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Introduction

In 2010, we argued academic libraries in Canada possess the qualities that Walker et al (2008) believe to be necessary for strong intellectual cultures:

- shared purpose
- diverse and multi-generational community
- flexible and forgiving community
- respectful and generous community (Jacobs, Berg & Cornwall, 2010).

To date, there have been few opportunities to nurture such an intellectual culture in Canadian libraries, especially on a national scale. A four-day national institute, the Librarians' Research Institute (LRI) was developed to offer Canadian librarians an opportunity to capitalize on what we already possess and to work toward developing a vibrant, positive, and productive research culture within our libraries.

Three Foundational Principles of the LRI

As we developed the LRI, three foundational principles emerged. These principles informed the planning, curriculum, and overall vision of the Institute.

- **By librarians, for librarians** Early on, it was suggested that we look to external experts to deliver the LRI content. Using external experts implied, inaccurately, that librarians across Canada did not have the expertise and background to teach and develop the LRI's curriculum. Instead, a peer mentor approach was used. Highly skilled and accomplished Canadian librarian researchers collaboratively developed a curriculum that drew explicitly on their expertise and experience with library research. Peer mentors reflected and highlighted the tremendous research skills and expertise already in the Canadian academic libraries.
- **Strengths not deficits** Focusing on deficits such as lack of time, resources, or skills mire discussions of research on problems rather than solutions. The LRI, instead, explicitly focused on the strengths the participants and peer mentors possessed. Believing we needed to do more than just navigate, negotiate, and survive obstacles, we concentrated on collective and individual strengths in order to explore new terrain and reach new heights.
- **Habits of mind not skills** Rather than teaching decontextualized skills, we worked to develop researchers' habits of mind, particularly persistence, flexibility, wonder, creativity, imagination, innovation, questioning, problem posing, and openness to continuous learning. These habits of mind could not be taught in a week but the Institute asked librarians to recognize and develop the habits of mind required to do the research they aspired toward.

Conclusion

Focusing on strengths not deficits, habits of mind not skills, and internal not external expertise allowed the Canadian academic library community to nurture the nascent qualities it possessed to develop a research community that is not only robust and productive but also flexible, forgiving, respectful, and generous.

The Librarians' Research Institute brings Canadian librarians of all levels together to share our research experiences and to learn from our collective wisdom.