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Conference report

LOEX 2022: A focus on assessment

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LOEX 2022: We Can Do It! Retooling Library Instruction for Today's Learning Environments was held May 5-7, 2022. This was my fifth time attending this very popular conference, and the first time the conference occurred in person since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since this was the 50th LOEX annual conference, it was fitting that this meeting was in the organization's hometown of Ypsilanti, Michigan. Attendee excitement and session attendance was high despite a mask requirement and other COVID-19 protocols. Additionally, Ypsilanti – or Ypsi, as it is often called – provided a great variety of culinary establishments and was a short drive to Ann Arbor to the West or Detroit to the East.

LOEX 2022 was structured similarly to past conferences: a pre-conference workshop followed by an opening reception on Thursday, as well as the plenary speaker, breakout sessions, graduate student poster presentations, and roundtable discussions throughout Friday. Finally, the conference ended Saturday with more breakout sessions, roundtable discussions, and lunchtime lightning talks. Like every previous year I have attended, attendance is limited with registration spots filling quickly, and meals, snacks, and coffee/tea breaks provided throughout the duration of the conference.

With each unique conference theme comes associated categories for the breakout sessions. This year's categories were *Pedagogy: Instructional Nuts & Bolts*; *Assessment: Building in Quality Control*; *Innovation: R&D in Information Literacy Instruction*; *Leadership: Stepping Up to the Line*; *Failures and Problem-Solving: Overhauling and Reinventing*; and *Collaboration and Outreach: Assembling Diverse Production Teams*. There were a staggering 59 breakout sessions offered over the course of two days, but to prevent myself from getting too overwhelmed I decided to focus on a single category: assessment.

The assessment session that I found most helpful was *What Does ART Say? Creating an Annual Report of Teaching* by Jane Hammons and Stephanie Founds, both from Ohio State University. Their presentation focused on their recent journey to create an Annual Report on Teaching (ART) from the instruction statistics gathered annually at their libraries. As an instruction coordinator, I often create reports based on my library's instructional efforts and statistics. However, I had never considered creating a full report on teaching that would go past specific reporting agencies to become an assessment tool. Hammons and Founds discussed how their ART creation allowed them to see the bigger picture, not only within the libraries but also of the impact outside the libraries.

Their presentation mirrored many of my other favorite LOEX presentations from years past. They presented the context, challenges, and benefits of their project in a simple, straightforward manner. The reflections and recommendations they provided ignited discussion across the room, spilling into questions and answers from the presenters and other attendees. It was this organic commentary that sparked my critical thinking the most. One audience member asked how to combat librarians' resistance to submit instruction statistics, while another broached the subject of buy in from the top of their organization. The answers focused on how helpful an Annual Report of Teaching could be by providing evidence – not only of instruction and

outcomes accomplished, but also gaps in coverage and the need for strategic planning. All of this made me realize that despite the unique teaching and reporting tactics at different libraries, we all face the same challenges.

While Hammons and Founds prompted me to rethink how I use instruction statistics, another breakout session had me considering how I utilize my own educational background to improve library instruction assessment. Renee Kiner and Kelly Safin presented *Continuous Improvement and Respect for People: Lessons Learned & Implemented from Studying the Toyota Production System's (TPS) Principles*. The Toyota Production System has successfully influenced production and industry for decades; it was something I studied in detail during my Human Resource Development degree. Kiner and Safin made me realize that I had not been using what I learned to boost library instruction and subsequent assessment. They introduced J. K. Liker's (2004) *14 principles for continuous improvement* in a way that made lean manufacturing approachable to everyone in the room and left me with many ideas on how to implement these principles at my library.

For library instruction assessment at the macro level, two other breakout sessions grabbed my attention and opened my eyes to diverse approaches that I had not yet considered. Karleigh Riesen's *Improving Instruction & Research Support for Graduate Students: A Mixed Methods Needs Assessment* was a great snapshot of a structured, mixed methods approach to assess library instruction effectiveness among graduate students and faculty. They not only provided a step-by-step road map for anyone interested in performing a similar study, but also a picture of what graduate students want from the library. Picking up the baton from this breakout session was Lisa Janicke Hinchliffe's *Privacy and Learning Analytics: Considerations in Assessment*. While Riesen focused on the gathering of data from and about students (and faculty), Hinchliffe instead focused on the ethical use, assessment, and storage of this kind of data for the purpose of learning analytics. While I felt overwhelmingly ignorant of this topic, I appreciated that Hinchliffe challenged audience members to not only think about the sticky points of ethical data principles, but also engage with their content to create our own individual philosophy statements and talking points to use upon return to our own institutions. Additionally, they used their breakout session to market the project from which it derived: Prioritizing Privacy, a continuing education program funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (Hinchliffe & Jones, 2022).

As an instruction coordinator, I am constantly trying to find ways to assess our library instruction efforts while increasing reach but not overworking the librarians. Kevin Moore and Clinton K. Baugess presented a way to do just that in their session *Drafting an Assessment Plan for Your Instruction Program: Sustainably Assessing Information Literacy in an Undergraduate STEM Course*. Their efforts focused on assessing a specific course that already has high library and information literacy involvement, but their methods can just as easily translate to my library or doubtless any other. This was my first breakout session at the conference, and I was quickly reminded why I love LOEX so much: the presenters provided ample information, context, and accessible support materials all while answering questions from every corner of the room. I am already making plans to revisit their slides and materials for my next annual assessment round. To round up my LOEX assessment experience, two sessions left me considering my IL efforts at the micro level. Ielleen Miller described how authentic assessment is far more useful than standard assessment as it focuses on assignments that require students to apply what they have learned, rather than their levels of satisfaction or attendance. Their session, *Authentic Information Literacy Assessment Without Burning Out*, reframed my way of thinking about instruction assessment to a more contained, sustainable endeavor that I can easily share with

colleagues. Jess O'Toole also inspired me to evaluate the way my library approaches conversations around research with our students. During their presentation, *Rethinking Research Consultations: Adding Critical Reflection and Increasing Metacognitive Awareness*, O'Toole described how simply adding questions for critical reflection to the existing post-consultation survey, students began exhibiting an awareness of their research knowledge and processes. Both Miller and O'Toole's presentations left me reflecting on the many reasons I have grown to love and look forward to the LOEX annual conference. Attendees walk away with challenging new ideas, assignments that are easy to adapt and implement, and inspiration for program or department level changes. My experience focusing on assessment at LOEX 2022 was no different.

References

Hinchliffe, L. J. & Jones, K. M. L. (2022). *Prioritizing privacy: Data ethics training for library professionals*. [Prioritizing Privacy](#).

Liker, J. K. (2004). *The Toyota way: 14 management principles from the world's greatest manufacturer*. McGraw-Hill.