Implementing an Instruction Exchange Program for Teaching Librarians:
Fostering Community, Professional Development, and Collaboration

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Background

During Fall 2018, we both attended a webinar titled "Writing and Assessing Learning Outcomes for Library Instruction," delivered by Dianne Brown and Jennifer Ferguson of Tufts University. In discussing the webinar, we both realized we had been considering a research log format for classes —one an online workshop for doctoral students and one a more traditional one-shot for upper level undergrads.

We were able to share materials and ideas for these classes, cutting down on the preparation time for both. We realized that our entire department could benefit from a more regular exchange of instruction ideas and we wanted to build this exchange into the culture of the department. Inspired by NELIG's annual Instruction Swap, the idea for an Instruction Exchange was born.

Community Guidelines

We started the group discussion with three guiding principles:

1. All contributions are valuable
2. Offer suggestions, rather than commands
3. Listen respectfully and actively

We developed the following principles as a group:

- Build on other's ideas rather than shutting them down
- Think about teaching in positive, rather than negative terms
- Every question is valid
- Seek perspectives beyond our group—invite other campus teaching partners

Format & Guiding Questions

Our exchanges have the following format:

- 10 minutes: Exploring an instruction hack (tool, technology, etc.)
- 50 minutes: Two instruction exchanges from R&I colleagues

To help colleagues prepare , we provided guiding questions:

Instruction hack:

- What is the hack?
- In which instructional situations might it be helpful?
- What should other library instructors know about this hack?

Instruction exchange:

- Background on the instruction experience
  - Was it for a specific course or group of learners?
  - Describe the context.
  - Do you have any instructional materials to share with the group?
- Reflection about the instructional experience
  - What were your goals or objectives? Were you able to achieve them?
  - What went well? How do you know?
  - What would you change?
- Looking ahead
  - Is there a particular aspect of the instruction experience you'd like to discuss with the group or receive input on?
  - What suggestions would you give to another library instructor who wanted to adapt your lesson?

Considerations

If you are interested in trying a similar exchange at your own institution, keep the following in mind:

- It might be difficult at first to talk about teaching practices in front of a group. Collectively drafting community guidelines and expectations may encourage participation and engagement.
- Not everyone will feel that they have something meaningful to contribute—asking or inviting colleagues to present on a specific topic can show that their expertise is valued
- Participants may have slides, handouts or other teaching materials that they can share with the group. It is helpful to create a system for sharing these via email, shared drives, etc.
- Voluntary or mandatory attendance? Both options have their benefits and drawbacks
- Be flexible with timing—as participants become more comfortable sharing you may want fewer topics with more time to discuss each

Future Directions

- Inviting other library instructors outside R&I to attend and share
- Inviting faculty collaborators to co-present
- Offering themed exchanges where everyone can discuss a common instructional pain point

References

Brown, D., & Ferguson, J. (2018, September 13). Writing and assessing learning outcomes for library instruction. Webinar. Boston Library Consortium Expanding Knowledge Webinar series.

New England Library Instruction Group. (2018). NELIG annual instruction swap. Retrieved from https://acrlnec.org/chapter-events/detail/52