Conference Corner

The ultimate information literacy setlist: showcase your greatest hits

41st Annual LOEX Conference: Nashville Tennessee, 2–4 May 2013

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This year's LOEX took place in Nashville, the 'Music City'. With the conference title The Ultimate Information Literacy Setlist: Showcase your Greatest Hits, themes included such delights as 'Chart-toppers' (assessment and evaluation); 'All Together Now' (collaborative endeavours); 'Songwriter's Alley' (instructional design); 'Mix It Up!' (technology and innovation) and so on. If you browse the presentation slides at http://www.loexconference.org/sessions.html, you'll see the conference theme reflected in many of the presentation titles, with examples such as 'Beyond the one-hit wonder', 'Librarians as synthesizers', 'Achy breaky classroom' – I could go on! There was even a session where the participants were doing karaoke to practise their presentation skills – or so I understand from the tweets of those in the room, and in the room next door...

LOEX is a US information literacy (IL) conference similar in many ways to our very own LILAC, but targeted at university-level instruction librarians only. The LOEX organisers deliberately limit the number of delegates to foster an environment where librarians can share and learn. Places therefore get snapped up very quickly. This year there were 350 delegates 'from 44 states, Canada and one from Wales'.

Live music at Puckett's Grocery and Restaurant during the conference dine-around

The conference sessions took place on the Friday and Saturday, but the Thursday saw afternoon trips followed by a networking event in the early evening. I knew not a soul, although had a few names to look out for as peer reviewers or authors for this journal. I needn't have been concerned, as everyone was very friendly and welcoming, and as the one overseas delegate I felt already introduced!

Friday and Saturday each started with a keynote address, and over the two days there were nine parallel session slots, a plenary with five lightening talks of seven minutes each, and a poster session. All the sessions were practical and applicable, with specific messages to 'take away'. If you've been to LILAC and pondered over which of several interesting but concurrent sessions to attend, you can imagine the conundrum of having seven parallel sessions to choose from each time.

A highlight of the conference was the opening keynote, given by Barbara Fister from Gustavus Adophus College, who challenged us to take the long view beyond supporting students to pass their next assignment towards helping them become critical thinkers in life beyond college. The Citation Project (http://site.citationproject.net) found that students were able to find the materials they required for assignments; however, many only read until they found a 'grabbable quote' that they could insert into their assignment. How should

universities, and librarians within them, help students progress from 'patch writing' to reading, analysing and synthesising research? Barbara made a series of provocative statements to challenge librarians to move away from the focus on finding information, emphasising scholarly sources and stressing citing and referencing, to instead helping students conceive research as 'other conversations' in which they can engage. She urged us to spend as much time with academic staff as we do with students and to offer them the spaces in which they can talk and learn from each other. In partnership, we can help students across the programme and university to read critically, identify claims, sort ideas, become more expressive and participate in unfinished conversations. The slides and notes for this excellent keynote can be found at http://homepages.gac.edu/~fister/loex13.pdf.

The parallel sessions covered a range of practical issues in IL teaching. Here are some of my personal favourites, but take a look at the conference website for other great sessions. Staff at Texas A&M University presented 'Video saved the orientation stars: Our 60 day journey from groupies to video production and social media assessment rock stars' (see what I mean about the titles!). They described the planning of the induction video based on *The Hunger Games* and gave some practical tips on things to consider when creating a library induction video. Their video and the slides are available online at http://librarylea.com/loex2013.

Michele Van Hoeck from California State University presented 'Wikipedia as an authentic learning space'. Linking with the Wikipedia Education Program, she is helping her students move beyond just reading Wikipedia to authoring for it, and is assessing their IL skills through a 1,000-word contribution to Wikipedia.

There were two sessions and a poster on the flipped classroom, highlighting continued exploration of this technique. I attended 'Double Live Gonzo! Double your impact with a flipped classroom' from staff at University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, who found the technique helpful in engaging the students in class with what really matters, beyond the mechanics of finding information.

The lightening talks were just as rewarding, with bite-sized ideas for games in the classroom (from bingo to using the game Taboo to start a discussion on choosing keywords) and a quick tool for creating hot spots in images to information or websites, called Thinglink (http://thinglink.com).

And the sessions I missed? The top-of-my-list talked-about session that I didn't get to was

Matt Upton and Alex Mudd's session on student-generated comics as information narratives. I'm looking forward to having a play with the ComicLife app that these comic books were created in, to generate visual IL messages.

A flavour of Nashville – Cathie in front of the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum

For a number of years, my colleague Nigel Morgan had been encouraging me to attend a US conference having himself twice attended LOEX of the West, but it was the enthusiasm and interest of visitors from the US and Canada in the Welsh IL Project that finally prompted me to apply to attend LOEX. Proposing a presentation is a competitive process, with only 60 papers selected from over 150 submissions this year. From previous conferences I could see that presenters took

the theme to heart, so my abstract included many a (corny) reference to the music theme, and I prefixed my title with 'Singing from the same hymnbook'. I was so pleased to be able to share the process, outputs and unexpected benefits of the Welsh IL Project with my audience and could see its relevance in the USA. All US states have jurisdiction over education, but most have recently signed up to US-wide *Common Core* standards that include IL (if not in that name). As states and schools review their curriculum, this is a timely opportunity for cross-sectoral working groups of librarians to formulate coherent frameworks of IL progression.

Attending the LOEX conference was a superb experience and I very much want to thank the John Campbell Trust for sponsoring my trip. As Nigel encouraged me, let me encourage you – do keep an eye out for information about the 2014 LOEX conference (in Grand Rapids, Michigan) as well as the 2014 LOEX of the West (Portland, Oregon). I can very much recommend them!