Librarians & SoTL

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How can librarians engage in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) to develop practitioner research projects to assess student learning and improve teaching?
What is SoTL?
Scholarship of Discovery
Scholarship of Integration
Scholarship of Application
Scholarship of Teaching

What is SoTL?

...systematic inquiry into student learning which advances the practice of teaching in higher education by making inquiry findings public.

Hutchings and Shulman, 1999
Lee Shulman, Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

The scholarship of teaching and learning invites faculty to:

- view teaching as serious, intellectual work,
- ask good questions about their students’ learning,
- seek evidence in their classrooms that can be used to improve practice, and
- make this work public so that others can critique it, build on it, and contribute to the wider teaching commons

Shulman, Foreword to Into the Classroom
Principles of Good Practice in SoTL
Felten, 2013

1. Inquiry into student learning
2. Grounded in context
3. Methodologically sound
4. Conducted in partnership with students
5. Appropriately public
SoTL and you
SoTL and the Framework
Information literacy is the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning.

ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education, 2015
Built around six frames...

Each consisting of a concept central to information literacy and anchored in threshold concepts...

Rather than a linear set of skills and search techniques, each frame prompts questions about what learners will need to know, experience, and do to demonstrate their increased understanding as they progress from novice to expert in the scholarly journey and as information literate individuals.
SoTL & the Framework for Information Literacy

- Metaliteracy
- Understanding by Design
- Threshold Concepts
Metaliteracy (Mackey & Jacobson)

- Students as creators as well as consumers
- Behavioral
- Affective
- Cognitive
- Metacognitive
- Reflection
Wiggins and McTighe

Essential questions
Backward design

Threshold concepts

Those ideas in any discipline that are passageways or portals to ways of knowing and doing in that discipline.

Two important things from threshold concept research findings:

1. The **dialogue** amongst faculty, librarians, and students is essential in the process of developing the threshold concept framework.

2. The **stuck places**: “Broadly, the purpose of threshold concept research is to explore difficulties in the learning and teaching of subjects to support the curriculum design process.”

“Transactional Curriculum Inquiry”, Glynis Cousin, 2009
FW & SoTL: “A community of conversations”

- The ‘teaching commons’ (Huber & Hutchings, 2005)
- Teaching as community property (Shulman)
- Bringing in student voices
FW & SoTL: Interdisciplinary

- The ‘big tent’ (Huber & Hutchings, 2005)
- The ‘trading zone’ (Morreale & Huber)
Getting started with SoTL

- Identifying a problem and the questions it raises
- Gathering evidence
- Choosing project design and methodology
- Going public
Identifying a problem and the questions it raises

- The problematization of teaching

- “How might we think of teaching practice, and the evidence of student learning, as problems to be investigated, analyzed, represented, and debated?”

Randy Bass, 1999
Hutchings’ taxonomy of SoTL questions

- What works?
- What is?
- What could be? (Visions of the possible)
- Theory building
“How Much of Library and Information Science Literature Qualifies as Research?”
Turcios, Agarwal, & Watkins

205 journal titles analyzed
1880 articles
16% of those qualified as research
Surveys were the most popular research method
Qualitative Research

- Investigates the *why* and *how*, not just *what*, *where*, *when*, or *who*...
Examples of practitioner research
TheGrounded Instruction Librarian
Participating in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

EDITORS
Melissa Mallon
Lauren Hays
Cara Bradley
Rhonda Huisman
Jackie Belanger
Ann Marshall and Sarah Wagner
“At the Intersection of Theory and Experience: How Qualitative Interviews Enrich the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning”

Problem to investigate:
To understand how students experience research and negotiate expertise through their own voices

Participants:
10 undergraduate student volunteers at Purdue University Fort Wayne

Method:
In-depth open-ended interviews
Lessons learned

- Understanding the gap between students’ lived experience and the world of academic scholarship and being reminded of the challenges of negotiating expertise
- The convergence between the language of the ACRL Framework and the students’ description of their research processes in their own words
- Listening to students helps librarians to step outside their role as experts and to realign themselves with students and reflect on their teaching
Rachel Scott, University of Memphis
“If We Frame It, They Will Respond: Undergraduate Student Responses to the Framework for IL for Higher Education”

- Problem to investigate:
  - How do incoming freshmen respond to the language and concepts of the Framework?
  - How do the language and concepts used in the frames fit in with undergraduates’ existing understanding of research practices?

- Participants:
  - First semester Honors Program students (n=16)

- Method:
  - Pre-test with two open-ended questions for each FW frame
  - Post-test at end of semester
Lessons learned

- Start on a small scale
- Changes in language can reflect evolution of understanding over time
- “Provides insight into the specific words and concepts with which students struggled as well as the concepts with which they more readily engaged.”
- “Makes explicit undergraduate students’ understanding of the Framework and how the frames relate to their conception of research practices.”
Margy MacMillan
Mt. Royal University, Calgary, Canada
“Fostering the Integration of Information Literacy and Journalism Practice: A Long-term Study of Journalism Students”

Problem to investigate:
- To prompt students to reflect on and articulate information literacy skills and understandings and their development over time for academic, professional, and personal use.

Participants:
- Journalism students (n=215+)
Margy Macmillan: Methodology and Results

Instrument: I-Skills Resume (Information Skills and Knowledge for Lifelong Learning Success)

Student-reported data—they completed the resume the fall semester of their first year and updated it every subsequent fall.

Results were coded for instances of various IL skills and development of skills over time. (Coded by hand; now she uses NVivo qualitative analysis software.)
Lessons learned

- “The long-term nature of the study provides evidence of students developing their understanding of threshold concepts in IL and internalizing those concepts into their practice.”

- “Some resumes explicitly describe the transfer of skills between information ecosystems” (personal, academic, professional)

- The resulting thematic analysis led to a restructuring of IL instruction to align with professional needs and practices of their discipline.
Partnerships: Creating a culture of teaching and learning
Pace & Middendorf (2004)
Decoding the Disciplines: Helping Students Learn Disciplinary Ways of Thinking

- Stuck places
- Charting the path between how experts think and how students think at the beginning
- Ties together threshold concept theory and practical application
Decoding the Disciplines

The Decoding the Disciplines Process

1. What is a bottleneck to learning in this class?
2. How does an expert do these things?
3. How can these tasks be explicitly modeled?
4. How will students practice these skills and get feedback?
5. What will motivate the students?
6. How well are students mastering these learning tasks?
7. How can the resulting knowledge about learning be shared?

Leah Shopkow, “What Decoding the Disciplines Can Offer Threshold Concepts.”
Felten – How can we engage student voices in learning partnership?

- Students as Learners and Teachers (SaLT) program at Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges
- Undergraduates as paid consultants with disciplinary faculty from outside of the student’s major in semester-long partners
- Student consultant observes class and then meets with faculty partner weekly to discuss observations
- Parallel discomfort and transformation
- Listening to student voices and perspectives

Assignment and course design teams as proactive participation and partnerships

- Librarians as contributors and learners
- Involving librarians on the front end
- Revealing what we can contribute

Sharon Mader & Craig Gibson, “Teaching and Learning Centers: Recasting the Role of Librarians as Educators and Change Agents” ACRL Conference, 2019
Why do we make good partners?

Benefits identified:
1. Librarians have a complementary role.
2. Librarians have a unique perspective on student learning
3. Librarians have the capacity to build bridges and relationships across campus and disciplines
4. Librarians bring a unique and valuable set of skills and expertise that others value.
Information Literacy Across and in the Disciplines

- Interdisciplinarity
- Transdisciplinarity
- The research process as a threshold concept across the disciplines
- Information literacy as an umbrella
SoTL as a community partnership

- Faculty learning communities (FLC’s)
- Centers for Teaching and Learning (CTL’s)
- Moving from our own disciplinary space to become part of the whole
Building Teaching and Learning Communities
Creating Shared Meaning and Purpose

Edited by
Craig Gibson and Sharon Mader
What are your own SoTL adventures?