhode Islanders.

FUTURE QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

In closing, we share the following questions that we ask ourselves, and all librarians. Some librarians may not embrace the role of teaching information literacy because they may believe that information literacy is not in their domain. However, a close reading of current and proposed information literacy standards and professional practices provides us with a clear conviction that teaching information literacy is as basic to librarianship as our traditional roles such as reference librarian or cataloger. Through ILART we continue to ponder these questions:
How can we ensure that all types of librarians embrace the role of teaching information literacy in our library communities? How can we share resources, information, and ideas to continue professional development programs for all librarians to become effective teachers of information literacy?

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