School Public Special Academic

LIBRARY INSTRUCTION ROUND TABLE NEWS

Volume: 34 No. 2 December 2011

From The President

By Linda J. Goff

Most people who know me know that I love hats and have a hat for every outfit. The hat I'm wearing in this picture is pretty special. It doesn't match *any* of my outfits, but I wear it proudly because this is the official emblem of the LIRT President. The tradition was originated by Past President Kari Lucas. Her university library (UC San Diego) houses the Dr. Seuss Collection, so the purple hat from ***Cat in the Hat*** was a natural choice. Past President Lynn Ossolinski was the first recipient in 1997. Each President since has added pins representing the conference locations for their year, so it's getting pretty heavy now. I had to stuff it with newspaper to get it to stand up for this picture. Usually it is passed on at the final Executive Committee meeting and my guess is that I may be the only LIRT President who might actually wear this in public! Still, it's a nice tradition and I thought you all should know about it.

LIRT traditions are what we will be celebrating in Anaheim during our 35th Anniversary, but LIRT is also trying new things. On October 6th we ran our first online meeting for LIRT Steering and Executive committees using the OPAL system provided by ALA. It went well, with only a few technical issues (Mac related I fear), but all-in-all I think this will be a viable option for committees to use to communicate between conferences. I urge committee chairs to contact Beatrice Calvin (bcalvin@ala.org) to set up dates for using OPAL with their committees before midwinter.

I was happy to see that ALA President Molly Raphael has launched a Special Presidential Task Force on School Libraries. This has been a concern of mine for many years and I'm glad ALA is stepping up its advocacy for school libraries: http://ala.org/ala/newspresscenter/news/pr.cfm?id=8155. LIRT members know better than anyone how important it is to have students exposed to information literacy instruction at all school levels. Research shows that students with excellent school library programs do better academically than those without.

Midwinter should be busy for all of us. There will be lots of work to do to make our annual conference program and our 35th Anniversary celebration successful. I've never been to Dallas before so I'm looking forward to exploring this new conference venue. See you all there – or maybe I should say:

See Y'all there!

Linda

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inside

The purpose of LIRT is to advocate library instruction as a means for developing competent library and information use as a part of life-long learning.

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LIRT Mid-Winter Schedule
Dallas, Texas

DALLAS TX2012 JANUARY 20-24
AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION MIDWINTER MEETING

Saturday January 21, 2012

(8 am – 12 noon is usually printed in the program)

8:00 am - 9 a.m.	Executive I
9:00 am-10:30 a.m.	Steering I
10:30 am – 12:00 p.m.	All Committees I
12:30 – 2:00 p.m.	Bites with LIRT (off-site restaurant)

Sunday, January 22, 2012

10:30 a.m. 12:00 p.m.	Discussion Forum (Transitions to College Committee) Start Where They Are: Google and Google Scholar, a gateway to database research? Join the LIRT conversation about how to help users make the transition from what they know (search engines) to what professors and librarians want them to use (scholarly journals).
12:30 – 2:00 p.m.	Bites with LIRT (off-site restaurant)

Monday, January 23, 2012

(8 a.m. – 12 noon is usually printed in the program)

8:00 am - 9:00 a.m .	All Committees II (if needed)
9:00 am – 10:30 a.m .	Steering Committee II
10:30 am - 12:00 p.m.	Executive Committee II

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From The Editor

by Rebecca Martin
rmartin2@niu.edu

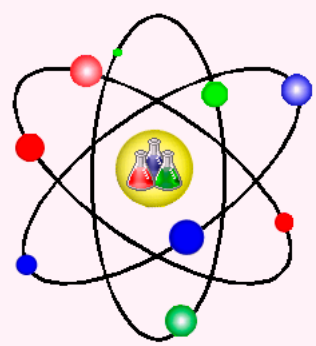
Greetings LIRT Librarians,

We're looking forward to ALA Midwinter in Dallas, Texas, where the LIRT Discussion Forum, hosted by the Transitions to College Committee, is entitled, "Start Where They Are: Google and Google Scholar, a Gateway to Database Research?" This conversation about how to help users make the transition from what they know (search engines) to what professors and librarians want them to use (scholarly journals) promises to be lively and engaging.

The LIRT steering committee has joined the ranks of librarians who have successfully conducted a virtual meeting. On October 6, we met online via the ALA Opal virtual room. To prepare for the meeting, members downloaded the OPAL Webconferencing software to their computers. LIRT President, Linda Goff, and past president, Kawanna Bright, presided over the meeting using microphones. Most of the committee members communicated through the chat module and even participated in answering some poll questions. Linda displayed the meeting agenda on the whiteboard module. Committee chairs will be discussing the use of this software with their members at the Midwinter meeting.

LIRT members may be interested in knowing that the newsletter production editor, Susan Gangl, is an adept user of Adobe InDesign software and has ratcheted up her skills to be able to add hotlinks and photo captions to our newsletter. In addition, she is a project director for the extraordinary traveling exhibit, Manifold Greatness: The Creation and Afterlife of the King James Bible, which will open at the University of Minnesota's Wilson Library in Minneapolis on January 25, 2012. In the fall, Susan attended a training workshop at the Folger Shakespeare Library in D.C. to prepare for this NEH-funded, ALA- sponsored exhibit. Three copies of the traveling exhibit will travel to 40 libraries from fall of 2011 through winter of 2013. If you would like to read more about the traveling exhibit, follow the link to http://www.ala.org/kingjamesbible.

A genre I have been following closely this fall has been science fiction books and the link between this imaginative reading experience and students' interest in pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. These books figured prominently in two well-attended events in my university town. One was STEMfest, a huge annual exposition hosted by Northern Illinois University outreach http://stemfest.niu.edu/stem/fest/index.shtml. The other event was SF Teen Read, a series of book discussions about science fiction for local teenagers held on campus in academic departments and at the library in conjunction with local public libraries and Friends of the Library. STEMfest is a satellite event of the USA Science and Engineering Festival http://www.usasciencefestival.org/. It featured hundreds of activities for all ages, including a laser maze and a haunted physics lab. There was also a book-nook, where science fiction novels and books about science were available for browsing. SF Teen Read discussions were moderated by NIU professors and staff from the libraries' Special Collections both on campus and at other regional locations. If your library has participated in a STEM event, let me know. That might be our next themed issue.



See you soon in Dallas, and for once, I hope my return flight gets delayed so I can spend some time wandering around the DFW airport metropolis—what with sculpture, trendy restaurants and an observation park—who would pass up this special opportunity to play hooky?

Happy Holidays,

Rebecca

INTRODUCTION TO ARCHIVAL ADMINISTRATION AT JOYNER LIBRARY

By Jonathan Dembo
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I have taught Introduction to Archival Administration (HIST 5910) since I arrived at East Carolina University's Joyner Library to work in the Special Collections Department in July 2000. The course is a prerequisite for public history majors. Initially, I taught it as a typical survey lecture course covering the history, theory and practice of the profession with grades based on exams and essays with lots of readings. I was disappointed to find that my students, a mix of graduate and undergraduate students, did not learn to understand, appreciate or value what archivists do. Their end-of-semester surveys contained comments like: "Prof. Dembo has a cool beard" and "Prof. Dembo really loves archives" but they mentioned none of the core concepts I had taught. Moreover, it was not benefitting the Special Collections Department.

Rare Book Room. Photo courtesy of the Manuscripts & Rare Books Department, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University.

So, I went back to the drawing board, and recreated the course from scratch. Having long worked training student assistants, interns, and volunteers, I tried to adapt the methods I had used with them to teach the course. I eliminated the second half of the lectures and dispensed with mid-term and final exams. I converted the remaining lectures into seminar sessions. In place of the eliminated lectures, I introduced a practicum segment where each student would process a small manuscript collection (no more than a quarter of a cubic foot or 100 items in size). I have progressively reduced the required texts to zero. Instead of essays and exams, I initiated an oral presentation and submission of the processed collection, finding aids and file-level inventories as electronic files.

I also relocated the class into the Rare Book Room, where the atmosphere was more conducive to seminars and discussions. In the seminars, I concentrated on explaining arrangement, description, and conservation and basic concepts like maintaining the original order, provenance, reversibility and the necessity to consult with colleagues and supervisors regularly. Basically unchanged, I have taught the class this way since 2001.

Just before spring break, each year, I distribute a list of available processing projects and ask each student to select five as possibilities. I was pleased by the students' response to the challenge. Indeed, picking their alternative collections greatly enhanced their understanding of what the process was all about. Competition for favored collections, especially for Civil War collections, did arise, but nobody found all their priorities preempted.

During the practicum, I meet at least weekly with each student. I ask them to work at least six hour per week on their projects but I have been surprised to find that they actually worked about 25% more. To keep them focused on essentials, I require each student to write a preliminary inventory and to obtain my approval before rearranging or conserving their collections. They must retain original folder descriptions in the inventory and on new archival folders wherever possible. They must also derive their biographical / historical notes and descriptive notes from the collection itself, if possible. I require them to footnote all outside sources.

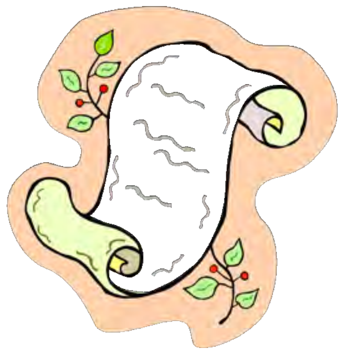
My students have had persistent difficulty understanding series and subseries and have tended to itemize or calendar their

Introduction to Archives Administration, continued on page 5

Introduction to Archives Administration, *continued from page 4*

collections. Requiring them to limit descriptions to what they could fit on a folder label and to justify each series or subseries by file format or the creators' purpose or use of the files usually helped solve these problems.

I schedule only two class meetings after spring break: an optional finding aid writing workshop and the oral presentation period. In the workshop, I discuss each field in the finding aid and inventory. I distribute electronic templates for each document and samples of successful projects. I also answer specific questions about their individual projects and offer suggested solutions. I also offer to meet with any student who feels that they need more help.



The oral presentations occur two weeks before the end of term. Students must circulate their draft finding aids and inventories to the whole class beforehand. In the presentation, they must briefly describe their collection, the problems they faced, and their main arrangement, conservation, and description decisions. A few shy students seemed bothered by discussing their projects in public but none has failed to do a presentation on this account. After each presentation, I provide a critique. I never mention seeing a problem without suggesting an improvement. The completed processing projects are due during the scheduled exam period for the class, giving the students two whole weeks to revise their projects.

I think that the course has proved its worth to all concerned. The students have clearly profited. They have produced professional-quality archival work, which they can cite in resumes. Only three students have dropped the course without finishing (one to take a job in the University Archives). The students' post-semester surveys show a much-improved level of interest and understanding of archival administration. They seem especially pleased by the chance to do "real" professional work and to see their work available. Twenty-six of my students have returned in later years as student assistants, interns, or volunteers. Their contribution, alone, has more than justified the effort it cost me to teach the course. Additionally, three or four of my students have become professional librarians, archivists or museum curators. Here are two typical examples of their output: *Greenville High School Collection* http://digital.lib.ecu.edu/special/ead/findingaids/0902/; and *Boogie in Black and White Documentary Collection* http://digital.lib.ecu.edu/special/ead/findingaids/1086/. It scarcely needs mentioning that the 98 collections processed by my students over the years have clearly benefited the department.

My one concern is that, in coming years, the department will be using Archivists' Toolkit to write inventories and finding aids. I fear that my students will be unlikely to master this program in the time available, and the additional work of converting their files to Archival Toolkit may make it impossible for me to use this system. Nevertheless, I would encourage any archivist who has the opportunity to teach to adapt it for their own use.

Have you created an instruction program or developed a unique classroom strategy?

Please share your experiences with LIRT.
Send your articles to Rebecca Martin (rmartin2@niu.edu)

Instruction for Inclusion

by Kim L. Eccles
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Students possess varying degrees of learning levels, comprehension levels, and learning styles. When incorporating strategies to address the needs of our learners, librarians must take into consideration the most underserved population--that of the disabled. Encounters with a visually-impaired student have provided a newfound assessment of how, what, where, and when to teach for this population. Prompted by curiosity of what is and is not available to best strategize teaching approaches, librarians have looked at the law itself, not to mention the constant reminder from the students about their entitlements. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or Title II, section 504, spells out what is access and what is a must versus what is minimally acceptable for those serving in public facilities. This act covers teaching and facility access to those with disabilities. Of course, there are librarians who serve specific populations with specific disabilities, such as hearing or visual impairments, and they need to know how to accommodate those patrons. They are prepared and have assistive technologies in place; however, when they are faced with mainstreamed students, it can be daunting to feel the need to know every aspect of the law.

Library instruction sessions are no exception. When instructing in a classroom that has students certified for ADA accommodations, librarians must quickly make changes in their delivery of instruction by utilizing varying strategies and approaches. There is a need for further research and an understanding of teaching strategies. The law is there to protect and ensure equal access and service, and librarians must ensure learning for all students.

First and foremost with regard to learning, there are the varying degrees of sightedness, hearing or mobility that are present. At first glance, a librarian may not know that a student possesses a disability of any kind. They may not use Braille for reading, use a stick or a cane, nor have an assistive dog. If they are wheelchair bound, how do we ensure that they have access to the teaching lab? We must never hesitate to ask what would best serve a student's needs because students with disabilities are more than obliged to answer the question. Most important is to listen to their questions and give explanations without prejudging, presuming or not being respectful of their attempts to articulate their specific needs. Each student is different, the same as those who are not physically challenged. There are students who may need highly-specialized, assistive technology services and others who may need Braille or reading-to-text assistance. The ADA law, as it pertains to libraries and instructional purposes, spells out the need for students to have equal access to an instruction lab, as stated in Title II Section V (Program Accessibility) of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Technical Assistance Manual:

> **II-5.1000 General.** A public entity may not deny the benefits of its programs, activities, and services to individuals with disabilities because its facilities are inaccessible. A public entity's services, programs, or activities, when viewed in their entirety, must be readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. This standard, known as 'program accessibility,' applies to all existing facilities of a public entity. Public entities, however, are not necessarily required to make each of their existing facilities accessible.

The following selected illustrations are provided under this act for clarification:

> **II-5.2000 Methods for providing program accessibility.**
>
> ILLUSTRATION 2: A public library's open stacks are located on upper floors having no elevator. As an alternative to installing a lift or elevator, library staff may retrieve books for patrons who use wheelchairs. The aides must be available during the operating hours of the library.
>
> ILLUSTRATION 3: A public university that conducts a French course in an inaccessible building may relocate the course to a building that is readily accessible.

Instruction for Inclusion, continued on page 7

Instruction for Inclusion, *continued from page 6*

More specifically, the Questions and Answers section of the Department of Education's website states the following obligations:

> **Q:** *What are a college's obligations to provide auxiliary aids for library study?*
>
> **A:** Libraries and some of their significant and basic materials must be made accessible by the recipient to students with disabilities. Students with disabilities must have the appropriate auxiliary aids needed to locate and obtain library resources. A postsecondary school must ensure that its library's basic index of holdings (whether formatted on-line or on index cards) is accessible. For example a screen and keyboard (or card file) must be placed within reach of a student using a wheelchair. If a Braille index of holdings is not available for blind students, readers must be provided for necessary assistance. Articles and materials which are library holdings and are required for course work must be accessible to all students enrolled in that course. This means that if the material is required course work, then the text must be read for a blind student, or provided in Braille or on tape. A student's actual study time and use of these articles are considered personal study time and the institution has no further obligation to provide additional auxiliary aids.

When choosing a method of providing program access, a public entity must give priority to the one that results in the most integrated setting appropriate to encourage interaction among all users, including individuals with disabilities.

Finally, there are some minimal skills the instructor needs in order to be useful to students with disabilities, such as knowing how to enlarge the text of the computer, changing fonts and background colors or adjusting the highest possible screen contrasts, if needed. Persons with low vision often need higher contrasts of print to background. Offer, as you would with any student, one-on-one consultations for locating resources and even do things as simple as taking students to where the bathroom is located in the library. If adaptive technology is available, make it a point to learn how to use it as part of your instruction when assisting disabled users. Always remain mindful and respectful of their individual needs without using generalizations, such as "all low vision students need the same zoom level or font size" or "all wheel chairs are the same" and do not yell at hearing-impaired students.

Remember that ADA pertains to all librarians, especially as instructors, and it is all right to ask students about their specific needs. These few skills will go a long way in service and instruction.

For more information on Section 504 and the ADA and their application to auxiliary aids and services for disabled students in postsecondary schools, or to obtain additional assistance, see the list of OCR's 12 enforcement offices, containing the address and telephone number for the office that serves your area, or call 1-800-421-3481.

References

United States. Department of Justice. "ADA Title II Technical Assistance Manual: II-5.0000 Program Accessibility." 28 CFR 35.149 - 35.150. Print.

ED.gov. (1998) U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. Auxiliary Aids and Services for Postsecondary Students with Disabilities: Higher Education's Obligations Under Section 504 and Title II of the ADA, Questions Commonly Asked by Postsecondary Schools and Their Students. Retrieved 15 November 2011 from http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/auxaids.html.

TECH TALK

By Billie Peterson, Baylor University
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Personal Learning Environments

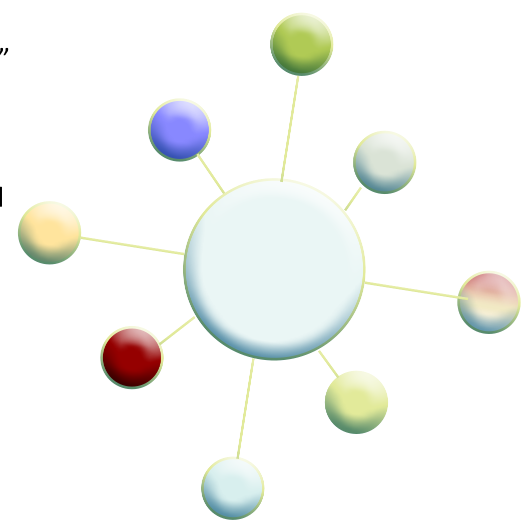
Dear Tech Talk –

I recently read an article that referenced "personal learning environments", but I was unclear as to exactly what a personal learning environment might be. Can you clarify? Do they impact the work of instruction librarians? *– PLEs Plainly Please*

Dear PPP – It's not at all surprising that you were uncertain about the meaning of a personal learning environment (PLE) after you finished your reading. Even going to the literature, you will find a variety of definitions for PLEs. For some examples, take a look at: "7 Things You Should Know About . . . Personal Learning Environments"; Attwell, 2007; Casquero; and van Harmelen, 2006 – to name just a few. The definitions of PLEs are as amorphous as the PLEs are themselves!!

However, when investigating PLEs, common themes do emerge. A key concept across all PLE definitions is that PLEs are **learner** centric – with varying degrees of application; the learner sets her learning goals, manages her learning, and communicates with others about her learning and the process, using tools that she selects. Contrast this approach with the more traditional model – the instructor controls the educational environment: setting the goals and outcomes, creating and providing handouts and assignments, determining the assessment tools, and so forth.

It is as challenging to determine when the phrase "personal learning environment" first came into use as it is to define it. However, the Wikipedia states that the first recorded use of the term was November 4, 2004 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_personal_learning_environments), and this time period seems to fit much of what can be found in reading about PLEs. To a large degree, PLEs evolved from the emergence of Web 2.0 technology. Consequently, other common components found in PLE definitions include:



- Employs social media;
- Is not an application;
- Is comprised of many components, individually selected for a purpose by the learner; and
- Is available in mobile environments.

Another cause leading to the emergence of PLEs stems from work and technological changes. Attwell states, "Driven by a shorter product life cycle, the increasing speed of adoption and implementation of new technologies in the workplace and the increasing instability of employment with the computer driven industrial revolution, it was reasoned that workers would need continuous learning throughout their work-life to update their occupational skills and knowledge or to learn new occupational competences" (Attwell, 2007, 2). Consequently, the learning process will continue informally and indefinitely – perhaps for life. These changes bring two more elements to the PLE definition:

- Embraces both formal and informal learning; and
- Enables lifelong learning.

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Given the information provided above, you may now realize that perhaps you already have a PLE – and you just didn't know it! What tools and resources do you use to keep current with topics of interest to you – whether work related or personal in nature? Blogs (that you read or perhaps write); collaborative spaces where you create materials with others (GoogleDocs); people or entities you follow on Twitter or Facebook; places (DropBox, Flickr, GoogleDocs, SlideShare, YouTube) where you store and share materials you have created; RSS feeds; search alerts; social bookmarking sites (Delicious or Diigo); tools (Google Search, LibEx, Zotero,) embedded in your browser? If you use any of these tools – alone or in combination with each other – in an effort to stay informed, to learn, or to share with others, then you have the makings of a personal learning environment. And – your personal learning environment is going to look different than a colleague's PLE, or a relative's PLE, or a neighbor's PLE, although they may share some of the same components. It is, after all, a **personal** learning environment. What works for you won't necessarily work for your colleague, relative, or neighbor. To fully understand the wide variety of approaches for PLEs take a look at the PLE diagrams "collected" by Scott Leslie: http://edtechpost.wikispaces.com/PLE+Diagrams.

What about Learning Management Systems (LMS) or Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) – the large-scale course management systems seen at colleges and universities and even K-12 schools, like Blackboard, Desire2Learn, and Moodle; where do they fit in with PLEs? LMSs were developed and implemented in the 1990s (well before Web 2.0 technology) with the goal of enabling the deployment of courses in an online environment. They have evolved to the point where they are usually tightly integrated with the administrative structure of the institution – pre-populating courses and students in courses each term; tied to the institution's authentication system; FERPA compliant; managing administrative processes such as uploading final grades, etc. They provide a standard interface that both instructors and students can usually navigate with ease and are heavily used by both instructors and students. However, they are clearly associated with formal learning and are very much course- and instructor-centric – the complete antithesis of PLEs.

There is no question that the LMSs provide valuable and essential functions for formal, online courses, but the students (learners) must adjust to that environment. They can't tweak the functions in the LMS to better meet their individual learning preferences. Consequently, there is a level of "tension" between LMSs and PLEs, as can be seen in the video created by Xtranormal (http://www.Youtube.com/watch?v=a9zSd5Gs6Mw) or the image created by Dr. Mohamed Amine Chatti that shows the LMS as a Swiss Army Knife and the PLE as a collection of tools (http://mohamedaminechatti.blogspot.com/2007/03/lms-vs-ple.html).

Sclater expresses this concern, "Most learners are entering universities with increasing experience of the on line world and competence in using social software in their leisure (or professional) activities. It has been suggested that learning providers cannot hope to compete with the developments that are happening so rapidly elsewhere on the Internet and that students will consequently find LMSs and the tools within them inferior to those they are already using freely on the Internet – both in their look and feel and in the amount of functionality offered" (Sclater, 3). Others express similar concerns that the LMS – both the proprietary and open-source versions – is monolithic, stifling, entrenched in "old" technology and unable to move into a Web 2.0 environment. To be fair, many of the LMSs have integrated some Web 2.0 technology – blogs, wikis, and other collaboration tools; but these tools (and the content created by the students) are only available to those enrolled in the course, during the time when the specific course is offered – resulting in a "walled garden". They don't exist in the "wild" where they can be discovered by others or easily incorporated into student e-portfolios.

It sounds like the LMS is a dinosaur, lumbering to extinction. Do educators throw out the LMS in favor of the PLE? Perhaps not. A chart provided by Mott comparing the strengths and weaknesses of LMSs and PLEs (http://www.educause.edu/library/EQM10113) clearly demonstrates that both of these tools offer valuable assets and come with their share of liabilities. To quote Mott, "As we weigh the potential contributions of the LMS and the PLE to learning, we face a Gordian Knot. If we choose one, we give up the advantages of the other while simultaneously taking on its weaknesses" (Mott, 2). So it would seem that a better solution needs to focus on finding a way for the LMS and PLE to peacefully coexist.

Mott speaks of an "open learning network" (OLN) that would mash together the best of each, reconciling "the apparently competing paradigms of the secure, private, proprietary institutional network and the public, dynamic, social web." An OLN would have three key features:

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1. Malleability;
2. Leveraging post-1990s technology; and
3. "A manageable balance between imperatives of institutional networks and the promise of the cloud" (Mott, 4).

Attwell describes an initiative funded by the New Zealand government "to provide an integration layer between the Open Source Moodle VLE and ELGG [http://elgg.org/] . . . [They say the plan] 'is to create a learner centered eportfolio system that sits outside of the Learning Management Systems. It will serve students from right across the sector and not be institutionally aligned.'. . . One of the big advantages is that . . . when the students move . . . they maintain their own ELGG account" (Attwell, 2007, 6). This particular feature enables the informal and lifelong learning aspects of a PLE.

Sclater presents yet another scenario, one in which the LMS becomes more of a management information system that works in the background, with the ability to export information to a variety of systems students prefer to use and still maintains a core set of functions of value to the institution and to those faculty and students who still prefer using a "consistent, simple institutionally hosted system" (Sclater, 9). The key to this solution is a level of interoperability between the LMS and all the different pieces.

No matter how the issues between LMSs and PLEs are resolved, PLEs do present some significant challenges to learners – even those who are enthusiastic about using them. There are a myriad of tools available. How do learners identify appropriate tools and implement them? These tools are "personal"; consequently each one of them requires setting up accounts with user names and passwords to be remembered and managed. Each tool functions differently, so the learner has to figure out how each one works. As with any cloud-based activity, the tool could be "here today and gone tomorrow". What happens to the learner's content if the service disappears or is absorbed by another entity? All of these challenges for learners can be turned into support challenges for those working with the learners – instructors and technology support staff. One possible solution to these issues is for the institution to provide some basic tools in a PLE, along with the "plug-in" or "drag-and-drop" framework. Learners can start with this basic structure and then tailor it for their specific needs and interests.

Having a sense of what a PLE is – or could be –we can now begin to think about how librarians might fit into this model. At this point in time, it appears that librarians are doing very little with PLEs – per se. Instruction librarians have found ways to insert themselves into online classrooms. A search across databases for variants on "embedded librarian" will retrieve numerous articles describing a variety of approaches. Librarians may become "assistants" in the online course, making themselves available to the students via "chat" and other LMS tools as described by Matthew and Schroeder. They may work with appropriate staff to place online catalog or database "widgets" on a top-level library "tab" or in specific courses in the LMS. Whittaker and Dunham describe integrating Web 2.0 tools into two ethics courses taken by medical students in an effort to provide them with a PLE to assist with their research activities for these courses. In a slightly different variation, Filgo describes being embedded in a course via Twitter and blogs. However, all of these efforts are tied to the course, and the course is still located in the LMS. Filgo gets closer to a PLE because she used social media tools outside of the LMS as a virtual communication channel with the students, but this experience – as innovative as it is – was still a concept developed by the instructor and Filgo – as opposed to a tool each student deliberately selected to help them with their learning.

Some librarians are experimenting with PLEs for their personal use. Booth briefly describes PLEs and how she values her PLE for easing the effort it takes for her to keep current in her research areas as well as help her create, manage, and share her presentations and papers (Booth, 13-14). Staff at the Colorado Libraries developed a series of modules to introduce library staff to web 2.0 technologies, with the last module being an assignment to create a PLE using the tools with which they have worked (http://web20.coceforum.org/the-modules/personal-learning-environments/).

Instruction librarians need to experiment with developing their own PLEs. Ideally, a PLE is a one-stop shop. The learner opens a web page, and most, if not all, of the tools needed for her PLE are readily accessible. This "start" page may pull in RSS feeds and e-mail, contain widgets for specific purposes, and provide connections to favored social media tools. Fortunately, tools already exist that help create this start page:

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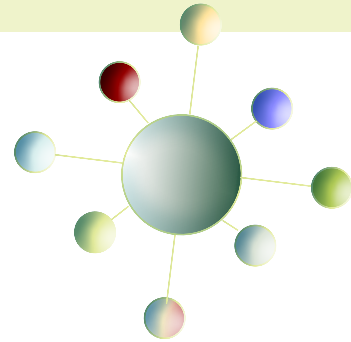

- iGoogle – http://www.igoogle.com
- My Yahoo – http://myyahoo.com
- Netvibes – http://www.netvibes.com/en
- PageFlakes -- http://www.pageflakes.com/
- symbalooEDU -- http://edu.symbaloo.com/

Explore these tools to see which one might work for your PLE. Be sure to use the “search” function in each of these tools to find “widgets” that others have created. In particular, look for the word – library. Minimally, this activity will accomplish two goals: you will become familiar with how these interfaces work, and you will gain a better understanding of the challenges that confront learners who want to create their own PLEs using these tools.

As it turns out, librarians **are** exploring these tools, creating widgets, creating “information portals”, and even using them in information literacy environments (Gordon and Stephens, 2007; Kolah and Fosmire, 2010; Metz, 2008; Special Feature, 2008; Thomas, 2011; and Weaver, 2010). In addition to working with these start pages, some librarians are also experimenting with tools like the Google custom search tool (http://www.google.com/cse/manage/create) or Yahoo Pipes (http://pipes.yahoo.com/pipes/). Using the Google custom search tool is fairly straight forward; however, Yahoo Pipes does require a higher tolerance for technological tinkering, although perhaps not as much as is needed to create widgets for iGoogle. To a certain degree, all of these activities represent the implementation of information-based PLEs – perhaps without librarians realizing the connection between these information portals and this educational model.

However, these explorations and experiments still don’t place the widgets and tools into the PLEs of the learners, and therein resides the key issue. If PLEs are becoming integral to the learning model of the future, librarians need to continue to develop tools that enable access to the resources and services found in libraries – tools that can be incorporated into PLEs. More importantly, librarians need to be more closely aligned with the people at their institutions who may be pursuing the development of PLEs for the learners – these could be individual instructors or those who oversee the local LMS or some other entity.

Are PLEs part of the educational model of the future? The crystal ball is somewhat fuzzy at this point regarding the long-term outcome for PLEs. However, two elements of a PLE definition – informal learning and lifelong learning – align very closely with values that instruction librarians want to impart to their patrons. Consequently, librarians need to be familiar with the concept and prepared to be a part of the personal learning environment model should it evolve the way some educators believe it will.

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LIRT Standing Committees

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

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.

Please see our online committee volunteer form at

http://fleetwood.baylor.edu/lirt/volform.php