

# Where Have We Been and Where Are We Going?

A Review of Four and a Half Decades of Library Instruction Literature

Andrea G. Stanfield  
University of West Georgia  
CAPAL Conference  
May 31, 2017

# Brief History

From Hopkins' "A Century of Bibliographic Instruction":

- Early librarians were members of faculty, sometimes retired, who saw their primary role as instructional
- As collections grew, librarians spent more time managing them which meant less time for instruction
- 1887 – First library school – School of Library Economy at Columbia
- Practical training (“library hand”) for applicants who were only required to have “native ability and good character”
- Librarians no longer came from the faculty and were not longer part of the faculty
- Reference desks in academic libraries began appearing and were based on the public library reference desk model
- Reference desks allowed librarians to assist students without having to interact with faculty

# A little more history

- 1960's - Voight and Shores describe the "Library College" where students would be taught to be independent learners using library resources, again advocating an instructional role for libraries
- 1966 - Patricia Knapp receives a grant to teach a library class at Monteith College (Ariew)
- 1960's and 1970's - librarians begin to become faculty members on many campuses
- Analysis of librarian job ads from 1973-2000 show a steady increase in number of jobs requiring instruction (Sproles & Detmering)
- 1975 - *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* is founded
- 1999 - The Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) introduces the Immersion Program to help librarians become better teachers

# Library Instruction at University of West Georgia

- University of West Georgia (UWG) is a state comprehensive university located 50 miles from Atlanta, GA
- In 1995, the Librarians at UWG's Ingram Library developed a class titled "LIBR1101: Research & the Academic Library" as part of the core curriculum
- LIBR1101 became the focal point of library instruction at UWG

# Changes brought about questions

- Retirements
- New faculty – on tenure track
- Reference a victim of “not a priority”
- Instructional Services begins seeking an identity

# Leading to Questions for Instructional Services

- What is our role at UWG?
- Is LIBR1101, now changed to LIBR2100 – Information Literacy & Research, the most important thing we do?
- How do we resolve conflicts about the value of reference?

# Which led to bigger questions

- What makes a librarian professional?
- How is a librarian different from library staff?
- Should we try to do everything?
  - Everything =
    - LIBR2100
    - Reference work
    - Instruction in our liaison areas – one-shots? embedded?
    - (and all the other things – committees, reporting, collection development, meetings....)
  - PLUS – Research (called locally “Professional Development”)

# HOW DID WE GET HERE?





# Literature Review: Scope

- Limited to *Journal of Academic Librarianship*
- Searched for articles about academic libraries and bibliographic and one-shot instruction

# Carolyn Kirkendall's Library Instruction Column: 1975-1982

## Key topics included:

- Sangamon State University's model – staff managed daily operations while librarians focused on instruction
- Library instruction as a permanent part of library services
- Credit-bearing library skills courses for undergrads
- Library (graduate) school curriculum including courses about instruction
- Teaching or demonstrating technical skills?
- Getting administrative support of instructional programs

# 1975-1982 (continued)

Topsy N. Smalley's article "Bibliographic Instruction in Academic Libraries: Questioning Some Assumptions" appears in *JAL* in Nov. 1977

- Asks if what librarians are doing is teaching since emphasis is on technical skills rather than conceptual skills
- Uses Jerome Bruner's framework for act the act of learning
  - Learning requires acquisition of new information
  - Learners should be able to manipulate new knowledge to make it fit new tasks

# 1980's – “Think Tank” article

- 1981 ALA San Francisco pre-conference
- “Think Tank” of “first generation instruction librarians” was formed
- Published recommendations in Dec. 1981 *College & Research Libraries*

# Think Tank Recommendations

- Integration of Bibliographic Instruction into Library Profession
- Integration of Bibliographic Instruction and the Whole of Academic Librarianship into Higher Education
- Integrating Library Use Skills, Bibliographic Concepts, and Available Technology
- Relationships with the Schools of Library Science
- Importance of Research
- Importance of Publication (including outside of traditional library-centered publications)

# Think Tank Controversial Statements

“Bibliographic instruction is intended to teach students to make intelligent, independent decisions about library use. To be able to use the card catalog, reference sources, or computer terminals to retrieve information on very specialized topics are fundamental skills that each student should possess” (395)

# Think Tank Controversial Statements

“Consolidate “the discipline by fostering research, publication, critical analysis, and development of an underlying pedagogy of bibliographic instruction” (394)

# JAL Symposium – Lewis & Vincent Response to Think Tank Recommendations

Lewis & Vincent article March 1983 JAL –

“The discipline ...is librarianship, not bibliographic instruction” (5)

“The authors seem to visualize current bibliographic instruction as a secondary reference activity which somehow must assume its commanding role as *the* reference activity.” (5)



# JAL Symposium – Responses to Think Tank & Lewis & Vincent

Joseph Rosenblum, Reference Librarian, Guilford College

- Librarianship is a dynamic discipline. Students will never be completely self-sufficient and the reference desk can provide updated information as needed (8)
- Library use is a skill and the art for which classroom instruction is no substitute for experience (9)
- “Bibliographic instruction practitioners’ are ...misguided. ....fail to realize that they can best accomplish their goals not by running around campus with projectors and screens,...but by helping users within the library” (9)

# JAL Symposium – Responses to Think Tank & Lewis & Vincent

Mary Reichel, Head, Reference Department, Georgia State University

“Reference desk service and bibliographic instruction are intimately connected, and both are necessary to teach students and other researchers about using the library and finding specific information. These activities are complementary, not competitive with each other”

# JAL Symposium – Responses to Think Tank & Lewis & Vincent

Joseph Boissé, Director of Libraries, Temple University

“One of the most important benefits of bibliographic instruction is that it inevitably results in more efficient and effective use of the time of reference librarians.”

# JAL Symposium – Responses to Think Tank & Lewis & Vincent

Janice T. Koyama, Head Librarian  
Moffitt Undergraduate Library, University of California, Berkeley

“Bibliographic instruction gained particular momentum during the decade of the 70s when there was a growing emphasis on consumerism. By being better informed, users of services and products could be self-reliant and not so dependent on professionals who monopolized their knowledge” (12)

“...undergraduates attempted to influence the quality of education by evaluating faculty and by participating on academic senates’ committees” (12)

# 1990's – What Do Patrons Know?

1990 – Joanne Bessler's article "Do Library Patrons Know What's Good for Them?"

"Service, not instruction should be the hallmark of the profession. Time, money, and imagination should be devoted to developing the technical expertise and services necessary to meet user expectations. While not all expectations will ever be met, a library that devotes its resources to collections and services valued by its patrons will fare better than one that expands its energy on programs to build better patrons" (77)

# Responses to Bessler's article

Patricia F. Stenstrom, Library & Information Science Librarian  
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, IL

“In their enthusiasm to create ‘do-it yourself patrons,’ librarians may inadvertently convey that asking for help is wrong” (78)

To imply that patrons are “wrong” for preferring user-friendly technology indicates “librarians are more interested in controlling the patron than in providing service” (79)

# Responses to Bessler's article

David W. Lewis, Head of the Research & Information Services Department  
University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT (also co-author of critique of Think Tank  
recommendations in 1983)

“We try to ‘build better patrons’ at least in part because it is often easier than  
building a better library” (80)

“Sometimes educating users will be the best solution, for often there is ignorance.  
But more often, as Bessler reminds us, what is needed is libraries that work better.  
What is needed is service” (80)

# Responses to Bessler's article

David Isaacson, Humanities Librarian & Assistant Head of Reference  
Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI

“ ...the mission of colleges and universities is teaching and research. By assisting students and faculty in this essential mission, surely librarians are contributing in a way that is uniquely calling on our expertise” (81)



# Responses to Bessler’s article

Barbara Wittkopf, Head of Reference Desk Services and Bibliographic Instruction,  
Louisiana State University Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA

“For users who have had the opportunity, within the library, to develop a sense of self-sufficiency and skill in meeting their own information needs, BI, in whatever perceived fashion – veiled or overt – may be deemed a service” (82)

# Responses to Bessler's article

Barbara P. Pinelik, Interim Associate Dean for Public Services & Collection Development, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN

“An Unreasonable Burden”

“...some energies that librarians are devoting to instruction might more profitably be channeled into finding ways to make libraries more user-friendly” (84)

# Further Questions

- Does faculty status play a role in these discussions?
- Pauline Wilson's 1979 article "Librarians as Teachers: The Study of an Organizational Fiction"
- Professional identity

# Bibliography

<http://goo.gl/xx6bcl>