

**Instruction Expectations and the Pandemic
BTAA Conference
"Lightning talk" aim for 10 mins or less (~5pgs)**

Opening Slide

The animating question for this talk comes from my own experience with library instruction during, ~~and dare I say after the~~ pandemic. Like most of us, I have learned and relearned values and methods of instruction moving from the Standards to the Framework ^{definitions} ~~definitions and~~ ^{formulations} ~~formations~~ and ~~practices of information literacy~~ ^{thought} and what constitutes an 'information literate student.' Generally, the faculty expectations over this period, too, have grown to embrace new ~~formations~~ ^{formulations} and practices and have come to expect the more robust forms of information literacy education ~~as~~ ~~standard as we move beyond the rudimentary elements of bibliographic instruction.~~ As the pandemic hit and the necessity of online instruction became the norm, it was my general observation, however, that in the transition, the desire for these more robust forms of information literacy instruction shrunk and a more practical and immediate need filled its place. ~~This is quite understandable as we all attempted to move to a new and different education environment many using these tools for the first time.~~ Thankfully, as this short talk helps to demonstrate, this was not necessarily a wide-spread observation and hopefully the general themes developed through this focus group can help us all recentre and focus our instruction for the post-pandemic instruction environment.

I am extraordinarily thankful to my colleagues who agreed to help with this. I will keep them anonymous for this talk, but thank you very much for your help.

SLIDE 2

~~Explanation of questions:~~ I structured the questions to move from the pre-pandemic ~~to~~ ~~the initial stages of lockdowns and remote instruction/~~ the height of the pandemic ~~/the long~~



Entry Pandemic

1974 Pandemic

~~period of on-going but stabilizing new normals, and then the stage where we are hopefully in the later stages these days.~~ The questions sought observations, practises, and methods from each of these stages. I ^{also created} opened a Google Form, as well, to allow feedback from colleagues who were ~~not comfortable or otherwise~~ unable to participate in the focus group session. The basic breakdown is as follows: 2 used the form and 6 joined for the focus group giving me 8 people providing their experiences. ~~Again,~~ ^{of course} this is not meant to be representative, simply illustrative.

SLIDE 3

Question 1: The first question sought to understand the group's teaching philosophy and goals back in the pre-pandemic classroom: (In the time before the pandemic, how would you describe your teaching or instruction philosophy? What are some characteristics of your teaching style? What are some of the things that you value the most in instruction?)

Slide 4

Responses in this area focused around 4 particular areas:

- 1) Dispositional skills: the ability to search and demonstrate learning through active learning methods
- 2) Attitudinal skills: shifting to a position of ~~looking through~~ the library as a common practice ^{/sketching plans}
- 3) Contextual skills: focused on the individual needs of the students and their assignments. Additionally, a direct focus on the specific and idiosyncratic elements of their specific libraries – e.g.. Focusing on the specifics of a branch location as opposed to the main library

- 4) A real focus on active and participatory learning, group learning, and engagement

Specifically, there were multiple notes about the importance of having students “drive” as it were – in letting them lead the way in searching to prove a model to build from and teach from. This involves physically having students move to the instruction computer; something not as easily

done in the online environment. As we'll see in the next question, issues of engagement were somewhat common in the move to the online environment

SLIDE 5

Question 2: Sought to look at the early stage of the pandemic and their reflections and observations from that time: (What were your observations in the early phase of the pandemic when the shut downs began. Were classes transitioning well to the online environment?)

SLIDE 6

Generally, respondents' observations centered around a couple of core ideas. Primarily, most found that the instruction landscape ^{felt} ~~was at least a little~~ different (setting aside the obvious fact of shifting to video) because the faculty members they were working with were having a difficult time adjusting to online instruction and not, as one respondent noted, not knowing "what they wanted from me" in the new environment. There was a sense that because of our colleagues in our Teaching and Learning Services area – an internal library group – that we were perhaps better equipped to handle this transition and were in some ways more comfortable than the instructors. One respondent noted spending a good amount of time preparing and learning Zoom and other conference software to be "ahead of the learning process" to be able to help faculty and lead the workshops confidently. This was a shared sentiment that it was important to learn the new tools quickly and competently to increase confidence and try to regain some sense of instructional integrity. This was coupled, however, with a decrease in the amount of instruction requests, per se, but an increase in research consultations for some and a marked increase in the amount of material access questions and questions about library services.

an internal library group *Special about*
Faculty
Teachers
Library Services

SLIDE 7

Question 3: For question three, I sought to understand how the respondents adapted to the height of the pandemic – that time when it was certain that we were not going to be heading

back to the classroom in the near future. In this section four clear themes developed in the conversation:

SLIDE 8

- 1) A sense of a deepening of 1:1 research consultations and a more tailored and personal sense of help for both students and faculty. Some felt that there was more of a chance to connect with the faculty and discuss their goals with the instruction session. Librarians felt like there was more a directed a purposeful mission with instruction and less of a need for a general introduction.
- 2) Interestingly, many felt that the Zoom environment allowed a somewhat more personal connection with the students as they had a window into our lives (pets, families, etc.) and us into theirs. We could see if they were home with family, driving to the beach, across the world, etc. At the same time, there was a note that this same notion led them to feel distanced from their colleagues.
- 3) The focus of instruction, too, changed as we couldn't focus solely on library resources, we were forced to demonstrate how the free internet tools could and should be incorporated into their work. Additionally, access remained the key to most ^{interactions} ~~intersections~~ as librarians added sections to their LibGuides and instruction ^{focused on} ~~completely about~~ access and restriction updates, processes, etc.
- 4) It was also clear that a focus on the method of communication and an awareness of learning differences was important as was understanding and emphasizing with Zoom fatigue and other environmental concerns that could detract from learning.

SLIDE 9

Question 4: This next question looked at the idea of adopting tools and strategies and trying to understand if there were any generalizable observations from this later period regarding student and instructor expectations.

SLIDE 10

These responses were more muted as much of these sorts of observations were discussed in the previous section, but the general consensus revolved around the notions that the rates and frequency of instruction was not dramatically hindered from what had become the pandemic-normal, but as discussed previously, much of needs revolved around issues of access. As a result, multiple respondents noted that they were incorporating far more non-library resources like the Internet Archive, Google Books, and more into their instruction. Additionally, a major thread of the conversation was regarding the uptick in questions about citation. Many students were very unclear about general notions of citation and writing and also were having trouble citing digital formats and other non-typical material. It was clear in the written responses, as well, that there was a need to simplify and to really distill instruction to a far narrower set of skills. For some, this carried over into research consultations as well which became more like tutoring sessions.

SLIDE 11

Question 5: For this final question I wanted to know if there are any lessons, skills, or instructional dispositions that the discussants have or will bring out of the online environment and back into the physical classroom. Interesting, the discussion focused on a couple of key areas:

SLIDE 12

- 1) Continuation of remote access and discussion of non-library internet sources
- 2) A doubling down on the core tenets of information literacy. Specifically, one respondent discussed the increasingly common understanding of mis/dis-information and the general adversarial information landscape. This included a general sense of wanting to help students understand resources like Retraction Watch to better understand the scientific publishing apparatus, notions of data security, and more.

*highlighted and spotlighted
during the 2020-2022 period*

*highlighted in the
medium discussion*

SLIDE 13

McClure - "A more Comp. Summary: High School Leadership - Age of the Oracle at Bennett"

Through this discussion it is clear that many of the librarians felt that the pandemic allowed them an opportunity to refocus and hone their lessons into a tighter and more direct package. Faculty members were better able to coordinate and explain their goals and hopes for the sessions, and librarians were then able to better address specific ideas and needs thereby increasing the impact of their instruction. While there were many challenges in the early phases, the librarians were, I'd say far ~~harder~~ ^{more equipped} than many teaching faculty, to really learn the skills necessary to not only stay afloat, but take sail and thrive despite the adversity.

I was hearted to learn this from my colleagues and this provides us an opportunity to take these lessons learned and pivot and remarket ourselves and services in the fall. This narrower, but deeper understanding of the direct needs of faculty and students provide us with a way to market our impact and to garner further buy-in in the future and to allow us to better find the footing for developing a coherent and scaffolded program as we regroup and move forward.

END Slide

Questions: