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Rely on Evidence, Not Anecdotes, in Instruction, Speakers Urge

By Amy Pace
High Point University (NC)

On Sunday afternoon instruction librarians gathered to hear about using evidence based practice in their classrooms. Speakers were Diana K. Wakimoto, Online Literacy Archivist and Librarian from California State University, East Bay and Megan Oakley, Assistant Professor at Syracuse University at the session entitled “Question, Find, Evaluate, Apply: Translating Evidence Based Upon Practice to Information Literacy Instruction.”

Oakley defined the idea of evidence-based practice in simple terms. The first step in the process is to formulate a good question. For example, “Is either face-to-face instruction or online tutorials significantly more effective in teaching first-year students information literacy skills?”

The next step, according to Oakley is finding evidence. This includes searching through the library literature and data bases. Finding great keywords can admittedly be difficult due to subject headings not fitting well. She recommended journals such as Journal of Academic Librarianship, College and Research Libraries, and Portal among others. Evidence based practice is also about what librarians observe as professionals, not just the literature, and includes user-reports of the instruction. She encouraged attendees to create cultures of evidence in their institutions—to explain why they believe what they believe, using literature and experience. This would theoretically include giving all librarians time for research, and indexing librarians’ conferences.

Reliability and applicability should both be considered when evaluating evidence, Oakley said, and evidence should be submitted to an intense summarization process. Present the findings by including an abstract, methods used, your main results, a conclusion and discussion.

Wakimoto discussed how to apply evidenced based practice to different types of instruction. She pointed out that evidence is good, anecdotes are generally bad and when in doubt, ask a colleague.

Wakimoto led the group of 400 plus librarians in an exercise to discover what they would do if teaching a class one-time lesson and concluded that it would be best to ask the students what they needed, which is evidence based practice in its simplest form. She recommended consulting education and educational psychology journals for evidence on best teaching methods and incorporating course assessments into the sessions.

Attendees were then reminded by Wakimoto that evidence based practice is very similar to information literacy in the formulation of questions, gathering evidence, and formulating and evaluating a product.

You can read Diana Wakimoto’s blog at: www.thewakilibrarian.wordpress.com. The session was hosted by the Instruction Section of ACRL. A bibliography of suggested literature and presentation slides may be found at http://bit.ly/awU7yj.

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Libraries Report Increased Use of E-government, Job Resources And Reduced Operating Hours

A new report finds America’s public libraries posted gains in provision of public computer and internet resources, particularly in supporting job seeking and e-government. However, snowballing funding cuts are forcing thousands of libraries to lock away these resources as they reduce operating hours.

Conducted by the American Library Association and the Center for Library and Information Innovation, the Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study provides current national and state data on library resources and trends. The research, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and ALA, finds: 79 percent of libraries (up from 54 percent one year ago) provide assistance to patrons accessing online government services; 88 percent of libraries provide free access to job databases; and 67 percent report staff helped patrons complete online job applications.

“Healthy public libraries play a vital role in ensuring digital opportunity for all,” said ALA President Camila Alire. “This report is a message to elected leaders as they balance budgets: today’s libraries are an essential service for accessing workforce and government services.”

Public access to these resources, however, is becoming more limited in many communities. Nearly 15 percent of libraries (or roughly 2,400 locations) report reduced operating hours, with urban libraries leading the trend with nearly one-quarter reporting fewer hours in 2009. The study also reports:

Two-thirds of libraries are the only provider of free public access to computers and the Internet in their communities.
- 89 percent of libraries provide technology training to patrons
- 82 percent of libraries provide Wi-Fi access
- Libraries offer robust Internet services, including online homework resources (88 percent) and ebooks (66 percent)

“Computer and Internet access at public libraries connects millions of Americans to economic, educational, and social opportunity each year, but libraries struggle to replace aging computer workstations and provide the high-speed Internet connections patrons need,” said Jill Nishi, deputy director of U.S. Libraries at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. “As demand for these services rise, public and private investment to support public access technology at libraries is more critical than ever.”

The full study can be found at www.ala.org/plinternetfunding.

African Libraries: Meeting the Needs of Diverse Communities

By Marie Paiva
University of Utah

On Sunday afternoon, Dr. Ghaji Badawi concentrated on how public libraries are helping girls and women in northern Nigeria by using library resources and library space for adult education classes for women. In the past, libraries did well in southern Nigeria and the north was overlooked. More Muslims are found in northern Nigeria and they did not easily accept western library concepts at that time. Today, libraries are now integrated with their communities they serve.

Stephen Mallinger serves as the International Resource Officer in Dakar at the United States Embassy and is responsible for information resource centers in ten countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. He spoke of the role of libraries in these countries and how they can serve as a model. The information in these resources centers are not censored, access is free to users and users are treated with respect.

“Librarians Without Walls: HIV/AIDS Information in the Sub-Saharan Context” was the title of Dr. Kendra Albright’s presentation. She is a professor in the School of Library and Information Science at the University of South Carolina. According to Albright, some libraries are doing a good job in providing health information related to HIV/AIDS but they need to expand these resources and make more titles available that are written by Africans in their own languages.
Ezekiel’s Dragon

By Amy Pace, High Point University (NC)

“I love to discover information.” “I love to help people.” “It’s still the love of the chase.” Before the speakers began to present, attendees were entertained by slides of the many hilarious anecdotes and reasons that reference librarians love their work in the aptly named RUSA President’s Program: “For the Love of Reference” on Monday.

RUSA president, Susan J. Beck, opened the session and said she “decided her goal was to re-emphasize reference in RUSA and to remind us what got us into the field in the first place.” She created a For the Love of Reference Facebook page, for librarians to share their reasons for their great love affair with reference, which is still available for those who want to add to the list.

Nancy Pearl, “one lusty librarian,” who is responsible for creating BookLust, spoke first on “The Gifts Our Patrons Give Us.” Pearl described herself as a “terrible, terrible reference librarian,” because she calls David Wright whenever she has a “real” reference question. “When I was a librarian… every time I saw somebody approaching… with a particular stride… I would always say, ‘Please God, let it be a question about poetry.’ I figured I could do that.” Pearl then stated, “for me, if I could do something for RUSA, it would be putting reading back in RUSA… All my life, I wanted to do one thing… that is, tell people good books to read.”

Pearl described her stress with traditional reference, “With reference, you’re acting under the assumption that there’s only one right answer, but readers’ advisory work is much easier.” Pearl described readers’ advisory as being something of a “mind reader,” although “you can do wonderful readers’ advisory work simply by ‘listening to what the patron says.’” Pearl has been so devoted to readers’ advisory because she admits, “I love narratives. I love stories. What you get is people’s stories, and sometimes, they don’t even know that they’re sharing their stories with you.” She explains that when people ask you for a book, they are “sharing themselves” with you. “They’re looking to replicate a particular reading experience, and it’s your job to help them.”

Joseph Finder, New York Times best-selling author of Killer Instinct and Company Man spoke next, saying “this is the only audience before which I can admit without embarrassment, that I have a Nancy Pearl action figure.” He described himself as a “researchaholic.” He wanted to be a writer from a young age because of the children’s librarian; he had read all of his library’s books. He loved Robert Ludlum novels, wanting to be Jason Bourne. “Libraries turned me into a real writer.” Due to research in a library at Harvard, Finder was led to the discovery that Armand Hammer had worked for the KGB. This led to intense research and a book contract. “I love talking with people. I love doing research. I love finding things out.”

Peter Bromberg, assistant director to the New Jersey Library Cooperative and who will soon be Director of the Princeton Public Library, addressed the subject of the future of reference. He said that “the work we do is so vitally important that we not only inspire love letters, but we also save lives.” Bromberg posed the question, “why do we help them?” He had noted our penchant for helping people everywhere we go, not just at the reference desk, and determined that we “just like to help people,” and can be described as “life savers.” He told the story of when he worked at the EPA, helping someone research childhood asthma and its relation to poverty. Hitting a bad citation, they were blocked, but he noticed a lot of documents were coming out of the Cincinnati Office, by a certain author. After tracking down the author through Switchboard.com in 1996, he was able to help the young researcher make significant advances in her research and hence saved many lives. “The technology will change. The methods will change. But we will continue to love to help people.”

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Upcoming Dates for Midwinter & Annual

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2011 Annual Conference
June 23–28, 2011
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2012 Midwinter Meeting
January 20–24, 2012
Dallas, TX

2012 Annual Conference
June 21–26, 2012
Anaheim, CA
Talking about Pop Culture and Libraries

By Kathryn Shields
High Point University (NC)

The ACRL Pop Culture in Libraries Discussion Group met at each Conference to discuss pop culture and its impact on and relevance to libraries. Each meeting has a general theme for discussion. This year, Sarah Sogogan, Massachusetts Library System, led a discussion on Web 2.0 in libraries. Participants began the discussion by talking about Twitter. The group commented that you see mostly academic libraries on Twitter and very few public libraries. However, there are some public libraries such as the Enoch Pratt Library, who has a strong model of how to use Twitter effectively. Their feed mixes both current events and library-related news. Another example is the New York Public Library, which has its own hashtag and posts first lines of famous books to show what they’re reading. Social networking sites can be incredible promotional and informative tools for libraries, but you do have to think about how you are going to allow to follow you on both Twitter and Facebook.

How do you decide which social network to use? The group said that sometimes it is a matter of trial and error, to see which network or networks get the biggest response. How do you decide if you have gotten a good response? Don’t just count the number of friends, but try to determine whether or not they are actually following the content. You also need to be careful about following what your students post. Check your privacy settings to find the right setting for your profile.

The group also discussed posting personal content on these sites and being careful about how much you share. One participant mentioned a site called Academia.edu that could be another option for academics to share information without as much intrusion. They also discussed generational gaps in libraries. Many times we assume that certain tasks, particularly those that deal with technology, are assumed to be better suited to young librarians. We need to get away from this idea, because technology is something that affects all of us, not just the younger generation. Librarians and libraries need to get on board with 2.0 now or they will get left behind, because the world is already moving into 3.0.
Preparing the Librarians of the Future

By Jeanna Vahling
University of Kentucky

REFORMA and NMRT, collaborating for the first time, hosted a session entitled “The New Professional Paradigm: Redefining the New Librarian” Sunday in the Renaissance Mayflower’s Colonial Room. Phrases like “the library revolution has arrived,” “succession planning,” and “managing between and across generations” have been at the tips of librarians’ tongues these past few years with the promise of the Baby Boomers finally retiring. The session addressed the planning and passing on of knowledge and management between and across generations in this era of the “new librarian.”

Meaghan O’Conner, a non-traditional librarian, briefly mentioned her two large scale library projects in Romania as she aggressively advocated for librarians. “We’re on the defensive” she said, talking about the need to justify our profession in lieu of the various cuts libraries are facing today in terms of budget, staff, and reduced hours. Despite her interest predominantly being in international library endeavors, the motivation behind her own career, getting librarians involved in the more tech savvy projects, was inspiring. She pointed out that it just isn’t enough to wait for technology to fix the problems that librarians are capable and willing to handle. “As librarians, we ought to be engaging in the technology development conversations.”

Valeria Gallo Stampino, Community Development Librarian at the Vancouver Public Library, presented “Public Library Leadership: A New Professional Perspective.” She touched on “community-led philosophy” and understanding the roles of new librarians while always being mindful of exactly where we are driving our profession. She said, “…against the conventional wisdom, in the public sector, innovation has been more often initiated by front-line public servants and middle managers…” Leadership skills that she found most practical in her community projects included thinking creatively, living with change, masterfully presenting ideas, and “go into the community and build relationships!”

Eric Frierson, a Reference and Instruction Librarian and a member of ALA’s Young Librarians Task Force, closed the session with discussion on retention in ALA membership. The task force goal over the past year has been to investigate ways to encourage young librarians to become better advocates for ALA and the profession.

van Nispen

“We’ve done an incredibly bad job in libraries of not having fun, it doesn’t have to be 24/7 serious.”

He suggested getting partners into the library. “In libraries we don’t talk about the most popular things. Most librarians are text-based learners. In this time there is so much video coming to your eyes, and your brains like it more. Text is difficult, and that’s why there are so many illiterate people. If you have to choose between reusing a book and watching television, your brain will choose watching television.”

He continued by saying, “In libraries we don’t talk about the most popular things. Most librarians are text-based learners. In this time there is so much video coming to your eyes, and your brains like it more. Text is difficult, and that’s why there are so many illiterate people. If you have to choose between reusing a book and watching television, your brain will choose watching television.”

van Nispen asked, “Would a library even be invented today? The electronic book is the library of the future. A library is a second hand business model. We buy books and we lend them out. We buy one book and a lot of people use it. In the digital era there is no second hand. Going to the library to ask a question will be out-dated.” He said that there are almost no mobile apps for libraries, only about 17. “But a library, should connect to social networks. “A lot of libraries don’t allow them, and we need to stop doing that.”

He continued by saying, “If you have a lot of media and a lot of metadata, it will mean more to people. Make your library plug and play. We send books home for three weeks, but we don’t allow people to have coffee while reading books inside the library.”

He suggested getting partners into the library. “Do things that are born digital. When it comes to things of local importance, no one is faster or more important than the library. You have to make a place where people want to come; where gaming is normal.”

van Nispen is very proud that the Delft Public Library was given the title of being the coolest public library in the world. “We have to go out and find our users. “Knowing that we are aging and society is changing, the next librarian needs to be proud and to claim it. There is no other institution that has so much traffic and connects so many people. You are obligated to your country to make something of the library. It’s not about how you start, starting is not the issue, but it’s how you finish. Finish strong,” he advised.
Monuments are a “kind of public archive where memory is deposited.”

Remembrance

“from page 3

are a “kind of public archive where memory is deposited.” As a society “we are trying to perpetuate the memory of people singled out for particular events” and we want to keep the memory alive for future generations after the person(s) have died away. Savage explores the idea that the essence of this public archive is its intention to be permanent. We select “only the finest and most imperishable of materials” to be used in our “quest for permanence to defeat time—to become timeless.”

One of the shifts in monuments and memorials takes place throughout the late 19th and 20th century, which places the common man and common soldier, as opposed to only officers and “heroes,” in the visual space to be memorialized. When Maya Lin designed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (built in 1982), this connection to the loss of everyone was at the center, rejecting the idea of “hero worship,” which is often realized with the “man on a pedestal” monument. When Savage was researching the history of monuments around the Mall, including the L’Enfant and McMillan Plans, he kept seeing the term “public grounds” and “public space.” Interested in the development of these two terms he looked for both in the New York Times index (1851-2000). He noticed that “public space” wasn’t much used in the 19th century, but exploded in use after the 1950s, when “public grounds” was becoming non-existent. Savage said this “indicates a new attitude of space and valorization of space over ground.”

The Grant monument itself escaped the traditional man on a pedestal to create a space of its own that is “quite grand and innovative,” said Savage. The monument shows soldiers huddling with dejected looks on their faces, which draws viewers into the psychological engagement of the tragedy and trauma, instead of seeing a symbol of heroism. “It’s the same with Lincoln Memorial. He’s brooding, thinking of complex issues”, says Savage, and the public is drawn in to a deeper level of emotion and empathy.

As of 2003, the landscape on the Mall is closed to future monuments and memorials, but Savage said this “seems an impossible dream because we must keep commemorating.” It will become imperative in future generations to memorialize and “they’re not going to want to do that on the edges.” He proposes getting rid of permanent monuments and erecting ephemeral ones, such as the Fourth Plinth Project in Trafalgar Square, London, which rotates artist’s creations.

The next speaker on the panel was Davis Buckley, FAIA, President of Davis Buckley Architects and Planners, whose talk focused on the Japanese American Memorial, which his firm designed and constructed. Buckley was an unpaid advisor for the Memorial for years, and he said it “sets the stage for all memorials and it’s the standard for which a lot of memorials are judged.”

The Japanese American Memorial was originally proposed as a commemorative work for military forces, but it then spoke to the issue of denial of civil liberties and rights of people who were American by birthright. The Memorial is there to help us understand the concept of civil liberties denied on a broader scale. During World War II Japanese Americans were given 24 hours to pack up and were then shipped to internment camps. Buckley stated, “We can all agree it’s a remarkable and despicable event in our history” and the Memorial contains the only admission of guilt on a monument, spoken by Reagan: Here we admit wrong.

In order to get approval for a monument, there is much paper work and years of waiting. Buckley spent a total of ten years on the project: three years trying to get approval for the location, and seven years designing and constructing it.

For librarians, Savage mentioned the supplemental materials that exist on the internet, which contain more background, different aspects and controversies surrounding monuments, etc. that will add a new layer of information to balance the traditional element of inscriptions in stone.
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Turn to us. The choices will surprise you.

The session “Not So Extreme Makeovers,” on Sunday, sponsored by APA included panelists of library directors and a personal stylist. They also concurred that image is affected by one’s attitude and confidence as much as it is about what one wears. Dr. Barbara Morrow Williams reminded attendees that as libraries and their services are being redefined and repurposed, so are librarians.

The history of women in the workplace was outlined by Williams, who tied the pre-women’s rights and civil rights movements and necessity of hats and gloves to the post-movement era when more women were in the workplace in the 1970s, and when a more casual style was infused into the culture. The 1980s brought the menswear look to women. The question for designers and retailers was how to dress the influx of women in professional and support roles who did not have incomes to support costly wardrobes. Now we are in a time when everyone can find styles and fashions within their price and size range to dress for success. Dr. Carla Hayden, former ALA-APA President, agreed saying that if children’s librarians present to administrators for budget hearings dressed as they would for patrons, they would be perceived as the people they serve—children. Dressing professionally is not “selling out” but ensuring that your appearance will not distract from your message. Hayden turned the table on the stereotype, however, and said that it can and has worked in librarians’ favor to be seen as brainy and organized as ALA fights against issues like the PATRIOT Act.

Nevertheless, dressing well is critical to being successful at advancing your institution’s goals, in addition to your own.

Avis Cuffee, personal stylist manager of Nordstrom in Pentagon City, Va., talked about how her staff helps people find their style. She showed examples of undergarments that hide imperfections and extolled the virtue of proper fittings. She demonstrated how to personalize with accessories, color and detail.

Ten Not So Extreme Makeover Tips included:

• Five classic pieces in a woman’s wardrobe: neutral jacket, skirt, pants, white shirt and sleeveless sheath dress. For men: classic jacket, flat front pants, nice jeans and at least three good shirts.

• Dress for the size and shape you are, not for what you used to be or aspire to be.

• Finding your style may require research and experimentation. Shop in your closet, think of whose style you admire, and be courageous enough to try on clothing that you wouldn’t normally. Also, think about what you wear when you receive compliments and find similar looks.

• Don’t wait for a big event—like a wedding, weight loss or gain milestone or recovering from an illness—to make a change.

• There are undergarments that can make your clothes fit better.

• When you buy an item of clothing, think about how many ways you can wear it.

• Dress for the situation and culture of your workplace.

• If you have hot flashes, wear layers and breathable fabrics like cotton.

• If you have staff who are fashion-challenged, develop a dress code and invite a personal stylist in to train staff on the relationship between apparel and customer service.

• Making yourself over can be inexpensive and fun!
WHERE PUBLIC K-12 school & ACADEMIC libraries ARE GOING

BOOTH #1942
The Importance of Digital Preservation

By Stacy L. Voeller, Minnesota State University Moorhead

“...We live in a world where we do a huge number of things electronically that we’ve never done before,” said Berman. “We interact with the government electronically, do our research electronically, and our kids have never known the world without the internet. They expect information to be anywhere at any time. These kids are our next faculty and scientists.”

Berman discussed the digital research data life cycle. “First we create the data, then we edit it, then use and reuse it, then publish it, and then store and preserve it.” The data cyberinfrastructure involves the access and services that enable researchers to get the most out of the data. This access and service is very important to researchers, and it “must be reliable and easy to use. The key characteristics are usability, scalability, interoperability, reliability, capability, predictability, accessibility, sustainability, and cost-effectiveness.”

Another consideration for digital research data is that one size does not fit all, she said. “Items to think about include retention timeline, size and scale, preparation, policy and regulations, life cycle planning, and standardization.”

Berman believes there is a great opportunity for the modern researcher's needs and traditional library strengths to work together. “Researchers need help with the things librarians are good at such as developing reliable management and preservation, navigating policy, regulation, and intellectual property, collaboration, and sustainability. This is potentially a marriage made in heaven. Researchers are increasingly required to retain the digital products of their research and university libraries can play a new role as local stewards of the digital research data. A preservation stimulus may be needed to make this realistically viable on a broad scale. There is currently no money to do this. It doesn’t make sense to start thinking about these initiatives until libraries can build the capacity to start being able to capture this.”

The Blue Ribbon Task Force on Sustainable Digital Preservation and Access, “was charged with conducting a comprehensive analysis of sustainable digital preservation; identifying and evaluating best practices to make specific recommendations for action; and articulating the next steps for further work.” The report can be found in full text at www.brtf.sdsc.edu.

Exhibitor News

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