“Welcome, won’t you join us?”

Those were welcome words to me, over ten years ago. I was just getting started in my first real librarian job—a six-month, fixed term appointment—and wanted to get involved and start making professional connections as soon as possible. I was a little intimidated by the size of ALA, and not sure of how exactly to walk into a meeting room for the many round tables and other groups I was surveying. I’ve always found LIRT to be a friendly and welcoming environment, which is very important to me.

Why? Because my personal philosophy of what makes our profession strong is our service ethic. Although our responsibilities have changed drastically over the years, and despite the constant predictions of our obsolescence, at the end of the day, the world works just a little better when there are people who take responsibility for providing access to knowledge and promoting lifelong learning. Working at a large university, I sometimes see services introduced by other departments that are underutilized because either they don’t promote it sufficiently or the department has no experience in serving or teaching students. I often think to myself, “Now if we provided this service…”

I see my participation in LIRT—and ALA more generally—as a way of serving our profession. Sometimes, all it takes is one good idea shared at a conference presentation or discussion group the can set off a chain of events that can really start a person’s career. In Boolean terms, LIRT is always looking for talented OR motivated OR energetic people to serve on committees, just as we view our strength as serving academic OR public OR school librarians. This diversity of experiences and expertise makes LIRT unique.

Welcome, won’t you join us?  (volunteer form)

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### LIRT empowers librarians, from all types of libraries, to become better teachers through sharing best practices, leadership and professional development, and networking.
BITES WITH LIRT
LIRT will host two tasty gatherings in Orlando in June, 2016!

LIRT (Library Instruction Round Table) is organizing "Bites with LIRT" groups for lunch during the ALA Midwinter Conference in Boston. This is your opportunity to meet other librarians interested in library instruction while enjoying lunch in a local restaurant. LIRT welcomes anyone who has an interest in instruction from all types of libraries. You need not be a member of LIRT to participate. We hope you will join us in this opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences about library instruction in a relaxed setting. Enjoy a stimulating and fun lunch with LIRT—good food, good company, and interesting conversation. We will make the arrangements; all you have to do is reserve a spot and come join us!

Watch for more information at http://www.ala.org/lirt/ and at https://www.facebook.com/groups/ala.lirt/

See photos from last Bites on pp 13-14!
The Midwinter Conference brought many delightful surprises and was full of goal setting, learning, and recommitting ourselves to doing our best to improve instruction in all types of libraries.

Speaking of learning, the LIRT discussion forum focused on learning management systems and the roles they play in library instruction. We discovered that there are many similarities and some interesting differences but the result is the same, an organized practical way to inform our learners and ensure their success.

We also met some new friends at BITES with LIRT and the Teaching Learning & Technology Social; we hope you will join us at these events at Annual. It’s always exciting to meet new colleagues who share the same passion for teaching and hear their successes, dreams, and plans for the future!

Enjoy this issue of the LIRT News and, if you feel inspired, let us know about the great things happening in your library.

Barbara
Candidates for LIRT Offices

VICE PRESIDENT

Ning Zou

Statement of purpose: Having been involved in LIRT for many years as a committee member and a co-chair, and participating in the LIRT strategic planning at ALA Annual this year has prepared me to serve in a greater capacity as your next Vice President/President Elect. If elected, I would make every effort to strengthen the advocacy aspect of the mission. I will do my best to have a productive tenure by working with the Executive Committee, the ALA Council and all members of LIRT to communicate what we offer and promote our programs, resources, networking and professional development opportunities to LIRT members and librarians through multiple channels.

Biographical information: Ning Zou is the Instruction Coordinator at Dominican University Library, a position she has held since 2009. She earned her B.S. in Accounting from Capital University of Economics and Business in Beijing, China, her MIS and MLS from Indiana University-Bloomington and her MBA from Dominican University.

In her current position, she coordinates a team of librarians and instruction interns to further integrate ACRL Information Literacy Framework into the core curriculum. She also teaches non-credit library workshops and credit-bearing Liberal Arts seminars at the freshman and sophomore level as well as directing the University’s Study Abroad China program. Prior to her position at Dominican University, she worked at Miami University Libraries, Eastern Kentucky University Libraries, and Trine University Library and Information Technology Center.

Ning has been actively involved in professional organizations. She currently serves as the co-chair of the Adult Learner’s Committee of LIRT and is a member of ACRL Immersion Program Committee. She served as the co-chair of LIRT’s Membership Committee from 2011-2015. She was the president of the Chinese American Librarians Association, Midwest chapter (http://midwest.chapters.cala-web.org/) in 2010. Ning has also carried leadership roles in other nonprofit organizations. She is a member of the board of directors of Dr. C. Moore & Associates Inc. (http://www.drcmoorer.org/About-the-Foundation.html), a not-for-profit organization advocating and supporting teaching and learning excellence. She also served as the chair of the board of directors at Xi Lin Northwest Chinese School (http://www.xilinchinese.org/), consisting of more than 150 families in greater Chicago area, from 2012-2014.

SECRETARY

Jennifer Corbin

Statement of purpose: LIRT has been my “home” in ALA for almost a decade now. During the past 3 years, I have served on LIRT’s Executive Committee. Last summer, I participated in LIRT’s Strategic Planning Retreat and I am currently working with other LIRT leaders to implement the ideas generated at that session. I would like to have the opportunity to assist with completing those initiatives. It would be an honor to serve as LIRT Secretary and continue to contribute to the evolution of the organization.

Biographical information: I currently serve as Past President of LIRT and Chair of the Organization and Planning Committee. From 2010-2012, I served as Co-Chair of the LIRT Membership Committee. At Tulane University, I am the Head of the Center for Library User Education, which includes instruction coordinator duties. Prior to that, I worked in public services positions at small liberal arts colleges. I hold an MLS from Indiana University, Bloomington and a BA in History and Spanish from Indiana University-Purdue University, Fort Wayne.
Cynthia E. Dottin

Statement of Purpose: Libraries understand, and reflect the character and diversity of their communities, and provide information for personal and professional needs. Increasingly sophisticated technologies have enhanced the acquisition and use of knowledge. Library users are more dependent on the professional skills and knowledge that librarians bring to the table in assisting them in the discovery, acquisition, and use of a multiplicity of resources and formats. It is incumbent upon librarians to promote libraries, their resources, and information inquiry in ways that appeal to varied users, and assist them in becoming competent users/researchers. In tackling these ever-changing and exciting tasks, we must embrace the mission of ALA, groups such as LIRT and ACRL, and utilize their innovations, methodologies, and techniques to appeal to, and work with, our users. Service to our users, and the significant professional roles of these bodies propel me to seek continued service as a member of Council.

Biographical Information: Recently retired as Coordinator of Library Educational Programs at Florida International University, Miami, Florida Cynthia began her professional career in Barbados as Biology Mistress at her Alma Mata, Alexandra School. Later, an interest in broadcasting and a love of writing lead her to join the programming staff of Rediffusion London which, at the time, was primarily a rebroadcast service for BBC Radio and an arm of Granada Television. She later came to librarianship from the field of History where her emphasis of study was the Middle Ages through 1603. As Coordinator of Library Education Programs, and a Reference and Instruction librarian, her major areas of interest and involvement have been Bibliographic Instruction, Information Literacy and critical inquiry. Her greatest concern is students' ability to transfer what they learn in one setting to that of others; and more specifically, their ability to understand that the research process has significance for the transfer of learning. She has utilized Problem-Based Learning as a vehicle to improve this ability with some small success, and continues to seek ways of enhancing this vehicle for greater gains. Cynthia is also Liaison to FIU's Department of History and the Honors College, has taught the First Year Experience and co-authored the library chapter in the 1st through, the current, 9th edition of *The First Year: Making the Most of College*, currently edited by Charlie Andrews and Larry W. Lunsford. She has also taught the Introduction to the Honors College, Honors Leadership, and the Origin of Ideas and the Ideas of Origin courses.

Her major accomplishment is the introduction of Lower Division Instruction at FIU. Worked with the Head of Reference, the English Department's Director and Associate Directors of Writing Programs in an active collaboration, endorsement and support of BI/IL classes for ENC 1101 and 1102. As Coordinator for Lower Division Bibliographic Instruction, and later Coordinator for Library Educational Programs, continued to organize and direct the Libraries' Instruction and Information Literacy programs to ensure the development and study of content modules that met specific faculty/staff and student information-literacy needs, supported student learning across disciplines, promoted the use of curriculum-based information resources, assessed student-learning outcomes, and evaluated the effectiveness of the information-literacy program.

Member of: Beta Phi Mu 2005-; Phi Kappa Phi 2005-; Phi Alpha Theta 1980-; Phi Theta Kappa 1977-.

Cynthia has been a member of ALA, LIRT, ACRL and RUSA since 2004. As a member of LIRT she chaired the Liaison Committee from 2006-2011, and has been LIRT Councillor from 2011-Present. She is a member of ACRL's African-American Studies Section (AFAS); ACRL Women's Studies Section (WSS); and ACRL's Instruction Section (IS) where she served as a member of the Information Literacy Best Practices Committee form 2010-2012, and 2013-2014. She has also been a member of the Dade County Library Association, and the Southeast Florida Library Information Network (SEFLIN) and its Information Literacy Discussion Group.
Mark Robison

Statement of Purpose:
LIRT was my entry point into serving the library profession at the national level. I love LIRT and am passionate about the ways it betters its members and the larger community of librarians. LIRT’s committees are creative and active in providing services & programs to librarians: from outreach to marketing, from food-centric social events to praxis-focused programs, our Round Table is doing a lot. In order to maintain the quality that LIRT contributes to the profession, budgeting matters. Making the best use of its resources and being responsible stewards of its members’ dues are key to LIRT’s health. If elected, I would continue LIRT’s tradition of fiscal responsibility and evidence-based spending decisions.

Biographical information: I have belonged to LIRT’s Transitions to College Committee since 2013, serving as one of its co-chairs since July 2014. During my time as co-chair, I have overseen the creation of the web-based project, Connecting Librarians on K-20 Transitions. As assistant professor of library services at Valparaiso University, I serve as the First-Year Experience Librarian and work with student learners on a daily basis. I hold as BA in History & in German Language & Literature from Purdue University and an MLS from Indiana University Bloomington. I have additional coursework in Managerial Accounting.

Have you created an instruction program or developed a unique classroom strategy?
Please share your experiences with LIRT.
Send your articles to Barbara Hopkins
(barbaraw.hopkins@gmail.com)
The Wonderful World of Library Instruction
Pedagogy and Practices to Inspire Teaching

Sunday, June 26, 2016 - 1:00 p.m.
Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, Florida

Take a sneak peek behind the scenes at best practices and pedagogy designed to create magical moments in which learners explore the concepts of information literacy. Journey through the realm of threshold concepts, frameworks and Common Core to emerge with new techniques designed to ensure learner engagement and comprehension. Investigate proven teaching strategies designed to create impactful learning, inspired teaching and creative programming.

This program will feature a panel of three innovative instruction librarians from a broad spectrum of librarianship who will share evidence based instruction techniques and best practices designed to engage library users, enhance critical thinking and inspire lifelong learning.

**Featured Speakers**

Jennifer Underhill, School Librarian at Florida State University Schools – the Developmental Research School at Florida State University

Andrea Sáenz, First Deputy Commissioner, Chicago Public Library

Silvia Lin Hanick, First Year Experience Librarian and Assistant Professor, LaGuardia Community College (CUNY)
Member A-LIRT: Kim Copenhaver
Reference, Instruction, and Access Services Librarian
Armacost Library at Eckerd College

What brought you to LIRT?
As a newly appointed instruction librarian, I realized that I needed to seek as many opportunities as possible to strengthen my teaching abilities. LIRT offered resources and programming devoted to information literacy instruction that I found of value. I appreciated the diversity of LIRT’s members and benefited from the multiple perspectives on library instruction brought together by LIRT.

What was your path to librarianship?
Libraries have always featured prominently in my life, from library patron, to volunteer, and for the last seven years as an academic librarian. I began my work in libraries as a graduate assistant at the Shimberg Health Sciences Library at the University of South Florida while pursuing my master’s degree in library science. Following graduation, I balanced working part time with the demands of raising a young family. I held positions with the Stetson Law Library and the Largo Public Library and volunteered in the media center of my local elementary school. So, perhaps it is clear why LIRT appeals to me! I am the product of a breadth of experience gained from working in multiple library environments!

Tell us about your current position. What do you like most about it?
Currently, I serve as the Reference, Instruction and Access Services Librarian at Eckerd College. Eckerd is a small, private, liberal arts college located on the shores of Tampa Bay in St. Petersburg, FL. I treasure most the close relationships forged between faculty and student at Eckerd College. The waterfront view from campus is also quite nice!

In what ways does it challenge you?
The multiple realms of responsibility often borne by a small college librarian provide daily challenges in professional balance, but offer multiple opportunities for growth. While it is often difficult to balance public services management, with teaching, research, and service to the profession, I find the variety each day brings, renewing and refreshing.

Throughout all your educational experiences, what teacher inspired you the most and why?
I was fortunate to have many wonderful teachers throughout my educational journey, but I continue to be inspired by my faculty colleagues at Eckerd College. The opportunity to witness the integral partnership between faculty and student that exists at a small school has opened my eyes to the transformative and engaging experience higher education can provide for students today.

When you travel, what do you never leave home without?
A smile! I love to travel and look forward to the opportunity to experience different cultures, make new friends and meet fellow librarians all over the globe!

If you could change one thing about libraries today, what would it be?
I would love to see an increase in libraries turning outward, serving as public innovators and fostering community conversations. I truly believe embedding libraries and librarians into the fabric of our communities, beyond access to our collections, will position libraries as indispensable community partners.

Tell us one thing about yourself that most of us probably don't know.
I am wild about native gardening! It’s an interest derived from the desperation of trying to coax life into landscape rooted in the sandy soil of west Florida and baked by the hot Florida sun. I find myself now collecting plants as fervently as I collect books!
LIRT InTeRAcTIve weBInAR In MAY 2016
presented by the T eaching, Learning, and T echnology Committee of LIRT

Ready to Roll:
Lesson Plans Incorporating Practical Technology
to Teach the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy

Having difficulty coming up with innovative ideas for how to teach using the ACRL Framework? Want to incorporate engaging technology in your teaching? Come learn some practical ideas that you can adapt to your teaching from our expert presenters! Presenters will demonstrate their lesson plans and strategies in a hands-on manner, and webinar attendees will have the opportunity to try them during the webinar. No boring lectures here!

This hands-on webinar will be followed by an innovative two-week asynchronous Slack conversation where participants can get feedback on their lesson plan ideas from fellow webinar attendees.

Friday, May 20th at 2 p.m. EST
Registration information will be listed at http://www.ala.org/lirt/
and on our Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/groups/ala.lirt/

Using the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy: Examples and Ideas

Meeting: Using the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy: Examples and Ideas, sponsored by ACRL; Update Session with Sharon Mader, Visiting Program Officer for Information Literacy held on Sunday, January 10, 2016.

This session provided an update on the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education’s status by visiting Program Officer for Information Literacy, Sharon Mader. Ms. Mader began with sharing the vision for the Framework as a tool “actively and creatively used in research and practice in order to transform the role of librarians as educators and of the library as an integral partner in the teaching and learning mission of higher education.” The speaker then discussed the future of the Framework, stating that instruction librarians continue to experiment and share examples of work with the framework at a variety of conferences. The ACRL Board is still examining the growth and development of the Framework to see how it will work and what the next steps are. Ms. Mader suggested that a more definite direction should appear shortly after the Midwinter Conference. Data from several surveys were shared which indicate that librarians’ reception of the Framework thus far has been largely positive. The survey information suggests that the Framework’s impact in library instruction has ranged from some conceptual modifications in one-shot instruction sessions to complete overhauls of library instruction programs.

The speaker concluded by sharing recommended resources. Two websites on the Framework were highlighted: the CARLI toolkit - http://www.carli.illinois.edu/products-services/pub-serv/instruction/ToolkitHomepage and The PALNI Framework Libguide - http://libguides.palni.edu/ilframework. Ms. Mader stated the Framework Sandbox will hopefully be available by the end of spring. More information on this and other news can be found at http://acrl.ala.org/framework/.
Adult Learners Committee
The ALA LIRT Adult Learners Committee held two virtual meetings in the fall of 2015. Members completed a survey before the meeting to identify areas of interest for the committee to pursue. The committee then discussed two ongoing projects, a literature review of adult learners and updates for the committee web page. Additional topics discussed were collaboration with other ALA and ACRL committees, storage of committee documents, and hosting a LIRT or discussion forum at an ALA conference in 2017.

Teaching, Learning, & Technology Committee
The TLT Committee had a very informal meeting at the LIRT social event at Midwinter, since so few of our committee members could attend the conference. The majority of the activity of the committee occurred at the Steering Committee meetings and had to do with the webinar/workshop we are proposing to coordinate and offer on May 20th at 2pm EST. The webinar is called, “Ready to Roll: Lesson Plans Incorporating Practical Technology to Teach the Framework” and will feature two speakers. Following the webinar, we will have an asynchronous workshop using Slack, during which attendees will have the opportunity to share their own ideas for lesson plans involving the Framework and technology. Our webinar/workshop proposal was well-received by the steering committee, and was officially approved by the Executive Board. The Steering Committee members encouraged us to collaborate with ACRL IS if we can, and we may also consider collaborating with AASL now or in the future.

To schedule the use of Adobe Connect through ALA, we have contacted Lorelle Swader (lswader@ala.org) and worked out the details of hosting the webinar. She will likely be the ALA staff member overseeing the webinar. It was recommended that we advertise to the LIRT-L listserv and the LIRT Newsletter so we can target LIRT members. A “save-the-date” notice was submitted to be published in the March LIRT Newsletter. Our goal for the near future is to find speakers and plan an advertising strategy.

Top Twenty
The Top Twenty Committee is in the process of reading and scoring the 58 articles that made it to round two. The deadline for scoring is February 29th. After that the authors will be notified. Each member will write annotations for the June issue of LIRT News.

Transitions to College

Possible Collaborations: We might be partnering with other committees on this social in the future. Laura has reached out to her colleagues on the Independent School Section of AASL, who might be interested in co-sponsoring a social in the future. If this collaboration works out, we might try to expand to even more co-sponsoring committees in the future.

Calling Card Project Mark gave an update on the progress of the Calling Card Project working group, which consists of Becky Richardson, Pamela Monroe, Chris Sweet, and Mark. Their “Librarian Networking” Google Map has been well received on library listservs, with nearly 300 librarians being added to the map since March. The next step is to create a webpage, on the LIRT website, that acts as a centralized resource for librarians wanting to work with others on transitions-related projects. It will include the map, talking points, and some successful case studies. The committee discussed possible names for this webpage project. Committee members suggested choosing a name that included words like “connections,” “bridging”, or “bridge.” Maybe “Librarian Connections.” LIRT’s web administrator, Billie Peterson-Lugo, will create a mock-up version of the page, which our committee can review and edit before it goes live. Mark will forward more information when the beta page is available.

ALA Connect Portal Several back documents from LIRT Transitions have been uploaded to ALA Connect recently.
This includes recent meeting agendas and minutes, and some back-up documents from the Calling Card working group.

**New Business** Co-chair volunteer 2016-2018 Beth West has agreed to begin co-chairing our committee, starting July 1st, 2016. At that time, our committee will begin having staggered co-chairs, so there is always some continuity in leadership from one year to the next.

**New members** As of July 31st, 2015, some committee members’ terms will be ending. If those people are interested in continuing to serve on the committee, please let Kristen know. We can coordinate with new LIRT Vice President, Jeff Knapp, to see about extending members’ terms. Investigate the roster here: [http://www.ala.org/lirt/transitions-college-committee](http://www.ala.org/lirt/transitions-college-committee) We also have some new members! Pamela’s and Beth’s terms have now “officially” begun, and we also welcome new members Eamon Tewell and Matt Upson.

**Web Advisory Committee**
The main focus of the LIRT Web Advisory Committee at the Midwinter Conference was hosting the LIRT Midwinter Discussion Forum, *Configure, Create, Conquer: Strategies for Using Learning Management Systems to Engage Staff and Users Across Libraries*. The discussion forum began with four lightning presentations from librarians representing academic, public and school libraries:

- **Kate Conerton**, Distance Learning Librarian, University of Wyoming
  Information Literacy Tutorials in the LMS
- **Kim Copenhaver**, Reference, Instruction and Access Services Librarian, Eckerd College
  The Training Trifecta:  Learning Management Systems, Gamification and Library Student Employees
- **Beth Hatch**, Special Projects Manager, Cleveland Heights University Heights Public Library
  Learning Management Systems Uses in Public Libraries
- **Barbara Hopkins**, District Library Media Specialist, Canyons School District
  Learning Management Systems in K-12 Libraries

Following a brief question and answer period, attendees participated in lively small group discussions. About 52 people attended the discussion forum, and the evaluations indicated that those who attended enjoyed and found value the forum. More details, including links to the slides and resources used by the presenters can be found on the LIRT website [http://www.ala.org/lirt/discussion-forum-2016](http://www.ala.org/lirt/discussion-forum-2016).
LIRT Discussion Forum ALA Midwinter January 10, 2016

Configure, Create, Conquer: Strategies for Using Learning Management Systems to Engage Staff and Users Across Libraries

Above: Panel members Barbara Hopkins, Kate Conerton, Beth Hatch, Kim Copenhaver. See more about the Discussion forum in the Web Advisory Committee report, page 11 and at http://www.ala.org/lirt/discussion-forum-2016

Below: Committee members Barbara Hopkins and Billie Peterson-Lugo. Photos by Ken Orenic
Bites with LIRT Boston 2016
LIRT Steering Committee ALA Midwinter

Boston 2016

Photos by Susan Gangl

Photo by Ken Orenic
Dear Tech Talk: It is becoming increasingly clear to me that librarians should teach – not only information and media literacy – but also “data literacy”. However, it is not at all clear to me what it means to be “data literate.” Do I need to be data literate (whatever that is) and fit data literacy into my information literacy activities?

-- Disoriented Librarian about Data Literacy

Dear DLDL: Increasingly, we live in a data-rich environment. Data surrounds us from the moment we wake up and read, watch, or listen to the news until we go to sleep at night. It is astounding – the amount of data that permeates our lives. Where does it all come from?

As technology continues to advance, easily accessible and highly useable tools have emerged that enable the collection of data. For example openly available tools, such as Survey Monkey or Google Drive forms, enable anyone to collect data. Build the form; send a link to the intended audience; collect the data in a spreadsheet as it is submitted. Furthermore, many institutions have access to robust, proprietary systems like Qualtrics, which also enable simplified data collection, storage, and manipulation. Additionally, the ease and decreasing cost of storing digital content enables the availability of repositories that hold massive amounts of bits and bytes. Ultimately, the need to work closely with someone familiar with complex survey techniques is no longer a prerequisite for collecting data.

Within academia, researchers applying for federal grants face requirements that they – ultimately – must make data associated with their research discoverable and openly accessible so that other researchers can use the data to replicate the research or re-use the data for new research. When these researchers submit grant proposals, they must include data management plans that describe how all the generated data will be made accessible, stored, and preserved, for the long term.

Increasingly, those who manage or work in businesses, schools, universities, organizations, etc. use data-driven decision making to determine strategic plans, i.e. expenditures that steer the entity in one direction or another. Consequently, at some level, they are involved in the collection and/or analysis of data about that entity.

These are just a few of the factors that influence the increased amount of data that society encounters through the course of a day, week, month or year. With this abundance of and easy access to data, an increasing number of individuals – instructors, newscasters, politicians, researchers, students, writers – use data to “tell a story.” The question then becomes, is the story depicted by the data fair and accurate?

With information literacy, a common mantra is “consider the source” – what are the perspectives and biases associated with the source of information? But, it’s different with data, right? Data is data, right? There are no biases with data, right? Maybe, maybe not. How was the data collected? How was the “raw” data refined? What types of analyses were used to manipulate the data into the information presented in the final story? What sorts of influences were introduced from the beginning to the end of the data life cycle?
Unlike traditional information sources, delving into data from beginning to end often requires varying degrees of expertise that many people do not have. Starting at a very young age, most are taught – on a continuum – how to read, comprehend, reflect about, and discuss what they have read. However, understanding the ins and outs of data is something that most people don’t encounter until they reach higher education and even then perhaps only for those immersed in certain disciplines. So, given what’s happening in the world of data, it seems viable for librarians to hone their data literacy skills.

Starting with the basics, what is data literacy? First there’s an issue of nomenclature to address; some will discuss any of these terms – data information literacy, quantitative literacy, research data literacy, statistical literacy, and other comparable terms – in the same breath as data literacy. Choosing not to pursue the nuances among these phrases, and for the sake of simplicity, this column will settle on the phrase “data literacy” to refer broadly to all of these concepts.

Even with that clarification in place, finding a definitive meaning for “data literacy” is challenging. Going back more than ten years, definitions for data literacy abound – some more succinct than others:

- Data literacy is training in how to obtain data and use tools that access, convert and manipulate data (Shield, 2004, p. 7).
- “. . . data literacy involves understanding what data mean, including how to read graphs and charts appropriately, draw correct conclusions from data, and recognize when data are being used in misleading or inappropriate ways” (Carlson, Fosmire, Miller, Nelson, 2011, p. 633).
- “Data literacy can be defined, then, as the component of information literacy that enables individuals to access, interpret, critically assess, manage, handle, and ethically use data” (Prado and Marzal, 2013, p. 126).
- “Data literacy for teaching is the ability to transform information into actionable instructional knowledge and practices by collecting, analyzing, and interpreting all types of data (assessment, school climate, behavioral, snapshot, longitudinal, moment-to-moment, and so on) to help determine instructional steps. It combines an understanding of data with standards, disciplinary knowledge and practices, curricular knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and an understanding of how children learn. Additional aspects of data literacy, for teachers as well as administrators, involve the ethical and responsible use of data, including appropriate considerations of the privacy of students” (Gummer and Mandinach, 2015, p. 2).
- “. . . the simplest definition of data literacy is the ability to interpret, evaluate, and communicate statistical information” (Beauchamp, 2015).
- “Data literacy can be defined as a specific skill set and knowledge base which empowers individuals to transform data into actionable knowledge by enabling them to access, interpret, critically assess, manage and ethically use data” (Koltay, 2016, p. 96).
- “Data literacy is the ability to read, create, and communicate data as information” (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Data_literacy)

It is even difficult to identify common themes among these definitions as they each have different foci: obtain and work with data; interpret and use data appropriately/ethically; assess data; turn data into actionable knowledge; interpret, evaluate, and communicate statistical information; read, create, and communicate data as information. However, if one has to make a choice, perhaps Koltay’s (2016) definition best captures the relevant aspects of data literacy.

“Data literacy can be defined as a specific skill set and knowledge base, which empowers individuals to transform data into actionable knowledge by enabling them to access, interpret, critically assess, manage and ethically use data” (p. 96).

Not surprisingly, data literacy and data literacy instruction are predominantly associated with academic librarianship. This perception is a natural outgrowth of significant trends in academia – the development of e-science or e-research, which Carlson, Fosmire, Miller, and Nelson (2011) defined as the practice of technology-driven research (p. 629); the relatively recent mandates for data management plans in federal grant proposals, which is particularly applicable in research universities; the changing roles of academic librarians as the service model for academic libraries continues to change and morph.
Expanding on this last trend, in the library edition of the 2015 NMC Horizon Report, the authors stated, “It is no longer enough for librarians to manage the flow and organization of print materials” (Johnson, 2015, p. 28). This statement is born out in seeing the changes in traditional academic library roles: reference librarians are now liaison librarians, digital humanities or digital scholarship librarians, user experience librarians; collection development librarians are now electronic resources managers. Catalogers are now metadata librarians. Acquisitions, circulation, and interlibrary loan are now incorporated into “delivery units” along with the advent of completely new roles such as scholarly communication librarians, GIS librarians, and many others. For additional examples, take a look at the chart provided by Cox, Verbaan, and Sen (2012) that lists a variety of research data management (RDM) roles, aligns them with existing roles, and identifies needed competencies.

Other evidence of the impact data has on academic libraries is found in two recent reports from the American Library Association (ALA) and the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL). The biennial Top Trends in Academic Libraries Report listed “data” as the first of seven trends, and suggests the following areas of focus: new initiatives and collaborative opportunities; cooperative roles for researchers, repositories, and journal publishers; partnerships related to discovery and re-use of data. (Association of College and Research Libraries, Research Planning and Review Committee, 2014, p. 294-5). More recently, in the 2015 State of America’s Libraries report, Rosa (2015) stated, “Academic librarians traditionally assess the research needs of academics, but big data poses new challenges. The sheer quantity and rate of accumulation of data require new skills and resources to enable researchers to share, analyze, and reuse it” (p. 6).

Some are under the impression that issues and instruction opportunities associated with data literacy are confined to academic librarianship. This is not – nor should it be – the case. Think of data literacy in the same context as reading, mathematics, or even information literacy. People don’t wait until they arrive at college to learn to read or develop mathematical skills or acquire some element of information literacy. They acquire these skills gradually, in many instances starting even before they enter preschool. Prado and Marzal (2013) presented this argument, “. . . we feel that data literacy, like information literacy, should be acquired gradually at all levels of schooling and even throughout individuals’ lifetimes. We consequently believe that school and public libraries should also include data literacy, adopted as necessary, in their information literacy programs” (p. 124). They further expanded, “. . .information literacy and data literacy form part of a continuum, a gradual process. . .that begins in school, is perfected and becomes specialized in higher education and forms part of individuals’ skill set throughout their lifetime” (p. 126). Bowen and Bartley (2014) added to this argument saying, “Data literacy is important for your students even if they aren’t going to be scientists because data are used to argue and persuade people to, among other things, vote for political agendas, support specific types of spending within organization, sell life insurance, or lease a car. An improved understanding of data practices means that better questions can be asked in all of these situations” (p. ix).

One more example of the importance of data literacy for those librarians outside of academia – recently Kristin Fontichiaro, a clinical assistant professor at the University of Michigan School of Information, received an IMLS grant for $240,000 for her project, “Supporting Librarians in Adding Data Literacy Skills to Information Literacy Instruction,” which will develop programming “to train librarians in providing data literacy services to students in accordance with current developments in data and information technology” (https://www.si.umich.edu/node/14215). The grant will run from October 1, 2015 through September 30, 2017. The news release further stated that her project is designed to improve “the capacity of librarians to cultivate data literacy in students. The cross-disciplinary nature of school librarianship [emphasis added] makes this the ideal position for helping students improve their understanding of data practices, such as interpreting statistics, data and visualizations while conducting research” (https://www.si.umich.edu/node/14215). School librarians and others need to monitor the progress and outcomes of this grant.

Another misconception associated with data literacy is that data literacy is only of value in the sciences. Given how much data permeates our daily lives, along with the previously mentioned observation by Bowen and Bartley (2014), it’s pretty clear that this is not the case. Even in academia, where historically only researchers in the hard sciences had reputations for basing much of their research in data (results of experiments), research using data has crossed to other disciplines, including the humanities. Most notably, humanists can now “text mine” sources like the HathiTrust, local digitization projects, or proprietary content via publisher agreements. Using different text mining tools, humanists identify and develop new ways to analyze...
texts and gain insights into historic and current works that otherwise may have gone unnoticed – which they then publish. Therefore, words become one source of raw data for humanists.

In these days of ever-tightening fiscal belts, all libraries – academic, public, school, special – find themselves in the position of providing resources and services that prove their value to the governing body. Working with data literacy initiatives – as appropriate to the constituency – is one more way for librarians to demonstrate this value. Over ten years ago, Shield (2004) wrote, “. . . librarians have a unique opportunity in view of their training. They are generalists, not specialists. Their focus is not the focus of a particular discipline. As such they are eminently qualified to teach students how to think critically, how to become information literate, how to become statistically literate and how to become data literate” (p. 9). Ten years later, Koltay (2015) expressed a related perspective, “Libraries collect and preserve textual material. This fact did not mean in the past that librarians would have been involved teaching people to read. However, data is different, because reading data requires skills that librarians may need to teach to users in order to help them seek and acquire meaning from it” (p. 4).

Data literacy is a big topic – too big to be confined within the boundaries of this single column. However, perhaps this column has whetted your appetite for more information. If so, this topic will be continued in the next edition where more attention will be given to the specifics of data literacy instruction.

Additional Resources


Martin, E., & University of Massachusetts Medical School (2014). What is data literacy? Journal of eScience Librarianship,


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LIRT STANDING COMMITTEES

**Adult Learners**  
This committee is charged with assisting library professionals to more effectively serve adult learners.

**Awards**  
This committee is charged with selecting the recipients for the LIRT Innovation in Instruction Award and the LIRT Librarian Recognition Award.

**Conference Program**  
This committee shall be responsible for annual program preparation and presentation.

**Liaison**  
This committee shall initiate and maintain communication with groups within the American Library Association dealing with issues relevant to library instruction and shall disseminate information about these groups’ activities.

**Membership**  
This committee shall be responsible for publicizing the Round Table’s purposes, activities and image; and for promoting membership in the Round Table.

**Newsletter**  
The committee shall be responsible for soliciting articles, and preparing and distributing LIRT News.

**Organization and Planning**  
This committee shall be responsible for long-range planning and making recommendations to guide the future direction of LIRT.

**Teaching, Learning, & Technology**  
This committee will be responsible for identifying and promoting the use of technology in library instruction.

**Top 20**  
This committee shall be responsible for monitoring the library instruction literature and identifying high quality library-instruction related articles from all types of libraries.

**Transitions to College**  
This committee builds and supports partnerships between school, public, and academic librarians to assist students in their transition to the academic library environment.

**Web Advisory**  
This committee shall provide oversight and overall direction for the LIRT Web site.

For more information about our committees visit [http://www.ala.org/lirt/committees](http://www.ala.org/lirt/committees)

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Library Instruction Round Table News  
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