Helping Students Develop Information Skills is Everyone's Business

Examining Information Contexts

Welcome

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Making New Connections: Librarians Meetup at ISSOTL 2017

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If one theme stood out during the 2017 conference, is was the idea of "community." However you identify with SoTL, the discipline's mission and philosophy encourages community interaction, collaboration, and the exchanging of ideas. This blog post is an account and reflection on how a group of librarians found their community during the 2017 conference.

(Photo by anonymous Calgary local - using Erik's phone)

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Outline

1. Objectives and purpose
2. Define information literacy
3. Discuss the theoretical underpinnings of information literacy
4. Overview of the United States and Canadian context
5. Overview of the Swedish context
6. Group brainstorm activity and discussion (information contexts)
7. Information literacy through the SoTL lens
8. Critiques of information literacy and future research directions within SoTL

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Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will have
- Defined information literacy

- Discussed the information literacy skills in their disciplinary/professional context

- Developed ideas about how information literacy is best taught in their discipline

- Explain how SoTL practices can strengthen information literacy research

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Information Literacy Theory and Practice

Foundations and ties to SoTL

ACRL

" *Information literacy is the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning*

Alexandria Proclamation

> *Information literacy empowers people in all walks of life to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goals. It is a basic human right in a digital world and promotes social inclusion in all nations*

Theoretical I.L. teaching and learning perspectives

Behaviorism – Focus on passive learners´ observable and measurable generic transferable behavior and skills

Constructivism - Focus on learners´ construction of internal active behavior and experiences

- **Phenomenography** – Focus on learners´ variation in experiencing phenomena
- **Social constructivist theory** – Focus on learners´ as active part of situated contexts and communities of practice

Photo by Iñaki del Olmo on Unsplash

(Limberg, L., Sundin, O., & Talja, S., 2013; Marton, F. & Booth, S., 1997; Pilerot & Hedman, 2009; Rosman, Mayer, & Krampen, 2016; Vygotsky, 1962; Wenger, 1998)

Group discussion

What are the essential information literacy skills in your discipline?

What skills do your students need to be successful in your discipline?

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Common instructional approaches

One-shots

Embedded librarianship

Liaison vs functional teams

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(Abrizah et al., 2016; Stephens, 2018; Bruce, 2016)

Traditional I.L. research (i)

Four phases of I.L. research (history), Lloyd and Williamson, 2008

One - Precursors phase, information skills and bibliographic instruction

Two - Experimental phase, I.L. used in a research context in education

Three - Exploratory phase, moving beyond a positivist approach

Four - Evolving phase (current), moving away from educational and other contexts and recognizing the variety of cultural settings

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Traditional I.L. research (ii)

Local experiences in the classroom

- Reporting on new instructional approaches (local)
- Understanding student I.L. competencies (discipline and institution specific)
  - Fluency with different resources and concepts

Broad

- Survey I.L. instruction at a national-level
- Threshold concepts
- Theories and frameworks
- Curricular integration
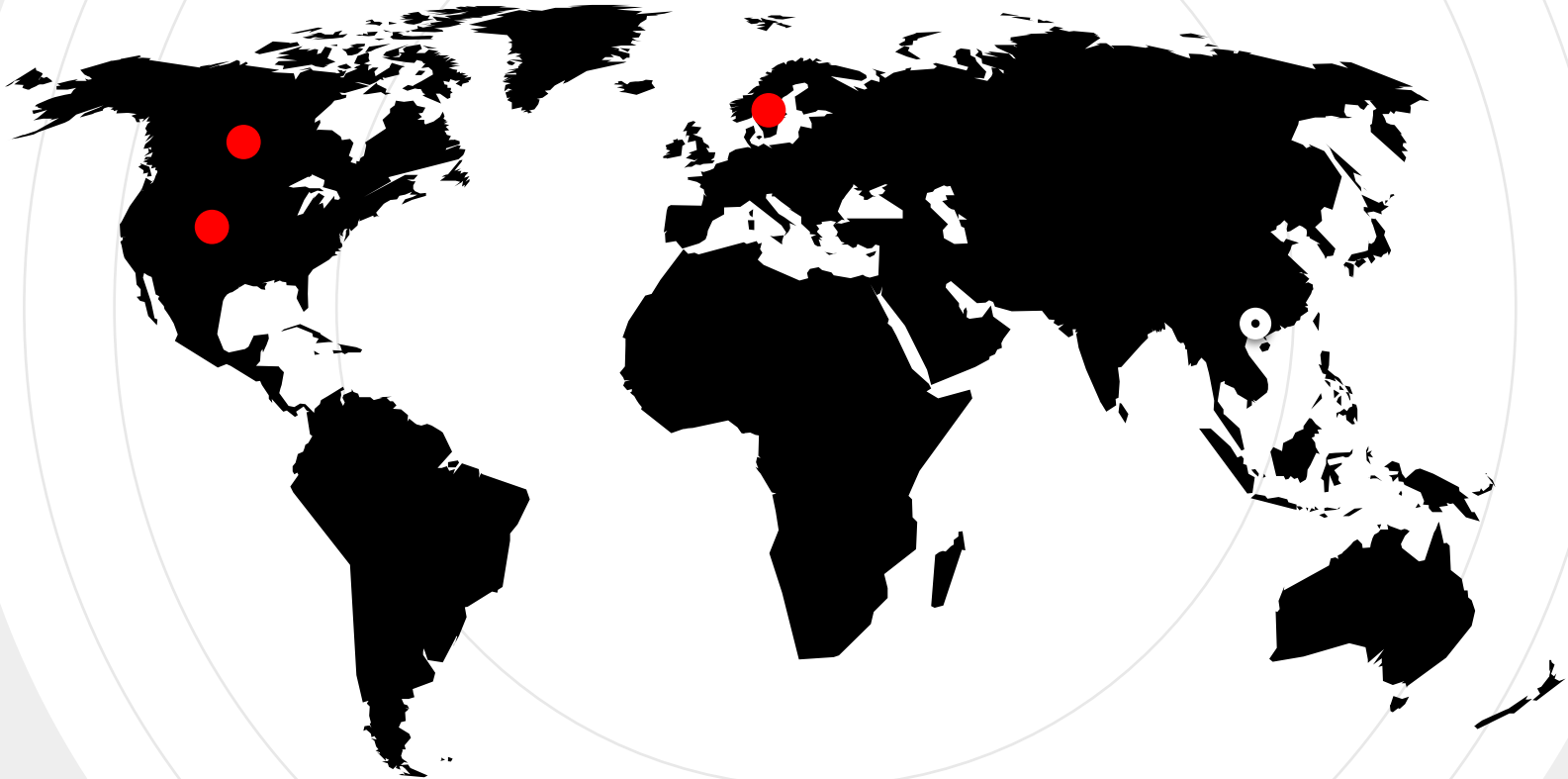
I.L. research tends to be highly collaborative

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Regional Contexts for Information Literacy

Maps

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The North American Context
United States and Canada

Image by Erik Christiansen (CC-BY 4.0)

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North America: Mount Royal University

University

- Small undergraduate university in Calgary, Alberta, Canada
- Approximated 9500 full-time students
- Focus on teaching over research
- Heavy SoTL research focus

Librarians

- Full faculty status
- Primary responsibility is information literacy instruction and teaching equivalent activities
- Librarians also involved in research and service

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North America: I.L. instruction prevalence (i)

United States (Julien et al., 2018)

- 55% of respondents were full-time instruction librarians
- Undergraduate and first-year students were the primary target demographic

Canada (Julien et al., 2013)

- Fewer percentage of full-time instruction librarians (29%).
  - Responsibility shared among multiple reference librarians
- Majority of respondents felt I.L. instruction should be a shared responsibility

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North America: I.L. instruction prevalence (ii)

Bury (2016) – Faculty perceptions I.L. Instruction

- Surveyed faculty from a university in Toronto
- Majority of respondents address I.L. in their teaching *and* thought librarians play a critical role
- Respondents in favour of diverse instructional methods/approaches
- Authors stress importance of *partnership* and *programmatic instruction*

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North America: Challenges

Challenges facing librarians is almost identical between countries

- Faculty buy-in
- Ratio of librarians to students (especially when demand is high)
- Maintaining student engagement
- Curricular integration

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(Bury, 2016; Julien et al., 2018)

The Western European Context Sweden

Sweden: A very brief history of I.L. instruction

From bibliographic instruction to I.L. instruction

- From focus on systems and sources to focus on students´ behavior and learning, including I.L.

The Bologna process

- Even more focus on students´ learning and I.L.
- Librarians involved in I.L. curricula design

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(Attard, A., Di Iorio, E., Geven, K. & Santa, R., 2010; Boyer, 1990; Lindberg, 2015; Limberg, L., Sundin, O., & Talja, S. 2013; Pilerot, 2018; Virkus, 2003)

Sweden: I.L. instruction today

- I.L. instruction today a fundamental part of Swedish academic librarians' professional practice
- Librarians do not have faculty status
- Most universities have I.L. instruction functional teams
- I.L. and library and Information Science research strongly influenced by socio-cultural theory of learning - information practices
  - Gap between I.L. research and I.L. instruction practitioners (librarians)

CC image by Kristianstad University

(Pilerot, 2014; Limberg, L., Sundin, O., & Talja, S. 2013)

Sweden: I.L. instruction at Kristianstad
University

Constructive alignment in information practices

Librarian-faculty collaboration essential for success

**Intended learning outcomes (ILO´s)**

- Integrated in discipline- and course-specific curricula

Teaching and learning activities (TLA´s)

- Integrated with discipline- and course-specific TLA´s
    - Lectures and workshop
    - Flipped classroom

Assessment tasks (AT´s)

- Integrated with discipline- and course-specific TLA´s
    - Seminars
    - Worksheets
    - Quiz

(Biggs, 2011; Limberg, L., Sundin, O., & Talja, S. 2013, Vygotsky, 1962)

ILO´s

I.L. in information practices

AT`s

TLA´s
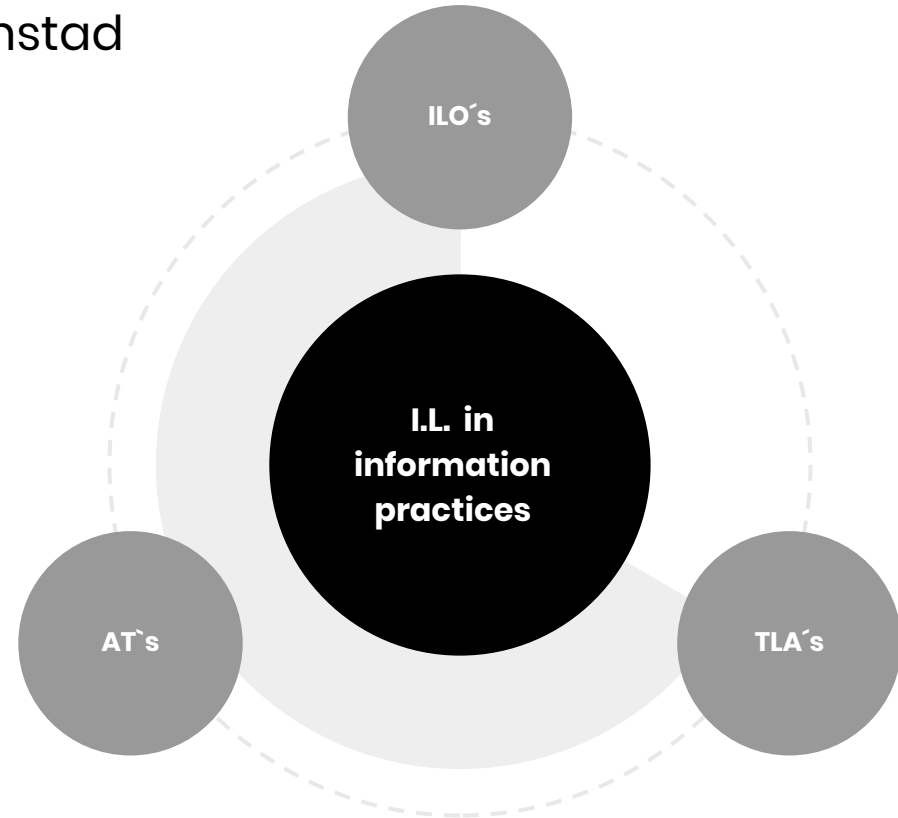
Sweden: Challenges

Challenges facing Swedish and North American librarians are similar:

- Recognition as teachers
- Collaboration faculty – librarians, librarians – educational developers, librarians – students
- Integrating I.L. in curricula
- Ratio of librarians to students
- Bridging the gap between I.L. research and I.L. practices

(Andersson, 2015; Pilerot, 2018; Limberg, L., Sundin, O., & Talja, S. 2013)

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Group discussion

What are the essential information literacy skills in your national/cultural context?

Are there common challenges your students encounter?

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Information Literacy through the SoTL lens

Opportunities

Criticism of information literacy

Treatment of I.L. as its own discipline and decontextualization of information skills (Farrel & Badke, 2015; Pilerot, 2016)

- Treated as generic skills that librarians prescribe across disciplines

Little evolution beyond the traditional 'one-shot' model / course-level instruction (Saunders, 2012)

Despite the level of instruction, I.L. has not become a priority for disciplines' curricula (McGuinness, 2006)

- Faculty still see I.L. as an essential skill
- I.L. seen as disciplinary-specific and are learned by doing (situated socio-cultural practices)
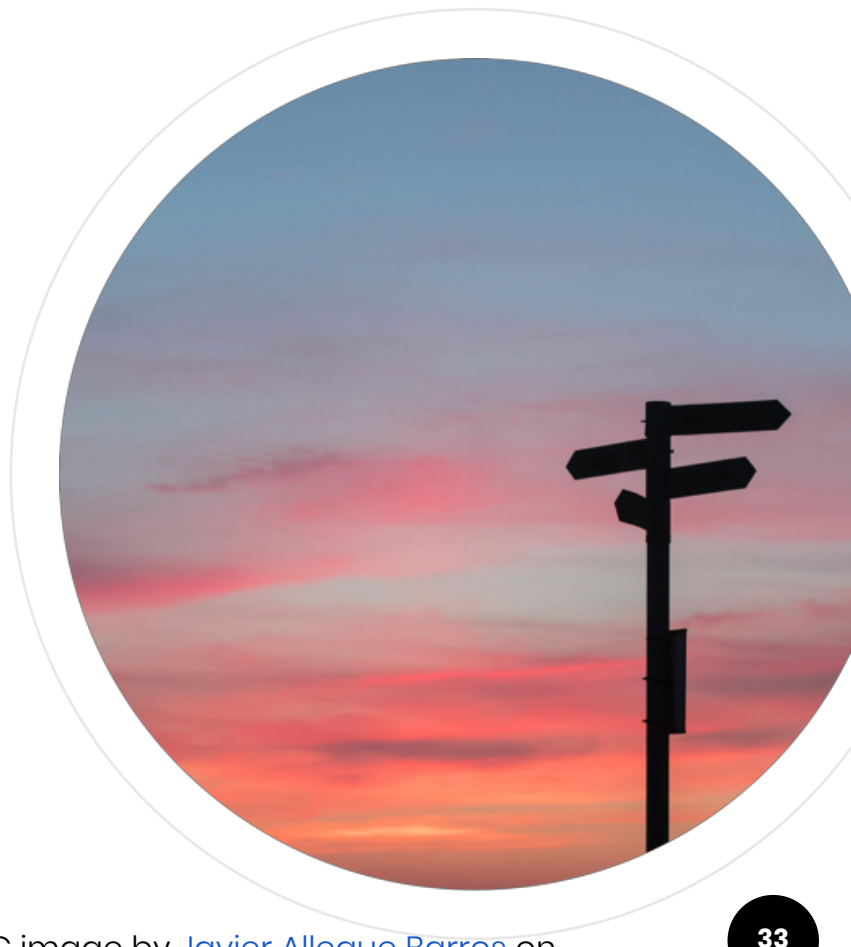
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Opportunities in SoTL

Bradley, 2009

- Provides librarians another avenue to develop their own teaching practices
  - SoTL underrepresented in the library literature
  - Framing teaching in SoTL terms

Bring information literacy outside of the library and information science domain

- Forge new faculty collaborations
- Develop the disciplinary contexts

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Bridging the gap

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Thanks for attending!

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