



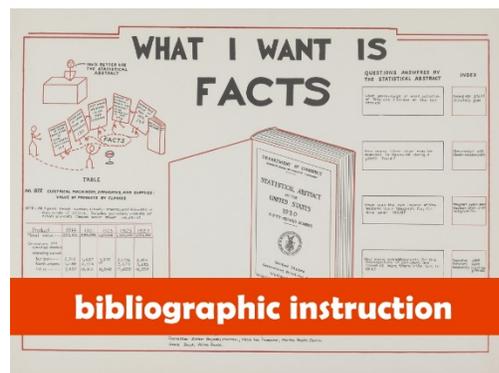
Thank you so much for inviting me to be part of this conference. The sharing that DEFF enables – of ideas, of resources, of problems and solutions – is wonderful, and it’s at the heart of what libraries do. We make sharing possible because knowledge is a collective project. We create the infrastructure for sharing so that we can enable the conversations that give rise to knowledge. Those conversations happen among scholars and experts and between teachers and their students. The library as a social institution, as an idea of a shared intellectual space, ensures that those conversations can thrive at our institutions.

By space I mean physical, digital, and conceptual space. Libraries are places. They are people. They are the idea of knowledge gathered, shared, created, and preserved. We remind our communities that community matters, that we’re not in this alone, that knowledge is made by people working collectively. Information literacy is a way of introducing students to those collective conversations, inviting them to join in, helping them gain confidence in their own voices so they can start conversations of their own. What we do is important work, but it’s work we do collectively – with other librarians, with students, and with the academics who teach them. That last bit, the relationship between teachers and their students, is the connection I want to talk about today.

When students become information literate, when they understand how information works and what role they themselves play in making knowledge, it’s not through being taught, it’s through guided experience. They have interacted with information, they have made things with it, they have begun to see beyond the mechanics of retrieving sources to see the people and the social organizations behind those sources. Most of that experience is designed and guided not by librarians but by their teachers. This leads me to the claim that if we care about information literacy, we should be spending as much or more time talking to teachers as we do with students. What I want to do this afternoon is talk about why I feel this way and how it might work in practice.

I want to begin with the big picture – where have we been with information literacy, where are we today, and why do I think faculty development is so important? My observations are based on my personal experience and on shifts in emphasis that I’ve seen in the United States over the past thirty years. I’m not certain how well this will match the experience of information literacy instruction here in Denmark because our educational systems are very different, but I hope you’ll see some useful parallels. (I should also apologize up front for using words in a peculiarly American way. When we say “college” we mean undergraduate higher education in general. When we say “faculty” we mean teachers in high schools and higher education. Forgive me as I use these terms in ways that are different to how they are typically used in Europe.)

I've been involved in this thing we now call information literacy for three decades, and I've seen some interesting shifts in the way we talk about the kind of learning that libraries and librarians enable. When

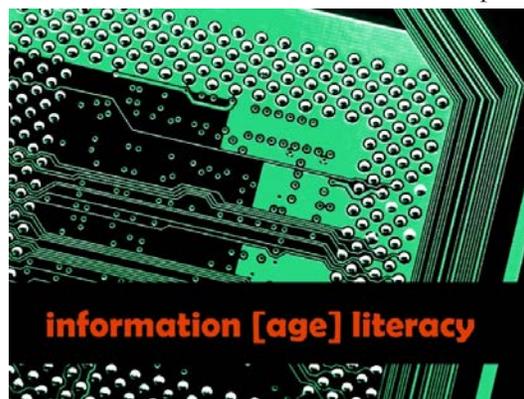


I first started working at a four-year baccalaureate institution, librarians were using the term “bibliographic instruction.” This was a world of print, a time when students had to come to a particular building to gain access to information. We collaborated with their teachers because the context of the learning was important, but we librarians considered ourselves experts at finding and evaluating information using bibliographic tools and a sense of how to search strategically. The main focus was on bringing students into the library to master the tools of research.

Then the millennium came, and with it a new phrase: information literacy. Information was no longer in print or in the library; it was everywhere, with the library as a gateway to a complex hybrid world where we owned some things, licensed access to other things, and warned students about the dangers of free things online over which we had no control. With new technologies came new anxieties. Was the library still relevant? Would students survive information overload? What the heck should we do about Wikipedia? Libraries promoted their value to teachers and their students at a time when judging the validity of information seemed harder and information had become abundant.

The library's identity was changing, and so did the rationale for our instructional work with students. The emphasis shifted from libraries and tools to students and their testable acquisition of skills. Our job was to give our students a universal skill set, as you can see from the old definition of information literacy used in our Standards, adopted in 2000: “Information literacy is a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information.” The focus here is no longer on libraries and tools, but on students and their skill development.

At the same time, libraries grew more committed to what we call “student success” – helping students being good at being students. In the U.S. our high schools began to focus on testing of basic skills, with less funding and time for libraries, so students arrived at university with little preparation for research. Public funding of higher education also fell dramatically and students and their families became responsible for the cost of their education. When it became an expensive personal investment, people began to think of education as a consumer transaction. Academic libraries felt they were competing with Amazon and Google for convenience and almost unlimited consumer choice. The library website became an exclusive members-only information shopping platform. Of course, what our students really want is less consumer choice. They want the perfect source as quickly as possible, the kind of algorithmic instant wisdom they've come to expect from using Google.



In this neoliberal university, American libraries began to focus more on survival skills: Here's how to use this library's website. Here's how to find the five scholarly articles you need for this assignment to pass this course. Here's how to recognize authoritative research: it will have the appearance of a peer-reviewed article. What you learn may not have any use to you at all after you graduate, but we will teach you things that will keep you from dropping out and losing your investment. So in my country, libraries have tended to

concentrate on courses students take in their first year, before they have developed much of a knowledge base.

I feel we don't think enough about what students will take with them when they graduate. A [recent study](#) from [Project Information Literacy](#) found a large majority of American graduates felt their higher education program helped them find and analyze sources critically, but didn't prepare them to ask questions of their own – which seems a fundamental part of being information literate, not to mention a fundamental purpose of higher education.

Back at the turn of the millennium I thought shifting from library-based bibliographic instruction to a broader definition of information literacy meant we would collaborate more with teachers. But that didn't happen. In the United States academic libraries grew more aligned with administrative units that kept students from failure: writing centers, academic skills centers, first year programs, tutoring programs. The more we focused on “value” – the financial return on investment that students made in their degrees as well as the return on investment that institutions made in their libraries – the less we librarians were able to live up to our *values*. Values that say sharing is good for all of us. That critical thinking means understanding and sometimes opposing oppressive systems. That social justice and democracy and diversity matter. That using a library isn't a matter of individuals being taught how to withdraw knowledge from the bank where it's controlled by the powerful – [Paulo Freire's idea](#) of the “banking concept of education.” Instead education should be the practice of freedom, and our job isn't to run a bank, but to help students understand and embrace that freedom to inquire and to invent.



This is why I am happy to sense a change in the air with our new [Framework for Information Literacy](#). It's time for a change. We are helping students learn about information in an era when information isn't just everywhere, but the conversations we have with one another as we create knowledge are also happening everywhere. Having access to those conversations is no longer mediated exclusively by institutions and publishers and libraries. As we work toward open access to knowledge, we're having to rethink the relationship of our local settings to the collective project that libraries are engaged in. We're thinking of ways to realign our collective resources to create a more open world where access to knowledge isn't tied to geolocation and privilege. From the emergence of a hybrid print and electronic library that drove our idea of information literacy in 2000, we're entering a new era in which information will be distributed and open. Librarians are shifting their work from providing access to the record of knowledge to helping students and their teachers create new knowledge, and to do that students will have to learn more than how to search databases and recognize high-quality published literature. They will have to know more about the social, economic, and cultural processes within which those publications are created. As the role of libraries becomes more collective, so too does our idea of knowledge as a collective enterprise, and that the capacity to find information is only one small aspect of information literacy.

As [Christine Pawley said](#) more than a decade ago, we need to help student understand the context and content of information so that they can see how information “works.” We need to be “explicit about the moral and political commitment to flattening rather than reinforcing current information and literacy hierarchies.” The way that information works may not always be ideal, may not always be just. Maybe there's a better way. And we need to “recognize that information ‘access’ is not just about information

classrooms. Librarians tend to work collectively. Faculty tend to think of their discipline as being the thing they belong to; librarians tend to think of our responsibility to our home institution. Finally, faculty have great depth of knowledge, whereas we pride ourselves on being generalists with broad knowledge.

In some ways we have different cultures.

Convincing faculty that we librarians have interests that are consistent with what they hope their students will learn is part of the challenge. So is finding common ground – places at your institution where conversations about student learning can happen, places where everyone feels safe about voicing their concerns and difficulties. Again, when I say “places” I mean not just physical ones, but points of connection within a community. At my institution, a lot of conversations about teaching and learning and research are sponsored by a center for engaged learning. This is an office on campus administered by a member of the faculty who organizes lunches and workshops and provides grants to teachers who want to try something new in their classrooms. It’s a trusted common site where people with similar interests can come together from different parts of the campus.



There may also be moments in your institution’s life that are opportunities for bringing information literacy to the fore. Has anyone gotten a grant recently to launch or refine a program? Is there a new center where students will be involved in research? Are there curricular conversations happening on campus that librarians might join? Are there national initiatives that your institution has to respond to in which the library might play a valuable role? Try to develop informants among the faculty and administration who can brainstorm opportunities. Keep an eye on institutional priorities and on places where faculty may be looking for a chance to learn new things themselves – data management, digital humanities, new publishing opportunities, or perhaps ways to protect their privacy in a world of big data and big brother. Look for the places in the institutional culture where you can make a contribution and help faculty understand what we do.

It can be a bit tricky sometimes. External pressures may force faculty to spend more time on research and less on teaching. Good lecturers may be on temporary contracts and have to leave just as you’ve developed a working relationship. Austerity may be causing institution-wide ennui and a lack of excitement about doing new things. Even when things are going well, it’s easy to accidentally offend someone or appear to be trespassing on their territory or asking them to do more work. Building trusting collegial relationships takes time and an almost ethnographic understanding of your institutional culture.

I spent three years as the director or co-director of our center for engaged learning and discovered some things about what worked and what didn’t when planning faculty development events. Here are some factors that I’ve found useful to bear in mind while providing these opportunities for faculty to learn and share ideas:

- Think carefully about how to present the opportunity. It’s important to ensure that faculty understand the benefits to them personally, that they feel some control over what will happen. Faculty may not think they have much to learn from librarians. They may even feel resentful if somehow the invitation you send makes them think their own expertise isn’t respected, as if we think they are doing it all wrong and we’re trying to fix their bad habits. Likewise, if they think information literacy is just one more thing they have to squeeze into their courses, as if it’s a library cause rather than their cause, they may be inclined to skip it because they already have too much to do. When

creating programs for faculty, it really has to be about their interests, and they have to feel ownership. Fortunately, I firmly believe most of them care deeply about information literacy even if they never call it that. One thing that might work is to include people who you know do interesting work with students, who already have shown an interest in making the library and its services a site of learning. Their experiences can be the inspiration to others.

- Faculty love to talk, and they love to talk with one another. If you're planning a workshop or event, make sure there's a lot of opportunity for conversation and for sharing experiences. Some of the best teaching ideas will come from other teachers.
- Faculty may be used to delivering information in the form of lectures. In my experience they hate receiving it that way. Make sure all of your programs for faculty are active learning experiences.
- Faculty seem to enjoy opportunities to meet faculty outside their disciplines. Mixing it up across boundaries has been well-received and can reinforce the idea that we share learning goals for students beyond those specific to disciplines. It also has the benefit of showing that teachers aren't alone in the challenges they are encountering and that some of their colleagues may have developed a good approach to those challenges.
- Faculty respect expertise and evidence. Keep an eye out for well-designed studies that provide evidence you can share about how students learn or where they run into difficulty understanding information. This may come from library literature, or from another field.
- Be mindful of the academic calendar. You don't want to invite people to participate in something when they are feeling overwhelmed. If you're planning an event during an academic term, pick a sweet spot where courses are off and running but marking isn't too burdensome. If summer workshops are an option, find out what time works best for everyone. We noticed science faculty weren't participating, so we asked them why. It was all about timing. While the first week of summer was a good time for many faculty, that was when our scientists were getting their research students started with lab work. Moving events one week later made them much more attractive – something we wouldn't know if we hadn't asked.
- Incentives communicate that an event is valuable. If it's a conversation, providing breakfast or lunch or a good cup of coffee helps. For summer workshops, we've found funding to pay faculty stipends is helpful.
- Promise that people will leave with something accomplished: a new teaching idea, a problem solved, a revised syllabus, a revamped assignment—something practical. Even if they are too busy chatting and drinking good coffee to finish that thing, it's helpful to at least start applying ideas to concrete outcomes and it feels like a good use of their limited time.

I'd like to give you some examples of what we've done with faculty and how we got started. Way back in 1997 we were working on a strategic plan and technology was much on our minds. Everything seemed to be changing so dramatically and we didn't feel ready. But as we talked to faculty, one of them said something that I'll never forget: "It's not about technology. It's about pedagogy. We need to change the way we teach." They asked if we could find a way to host conversations about teaching differently. So we did.

We applied for a [grant](#) from our federal government and one of the things it funded was two week-long workshops for faculty who were invited to design or redesign a course to embed in it the scaffolding to learn research skills as a process. We purposefully included faculty from different disciplines and courses that ranged from the first year to the senior level, and we studied the results of these redesigns by comparing syllabi and assignments before and after the workshop. Most of the faculty involved ended up changing more

than one course and entire departments held follow-up discussions about the place of independent inquiry in their curriculum. The relationships built in these workshops paid off for years in closer collaboration with those faculty and their colleagues.

Other faculty development efforts have included

- sessions to help faculty teaching first year seminars for the first time understand how new students approach research tasks
- a three-day workshop on critical information literacy that invited faculty from multiple disciplines to work on assignments, courses, and even their entire departmental curriculum,
- a campus-wide workshop organized by our center for engaged learning that brought together representatives from every department to explore ways to enhance opportunities for undergraduate research,
- a [short course](#) on how information works based on a semester-long course that I teach but retooled for faculty at their request,
- a grant-funded [project](#) to explore threshold concepts for information literacy with our faculty. We actually wrote this grant before the new Framework for Information Literacy was rolled out, with its emphasis on threshold concepts. We were able to prepare a list of threshold concepts developed by our faculty in parallel with this major national effort led by librarians. As it turns out, what our faculty thought were crucial concepts for information literacy match up pretty well with what our library association came up with, with a few interesting differences. Getting some agreement on what essential concepts matter the most has given us a good place to work more closely with faculty on developing opportunities for students to experience these “aha!” moments.
- Now we’re applying for another national grant to hold wider workshops on how to foster learning these concepts in courses and programs using the threshold concepts our faculty came up with. We’re hoping this will help us rebuild the kinds of relationships and campus-wide excitement that our original grant did more than fifteen years ago. One of the challenges of faculty development is that it’s never done. As new faculty arrive, the curriculum changes, and the world of information evolves, there is always more to learn.

What I hope you’ve heard this afternoon are a lot of ideas for working with teachers on the kinds of teaching most of them love to do – teaching that prepares students for whatever the future might hold, creating learning opportunities that provide students with the confidence, skills, and disposition to become involved in the world they are graduating into. Becoming information literate requires experiential learning that takes time, and teachers will play an essential role in setting up those experiences, guiding students through the rough spots, and encouraging them when they’re nervous about the messy open-endedness of it all. We can’t do this work by ourselves, but we can help create conditions so that teachers are willing and ready to embrace this kind of learning.

But let’s not forget that we librarians have a unique role to play in this, and it’s not just in guiding students to use library databases or how to retrieve sources. Libraries are places of connection because the library is the intellectual common ground for the campus. Librarians are particularly well positioned to host these conversations because we keep an eye on evolving information systems and we witness what happens in the liminal space in between classrooms and between disciplines where students begin to connect ideas and to find their own identities as participants in this vast, multi-vocal, ongoing conversation that is knowledge. As a profession, we have core values that are immensely important right now – intellectual freedom, respect for diversity, access to information because building a better world depends on it, support for lifelong learning,

and a belief in social responsibility and the importance of the public good. These values are the equipment our students need to go out into the world empowered to make it better. Working with faculty, we can do more than help our students succeed as students. We can work together to prepare them for an active role in shaping their world.

References

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