

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

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As a recent student of library and information studies, I have pondered the vast record of the world's knowledge, all neatly shelved and labeled on miles of library stacks. I have also been cognizant of the fact that by putting content online, an immense store of information has become accessible in ways never imagined before and yet is very often difficult to navigate. Part of my own education involved orienting myself with this expansive terrain; now I am eager to help other students who are encountering this profusion of resources and discovery layers for the first time. As an instruction librarian, I believe I can play a pivotal role in assisting students learn how to match their information needs with relevant information sources, selected from this seemingly infinite space. For each group of students that I teach, I will address three stages of teaching practice that I think are critical to providing effective support for this kind of learning—pre-instruction planning, in-class assistance, and post-instruction assessment.

Supporting student learning through effective pre-instruction planning. Planning for the class that lies ahead enables me to think about how best I can support student-learning objectives and outcomes. I consider the group of students I will be working with and what their learning needs, expectations, and goals might be; what prior knowledge they have; and where they might be challenged. I communicate with the instructor to find out what assignment the students are working on and then prioritize topics that need to be covered, plan for pair or group work to encourage participation, and identify points at which I can pose and/or field questions to reveal where students have confusion or contributions to make. Working with high school advanced placement English students, for example, I create space in the class outline for students to talk about websites they visit every day, as an introduction to evaluating sources on the Internet. In this way, students can start with their own understanding of the Internet before exploring scholarly materials and the methods used for accessing those resources on the library databases.

Supporting student learning through effective in-class assistance. The short time frame allotted for many library instruction classes presents challenges and opportunities for the instructor. Often I must present a lot of new, complex material, so I highly value finding ways to support students as they encounter new concepts and skills in the classroom. ESL students, for example, benefit from extended one-on-one assistance in class—it allows them to reach beyond the language barrier toward the competencies they need to succeed in an American academic setting. I spend time with each student not only to give them a chance to fully explain their topics and the difficulties in searching library databases, but also to give myself time to shape a response that will address their concerns in language that each

student can understand. My goal is to help these students move through the content and tasks covered in class so that they can witness their own learning—of the multitude of library databases, search interfaces, and functionality each offers, as well as of concepts and vocabulary pertaining to academic research in the United States.

Supporting student learning through effective post-instruction assessment. Evaluating the class afterward provides additional ways in which I can support student learning through the application of formal and informal assessment tools. In instruction classes with a graded writing component, for example, I utilize a rubric, allowing me to apply the same standard to each student’s work in order to view the formal learning outcomes as a group. But I also add my own comments to each paper, addressing each student’s particular responses and level of comfort with each task. Both the rubric and my commentary provide detailed feedback for students, which they can use to evaluate their own learning. Both measures also give me the chance to assess what individual students have learned and where confusion is evident. This information allows me to reflect on the effectiveness of my teaching and offers valuable input into the next instruction session I plan.

As an instruction librarian, I feel a great responsibility to the students I teach. The preparation before teaching, the in-class efforts, and the assessment afterward all illustrate the ways in which I believe I can support students’ discovery of the information resources they need. Ultimately, I have the privilege of working in an extraordinary setting—a place where it is my job to assist students as they work to create new knowledge.