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Some Ideas on Addressing Affective Learning in Business Library Instructions

In my business library session, I've been exploring different ways to address the affective aspect of learning and motivate students to overcome affective barriers in their business research. I would like to share some of my approaches and hope to inspire other librarians.

Background

The affective domain was addressed in Bloom's taxonomy in the 1960s as one of the three domains of educational learning objectives. It addresses the affective, attitudinal, and valuing dimension of learning and emphasizes the growth in feelings or emotional areas (Wilson, n.d.). In the 1990s, Kuhlthau explored the affective domain in information searching within the library and information science field and built it into her analysis of the six-stages of the information search process (ISP) (Kuhlthau, 1991).

In terms of the information literacy standards in higher education, the UK's Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL) addressed the "attitudes" aspect of information literacy (IL) skills in its *Seven Pillars of Information Literacy* model, revised in 2011 (SCONUL, 2011). In the US, the affective domain of information literacy was addressed by the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) by its newly released *Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education* in 2016 (ACRL, 2016).

Why Is Affective Domain Important in Business Information Literacy?

The affective domain in learning requires students to receive, respond, and value the knowledge they learn, incorporate it into their value system and ultimately internalize the knowledge and values as a part of the "self" (Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964). The new IL framework emphasizes the disposition aspects of learning and asks librarians to help nurture students' habits of mind by leading the students to:

- consider research as open-ended exploration;
- motivate themselves to find authoritative sources;
- develop awareness of the importance of assessing content with a skeptical stance and with a self-awareness of their own biases and worldview;
- accept ambiguity and recognize that ambiguity can benefit the research process;
- suspend judgment on the value of certain information until the larger context is better understood;
- appreciate the disruptive nature of simple facts;
- value persistence, adaptability and flexibility;
- seek multiple perspectives;
- demonstrate intellectual humility and recognize their own intellectual or experiential limitations; and
- see themselves as information contributors rather than consumers.

I personally find these concepts essential because these habits of mind are the essence of what business schools are trying to teach their students and are critical for future business leaders. However, these concepts are very challenging to teach. It requires a persistent effort of nurturing. There are many ways to embed these concepts into business library instruction and here are a few I have tried:

1. Teach information search strategies

I tried to shift the focus of my library sessions from resources to strategies (Liu, 2016). Strategies inspire students to explore a variety of sources to find the information they need and encourage them to be flexible--if one source doesn't have the information they need, they can try a different approach.

2. Incorporate a framework concept or a quotation in the course guide

I used a quotation from Aristotle--"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit"--in my library guide and also put Framework Concepts such as "Searching as Strategic Exploration" or "Information has Value" in my research handout. These can help subconsciously boost students' confidence with searching.

3. Mention affective learning goals in class

In some classes, when I mentioned learning goals, I would include both cognitive learning goals and affective learning goals. The affective learning goals can include "valuing the flexibility in using research tools and trying multiple ways to find the most relevant and current sources."

4. Address emotional challenges in research

I directly mention the emotional challenges students will encounter during research and encourage them to overcome these challenges. I tell them that it is common to feel overwhelmed and frustrated while searching for information, and we should be proud of demonstrating persistence and diligence in our research. I also stress that it is always appropriate to ask a librarian for help.

5. Tell the truth

I think the most powerful tool for building students' competency and confidence is actually telling the truth. Where it is applicable, don't be afraid to mention:

- The library does not have the resources you need.
- Google is the best tool to find such information.
- The industry report you get from the library is problematic.
- You will find lots of discrepancies in business information sources.
- Research is challenging for everyone, including librarians.
- You can do it if you put in the effort.

6. Let students know the disclaimers from the publishers

I have found that if the information we deliver challenges students' thinking, their attitudes towards information can be changed instantly and forever. I saw this change when I quoted the publishers' disclaimer in my class. In fact, every publisher has some similar disclaimer to this one from IHS Global Insight: "The entire risk as to the accuracy and completeness of all Content is with you. Neither IHS Markit nor any data provider makes any warranty, express or implied, as to the accuracy, timeliness or completeness of the Content" (IHS Markit, n.d.). This informs students that the information they get is not infallible, even from reputable sources, and they should be critical of all information sources.

7. Share your personal definition of research

I think it is important to let students see me being authentic. Instead of sharing a textbook definition, I decided to share my personal, and hopefully inspirational, definition of research: "Research is the pursuit of finding the truth underlying all available information and finding your own belief underneath all available perspectives." In any type of research, I hope that students will not seek information, but seek the truth, and be receptive to new perspectives before they form their own judgments.

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