When to plant heirlooms and when to plant hybrids:
Unearthing instruction librarians’ motivations for adopting new practices

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Think/pair/share:

Describe the last time you tried something new in your IL instruction or program. Why did you try it? How did it go?
I had some questions....

- What influences librarians to try new things in information literacy instruction?
- Why do some of us tend to try out every innovation that comes along, while some of us prefer sticking to familiar methods?
- How might these attitudes influence adoption of the Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education?
Participants & method
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<th>Years worked as a professional librarian</th>
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<td>People at institution with responsibilities in information literacy instruction</td>
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<td>16–30</td>
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<td>31 or more</td>
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How would you rate your familiarity with current trends, developments, and publications in information literacy instruction?
How would you rate your interest in incorporating new methods and/or theories into your information literacy instruction practices?
In general, which statement best describes how you feel about participating in information literacy instruction?

- I rarely enjoy it
- I do not enjoy it most of the time
- I enjoy it most of the time
- I almost always enjoy it

Diagram showing:
- 0 people rarely enjoy it
- 1 person does not enjoy it most of the time
- 6 people enjoy it most of the time
- 5 people almost always enjoy it
Method

12 in-depth interviews conducted through Adobe Connect

Interviews transcribed*

Transcripts thematically coded using nVivo

*Transcription was funded through a SCELC Research Incentive Grant.
Preliminary findings
Three main categories of themes arose....

Practices  Influences  Barriers
Question 1: Define information literacy instruction in your own words.
Question 2: Describe the kinds of information literacy instruction you do as part of your work.
New practices adopted (examples)

- Group work
- **BEAM method**
- Implementing programmatic qualitative assessment
- Transforming existing learning experiences (scavenger hunt, lecture) into active learning activities (**gallery walks**, creating comics)
- Stricter classroom control of electronics use
New practices never adopted (examples)

- Classroom technology (clickers)
- Incorporating social media
- Incorporating the Framework into one-shot sessions
- Assessment
- Recording sessions to learn from them

I don't feel comfortable yet [with group work] because I don't know if my experience is enough yet to keep control of the classroom…and make it meaningful.
New practices adopted and abandoned

Most had to do with assessment

- Digital badges
- Minute papers
- Pre- and post-tests
- Assessing learning through tutorial statistics
I'm convinced we can always do better. I'm not convinced that any practice is best yet.
Influences

Where participants learned about practices, activities, or theories new to them:

- Journals and scholarly literature (LIS), 19
- Conferences/presentations, 9
- Journals and scholarly literature (education), 7
- Colleagues/observation, 7
- Blogs (information literacy), 6
- Listservs (LIS), 4
- Twitter, 4
- Other literature (e.g., mindfulness), 3
- Associations and interest groups (e.g., ACRL or local groups), 3
- Examples (e.g., lesson plans, tutorials) from other libraries/institutions, 3
Frequently cited reasons for adopting new practices

- To benefit students
- Evidence of student learning
- Burnout (of both librarians and students)

We do so much that’s repetitious, and we do so much that’s written about...that it’s really exciting to figure or to stumble upon something that we haven’t tried before or thought of,…

Students “find it exciting to do new things”

Causes less “friction” with students to use newer technology
I feel that there’s an attitude out there that...information literacy is so boring....Let’s use glitter, let’s use the acting techniques or whatever, and that really bothers me because I think information literacy is super important, it’s part of lifelong learning, it’s everywhere, and so it’s up to us to integrate that into students’ processes and sort of make it fit with...their goals and their needs.
Barriers

Organizational structure and culture

ILI teams understaffed

Teaching improvements (especially small ones) not valued in review/tenure processes

Coordinators burdened with being the “expert” on all new practices

I’ve really stagnated because it's not a priority for my tenure. My first priority has to be my research and publishing and I will do enough with my teaching but…that cannot jeopardize my research. I have negative incentive.
Barriers

Student perceptions

I feel when I take examples on the fly, sometimes they work well, sometimes they don’t… I think [it’s] an important lesson, but it’s not necessarily the first lesson I want to teach them. I don’t want them to see me thinking, ‘Oh, goodness, even she can’t do it. How am I expected to do it?’

- Want to be trusted as an authority
- Demonstrated bias against young, female-presenting instructors
Barriers

Time constraints

Cycle of the academic year

Limited time to prepare for teaching

Limited time for reflection
Think/pair/share:

What influences and/or barriers to adopting new ILI practices do you notice at your institution?
Emotion and reflection
teaching load

emotionally taxing
draining
tiring
mentally and physically exhausting

new practices

passion
fun
exciting
intimidating
worried
hesitant
I do depend a lot on the class to provide fuel, I guess, and motivation for having -- for confidence, I guess, is really what it is. I do lose confidence when a class does not react the way I expect or hope.
How do you reflect on your information literacy instruction?

All participants stressed the importance of reflection on ILI, but most noted the difficulty of finding time to reflect.
Implications and suggestions

- Create space for expressing and sharing emotional aspects of ILI
  - Librarian Burnout (Accardi)
  - Resilience, grit, and other lies (Galvan, Berg, & Tewell)

- Supervisors, coordinators, administrators, associations: foster more, and more varied, communities of practice

- Participants’ varied, thoughtful, and nuanced approaches to improving as teachers did not match expectations about assessment and value
  - make space for more creative, long-term, and qualitative forms of assessment
  - “Assessment cannot be ignored; it is up to us to work at making it as ethical a practice as possible, to acknowledge when it is not, and to navigate the continuum in between.” (Gardner & Halpern)
Acknowledgements

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- IRDL photo from @irdlonline
References


Thank you

Any questions?

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