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Using Appreciative Inquiry Methods to Build a Culture of Assessment and Library Instruction Program from the Bottom Up:

Uncovering Librarian Values, Assumptions, Beliefs, and Best Practices

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Objectives for this Session

At the end of this session, you will have:

- A better awareness of the Appreciative Inquiry methodology
- Be more familiar with the literature related to the identity of instructional librarians
- Discussed challenges and opportunities related to instructional librarians
- See examples of how data collected can be used in planning and evaluation

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Libraries Have Changed

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c5/University_Park_MMB_M8_George_Green_Library.jpg

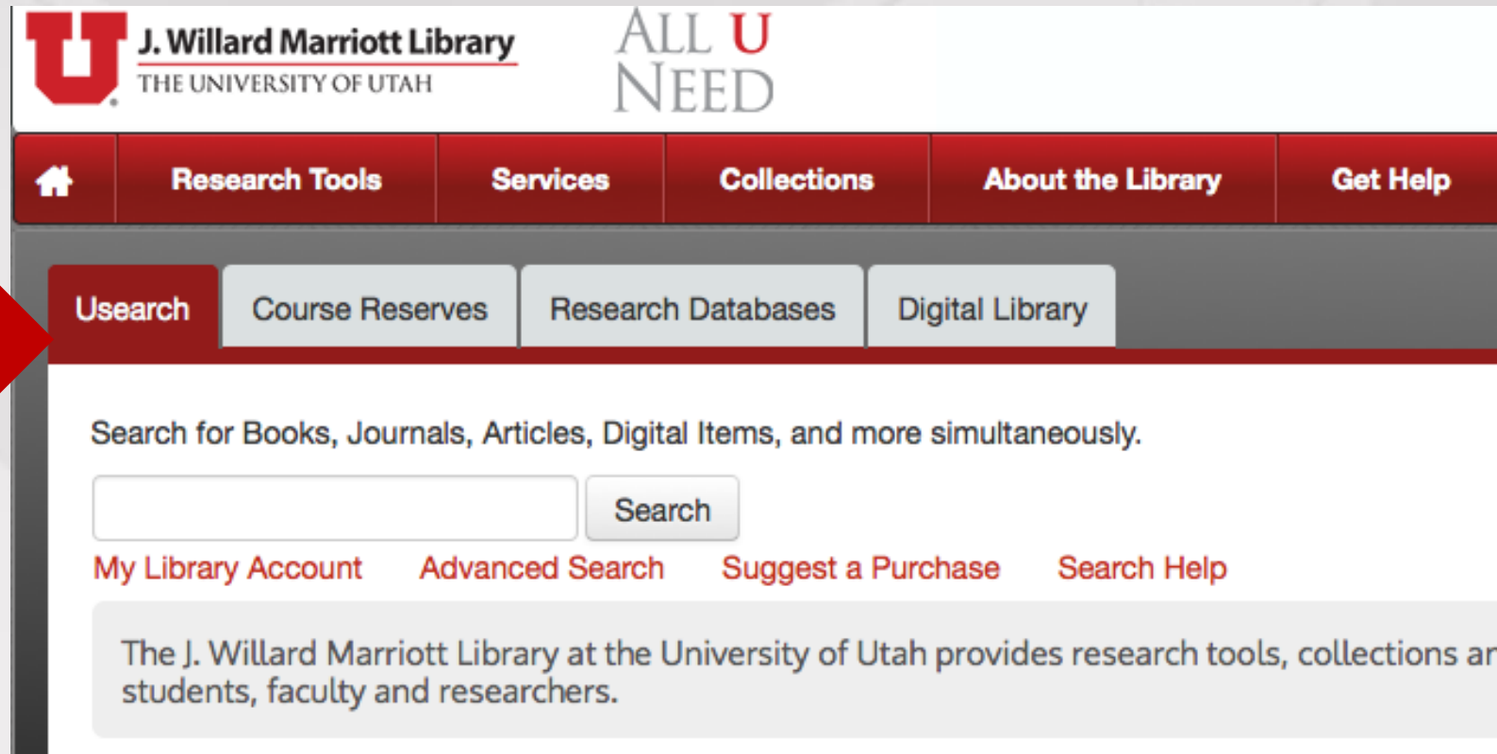
http://www.lib.utah.edu/services/knowledge-commons/index.php

What Librarians Do Has Changed

https://www.flickr.com/photos/30976576@N07/4113330094

https://www.jisc.ac.uk/sites/default/files/computer-work-teaser.jpg

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/7e/Schlagwortkatalog.jpg



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Librarian Teaching Identity Cited in the Literature

- Librarian faculty status not always considered = to other academic faculty on campus (Wilson, 1975)
- Librarians not the ‘teacher of record’ and lack access to students, ownership, and assessment (Jenkins, 2005)
- Teaching development often not included in MLS degree and some librarians resist teaching (Brewerton, 2011)
- Often ‘Information Literacy’ concepts are not valued by disciplinary faculty (Morrison, 2011)
- Librarians are seen as providing a service; not being a partner for teaching & learning (Nalani-Meulemans, 2013)
- Scalability and sustainability issues for trying to help all of campus (Jaguszewki & Williams, 2013)

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Rationale for the Research

Organizational Reasons

- No unique culture of teaching in the library ("invisible labor")
- Teaching responsibilities are spread across departments – no coordination
- No culture of assessment
  - End-of-semester student course feedback not very useful and only available in some courses
  - Little time and support
  - Little training in assessment
- Top-down reorganization
  - *'Process'* of instruction and education downgraded
  - Education Services department – now Graduate and Undergraduate Services
  - More focus on 'visible' *'Objects'* like 3D printing, virtual reality, makerspaces, video games

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Rationale for the Research

Personal Reasons

- Library outsider, a ‘feral librarian’ lacking an MLS degree
- Come to the library with a very different professional enculturation (Ed.D. and instructional design expertise)
- Perceived by some librarians as encroaching on their professional space
- Identify as an educator and researcher, but now in a service-oriented world
- Charged to implement curriculum, assessment and teaching cultural changes but was not empowered to enforce teaching development or evaluation measures
- Decided to collect data and take an evidence-based approach – to ground decision-making

Strategies for the Research Approach

- Opted to use an **Appreciative Inquiry** approach to order to counter the negativity about instructional librarian identity
- Applied for an undergraduate research grant to bring a student perspective into the project
- She did the librarian interviews – to take my biases out of the picture
- 14 librarian interviews, audio-taped, transcribed and analyzed using grounded theory methodologies
- Data were coded by the student intern and librarian
- 12 main categories emerged from the data that were winnowed down to five main themes
- Previous LibQual comments and end of semester student course evaluations used to triangulate findings

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Study Research Questions

1. What are the best teaching/research/ consultation stories and experiences reported by librarians?
2. How do they describe their teaching librarian identity?
3. What are the core principles and values related to teaching that librarians at this one institution report?
4. What are the themes and threads that cross over librarian experiences that could be used for creating synergy and a community of practice among teacher librarians?

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What is Appreciative Inquiry?

"first discover what is working particularly well and then to envision what it might look like if "the best of what is" occurred more frequently."

Preskill, H. & Catsambas, T. (2006). *Reframing Evaluation Through Appreciative Inquiry*, (p.2) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

"describe appreciative inquiry as being "based on the simple assumption that every organization has something that works well, and those strengths can be the starting point for creating positive change"

Cooperrider, D., Whitney, D. D., & Stavros, J. M. (2008). *The appreciative inquiry handbook: For leaders of change*. (p.3).

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What is Appreciative Inquiry? Cont.

Uncovering accomplishments, past best experiences

Shifts focus to building on possibilities not failures

Entails a 4 stage question process:

1.Discovery/Inquiry

2.Dream/Imagine

3.Design/Innovate

4.Destiny/Implement

It is a philosophy and a process

Paradigm shift away from problem solving

Not just about generating themes, but findings are applied some way to initiate change

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Appreciative Inquiry Interview Questions

1. Can you share a story about a teaching or librarian experience that you have had where you felt energized or felt you really impacted a student or group of students? (discovery -what gives life).
2. What do you value about your role as a librarian and/or teacher? (discovery -what gives life).
3. If you had 3 wishes for how to impact student learning through your library instruction in the future, what would they be? (dream/design - what might be).
4. What would the future look like if you adapt these experiences and values you talked today to create great or better new teaching experiences in the future? (design/destiny -what should/will be).

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The Findings: 5 Main Themes

Value-added Institutional Roles

Emerging and Converging Librarian Identities

Blurring of Professional and Personal Boundaries

Overlapping Cultures for Teaching Pedagogy and Identity

Moving Beyond Helper to Mentor

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The Findings: 5 Main Themes

Emerging and Converging Librarian Identities

"I don't know that I'll do the best job, but I'll do the job. … Learning about 'urban trees' and what does that mean. So, anyway, more time with students, more time in classes, more time to learn because the world is changing and when I graduated from library school there wasn't any internet".

Codes:

librarian as learner

build confidence in teaching what we don't know

seeing positive – opportunities for interaction

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The Findings: 5 Main Themes
Value-Added Institutional Roles

"Well, so I think one piece would be maybe moving away from information literacy so much as to like information fluency . And also helping them feel confident in using all of this information and knowing how to access them. And then really focusing on synthesizing information and I think that is a bigger issue and that is why I would really like to be involved in curriculum development and also assignment development."

Codes:

stepping up to lead

Leading the effort to redefine information literacy on campus

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The Findings: 5 Main Themes

Blurring of Professional and Personal Boundaries

"It is that kind of stuff that is fascinating to me. People come in and ask such interesting questions. I love that part about being a librarian. I love and really enjoy facilitating the discovery. To me it is just an emotional high, that discovery."

Codes:

mixing the personal and professional (caring about students)
the adventure of discovery
getting emotionally engaged

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The Findings: 5 Main Themes

Overlapping Cultures for Teaching Pedagogy and Identity

"So I take a lot of motivation out of driving my own scholarly ship being a librarian. So I want to be able to help other students. I want to help the student I am working with and I am also interested personally."

Codes:

learning by teaching others

personal interests

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The Findings: 5 Main Themes
Moving Beyond Helper to Mentor

"There was a student who came in and he wanted to be an engineer. He didn't want to know how to write and he even said that. 'I am going to be an engineer; I don't need to know how to write'. And he came in with this attitude that everything else was no good. And so to be able to change that attitude [best experience]."

Codes:

beyond the content

beyond helping

mentoring students = personalized approach

Other Considerations

- The importance of the personal touch in the learning process
    - Personalized learning (one-on-one connection)
    - Developing dispositions, confidence, and attitude in students
- Stepping up and out into new librarian roles
    - Developing dispositions, confidence, and attitude in librarians
    - Identity as mentor not just a “helper” will require:
    - A refocus from service provider to leader
- Creative integration of roles & responsibilities
    - Less support strategies and more partner collaborations
    - Self-reflection and evaluation of expertise
    - Strength building

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Department Visioning

Instruction & Curriculum

Teaching (For-Credit) Taskforce?

Teaching & Curriculum Partners from Across Library

Faculty Teaching Collaborators

Informal Approach:
Consultations, Events

Formal Approach:
Classes
Presentations
Online Resources
Workshops

Projects:
UG, Grad
International
Transfer
LEAP
Honors
WRTG 2010
Block U
ED PS

Online Programs Task Force?

Collaboration with TLT for Online Resources

Assess I&C outcomes and focus on data driven instructional improvement

Use instructional activities to connect with and develop relationships w/external & internal partners and future students

Assessment & Evaluation

Projects:
Library-Related Research
Teaching as Research
Culture of Assessment
Student Success Research

Collaborative Researchers Across Library

Collaborative Faculty Researchers

Planning & Assessment Committee?

Outreach & Tours

Projects:
Tours
U of U Outreach
Graduate Outreach
Bootcamp
High School Instruction

Collaboration with External Community

Marketing & Development

Collaboration with Internal Partners (Grad School, Student Affairs, etc.)

Outreach Committee?

Track and assess outreach activities & partnerships
Use assessment data to drive outreach activities and policies

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Other Application of These Findings So Far

- Very small improvement in culture by opening the door to discussion about teaching
- Creation of our own customized learning outcome statements from a librarian ‘dream exercise’ about what we dream students will look like at the end of their education related to information literacy skills
- Use the focus on librarian values to frame the Teaching Guidelines Document – this document will help librarians who are teaching
- The creation of a logic model or a planning document – to put teaching back on the radar of the library administration and university
- The beginnings of an action plan for librarian professional development and mentoring training
- The synthesis of the study themes into a core variable or

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Questions?

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