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Review of Leading Dynamic Information Literacy Programs: Best Practices and Stories from Instruction Coordinators, edited by Anne C. Behler

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Book Review

Leading Dynamic Information Literacy Programs: Best Practices and Stories from Instruction Coordinators

Edited by Anne C. Behler

Review by Amanda Dinscore

Leading Dynamic Information Literacy Programs: Best Practices and Stories from Instruction Coordinators is an edited volume, written by and for instruction coordinators, organized into five thematic sections with one to two chapters each. Themes include: Claiming our Space: Library Instruction in the Landscape of Higher Education; Moving and Growing Together; Curriculum Development; Meaningful Assessment; and Leading Change. Though the stated audience for this book is instruction coordinators, academic librarians in any position whose responsibilities include teaching will find chapters that inform and inspire.

The book opens with the editor's introduction which offers a historical perspective on how library instruction, and the role of the instruction coordinator, has developed over time. While the state of library instruction, and the coordinator role, is somewhat overgeneralized, the introduction provides the reader with a clear idea of the objective for the volume: to provide examples and guidance from library colleagues to help inform individuals in the role of instruction coordinator.

The first section begins with a chapter by Maybee which traces the development of the concept of information literacy over time. The historical perspective provided in this chapter would offer any librarian an increased appreciation for how information literacy has evolved and shaped the role of libraries in higher education. From its origins in bibliographic instruction to the ACRL Framework and current critical approaches, Maybee provides a historical and theoretical context for the subsequent chapters, defining and outlining concepts and trends that have influenced current attitudes toward library instruction and demonstrating how our approach to instruction should continue to evolve and embrace experimentation. In the second chapter, MacDonald also shares a historical perspective by describing how, over time and with administrative support and librarian advocacy, information literacy was integrated into one university's general education curriculum. MacDonald's approach was to locate the "anchors" within the institution where information literacy and campus initiatives intersected and utilize them to build a long-lasting information literacy effort that no longer relies solely on librarians (p. 27).

Waltz introduces the second part of the book with an insightful chapter on the lessons learned from transforming a library instruction program from the "junk drawer of the library" to a robust, people-centered program built on trust, clearly defined roles, and mutually identified program boundaries (p. 45). This chapter stands out amongst the

collection with its “people first” approach and sensitivity to the unique challenges of leadership. Gammons et al., authors of the second chapter in this section, also share their experience of reimagining an “aging and divisive” teaching program and how prioritizing relationship-building and engagement of library administration in the process were key components to its success (p. 64). This chapter also provides insight into how a library can move from being organizationally divided to developing strong communities of practice that focus on mutual support and commitment to the “shared enterprise” of high quality information literacy instruction (p. 73).

Curriculum development is the focus of the third section of the book in which chapters are dedicated to case studies at two very different universities. In the first chapter, Wightman discusses the ways in which changing modes of instruction in higher education provide opportunities for librarians to engage in the curriculum beyond the “one shot” instruction session. In this example, a cross-departmental collaboration at a small university helped librarians promote information literacy and textbook affordability alongside instructional design and course management system services, incorporating librarian consultation into the course redesign process. In the second chapter of this section, Cook describes a scaffolded, multi-modal approach to creating information literacy “pathways” in the sciences that addressed strains on librarian workload and provided students with information literacy skills at their point of need (p. 111). The author also identifies the ongoing need for library instruction programs to hire individuals with expertise in instructional design and focus their efforts on a mixed-modality approach to instruction.

Part four focuses on the development of meaningful assessment as an essential component of effective information literacy programs. In the sole chapter in this section, authors Kirker and Blinstrub detail the development of a student learning assessment plan for a large university library system, beginning with the regular use of a one-minute paper to help librarians assess and reflect on their instruction sessions. Specific student learning outcomes were later identified and addressed in an attempt to provide more evidence about actual student learning and improve instructional practices. A detailed description of the Student Learning Assessment Plan is included, as well as how it was implemented and how challenges with librarian buy-in were addressed.

The fifth and final part is entitled “Leading Change” and includes perspectives from both a small community college system and a large research institution. In their chapter, Brown and Souza-Mort describe the challenges in meeting the information literacy needs of a wide variety of students in a community college setting, particularly after assessment results revealed the inadequacy of the “one-shot” in helping students master information literacy skills. After a program change that emphasized partnering with faculty to integrate information literacy throughout the semester, librarians also experimented with engaging the campus community on current events topics and social issues to address important information literacy topics and integrate it more fully into the

campus culture. In the culminating chapter, Behler described a library initiative that involved taking a semester-long break from teaching classes in order to make space for more “intentional, relevant, and meaningful” information literacy instruction (p. 150). This “Library Instruction Reboot” took place during the spring semester in an effort to engage stakeholders and make a statement about the importance of proactively designing “strategic and meaningful” learning opportunities that helped the library build a stronger instruction program and prepared them for the shift to exclusively online services during the pandemic (p. 153).

In the introduction, Behler points out that “space and time” are themes found throughout the book’s chapters and that the transformative work of instruction program development is “incremental and cumulative” (p. 4). Additional themes include the importance of support from library administration in program development, aligning program goals with those of the larger institution, and the ways in which information literacy can be integrated throughout the higher education curriculum and community in partnership with university programs and committees. Further, several chapters mention librarian workload and the need for rethinking information literacy delivery models to promote sustainability and more effective opportunities for learning at the students’ point of need. Though aimed at instruction coordinators, this volume includes insightful reflections and examples that can inspire any academic librarian whose responsibilities include instruction, offering ideas that can be adopted in a wide variety of institutions and contexts.