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The Many Faces of Instruction: An Exploration of Academic Librarians' Teaching Personas

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Abstract

While several studies explore whether librarians think of themselves as teachers, how librarians construct their teacher identities has received less attention in the literature. This project used semi-structured interviews with eighteen academic librarians in the United States to gain a sense of their teaching personas and how these have developed and evolved over time. The participants valued authenticity but were also able to quickly adapt their personas to different contexts. Librarians wish to be seen as friendly experts and develop their values-based teaching personas slowly over the course of their careers. The results of this study can help shape professional development efforts aimed at librarians who teach as well as provide guidance to library and information science students as they learn about information literacy instruction.

Keywords: teaching personas, library instruction, information literacy, librarian identity

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The Many Faces of Instruction: An Exploration of Academic Librarians' Teaching Personas

Academic librarians who teach bring parts of their personalities—intentionally or not—into the classroom and this has an impact on the students with whom they interact. Parini (2005) likened personas to “masks” individuals wear in different social interactions and to the unique “voice” that a writer cultivates during the course of his or her career. The concept of the teaching persona has appeared throughout the education literature, with researchers and practitioners encouraging their colleagues in various contexts, from elementary schools to college classrooms, to carefully consider the “face” they present to their students.

Although some librarians identify as teachers and draw upon pedagogical theories and best practices, no formal exploration of librarians' use of teaching personas has been conducted. Do librarians with significant instructional responsibilities develop and deploy teaching personas? Even librarians who do not consider themselves teachers or deliberately create personas may nevertheless center their presence on certain values and adopt specific tones of voice, demeanors, and behaviors when providing instruction. Through semi-structured interviews with 18 academic librarians at different points in their careers and situated in various instructional contexts, the author sought a better understanding of librarians' teaching personas. The results of this exploratory study highlight the included librarians' desire to build rapport with students while appearing competent. They also underscore a need for both adaptability and authenticity in librarian personas and illustrate the importance of professional development and reflection to their creation. While the librarians did show that they develop personas and reflect on their classroom identities, more targeted professional development focused on reflective practice and experimentation could prove beneficial for them as well as others who might want to use teaching personas to improve their practice.

Literature Review

Teaching Personas

The concept of a persona as the “face” individuals present to others in certain contexts originated with Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung (1917 & 1935/1972). Goffman (1959) further elucidated on the concept using the theater as an analogy. According to him, individuals seek to manipulate others' perception of them using both discursive and non-discursive

(clothing, gestures, etc.) techniques. A teaching persona, then, refers to the various identities teachers develop and deploy in instructional contexts using these same techniques. Several authors have discussed teaching personas in the context of teacher training, offering their newer colleagues advice on how to develop a unique teaching style (Banner & Cannon, 1997; Lang, 2007, 2011; Parini, 1997, 2005; Showalter, 2003). There is disagreement as to how closely a teacher's persona should reflect their "true" personality—if such a thing exists at all (Lang, 2007). Banner and Cannon (1997) discouraged adopting "manufactured personas" to gain their students' favor (p. 108). Instead, teachers should cultivate those aspects of their personalities that facilitate student learning.

Lang (2007) likewise wrote that personas warrant "conscious reflection" and suggests teachers consider how their self-presentation choices might impact student learning. While this can be a difficult exercise for new teachers, they will slowly begin to fashion personas that suit their personal preferences and situations as they spend more time in the classroom (Lang, 2010). Showalter (2003), a literature professor, contended that effective teachers of literature ought to cultivate teaching personas that align with their intellectual convictions and "critical beliefs," or the school of literary theory to which they subscribe (p. 39). Rather than hide behind fabricated personas, she advocated for increased self-revelation in the classroom, seeing it as a way for teachers to engage more deeply with their students (Showalter, 2003, p. 41). Palmer (1998), in his book on the inner lives of teachers, also warned against becoming a caricature of oneself when teaching and argued that self-knowledge is "crucial to good teaching" (p. 2). Good teachers bring a strong sense of personal identity to their work, which entails some vulnerability. For Parini (2005), on the other hand, teaching involves some artifice. He encouraged his fellow teachers to spend time consciously crafting personas that suit the situations in which they find themselves. Those new to teaching benefit from using their own teachers or their more experienced colleagues as models—similar to how a writer is influenced by what he or she has previously read.

Others have investigated teaching personas more formally. Davis conducted two studies that examined how teachers construct personas. One featured interviews with student teachers, while the other focused on established teachers at a private K-12 school using a mixed methods approach (Davis, 2011, 2013). The student teachers noted that their actual classroom behaviors did not always match the personas they had envisioned for themselves, but trying out different personas helped grow each student teacher's confidence in his or her abilities over time. These preservice teachers modeled their experimentation with personas

on memorable teachers from their pasts as well as the cooperating teachers they were working under (Davis, 2013). The teachers in Davis' 2011 study used a variety of both verbal and non-verbal devices (facial expressions, gestures, movement, clothing, etc.) to shape their students' perceptions of them, some with more self-awareness than others. Classroom context as well as aspects of the teachers' personal histories influenced the personas they deployed (Davis, 2011).

At the collegiate level, Tait et al. (2015) conducted semi-structured interviews with instructors at an Australian university to uncover the extent to which humor shaped the teachers' personas. A majority of the fifteen interviewees saw teaching as requiring some performance on the instructor's part and relied primarily on verbal humor to construct personas that appealed to their students. Instructors who thought of themselves as funny outside of the classroom were more likely to construct humorous teaching personas, and senior academics felt more secure using different types of humor in their teaching than their less experienced colleagues.

While there is some debate as to how closely a teacher's classroom persona should align with their authentic self or the version of themselves they inhabit outside of the classroom, those in the field of education seem to agree that teaching personas do have an impact on student learning and should therefore serve as locus for critical self-reflection and study. As Palmer (1998) stressed, teaching is an inherently human activity during which an instructor's inner life inevitably plays a role.

Librarian Teacher Identity

Formal studies on teaching personas have not appeared in the library and information literature. Research has focused instead on user personas, a concept from the fields of human-computer interaction and user experience that helps to design systems and processes that better meet user needs (Brown, 2006). However, since identity and personas are intertwined, a related area of inquiry is librarian identity, chiefly whether they consider themselves to be teachers. This is because how librarians see themselves—that is, how they construct identities within particular instructional contexts—potentially impacts the choices they make during instruction as well as their students' perceptions of them. Echoing Showalter, Donovan (2009) encouraged librarians to embrace authenticity in the classroom. Although teaching is a type of performance, librarians who base their teacher identities on aspects of their own innate personalities—rather than hide behind “detached” personas—foster more open learning environments and are better able to engage with students

(Donovan, 2009, para. 9). Drabinski (2016) explored the history and recent debates surrounding librarians' teacher identities using the concept of "kairos," or the intersection of time and action, as a framework.

Several studies have indicated that librarians are conflicted about their identities as teachers. Walter (2008) interviewed six academic librarians regarding their roles as teachers. All of the participants saw teaching as a core job responsibility. However, responses also underscored the lack of attention teaching receives in many library and information science (LIS) programs, which necessitates reliance on more informal professional development opportunities and the support of colleagues in similar situations. Stereotypes, which often shape outsiders' perceptions of librarians and the work they do, as well as multiple competing demands can likewise constrain librarians' attempts to identify as a teacher (Walter, 2008). Wheeler and McKinney (2015) took a similar approach in their study of librarians in the United Kingdom. Not all of their interviewees identified as teachers, and some considered the type of teaching librarians engage in as distinct from that of faculty in other disciplines. The authors cited the blurring of information literacy with information technology skills training, how librarians are perceived at different institutions, and the availability of professional development related to teaching as factors that influenced whether participants identified as teachers. More recently, Hess (2020) surveyed librarians about their teacher identities using a transformative learning theory approach. She found that more experienced librarians cited changing job responsibilities and the opinions of those outside of the profession as having the greatest impact on their identity formation. Newer librarians, on the other hand, indicated that feedback from those within the profession influenced their teacher identities.

While some librarians are conflicted about embracing their identities as teachers, research has suggested that developing a teacher identity is important for librarians engaged with information literacy instruction and can lead to better practice. Roy and Hensley (2016) urged LIS educators to help their students develop their "inner teacher[s]" and embrace a critical, learner-centered approach to reference work (p. 337). Gammons et al. (2018) reported on the intensive Research and Teaching Fellowship at the University of Maryland Libraries, which provided LIS students with the classroom experience, intellectual engagement, and the supportive community of practice needed to cultivate their teacher identities, as evidenced by fellows' focus group responses and end-of-the-semester reflections. They found that the students' teaching skills improved across several different

measures—most notably in their ability to draw upon various instructional strategies and techniques—and the fellows indicated a continued interest in teaching information literacy. While educators have recognized the importance of embracing teaching personas, there has been less attention given to this subject by librarians, perhaps because librarians have been more reluctant to think of themselves as teachers. However, some believe that grappling with this issue is key to encouraging reflective practice and furthering information literacy instruction efforts. This study seeks to fill a gap in the literature by illustrating how teaching personas, as a concept, might help librarians “try on” different identities in the classroom and serve as a starting point for developing a praxis centered on reflection.

Methods

Following in the footsteps of several of the researchers cited above, the author conducted semi-structured interviews with eighteen academic librarians in the United States who engage in library instruction on a regular basis, a participant size that is consistent with the goals of phenomenological research (Guest et al., 2012). The University of Nevada, Reno institutional review board approved the project prior to the start of data collection. A call for study participants was shared through several professional listservs aimed at academic librarians and/or information literacy. Interested individuals were directed to fill out a brief survey administered through Qualtrics.

The author used this information to assemble a pool of librarians with varying levels of experience who work in a number of different institutional and instructional contexts. At the time of the study, a third had less than three years of experience, a third had between three and seven years of experience, and another third had more than seven years of experience in the field. The vast majority reported having some liaison responsibilities, but a few provide reference and instructional support more generally, holding titles such as “Public Services Librarian” or “First Year Experience Librarian.” One provides instruction for a special collections library. Nine of the librarians work at mid-sized or large research universities, while seven work at smaller institutions (e.g., private liberal arts colleges) or community colleges. The majority of the librarians interviewed primarily teach one-shot information literacy sessions and standalone workshops, although a few teach semester-long credit-bearing courses.

Interviews were conducted via video conference in the fall of 2019 and were recorded.

Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes on average. The author asked each participant

ten core questions that are based on those Davis (2011) asked K-12 teachers. The first few questions asked participants to describe how instruction fit into their work and to reflect on a recent library instruction experience. The librarian participants then answered questions about their teaching styles (e.g., are they more scripted or improvised), their apparel, tone of voice, and body language in instructional situations, how much personal information they share with students, and whether certain aspects of their personalities come through more than others inside the classroom. The author's aim was to encourage the participants to reflect less upon the content or teaching strategies they use and more on the features of instruction where their personalities and their own self-perceptions might come into play. And, finally, interviews concluded by asking the participants if they, as librarians, identify as teachers in order to get insight into each participant's sense of their role within the higher education landscape. (See the appendix for the full list of questions.) Participants consisted entirely of librarians who responded to a call shared via several listservs, and they were not compensated in any way. Therefore, self-selection is a limitation of this study. Involvement may have been skewed towards those librarians who enjoy teaching or those who are passionate about library instruction.

The author then used Temi, an automated, web-based transcription service, to transcribe the interviews and NVivo to code the transcripts. Each participant was assigned a unique identifier (referred to here as Librarian 1 through Librarian 18). First, the author cleaned up the machine-transcribed documents, having exported them from Temi as Microsoft Word files. She then developed an initial set of codes based on a read-through of these documents. The author coded the transcripts twice, combining a few initial codes that overlapped with one another and creating an entirely new code ("authenticity") during the second attempt. A re-read of the coded transcripts and simple analysis using NVivo facilitated the author's turning these codes into themes.

Results

Five core themes emerged. The librarians were focused, first and foremost, on building rapport with students and keeping their audiences engaged. They were also intent on conveying their expertise in the areas of information literacy and research skill development. While they often needed to adapt their personas to reflect the institutional or, as liaisons, the disciplinary cultures they find themselves in, their innate personality traits and core values still shaped their personas to a degree. Finally, all of the participants

indicated that they had experienced or engaged in some form of professional growth and development that helped them become more confident teachers and develop classroom personas that fit their unique instructional contexts.

Building Rapport

All of the librarians interviewed expressed a desire to build rapport with students during library instruction. They wanted students to see the library as a welcoming space and librarians as friendly and approachable sources of support. “I want to present myself as that I care about what happens to them, and that I am there to help them,” said Librarian 8, for example. And Librarian 10 said that they “[r]eally want them to feel that they're welcomed, and that the library is a warm environment.” The librarians saw student engagement as key to building rapport. Many mentioned that they were aware that students often assume that library instruction would be boring and/or irrelevant. Others expressed concern that students perceived libraries and librarians as strict and formal. They have combatted these stereotypes by presenting fun and somewhat informal personas when they meet with students. “[T]he last thing I want to do now with these populations is come in and be super stuffy and make them feel bad because their citation is wrong or something, you know? Like, I want to make this easy and smooth. And taking my ego out of it has been really helpful,” explained Librarian 14.

Approachability was a major concern. Several librarians said that this was why they tend to stay away from overly formal attire on instruction days; they did not want to come across as unapproachable. Younger librarians, or those who appear younger than they are, likewise said that being closer to their students in age helped with this. “[S]ounding like I'm 12 can be helpful very nonthreatening,” joked Librarian 18. Additionally, librarians from underrepresented groups have tried to make students of similar backgrounds feel welcomed and comfortable. Librarian 5, for instance, described using carefully chosen stories and anecdotes to forge connections with students from the same underrepresented communities of which she herself is a part.

A subtheme was the librarians' desire to appear to be enthusiastic and energetic regardless of how they are feeling. Several of those who described themselves as introverts said they are more extroverted in the classroom. As Librarian 2 said, “[W]hen I'm teaching, the extrovert side of me will come out.” And Librarian 5 shared this: “I don't consider myself outgoing, but I think other people may say something different. Sometimes I'm, I can keep to myself a lot, but when I get in front of a class, it's like I have no problem talking.” Some even

described themselves as being a little “goofy” or “hokey” when they teach. A few of the librarians also said that they use humor to capture the students’ interest and make themselves seem more human. They have been careful, however, to avoid humor that might put students off. “But, I definitely, like, I tease people, but I think I’m always cognizant of the boundaries. It’s like I don’t want to actually make anybody mad,” said Librarian 3.

Several of the librarians discussed employing various active learning techniques, including small group work, discussion, and reflection, to counteract any negative stereotypes and stave off boredom. Librarians 1 and 13, for instance, mentioned using variations of a “speed dating” with sources activity to capture students’ interest. A few have used storytelling to illustrate important information literacy concepts while keeping students engaged. Librarian 5 described using pop culture references and short personal anecdotes, for example. Others have relied on on-the-fly feedback or types of formative assessment during instruction to ensure that they were tailoring their teaching to the students’ needs.

Conveying Expertise

While establishing rapport with students was a primary goal, the librarians also wanted the students to recognize them as consummate professionals. Their worries about students’ negative perceptions extended beyond boredom to doubting the value or usefulness of library instruction. The librarians also indicated that they wanted disciplinary faculty to take them seriously as educators, to see them as peers. Faculty perceptions can have an outsized effect on their students’ impression of librarians and the library. Consequently, the librarians have tried to strike a balance between exuding an informal, fun vibe (as described above) and one that was more formal and serious-minded. Once they have captured the students’ interest, letting a little “nerdiness” come through, as some put it, was useful. “I try to be very excited about things but still have that professionalism,” Librarian 1 explained.

The librarians conveyed their expertise primarily by carefully modeling research best practices and critical thinking during instruction sessions and by paying attention to their outward appearance and tone. Many of the librarians said that they begin instruction sessions by sharing their credentials, such as their MLIS degrees and their professional research interests. Some also have highlighted their subject backgrounds. Appearing confident, even if they did not really feel that way, was also key. Librarians 10 and 12 described working hard to seem confident in front of students when demonstrating how to effectively search for and evaluate information. The former has avoided phrasing statements

as questions, which is her natural tendency in certain social situations, so as to appear more sure-footed in the classroom. Librarian 6 said she is naturally quiet and was trying to learn to project her voice. Librarian 12 said that exuding confidence has assured the students that they could trust the librarian's authority on research-related matters.

Younger librarians worried that their youthful appearances undermined their authority in students' eyes (even while it makes them more approachable), so they have tried to highlight their advanced research skills during sessions. These librarians also said that they have dressed a bit more formally in certain situations, foregoing the casual attire they typically favor (as discussed above). "I want them to see me as someone who's got their stuff together," said Librarian 6. As noted above, they have not wanted to appear overly formal or "stuffy," as Librarian 7 put it, but they have tried to dress in ways that distinguish them from students (e.g., wearing slacks instead of jeans). Even more established librarians said they have dressed more formally when working with faculty members for the first time in order to appear more competent to their disciplinary counterparts. Others have always dressed at least semi-formally to signify that their time was valuable. Librarian 14 described her thought process this way: "I'm [going to] honor the students that took the time to come to the library, because we all know that that's an easy class to skip...[A]nd so if it takes the 30 seconds for me to put on slacks instead of jeans, I think that's an easy choice to make."

The librarians' professional identities also had a hand in their desire to be seen as authority figures in the classroom, on equal footing with other teaching faculty. Many saw themselves as teachers of one kind or another and believed the unique expertise they have brought to their institutions was valuable, describing these skills as a complement to the disciplinary knowledge other instructors at their colleges and universities possess. "I'm a teacher who just happens to know the library stuff," explained Librarian 4. And Librarian 18 noted that "some of the students actually appreciate that I have a unique background that allows me to teach things that the professor understands, but maybe that's not their area of expertise." Several were empowered by the Association of College and Research Libraries' (ACRL) *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* and any pedagogical training they may have had. They believed that deeper information literacy concepts and skills were important and incorporated them into instruction sessions, even if faculty wanted them to focus on just basic search mechanics. For Librarian 17, embracing the teacher identity has been key to the success of information literacy instruction: "[Y]ou have to put in the time with faculty for them to see you as a teacher too. And if you don't own that identity, then why would I want you in my classroom teaching my students?"

Adapting to Different Contexts

Perhaps owing to the type of the instruction they have provided, librarians viewed themselves as being highly adaptable and responsive to students' needs. Improvisation, in some form or another, was a component of many of the librarians' teaching philosophies. Many described enhancing or toning down aspects of their innate personalities as needed to accommodate different groups of students and instructional contexts. The librarians also described adapting to institutional norms and values as well as those unique to the disciplines they routinely work with. This was especially true of those who supported professional programs like business or health sciences. As Librarian 5 put it, "Every place has its own flavor." However, the "basics are still there" (Librarian 4).

Many of the librarians described having to rethink their approach to instruction when moving from one institution to another or when taking on new liaison responsibilities. For example, Librarian 8's first institution was very formal, constraining even, and this was reflected in the library's instruction program. Others described being at institutions that were more or less open to active learning. "I try to respect [the culture of this institution]," said Librarian 18. "[A]nd I'll just do little, tiny movements, baby steps more towards the active learning and engagement." Going against the prevailing culture was often difficult, especially if the culture in question reflected disciplinary norms, as this could impact faculty and student buy-in. "I dress more professional here than I used to," said Librarian 15, who worked with professional programs in the health sciences. Indeed, librarians supporting disciplines like business, engineering, and the health sciences described having to adopt more formal teaching personas than those liaising with programs in the liberal arts. Because of these differences, almost all of the librarians have built flexibility into their lesson plans, even after switching to colleges and universities where they had more autonomy or taking on new subject areas.

Authenticity

Although they were very adaptable, the librarians also valued authenticity. That is not to say that the librarians were "open books"—though a few referred to themselves as such. Instead, many described who they were in the classroom as grounded in, if not an exact replica of, who they were in other parts of their lives. "Everything that comes out in the classroom is definitely just a natural extension. It's usually, like, a heightened version of whatever, right? It's like it's a performance version, right? I'm giving the performance of being my, of being me," said Librarian 11. For example, introverts described being slightly more extroverted

when teaching, while extroverts have let their natural energy shine through—but would temper themselves when their exuberance threatened to undermine their goals. The librarians likewise revealed low-risk personal information or anecdotes during instruction such as their hobbies, or their favorite movies, video games, and sports teams. “I will talk about Marvel movies until the cows come home with them,” said Librarian 12, for example, and Librarian 8 said that “I have found the personal anecdotes, the students really just, they zoom in on that, like they pay close attention, because it's real.”

For most participants, the idea of being an entirely different person in the classroom, putting up a façade, was incredibly off-putting and uncomfortable. They felt that it would undermine their efforts to build rapport with students and to get students to trust in their expertise. Authenticity, in contrast, was humanizing and could help build trust. “[Y]ou can focus on teaching the content and not on pretending to be someone you're not,” explained Librarian 12. This was echoed by others including Librarian 3: “[I]f you're being yourself, then you can actually focus on the students and the content.” In fact, a few of the librarians described situations in which their colleagues took on inauthentic personas and how uncomfortable this made them. “I do have a former colleague who totally put on this teacher voice when she taught. And I was like, this is not what you sound like in real life. And she would only do it when she taught and it sounded bizarre,” said Librarian 3. And Librarian 12 shared the surprise she felt upon finding out a mentee of hers was using her jokes verbatim in instruction sessions. “No one can deliver my jokes the way I do,” she said, explaining that her colleague needed to find the approach that worked best for him in the classroom.

Professional Growth and Development

Virtually all of the participants described instances of professional growth that helped them to become more confident about their teaching. “I'd like to think that my level of comfort with public speaking has just, like, accelerated or expanded exponentially...I don't think I was a very good teacher when I first started...I think once I became a better teacher, I started enjoying it a lot more. And so that allowed me to be more confident and...I could be a little more casual and fun in the classroom,” said Librarian 3, for example. This librarian's confidence grew as a result of their teaching and the exposure to different public speaking scenarios it afforded them. Learning by doing, that is, having the opportunity to try new things in the classroom and reflect on what worked and what did not, seemed to be key to this growth. The sentiment was reflected in comments by Librarians 8 and 13, among others. “[M]y director let me start trying everything,” said Librarian 8 when describing how

his own professional transformation began. “[O]ver the years you learn what works, what doesn’t work and what you do well as an instructor,” explained Librarian 13.

While most of the librarians agreed that the library science programs they attended had not adequately prepared them for library instruction, they all described how various relationships and experiences helped them grow as teachers. Many cited trusted mentors or peers they could run ideas by or turn to for advice. Several others mentioned observing others teach, co-leading instruction sessions with fellow librarians, or adapting teaching materials they had inherited from colleagues early on in their careers. “I use a lot of the slides that the previous librarian had who had this position. But over time I’ve made it more my own, even some of the pictures that she used. And so now I’ll go back and I’ll use my own pictures to illustrate my own points,” said Librarian 5, for example. And Librarian 6 said that one thing that really helped her with her “teaching style was watching one of [the] senior librarians.” Additionally, the librarians noted the learning opportunities they had found most helpful in growing their skills, such as ACRL’s Immersion Program and graduate school teaching assistantships or internships. A few even had undergraduate backgrounds in education or had taken education courses at the graduate level, which they said helped them grow their confidence.

Discussion

Most of the librarians in this study appear to have built their personas gradually over the course of their careers—however long or short of a timeframe this amounts to—mostly through trial and error and as a result of constructive feedback and reflection. These personas are grounded in the librarians’ own personalities with enhancements or adjustments as needed. These tweaks to their innate dispositions serve primarily to build rapport with students and, to a lesser extent, non-librarian instructors. They also aim to promote the librarians’ unique (research) skills and showcase the librarians’ familiarity with institutional and/or disciplinary norms and values. While it is impossible to determine how effective the librarians’ personas are at achieving these goals based on this study’s findings alone, the attention given to their personas suggests a commitment to recognizing all the various factors that help establish an environment conducive to learning, not just the instructional content itself.

While the results of this study are not generalizable to instruction librarians as whole, they do highlight the importance of professional development and reflection, especially for any

librarians interested in teaching personas and related pedagogical strategies. Developing and reflecting on classroom personas could potentially help librarians recognize and change those aspects of instruction tied to the librarian's presence, style, and delivery, rather than the content itself. Since the participants' teaching personas involved a lot of experimentation, with several expressing appreciation for graduate assistantships and first jobs that either exposed them to a variety of instructional situations or gave them the freedom to experiment with different approaches, instruction librarians (like preservice teachers) might benefit from targeted training designed to help them create and "try on" different teaching personas. Some librarians even have advocated using theatrical performance techniques to improve instructional practices (Antonelli et al., 2000; Furay, 2014). As these strategies encourage librarians to consider how to "use their minds, bodies, and voices to communicate information to a group," they can help librarians hone the aspects of instruction teaching personas illuminate (Antonelli et al., 2000, p. 178). Professional development of this kind could take the form of either a multi-day workshop or retreat or a community of practice comprised of instruction librarians and disciplinary faculty both within and outside of an institution.

Reflection was also a feature of the study participants' persona development. In order to adjust their personas to either adapt to various instructional contexts or to better reflect the role they want to play in the classroom, the librarians first needed to pay attention to and critically reflect on these points. Ensuring a measure of authenticity, as many of them strove to do, likewise necessitated self-reflection. Those who participated in any pedagogical training, from actual degree programs and courses to self-guided reading, said that these experiences encouraged them to reflect on the impact they were (or weren't) having on students. Others described supportive mentors, peer observation, and regular reflection as conducive to their gaining confidence in the classroom. Librarians interested in crafting and using teaching personas therefore might consider making reflection a formal part of their practice. This could be something they engage in on their own or as part of a peer group. Critical reflection is also a practice that LIS programs might encourage their students develop (McNiff & Hays, 2017).

Conclusion

This study's academic librarians tended to develop unique teaching personas over time that they then deployed in the classroom. They wanted to be perceived by students (and faculty) as friendly experts in searching and information literacy. Even though they were able to

quickly adapt to meet the needs of the various groups with which they worked or the contexts in which they find themselves, these librarians based their personas on authentic aspects of their personalities. Developing these personas involved continual professional development and reflection. This suggests that teaching personas might have a place in library instruction by serving as a focus for professional development programs and reflective practice. However, more research needs to be done on teaching personas in the field of librarianship. Preferably, this would consist of empirical studies that examine whether professional development featuring personas actually improves library instruction or impacts librarians' identities or student perceptions of librarians in any way. Future studies could also compare how librarians actually use teaching personas in the classroom through peer observation.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

1. Tell me a little about your current position and institution. How does library instruction figure into your work? What kind of instruction do you provide?
2. How long have you been providing library instruction?
3. Can you describe a recent library instruction experience for me? What do you think went well and what do you think didn't?
4. How do you think the students [or audience] perceived you during this experience?
5. How would you describe your presentation style? Is it formal or informal? Scripted or improvised?
6. Has your style evolved over time? If so, how?
7. Do you consider any of the following when preparing for, or during, an instruction session?
 - a. Dress
 - b. Tone of voice
 - c. Body language
8. Which parts of your personality—or specific personality traits—find their way into the classroom?
9. How much personal information do you share with students inside and outside of the classroom? Can you provide some examples?
10. One final question: Do you consider yourself a teacher? Why or why not?