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**Authors**

Johnson, Matthew Weirick  
Brasseur, Michelle  
Solodkaya, Alexandra  
[et al.](#)

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# Transforming Our Identities as Learners and Instructors:

## A Library Instruction Training Program

*Matthew Weirick Johnson, Michelle  
Brasseur, Alexandra Solodkaya, and  
Hannah Sutherland*

In 2017, the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Library developed a matrixed structure in the User Engagement department, uniting public services staff across three major divisions (Sciences; Arts, Music, and Powell; and Management/Humanities & Social Sciences) and five functional teams (Collections, Outreach, Research Assistance, Research Partnerships, and Teaching & Learning). The teams change slightly every two years, and for the 2021–2023 cycle, we have the following five functional teams: Anti-Racism, Collections, Outreach, Research, and Teaching & Learning. A primary goal of this matrix model was to encourage more collaboration and teamwork in the department across multiple library locations. As a result, we have been able to rethink the ways that we hire, train, and mentor graduate student employees across the UCLA Library.

In the past year, UCLA Library has moved toward a centralized model for training graduate student employees who serve as research assistants, providing research consultation services to UCLA Library users. Student employees are assigned to service points across campus in various libraries, and they receive weekly generalized training together for ten weeks in addition to specialized training on-site.

As an extension of this training model, the Teaching & Learning Functional Team has designed new structures and an in-depth curriculum to prepare student research assistants for teaching roles. As an added benefit, students in our MLIS program, early career librarians, and library staff at UCLA Library are invited to participate in this training to expand their teaching knowledge. This curriculum focuses on information literacy, pedagogical training, and instructional design. Our learners will also have an opportunity for experiential learning through teacher observation, co-teaching with a librarian, and eventually teaching alone.

The curriculum is designed to complement student research assistants' current work providing research consultation services and their educational development as learners (especially for graduate students enrolled in UCLA's MLIS program) by providing both theoretical and practical teaching and learning opportunities. Since our learners are also instructors, the boundaries of instructional identity are blurred while learners navigate both roles. Throughout the training, we encouraged our learners to begin to see themselves as instructors while remembering their experiences as students in order to inform their approach to instruction.

One of our primary goals for this training is to develop a student instruction program to expand the Library's capacity for instruction and scalable teaching and to further develop a centralized and prioritized library instruction program. Our long-term goal is to reach every UCLA undergraduate student (23,945 students in fall 2020) by partnering with Writing II classes, which are part of a requirement at UCLA that all students must complete.<sup>1</sup> In this way, we can begin to set the groundwork for information literacy and research skills development hopefully early in their studies, allowing us to provide more in-depth and advanced training in later years and courses based on the knowledge that all students have received this foundational training.

Our teaching team for Library Instruction Training consisted of a graduate of UCLA's MLIS program, librarians who attained degrees from other institutions, and non-library degree-holding library instructors. Many of us had experienced a lack of hands-on training in information literacy and library instruction in our MLIS degrees and other education experiences and hoped to provide more opportunities for current students, early-career librarians, and library staff.

## **DISORIENTING DILEMMAS AND TRANSFORMATIVE CATALYSTS**

In fall 2020, 46,000 students were enrolled at UCLA, including undergraduates, graduates, and interns/residents. Among the 23,945 undergraduate student population, 6,386 were new first-year students and 3,787 were new transfer students in the fall 2020 quarter.<sup>2</sup> This

high number of incoming first-years and transfers means a high volume of new students with limited knowledge of UCLA Library resources and services and with a need for research skills and information literacy instruction. Furthermore, compared to staff in User Engagement (UE), the ratios of over seven hundred undergraduate students to one staff member and about 300 new students to one staff member are untenable.

To provide scalable instruction to reach all of these students, UCLA Library has created asynchronous online learning objects through the Writing Instruction + Research Education (WI+RE) team, but we have not had a scalable synchronous counterpart. To create a synchronous complement, we developed a library instruction training and student instruction coordination program with clear programmatic outreach to course instructors, especially TAs, and we trained student research assistants to scale synchronous library instruction to reach all our undergraduate students.<sup>3</sup> Upon first receiving library instruction, many upper-level UCLA students express a wish to have learned basic research skills earlier. Similarly, upper-division instructors sometimes assume students already have basic research skills and design assignments accordingly. Students can then easily become overwhelmed when being asked to perform more advanced research.

While our Library Instruction Training program meets programmatic goals and teaching and learning outcomes for the Library, our team was also galvanized by the need and desire of UCLA MLIS students for more practical training and opportunities to get involved with library instruction. Dodson found that 95 percent of ALA-accredited programs offered at least one course on library instruction, a great improvement from the past, but Saunders still encourages programs to consider other ways to provide additional opportunities for students to gain skills and experience, including working with librarians to help MLIS students gain hands-on experience and move beyond introductory courses in instruction.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Saunders argues that further training in library instruction is needed to meet the demands of library job ads, and Hall found that employers specifically value library instruction knowledge and experience.<sup>5</sup>

In implementing our library instruction training and student instruction coordination program, we specifically respond to both the desires of our student employees and the expectations of employers, according to current scholarship. Specifically, we hope that the continued opportunities for student staff to participate in library instruction throughout their work with us prepares them for careers in libraries providing library instruction. Beyond a simple introductory course or training, we hope to provide opportunities for our student staff, not only to teach but also to participate in lesson planning, curricular development, and a programmatic initiative. In the end, this program ideally meets both programmatic goals in the Library and provides requested training and opportunities to our student employees, early career librarians, and library staff.

## **EXAMINING, EXPLORING, AND REFLECTING**

We offered our first Library Instruction Training (LIT) in the winter 2021 quarter (January–March 2021), but planning and preparation began over a year earlier in September 2019. We began with some general brainstorming around key topics in information literacy instruction and how it is implemented at the UCLA Library. Some of these included

basic information literacy principles (e.g., the information ecosystem, how information is constructed) while others spoke more directly to the experiences of group members (e.g., parallels between instruction and outreach). For members of our teaching/planning team who received formal education in teaching and pedagogy either for library instruction or other forms of teaching, leading the training was also an opportunity to reflect on that training, think about how it might inform our programming, and imagine ways to incorporate more practical elements. These early discussions helped form the backbone of our curriculum.

In the curriculum design for the Library Instruction Training, we prioritized critical approaches to library instruction, constructivism, and practical skills. In particular, we dedicated considerable time to learner-centered design through the WI+RE Way using the WI+RE design toolbox. As we were finalizing our planning, Saunders and Wong's open educational textbook, *Instruction in Libraries and Information Centers: An Introduction*, was published and served as an excellent resource for our planning and a companion to student learning in the program.<sup>6</sup>

It is worth noting that our team had varying levels of experience with instruction. Some team members were experienced instruction librarians, while others were relatively new to teaching. As a result, our curriculum development and lesson planning processes were learning opportunities for our team. The process had an added layer of reflection baked in as the experienced instruction librarians on the team guided the less experienced team members in creating the curriculum and lesson plans. Through our planning process—incorporating collaboration and reflection and making space for learners and instructors and experts and novices—we set the stage for a training environment that encouraged participants to see themselves as both learners and instructors, based on our own example of learning and teaching together.

Throughout the training, we asked students to reflect on their learning experiences, good and bad, to inform the ways that they might teach or to provide examples from which to learn. By exploring their past experiences and examining them as both students and instructors, we encourage critical reflection as a teaching practice, help students start to see themselves as instructors, and employ adult learning theory and transformative learning theory to create a memorable and meaningful experience.

A review of key literature in the field of transformative learning supports our decision to let the learners take the lead in the form of group work, debates, discussion, and presentation. We invited them to reflect on their own experiences as learners while encouraging them to begin thinking of themselves as instructors. As Mezirow suggests, “[A] key goal of transformative learning is for students to become critically reflective of their own assumptions and frames of reference so that they may better adapt to change.”<sup>7</sup> Mezirow points to group projects, role play, and simulations, among other techniques, as helping learners engage with course content in the context of their lives and “collectively critically assess[ing] the justification of new knowledge.”<sup>8</sup> According to Mezirow, classroom discussion can provide students with an opportunity to challenge, confirm, or reject their existing beliefs and those of their peers, which can contribute to the transformation of the self and identity. He also recommends that classrooms

become gradually more independent and students more self-directed, giving students more leadership.

Dirkx takes things a step further, arguing that self-actualization for today's student is restrained by personal and socio-cultural forces.<sup>9</sup> Transformative learning, he says, aims to free us from these forces through "reflection, dialogue, critique, discernment, imagination and action."<sup>10</sup> Students in our training were given the opportunity to begin to view themselves as librarians and instructors by exploring what these job skills and practice entail or, as Dirkx says, "name, reflect on and reconstruct various aspects of one's self and one's relationship with the world."<sup>11</sup> The ideal classroom environment supports students learning together and working together to see the big picture and gaining a better understanding of themselves. Our role as educators is not to cause this transformation—as Dirkx says, that is not possible—but to join learners on their journey. In preparing to lead LIT sessions, members of our team preemptively followed Dirkx's advice to carefully reflect on our own experiences and growth and to stay humble, acting as facilitators for discussion.

Illeris points to a need for today's learners to "handle a constant stream of new situations, which cannot be foreseen, and which are often of decisive importance," which he says requires students to be creative, imaginative, flexible, intuitive, and have strong critical thinking skills.<sup>12</sup> Illeris agrees with Dirkx that "transformative learning cannot be taught" and suggests educators try to organize "situations, procedures, content, and teach in ways which optimize or promote the probability of transformative learning," which includes making room for students to form opinions and express doubt.<sup>13</sup> Transformative learning, Illeris finds, is most likely to happen during the initial "investigation phase" of a new concept as well as during the "internal evaluation and post-evaluation" phases.<sup>14</sup> Learners are most likely to make decisions, have disagreements, and make compromises during these stages when their roles in the learning processes are being determined. We created such opportunities for students to consider their own decision-making and talk through disagreements and compromises in activities throughout our training that engaged regular library instruction decisions, such as working with instructors and delivering sessions.

While working with MLIS students, especially, it may be helpful to keep in mind Hess's survey findings, which suggest that librarians newer to the field may want to focus on "library-based interactions and feedback," which may include mentorship, reaching out to colleagues and peers at other institutions, "or even social media-based interactions focused on teaching."<sup>15</sup> Our Library Instruction Training provided students with these types of library-based interactions, including the chance to ask questions and share experiences with guest speakers, many of whom were staff members from throughout the UCLA Library.

## **BUILDING SKILLS AND CONSTRUCTING KNOWLEDGE**

To prepare students to provide library instruction and to help them build practical skills related to teaching, complementing existing coursework in the MLIS program, our instruction team took stock of the required skills that students would need to acquire or develop. We devised an eight-week program with two-hour sessions, forum post reflections, and an assignment to develop different components of a lesson plan each week. By

the end of the quarter, students were meant to have developed a lesson plan for a potential library instruction session based on an actual course syllabus and assignment and provided various reflections on why they made the choices they did. In addition to the eight-week training, students had the opportunity to shadow library instructors during classes and to co-teach both in the term the training occurred and in the following term, allowing for additional experiential education outside of the training sessions.

The topics and learning outcomes for each week's session are included in table 1.1. The weeks alternated between sessions focusing on library instruction, broadly, and learner-centered design. By the end of the training program, we hoped that all of our learners would be able to interpret and respond to library instruction requests from course instructors, examine syllabi and assignment descriptions, develop and deliver learner-centered and assignment-driven library instruction online and in-person, and design and create learner-centered open educational resources.

<b>Learning Outcomes by Week</b>	
<b>Session</b>	<b>Learning outcomes (learners will be able to...)</b>
Week Two - Intro to Library Instruction Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify different types of information sources</li> <li>• Evaluate information sources</li> <li>• Discuss ways that information is constructed</li> <li>• Describe the components of scholarly information</li> </ul>
Week Three - Values-Driven Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define learner-centered design</li> <li>• Identify personally relevant examples of memorable, meaningful, and transformative learning</li> <li>• Question and critique traditional/default approaches to representation in the curriculum and generate alternative frameworks for their designs</li> <li>• Explore and investigate the role and importance of design decisions, with a particular emphasis on the values inherent to designed objects/environments</li> </ul>
Week Four - Library Instruction Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain different pedagogies used in library instruction</li> <li>• Determine which pedagogical approach(es) to use for a particular learning situation/experience</li> <li>• Incorporate different pedagogies into a one-shot library instruction session</li> <li>• Implement pedagogical approaches in your instruction</li> </ul>
Week Five - Centering Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summarize what is meant by learner-centered design</li> <li>• Recall and name elements of instruction that were not learner-centered</li> <li>• Apply learner-centered value in instructional (resource) design through empathy mapping and learner's journey mapping</li> <li>• Construct learner-centered learning outcomes for project idea</li> </ul>
Week Six - Systems, Resources & Frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find and use teaching and learning resources from UCLA Library in their instruction</li> <li>• Use the UCLA Library Core Competencies and ACRL Framework to frame information literacy instruction</li> <li>• Demonstrate scaffolding learning outcomes from a Writing I to Writing II course at UCLA</li> </ul>

<b>Learning Outcomes by Week</b>	
<b>Session</b>	<b>Learning outcomes (learners will be able to...)</b>
Week Seven - Prototyping & Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the potential benefits of rapid prototyping, as shared in “The Making of Wheel of Sources”</li> <li>• Share personal experiences with giving and receiving feedback</li> <li>• Identify why even “well-intentioned” feedback can sometimes be unhelpful</li> <li>• Share and discuss qualities of helpful and effective feedback</li> <li>• Create a “four paths” prototype based on a previously identified learning challenge or breakthrough</li> </ul>
Week Eight - Online & Remote Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe best practices for online and remote instruction</li> <li>• Identify pros and cons of asynchronous and synchronous instruction</li> <li>• Gain familiarity with tools and resources used for online and remote instruction</li> <li>• Empathize with student experience</li> </ul>
Week Nine - Teaching Writing I & II: English, History, and WP Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine assignment descriptions and identify library/information literacy learning outcomes</li> <li>• Develop classroom activities and instruction to achieve identified learning outcomes</li> <li>• Align library learning outcomes with course and assignment learning goals</li> <li>• Explore disciplinary and field-based approaches to library instruction</li> </ul>

## PLANNING AND PILOTING IN PRACTICE

After over a year of planning and designing the library instruction training, we offered our inaugural program in winter 2021 from January to March. The activities for each week are included in table 1.2, but we also expand on a few specific activities and explore how they contribute to transformative learning: Characteristics of an Information-literate Person, Instruction Types Debate, and Metapedagogy Mini-lectures.

<b>Activities by Week</b>		
Week Two	Intro to Library Instruction Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning outcomes lecture and examples</li> <li>• Types of sources lecture</li> <li>• Characteristics of an Information Literate Person screen annotation collaboration</li> <li>• Parallels between Outreach and Instruction lecture</li> </ul>
Week Three	Values Driven Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zoom best practices</li> <li>• Learner-centered design discussion</li> <li>• WI+RE Manifesto discussion</li> </ul>
Week Four	Library Instruction Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruction Types Debate (one-shot vs. multiple engagements vs. credit-bearing courses)</li> <li>• Metapedagogy mini-lectures</li> </ul>



**TABLE 1.2**  
**Weekly workshop topics and learning activities**

Activities by Week		
Week Five	Centering Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facets of instruction (resource) design</li> <li>• Learner-centered design</li> <li>• Empathy mapping</li> </ul>
Week Six	Systems, Resources & Frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching &amp; Learning Resources: Teaching &amp; Learning Collection, Library Instruction Guidelines, Library Teaching Toolkit</li> <li>• Core Competencies Scenarios and Scaffolding</li> </ul>
Week Seven	Prototyping & Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rapid prototyping lecture</li> <li>• Helpful and effective feedback discussion</li> <li>• “Four paths” Rapid Prototyping activity</li> </ul>
Week Eight	Online & Remote Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empathy discussion</li> <li>• Best practices for remote instruction</li> <li>• Online learning objects</li> <li>• Asynchronous, synchronous, and hybrid instruction</li> </ul>
Week Nine	Teaching Writing I & II: English, History, and WP Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determining students’ prior learning</li> <li>• Teaching to the research demands</li> <li>• Subject-specific instruction</li> </ul>

### *Characteristics of an Information-Literate Person*

To explore concepts related to information literacy and information sources, students participated in a Characteristics of an Information-Literate Person activity, which asked them to reflect on the characteristics, qualities, and tools needed to be information-literate. The students considered their idea of an information-literate person in small groups and then were asked to use Zoom’s annotation tools to draw, type, or stamp the characteristics they discussed onto a graphic of a stick figure. By asking learners to notice certain qualities in themselves and fellow learners, we lay the groundwork for learners to begin thinking of themselves as future instructors who might help future students master related, desirable skills. In this exercise, we also attempted to connect concepts of individual and group identity to information literacy instruction.

### *Instruction Types Debate*

We explored three levels of engagement for library instruction: one-shots, multiple engagements, and credit-bearing courses. We divided students into groups, assigned each group one of the three levels of engagement in instruction, and gave them eight minutes to prepare. Each team then presented the pros of their assigned level of engagement for up to two minutes, the cons of one of the other types of engagement for up to one minute, and conclusions for up to one minute each.

The students seemed invigorated by the debate and were encouraged to think critically about the benefits and challenges of each level of engagement. While their timing was



**FIGURE 1.1.** The class’s group collaboration—an illustration of an “information literate person,” completed using annotation tools in Zoom.

limited, students were forced to explore and consider the different levels of engagement both to support their own instruction engagement level and present challenges for others. Students completed their research (albeit quickly gathered) and considered how best to convince others of the benefits of their assigned level of engagement. In this way, students engaged more deeply with the content and with teaching each other about the training material. The short presentations also gave students a chance to speak in front of the group, which helped develop their public speaking skills to prepare them for providing library instruction and forced them to be concise in sharing their thoughts.

### *Metapedagogy Mini-Lectures*

In groups or individually, students were asked to prepare a lesson plan in the style of a specific learning pedagogy and present it to their peers using that same pedagogy, as time allowed. Pedagogies and learning theories included critical and feminist pedagogy, constructivism, and inquiry-based learning. These mini-lectures provided another opportunity for students to begin to see themselves as library instructors and as experts in teaching and learning. Students continued to develop skills in public speaking, presentation, and instructional design and delivery while developing their identities as both learners and instructors. By allowing students to lead the delivery of specific course content and even to identify their preferred pedagogies from a list, we gave students the opportunity to take control of their learning experience for more self-directed learning contributing to optimal conditions for transformative learning.

After completing all eight weeks of the training, students were awarded a certificate in library instruction. This credential is a tangible item to reinforce, for themselves and

potential employers, their identity as library instructors and their skills in the area of instructional delivery.

## TAKING TRANSFORMATION FORWARD

Based on the data we collected from formal and informal feedback and our own observations in managing and delivering the training program, we identified several changes to help make the learning experience more meaningful, memorable, and transformative for students in our second cohort (winter 2022).

In the future, we plan to remove the weekly assignments, such as the discussion forum and components of the lesson plan. Students commented that these required considerable time to complete; many students attended the synchronous training sessions but did not complete the assignments, and we spent significant time reviewing them and providing feedback.

Overall, students seemed engaged, with most actively participating in weekly class discussions on their experiences as learners, the many ways in which library instruction can be delivered, and their futures in libraries, among others. A survey of training participants revealed that most found the weekly class sessions and interactions with peers to be significantly or moderately valuable. Those who had schedule conflicts appreciated the option to watch recordings of the weekly sessions online and answer online reflection questions. When asked about specific content covered in the training, many learners listed the weeks focusing on pedagogy, frameworks, rapid prototyping of learning objects, and online/remote instruction as being very meaningful and effective. They also marked “developing a component of a sample lesson plan” as having been valuable for them in the future.

Perhaps the biggest hint that our learners may have had a transformational experience is the fact that most reported feeling that they had more understanding of library instruction following our training and were more comfortable or at least somewhat more comfortable with the idea of providing library instruction in the future. In fact, even the language they used to talk about their futures in libraries seemed to change throughout the course of the training. In their post-evaluation, one learner wrote, “The sessions on teaching pedagogies, feedback and rapid prototyping stand out to me as skills and knowledge that I plan to use in the future as a librarian.”

In our post-assessment survey, students said they appreciated the opportunity to practice providing instruction via activities like the Metapedagogy mini-lectures, but some remembered that assignment as being particularly stressful. In the future, we may consider asking students to complete this assignment asynchronously and/or moving it to another week.

For our inaugural training program, we offered sessions in both the winter and spring quarters. However, in the future, we hope to consolidate training sessions to the winter quarter and provide more opportunities for shadowing, mentorship, and instruction in the spring quarter rather than formal training sessions. To this end, we will be splitting the program into a training phase in the winter and an implementation/practical phase in the spring, with opportunities for these to fold together (e.g., more shadowing in the winter).

Relatedly, we hope to adjust the curriculum to better include assessment in our winter training, to incorporate learner-centered design more holistically (rather than alternating weeks), and to better time sessions to be more coherent and relevant. We also hope to make this learner-centered design aspect more hands-on as students asked for opportunities to create online learning objects (including handouts and research guides) together for a more practical learning experience. We've also considered opportunities to offer credit for our library instruction training program to students enrolled in the MLIS program at UCLA. This option would hopefully encourage their participation, provide an opportunity for practical experience not always offered in MLIS programs, and build a closer working relationship between the Library and the Information Studies Department.

As we continue to build the training program, we are also continuing to build our student instruction program by looking for new opportunities for student employees to teach classes and workshops. Similarly, we are looking to formalize processes to make it easier to shadow library instructors or find opportunities to co-teach with a full-time staff member. In this way, we are expanding the practical components that occur outside of the formal training setting and focusing on opportunities for transformational learning by allowing students to see themselves more in the classroom and as instructors.

## **CRITICAL REFLECTIONS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL IDENTITIES**

- In what ways are you leveraging library instruction opportunities at your institution to train the next generation of librarians?
  - As part of our reasoning for offering this training, we discussed how library instruction is necessary for new librarians but under-emphasized in graduate programs. Library instruction training provides yet another opportunity for future librarians to engage with teaching and learning theoretically and the opportunity to work with library instruction classes at your institution provides the ability to engage practically with teaching and learning.
- How can library student employees (as instructors) allow us to scale up synchronous library instruction and reach more students?
  - Especially at large institutions, reaching all of our students is incredibly difficult, and we have to look at different ways to scale instruction. A common way of providing instruction at scale is to develop modular asynchronous content that students can engage with to learn key information literacy concepts and research skills; however, this approach lacks the high-touch quality of synchronous instruction. Through the design of our library instruction training, we focused both on preparing student employees to deliver library instruction synchronously and on designing learner-centered asynchronous resources. In this way, students can contribute to two different approaches to scaling up library instruction.
- If your institution offers a credit-bearing course on information literacy or library instruction, in what ways can you incorporate learner-centered design in your curriculum?

- Learner-centered design is applicable for synchronous online and in-person instruction and various asynchronous instruction, including the development of research guides, online modules, and handouts. Exploring learner-centered and values-driven design with students in information literacy and library instruction classes encourages them to begin thinking about ways to center learners in all of the instructional content that they develop and deliver. The concepts are also applicable to other things like user-centered design in web and systems development.

## NOTES

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