

INNOVATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION TEACHING AND LEARNING

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Series Editor: Patrick Blessinger

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INNOVATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION TEACHING AND
LEARNING VOLUME 26

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON IMPROVING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT: ADVANCES IN LIBRARY PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Created in partnership with the International Higher Education Teaching
and Learning Association



**Higher Education
Teaching & Learning**

<https://www.hetl.org/>



**emerald
PUBLISHING**

United Kingdom – North America – Japan
India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2020

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-83909-453-8 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-83909-452-1 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-83909-454-5 (Epub)

ISSN: 2055-3641 (Series)



ISOQAR certified
Management System,
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Environmental
standard
ISO 14001:2004.

Certificate Number 1985
ISO 14001



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SERIES EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this series is to publish current research and scholarship on innovative teaching and learning practices in higher education. The series is developed around the premise that teaching and learning are more effective when instructors and students are actively and meaningfully engaged in the teaching–learning process.

The main objectives of this series are to:

- (1) present how innovative teaching and learning practices are being used in higher education institutions around the world across a wide variety of disciplines and countries;
- (2) present the latest models, theories, concepts, paradigms, and frameworks that educators should consider when adopting, implementing, assessing, and evaluating innovative teaching and learning practices; and
- (3) consider the implications of theory and practice on policy, strategy, and leadership.

This series will appeal to anyone in higher education who is involved in the teaching and learning process from any discipline, institutional type, or nationality. The volumes in this series will focus on a variety of authentic case studies and other empirical research that illustrates how educators from around the world are using innovative approaches to create more effective and meaningful learning environments.

Innovation teaching and learning is any approach, strategy, method, practice, or means that has been shown to improve, enhance, or transform the teaching–learning environment. Innovation involves doing things differently or in a novel way in order to improve outcomes. In short, innovation is a positive change. With respect to teaching and learning, innovation is the implementation of new or improved educational practices that result in improved educational and learning outcomes. This innovation can be any positive change related to teaching, curriculum, assessment, technology, or other tools, programs, policies, or processes that lead to improved educational and learning outcomes. Innovation can occur in institutional development, program development, professional development, or learning development.

The volumes in this series will not only highlight the benefits and theoretical frameworks of such innovations through authentic case studies and other empirical research but also look at the challenges and contexts associated with implementing and assessing innovative teaching and learning practices. The volumes represent all disciplines from a wide range of national, cultural, and organizational contexts. The volumes in this series will explore a wide variety of teaching

and learning topics such as active learning, integrative learning, transformative learning, inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, meaningful learning, blended learning, creative learning, experiential learning, lifelong and lifewide learning, global learning, learning assessment and analytics, student research, faculty and student learning communities, as well as other topics.

This series brings together distinguished scholars and educational practitioners from around the world to disseminate the latest knowledge on innovative teaching and learning scholarship and practices. The authors offer a range of disciplinary perspectives from different cultural contexts. This series provides a unique and valuable resource for instructors, administrators, and anyone interested in improving and transforming teaching and learning.

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PART I

IMPROVING INFORMATION LITERACY

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO ADVANCES IN LIBRARY PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON IMPROVING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Enakshi Sengupta, Patrick Blessinger and
Milton D. Cox

ABSTRACT

We are living in an electronic age, where everything that we want to know or are curious about is increasingly facilitated by the internet and search engines. Now, much of the world's knowledge is at our fingertips. Students have unlimited access to information in the form of e-books, journals and other open sources. The value of a physical repository of knowledge is diminishing and the printing of material is becoming less compelling. It has been noted that college students spend as much time on the internet as they do while studying (Jones, 2002). The most pertinent question is whether the library is still considered an important source of information to students? Can we imagine a university without a library with just computers and a server room? The information highway is posing new challenges that the librarians have to deal with (Dunn, 2002; Rockman & Smith, 2002). In the past, gatekeepers like the librarian decided what a student should read, depending on their level of study and their comprehension power. The picture has altered and now students decide what exactly they should read with the click of their computers. Leaders in higher

International Perspectives on Improving Student Engagement:
Advances in Library Practices in Higher Education
Innovations in Higher Education Teaching and Learning, Volume 26, 3–14
Copyright © 2020 by Emerald Publishing Limited
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ISSN: 2055-3641/doi:10.1108/S2055-364120200000026001

education institutions are skeptical as to how much they should actually invest in buying books, how many shelves to create to stack them and whether the collection of books is going to be an indicator of the academic quality of that institution. This book talks about a vital subject as to how much and in what ways a library can engage a student to create information literacy. Various interventions have been discussed as case studies in colleges and universities from Canada to India. Student-centered workshops have been designed along with university partnerships with a writing center as well as the role of a library as a source of socio-economic transformation in Africa. The experiences shared by the authors in this book will be a valuable resource for librarians across the world as they increase their collaborative efforts to promote the value of information literacy for students.

Keywords: Library; information literacy; students; engagement; internet; open source; collaboration; partnership; workshops; comprehension

INTRODUCTION

The information highway is a gateway to unlimited access to information which is posing new challenges to the librarians (Dunn, 2002; Rockman & Smith, 2002). Students are more attuned to source information at their own discretion and at their own pace without a gatekeeper deciding what they should read. While the world is reeling under the scarcity of resources, the obvious question that has been asked by many is the contribution of a library toward student's learning. Public accountability and financial constraints have raised issues about the value of the library and its utility in an institution of higher education (Lindauer, 1998). The questions that prompted academics to judge the contribution of a library are many and have bordered on the unfettered access to exponentially growing information bases, the paradigm shift of educational institutions from teaching to learning, from classroom to experiential form of learning and the expectation from every university to be effective in capacity building and the scalability of their institutional knowledge base. Barriers to space, time and mobility have compelled students to take help of technology. It has become a common sight to find students with handheld, inexpensive ready-to-use devices to access the vast pool of knowledge lying in the open source. Social realities in the context of gender and education are changing the usage of information and technology with regard to accessing higher education (Sengupta, Reshef, & Blessinger, 2019).

Although students have access to vast sources of free information, the need for a tangible repository of books remains important and many educational institutions have invested their resources to build up a good library and to maintain their archival data. In most cases, students have expressed their doubt about the quality of information they derive from the internet (National Center for Postsecondary Improvement, 2001) and they have admitted that it is often difficult for them to judge the quality and accuracy of what they find (Outsell, 2001).

computers or smart phones, whereas the library staff may not belong to the millennial generation. These students may be more connected and technologically savvy than faculty members and library staff. Steeped in the world of virtual reality and multimedia, their handheld device is an extension of the body, an appendage that is difficult to not use. They find comfort in their electronic world and it may be difficult to engage with a world of tangibles, such as a library.

Krause (2004) claims that this generation is less likely to borrow books, spend their time in the dusty alleys of a library, photocopy journals or articles and take notes. True to his claim, survey figures have noted that there has been a plummeting in numbers of photocopies made on the campus but number of visitors in a library is increasing mainly by those who have a collaborative learning space and provides latest technology to get connected to open sources and download and read e-books and e-journals. E-resource usage has gone up and is steadily increasing with effective search tools and e-platforms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There has been a growing concern on the impact and outcome of information literacy and the engagement of students and their use of library facilities including borrowing of books, using e-resources and achievements in learning (Wong & Webb, 2011). The role of libraries and that of a librarian is a well-researched area in the field of academics. Researchers have worked on areas pertaining to teaching and learning and the investment of time and other tangible resources to build a library and the nature of involvement of a student with such facilities. Gratch-Lindauer (1998) conducted an analysis of how the performance of academic libraries can create an impact on the institutional goals and outcomes.

Cox and Jantti (2012) developed a “Library Cube,” which consisted of a new data set that joins library usage data with student data in an attempt to showcase the results of their study which exhibits a strong correlation between usage of library resources and student academic performance. Stone, Pattern, and Ramsden (2011) also found a statistically significant correlation across a number of universities in the United Kingdom between library activity data and its direct impact on student’s attainment. Wong and Webb (2011) initiated an intervention to investigate the correlation between students’ grade point average and their borrowing of books from the library. The usage of electronic resources was added as an additional factor to their study at a later stage. Their study claims to have deduced a positive correlation between book and multimedia loans and students’ academic performance in most universities (Wong & Webb, 2011).

Ory and Braskamp (1988) also reported a positive relationship between the usage of the library and gaining proficiency in the arena of critical thinking. Whereas academicians like Terenzini (1995) found negative relationships between library experiences and critical thinking scores and the explanation could be the various modes of usage of the library and effectiveness of time spent in a library for a student.

Pace (1984) has argued that there are two types of library usage by a student. The first could be termed as exploration, such as looking for information, reading assigned reference materials suggested by the faculty and using the quietness and solitude in the library as a space to study and prepare assignments. The second kind of usage and the most effective one for learning is more focused exploration which deals with analysis and evaluation of information, collaborative workgroups and discussion forums which can help generate questions which are stimulated by problems introduced by the instructor for which library resources are essential to solve such issues. Whitmire (1998) found that the latter has a significant positive effect on student self-reported critical thinking and is independent of student characteristics such as race and ethnicity (Whitmire, 1999).

The heretical question that becomes difficult to ignore while discussing students' learning outcome and information literacy is the question about the contribution of library toward students learning and what measures could be used to evaluate the impact and its desired outcome. Library usage often has a salutary effect on students in the way of developing an appreciation for the literary world and the vast source of knowledge. There has been a growing expectation on librarians to understand the conditions that may help in fostering learning and the ways they are unable to assess the outcomes associated with library experiences.

Academics researching on the subject came up with two very simple propositions that can account for the various influences a library can generate on student learning. The first proposition stated that the amount of time and energy a student spends in a library determines the amount of benefit they derive (Astin, 1984; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Second, those institutions who are keen on the effectiveness of education work on designing experiences that can channel the student's energies toward a purposeful goal (Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 1991).

Universities are now trying to derive the connection between libraries and student retention rates. Pagowsky and Hammond (2012) spoke about the programmatic approach that two libraries have undertaken to draw a causal relationship between the library and the retention of students. Their argument was if the interactions in the library are made meaningful to students by integrating it in curriculum and other outreach practices then it might help in generating interest in students and interested students would boost retention.

Haddow (2013) investigated the association of library usage and student enrollment. Their study deduced that enrolled student usage of the library is higher than those who withdrew. Haddow (2013) did caution that the library cannot be the only source of enrollment and retention; various other factors such as finances, motivation plays a crucial role in the retention of students and one such study cannot generalize the effectiveness of libraries. Megan Oakleaf (2010) encouraged librarians to "embrace an outcomes approach that reveals the impact of libraries on users" (pp. 93–94). Libraries according to her must clearly define the outcomes that they are interested in exploring and then communicate their experiences to the professional community they belong so as to enable others to develop a convincing body of evidence regarding library impact.

CONCLUSION

Libraries are known for engaging students, from the physical space to their information resources. Physical space gives students a collaborative learning space and an independent study area where they can be engaged in a meaningful way with their fellow students. Libraries exist in the electronic world with online chat rooms and flexible learning space allowing access to students from remote places. Universities have now started informing students about their new acquisitions, upcoming workshops through various social media platforms. At times students are able to access the databases online, which allows them to be remotely connected to the library resources. These mobile web versions of the libraries are helpful for conducting research and sourcing journals and books while not being physically present in the university.

A time-honored improvement strategy can help identify the promising practices which can be used in improving the functions of a library. Academic librarians have the required expertise to provide leadership and influence the outcomes associated with information literacy. Yet, this job cannot be accomplished on their own. The whole campus needs to make a collaborative effort to produce an information literate college graduate. A collaborative effort from the faculty, staff and leadership teams provides opportunities to students to access and evaluate the quality of information they come across and how effectively they can use them to their advantage to become a thought leader in the future.

CHAPTER OVERVIEWS

“Improving Data Literacy and Student Engagement through Authentic Assessment and Performance Tasks: The Data Workshop Series,” by Hilla Sang and Elizabeth A. Gilblom, talks about libraries as they evolve, they accommodate and they refine their services to support the varied institutional, student and faculty, and course needs, including developing workshops tailored to course requirements or that provide students and faculty with additional skills that promote their academic pursuits. Some services provided by academic libraries reflect strategic choices that promote the increased alignment of the users’ needs with the institution’s needs. One need anticipated and observed by many research-intensive institutions is data literacy, research and software skills. This chapter describes the case of the academic library at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), an R1 research institution, which offered the Data Workshop Series (DWS) to help prepare students, faculty and staff to clean, manipulate, analyze and visualize research data. This applied student-centered technical workshop series was guided by authentic assessment, specifically performance tasks, which were employed to ensure the participants’ engagement and comprehension of the applied techniques presented. The performance tasks also helped participants gain confidence in their data skills. From them, the participants learned that they can use the software and solve questions on their own. When reflecting on what they learned in the DWS, participants stated that they could develop their skills on their own with additional practice and that they plan on integrating