

CARL LRI Poster: By Librarians, For Librarians: The Development of the Librarians' Research Institute

Abstract: This poster will describe our investigations of research culture in Canadian libraries and the development of a Librarians' Research Institute (LRI), which emerged from these investigations. This poster will convey some of the theoretical and practical underpinnings of the LRI and articulate the foundational principles that informed the LRI. **Résumé:**

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1. Introduction

In spite of the increase in formal and informal expectations for research by Canadian librarians, there have been few—if any—Canada-wide initiatives to help support librarians in meeting research expectations. Moreover, there have been few opportunities to address academic librarians' needs and Canadian librarian research culture in any systematic way, especially on a national scale. As a way of redressing these absences and filling this need, a four-day national institute, the Librarians' Research Institute (LRI), was proposed and conducted in order to bring together Canadian librarians interested in developing their own research programs and working toward fostering a positive and productive research culture in Canadian academic libraries.

The three foundational principles that informed our Institute's format, programming, and short- and long-term objectives include: focus on strengths not deficits; development of habits of mind not skills; and content created and delivered by librarians for librarians. These foundational principles will be described in the proposed poster.

2. Strengths not deficits

As we considered what could be done to help develop, nurture, and further the research work of academic librarians in Canada, we knew focusing only on deficits such as lack of time, resources, or skills would mire our discussions on problems rather than solutions. Instead, we explicitly focused on the strengths our professional community possesses rather than what it lacks. Considering alternatives to the deficit model, inspiration came from scholars, researchers, and practitioners in other fields who used strengths-based approaches. Emerging primarily from the field of social work, a strengths perspective, as articulated by Saleebey (1996), demands that individuals, families, and communities are seen in the light of their capacities, talents, competencies, possibilities, visions, values, and hopes. By focusing the Institute on the strengths the participants and peer mentors possessed, we believed it was possible that we—as a community of librarian researchers—could do more than just navigate, negotiate, and survive obstacles: we could use our collective and individual strengths to explore new terrain and reach new heights.

3. Habits of mind not skills

From its inception, the LRI's mandate was to provide Canadian librarians with opportunities not otherwise available to them. Most librarians have previously had or have potential to access skills-development opportunities. For these reasons, the focus of

the LRI was not on skills but on developing researchers' habits of mind. Focusing on habits of mind was a way to think about research as a holistic experience. In *Discovering and Exploring Habits of Mind*, Costa and Kallick (2000), describe sixteen habits of minds or “characteristics of what intelligent people do when they are confronted with problems, the resolutions to which are not immediately apparent” (p. 2) including: persisting; thinking flexibly; responding with wonderment and awe; striving for accuracy; thinking about thinking (metacognition); creating, imagining and innovating; questioning and posing problems; applying past knowledge to new situations; remaining open to continuous learning; and thinking and communicating with clarity and precision. These habits of mind clearly could not be taught in a week, but the Institute could start to help librarians recognize and develop the habits of mind required to do the research they aspired to do.

4. By librarians, for librarians

Initially, it had been thought that the LRI curriculum could be presented by scholar experts outside of the library community. It became apparent, however, that building a curriculum using experts outside of our discipline and country ran counter to the Institute's intentions. Relying upon non-librarians or non-Canadians for content and curriculum would do very little to develop and nurture a research culture among Canadian librarians. Looking to external experts also implied, inaccurately, that librarians across Canada did not have the expertise and background to teach and develop the LRI's curriculum. For these reasons, a peer mentor approach was proposed wherein accomplished Canadian librarian researchers would come together to build a curriculum that drew explicitly from their expertise and experience. Peer mentors were chosen for their research achievements, leadership qualities, and the unique contributions they could make to a diverse team.

5. Conclusion

This poster will provide insight into how Canadian academic librarians are working towards building a research culture that aligns with the strengths and values of academic librarianship.

6. References

- Costa, Arthur L., and Kallick, Bena. Describing 16 habits of mind. Institute for Habits of Mind. 2000. Accessed December 28, 2013.
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- Saleebey, Dennis. 1996. “The Strengths Perspective In Social Work Practice: Extensions And Cautions.” *Social Work* 41, no. 3 (May 1996): 296-305.