



## Foreword

I have been extraordinarily lucky to work closely with educational developers for most of my career, and I have always been struck by the similarities in the space we occupy in the academic enterprise. We both inhabit the space where the boundaries between disciplines are at their most permeable. We both use our expertise to work with faculty to introduce students to their own disciplines' ways of thinking and knowing, not to our own disciplines of librarianship and educational development. We both have developed a facility for asking the questions that allow us to understand another's disciplinary thinking and, from our own liminal perspective, to translate those concepts so that they may be understood by novices and outsiders, whether those are students or fellow participants in a faculty learning community.

But even with all this common ground, there has been relatively little shared conversation. This became obvious to me during the introduction of the *ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*. In many of the discussions, librarians appeared surprised by threshold concepts and unaware of their long history in educational development circles. Similarly, much of the work on assessment of information literacy appears independent of parallel work from educational developers. The introduction of the *Framework* has been an impetus for many of us to learn new things, and in this learning we need to look beyond the library and connect to larger conversations as learners and teachers. Educational developers and librarians have much to learn from each other, and this book is a giant leap in the right direction.

The authors are international leaders in educational development, whether or not that phrase is part of their current position description. Some have formal roles within teaching and learning centres, while others drive change in their disciplines or through large organizations. The chapters they contributed to this book provide everything from road maps for changing institutional cultures to examples of particular strategies in particular contexts that may be easily adapted to our teaching. The book is effervescent with potential to transform our work in everything from our relations with students to our role in developing teaching cultures on campus. There are insights into general topics like the need to restructure reward systems and very particular considerations of teaching. The questions sparked are deep—"What is our signature pedagogy?" could be the focus of a book on its own—and each could be the nucleus of a faculty learning community either at the library level or more usefully with others in the institution.

As I was reading the book, the word that kept coming to mind was *belonging*. This is another area where there is some commonality between librarians and those involved in educational development. At many colleges and universities, we both don't quite fit the structure of the institution. In some places neither of us are quite the same as other faculty in terms of professional expectations, support, remuneration, or visibility; our work doesn't look quite the same as that of "regular" faculty. Sometimes there is an undertone of "outsiderness," of wanting to belong. This may be what makes us most effective because we can empathize more deeply with students who work their way into belonging—in higher

education, in a discipline, in a peer group. Faculty learning communities, communities of practice, collaborations, conferences are all ways that we can belong more as learners. Students as Partners, Decoding the Disciplines, and Signature Pedagogies are all part of helping students feel that sense of belonging more deeply, of becoming more active participants in their academic communities.

I have recently moved to a city where gardening is taken *very* seriously, in part because the climate supports growth and in part because there is a latent expectation that if you live here you will contribute to the community by, at the very least, having an interesting front yard. Getting to know the neighbours has often resulted from a brief pause to admire a spectacular rhododendron or a carefully composed rockery; questions are met with generous advice and occasionally cuttings or promises of seeds. Although neighbourhood walks frequently take the same route, each time the gardens look a little different and each time I see something different in them, depending on where I am in my own planning.

For me this book provokes a similar feeling. The authors, all experts in their fields, are providing us with a look into their gardens. On some visits we may be looking for particular tips, on others for ways of setting up conditions for growing, and sometimes we may just be craving the inspiration that may come from contemplating someone else's approach to a common situation. This is a book for returning to frequently under varying needs and conditions. It is a collection of "over the fence" conversations that may lead to similarly generative discussions with colleagues involved in educational development closer to home.

It is also a book that opens up pathways for librarians to contribute to wider academic discussions around learning and teaching. As I read the chapters, I saw not only where I could apply the approaches in my own work, but also where my expertise as a librarian could enrich the approaches for others. The work provides interesting glimpses as to how librarians are perceived by leaders in educational development and shows that there is ample room for us in these communities of learning and practice. Roxå, Mårtensson, and Alveteg write about the need for cluster-to-cluster communication to leverage communities of practice to change teaching culture.<sup>1</sup> Librarians are ideal participants in this endeavour, not only because we are adept at translating between other academic cultures, but also because we have expertise in teaching and learning to contribute. Often, we see a wider range of learners than others, we see different learning bottlenecks, and we see patterns across groups of learners that others can't. Our participation in educational development initiatives creates opportunities to change teaching culture not only in the library, but also through our interactions with others on campus, across the institution.

This book is an entry point into some of the most interesting conversations in higher education. It is an example of active learning with text, proposing questions and challenging assumptions, providing examples from parallel situations and inviting us to make them our own. Engaging with the ideas proposed by the authors may transform your thinking about learning and teaching and your teaching about thinking and learning. Enjoy!

—Margy MacMillan

## Note

1. Torgny Roxå, Katarina Mårtensson, and Mattias Alveteg, “Understanding and Influencing Teaching and Learning Cultures at University: A Network Approach,” *Higher Education* 62, no. 1 (July 2011): 99–111, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-010-9368-9>.

## Bibliography

Roxå, Torgny, Katarina Mårtensson, and Mattias Alveteg. “Understanding and Influencing Teaching and Learning Cultures at University: A Network Approach.” *Higher Education: The International Journal of Higher Education and Educational Planning* 62, no. 1 (July 2011): 99–111. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-010-9368-9>.

