LIBRAS Report
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WILU 2010: Design, Play, Learn

WILU 2010 was a welcome change from the conferences I typically attend. Similar in format to LOEX, WILU seems to have a slightly more scholarly approach to information literacy, reflecting what appeared to be a more widespread emphasis on research and scholarly publishing by academic librarians.

Dr. James Paul Gee, author of *What Video Games Have to Teach Us about Learning and Literacy,* provided a thought provoking keynote address, essentially saying that if we present learning in a format that students enjoy, i.e. video games, they will be more likely to buy in to that learning and perform at a much higher level. Gee advocates establishing a "passion driven learning community."

Breakout Sessions:

1. Learning Styles and Information Literacy: Using Research to Inform our Teaching

   This presentation of research raised questions about the validity and usefulness of learning style theories. The speaker suggests there is a difference between learning preferences and traits, which are more inflexible, and cautioned us not to become a slave to published learning styles. She quoted one researcher who advocates teaching styles should match content, not student learning styles.

2. Designing Learner-Centered Research Guides

   The speaker reported on CSU: Monterey Bay's development of learner-centered research guides using Library a la Carte. Her recommendations:
   a. Make sure students can find the guides
   b. Make sure students know what they are for
   c. Make sure students understand "disciplines"
   d. Leverage tagging capabilities for all classes a guide may apply to
   e. Tag from database page
   f. Use **active goal directed** words ("Start your research here," "Find Books," "Locate Articles" [SFX])
   g. Recognizability – content and format should be already familiar to user
   h. Selectivity – they are only a starting point, not exhaustive lists
   i. Transparency – readability and understandability
   j. Accessibility – logical access points
   k. Incorporate a "comment on this guide" link
   l. Use guides as learning objects – self-contained, reusable. Can be aggregated and tagged with metadata

3. Wednesday morning began with five "Lightening Strikes," brief presentations encapsulating the presenter's research into less than 10 minutes. It was an interesting way to hear just the heart of a number of research projects in a short period of time.

   This was followed by "Birds of a Feather," a 75 minute round-table discussion on topics suggested ahead of time so that we could sign up for the table topic of our choice. I sat in on the "Motivating Students" discussion, which the discussion leader tried to keep focused on an article she had read, somewhat limiting the overall effectiveness of the discussion.

4. From Active Learning to Activity: Getting Beyond Busy Work and into Deep Learning

   The speaker addressed the difference between having teaching going on in a classroom and having learning going on in a classroom. She said learning will happen when we concentrate on how we teach, not just what we teach, citing "Activity Theory" as the route to learning. We need to consider what tools our students are bringing to the learning activity and what additional tools are available for the activity. In order to succeed, a student should pick a topic about which they are passionate, on which they can find sources, and which can be narrowed. She emphasized that narrowing should evolve out of reading. Students should not initially narrow the topic and then set out to find sources on that narrowed topic. Information literacy is a reading problem; students need to engage with the text in order to succeed. The ultimate goal of research is to move beyond finding sources to learning about the topic.

5. Sources as Social Acts: Using Genre Theory to Transform Information Literacy Instruction

   This was one of the more esoteric sessions, exploring which was a little more difficult to transfer into real life. Basically the speaker made the point that instead of classifying sources by similar content or form we should be teaching students the context in which communities construct responses to common, recurring rhetorical situations. Forms are chosen for the specific purpose they achieve.

6. From Pre-defined Topics to Research Questions: An Inquiry-based Approach to Knowledge

   These presenters have designed an instruction session that draws the students out in the Cephalonian Method from the moment they walk in the room. Certain students are selected to participate in an introductory activity using color coded, scripted cards. The traditional form of this class was for students to be given a topic for their research papers. In this method a series of activities are used to guide students in selecting a topic through a process of discovery, researching widely to produce new information, gaining membership in a community of scholars. Often this process starts with a You Tube video appropriate to the class. Students are encouraged to think of questions that interest them prompted by the video. Librarians then suggest reference sources that would contain a broad answer to their question. After reading the article students brainstorm key words, related topics, synonyms, etc. and formulate a plan

of research. Each group of students is then charged with finding one specific resource on their topic (article, book, expert opinion, website, etc.) The librarians also use Turning Point clickers to generate discussion of some sources. This method works well for classes that do not already have topics, but would have to be adapted for those that do.

7. Designing Web 2.0 Experiences for Students

   These presenters incorporated a unit on Web 2.0 tools into a for-credit information literacy class when they found that students were not as savvy about many of these tools as they claimed to be. Activities included a blog presenting "10 Things," exploratory exercises using specific Web 2.0 tools. Students were required to familiarize themselves with blogs in their disciplines, to set up RSS feeds in their discipline, and to participate in a class blog about their class research experiences.

8. The closing keynote speaker was Stephen J. Bell, Associate University Librarian for Research and Instruction at Temple University, Exploring the Instruction Mystery: Designing Our Way Past a Wicked Problem

   The wicked problem is the potential shrinking role for instruction librarians if we cannot make our case to administration to include information literacy acknowledged in institutional strategic plans and the governance structure. Looking at our programs as a mystery to be explored, we must use new technology, new skill sets and new instruction experiences to explore the mystery of instruction. Bell is an advocate for using blended librarianship to connect with faculty in order to achieve student learning outcomes, by improving our knowledge and abilities in the practice of instructional design and technology.

Attending WILU gave me a refreshing look at the way a whole new group of librarians practice instructional librarianship. I had many interesting conversations with other attendees, and was stimulated to consider different approaches to my teaching. I'd like to thank LIBRAS for their support in my continuing professional development. I would encourage other instruction librarians to step out of their comfort zone and try WILU. I think they will be pleasantly surprised.