

Journal of Information Literacy

ISSN 1750-5968

Volume 12 Issue 1

June 2018

Conference update

Inge Carpenter, L. 2018. LOEX 2018: New frontiers: exploring and innovating in uncharted territory. *Journal of Information Literacy*, 12(1), pp.147–149.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.11645/12.1.2480>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

Copyright for the article content resides with the authors, and copyright for the publication layout resides with the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, Information Literacy Group. These Copyright holders have agreed that this article should be available on Open Access and licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution ShareAlike licence.

"By 'open access' to this literature, we mean its free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited."

Chan, L. et al. 2002. Budapest Open Access Initiative. New York: Open Society Institute. Available at: <http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read.shtml> [Accessed: 18 November 2015]

LOEX 2018: New frontiers: exploring and innovating in uncharted territory

Lindsay Inge Carpenter, Pedagogy Librarian, University of Maryland.
Email: linge@umd.edu. Twitter: [@Linds Librarian](https://twitter.com/Linds_Librarian)

LOEX was the first library conference I ever attended, and each time I attend I'm reminded of why it has remained a favourite. The conference's small size, its emphasis on information literacy (IL) instruction, the value you receive for the registration fee (breakfast, lunch, and snacks are provided every day!) and the high quality of presentations keep me coming back year after year. This year's annual conference was held in Houston, Texas. With NASA's Johnson Space Centre only a few miles away, this year's theme was, naturally, 'New frontiers: exploring and innovating in uncharted territory'. The festivities began on Thursday 3rd May with pre-conference workshops and an opening reception, and continued through Saturday 5th May.

It's always a struggle to decide which sessions to attend at LOEX; each breakout session features seven simultaneous presentations. As I sat in my hotel room on Thursday night and scanned the schedule, I noticed several new themes this year. I was surprised to see several sessions on 'gamification', suggesting that we might see a resurgence in popularity of this topic. Less surprising was the number of sessions addressing 'fake news', which continues to be a hot topic in the wake of the 2016 US presidential election and subsequent administration. Refreshingly, the presenters on these topics confronted the myth that 'fake news' is a recent phenomenon, addressing the fact that librarians and other professions have long investigated the social, psychological, and structural factors impacting the spread of false information.

All of the presentations I saw were excellent, but there were a few that were especially impressive and left me with much to think about on my flight home. The first was 'The negotiated classroom: conversations about power and pedagogy' presented by Veronica Arellano Douglas (St. Mary's College of Maryland), Siân Evans (Maryland Institute College of Art) and Joanna Gadsby (University of Maryland, Baltimore County). I have long admired their work, especially Arellano Douglas and Gadsby's ACRL 2017 paper, '[Gendered labor and library instruction coordinators: the undervaluing of feminized work](#)' and Evans's work as co-founder of [Art + Feminism](#).

Their latest project seeks to investigate the power dynamics at work in the library classroom, asking the question, 'are we working from a place of empowerment or disempowerment?' The research examines librarians' views on agency and power in the classroom and has identified the following themes: the integral role of relationship building with academic staff; the lack of a common definition within our profession of 'collaboration' or 'library instruction'; structural issues (including time, resources, and status in relation to academic staff); and the impact of intersectional identities on respondents' experiences in the classroom. The presenters shared that their research so far has left them with more questions than answers, highlighting in particular the conflicting responses regarding what collaboration and authority in the classroom actually looks like. Arellano Douglas, Evans, and Gadsby concluded by saying that our ability to teach is impacted by personal identities, interpersonal relationships, and larger structural issues, and they called on attendees to reflect upon how these factors impacted their own teaching. I left reflecting on their closing words: '*The first step in empowerment is recognising and addressing our disempowerment*'. I am very much looking forward to reading the results of their study, and encourage anyone interested in library instruction to keep an eye out for it as well.

I am just dipping my toe into the world of educational technology and open educational resources (OER), so I was excited to see several presentations on those topics. I learned so much from Karna Younger and Carmen Orth-Alfie's 'Camp infomania: educating future journalists in the open'. Younger and Orth-Alfie (both from the University of Kansas) shared their experiences developing an open textbook for undergraduate journalism majors, a project that included collaboration with Peter Bobkowski, a journalism academic staff member, and Callie Branstiter, the Undergraduate Engagement Librarian at the University of Kansas. Younger and Orth-Alfie noted that the three big keys to the project's success were: academic staff partners; librarian partners with expertise in the subject area as well as in OER and pedagogy; and finally an institutional culture that supports the library and OER. As someone who is just beginning to work on OER projects, I appreciated that Younger and Orth-Alfie shared lessons learned from their work so far, starting with being realistic about how long a project like this takes. They recommended hiring a project manager (in their case, a graduate student) to develop a communication plan and set reasonable expectations and timelines, which helped keep their project on track. They also suggested leaning on colleagues' strengths, building on existing OERs, anticipating breaks throughout the process, and recognising that this is just one project of many that all team members are juggling. My favourite part of this project? Younger and Orth-Alfie secured funding to pay everyone involved, including undergraduate student reviewers and contributors, the graduate student project manager, academic staff reviewers and contributors, and a professional proofreader. I left the session with a much more realistic picture of how OER works in a library setting, and feeling excited to dive into OER at my own institution.

I also really enjoyed Alison Valk and Liz Holdsworth's presentation, 'Making a connection to the mothership: launching a multimedia instruction program with maximum funk' (which, for the record, was accompanied by an excellent George Clinton-inspired soundtrack). Planning an instruction program can be intimidating or tedious, but Valk and Holdsworth (both of Georgia Tech) presented attendees with concrete strategies for building a successful program. They shared strategies for determining whether to offer a specific workshop ('The 5 whys': Why are you doing this?; Why is this important to you?; Why is this important to your users?; Why should this come from the library?; Why now?), as well as a stakeholders worksheet to identify potential partners for collaboration. They also facilitated a crowd-sourced list of software and hardware at various price points (the best tip: if your library comes into money, it's better to invest it in new hardware than in pricey software that will quickly become outdated). The presentation was an example of all that is great about LOEX: knowledgeable and engaging presenters, interactive activities, concrete strategies to take home, and generous sharing of materials and expertise. This last bit can't be understated – as instruction librarians, we know how much work and mental energy goes into creating these materials, and I am so appreciative of our colleagues who are willing to share the fruits of that labour with us!

Another of my favourite things about LOEX is that it reserves its poster sessions for graduate students and resident librarians. MLIS graduate students hold a special place in my heart – I work closely with them in my role as Assistant Director of the University of Maryland Libraries Research and Teaching Fellowship, and I love meeting students from other programs. I'm always amazed at the work that these emerging professionals are doing, and I love seeing them shine as presenters during these sessions. This year's poster presenters did not disappoint; I encourage everyone to check out the online copies of their posters on LOEX's website for new ideas on everything from pedagogical theory to technology. I was so impressed with all of their work, and I'm excited to see what they do next!

You will have noticed that I have not yet mentioned the plenary session. That is because Friday morning's opening keynote, while on a very important topic (race and gender bias), was not terribly well received. There was frustration among attendees (voiced in person and on Twitter) that many conference keynotes are given by non-librarians who do not seem to have a strong understanding of the work that we do, and instead rely on tired stereotypes about librarians to

engage the audience (has anyone *not* been to a conference where a non-librarian jokingly shushed you?).

As one attendee voiced on Twitter (to much agreement), the real keynote happened on Saturday, with Eamon Tewell's presentation, 'The problem with grit: dismantling deficit models in information literacy instruction'. Tewell challenged deficit models in education (which attribute students' success or failure to individual effort, rather than to structural factors), and instead proposed viewing IL through the lens of models such as critical IL and culturally sustaining pedagogy. These models seek to dismantle the status quo in higher education by asking students to engage with questions of academic authority (including the economics of scholarly communication, and considerations of whose perspectives are missing from scholarly papers) and by acknowledging that students bring previous knowledge and experiences to these conversations (and are not just empty vessels for us to fill with knowledge). Tewell concluded by urging instruction librarians to '*Teach at the level we want students to learn, while recognising differences in familiarity with academic cultures and expectations*'. Tewell's student-centered and critical approach resonated with many in attendance and online, and offered an excellent concrete example of how librarians can address systemic bias in the library classroom. I hope to see something like this as the opening plenary session at next year's LOEX, and look forward to more excellent presentations from our colleagues.