



Where do librarians in higher education learn how to teach? Are courses on instruction part of LIS program curriculum? How can we better train and support academic librarians who teach?

## In the Literature

### Training and Education:

- Calls for better training in instruction have been present since the 1970s: Galloway (1976), surveying 47 LIS program curricula, determined that “instruction receives only superficial attention; a cursory mention in the curricula of less than half the schools” (p. 29).
- The number of courses increased throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Larson & Meltzer, 1987; Sullivan, 1996).
- Even with this increase, Westbrook (1999) argued that “the need still outpaces the support” (p. 96). This conviction is repeated in more recent literature (e.g. Sproles, Johnson, & Farison, 2008; Westbrook & Fabian, 2010; Bewick & Corral, 2010; Bryan, 2016).
- Several studies suggest that librarians would prefer to learn about instruction in their LIS programs (Shonrock & Mulder, 1993; Bewick & Corral, 2010).
- Walter (2008) suggests a closer look at the *content* and *structure* of courses on instruction, as well as how they are perceived by students (p. 56, 62).
- Several studies suggest “formalizing” on-the-job or job-embedded learning (Westbrook & Fabian 2010, p. 588; Hess, 2016).

## The Study

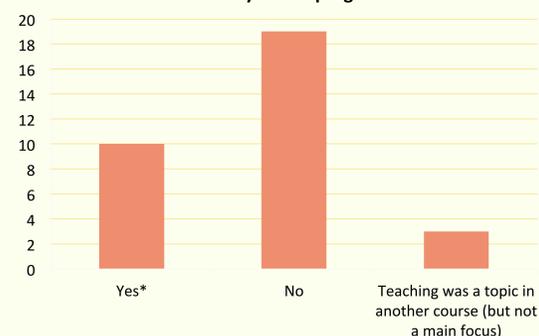
- 20 LIS programs with online curriculum information and course descriptions were surveyed for courses on instruction.
- An online questionnaire (9 questions) was sent out via email and Twitter to a small network of librarians in higher education.
- The survey received 32 responses.
- Brief follow-up interviews were conducted on a volunteer basis with 5 of the 32 responding librarians.

## Findings: The Current Situation

### Courses on Instruction:

- 19 of the 20 surveyed LIS programs have dedicated instruction courses.
- 11 programs have 1 course; 6 have 2; 2 have 3.
- 7 have university certificates in college teaching/pedagogy.

Figure 1. Did you take an instruction course in your LIS program?



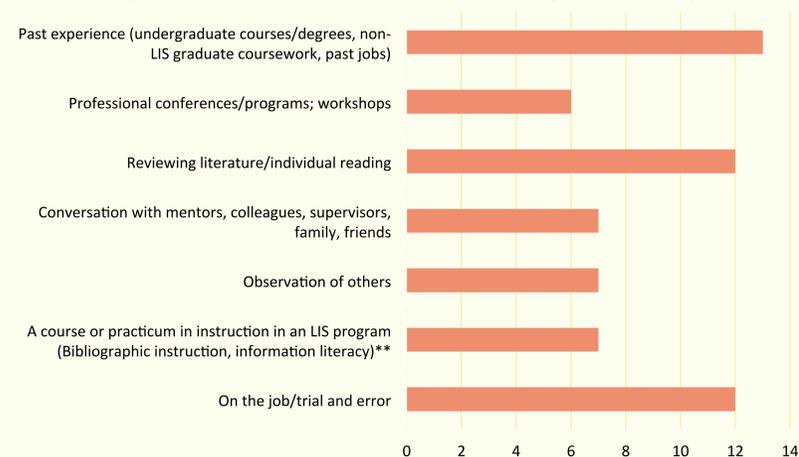
### Continuing Education on Instruction:

- Librarians use many of the same methods in Fig. 2 for continuing education on instruction.
- Conferences were more often mentioned in the context of continuing education and keeping current with instruction practices.
- Respondents also mentioned the #critlib community on Twitter as a continuing source on instruction.
- In general, respondents were most interested in literature on specific, practical approaches that they could apply directly to their work.

### Learning about Teaching:

- Most respondents did not take an instruction course in their LIS program (See Fig. 1).
- Several “Yes” responses were qualified by comments such as: “But it was horrible” or “It barely scratched the surface.”
- Most acquired knowledge of teaching through other means (See Fig. 2).
- 19 out of 32 had received some kind of mentoring related to teaching.

Figure 2. How did you acquire most of your knowledge about teaching?



### Conclusions:

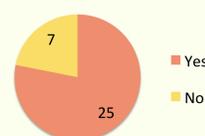
- Academic librarians learn about instruction from many sources, and most respondents utilized several avenues for exploration. Time is a significant factor in continued learning.
- Most preferred learning by doing, observing, and conversing with colleagues.
- There is a strong preference for literature on specific, practical approaches to instruction that can be applied to daily practice.
- There are many opportunities for more systematic training and support.

## Findings: Opportunities for Change

### Teaching is Expected:

- Most survey respondents expected to teach (See Fig. 3).
- This supports claims from respondents and the literature that more training is necessary.

Figure 3. Did you expect teaching to be part of your duties as an academic librarian?



### Suggestions for better training and support:

#### Interviewees mentioned:

- Mentality shift within profession is needed: a more intentional focus on instruction in LIS education and professional practice
- Require LIS students to take a course on instruction

- Create courses on online instruction
- Engage with instruction literature outside of librarianship
- Create opportunities for practice (for students and interested professionals)
- Residency or Fellowship programs for recent graduates
- Teaching orientation for new hires
- Mechanisms for observation
- ACRL Immersion
- Internal support mechanisms (e.g. reading or conversation groups)

“Teaching is about practice and learning from doing.”

—Survey Participant

“Both [beginning librarians and academic institutions] should commit themselves to making additional training and continuing education a priority” (Sproles et al., 2008, p. 207).

For references and more details on the study, scan the QR code above.