School Public Special Academic

LIBRARY INSTRUCTION ROUND TABLE NEWS

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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From The President

By Vibiana Bowman

We librarians are living in proverbial "interesting times."

American Libraries (December, 2007) notes in "Top 10 Library Stories of 2007" that financial uncertainty was *the* prevalent concern in the library community. School and public libraries have endured "massive cutbacks" (44). Academic libraries are suffering slashed or frozen budget lines. Privatization in all sectors of librarianship – from elementary schools to government agencies – raises concerns regarding standards of services for patrons and the preservation of wages and benefits for library staff and professionals.

In the same article, *AL* notes that these threats to our profession are being met nationwide with "outpourings of public support."

We are also fortunate in that librarians, as a group, are collegial, supportive, and rally to each others support. In response to scarce travel funds, LIRT has been exploring increased virtual participation at conference, as well as sponsoring new professionals through ALA's Emerging Leaders program and investigating ways to incorporate retirees who wish to remain professionally active.

In these "interesting times," what can LIRT do to serve you better and address your concerns?

LIRT officers are in the process of long-range planning, examining our mission, goals, and objectives. Ideas, complaints, and suggestions are welcome and will be incorporated into discussions at Annual in Anaheim. My contact information is below.

All the best!
Vibiana Bowman

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http://www.baylor.edu/LIRT/lirtnews/

Candidates for LIRT Vice-President / President-Elect

WILLIAMS, LISA. **Degrees and Certificates:** University of North Carolina Wilmington, MALS, 2007; North Carolina Central University, MLS, 1999; East Carolina University, BS, 1992. **Current Position:** University of North Carolina Wilmington, Randall Library, Librarian 2001-present. **Previous Position:** University of South Carolina Spartanburg, Librarian, 2000-2001; East Carolina University, Joyner Library, Temporary Faculty/Graduate Assistant 1997-1999. **ALA Activities**: LIRT Teaching, Learning & Technology Committee 2003-present; ACRL Status of Academic Librarians 2003-present; RUSA RSS Cooperative Reference Committee 2008-present. **Partial List of Publications:** Fritzler, P., Palmer, L., & Williams, L. (2006). The future has sent you a message: Will you accept? *2006 UNC TLT Conference Proceedings*. Presented at the 2006 UNC Teaching and Learning with Technology Conference. (pp. 24-30). Pemberton, A., & Williams, L. (2006). Engaging Students: Using Technology in the Library Classroom. In (Eds.), *Discover, Connect, Engage: Creative Integration of Information Literacy.* Papers and session materials presented at the 33rd National LOEX Library Instruction Conference. Ann Arbor, MI: Pierian Press. **Statement**: Library Instruction has been and continues to be an evolving practice as libraries shift from print to electronic resources and instruction gradually moves from face-to-face sessions to distance education. I feel the purpose of this round table is to help librarians maintain the core of library instruction while offering support through best practices for understanding different learning styles and working with new technology. Not only do our technology and our vehicles for instruction evolve but our teaching styles should also continue to evolve.

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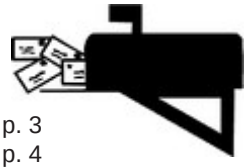

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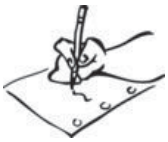

by Jeff Knapp

jeff.knapp@psu.edu

Greetings everyone! I'm feeling old—about a hundred years old, to be exact. A student came to me the other day at the reference desk needing help finding a book. She had the call number written down of a book she found in our catalog. When I walked her over to the shelf and found the book, she looked at it and said, "Oh . . . but it's, like, a hundred years old." On the call number label was its year of publication: 1967. (Sigh.) Enough said . . .

There's been a lot of talk about the "Millennials" in the literature lately, and while and I am growing a bit weary of new "generations" being christened every four or five years, there's no question in my mind that understanding a few general things about the experiences of our students is important. What I've been noticing the last few years is that the generalization about today's students being completely computer-savvy is not that accurate anymore. Or, it's about as accurate as any sweeping generalization about unrelated people who have only their birth year in common (that is to say, not at all).

The reason I say this is that I'm fielding more questions at the reference desk like, "Where did my file go?" or "How do I create a web page?" In other words, I think the so-called Millennials have never learned "from scratch" how to navigate a file structure on a network or how to code in html, like people needed to do maybe ten years ago in order to have a meaningful experience online. The best analogy I've heard that describes this is that of the automobile. In the early 20th century, when cars were a new technology, most drivers had a good understanding of how a car worked—they frequently had to deal with leaking fluids, broken belts, and replacing filters and gaskets. With the reliability and durability of the average car today, I'd be willing to bet that there are licensed drivers who don't know how to even open the hood—and why should they? It takes them where they need to go, and they'll probably trade it in for a new one before it ever breaks down.

The lesson I take away from this is simply that we always must be aware of where our students are coming from in their understanding of technology. As library services become increasingly network-based, we need to remember that unless we can make them as easy to use as Google, we can't assume that they'll automatically understand how to use them.

Or at least that's the opinion of this centenarian. Now if you'll excuse me, I need my nap . . .

http://www.baylor.edu/LIRT/lirtnews/

This Worked!

By Elana Karshmer

Space is at a premium in our library, but our creative librarians discovered a way to create a study space that can also serve as a classroom!.

Weeding the rarely used indexes allowed us to develop a joint use area—a study space with round café-style tables and a SMART Board*/projector setup allows us to show students how to access library resources. After the instruction overview, they complete an assignment utilizing these resources on their laptops. Now we have a classroom that can be converted back to a quiet study area in minutes!

*interactive, electronic whiteboard

Send Us Your Tutorials -
The Adult Learners Committee invites LIRT and ALA members to submit links and short annotations for online tutorials that they have created, which are geared toward Adult Learners. These include, but are not limited to, teaching methods, learning theory, adult literacy, or special populations within the adult community. Those selected will be added to the Adult Learners Resource Center Tutorials section. Send your links to Ted Chaffin, co-chair, at tchaffin@mailer.fsu.edu. Please include "LIRT Adult Learners – Tutorial" in the subject line.

LIRT Program: Energize Your Instruction: Keep the Magic Alive for You and your Audience

By Victor D. Baeza

Is your instruction dull and lifeless? Do you have students drooling on their keyboards? Are you and your audience equally bored? Even if the answer to these questions is no, you'll want to join speaker Andrew Sanderbeck at LIRT's ALA Annual program to discover how to avoid getting into a rut and put the pizzazz back into your teaching. Keeping that spark and passion alive in those who teach is critical to a successful learning process. That's why this program will focus on proven techniques that help employees avoid and overcome the symptoms of "teaching burnout" and will give participants the tools to rediscover the best potential in themselves and others.

LIRT Committee Reports

Adult Learners Committee
Ted Chaffin, Chair

The Chair provided an overview of the LIRT Steering Committee meeting which included the 2009 Budget, the ALA endowment totaling almost $50,000, and a speech from incoming President Jim Redding.

Several announcements were made including a need for volunteers to actively recruit new LIRT members, a review of the committee membership, and submission deadlines for forthcoming LIRT news.

The committee began planning for the 2008 Midwinter Discussion Forum. Our theme will be Wikipedia and Library Instruction. Several issues regarding the planning were discussed, including the need to confirm a venue, investigate potential guest speakers, determine the format for the forum, brainstorm discussion questions, determine necessary equipment, and outline an advertising and promotion plan.

Organization & Planning Committee
Carol Schuetz, Chair

From out meeting, a proposal was generated for the upcoming 2010 LIRT Retreat including outcomes, goals and tentative budget. Three names were suggested for facilitators and locations for the retreat were discussed. Possible items to give participants and a list of invitees were also looked into as well as purchasing giveaways this fiscal year and storing them until the retreat.

During the conference the committee developed a proposal for 2010 LIRT Retreat, identified tentative invitees, and constructed a preliminary budget.

The committee will meet virtually on the last Friday of each month to continue the discussion and work on the LIRT Retreat.

Web Advisory Committee
Stephanie Michel, Chair

Committee met for the first time to discuss the status of the LIRT web site, the issues involved in moving over to the ALA content management system, and to generate ideas and set a timeline for a survey of LIRT membership about the LIRT web site.

The LIRT web site is currently housed on an outdated server and will not be replaced if fails. Plans are being made to move the LIRT web site to the new ALA content management system (Collage); however, the web site would not be moved as-is, so this is a good time to reevaluate content and design, possibly working with the ALA design office.

The committee will discuss and edit questions, which will be completed by March 1. A survey created using software available at Baylor University (Snap) will be widely distributed through a variety of listservs between April 1 and April 30.

The committee has several goals, both short and long term, including examining and inventorying the content and currency of the LIRT web site, developing guidelines for committees that want to create content, develop a plan to move the LIRT web site to the ALA system, and investigate new technologies for the web site.

Newsletter Committee
Jeff Knapp, Chair

The committee is preparing questions to include in a general LIRT Survey to determine if members prefer to receive LIRT News in print. Also discussed was changing the layout of LIRT News. A new template is being created to address this. In place of chair, Jeff Knapp, at Annual in Anaheim will be Janet.

Non-LIRT Meetings at Midwinter

Electronic Resources in Communication Studies

ACRL-EBSS

Those interested in, or charged with, Communications Studies in their library need to be in touch with the work of the ACRL-EBSS Electronic and Resources in Communication Studies Committee. This hard working, energetic committee has been in existence for the past three years, and consist of 4 subgroups with four major focus areas: Communication with Colleagues, Scholars, Patrons and Vendors; Evaluation and Assessment of Resources; Scholarly Communication/Principles and How they Relate to Electronic Resources in Communication Studies; and Maintenance/Enhancement of the Resources for Communication Studies Website. The major thrust of their Sunday agenda was a review of the progress of the 4 subgroups. Among the Communication subgroup's noteworthy accomplishments is the establishment of a link to the COMLIB-L listserv archives. **COMLIB-L@listserv.uiuc.edu,** managed by the University of Illinois Communications Librarian, deserves particular mention here because of the important role it plays in providing communication studies librarians with a forum for discussing events, issues and resources; asking for assistance with reference questions, handling service issues and making collection development decisions; and furnishing a means to post current events, activities, and participate in other kinds of networking activities. To join go to: http://listserv.uiuc.edu/archives/comlib-l.html. Evaluation and Assessment has completed an indispensable list of *Criteria for Evaluating Communication-Related Databases,* a helpful tool for those who need assistance in determining which databases to purchase in the various areas of Communications Studies. Scholarly Communication/Principles has produced a list of 25 core communications journal titles, which have been endorsed by the Committee and presented to JSTOR for consideration of inclusion in the JSTOR lineup. The Website group's work is ongoing, and includes reviews, updates, and assignment of future projects. Among the suggested future website projects is the addition of a "Gaming Studies" subject area and Internet video sites and blogs. — *Cynthia Dottin, LIRT Liaison Committee*

Reference Services in Large Research Libraries: Next Generation Discovery Tools: How Do They Help (or Hinder) Scholarly Research?

ACRL-RSS

Web 2.0 technologies are revolutionizing the ways in which the world interacts with information. With it has come such terms as Next Generation Libraries and, indeed, the topic of this discussion, Next Generation Discovery Tools. Along with Web 2.0 comes a clear mandate that libraries much change, in both their physical and virtual aspects, if they wish to remain relevant in the 21st Century and beyond. Indeed, it is in the face of this reality that the "hot" topic of Next Generation Discovery Tools drew a, standing room only, group of librarians to the North Ballroom of the Sheraton Philadelphia. The question posed**:** What can YOU, as reference librarians, bring to the

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Update to Bibliography for "Presentation Skills" Brochure

By Carla List-Handley

In 1999, LIRT published *Presentation Skills*, a brochure that covers the basics of giving presentations. It also works well as a guide for teachers looking to improve their classroom teaching performance. I distribute the brochure every time workshops on the topic. The brochure includes a brief bibliography of works related to teaching and presenting. After doing a little of my own research, I discovered that the concept is a slippery one: items usually address either the holistic evaluation of a teacher's performance, or the teaching of performance to actors, usually in a theatre/stage context. I added those works that actually do address performance skills for classroom teaching to the original bibliography. (There is one more that may be added in the future: Cox, Christopher N. and Elizabeth Blakesley Lindsay, eds. *Information Literacy Instruction Handbook*. Chicago: ACRL, in press 2008.)

The bibliography below is my update of the 1999 LIRT effort.

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Modified by Carla List-Handley
January 2008

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Non-LIRT Meetings at Midwinter (cont'd)

table to help patrons by designing, teaching, or answering questions arising from these [next generation discovery] tools? elicited a two-hour long, spirited, and informative discussion regarding many of these tools and their use by a variety of institutions. Among the examples presented for discussion were: Faceted browsing: AquaBrowser: Queens Library http://aqua.queenslibrary.org/ and The University of Chicago http://lens.lib.uchicago.edu/ or Primo: used at Boston College http://www.bc.edu/supersleuth and the University of Iowa http://smartsearch.uiowa.edu/ WorldCat identities http://orlabs.oclc.org/Identities/ tagging, such as Penntags http://tags.library.upenn.edu. Queries about these Next Gen Tools flew like projectiles across the Ballroom: How are these different from other resources? What are some of the pitfalls? What are some of the issues that we need to think about? What are some of the advantages? How customizable are these tools? Which searches are more appropriate for these next generation tools, and which are more appropriate for the Library Catalog? Alas, the answers to many of these are yet to be determined but, as librarians, we must continue our quest the "Library of the Future."

—Cynthia Dottin, LIRT Liaison Committee

Teaching Disabled Students: Emphasis on Their Abilities, Not Their Disabilities

ACRL-IS Current Issue Discussion Forum

This IS Discussion Forum, lead by Scott Sheidlower, York College/CUNY, provided participants with practical tips on how to meet the educational needs of disabled students. The forum began with a description of the various types of disabilities that might need to be addressed in an instructional setting and the legal issues surrounding disability services. Small groups were then given various instructional scenarios involving disabled students and asked to come up with solutions to meet the students' needs. Participants were especially asked to consider Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (different learning styles) when chatting about solutions. Following the small group discussions, Mr. Sheidlower shared his own personal experiences on being a disabled student. Conversation then continued on how to respond to the different scenarios and other librarians shared their own experiences. Overall, most solutions stressed being adaptable to changing instructional needs, and trying to get as much information as possible about any needed accommodations before library instruction sessions. Many instructional strategies were suggested, such as speaking clearly, facing your audience, giving specific directions, providing handouts, ensuring proper lighting, and asking if anyone would like to sit in the front row etc. It was felt that these suggestions would help all students and not just the disabled. A final digest summarizing the discussion will be available on the Instruction Section homepage. *—Carrie Forbes, LIRT Liaison Committee*

Assessment: We know we should do it, but does it have to be so difficult?

ACRL-IS Current Issue Discussion Forum

Gayla Byerly and Annie Downey, of the University of North Texas Denton, led a forum on the practical challenges of implementing instructional assessment tools. The large group of participants was broken up into several small groups and asked to discuss the following questions: 1) What assessment have you done that has worked? 2) Do you feel like you have to come up with a new assessment for each class? Why or Why not? 3) What are your fears about assessment? 4) Why are librarians not doing assessment? 5) Do we really want to know the results of assessment? Why or why not? The small groups then reported back on their table conversations. Many groups expressed fears and challenges regarding assessment including feeling judged, not having enough time or support, not knowing how to conduct proper assessment, not having clear ideas about what to assess, and not knowing what to do with assessment results. Suggestions for improving instructional assessment included focusing on student learning (not whether they liked the teacher), working with programs or offices on campus that deal with assessment, and starting small by assessing classes in a certain program and not necessarily a whole instructional program. A final digest summarizing the discussion will be available on the Instruction Section homepage. *—Carrie Forbes, LIRT Liaison Committee*

Research Into Action: Leveraging Research into IL Instruction

ACRL-IS Discussion Forum

The session began with a panel discussion and was followed by small group discussions. The members of the panel were: Lisa Janicke-Hinchcliffe (Illinois), Scott Walter (Illinois), and Michelle Zafron (Buffalo). Two questions were posed to the panelists. The first was: "why is information literacy research important to teaching librarians?" Janicke-Hinchcliffe responded that research reflects systematic knowledge and best practices in an academic field. Zafron replied that since many librarians do not have a teaching background, we need to look to the literature for ideas about teaching and assessing our teaching. Walter agreed with the others and turned to why we should undertake research; namely, it makes us join a community of colleagues who are looking to improve teaching . Further, it helps develop data to inform our profession of what directions to take. The second question was: "how have you used information literacy articles to inform your teaching?" Walter answered that articles provoke thought into how you approach the classroom and allow you to see different models of teaching and assessment. Zafron answered that she goes to the education literature to become a better teacher. Overall, she feels that we need to learn how to critically appraise literature and strengthen the quantitative aspects of our research. Janicke-Hinchcliffe uses the literature to find answers about why certain teaching approaches are not working. Small group discussions followed based on the question: "what barriers are there to transferring research into practice and how can groups like ACRL help?" *—Russ Hall, LIRT Liaison Committee*

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Candidates for LIRT Positions, 2008 (cont'd)

Candidates for LIRT Secretary

HOPKINS, BARBARA. Current Position: School Librarian, Jordan School District, Fort Herriman Middle School, Salt Lake City, UT. **Previous Position:** Circulation Librarian, Utah Valley State College (managed staff of 35, taught classes, and provided reference services). **ALA Activities**: LIRT Conference Planning Chair. **Offices Held outside of ALA:** Utah Library Association's Library Administration and Management Roundtable Co-Chair; Conference Registration Chair for the upcoming ULA/MPLA conference (April 2008).

MCCUTCHEON, CAMILLE. Degrees and Certifications: University of South Carolina, Joint Master's Degree in English and Library and Information Science, 1995; Columbia College, B. A. in English and Public Affairs, 1993. **Current Position:** Reference Librarian, University of South Carolina Upstate Library, 1998-present. **Previous Positions:** Reference Librarian, University of South Carolina Upstate Library, 1998-Present; Librarian, Converse College Library, 1996-98. **ALA Activities**: Various positions within LIRT, including chair- and co-chair positions, since 2006. **Offices Held outside of ALA:** Positions including chairs and co-chairs of various SELA (South Eastern Library Association) committees beginning in 2002-present and numerous chair positions within SCLA (South Carolina Library Association) from 1998-present. **Partial List of Publications:** "Hooray for Hollywood: Biographical Resources for Film Pioneers," *Choice*, July/August 2006; "Reference and Bibliographic Instruction: Making Connections in the Age of ," *Research Strategies*, 2001. **Statement:** I believe I have the professional background needed to be elected Secretary of LIRT. Due to my positions as Chair and, most recently, Co-Chair of the LIRT Top 20 Committee, I have served on the LIRT Steering Committee for the past two years and, therefore, am familiar with the duties and responsibilities of this position. I believe my previous experience as Secretary of the SCLA also makes me immensely qualified. I would like to continue being actively involved in LIRT and would consider it one of the highlights of my career as a librarian to serve as LIRT Secretary.

Candidates for LIRT Treasurer

LUCAS, KARI. Degrees and Certifications: University of Michigan, A.M.L.S., 1981; Grand Valley State College, A.B. Literature, 1979. **Current Position:** Director, University of California, San Diego, 2000-present. **Previous Positions:** Head, Undergraduate Library, University of California San Diego, 1992-99; Reference/Instruction Librarian, University of California San Diego, 1986-91; Grant Director, San Diego County Library, 1986-87; Reference/Instruction Librarian, Baylor University, 1982-86. **ALA Activities:** member of various committees within LIRT, ACRL, and LAMA, since 1988, including past presidency of LIRT. **Offices Held outside of ALA**: Representative to the Librarians Association of the University of California, San Diego Division, as well as several member/chair positions within the organization, since 1987. **Partial List of Publications:** "The undergraduate library and its librarians in the large research university: responding to change to remain vital and relevant," *Advances in Librarianship* (ALA), 2006; editor, *Faculty Guide to Academic Information Technology* (University of California San Diego), 2001-04. **Statement:** I have been involved with LIRT for many years. I believe it is the role of long-standing LIRT members to impart their knowledge and experience to newer members by taking leadership roles so that the tradition of excellence that LIRT is known for continues. I served as a committee member, committee chair, secretary, and President. Over time, and from my many different roles within LIRT, I learned that conscientious fiscal oversight is critically important to allow LIRT to be as effective as possible for its members.

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Non-LIRT Meetings at Midwinter (cont'd)

(Re)thinking Subject Guides: Interactivity Unbound
ACRL WSS Discussion Group
The moderator, Diana King (UCLA), began by discussing trends in subject guides. These trends include using blogs, wikis, Meebo, outside sources like LibGuides, and YouTube tutorials. When opened to the floor, the first discussion was about using the social bookmarking site del.icio.us. You can keep one list of guides and tag it so you can have a tag cloud for, say, "English 301." However, it's rather ugly and doesn't allow for applying a library "brand" to it. Similarly, FURL is ugly and not customizable. Another participant felt that course management software was an effective location for subject guides. Institutional portals allow for multiple channels and offer the opportunity to "push" information to specific patrons, for example, biology majors. Portals were also discussed as a way to allow patrons to customize their own subject-guides. In-browser toolbars are another way to get subject guides to patrons, but downloading the toolbar seems to be a barrier to usage. The discussion then turned to wikis. Some felt that it was difficult to get students to use wiki subject guides because we train them not to use Wikipedia; they seem unable to separate the format from the content. Wikis were also discussed as a shared tool between librarians, faculty, and students. Participants tended to like wikis because they find them very easy to update and users are familiar with the format. Many participants lauded the LibGuides software as an excellent way to publish subject guides. *—Russ Hall, LIRT Liaison Committee*

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Member A-LIRT: Linda J. Goff

Linda is Head of Instructional Services at the University Library at California State University, Sacramento. Sacramento has almost 29,000 students, and Linda is proud of the fact that at least 13,000 of them participate in her instruction program each year. Luckily Linda has two other instruction librarians and 15 subject specialist colleagues who participate in the instruction program.

Linda has been active member of LIRT since 1990, and has watched LIRT grow to become one of the larger Round Tables within ALA. She chaired the PR/Membership Committee for 5 years, served as Secretary of LIRT in 1998/99 and is currently on the Program Planning Committee. Her most recent role is as the ALA/LIRT Representative to the Information Literacy Section Standing Committee, International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA). This four year appointment began in August of 2005, with a trip to Oslo, Norway for her first international conference. Sitting in that first meeting beside Hannelore Rader, one of her heroes, was a personal thrill for Linda.

Not one to hold back, Linda's first assignment was to serve as the convener of the IL section program at the 2006 conference in Seoul, South Korea. Posting the call for papers, screening and selecting those chosen and organizing the presenters took most of the year. She repeated this role for the Durban, South Africa conference in August 2007 and also appeared on a program about the Information Literacy Resource Directory (http://www.infolitglobal.info/), a major project of the section. If you haven't already posted your own materials on this site, Linda urges you to please consider becoming a contributor. At that same address you will find a link to the IL logo contest which seeks to develop a standard image or icon that we can use internationally to represent the concept of Information Literacy.

For a look at what happened in IL at the Durban conference and for a better idea of what the IL section is doing, Linda reports that she has just finished compiling the January 2008 issue of the newsletter and that it is available on the IFLA IL section website: (http://www.ifla.org/VII/s42/index.htm)

If you'd like to attend IFLA, this is definitely the year! IFLA alternates continents for its meetings and 2008 will be in North America. You will find conference information for Quebec City, Quebec, Canada, on the web at http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla74/index.htm. Deadlines for some of the calls for papers have been extended, and you can still get a paper accepted!

TECH TALK "Learning Commons"

By Billie Peterson, Baylor University
Billie_Peterson@baylor.edu

Dear Tech Talk: I've heard colleagues talking about "learning commons." Is this just one more synonym for "information commons" or is it something different? *—Limited Comprehension of Learning Commons*

Dear LCLC: Synonyms abound for the concept of an information commons, including the use of "learning commons." However a true "learning commons" goes well beyond the expectations we have historically associated with "information commons."

A brief review of the literature identifies a number of authors who have defined the differences between learning commons and information commons (Bennett, Roberts, Schmidt, Spencer, and Sinclair). However all of the definitions contain similar key concepts for a learning commons:

- Collaborative: Both a collaborative learning environment and collaboration with other entities within the institution: the library, technology services, writing centers, tutorial services, student affairs, centers for teaching and learning, etc.;
- Student centric: Today's students (Millennials) have study and research habits that differ significantly from their predecessors and learning commons focus on meeting students' expectation related to these habits;
- Supportive of mobility: Wireless capabilities and sufficient access to power to support student's personal devices;
- Flexible and open: The way in which students use a learning commons environment will vary greatly during each day; therefore the environment must be easily reconfigured multiple times during a day;
- Human-centered design: The environment needs to be highly functional and aesthetically pleasing, an environment to which students are attracted and one that stimulates creative thinking.

So, there is a difference between information commons and learning commons, but why is the learning commons concept now moving to the forefront of library renovation conversations; what has changed? To a certain degree, nothing has changed. Libraries continue to pursue their mission as the academic life center for their institutions; but in recent years, a couple of significant changes have surfaced that drive how that mission is fulfilled:

- "Learning research indicates that competence is developed in active, exploratory, and social settings." (Oblinger, 15).
- As they have grown up in a fast-paced, digital age, today's Millennials have developed skills that integrate well with learning that is active, exploratory, and in a social setting.

Consequently, the library of the past—the one that housed, managed, and provided access to materials and services and supported the individual researcher model—is faced with a completely different paradigm. Course work is team-based and oriented to problem solving. The outcomes are often "knowledge creation" —not research papers, but a wide variety of knowledge objects—such as PowerPoint presentations; design projects; multimedia presentations; computer programs; interpretations of lab data; etc.; and the knowledge objects are created collaboratively.

So, where an information commons is/was used for *knowledge seeking*, a learning commons is used for *knowledge creation*. (Roberts, 805) The need for students to have comfortable, flexible learning spaces that enable and support their knowledge creation activities can be met in a variety of venues. However, the library remains the most viable location for these learning spaces because of its rich body of resources and, more importantly, because of the continued intrinsic value of the library as a vibrant academic life center..

Since another key component of learning commons is student centricity, since Millennials are significantly different from previous generations, and since library professionals may find it difficult to understand these differences, how does one obtain a good understanding of these students' mindset? An obvious answer is to run surveys or create student focus groups to open conversations. But before doing anything, read Foster's and Gibbon's Studying Students: The Undergraduate Research Project at the University of Rochester, an anthropological and ethnographic study that

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TECH TALK "Learning Commons"

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explored students' research lives from multiple perspectives. Even though this landmark work is focused on undergraduates at a specific institution and the results are not necessarily universally applicable, this research provides:

- significant insight into the academic lives of Millennials;
- a good, concise analysis of Millennials and how and why they differ so much from previous generations; and
- a fascinating array of survey techniques and activities—many of which could be replicated by others, even without the assistance of an anthropologist.

So, what might a learning commons look like? Ideally, it is a very, large open room. It's warm, light, and inviting, preferably with a source of natural light, as well as artificial light. Flat screen monitors are prominent, displaying examples of digital projects or promoting a variety of activities when the monitors are not being used. Many of the room divisions are created through the use of furniture (all on wheels): clusters of high-backed chairs surrounding circular work tables to create semi-private collaborative work spaces; pods of workstations that support the production of sophisticated multimedia projects; and pockets of various forms of soft seating for those who want to socialize, relax, or study individually.

Additional learning spaces would include glassed-in group study rooms equipped with flat screen monitors that can be used with software like TeamSpot (http://www.tidebreak.com/), enabling multiple laptops simultaneous access to the displayed project, as well as a larger glassed-in group instruction room with tables and chairs on wheels to enable on-the-fly room reconfiguration and robust support for laptops.

The learning commons has a service area staffed with an array of student employees and library and information technology staff who work collaboratively to assist the students with the creation of their knowledge objects. Moreover, space is also provided for services traditionally obtained from writing or tutoring centers. Perhaps this area also houses a center for teaching and learning which facilitates instructors' ability to incorporate new instructional technologies and learning activities into their teaching. Lastly, space adjacent to the learning commons will provide access to the libraries' coffee shop, which is now part and parcel of a library environment.

http://www.baylor.edu/LIRT/lirtnews/

Yes, learning commons are different than information commons, and yes, moving toward a learning commons environment may require a paradigm shift for those who still revere the traditional library. However, learning commons and traditional library do not need to be mutually exclusive concepts. To this end, libraries have already made significant changes in order to evolve from the information commons environment to the learning commons environment:

- Brigham Young University – http://net.lib.byu.edu/gen/ic/
- California Polytechnic State University – http://learningcommons.lib.calpoly.edu
- Dalhousie University – http://www.library.dal.ca/commons
- Emory University – http://www.cet.emory.edu/cox/index.cfm
- Georgia State University – http://www.library.gsu.edu/learningcommons/pages.asp?ldID=108&guideID=0&ID=4657
- North Carolina State University – http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/learningcommons/
- Ohio University – http://www.cni.org/tfms/2004b.fall/abstracts/handouts/CNI_learning_stuart.pdf
- Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3) – http://www.tc3.edu/news/default.asp?Category=5#3738
- University of Colorado, Boulder – http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/learningcommons/
- University of Illinois – http://www.library.uiuc.edu./ugl/lc/more.html
- University of Massachusetts, Amherst – http://www.umass.edu/learningcommons/
- University of Guelph – http://www.learningcommons.uoguelph.ca
- University of Texas, Austin – http://www.utexas.edu/oncampus/2007/10/18/ufcu-feature/
- University of Oregon – http://libweb.uoregon.edu/commons
- Yale University – http://net.lib.byu.edu/gen/ic/

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

Please share your experiences with LIRT.

Send your articles to Jeff Knapp (jeff.knapp@psu.edu)

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Additional Resources

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As always, send questions and comments to:
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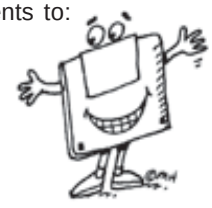

Standing Committees

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.

Research

The committee will identify, review, and disseminate information about in-depth state-of-the-art research about library instruction for all types of libraries.

Teaching, Learning, and 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://www3.baylor.edu/LIRT/volform.html

Library Instruction Round Table News
c/o Lorelle Swader
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