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Ginal Schlesselman TSSA Spring 2015

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Gina Schlesselman-Tarango
Teaching Skills Study Award Report
April 6, 2016

Name of Conference Attended

LOEX (Library Orientation Exchange) 2015: Perfect Your Craft

Teaching Strategy Studied

While I attended a variety of sessions and was exposed to a number of exciting teaching strategies, two stuck out as remarkable. The first, “Drinking on the Job: Integrating Workplace Information Literacy into the Curriculum,” asked participants to create a visual map of personal learning environments (consisting of strategies, tools, and social connections one uses to control and manage learning) and then compare that to information literacies valued or expected in academic contexts. After comparing the two, we then moved to a discussion of workplace information environments and noticed that such landscapes often pull from both personal and academic strategies and knowledges, but are also highly contextual. The presenter ended with a discussion of how librarians might be able to move towards teaching to workplace information literacies with students in practice-oriented disciplines.

The second session, “Distributing Your Craft: Scaling Quality Instruction,” described how one library has integrated critical thinking skills and advanced search strategies into their online information literacy instruction materials. I was particularly interested in their Research Diaries, which are information literacy modules developed in conjunction with a first-year writing program. Each diary contains a reading or video and an accompanying reflection prompt. Students complete the diaries throughout the semester, and both the instructor and librarian have access to the students’ work.

Impact/How Applied to Current Teaching

I have been more purposeful in asking students to describe their personal learning environments before moving to a discussion of academic learning environments, literacies, and skills. This allows me to not only get a feel for where they are, but also to make connections between the ways in which students are expected to conduct research in college and the way they already do it. Instead of telling students that they have been doing it the wrong way their whole lives, I try to expand upon what they are already doing well. I haven’t yet addressed workplace literacies, but I hope to do so, particularly in my work with graduate students. I took away a lot of great ideas from the second session, as far as how to formulate discussion prompts and activities for online learners. Since I am the person primarily responsible for our Critical Information Literacy Laboratory for Faculty, I have been following the Research Diaries project (and similar projects) to gather more ideas to encourage critical thinking and critical analyses of the information environment.