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Staying Well in Turbulent Times // Harness the Power of AI // Transactional Distance in Academic Libraries

Florida Libraries

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FROM THE EDITOR

MARY DANIELS



First of all, I want to thank the Board of the Florida Library Association for accepting my application to be the full-time Editor-in-Chief of Florida Libraries. This is such an honor, and I am looking forward to continuing the tradition of excellence left by those who went before me. I'm so appreciative for the chance to work with our fantastic Editorial Board, the leaders of FLA, and library workers across the state.

This issue has an unintentional current running through it—that of support. Librarians and library workers have faced unparalleled challenges in the last few years—I don't need to cite articles or provide links to tell you that. Many of you are living these experiences. And while we read lots about book bans, Boards and governments not supporting their library workers, misuse of Artificial Intelligence, and the myriad of other difficulties facing Florida libraries, I hope this issue will be a bright spot in your reading time, shining a little hope and encouragement across your screens.

Incoming FLA President, Jorge E. Perez, wrote an amazingly uplifting piece for this issue detailing the time he spent in Washington, D.C. at the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) meeting where he met viral librarian sensation, Mychal Threets. If you're unfamiliar with Mychal, he went viral on social media over the past year by sharing stories of Library Joy, and is (at time of press) partnering with PBS for new library and literacy-themed programming. Nancy Fredericks from University of South Florida wrote a comprehensive guide for library workers about staying well—physically, mentally, and financially—during turbulent times. There are two articles in this issue with suggestions on how libraries can embrace the use of Artificial Intelligence rather than shying away from it. And I had the honor of speaking with former American Library Association President, Patricia Glass Schuman, about the challenges she faced in the 1990's and the importance of ongoing advocacy.

The impression that stuck out to me when compiling this issue was that despite the turbulence we are facing in our field, there are so many people who support their libraries, who love their librarians, and who experience that Library Joy. We have supporters not only in our field, but in other professions and organizations, too. Now is the time to reach out, build bridges, and reciprocate that support with each other and those outside the library field, too. Speak up. Get involved. Advocate for us and encourage others to do the same!

Not sure where to start? There are some great tips throughout this issue, but as May approaches, the best suggestion I can offer is to attend the FLA Conference in Orlando if you are able. Conference is an invaluable opportunity to connect, make partnerships, and learn more about libraries throughout the state (and most importantly, the people who work there). If you can't make it to the Conference, don't worry—we are planning a special Conference Recap issue of Florida Libraries for this summer.

In short: times are tough but so are we! We have shown over and over again that we cannot be knocked down, and that no one will be able to take away our Library Joy. If you see me at Conference, stop by and say hello!

Best,

MARY DANIELS, MLIS
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

FROM THE PRESIDENT

DOUGLAS CRANE



As my term as President of the Florida Library Association comes to an end, I am taking time to look back on the past year. Being the Association President provides a unique vantage point from which to view the entire organization. Along with it goes the responsibility to take special care to leave FLA better off than when I entered the position. I can say that I gave the Presidency plenty of time and attention to help us move forward and address the unique challenges facing libraries in this time.

On the down side, certain political groups have continued to cast libraries and library workers in a negative light. This has been most clearly demonstrated in the attacks on the American Library Association and its current President, Emily Drabinski. Unfortunately, FLA is involved in this conflict through our status as a State Chapter. To combat this threat, FLA has been working with ALA to be active on several fronts.

In Tallahassee, the FLA Advocacy Committee, the Board of Directors, and our lobby team of Robert Stuart and Katie Flury from GrayRobinson worked to advocate for the organization and library funding, both in the Governor's office and the Legislature. Thankfully, this past legislative session saw no library or book-targeted bills. In both my visits to the Capitol, including for our successful Advocacy Day, I found no interest amongst Senators or Representatives to limit libraries. In fact, we saw another year of funding for new library construction grants.

Professionally, FLA has been very active to educate our members and equip them with the tools they need to support the profession. Our Intellectual Freedom and the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) committees were active in providing resources and keeping our membership informed on current issues. Our upcoming conference will feature several breakout sessions designed to train and enlighten our conference-goers on these issues.

On a positive front, FLA was busy with new endeavors. On the fundraising side, the Communications Committee laid the groundwork to open our very first online merchandise store. The Professional Development Committee put together an excellent webinar to inform participants on how to get the most out of any conference they attend. The membership team worked hard to reach out to our members, inviting them to renew and make the most of their investment in FLA. The committees for Awards and Honors and Conference Planning are both in the home stretch of their work, which will bear fruit in Orlando at the annual conference.

Thank you to the entire Board of Directors for their stellar participation in monthly meetings. All year, the Board was able to quickly address issues in a collaborative manner that ensured a wide-ranging, respectful conversation.

FLA could not function with the day-to-day efforts of its small but mighty staff. Executive Director Jenny Abdelnour ensured that the office ran smoothly and handled all surprises along the way. Niall Williams, our new part-timer, dove right in to help with Legislative Day. As well, a big thanks to Jeanice Caskey, our contracted Conference Planner, who is working her magic to ensure everyone has a great conference.

Please enjoy this issue of Florida Libraries. Thank you to our editor Mary Daniels and all the contributors for taking the time to put this together. I look forward to seeing everyone at the Annual Conference in Orlando.

Respectfully Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Douglas Crane'.

DOUGLAS CRANE

FLA PRESIDENT 2023-2024

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

JENNIFER K. ABDELNOUR, CAE



Spring is (has been) here! And FLA is here for it!

FLA's first priority this year was hiring a new part-time Administrative Assistant. We hired Niall Williams, a Master of Science in Information (MSI) student at Florida State University, in January. Niall has proven to be such an asset to FLA and to my work supporting your association.

Next up was the selection of your new *Florida Libraries* Journal Editor-in-Chief, Mary Daniels, Maitland Public Library. Mary and the Editorial Board members are critical to shepherding journal issues from their many disparate parts into cohesive publications.

Library Legislative Day was held in late January, though planning began last summer. Around 35 library supporters, Florida legislators, and legislative staff attended the Legislative Reception at the Historic Florida Capitol. The next day our advocates met with legislators' offices to share the good work that libraries do and to request their support of library funding. The visits were upbeat and positive. Thank you to all who participated.



Douglas Crane, Winona Patterson, Rep. Rita Harris, Patty Takacs, Jenny Abdelnour

Also in late January, FLA awarded hurricane relief funds to a Taylor County Library staff member in need following last year's Hurricane Idalia. Thank you to those who donated to the Hurricane Relief Fund. You made a difference.

Rounding out the month, FLA's Communications Committee, led by Chair Dino Giallourakis, helped create a merchandise shop on the Threadless website. Shirts, mugs, tote bags, and other items can be customized with the FLA logo, conference logos, and more. And, FLA gets a percentage of all sales!

February brought many opportunities for our members and other library supporters to expand their knowledge and make their voices heard through the Virtual Town Hall with President Douglas Crane; Diversity Discussion; Library Conferences 101 webinar; and a Q&A with our 2024 Conference keynote speaker, Kris McGuigan.

In early March, Vice President/President-Elect Jorge Perez flew to Washington, DC to participate in the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies' Voices for Libraries event. Jorge participated in a briefing followed by a day of advocating for library funding at the federal level. Thank you, Jorge, for representing Florida libraries!



Jorge Perez



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

JENNIFER K. ABDELNOUR, CAE

In early April, FLA welcomed two new and three existing Board members to the 2024-2045 FLA Board of Directors. Congratulations to VP/President-Elect, Allison Grubbs; Treasurer, Nancy Fredericks; Region 2 Director, Sonya Chapa; Region 5 Director, Holly Albanese; and Region 6 Director, Caitie Cerise. We appreciate your past and future service to FLA.

FLA will be awarding three worthy library graduate students with scholarships of more than \$1,000 each. In addition, we will honor esteemed libraries, library workers, and library supporters with 16 awards. Congratulations to all of our honorees!

Year-round conference planning will soon culminate in the May 15-17, 2024 Annual Conference in Orlando. You do not want to miss all of the professional development, camaraderie, and just plain fun of this event!

Looking ahead to early August, the FLA Board of Directors and Committee Chairs will hold a retreat at the University of Central Florida to include a facilitated strategic planning session.

I look forward to seeing you at the FLA Conference in May and wish you a fun-filled summer.

As always, thank you for supporting Florida libraries!

JENNIFER K. ABDELNOUR, CAE
FLA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



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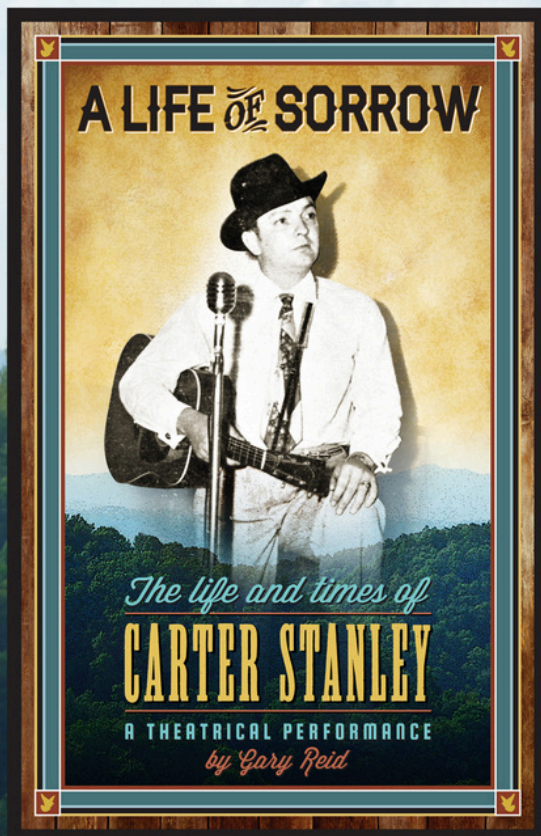
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CELEBRATING LIBRARIANS

IT IS TIME TO TELL OUR STORY AND REFLECT ON OUR SUCCESSES



BY JORGE PEREZ

Jorge Perez is the incoming president for the Florida Library Association and Instructional and Information Services Librarian for Louis Calder Memorial Library for the Miller School of Medicine at the University of Miami.

“Without librarians, a library building is merely a warehouse of stuff. It’s the librarian who makes a library what it is.”

Scott Carlson (1)

It is time to tell our story. We are a unified community. We are a strong, passionate group of people. We have a powerful history. We share supportive professional associations. We embody values in line with the public good. We strive to be of service to all our community members, whether we are serving in a public library or an academic setting. All these statements are a celebration of ourselves. Celebrating librarians and our work aligns with social media sensation Mychal Threats’ movement to focus on “Library Joy.” I met Mychal in Washington, D.C. at the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) national meeting of librarians to effectively communicate with legislators about the importance of federal funding for libraries. Mychal’s simple message has resonated with so many people. It is no surprise that communities nationwide support librarians.



The author with Mychal Threats

Librarians are Valued.

According to a survey conducted in November 2023 by Every Library Institute on parent perceptions of school and public librarians, an overwhelming level of trust is placed in librarians, coupled with a high degree of overall satisfaction with their respective libraries. Among many positive data points, one item stood out for me; parents rated 91% of public librarians and 87% of school librarians as ‘Trustworthy’, far exceeding other professions. In addition, 92% of respondents trust their librarians to select resources and to suggest books and materials that are suitable in terms of age and content. (2) These findings are an important reminder of our community’s value and trust in us during a time of surges in book banning challenges and cases of hostility towards librarians.

In another survey conducted in 2017 by academic librarians at James Madison University (JMU), undergraduate students strongly believed that librarians are dedicated, with the primary motivation being their desire to assist people. The survey revealed that 70% of students acknowledge that supporting students is a key focus for librarians. Additionally, over 80% of students agree that librarians respect their intelligence, have practical knowledge, help students learn to do things themselves, and are friendly and pleasant. (3) JMU faculty shared similar sentiments, concurring that their librarians are highly competent and provide an invaluable level of service. (4)

Human nature often leads us to absorb the chaos around us, momentarily allowing it to influence our perception of professional value and worth. Let’s recognize that these external events do not define our inherent value or how the communities we serve perceive us as librarians.

CELEBRATING LIBRARIANS

Librarians Care for Their Colleagues

On the cusp of my FLA presidency, I reflect on those who have supported me in my professional career and have changed my professional trajectory. We all participate in mentoring and empowerment practices during these times.

In early 2002, I made my way from Little Havana to the Tampa Bay area to attend library science school at the University of South Florida (USF). I was hired as a courier for the Pinellas Public Library Cooperative (PPLC) in Clearwater, FL when Bernadette Storck was Executive Director. She touched many lives, mine included. Bernadette was a key figure in Florida library history and added to my excitement in embarking on a remarkable profession. I am forever grateful to her for approving education funding as part of my employment benefits.

Later in my studies, I was a part-time law librarian thanks to Sally Waters at Stetson College of Law, who is such a wonderful soul to be around. Sally made the work environment fun, welcoming, and conducive to growth. I learned the nature of professional dedication and finding joy with your colleagues and the community we serve. Later, during my time at St. Petersburg College (SPC), Dr. Tracy Elliott, now Florida Gulf Coast University Library Dean, taught me to not be afraid to try new, innovative approaches to connect students to libraries. I will always be grateful for her encouragement to shine.



Stetson College Law Librarians, Pamela Burdett, Nick Jackson, Sally Waters, and Julieanne "Jules" Stevens, and the author

At SPC, Debbie Robinson encouraged and gave me the needed push to delve into administration and become a campus director, first at the Tarpon Springs campus and later at the Gibbs Campus. Often, the encouragement and recognition from others can fuel our confidence and determination to succeed in areas that initially seem daunting.

Gene Coppola, past Palm Harbor Library director, has been a remarkable mentor through the years. I first met him when I was an ILL courier and later reconnected years later as a campus director at SPC's Tarpon Springs Campus. He boldly reimagined library spaces at his branch and has been a key player in nurturing future generations of librarians. I hope to mirror his boldness and ability to build communities during my presidency. Gene briefly commended me after my lightning round presentation at our last FLA conference, and what I would like to tell him is that his commitment to the profession and his support through the years stimulated my self-actualization journey.

Reflecting on those who have changed our lives can be a powerful exercise. It allows us to express gratitude, acknowledge the influence they've had on us, and perhaps even inspire us to impact others positively ourselves.

Librarians Care for Themselves.

A key aspect of Mychal's 'Library Joy' movement is mental health awareness. This is the time, more than ever, to have mutual mental health check-ins. The current legislation passed has created an environment of great uncertainty and unneeded hostility. We know of librarians leaving the profession prematurely or fleeing work environments where they are not supported, have to self-censor, or make choices that are not in line with our professional and personal values.

The passion we have for our profession is the same feeling that can make us hurt during these tumultuous times. We tend to take things personally. We are committed to our craft and assisting our communities. While current times bring challenges, our passion also provides strength and purpose to persevere and make a difference, no matter the obstacles we may face. Our determination is stronger than ever.

Thanks to FLA leadership, I have gained valuable insights over the past year about the importance of balance and discernment in navigating challenges, especially in the face of media sensationalism and changing regulations. Recognizing that there's an art to knowing when to challenge certain situations and when to allow things to unfold naturally demonstrates a mature understanding of how to approach various circumstances.

CELEBRATING LIBRARIANS

Librarians Care for their Professional Associations

As I reflect on my more than twenty years in the profession, Florida Library Association (FLA) was the initial professional organization instrumental in my career growth, offering the spaces for countless opportunities. In 2006, I attended my first FLA conference as a timid, awkward new college librarian at SPC. By the end of the conference, I felt I had found my people.

Through FLA, I chaired and collaborated on several committees, experienced library legislation day, became a regional director, and even nurtured my creative side by becoming a past conference logo designer and bookmark contest winner. FLA has afforded me collaborations with fellow state colleagues and connected me to extraordinary mentors. In fact, FLA conferences were the venues that allowed me to present my first library poster, lightning round, and solo conference presentation. Being a librarian is an awesome job. I am amazed at all the work that FLA communities are doing currently, and together with all of you, I would like to be an instrumental piece in keeping this excellent work moving forward. I know that we have the power and focus to continue FLA's mission.

My gratitude for FLA and its mission to uphold our values at this moment in time are the reasons I opted to run for office. I am going to do something radical; I will accept what is and make a mindful choice to celebrate our profession. Looking back at our past conference themes, the majority focus has been on serving our communities or how we can do better to serve others. This year is our year. We are celebrating us. Our profession. Ourselves. We are telling our story.

Call To Action:

1. Revisit the foundations of our profession. Let's not get lost in the noise. Staying grounded in our professional ethics and values is crucial, especially during challenging times. When the world around us seems chaotic or uncertain, it's essential to maintain our strong moral compass to guide our actions and decisions. Revisiting the foundations of our profession can provide us with clarity, purpose, and direction to move forward in a healthy way.

2. Reflect on our Successes. Reflection is usually something that we skip over or rarely mindfully integrate into our daily lives. Have a conversation with a colleague about tough topics and experiences. Journal. Create a list of projects and techniques that have been successful. Reflect on what has worked on yourself for self-affirmation. These practices create distance from negativity and assist in bringing out the "best you" in any situation.

3. Tell Your Story. Unfortunately, many do not fully understand the breadth of responsibilities that librarians undertake or the educational background required to enter the profession. We know that we play a vital role in society, far beyond simply organizing books, and we have a calling to make folks aware of this. During library events, presentations and orientations, let's highlight what we do. Share your story. What made you go into librarianship? Share the why of what you do to enlighten elected officials and community members.

4. Become Involved. Getting involved in professional library organizations can take many forms, from attending conferences and workshops to volunteering on committees, contributing to publications, or participating in advocacy efforts. By actively engaging with your professional community, you can stay informed, expand your network, and contribute to advancing the library profession. Please consider becoming more proactive with FLA.

5. Mentor and Build Relationships. We all have something to offer others from our experience, regardless of the length of our career. Seasoned librarians can partner with recent graduates to provide mutual fresh perspectives, insights into emerging trends, and opportunities for learning and growth for both parties. Reach out to a new hire. Create an internal program that fosters connection and growth. Building a strong support network strengthens the fabric of our professional community and creates a sense of belonging for our colleagues.

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PARTNERSHIPS AS PATHWAYS TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A VILLAGE LIBRARY STORY

MICHELLE BROWN, MLS
LIBRARY DIRECTOR BROCKWAY MEMORIAL LIBRARY
MIAMI SHORES, FLORIDA

**"Alone we can do so little;
together we can do so much."**

Helen Keller

Since 1949, Brockway Memorial Library has been serving Miami Shores Village, a suburban hamlet situated just north of downtown Miami, yet distinctively unique for its proximity to Biscayne Bay, its lush tree canopy, and its small-town vibe. Built at the onset thanks to a generous bestowal of \$50,000 by philanthropist and truck manufacturer, George A. Brockway, and a donation of the land on which it sits by Bessemer Properties, the library has had community spirit in its roots from the start. In fact, the initial collection consisted of 4,182 volumes, composed of books donated by individual residents and civic organizations, such as the Miami Shores Woman's Club, Rotary, and the Miami Shores Optimist Club.

Over the years, local organizations, schools, professionals, and business owners have sought to partner with the library as an avenue for outreach. With a shared desire to bring the public together for a common purpose, the results of these collaborations have been exponentially beneficial to all parties. With an open mindset, the library has been able to offer a variety of stellar programming for both adults and youth with community groups from all backgrounds.



Master Gardener Workshop

From the arts, entities such as the Miami Theater Center, the North Miami Museum of Contemporary Art, the Miami Shores Fine Arts Commission, and the Miami Art League, have all created opportunities for the library to serve as an avenue for experiencing music, art, poetry, dance, and photography. From environmental groups, such as the Miami Seed Share and Bound by Beauty, patrons have learned about native gardening and have been given the tools to work, live, and play more sustainably. Groups with a focus on history and preservation, such as the Miami Shores Historic Preservation Board and HistoryMiami Museum, as well as local tour guides and resident historians, have led to a community passion for local history that earned Miami Shores Village a Florida League of Cities 2022 Florida Citizenship Award. STEM-focused (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) partners, like the Frost Museum, have enthralled and educated our youngest patrons to excite their interest in these important subjects. Business-minded collaborators like the Chamber of Commerce and the Village's own Small-Business Development groups are helping our local business owners find a niche in our growing downtown corridor. And the list goes on!



Master Gardener Workshop

Partnerships as Pathways to Community Engagement

Health and wellness with our neighborhood physicians and fitness instructors, lifelong learning with our local universities, and non-profit organizations with a social mission, like the South Florida People of Color, are all working together to better our community, and the library resides at the heart of it.

Brockway Memorial Library provides services to a municipality of just over 11,000 residents. With a burgeoning patronage of young families and new neighbors, as well as a large number of retirees and senior citizens, there is a strong demand for offerings geared toward these various age groups, and a new interest on the library's part to provide programming that ties them all together in what we call intergenerational offerings. The latter has been very well-received and has been simple to accomplish in the forms of walking history tours, family game nights, and a particularly strong program, Senior Tech Connect, founded by Nicolas Jachtchenco, a high school student who recognized the difficulties his grandmothers had with technology and figured that other seniors were having similar issues. His mission is to improve the quality of life of senior citizens by breaking down technology and age barriers by giving them the skills they need to access today's digitally-driven world. The dynamic between the age groups is wonderfully uplifting! What started as a one-time program, now recurs monthly.

Like all libraries in this Digital Age, we have had to evolve in order to meet the changing needs of today's users. Community partnerships have been one way that our library has been able to stay vibrant and valued. What's more, we've been able to host innovative offerings beyond what we ourselves, as a small staff of 10, could have managed on our own. Programs like these also allow us to tie real-world, current interests and needs into our other materials, both in the physical and digital collections, exposing the public to resources that they may not have been aware of. Most significantly, these partnerships and resulting offerings have connected our library patrons to one another, creating a strong sense of community. They have solidified the public's opinion of the library as a trusted gateway providing opportunities for literacy, learning, and access to information - all elements of our mission statement.

As our Village Library celebrates its 75th Anniversary this year, we recognize the many wonderful people and colleagues who have shared their knowledge, passion, and time to help us provide meaningful and impactful programming to our patrons—most often at little to no cost to us. They have made an invaluable difference to those we serve, and have enabled the library to remain a place of purpose, engagement, and refuge for today's citizens. How wonderful is that?



Shoreland Mansions Tour



Senior Tech Connect

WE ARE ALL PART OF THE MAGIC:

Insights from Disney Leadership Experts

FLA President, Doug Crane, recently interviewed the creative leadership forces behind James Songster Emerging Leader Training, three former Disney employees who utilize their years of experience to teach leadership skills. The conversation includes tips for dynamic leadership, fostering an environment of creativity, the importance of workplace culture, and how to keep it all fun. The article was published in full on both his [blog](#) and [Public Libraries Online](#). Read on for some highlights and ideas for integrating that special magic into the field of librarianship.

James Songster is a magician and an educator who worked for Walt Disney World Resort® for 30 years. In 1997 he founded James Songster Emerging Leader Training.

Sue Schank had a career in public education as an exceptional education teacher and department chair, and then a longer career at Walt Disney World Resort®, mostly involved with the education department.

Barbara Blake started at The Walt Disney Company® in 1978 and ended up working there for 42 years. The majority of that time was in educational opportunities.

Together they operate James Songster Emerging Leader Training (<https://BetterLeadershipSkills.com>), a company devoted to unlocking the best of leadership, teamwork, creativity and organizational culture.

Doug Crane is the Director of the Palm Beach County Library System and President of the Florida Library Association. He shares his musings on productivity, libraries, and leadership at his website: www.efficientlibrarian.com

Doug: Disney is known for its amazing creativity. How do you teach others how to tap into the creative spirit?

Sue: People won't let the creativity fly if they feel unsafe. We created a safe environment where it's okay to take a flying leap. It might be fabulously successful, or it might not. Either way, we learn from it and apply that moving forward. Creating a safe space is what makes creativity possible. It is absolutely essential that people feel comfortable and safe being creative.

James: Creating a safe environment where people are willing to take risks was the biggest challenge. Most people are afraid of being seen as unsuccessful or afraid of failure. Without taking a chance you're only going to do exactly what you're doing right now. For me, that was a revelation because, as a magician and entrepreneur, my whole life is about experimenting. The work became how to create an environment where people felt safe taking chances. We created the leader mindset that acknowledged not everything that we try is going to work, but if we don't learn in the process, we're never going to get better. There's a big thick coffee table book that Cast Members love called Disney Animation: The Illusion of Life. It's written by two of Walt's favorite guys, Ollie Johnston and Frank Thomas. There's one page in the book about how at any given time one of three Walt's might walk into the office. There was Walt the creative dreamer with new ideas to share. There was Walt the realist who could marshal the existing resources.

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There was also Walt the critic who could look at a process and ask if this was really our best work. When I started teaching the creativity program that we now offer as Unlocking Creativity Magic, we established that creativity is a strategic approach to problem solving. The mindset is: here's the opportunity, here's the risk in taking that opportunity, and here's what we can learn if we seize that opportunity. But to be successful, we need to have that safe environment. We recognize that everybody has a place in this process: dreamer, realist, and critic. The way to get best efforts is when we value each person's role in that process and understand the thinking behind why we go through this process. We define creativity as the point where imagination collides with opportunity. You have to be willing to take the chance, but you also have to do brainstorming and skill assessment and resource gathering in order to take advantage of the opportunity.

Barbara: In our Disney programs, we were always aware that some participants didn't want to make a mistake or try something that might fail. We were asked to put on education programs in our new park in Hong Kong. We were dealing with a different education system in Asia. Over there the students want to please their professors. Everything in our programs had been written to be very experiential. As we developed those programs in Hong Kong we had to figure out how to make that safe space for the students.

Sue: The Hong Kong system is very didactic. A second grade teacher is viewed like a "professor" in the front of the classroom, and the students are "bobble heads." Students don't question, challenge, or argue. They accept and repeat it back. We had meetings in advance with local teachers from the Hong Kong area. It was a fascinating experience because there was a desire to see change in the education structure so that students were more participatory rather than just memorizing. But there were also "old school" teachers who felt that students could only learn the way they always had.

One of my favorite visuals of the difference in the systems and discovery of a new way of doing things was testing with kindergarten and first grade students. We had a small test group of a dozen students and their teachers. One of my co-workers, Michael, was doing the program. At one point they were walking down Main Street in the Park. I was in the back of the group watching and all the little ones were lined up in a straight line behind him. All the students were quiet and walking in a straight line behind Michael because he was the leader. Michael saw what was going on and he started doing a serpentine walk down the street. He went side to side around the lamp posts and trash cans, weaving and wandering around. At first the kids literally stopped and looked at him like he had sprouted a second head. Then one by one they started a kind of giggle and followed him. By the time we got to the end of Main Street they were laughing, clapping and holding hands. They came out of the constraints that their educational structure put on them. It was an eye-opening experience for their teachers. At first the teachers thought the students were being bad. Then it was a realization that they were being children and having fun learning. They saw it was possible to change the mindset. When you set the right atmosphere to support self-confidence and know it's safe to experiment, amazing things happen.

Doug: How did you end up founding your training company and start working with libraries?

James: Growing up, I was the library kid that went to all the programs. I was also a volunteer in high school in the library. Libraries were safe places that I could explore. As a magician, I wanted to be in places that I knew, so I naturally performed for summer reading programs. As my Emerging Leader Training programs were expanding, it became a natural thing for me to offer them to the same clients I was already supporting. I had existing programs, and the librarians were open to them. Eventually I was given the opportunity to facilitate our Unlocking Creativity Magic workshop for the 2022 Florida Library Association conference. That was the big kick starter of how we got started supporting libraries across the state.

WE ARE ALL PART OF THE MAGIC

Doug: Having worked with librarians, what are you hearing from library workers are the biggest leadership and cultural challenges they're facing?

James: In our workshops, we run an exercise where we ask participants specifically what their teams are struggling with. The first thing that comes up on their list every single time is communication. They believe they don't communicate with each other effectively or efficiently. Every organization we have ever worked with has this as the first answer. Another thing we hear is that they don't like working in an environment where different points of view or input are not being supported or heard.

Sue: When we do our Culture program, we talk about the idea of purposely created culture and having input over where the culture is going. It is a common theme for our participants that "no one's listening to us". They have all these ideas that don't go anywhere. The more they talk about the issues they face, the more it becomes obvious that they don't understand the culture of their organization. They don't know if it's there by choice or by chance. When asked to describe their culture, it is a difficult challenge for them to articulate it. A lack of understanding of what the culture really is and what drives it, I think is a source of great frustration for our groups.

Doug: Please share a book that had an impact on your development.

Barbara: When I started at Disney in 1978 they didn't do a lot of explanation about the philosophy of Disney beyond the Four Keys. So I read Bob Thomas's book *Walt Disney: An American Original* and reread it several times. It's an incredible biography because he knew Walt and got the interviews directly from him. It was a valuable tool for me to understand the company on a personal level.

Another book that impacted me when I was in high school was Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. I was raised in South Florida so most of my friends were from the North or Northeast but both sides of my family come from the Deep South. I had no understanding of the issues that were going on until I read that book. It really affected my view of the world at that time. It was 1968 and the Civil Rights organizations were impacting the world. It was an impactful book for me.

Sue: I also have two and neither one are about leadership. One is *The Star Thrower*, by Loren Eiseley. It taught me the incredible value and richness of carefully selected language. He was a brilliant writer whose style of writing was artistic and opened my eyes to the importance of using language purposely. It's inspiring, motivating, and powerful.

The other book I've read a million times is Earl Kelly's *Education for What is Real*. It was written post World War II and explored the education system when the nation was coming out of the war and into a golden future. He looks at why people are the way they are and why they make the choices they make. He noticed that people tend to respect and be kind to others. However, we've built a competitive society where people want to win and someone has to lose. His insights into nature and what that means to the learning journey are fascinating. They anchored my decision to become an educator. When I got into training with Disney, *Education for What is Real* was a mental guideline for me in terms of the need to share knowledge and the skills for students to be successful versions of themselves. It's part of my job to help them see that journey.

James: I would say the first book that I remember having a profound effect on me was *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, by Richard Bach. The philosophy behind it is that excellence is a personal choice. Nobody can stop you from excellence if you have a mindset for it. It is a choice that you have to make for yourself. It may come at great risk and pain but you have to set your wings at the right position to do the things that you want. That was really important to me when I was young because I was going against the trends and the wishes of my college and my high school counselors. I was determined to chart my own course.



WE ARE ALL PART OF THE MAGIC

Another book that was very impactful to me was *Who Moved My Cheese?*, by Spencer Johnson. During the pandemic, the entire world shut down. As a performer, I had never imagined that every single revenue stream would suddenly stop. I had a moment of panic and looked over at my bookshelf. I picked up my copy that I had for so long the pages were yellowed. I re-read that book and it was the exact mindset I needed to go forward. If there's a thread that ties everything together, it's that you are what you put into your own brain. We have a responsibility to make sure we put values and nurturing ideas into the brains of the people that we're working to support. We're trying to guide them and that's a thread that goes through all of the workshops.

Doug: How are your workshops structured?

James: Our programs flow as a conversation that starts with “I:” Unlocking Leader Magic, all about self-reflection and awareness. That takes us to “We:” Unlocking Teamwork Magic, about methods for embracing our collective skills, and reaching our goals and becoming successful. Then we have “How:” Unlocking Creativity Magic, developing a strategic approach to problem solving. And lastly, we have “Why:” Unlocking a Purposefully Created Culture, answering the critical questions. Why does this matter to our organization? Why do we want this? It's the leadership, teamwork, creativity and culture, all working together that makes the difference. It was true at Disney and it's true in all of our individual careers. No matter your career path, you still have to answer those four things: Who am I? Who are we? How do we create the culture and the environment that will support us? And why does it matter in the first place?

Doug: James, you're known for doing your magic tricks in workshops and even teaching students a magic trick. How did this training approach come around?

James: We say they're workshops and not seminars because a seminar implies I'm just going to talk at you. A workshop says it's hands-on. The old saying is: Tell me, I forget. Show me, I remember. Involve me, I understand. For me a huge resource that I have in my toolbox is that I can perform magic.

So, I use magic to engage their imagination, to keep them curious and excited. I love it whenever the students are all participating and performing the magic. I don't do a magic trick in the middle of a seminar or a workshop only for a brain break. The reason we do this magic is to build the connection between the content and the fun experience of the workshop. There is a great Walt Disney quote that says: Laughter is no enemy to learning. If you're having fun you're more likely to engage. If you're engaged, the outcomes are going to be more impactful. I want us to do this together so that the students can walk out of the room knowing they can start doing it tomorrow.

Doug: To wrap up, please share a favorite Walt Disney quote that's kind of stuck with you.

James: I'm going to take as my favorite Walt quote: “I would rather have entertained them and hoped that they learned something than to have educated them and hoped that they were entertained.” I've found that to be good solid advice.

Barbara: My favorite is: “It's kind of fun to do the impossible.”

Sue: Mine is a little longer but I love the sequence of it. “First think, second believe, third dream and finally dare.” I love that approach to tackling the world.



The entirety of this interview was published in Public Libraries Online:

Hughes, K. (2024, March 5). We are all part of the magic: Insights from Disney Leadership Experts - Public Libraries Online. Public Libraries Online - A Publication of the Public Library Association. <http://disq.us/t/4n7ecbb>

THE ELECTRONIC BRAIN

HARNESSING THE POWER OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Angelina M. Vigliotti, Student Services & Reference Librarian,
Stetson University College of Law

Kristen R. Moore, Associate Director, Stetson University College
of Law



Introduction

At the time of writing this article, it is difficult to conceive of an information professional in any field who has not encountered artificial intelligence in either practice, product, or media. Although Artificial Intelligence presents an uncertain future for many industries and professions, librarians, or, more appropriately termed, information professionals are, and historically have been, the natural leaders in the practice of utilizing new research technologies. As a result, information professionals have a professional incentive to embrace technology in its capacity to enhance their work while simultaneously acknowledging the limitations of the tools that are developed. This reality is particularly prescient now as librarians face the newest rapidly developed and disruptively capable tool that has been presented to us- Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Although librarianship in the modern age has been closely associated with books, and thus is often imagined as being tied to the rise and fall of books as a medium for information, a more accurate understanding of the profession requires a more historic perspective. This is not the first time our profession has been allegedly “threatened” by technological advancements. With the creation of the world wide web and digital content, a time when people could find everything needed online commenced, and many speculated that it would be the end of libraries. However, quite the opposite occurred. As a result of this new digital content and explosion of information, libraries became grounds for access and knowledge of how to navigate this abundance of information. We are, at the heart of our profession, information specialists regardless of the form the information takes. As such, we will continue to help our patrons navigate the fast-changing landscape of research and help them utilize AI to its potential. This article seeks to provide advice on how to best approach the advent of new trends and tools relating to research technologies, specifically AI as it affects our patrons’ information seeking behavior.

Learn It

As with any new technology whose primary purpose is providing information, AI is within the scope of our profession. To continue to provide excellent service to our patrons, whether in academia or the general public, we need to establish best practices for using AI as we have with previous technology. And, the first step to establishing those best practices is learning and understanding. One of the major benefits of a new technology is the overwhelming response from educators and practitioners dispersing information. There is seemingly no limit to the number of resources available and opportunities to educate oneself.

No matter your learning style or schedule, there are opportunities likely to be tailored to your preferences. Though AI can seem intimidatingly complex, there are plenty of ways to get up to speed with the definitions, practices, and functions of this new technology. One way to begin your education is the natural librarian reaction-read about it. A simple Google search for ‘Artificial Intelligence’ will yield more results than any of us could read in our lifetime. For a more curated approach, a quick visit to any information professional organization’s website will most likely offer publications on the topic from a librarian’s point of view. Prime examples of these national organizations include the [American Library Association](#), the [Association of College and Research Libraries](#), the [American Association of Law Libraries](#). For more localized options, the [Florida Library Association](#) and the [Florida Association of College and Research Libraries](#) provide many learning opportunities for information professionals based in Florida. These examples present some of the largest organizations, but don’t forget your [regional options](#) as well, who can offer a more personalized approach to your research. Webinars and conferences provide another learning opportunity, particularly for those who want to see tools in action or otherwise hope to socialize with those who share a common interest. A visit to your local library organization website can let you know about upcoming events on the topic.

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Once you have read and learned all you can about the topic, it is time to experience it. Learn about some of the most relevant tools for your setting and your budget, and play with them! AI tools are readily available, with free trials or open access options to try them, allowing you to start your own experiments. We have participated in training hosted by our Westlaw and LexisNexis representatives to better use their new AI offerings, and your vendors may provide similar training as well. The continual development of new AI platforms means your trusted vendors may be your best bet for focusing your efforts on the most relevant tools available to you. “Learning it” comes in handy because your research should have revealed some of the most useful AI applications for you, your patrons, and your institution. Consider how your patrons will use these tools and create a similar experience. Even sophisticated modern technology has limits, and you and your patrons will be well-served by your independent research. Honestly evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each tool so you can better educate others, which leads us to our next topic.

Teach It

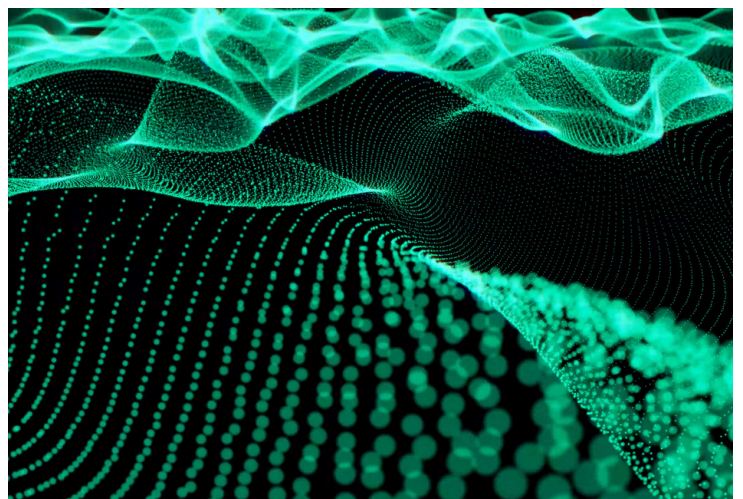
As information professionals we should naturally be considered experts on any tool that provides information, and this should include new technology that is generating information, not just traditional information resources like books and databases. A great way to establish oneself as an expert and resource on a topic is to teach it. The reality of our profession is that we are often an early stop in the research journey for those hoping to learn something new—meaning questions about AI are on their way to our reference desks. That this technology has influenced just about every industry means that we now must be proactive rather than reactive in preparing ourselves for the inevitable.

If you are at an academic institute, try proposing a course to teach students how to use AI for research or coursework. Also think about offering regular workshops to students, faculty, and staff to keep them abreast of the latest news and applications of AI. If you are at a public library, consider offering AI education in your programming for adults and children. If you can't teach a full course or offer regular programming, record online tutorials for patrons to view on their own time and create online research guides to demonstrate that you are taking the lead on this new technology. If your library has a makerspace, AI tools may be an excellent new addition to update your offerings.

While AI offers a great deal of potential in research, it also provides opportunities in creative ventures as well, so be sure not to overlook just how varied the generative possibilities are. Collection development, acquisitions, and technology services provide opportunities in every library to make information about AI available with respect to each institution's parameters. The possibilities are extensive for librarians to assert themselves in the midst of these technological changes, further demonstrating their adaptability and value in service to their patrons.

Integrate It

In homage to the old adage “practice what you preach,” AI is not merely a topic for librarians to teach; it is a tool for librarians to integrate into their day-to-day operations and services. There is no greater demonstration of the adaptability of libraries than our ability to embrace our times and evolve as needed. Embracing AI does not require replacing tried-and-true services or valuable technological infrastructure for the sake of novelty or appearances. Rather, it should be an opportunity to enhance select services and internal workflows. Gradually experiment and implement the AI tools that are the most conducive to your preexisting mission. Further, integration need not be a solitary act. It can be the natural result of collaboration with partner institutions or shared inspiration with other organizations grappling with these rapid changes in much the same way you are. Look to your peers for ideas and honest evaluations of new tools and services. It can be incredibly beneficial to tap your local counterparts for advice or guidance. Fortunately, here in Florida, there is no shortage of organizations—regional, topical, or statewide—that facilitate the sharing of ideas and interorganizational education as discussed in Section 1 of this article. Collaborative partners are readily available to mitigate risk and waste in the process of implementing AI in existing services.



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Follow It

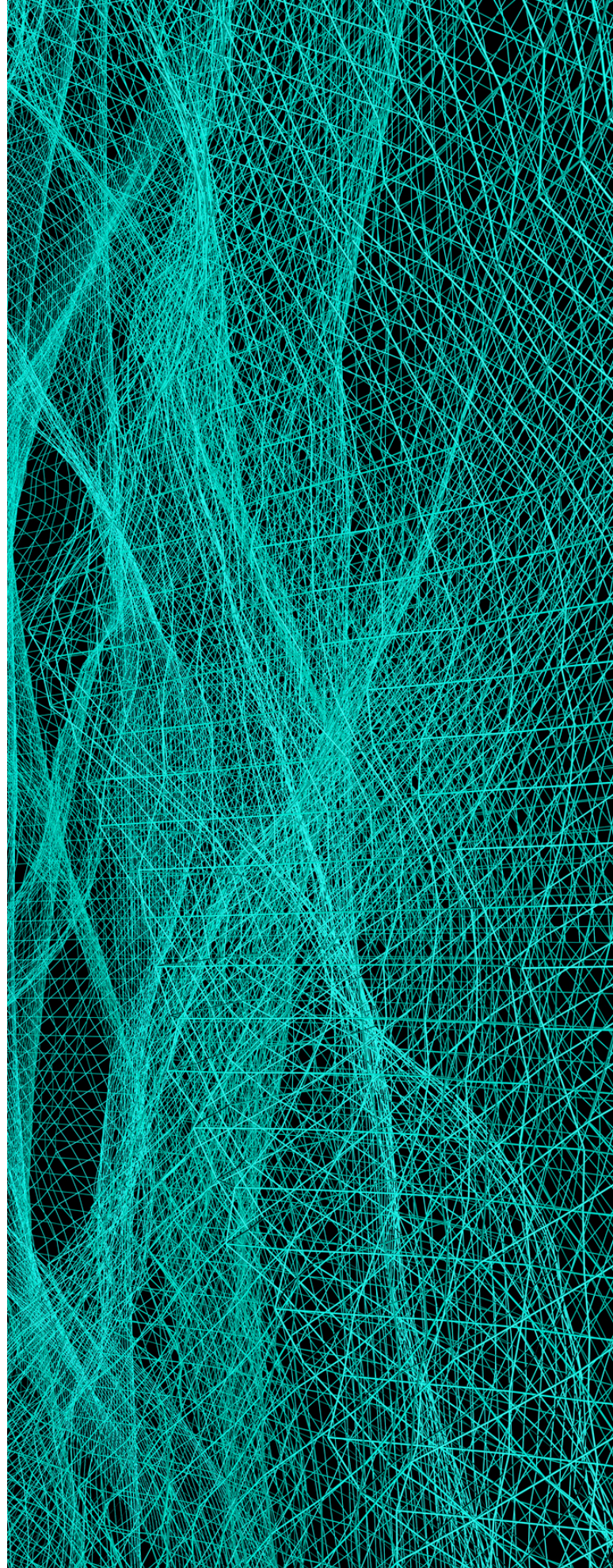
Finally, when exploring any new technology, it is important to follow the trends and stay abreast of the new advancements and changes that occur. This is particularly true regarding AI, which not only entered the public conscience rapidly, but has continued to evolve at a similar pace. AI has proven itself ubiquitous in society as various industries adopt it as a product, tool, and/or feature. Likewise, developers continue to produce new tools in response to the ever-growing demand. It is important to evaluate these tools as they are released to determine their value in your setting and for your patrons. Blogs, news alerts, and library publications, both scholarly and practical, are great ways to stay current. In addition, organizational listservs curated with a library focus can support your awareness of new trends and tools relevant to your work.

Conclusion

It is a reality of the profession that we must continually demonstrate our value to our patrons, our institutions, and our communities. By staying at the forefront of new technology, such as AI, we confirm our value, adaptability, and relevance in an ever-changing world. This is not the first time libraries have confronted disruptive information technology, and it will likely not be the last. But, as with all the times before, our missions have been satisfied by our willingness to embrace change and evolve in the quest to improve access to accurate information. As depicted in the popular 1950s movie *Desk Set*, technology is not meant to replace us, but rather to serve as a tool to help us better perform our jobs. In fact, librarians and disruptive technology sometimes get along exceedingly well. With a mild alteration to Bunny Watson's climactic proclamation in *Desk Set* (1957) quoting the poem *Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight*, "Curfew will not ring tonight!" [1]

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[1] Lang, Walter, dir. *Desk Set*. 1957; Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century-Fox, 2004. DVD.



FOSTERING ENHANCED LIBRARY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH INFORMATION LITERACY INSTRUCTION

MICRO-LEARNING RESEARCH SKILLS TOOLKIT WORKSHOP SERIES

Jossie Amador- González, MLIS, Research Librarian, Stetson University

Kellie Pait, Assistant Professor, MLIS, Research & Learning Librarian, Stetson University

The Micro-Learning: Research Skills Toolkit Workshop Series is an innovative approach developed by librarians at Stetson University's duPont-Ball Library. This program tackles information literacy in a way that is engaging and efficient.

Background

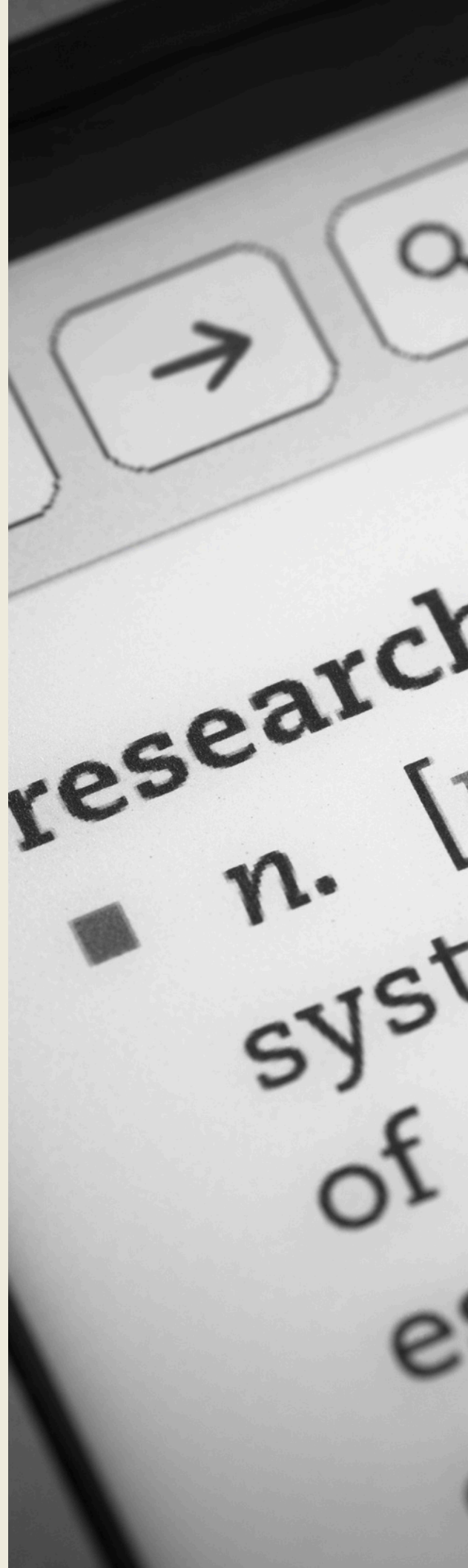
In Fall 2023, Jossie Amador-González embarked upon a new role as the *Research Librarian* at the duPont-Ball Library, a position funded by Stetson University's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). This QEP, "Bridging the Gap: Enhancing Information Literacy" builds on the university's mission and values with a focus on critical learning skills of information literacy [1]. To develop her skills as a new Academic Librarian, she began taking account of her professional learning goals and what experience she could draw on to achieve them. She welcomed the opportunity to learn from her colleagues including a mentoring relationship with her predecessor, Kellie Pait, who held this position two years prior and is currently Research and Learning Librarian, Assistant Professor.

While at her first library instruction team meeting, Jossie proposed to create a new approach to instruction that would facilitate the QEP and engage students beyond the classroom to meet their research needs. In collaboration with faculty librarians, including the QEP Library Liaison and Director of Library Public Services, Jennifer Corbin, the Micro-Learning: Research Skills Toolkit Workshop Series was developed.

What is Micro-Learning and How Can it Help Students in the Library?

Micro-Learning takes complex topics and breaks down the information into short, focused learning modules. These modules are typically designed to be completed in 15-20 minutes, targeting a single learning objective or skill.

Through these sessions, students engage in research discussions relevant to their discipline and needs, equipping them with essential research skills critical to their information literacy. The series helps in preparing them to become life-long learners and library patrons, whether at their academic institution or at their community libraries.



Fostering Enhanced Library Engagement through Information Literacy Instruction

The duPont-Ball Library Model:

The Association of College & Research Libraries' (ACRL) Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education, particularly the frame Research as Inquiry, was used to guide the development of the series. The framework emphasizes the iterative nature of research, highlighting the importance of asking increasingly complex questions to drive inquiry. Each session includes three 15-minute micro-learning topics focused on a research concept, skill, and tool. We found that it is best to staff each learning topic with an individual librarian, enabling students to cycle from topic to topic, rounding out their time with three librarians at 45 minutes. The learning topics for our inaugural series were:

- **Introductory Tools:** Designed to equip students with foundational skills like how to navigate the library's electronic catalog, efficiently search for information, and develop effective research strategies.
- **Advanced Techniques:** Students refine their skills by learning how to navigate various databases, locate relevant research materials and resources, and start to synthesize their findings.
- **Citation Management:** This session introduces essential tools for managing citations and covers various citation styles to ensure proper referencing and academic integrity.

Stetson's QEP uses a train-the-trainer professional development model to support disciplinary faculty as they incorporate information literacy skills into lower division assignments and courses. Faculty participants asked the library for content to share with students about various information literacy skills like evaluating sources, searching library databases, citing sources, and so on. To address this need, Librarians gathered existing content focused on library research tips and information literacy skills to create the Research Skills Toolkit (see <https://guides.stetson.edu/toolkit>). The toolkit is now a separate section of the library website that provides a convenient, student-facing place to find videos, infographics, and other related content to support students who are learning about the research process.

**JENNIFER CORBIN, QEP LIBRARY LIAISON AND
DIRECTOR OF LIBRARY PUBLIC SERVICES**

Micro-Learning at Your Library:

A strength of this series is that it is adaptable and scalable. This workshop series can be customized based on the needs of the learner, library, or larger institution. Take these steps to implement Micro-Learning in your library:

1. **Identify the Goal:** Clearly define the purpose of the sessions and series. What do you want participants to learn and what target areas will it address?
2. **Plan and Work Together:** As a team, define your learning objectives, design content if needed, promote the workshop, and keep an eye on logistics. Consider dates, time, and venue. Strategize to decide who might be best to deliver an individual micro-learning concept. Take librarian expertise and enthusiasm into mind.
3. **Leverage Existing Resources:** Each learning topic can work in tandem with a corresponding LibGuide or online tutorial. Does your library have a research skills toolkit or comprehensive research guide? Use that to steer the micro-learning agenda.
4. **Market Effectively:** Deploy a marketing campaign across various avenues in your community. Eye-catching graphics can promote the workshop series. Spread the word using social media, digital signage, and flyers.
5. **Evaluate and Reflect:** Work with your team to hash out what worked well and where there is room for improvement. In the next round, implement changes to reach your desired outcome.
6. **Have fun!:** These sessions are designed to be an engaging and collaborative experience. Take the opportunity to work with colleagues in a new and exciting way, while positively impacting learners on their research journey.

The Micro-Learning: Research Skills Toolkit Workshop Series combines the best of engagement, outreach, and instruction. The simplicity, efficiency, and adaptability of the series lends itself to any library looking to reach a broader student audience and cultivate lifelong learners. As the duPont-Ball Library continues to work on its series, ongoing research will determine the impact of the program.

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1. Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education. Association of College & Research Libraries, 2015; <http://www.ala.org/acrl/files/issues/infolit/framework.pdf>
2. Schlak, Tim. 2018. "Academic Libraries and Engagement: A Critical Contextualization of the Library Discourse on Engagement," *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 44, 44 (1): 133–39. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2017.09.005>.

“LIBRARIES ARE A VERY RADICAL IDEA, YOU KNOW:”

Observations from ALA Past President, Patricia Glass Schuman

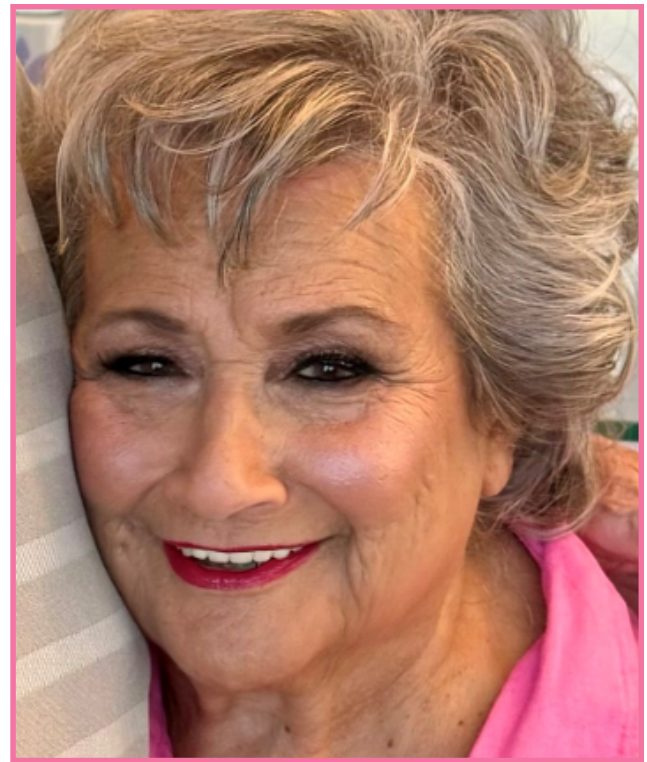
Interviewed by Mary Daniels, Editor-in-Chief of Florida Libraries Journal and Collection Services Librarian at Maitland Public Library

It was suggested to me by a former professor and current colleague of mine, Dr. Kathleen de la Peña McCook (Distinguished Professor at University of South Florida, School of Information) that I might be able to reach out and interview Patricia Glass Schuman, former American Library Association (ALA) President, who is currently a Florida resident. How could I pass up such an opportunity?

Pat Schuman was the President of ALA in 1991-1992, and during that time focused on the public's Right to Know on topics including library funding cuts, censorship, and restricted access to government information. She was the first female Treasurer of the ALA. Additionally, she was among the founders of the ALA's Social Responsibilities Roundtable, including the ALA's Feminist Task Force, as well as the ALA's "Library Advocacy Now!" effort. Her years of experience give her the unique perspective to see how things have changed in the last thirty years, and how, frighteningly, things have stayed the same.

Her wisdom and insight on the importance of advocacy for public libraries, from every level of support, is reassuring in the face of challenges libraries and library workers are facing both state and nationwide. May all of us learn from her experiences, and take away the hope, inspiration, and fire to continue the good work we do.

(To give Pat's responses a more narrative flow, I'll present the questions I asked first, followed by her thoughts and answers.)



Patricia Glass Schuman

How does what's happening in libraries today compare to issues you faced as ALA President in the 90s? What advice can you give library workers who are facing criticism and censorship efforts? What was your major takeaway from your time as ALA President? And if you could share any piece of advice with library workers or librarians, what would it be?

PGS: Sadly, what is happening across the country's libraries today is not all that different than some of the problems we faced in the 90s when I was ALA President.

I had an interesting call from a California reporter the other day. He was covering the Huntington Beach Public Library. Their board was voting on whether or not to solicit a bid to privatize the library. This reporter ran across an article I had written in 1998 — almost a quarter century ago — about the privatization of public libraries. Shockingly this issue is alive and kicking. And the public's right to know is still under attack. Attempts at censorship are happening across the country — more books are being challenged than ever before.



“Libraries are a very radical idea, you know”

Library censorship is frightening. When I was an ALA president (1991-1992), children's access to the Internet faced heavy challenges. It's fascinating to me that people have now gone back to focusing on books. I guess they're easier to challenge. Attempting to restrict the Internet is a much messier proposition.

[While] The library community does not have “megabucks,” what we do have is public support. Our task is to mobilize library advocates to speak out loudly, clearly, and with a unified voice. To turn dedicated library users into active allies, to reach out and tap our great well of support. If libraries and librarians are to win in the public and legislative arenas, we need many more active and articulate advocates.

We founded the Feminist Task Force in the 70s because although women made up over eighty percent of library workers, men held ninety percent of the director positions. And women's salaries for comparable work were still less. It was wonderful to band together to talk about the issues — and to encourage important looks at history, current practices, and future needs.

We used to think that libraries were not political, but we know better today. In the 90s we started the Library Advocacy Now initiative. We trained thousands of librarians and supporters across the country. Our library advocacy campaigns resulted in record-high (though not high enough) federal funding, the establishment of the e-rate, and a new Institute of Museum and Library Services. Advocacy helped to hold the line on Fair Use for libraries and educators in the Digital Millennium Copyright Act. Libraries were designated universal services providers for electronic information by Congress.

Libraries are a very radical idea, you know — the distribution of information to everyone regardless of income, sex, class, or race. It's the one educational institution that's open to everyone. I think that the role of libraries and librarians will be very much the same. Technology is changing our methods and the way we look at things — we're shifting from equal ownership of information to equal access to information. Technology offers us broad ways to access information for people, but it also has a real potential for limiting information if we're not careful. The library is the one agency that is really dedicated to safeguarding the public's right to know.

Libraries have long been considered information gatekeepers, but librarians actually provide information gateways. Librarianship is the one profession dedicated to keeping information affordable, accessible, and available for all people. The very existence of libraries stands in defense of the First Amendment, in defense of equality, in defense of America's right to know.

Successful advocacy means that we must use our personal power individually and collectively, because we have learned that library advocacy — locally, statewide, and nationally — works! That's where library leadership, vision, and advocacy come in. We have here, right now, what comic book character Pogo would call an “insurmountable opportunity,” an opportunity to ensure that the promise of the information age is fulfilled for all Americans. People like us, people who know the value of libraries, must be leaders who fight for libraries.



Daniels, Mary, and Patricia Glass Schuman. “Libraries are a very radical idea, you know:” Observations from ALA Past President, Patricia Glass Schuman. Personal, March 31, 2024.

GEOCACHING & LIBRARIES

AN ADVENTUROUS PAIRING

by Jenn Bishop
Maitland Public Library

Today's libraries are more than just buildings full of books. Maybe I'm a bit of a romantic, but if you ask me, libraries are collections of adventures packed into travel-sized containers.

They are dedicated to serving the members of our communities who come in seeking an escape from their day-to-day lives. In this, Geocaching and Libraries have a lot in common.



Example of a waterproof cache

Geocaching in Movies & TV

- Finding 'Ohana (2021, PG, directed by Jude Weng)
- Splinterheads (2009, R, directed by Brant Sersen)
- Tracker (2007, NR, directed by Alex Bica and Xander Bryant)
- G.P.S. (2007, R, directed by Eric Colley)
- Campfire Kiss (2017, TV-G, directed by James Head)

WHAT IS GEOCACHING?

Geocaching is a worldwide scavenger-hunt-style game that uses the Global Positioning System's satellites to lead players to a hidden container or secret location. GPS was originally used as a military tool. Selective Availability (SA) was a way for the government to purposefully restrict the accuracy of GPS signals used by civilians. On May 2, 2000, the US government ended SA, to make GPS more available for civil and commercial use worldwide.¹ Geocachers call this "Blue Switch Day," the day the "Big Blue Switch" was flipped.² GPS Enthusiasts took advantage of this newly increased accuracy. They hid stashes for others to find, sharing the coordinates on internet message boards as a way to test their personal GPS receivers. The next day, May 3, 2000, Dave Ulmer hid his first "stash," a 5-gallon bucket full of trade items, outside Portland, Oregon.³ Mike Teague was the first person to find this stash and began compiling a list of stash locations on his personal website.⁴ The hobby quickly grew, and by September 2000, [the official Geocaching website](#) launched with the world's first 75 hides.

Today, geocaches come in many sizes and styles. Some are easy to find; many are cleverly disguised to blend into their surroundings. The basics for all geocaches are the same: You first view a cache listing on the [geocaching.com](#) website or app. Then, you use the coordinates listed to navigate to the specified location. Search for the geocache, and once you find it, log your experience online. Most geocaches are hidden outdoors in parks and parking lots, but the possibilities are vast.

1. Office of the Press Secretary, "Improving the Civilian GPS"
2. Sadly, there is no actual Big Blue switch.
3. Ulmer, Dave, "GPS Google Group"
4. Archive, GPS Stash Hunt (Geocache) Homepage



Geocaching in Libraries

TYPES OF CACHES

The four most common library-related caches are typically one of these types:⁵

- **Traditional:** A water-tight, or other appropriate, container with, at minimum, a paper log to sign. Larger containers will usually have a pen and small trinkets that can be traded. The container may be the size of a pea, or as large as a building. It may be easily identified, or camouflaged for more difficult hides.
- **Multi-Cache:** These hides are traditional style hides that have more than one stage, and usually require a player to use information they find along their way to lead them to the final spot where the container will be hidden.
- **Event Cache:** A geocaching-related meet-up, 30 minutes or longer, for players to engage in a common activity or share stories about their caching experiences. This is a great way to introduce new players to the social side of the game. Examples could include crafting geocache containers, hosting a book talk with the author of a geocaching-related book, or having a geocaching-related movie watch party.
- **Mystery Cache:** This cache style requires players to solve a puzzle to get the needed coordinates for the hide. The puzzle may be easy or difficult. It might need to be completed before leaving home or could include a “field puzzle” on-site.

I work at the Maitland Public Library in Maitland, FL. We currently have a multi-cache style geocache that takes searchers on a tour of our historic building. They must navigate every room and space, looking for clues that lead them to a call number. Hidden amongst the Florida History section of our collection is a hollowed-out car repair manual that was rebranded with a new cover to blend in and celebrate over 125 years of our library’s history. Geocachers have traveled from as far away as Sweden to find our cache! Several local geocachers have remarked how much they love our space and have returned to drop off trade trinkets and traveling items in our cache.

5. “FAQ.”



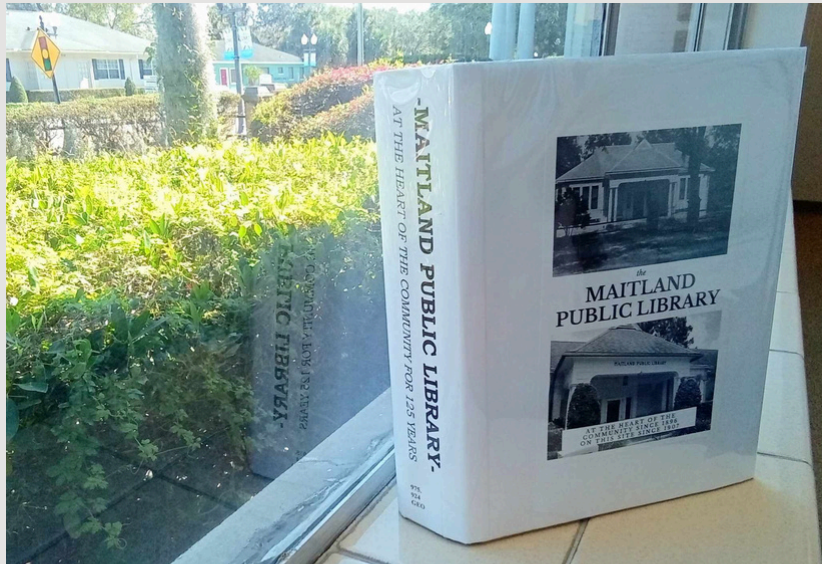
TIMELINE OF GEOCACHING AND LIBRARIES⁵

- MAY 3, 2000**
GCF: The Original Stash
Following “Blue Switch Day” Dave Ulmer hides a five-gallon bucket outside Portland, Oregon. This would become the first geocache.
- MAY 13, 2001**
GC94A: Swimming with Porcupines
The first geocache utilizing library resources is hidden in Nova Scotia, Canada near the Halifax Regional Library.
- JUNE 15, 2001**
GCC48: Library
A precursor to Little Free Libraries, this geocache was hidden near Nümbrecht, Germany to act as a book-swap location.
- NOVEMBER 2, 2001**
GC25F0: Geisel Library
The first geocache hidden inside a library is located at the Geisel Library on the University of California San Diego campus. This cache is still active today!
- OCTOBER 22, 2002**
GC9F2D: The Envelope Please, Desk Top Edition
The first geocache hidden inside a library in Florida is placed at the Leroy Collins, Leon County Main Public Library in Tallahassee, FL. This cache is also still in play.

Geocaching in Libraries



Maitland Public Library's hidden cache



Many library collections may already have the most popular geocaching books, but here are some titles to consider adding if you are thinking of bringing geocaching to your library.

- *Geocaching for Dummies*, by Joel McNamara (978-0764575716)
- *How to Puzzle Cache (Second Edition)*, by Cully Long (978-0997348897)
- *501 Geocaches to Find Before You Die – U.S. State Version*, by Gary Slinkard (979-8772492345)
- *Geocaching Challenges: The Game Within the Game*, by Jesse & Kristi Lunsford (978-1092294966)
- *The Joy of Geocaching: How to Find Health, Happiness, and Creative Energy Through a Worldwide Treasure Hunt*, by Paul & Dana Gillin (978-1884956997)

CACHES IN LIBRARIES

Geocaches, for the most part, require little interaction from staff. Once a physical cache has been placed, someone would need to monitor the email attached to the hide. When cachers log that they have found your geocache, you'll receive an email with their online log. Occasionally, a designated member of staff might need to perform maintenance to ensure the container is in good condition and that it is still hidden as intended. We keep bookmarks and small items, like silly bands or erasers, as tradable items in our cache. Occasionally, these goodies may need to be restocked, but generally, the cache keeps itself. How you decide to structure things is completely up to you. You can even count geocache logs as participation in a passive program in your user statistics.

With nearly 2 million active geocachers in the world, it shouldn't be difficult to create a buzz in your area. Many regions have dedicated clubs of cachers who would be more than happy to help you introduce the game to your patrons. My local group, CFLAG – Central Florida Area Geocachers, have had geocaching-related movie watch parties in our Community Room. They are planning more events to discuss cryptography and how to approach puzzle-solving as it applies to geocaching.

The upcoming 2024 Collaborative Summer Library Program theme is "Adventure Begins at Your Library." Geocaching can be a great way to bring adventure to your patrons, both on-site and beyond!

Resources

1. Dave Ulmer, post to "GPS Stash Hunt," Google Groups, May 3, 2000, 3:00:00 AM., <https://thewebdesignforum.co.uk/topic/4553-htmlcss-books-n-blogs/?p=40893>.
2. "FAQ," Geocaching.com website. <https://www.geocaching.com/sites/education/en/frequently-asked-questions>
3. "GPS Stash Hunt (Geocache) Homepage" <https://web.archive.org/web/20000621194709/http://www.triax.com:80/yngw/ie/gps.html>.
4. Improving the Civilian Global Positioning System (GPS)." The White House, May 1, 2001. The White House. https://clintonwhitehouse4.archives.gov/textonly/WH/New/html/20000501_2.html

THE ROLE OF LIBRARIANS IN CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION

Yvonne Sandomir

Author of *The Invisible Girl, A Memoir* and *What, Why, Who, Where, How, When, Plan: A Parent's Guide to Preventing Child Sexual Abuse*

In the shadows of our society, a harrowing reality persists: child sexual abuse. Despite being uncomfortable, this is a conversation we must not shy away from, as doing so only perpetuates the suffering of the innocent. As the statistics reveal, the prevalence of this issue is far too staggering to ignore. Here's a closer look at the numbers concerning statistics and the vital steps towards awareness and prevention.

Alarming Numbers: The Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse

The figures paint a distressing picture, indicating that child sexual abuse is not just an isolated incident; it's alarmingly pervasive.

- One in three girls and one in five boys experience sexual abuse before reaching adulthood.¹
- Online spaces, once thought distant and secure, now present a significant risk, with one in five children encountering sexual solicitation. It is critical to educate children about the dangers they may face and appropriate responses to sexual solicitation.²

After digesting these disheartening statistics, action is more than a suggestion—it is a necessity. The involvement of a librarian could be the turning point for a child in crisis.

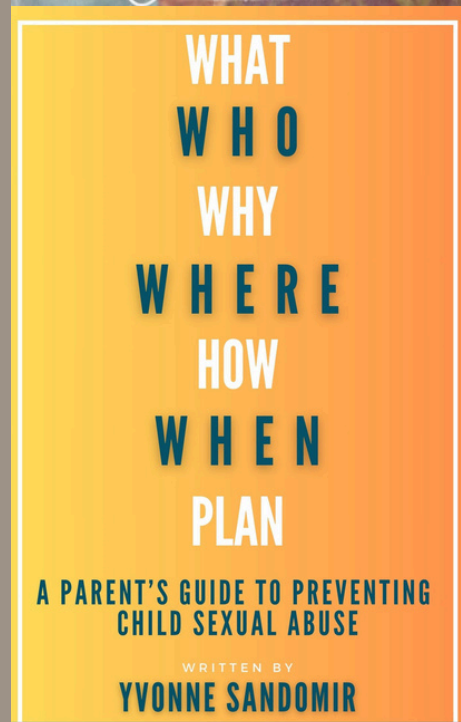
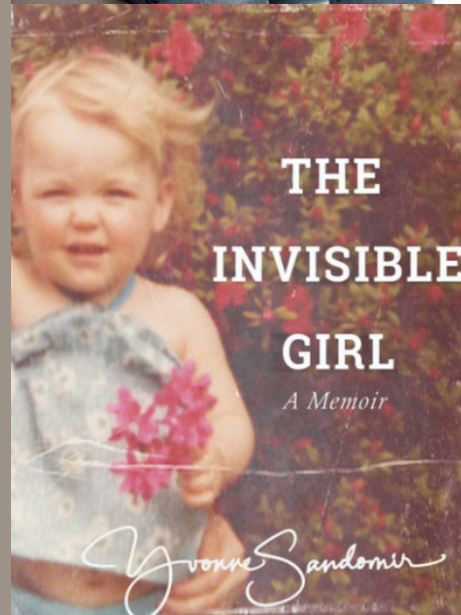
Rethinking Safety Education in Libraries

Librarians are not just keepers of books; they are the mentors to the diverse youth who pass through library doors and the architects of communities built on learning. With that power comes the duty to ensure that the educational materials and programs provided are not just extensive but also current, inclusive, and life-relevant. Few topics are as crucial as safety education, especially as it pertains to the issue of child sexual abuse prevention and awareness.

In society, the traditional 'stranger danger' approach has long been the staple of safety education, but it is a practice rooted in a reality that no longer reflects the truth. The lines of trust have expanded—abusers are not solely strangers lurking in shadows; they are often familiar faces in the bright light of day. Shockingly, 90% of abuse victims know, love, and trust their abuser.³

Understanding these modern dynamics is the first step in protecting our youth. By addressing the real dangers, we have the potential to prevent a staggering 95% of abuse cases.⁴ So, it is imperative to incorporate updated safety education materials into library programming.

1. "Facts and Stats about Child Abuse: Child Protect."
2. "The Issue of Child Sexual Abuse," Lauren's Kids
3. Department of Justice
4. "Tell Others the Facts: CMRPI."





Awareness Goals: Shedding Light on a Dark Subject

Awareness is pivotal to combat this epidemic. We must strive to achieve several essential awareness goals:⁵

- Recognizing the signs: By informing the public—especially parents, educators, and caregivers—about the warning signs, we empower them to identify when something is amiss. Whether online or within our communities, recognizing these indicators can save a child from a lifetime of trauma.⁶
- Understanding the risk: No child is immune from the danger as sexual predators reside within every socioeconomic level, every ethnicity and culture, within all religions, and at all levels of education.⁷
- Encouraging open conversations: An atmosphere of openness, where children feel safe discussing boundaries and consent, is one of the best shields against abuse. These conversations should be gender-appropriate and normalized, and they should foster a family dynamic where trust and support are paramount.⁸
- Knowledge about resources: Victims of sexual abuse often do not know where to turn for help. By increasing awareness of the resources available, we provide a critical lifeline for those in need and reinforce the idea that they are not alone in their struggle.

Librarians are in a unique position not to look the other way but to extend a caring hand. With due diligence, a librarian can offer not just a book but a safe harbor, a listening ear, someone to share the load, and, in some cases, a lifeline.

Identifying Signs of Abuse

As the silent guardians of knowledge, librarians stand on the frontlines every day, not just for books but for the young minds and souls who walk through their doors. Amidst the hushed whispers and the rustle of pages, librarians foster a unique relationship with their communities, one that can be a beacon of hope for some of the most vulnerable members: our children. This special bond, built on trust and shared interests, gives librarians an invaluable perspective not found in training manuals — insights into the well-being of the children they serve.

5. Prevent Child Abuse America

6. "Warning Signs."

7. Hull Sharp, Cindy F.

8. "Child Sexual Abuse Fact Sheet."

9. "Tip Sheet: Warning Signs of Possible Sexual Abuse in a Child"

10. "Grooming and Red Flag Behaviors."

Warning signs that librarians should look for include:⁹

- Frequent cuts and bruises
- Changed behavior (i.e., aggressive or taking dangerous risks)
- Self-harm
- Failing grades
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Regressive behaviors (i.e., thumb sucking)
- Sexualized behavior, language, or knowledge
- A child seems distracted or distant at unusual times
- Thinks of self and body as disgusting, repulsive, or bad
- Has a sudden change in eating habits (not eating, binge eating, losing weight)¹⁰
- Talks about a new older friend
- Pain, discoloration, bleeding, or discharge around the mouth
- Pain when sitting or riding a bike
- Pyromania is almost a sure sign of abuse
- Cruelty to animals is almost a sure sign of abuse
- Hallucinations require immediate attention
- The onset of physical complaints (i.e., headaches, stomachaches)
- A child is suddenly isolated and secretive

Taking Action if You Suspect or Confirm Abuse

But what happens when those silent signals scream for action? Librarians are not just listeners; they are the voices of the voiceless. When in doubt, they have a duty, whether mandated by law or moral compass, to report suspected neglect or abuse. The path from suspicion to intervention is a direct one — using the established reporting protocols and resources, every librarian has the power to set in motion the wheels of protection for a child in need.

Spreading Awareness, Anchoring Hope

Libraries and librarians are the cornerstones of our society, where close to eleven million Floridians access crucial resources and materials they may not be able to afford otherwise. Libraries are the heart of public information that should include ongoing sexual abuse prevention campaigns for people within every community.

But it doesn't end there. Understanding the permanence of the library's impact, librarians can offer informative resources — from brochures and website links to guest speakers — that empower not just their voices but those of their patrons to understand and prevent child sexual abuse.

The Role of Librarians in Child Sexual Abuse Prevention

Write the Next Chapter: What Can We Do?

In addition to keeping a watchful eye, librarians can establish regular monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly campaigns to educate the community on the quiet crises taking place under our noses. These campaigns should inspire open dialogue about child sexual abuse awareness and prevention, creating an environment where speaking up is not only encouraged but praised.

As part of the campaign, inventive approaches could be tailored to specific audiences and include comprehensive programs for developing awareness about personal boundaries, online safety, and anti-abuse drives for all age groups and building a library environment of solidarity and protection.

In the End, It's About the Littlest Listener

Librarians have a unique position to make a difference, not just by suspecting, reporting, and educating but by actively creating a community where child welfare is not a dark corner shade but a shared, visible light. No child should endure unspeakable tragedies in silence. With informed compassion and readiness for action, children in need can become the beneficiaries of a community banding together to protect, educate, and nurture the most valuable resource of all — our future.

With the knowledge librarians hold, the voice they lend, and the paths they illuminate, the littlest listeners in the library — and the world beyond — can be at ease, knowing that there are silent protectors among the shelves, looking out for them, listening to them, and ready to act for them.

The library can be a loudspeaker for spreading awareness about these vital issues, advocating for reform in educational systems, and contributing to a safer society. By implementing these strategies, the library can be transformational, not just informational. The resources and programs provided have the potential to educate, protect, and truly empower.

Campaign Suggestions

Expectant parent workshops: Prevention begins with understanding the role of boundary setting as early as possible. Discuss scenarios of daily interactions with their infant to emphasize when and how to start seeking their consent, from changing their diapers to playtime routines. Boundary setting is asking your child for permission before changing their diaper, bathing private parts, and honoring their wishes not to be touched, tickled, or held, amongst other things. It teaches them that if parents have to respect their boundaries, then anyone outside the home must also respect their boundaries. Boundaries are the language through which children learn to express themselves and know adults are to treat them with dignity.

Parents of toddlers: Establishing and respecting boundaries is a fundamental part of a child's development, particularly in the toddler years. Children at this age are learning their autonomy, and parents must extend their protective sphere beyond the home, which involves not only teaching toddlers about personal space but also ensuring that everyone in the child's social circle respects these new boundaries. Boundary setting outside the home means that grandma, grandpa, aunt, uncle, and friends must also get the child's permission before hugging, holding, changing, etc. A toddler's request not to be touched, picked up, tickled, etc., must be honored. Toddlers might not yet be able to articulate why they need space or refuse a hug, but their discomfort is a clear signal. By respecting these early signs of autonomy, parents can set the stage for healthy self-assertion and self-esteem in later life. By developing and enforcing these boundaries, parents invest in their child's emotional well-being and lifelong self-assuredness. It's an intricate dance of teaching respect, consent, and the child's individuality, but one that is crucial for the development of a healthy and secure young person. Remember, the barriers parents establish today can serve as solid foundations in the years to come.

Parents of adolescents: Focus on the signs of abuse, potential abuser red flags, grooming techniques, long-term negative after-effects of abuse, what to do if they suspect abuse, and how to respond if abuse is confirmed. A parent's primary concern is the safety and welfare of their child. Recognizing the signs and risks of child abuse is a crucial step in safeguarding children and helping to create a world where all children are protected. By understanding the potential red flags of abusers, the insidious nature of grooming, the serious long-term consequences of abuse, and the steps to take if abuse is suspected or confirmed, the parent empowers themselves to be an advocate for their child's safety and well-being.

*The Role of Librarians in Child Sexual Abuse Prevention***Campaign Suggestions**

Teenage empowerment talks: During adolescent years, navigating the complexities of romantic and sexual relationships can be both exhilarating and confounding. This program discusses the statutory limitations regarding the age gap in relationships. Laws typically allow a close-in-age exception, usually within three years, to protect the rights of minors and acknowledge the developmental differences between teens and adults. The intent is to ensure that relationships between minors, especially when there is an age difference, are consensual and not a result of manipulation or coercion. Teens and parents must understand the legal and personal boundaries that define appropriate relationships and identify the red flags that are critical to their safety and well-being. By recognizing these signs, teens can protect themselves and others from falling into a predator's trap.

Kids program: For kids aged 3 to 12. It covers essential topics such as "no-go zones," personal empowerment, online safety, and the fundamental four steps of P.L.A.N. methodology.¹¹ We introduce the concept of "no-go zones," where kids learn which areas of their body are private and that they have the right to protect them. Through positive reinforcement and role-playing, kids practice using their voice and body language to communicate confidently what they are comfortable with and what makes them feel safe. This program includes tips for navigating the digital world without compromising their safety and breaking down the four steps of P.L.A.N. – Permission, Location, Activity, Names & Numbers – to give kids a structured approach to safe decision-making in everyday scenarios.

Program for the general public: A program that combines all topics into one discussion to help the community understand the various forms of child sexual abuse, whether it's by a stranger or someone they know, and the tactics abusers use to manipulate their victims and those around them. By understanding the far-reaching effects of abuse, we can all be more empathetic and supportive of those who have endured the trauma. As a community, we must foster open lines of communication where children feel safe and heard, no matter what. A crucial part of prevention is confronting abusers directly with the message that their actions are not only morally reprehensible, but there will be legal consequences to their actions as well. The goal is not just to spread awareness but to empower each person to take a stand, whether it's through reporting, supporting victims, or teaching children about their rights and body autonomy. Remember, every voice counts in this crucial conversation, and every action can make a difference.

Resources

1. Book, Lauren. "How to Build a P.L.A.N. for Child Sexual Abuse Prevention." Web log. Lauren's Kids (blog), August 11, 2021. <https://laurenskids.org/how-to-build-a-p-l-a-n-for-child-sexual-abuse-prevention/>
2. "Child Sexual Abuse Fact Sheet." National Child Traumatic Stress Network. Accessed April 8, 2024. https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/child_sexual_abuse_fact_sheet_parents_teachers_caregivers.pdf
3. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Sexual Assault of Young Children as Reported to Law Enforcement (2000).
4. "Facts and Stats about Child Abuse: Child Protect." Child Protect | Supporting the Victims of Child Abuse. Accessed April 8, 2024. <https://www.childprotect.org/facts-about-child-abuse.html>
5. "Grooming and Red Flag Behaviors." Darkness to Light, January 29, 2020. <https://www.d2l.org/child-grooming-signs-behavior-awareness/>
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7. "Tell Others the Facts: CMRPI." Child Molestation Research & Prevention Institute. Accessed April 8, 2024. <https://www.childmolestationprevention.org/tell-others-the-facts>
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9. "The Issue of Child Sexual Abuse." Lauren's Kids, January 15, 2022. <https://laurenskids.org/about/the-issue-of-child-sexual-abuse/>
10. "Warning Signs." RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network). Accessed April 8, 2024. <https://www.rainn.org/warning-signs>



11. Lauren Book

STAYING WELL IN TURBULENT TIMES

By Nancy Fredericks

Adjunct Instructor, University of South Florida, School of Information

It's difficult to be a library worker today. Libraries of all types are subject to controversy and in the news almost daily; Florida libraries in particular. Why is this? Is it because the person in a representative role for the library profession made statements about being a lesbian or a Marxist? Or is there something deeper going on in our society as a whole? Many years from now sociologists may be able to explain this turbulent period, but, in the meantime, the situation remains a challenging one for library workers.

Alejandro Marquez from the University of Denver, Auraria Library, recently presented a webinar, "[Moral Injury in Libraries: Strategies for Healing and Growth](#)".¹ He describes moral injury as "a betrayal of an individual's personal or professional values or beliefs by authority figures, coworkers, users, and workplaces." Marquez references three types of moral injury: doing something that goes against your own beliefs, failing to get involved (not doing "enough"), and witnessing others treat individuals poorly. Due to the current cultural climate and the associated criticisms of the library profession, library workers suffer moral injury. Marquez explores the potential conflict between a library worker's personal and professional values and the values of community by examining the American Library Association's Core Values, Code of Ethics, and Freedom to Read Statement. Marquez goes on to share research regarding library worker attitudes about their work, revealing that many library workers feel tired, stressed, overworked, and that their work does not matter in the current climate. They are dealing with dwindling resources: time, money, and energy. Not only do library workers have these feelings, but many of the people the libraries serve have similar feelings and sometimes more extreme challenges, as in the case of those experiencing homelessness.

1. Marquez, "Addressing Moral Injury in Libraries"

2. Ettarh, "Vocational Awe"

3. Marquez, "Addressing Moral Injury in Libraries"



Library workers tend to see their work as important and more than just a paycheck; their work offers them a sense of purpose, growth, and community connection. Having the perspective that their work is more than just a paycheck poses additional challenges for library workers. Fobazi Ettarh, in the article "[Vocational Awe and Librarianship: The Lies We Tell Ourselves](#),"² states:

Vocational awe describes the set of ideas, values, and assumptions librarians have about themselves and the profession that result in notions that libraries as institutions are inherently good, sacred notions, and therefore beyond critique. I argue that the concept of vocational awe directly correlates to problems within librarianship like burnout and low salary.

Library workers may see library work as a vocation, rather than a job or career, which connotes a religious "calling." A religious "calling" implies that library workers are saviors whose primary job is to "educate and save." If library workers are "called" to such service, then their libraries must be sacred places. Fobazi Ettarh argues that if library workers, by virtue of working in a library, are responsible for "good work," an expectation is set that any failures of libraries are largely the fault of library workers who failed to live up to the ideals of the profession. He asks the question: if the library's purpose is to serve, is it so holy that it fails to serve those who work in them?

Library workers become overwhelmed when dealing with cultural criticisms, moral injury, and vocational awe. So, how to cope? Alejandro Marquez suggests that one way to cope is to have hope. He defines hope as a will and a way. Being realistic and having a game plan is crucial, as a belief without a game plan is toxic positivity.³ Change will eventually happen; however, this change may take a while. In the meantime, library workers need to prioritize their physical, emotional, and financial health.

STAYING WELL IN TURBULENT TIMES

In the book “Fostering Wellness in the Workplace: A Handbook for Librarians,” Bobbie Newman provides a number of recommendations for improving physical, emotional, and financial health. She addresses the library’s physical space. Libraries are often housed in older buildings, many of which were not even designed to be a library. Even newer workspaces can be problematic due to a lack of windows and a reliance on open floor plans, which result in a lack of privacy for library workers. Ergonomics need to be addressed as poorly designed work areas can result in neck, back, and wrist pain. Building temperature, noise levels, and air quality also affect one’s health. Library workers are entitled to well-organized, freshly painted spaces with updated furniture, all of which help improve both mood and productivity.⁴

Newman also considers library policies and practices such as salaries, paid leave, flexible work schedules, and the promotion of work-life balance, sharing research on how these policies affect worker wellness. Newman references emotional labor, which like moral injury and vocational awe, takes a toll on library workers. Emotional labor decreases job satisfaction and increases emotional exhaustion and burnout. Time away from the service desk and private spaces where staff can process the aftereffects of emotional labor are essential to a healthy workplace.⁵

Organizational culture, cultural humility, and an atmosphere of inclusion are also explored in “Fostering Wellness in the Workplace.” Library administrators play a key role in facilitating a healthy and productive workplace by advocating for library workers at their institutions. Library administrators and managers should also offer:

- robust new employee orientation programs
- clear, measurable, and reasonable goals and expectations
- practices that ensure continual learning
- opportunities for staff involvement in decision-making
- rotations of the most stressful job duties among staff and provide downtime to recover from these duties⁶

It’s important to acknowledge that administrators and managers are often stuck in the middle between frontline workers and their institutions. When they are able to do so, they should push back on unreasonable demands from higher-level administrators.

Library workers can support each other by encouraging self-care and reminding co-workers to take time for:

- Relaxing activities such as mindful meditation,⁷ body scanning,⁸ and journaling,⁹
- Practicing gratitude daily, taking a moment to acknowledge the good things in life, and finding joy in the small things.
- Setting boundaries and saying “no” when overworked and overwhelmed
- Staying connected and having a strong support system¹⁰

An important aspect of wellness is the belief that each one of us can make a difference. Alejandro Marquez proposes that library workers should find allies and partner with other organizations and individuals that share the same priorities as library workers. These could include:

- Labor unions and others who support collective bargaining
- Not-for-profit organizations such as the Everyday Activism Network¹¹ and Everylibrary.¹²
- Professional organizations such as the Florida Library Association and the American Library Association. (Note: Despite the “banning” of memberships in these organizations by some library institutions, individuals are guaranteed the right of association in the United States Constitution.)¹³



4-6. Newman, *Fostering Wellness in the Workplace*

7. “Getting Started in Mindfulness”

8. Headspace, “Body Scan Meditation to Reduce Stress”

9. University of Rochester Medical Center, “Stress Management”

10. Rocky Vista Health Center, “Importance of Self-Care”

11. Everyday Activism Network

12. EveryLibrary

13. Findlaw, “Freedom of Association”

STAYING WELL IN TURBULENT TIMES

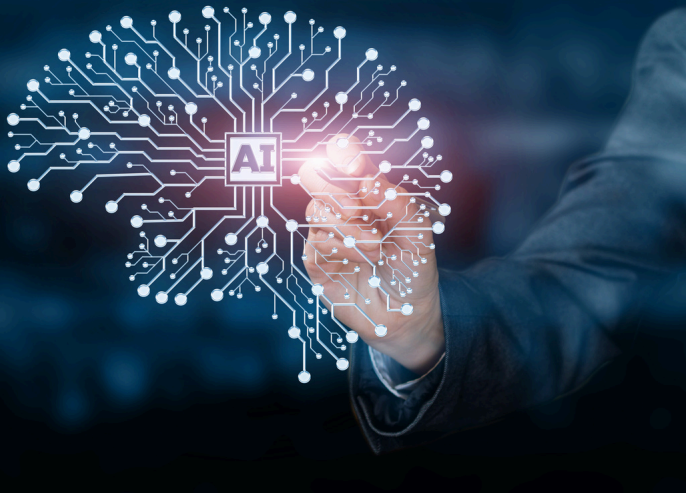
In summary, these are challenging times for library workers. Some people in our communities have chosen to blame libraries and library workers for the changes they don't want to see in society. Library workers experience moral injury when they do things against their own beliefs, don't feel like they are doing enough, and witness others being treated poorly. They suffer from vocational awe by viewing the library as a sacred place and themselves as saviors resulting in burnout. Prioritizing physical, mental, and financial health is essential for library workers. Library workers can navigate these challenging times by learning about and taking advantage of workplace resources such as employee assistance programs, wellness programs, and paid leave; advocating for a healthy work environment, from ergonomic workspaces to private spaces to decompress after providing emotional labor; and seeking out allies who will support the work of libraries and library workers.

In the words of Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Library workers should begin by prioritizing their own physical, emotional, and financial health.



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AI VS. ACADEMIA: IS THE RESEARCH PAPER DOOMED?

Lisa Seymour, Librarian/Associate Professor,
Palm Beach State College

Abstract

The rise of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) has raised concerns about its potential impact on academic integrity, especially concerning research papers and academic writing. Some institutions have decided to ban the use of AI, while others are looking for ways to integrate it into their curriculum responsibly. Pennsylvania State University offers a course called "Emerging Technologies in Popular Culture," which explores the ethical implications of AI-generated art. This approach emphasizes critical evaluation and problematization of AI-generated outputs and serves as a model for embracing AI while maintaining academic rigor. As AI reshapes education, educators must prepare students with the necessary skills to navigate this evolving landscape.

Introduction

On November 30, 2022, the world as we knew it changed. Open AI released ChatGPT to the public, and the world has never been the same. The tool quickly went viral. Suddenly, people everywhere were talking about this emerging technology. There were over one million users only five days after the Open AI released Chat GPT (Marr, 2023). With ChatGPT available to the public, academics nationwide began to show signs of worry regarding academic integrity. Those in K-12 and higher education feared this new tool would kill original research and the concept of the research paper. Traditional research papers have been a staple of education for decades, and with the rise of AI, some have questioned their relevance. Despite the trepidation felt by academics, it is important to remember that AI can be a valuable tool in the research process. By adjusting how we design and assign research assignments, academia can ensure that traditional research papers remain an important part of education.

The first instinct of some professors and school districts was to ban the use of AI. This author's son, a student at a prestigious university, was directed by one of his professors to purchase Blue Books.¹ He was informed that exams would be conducted in person instead of online to deter the use of generative AI. Reverting to outdated practices to combat cheating and uphold academic integrity is an ineffective approach to addressing the rise of generative AI. Professors and teachers need to have intellectual conversations about the use of AI and how to maintain academic integrity. Such discussions will help students better understand a professor's trepidation about using AI and how important academic integrity is in the research process and all aspects of their educational lives.

Findings and Discussion

Even in original research and thought, cheating is not a new problem at institutions of higher learning. As a college student at the University of Massachusetts in the late 1980s and early 1990s, one could buy a "completed", or "pre-written" paper, and if they were willing to sacrifice their academic integrity, turn it in to their professor as their work. These practices were not unique to the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. When this author became a new teacher in the late 1990s, she assigned a one-page research paper to the eighth-grade social students in her class. More than one student printed out a page from Microsoft Encarta (Remember Microsoft Encarta?), put their name on it, and turned it in, complete with the Microsoft Encarta mark at the bottom, committing plagiarism by putting their name on something written by another person. Banning a tool as shiny and new as generative AI will not work. The outright banning of AI turns it into an even shinier and brighter new tool that students are dying to use. Students will find ways to skirt the system.

1. A Blue Book is a booklet, usually with a blue cover, with about 20 lined pages inside that students use to answer exam questions, particularly questions in an essay format.

AI vs. Academia: Is the Research Paper Doomed?

The answer to the AI problem for academia is not to ban it. The answer is that we must integrate generative AI into academic research. This necessitates a paradigm shift in the evaluation and validation of research outputs, moving beyond traditional measures of authorship and publication to focus on the quality, impact, and reproducibility of AI-assisted research. We must teach students the ethics of information and information literacy and how to deal with the misinformation, disinformation, hallucinations, and bias that come with these shiny new generative AI tools. If we do not, AI remains available, and the people using it will not have the right training for it.

Some institutions are trying to teach their students that AI can be an instructive tool, as opposed to those who are outright banning the use of AI. Pennsylvania State University at University Park is the former. They are offering a course entitled *Emerging Technologies in Popular Culture*. The art department offers this course, which seeks to answer the following questions: "Who owns the art co-created with a machine? When does AI become the artist?" Moreover, "Do we view art created with the aid of AI differently?"² Offering this course to their students puts this university ahead of the curve in incorporating AI into the curriculum. This new course is a model for how universities can handle generative AI. Perhaps the key learning objective of the course will give us a blueprint for handling AI in the academic research paper. That key objective is that students must "problematize and critically evaluate AI-generated art in society."³ Students must critically evaluate every piece of information that comes from generative AI. The critical thinking that results from trying to answer these questions leads to the exact kind of discourse that should be present on college campuses. This course employs good educational pedagogy using a new technological tool to answer philosophical questions.

Pennsylvania State University is going in what this author believes to be the proper direction with generative AI by adding it to the curriculum in a productive way. They offer a course that seeks to educate their student body on the ethical issues surrounding the use of generative AI. Their course delves into important questions about using and interacting with this new technology.

According to Duke University, "every course should have an AI policy. Instructors should update their plagiarism policies to include guidance on using generative AI text in their class."⁴ They even go one step further and say that professors need to guide their students with this new source of information and support AI literacy. In *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Kevin Gannon states, "Students are telling us, the use of ChatGPT and other AI tools is ubiquitous - and the days of brushing them aside in our course and assessment planning are over."⁵ So, the question remains: will higher education put their collective heads in the sand and continue to ban the use of AI, or will teachers and professors show their students how to use this technology ethically and with a critical eye, ensuring their students are ready when their future employers ask them to use this technology?

This author believes that both K-12 education systems and institutions of higher learning must learn to embrace this technology. Understandably, teachers and professors need more time to accept and encourage the use of a technology that allows their students to enter a prompt, have it spit out a research paper complete with citations, and turn it in, thus committing plagiarism. "The growth of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies has affected higher education in a dramatic way, shifting the norms of teaching and learning. With these shifts come major ethical questions."⁶ As educators, we need to find a way to answer the ethical questions that generative AI brings along with it. Some ethical questions surrounding generative AI in the research process include questions such as, what bias may be present in the results? How trustworthy are the results? Are students using AI with academic integrity throughout the research process?⁷

AI is nascent and has already begun to disrupt and revolutionize how we teach and learn. Now, academia must revolutionize its teaching model to include AI. The only way to manage AI in K-12 schools and on college campuses is to teach the students how to use it properly. We must teach students how to use AI as a tool akin to a calculator. Calculator technology has emerged as a universally recognized and valued tool through several transformative phases.

2-3. Pennsylvania State University

4. Duke University, "Artificial intelligence policies"

5. Gannon, K, "Should you add an AI policy to your syllabus?"

6. Huang and Shiri, "AI and Ethics"

7. Slimi and Villarejo, "Navigating the Ethical Challenges of AI"

AI vs. Academia: Is the Research Paper Doomed?

These phases include the teacher being confident in their mathematical skills and their skills as an educator capable of teaching complex mathematical concepts, understanding the limitations of the calculator and that if students do not understand the mathematical concepts, the calculator will not provide them with the correct answer; the calculator is used for basic tasks like “confirming and checking mathematical ideas which allowed students to see its value and usefulness”; and finally, the acceptance that they must teach understanding of mathematical concepts, and without that understanding the calculator is not a source of “mathematical authority” but simply a tool that the students use.⁸

Conclusion

As librarians, we need to be at the forefront of training the faculty on our campuses to manage AI and coexist with its presence in their classrooms. Faculty must fully understand the benefits and drawbacks of using and learning with AI. As educators, we must always be mindful not to lose out on human interaction with our students. We must remind our faculty that this innovative technology does not replace cognitive reasoning and cannot create and engage a community of learners as humans can. We are uniquely poised to help the faculty on our campuses handle artificial intelligence. The first step is helping our faculty craft policies for the ethical use of AI within their classrooms. These policies must be in the syllabus at the beginning of the semester or the year so that students understand what is and is not acceptable in their classrooms. Professors must decide how and if they will allow their students to use AI. Students may use it on some assignments while not on others. They must make these requirements clear in the syllabus and for each assignment.

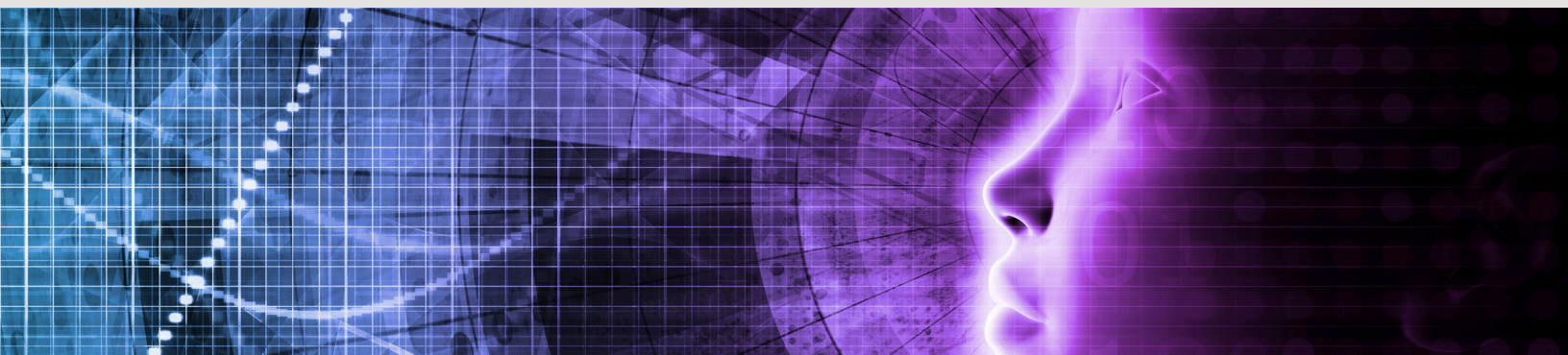
8. Doerr and Zangor, “Creating meaning for and with the graphing calculator”

9. Pisica, *et. al.*, “Implementing artificial intelligence in higher education”

This author believes “AI can facilitate learning, and it can offer that AI can facilitate learning, and it can offer both students and teachers a personalized approach.”⁹ Pisica *et al.* further state:

The benefits of the implementation of AI in HE are appreciated in relation to the research process. AI offers exceptional opportunities to increase interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary research, as AI facilitates searching through a huge number of sources, selecting eclectic topics, and transferring methods from one field to another.

In their paper “Implementing Artificial Intelligence in higher education: Pros and cons from the perspectives of academics,” Pisica *et al.* discuss inclusion in education as a benefit of using AI in higher education and speak about AI-powered personalized learning approaches that will open doors for students of diverse abilities and backgrounds, enabling them to progress academically through customized learning pathways that cater to their unique needs. When discussing inclusion in education, it is not hard to imagine how using generative AI will enhance student education. It is not hard to imagine a situation where you have a student who does not understand a concept you just taught, and that student can go to ChatGPT, Google Bard, or any other AI Large Language Model and type in the concept and ask for it to be explained to them. AI can be a powerful learning companion when used correctly and ethically. Another scenario could be a teacher has a student who just moved from Belgium and needs help understanding what they are reading. AI can translate the text so students can learn with their English-speaking peers. These two examples show how effective AI can be as a learning companion.



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Regarding research, we must be careful to teach our students how to use AI as a tool in the same way we allow our students to use calculators to solve math problems (those of us of a certain age may remember being told we were not to use calculators for our math homework and tests; that does not age well). AI can be a tool students have in their pockets when conducting research. AI can be a brainstorming partner, helping the fledgling researcher create an outline for their paper, devise search terms to plug into legitimate research databases (that we, as librarians, help them find), edit their thesis statement, and more.¹⁰ These uses are ethical in the research process so long as, just like any other source, citations are provided when AI is involved in research. Both MLA and APA have guidelines on how the researchers should cite AI use in research papers.

As with anything, AI has drawbacks in the research process. Researchers must be careful when using AI as a research tool. As with any tool, there is often the temptation to use AI unethically.¹¹ But the temptation to cheat is not a problem with AI chatbots so much as it is human nature. Students must be wary of any source obtained directly through an AI chatbot and should fully vet any source retrieved through AI to ensure that it is indeed a real and credible source. That is what we can and must teach.

AI is an ever-evolving technology that will be present everywhere in our lives for many years to come. Academia must accept AI as it has embraced the calculator, the internet, and other educational technology tools. With proper guidance and policies, AI can make the learning experience richer and more valuable if we teach our students the information literacy skills needed to be successful consumers of information from AI and the internet, and provide them with clear policies on how and when they may use AI.

10-11. Pisica, et. al., "Implementing artificial intelligence in higher education"

By incorporating AI in research assignments, students can access a wealth of information that was once unimaginable. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of AI-generated information and ensure that students understand this and use it ethically. This can be achieved by teaching students to use AI-generated information responsibly, by teaching proper citations, and by adapting research assignments to ethical considerations.

Despite the initial fears, traditional research papers are far from dead. Instead, AI has the potential to enhance them. By incorporating AI in research assignments and teaching students to use AI-generated information ethically, we can ensure that traditional research papers remain a valuable part of education.

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MIND THE GAP:

Transactional Distance and Access to Human Support in Academic Libraries in Florida

Dr. Christine E. Woods: Online Reference and Instruction Librarian/Assistant Professor, Saint Leo University

christine.woods@saintleo.edu

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9362-7176>

Viki Stoupenos, Regional Librarian, Saint Leo University

viki.stoupenos@saintleo.edu

Abstract

Seventy-four colleges and universities in Florida were examined to determine the transactional distance of connecting to human support in academic libraries. Transactional distance was defined as how far away students or users may feel from getting human support. This distance was measured with the number of steps it would take a user to navigate from university home pages to academic library home pages, which was affected by the location and visibility of the library link on the university home page. The transactional distance of human support through synchronous systems, live chat, and virtual or in-person appointments with a librarian was also measured by the number of steps, as well as hours of availability, and access to human interaction rather than chatbots. The researchers concluded that the transactional distance for users, prospective students, current students, and community members had increased due to the findings that the link to the library was more than two steps for 46% of the colleges and universities compared to similar research ten years ago. However, the researchers concluded that transactional distance for students decreased due to synchronous methods such as live chat and the availability of reference appointments with a librarian. This study found that 80% of academic libraries in Florida had live chat, and 66% had visible means for students to make an appointment with a librarian. Askalibrarian.org, Florida's chat consortium which is used by 39 colleges and universities, positively impacted the availability and number of hours that live chat could be offered. Chatbots were used by 10% of libraries, in six institutions. Academic libraries in Florida should continue to advocate for visibility on university home pages and explore options to increase student support through human interactions.

Keywords: transactional distance, college or university Web sites, academic library Web sites, virtual reference, live chat, chatbots, Florida college and universities

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to determine the transactional distance of access to human support in academic libraries in Florida. Transactional distance is defined as the gap between the learner and the teacher in online classes.¹ In other words, how far away the learner feels from the teacher or the ability to get assistance. This definition can also be applied to how far away the learner feels from the library or the ability to get assistance. Awareness of the placement and visibility of links to library home pages from university home pages may inform librarians of the need to advocate for a better presence on university home pages. Attention to the placement of virtual reference and appointment options on academic library home pages ensures patrons can readily access support from academic librarians. Learner autonomy is often assumed to be high, but many students struggle to navigate college and library Web sites to find what they need. Two crucial issues in transactional distance are structure and dialogue. The structure of learning materials and the ability for students to communicate their learning needs are also important for libraries and librarians. According to Moore, educators can “bridge the gap” of transactional distance with “communications technology.”² Web sites must have a logical structure, and students must have the ability to communicate with someone to get help if needed. This research study will focus on the premise that transactional distance for students increases as the number of steps to reach the library and library support increases.

1. Moore, “The Theory of Transactional Distance”

2. Moore

The Association for College and Resource Librarians' (ACRL) Standards

The ACRL Standards for Libraries in Higher Education clearly explain the importance of structure and transactions with students.³ Rather than focusing on the Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education, the Standards establish principles and performance indicators in the following areas: institutional effectiveness, professional values, educational role, discovery, collections, space, management, personnel, and external relations. Although many of the standards could be tied to research related to library Web sites, virtual reference, and supporting students via individual appointments, the standards connected to the Educational Role, Discovery, and Space were the primary focus of the inquiry. ACRL defines Discovery as how libraries empower students to discover for themselves everything libraries have to offer, which can be accomplished by carefully constructing library Web sites and connecting to university Web sites and portals. Discovery is tied to one-on-one instruction, which can be accomplished through in-person and virtual options. ACRL defines the Educational Role of librarians and includes the ability of library personnel to provide "appropriate and timely instruction," which may be accomplished via in-person or virtual options. Finally, Space is defined by ACRL as not just physical space but also virtual spaces, which should be formatted in ways that are conducive to students' self-discovery of library resources. ACRL defines Space as "convenient hours" of access to library personnel, services, and resources. Therefore, academic libraries should regularly examine issues related to library Web sites, and students' access to virtual reference.

Transactional Distance

Transactional distance is a theory developed by Moore (1993) to explain the psychosocial distance students may feel in an online course rather than physical distance.⁴ This seminal work posits the organization or logical structure of courses impacts students because, otherwise, they may feel lost or confused. He also determined that interactions with humans, such as the course instructor and fellow students, affected transactional distance. Moore's theory can be applied to how students interact with libraries through online library Web sites. The number of online students rose nationally from 36.3% in 2019 to 53.3% in 2022.⁵ The number of online students in Florida colleges and universities rose higher than national averages, from 45.6% in 2019 to 60.6% in 2022.⁶ Academic libraries must consider the needs of online students who do not have the option of walking up to a reference desk to ask for help. Regardless of the physical location of students on the main campus, satellite campus, or online, students need to be able to access library resources.

3. ACRL, "Standards for Libraries in Higher Education"

4. Moore, "The Theory of Transactional Distance"

5. National Center for Education Statistics, "Percent of Students Enrolled in Distance Education Courses in Postsecondary Institutions 2012-2022"

6. National Center for Education Statistics

Importance of Access to Library Resources and Support

Many research studies, most notably the comprehensive research of ACRL's Assessment in Action program, have proven the importance of access to academic libraries and the instruction provided by librarians.⁷ Reports from studies in 2016 and 2017 concluded the following:

1. Students benefit from library instruction in their initial coursework.
2. Library use increases student success.
3. Collaborative academic programs and services involving the library enhance student learning.
4. Information literacy instruction strengthens general education outcomes.
5. Library research consultations boost student learning.⁸

A more recent longitudinal study by Soria et al. in 2017 investigated students' library usage for four years and concluded that students benefited the most academically by utilizing books and Web-based services such as databases.⁹ Students who engaged with reference services, such as an appointment with a librarian, were also more engaged with their academics. A study by Wittkower in 2022 showed the benefits of students who received in-person, synchronous library instruction in an undergraduate English course compared to a control group that did not.¹⁰ Students who received library instruction were more likely to complete the course and earn a higher grade. Access to libraries and library instruction are essential for students' success in higher education.

University Web Sites

Since the earliest study of library links on university Web pages, a connection has been made between the library's value to the institution and where the links are located. A study of 122 Association of Research Libraries (ARL) library Web pages was conducted by King in 1998 and included the number of steps from the institution's Web page to the library.¹¹ His results showed that 44% of library links could be found in one step, 38% in two, 10% in three, and only one in more than four steps. What has changed since 1998 is the development of portals, most with password-protected access, for current students, while university Web pages have become advertisements for prospective students. However, the prominence of a link to the library, or the lack of one, speaks to the value of the library to the university. A study in 2015 by Becher of 357 college and university Web pages found that the link to the library was either immediately visible or easily located in the main menu more frequently on home pages of doctoral-granting institutions.¹² Becher concluded that doctoral-granting institutions were more likely to consider the value of the library important to prospective students versus institutions focused on "career-oriented" degrees and certificate programs.¹³ Becher also noted a correlation between larger public universities and library link placement within one step. Academic librarians must advocate for visibility on their institution's Web site with administrators and Information Technology departments. Students at large, small, public, private, and for-profit universities deserve the same ease of access to library services, which are important to their academic success.

7. Karen Brown, "Documented Library Contributions to Student Learning and Success"

8. Brown

9. Soria, Fransen, and Nackerud, "Beyond Books"

10. Wittkower, McInnis, and Pope, "An Examination of Relationships between Library Instruction and Student Academic Achievement"

11. David L. King, "Library Home Page Design"

12. Melissa Becher, "Factors Impacting Library Visibility on Academic Institution Home Pages"

13. Becher

Mind the Gap

Academic Library Web Sites

When students reach the library home page, they need to be able to navigate the site and know how to get help if needed. There are many issues related to Web site design for libraries, including visual design, usability design, and accessibility design. Most of these design issues are outside of the scope of this research. However, some topics related to navigation and usability were factors in this study. For example, Comeaux examined 37 library sites in the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries and found that certain design elements related to navigation were more popular than others, such as the prevalence of top menus with drop-down links.¹⁴ The terms “Help” and “Ask” were in a list of common menu terms but not used as frequently as “About,” “Services,” “Collection,” and “Research.” Comeaux also noted the most prevalent placement of library hours in the top right area of library home pages. Jones and Thorpe examined 488 library home pages.¹⁵ They created a list of the most common elements starting with the most frequent and presented in decreasing order: link to university home page, library hours, images, interlibrary loan link, “About” link or section, link to catalog search, link to tutorials or guides, contact librarian link, and link to staff directory.¹⁶ Overduin conducted a usability study after redesigning their library Web pages. The results showed that one of the most difficult tasks for students was to locate the contact information for a subject/liason librarian if they needed help, with a 22% success rate.¹⁷ However, students were more successful in finding how to get research help from a non-specific librarian at a 68% rate. Overduin also noted that although the “Ask a Librarian” chat widget was featured prominently on the home page, students expressed distrust over using it and said they preferred to ask a librarian in person or on the phone. Overduin concluded that whether students were new or returning, they needed instruction on navigating the library’s Web site pages.

Virtual Chat and Virtual Reference Appointments

Using many different methods to provide information literacy instruction to students promptly has led to the rise in academic libraries using “Ask a Librarian,” which is a service of Springshare, also known as Libchat, and offering virtual reference appointments utilizing video conferencing platforms such as Zoom, Web Ex, Microsoft Teams, and Google Meet. The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns impacted the number of libraries using chat services. Askalibrarian.org is a service provided in Florida by the Tampa Bay Library Consortium and provides virtual reference services to over 100 academic, public, and special libraries, including 39 colleges and universities.¹⁸

14. David J. Comeaux, “Web Design Trends in Academic Libraries—A Longitudinal Study”

15. Comeaux

16. Jones and Thorpe, “Library Homepage Design at Medium-Sized Institutions,”

17. Terezita Overduin, “Like a Robot”

18. Tampa Bay Library Consortium, “Ask a Librarian Statewide Chat, Text, and Email”

A report by Bailey et al. stated that during lockdowns from 2019 to 2020, the number of chats increased by 121%. Chats remained high in 2021, increasing by 113% from 2019.¹⁹ Although participating in a consortium can help libraries without sufficient personnel to provide chat services for more hours, there is evidence that students may not trust sources outside of their institutions. A study by Barrett and Pagotta found that, “Users were more likely to be dissatisfied if the [chat] operator disclosed that they were affiliated with a different university or campus than the user.”²⁰

Another way libraries can offer chat services when personnel are unavailable is to use a chatbot. Springshare LibChat now offers a chatbot to answer questions according to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) and other “flow” settings. The chatbot will direct questions that require human interaction to email or transfer to a live chat operator if available.²¹ There are two different ways of using chatbots: integrating or separating. Full integration means the chats go through the chatbot first, and then a “live agent” is notified if the answer cannot be located, or the user requests it. Separating the chatbot means it is employed only when chatting with a live agent is unavailable. More intricate details of what chatbots are and exactly how they function are beyond the scope of this research study. According to Adetayo, chatbots assisting with reference services may be helpful, but there are risks, such as students who prefer to talk to librarians and the frustration of chatbots not providing the correct answer.²² Ehrenpreis and DeLooper implemented a chatbot in addition to live chat with a librarian. They found that students often got mixed up and did not understand the differences or limitations of chat systems.²³

However, students benefit from information literacy instruction that can take place during chats with a human, specifically a librarian. A study by Barrett et al. found that 33% of chats included instruction.²⁴ Rather than graduate students or paraprofessionals, librarians were more likely to provide instruction in chat interactions. A study by Hervieux and Tummon found that 23% of chat interactions included instruction. As they noted, students often asked questions that required short answers or information about another department or service. More effective instruction can be accomplished through virtual reference with individual appointments. As Cole and Raish explained, in their experience, although Zoom or video conferencing can be initiated from chat, depending on chat volume, it can be very distracting for librarians.²⁵ Cole and Raish explained scenarios based on chat transcripts that would be more beneficial for students in virtual appointments, such as working with students with negative emotions to establish a calming, trusting environment with face-to-face interactions. A study by Bennett of virtual consultations found that students gained confidence in their research abilities and learned valuable research skills they would use again.²⁶ There are many benefits of virtual reference, especially individual appointments.

19. Jules Bailey et al., “Chat Services and Covid-19: Trends in ‘Ask a Librarian’”

20. Barrett and Pagotto, “Pay (No) Attention to the Man Behind the Curtain”

21. Lilly Sundell-Thomas, “Springshare Buzz: SpringyNews”

22. Adebowale Jeremy Adetayo, “Artificial Intelligence Chatbots in Academic Libraries”

23. Ehrenpreis and DeLooper, “Implementing a Chatbot on a Library Web Site”

24. Kathryn Barrett et al., “Teaching and User Satisfaction in an Academic Chat Reference Consortium”

25. Carmen Cole and Victoria Raish, “Serving the Need: Engaging in Virtual Video Reference with Students”

26. Jessica L. Bennett, “Virtual Research Consultations Study”

Mind the Gap

Research Questions/Objectives

1. How many steps does it take to reach the library home page, starting from the university home page? Where was the link to the library located on the university's Web site? Standard 4.2, "The library integrates library resource access into institutional Web and other information portals."²⁷ This standard was connected to our inquiry regarding the placement of library access on university Web sites.
2. Was chat virtual reference available? Where was the chat widget placed on the library Web site? How many hours was chat available? Was it explained whether the chat was with a person or chatbot? Was it explained whether the person answering the chat was a librarian? Was it explained whether the chat system was part of a consortium? Can students ask a question and get it answered later if chat is offline? Standard 4.6, "The library provides one-on-one assistance through multiple platforms to help users find information." Standard 3.4, "Library personnel provide appropriate and timely instruction in a variety of contexts and employ multiple learning platforms and pedagogies."²⁸ These standards prompted the researcher's questions regarding access to chat virtual reference and appointments with librarians. Standard 6.1, "The library creates intuitive navigation that supports self-sufficient use of virtual and physical spaces."²⁹ These standards are correlated with our research into the logical location of chat and options to make appointments within library Web site pages. Standard 6.7, "The library provides ... convenient hours for its services, personnel, resources, and collections." This standard inspired the researcher's questions about the availability and number of hours for chat.
3. Was there a way that students could make an appointment? Where was the information located so that students could make an appointment? How many steps does it take to make an appointment from the library home page? Was there a phone number, email, link, or other method for making the appointment? Were in-person, virtual, or both types of appointments offered? Standards 3.4, 6.1, 6.7, and 6.8, as listed previously, were used to develop these research questions related to students being able to make an appointment with a librarian for one-on-one instruction and support.

27. ACRL, "Standards for Libraries in Higher Education."

28. ACRL

29. ACRL

Method

Seventy-four four-year colleges and universities in Florida were examined to determine the number of steps from university Web sites to library Web sites and the number of steps from library homepages to human support through virtual reference or an appointment with a librarian.

A list of 122 four-year colleges and universities in Florida was generated using the National Center for Education Statistics College Navigator (<https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator>). Forty-three schools were eliminated from the study because their enrollment was less than 800 students. An additional four for-profit schools were not included in the study because access to their libraries was permitted only for active students. IRB approval was not required for this study as no human subjects were involved.

Data was collected by two researchers using a private Qualtrics survey, which was used to compile the data and utilize analysis tools. The two researchers conducted a trial of five universities each and then met to improve their questions and response options for the study. The researchers reviewed what would be defined as a step prior to and after the first trial. The definition of clicks and steps were similar to previous studies by King (1998), Becher (2014), and Simpson (2015). If the library link was immediately visible it was one step. If the link was immediately visible but the researcher had to scroll down to view it at the bottom of the page, it was considered two steps. If the researcher had to click on the main menu or hover the mouse over the words in the main menu before clicking on the library link or another link, that was considered two steps. Additional clicks or steps on other pages were determined in the same manner. The researchers communicated with each other about any difficulties and reviewed special cases together to reach an agreement on how to report them.

This study was non-experimental empirical research because it was based on the observation and description of the relationship between currently occurring variables of the university and library Web sites at the time of the study in February 2024. Quantitative data was analyzed for the mean, total counts, and percentages of responses. Data is publicly available at this link: <https://qj.tc/iMdNHb>

Mind the Gap

Results

Number of Steps from University Web Sites to Library Home Pages

The university Web sites and library home pages for 74 four-year colleges and universities in Florida were examined. Out of the 78 institutions that were identified, four university Web sites had password-protected access to all school resources and had to be eliminated from the study. 53% of the colleges and universities were public, 38% were private, and 9% were private for-profit. 36% of the colleges and universities were small (enrollment between 1,000 to 5,000 students), 32% were medium (enrollment between 5,000 to 15,000), 12% were large (enrollment between 15,000 to 30,000), 11% were huge (enrollment over 30,000 students), and 8% of the colleges and universities were very small (enrollment less than 1,000 students).³⁰ Note that the Carnegie classification of size was adjusted because there was a variety of residential characteristics within four year institutions in Florida.

The average number of steps from the university Web site to the library home page was 2.5. Cross-referencing data for public and private schools did not show much difference between them: public 2.6 average and private 2.5 average, but for-profit was higher at 2.7 average steps. However, cross-referencing data based on school size showed some interesting differences. Very small schools had the highest average of 2.8 steps, small and medium schools had 2.6 steps, while large and huge schools had the lowest average step count at 2.4 (see Table 1). The lowest number of steps was one step, which meant that the link for the library was immediately visible in the main menu. The highest number of steps for any school was five steps, which also required searching for it much longer (see Table 2).

Table 1

Average Number of Steps from University Web Sites to Library Home Pages by Institutional Size

Total avg.	Very small	Small	Medium	Large	Huge
2.5	2.8	2.6	2.6	2.4	2.4

Note. Very small (enrollment less than 1,000 students), small (enrollment between 1,000 to 5,000 students), medium (enrollment between 5,000 to 15,000), large (enrollment between 15,000 to 30,000), huge (enrollment over 30,000 students).

Table 2

Number of Steps from University Web Sites to Library Home Pages by Institution

Number of steps	Percent	Count
1	5	4
2	49	36
3	32	23
4	10	7
5	4	3
NA		1
Total	100	74

Note. NA means non-applicable. One institution did not have a link to a library.

30. American Council on Education, "Size & Setting Classification"

Mind the Gap

Location of Library Link

The most common location for the link to the library was in the main menu, located under or after clicking on “Academics.” Selecting “Current Students” from the main menu was also common. Several other menu terms were used, such as academic resources, academic support, and additional academic links. Menu terms similar to current students were student life, student support, and links for students. There was only one school where the link to the library could not be located but was accessed after a Google search. (see Table 3).

Table 3

Location of Library Link on University Web Sites

Link location	Percent	Count
Main Menu - Academics	40	34
Main Menu - Current Students	21	18
Other	15	13
Main Menu - Resources	6	5
Bottom of the Page links	5	4
Main Menu (immediately visible)	4	3
Main Menu (after opening it)	4	3
Main Menu - Quick Links	4	3
Google Search	1	1
Total	100	84

Note. N=84 due to two or more choices being selected per institution

Access to Virtual Reference Chat

Location and Hours of Chat

Sixty-eight percent of institutions had chat services immediately visible on their library home page. 20% (15 schools) did not have chat services. For 12% of schools, it was necessary to click on a link or go to another page to get to chat. Those links or menu terms were usually clearly labeled as “Ask a Librarian,” “Ask Us,” or “Get Help.” Notably, one school had two chat boxes, one for the home institution and one for the “Ask a Librarian” consortium. Cross-referencing data based on institutional size showed that institutions with less than 5,000 students were less likely to have chat services (see Table 4).

Table 4

Number of Libraries Without Chat Services by Institutional Size

Total	Very small	Small	Medium	Large	Huge
15	3	10	2	0	0

Note. Very small (enrollment less than 1,000 students), small (enrollment between 1,000 to 5,000 students), medium (enrollment between 5,000 to 15,000), large (enrollment between 15,000 to 30,000), huge (enrollment over 30,000 students).

Sixty-six percent of schools clearly posted the hours that chat was available on the library home page or on the page where chat was located. The average number of hours for chat Monday to Thursday was 14.9 hours. Although Sunday hours were often the same as Monday to Thursday, there were a few schools with fewer hours, so the average was 14.1 hours. On Fridays and Saturdays, the hours were an average of 10.6 and 10.4. The number of hours chat was available was affected by whether the institution was part of a consortium. The Florida “Ask a Librarian” consortium service is available 14 hours (10 a.m. to midnight) Sunday through Thursday and seven hours (10 a.m. to 5 p.m.) on Friday and Saturday (ET). Seven libraries offered chat services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The average number of hours offering chat was lower for schools that were not part of the Florida “Ask a Librarian” or another consortium (see Table 5)

Mind the Gap

Table 5

Comparison of Number of Hours for Chat: Consortium and Not in Consortium

	Sunday	Mon.-Thu.	Friday	Saturday
Total	14.1	14.9	10.6	10.4
Schools not in consortium	9.2	12.1	8.1	6.4

Who is Answering Chat: Consortiums, Librarians, or Chatbots?

Although there are 39 colleges or universities identified as belonging to the Florida consortium, not all schools advertised or clearly posted the information. 61% of institutions did not identify they were part of a consortium. In many cases, it was not clear if other consortiums or chat services were being utilized outside of personnel paid by institutions.

Sixty-nine percent of libraries advertised or posted that students were chatting with a person. It was unclear whether chat was being answered by a person or chatbot in 20% of institutions. Chatbots were being used by only six schools. Three institutions used the chatbot only after normal library hours. One institution using the chatbot explained that a “live agent” could be requested. Two institutions were using a chatbot, and it was unclear if questions that couldn’t be answered would be directed to a person (see Table 6).

Table 6

Chat Monitored by People, Chatbots, or Both

Chat monitor	Percent	Count
Person	69	41
Unclear	20	12
Both	7	4
Chatbot	3	2
Total	100	59

Sixty-one percent of libraries indicated that chats were being answered by a librarian either clearly stated or by advertising services such as “Ask a Librarian.” It was not clear who was answering questions at 25% of schools because the chat was titled “Ask Us” or “Contact Us,” and there was no further explanation available. Only two libraries clearly explained that a librarian or library staff would be answering questions. One library explained that a librarian, learning services coordinator, instructor, or tutor would answer the question. More than half of the libraries indicated that students could ask a question, and someone would answer it if chat were not available, which was not an issue for institutions that offer 24/7 chat (see Table 7).

Table 7

Students Could Ask a Question Using Chat and Get a Response Later

Response	Percent	Count
Yes	59	35
Unclear	25	15
NA 24/7 chat	12	7
No	3	2
Total	100	59

Note. NA means non-applicable.

Reference Appointments

Although 66%, more than half, of the academic libraries examined clearly showed a way that students could make an appointment for support, that meant that 34% did not. Small to medium-sized institutions were more likely not to offer appointments in a clearly visible manner (see Table 8). It is possible that students could make appointments in person or directly by email with specific librarians who identify themselves in other ways or by using staff directories.

Mind the Gap

Table 8

Institutions with No Visible Way to Make an Appointment by Institutional Size

Institution Size	Percent	Count
Very small	8	2
Small	40	10
Medium	40	10
Large	4	1
Huge	8	2
Total	100	25

Note. Very small (enrollment less than 1,000 students), small (enrollment between 1,000 to 5,000 students), medium (enrollment between 5,000 to 15,000), large (enrollment between 15,000 to 30,000), huge (enrollment over 30,000 students).

The location of a link or access point to making an appointment with a librarian was located on 43% of library home pages. Eight libraries, or 16%, required a user to click on “Contact Us” or “Ask Us” to see the information. “Get Help” or “Get Support” pages were also used to post information on how to make an appointment. A variety of other terms were used for pages using a combination of common words such as research, assistance, support, resources, connect, and ask. Although “Ask a Librarian” was used for chat services in most cases, three libraries featured a separate page labeled that way, which included how to make an appointment. Only two libraries placed the information on the library directory page (see Table 9).

Table 9

Location of Information to Make an Appointment with a Librarian

Location	Percent	Count
Library Home Page	43	21
Other	27	13
Contact Us/Ask Us	16	8
Get Help/Get Support	10	5
Library Directory	4	2
Total	100	49

The average number of steps to make an appointment with a librarian from the library home pages was 2.6 steps. Students were able to make appointments using many different methods, such as email, phone, and links to calendar applications and request forms. Springshare’s LibCal was used by 15 libraries. Using a shared calendar is an excellent way to be sure students have the most options for dates and times (see Table 10).

Table 10

Methods for Making an Appointment

Method	Percent	Count
Link	30	30
Email	27	27
Phone	23	23
LibCal/shared calendar	15	15
Email form	3	3
Ask in-person	1	1
Total	100	99

N equals 99 because more than one response could be chosen.

More than half of all libraries, 67%, where students could make an appointment offered virtual and in-person options. Twenty-two offered virtual only, and 10% required in-person appointments.

Mind the Gap

Discussion

RQ1

This research study focused on the premise that transactional distance for students increases as the number of steps to reach the library and library support increases. The researchers concluded for RQ1 that the transactional distance for users, prospective students, current students, and community members had increased because the link to the library was immediately visible: one step for only 5%; within two steps for 49%; and more than two steps for 46% of the colleges and universities compared to similar research ten years ago. Simpson examined 256 university sites in 2014 and found that from 80% to 95%, depending on the type of university, had a link to the library on the home page within one step.³¹ In 2014, Becher examined 357 institutions and found that 32% of library links were immediately visible, 37% were visible within two steps, and 31% were visible in more than two steps.³²

The huge decrease in the visibility of library links is due to several reasons. First, universities are now focusing on Web page creation as advertisements for new students, while portals and learning management systems often have links to the library and other services. A study by Becher found that doctoral-granting universities were more likely to promote the library as important to research.³³ Second, students and others seeking the library can use Google or another search engine to find it. Third, libraries, in general, are being undervalued due to students preferring to use Google or Google Scholar for research. Another salient point is that community members benefit from universities in their area and do not have access to student portals or links placed in courses. Considering these issues, academic libraries must continue to advocate for visibility on university Web sites.

RQ2

The researchers concluded that transactional distance for students decreased due to synchronous methods such as live chat. This study found that the number of academic libraries using chat had risen considerably compared to similar research ten years ago. Eighty percent of academic libraries utilized chat services. A study by Yang and Dalal in 2014 found that out of 362 academic libraries, 48% provided chat services but not all of them were synchronous.³⁴ The overall increase in the number of academic libraries utilizing live chat is significant because it is a synchronous method for students to contact human support. A study by Pyburn showed that prior to having a chat widget on the home page, only 1% of online students engaged with a reference librarian.³⁵

31. Jessica Simpson, "The Heart of the University"

32. Becher, "Factors Impacting Library Visibility on Academic Institution Home Pages."

33. Becher

34. Yang and Dalal, "Delivering Virtual Reference Services on the Web"

35. Lydia L. Pyburn, "Implementing a Proactive Chat Widget in an Academic Library"

The number of chats doubled from 4,020 questions answered in 2015–2016 to 8,120 questions answered in 2016–2017 after implementing the chat widget and adjusting the hours that chat was available and staffing. Askalibrarian.org, Florida's chat consortium, positively impacted the availability and number of hours that live chat could be offered. Libraries that were not part of the Florida consortium or 24/7 chat service were not able to have live chat available for as many hours. Chatbots were only being used by 10% (six) and unclear whether they were being used by 20% (12) of libraries. Although chatbots may extend the number of hours that chat is available, there may be a distrust of using this fairly new technology.

RQ3

The researchers concluded that the transactional distance for students decreased due to the visibility and availability of students to make an appointment with a librarian compared to similar studies. This study found that students could make an appointment with a librarian at 66% of libraries, and 43% were clearly visible on the library home page. A study by Jones and Thorpe found that about 50% of library home pages featured library hours and a link to contact a librarian.³⁶ A study by Yang and Dalal in 2014 found that out of 362 academic libraries, 74% offered virtual reference by phone, email, or video chat.³⁷ Our study examined options for making an appointment with a librarian at 66% of academic libraries, which was different from the study done by Yang and Dalal.

Limitations

Although university and academic library Web sites are considered stable, they do change over time. During the time that research was being conducted, one university relocated the link to the library, which was immediately visible in the main menu the first time observed, and then it was moved more than two steps away. Researchers tried to be consistent with definitions of what constituted one step and other measurements, but there could have been differences in the way Web sites and virtual reference were examined by two different researchers, as well as the potential for error. Researchers tried to examine Web sites as efficiently as possible the first time because repetition in viewing the site meant that it became more familiar and easier to navigate or remember specific steps. In a few cases, to address outliers in the number of steps or other issues, sites were reexamined or examined by both researchers.

Although students were not involved in the study, the researchers experienced frustration when they could not find links or information in logical or expected places on university and library Web pages. Since the researchers were experienced academic librarians conducting the study rather than students, it is likely their level of perseverance was higher. A usability study of a library Web site by Vargas Ochoa found that students often did not complete tasks if they had to click more than five times or scroll down the page.³⁸

36. Jones and Thorpe, "Library Homepage Design at Medium-Sized Institutions"

37. Yang and Dalal, "Delivering Virtual Reference Services on the Web"

38. Isabel Vargas Ochoa, "Navigation Design and Library Terminology"

Mind the Gap

Limitations, cont.

Overduin conducted a usability study of a library Web site with students and found that they had a difficult time finding contact information for librarians (39% success rate) and how to get research help (68% success rate), noting the number that gave up was higher than expected.³⁹Overduin also found that students preferred to talk to a librarian in person or on the phone. The logical conclusion is that students would feel lost, confused, and more likely to give up if they cannot find the information or link they want within a few steps.

The researchers developed a Qualtrics survey form to help record their data as they examined university and library Web sites. In only a few cases, it was discovered that there were unique issues which had not been incorporated into the response choices. However, researchers were able to utilize “other” text responses. Despite these limitations, the researchers are confident in their results and their efforts to conduct research ethically and carefully. The data gathered is generalizable and applicable to academic libraries of any size, public or private. This information is significant because it is the first research of its kind to focus specifically on Florida colleges and universities.

Implications

Academic libraries should advocate for improved placement and visibility of links to their home pages on university home pages because doing so is connected to the perceived value of the library to the institution. Cox stated in a 2018 article, “Traditionally, the library was viewed as the heart of campus, and there was an almost unquestioning acknowledgment of the centrality of its contribution to the institutional mission.”⁴⁰Based on a systematic review of the literature, Cox recommended several strategies to improve library visibility and perceived value. Align the mission and strategic plans of the library to the university. Libraries and librarians should be involved in leadership, creating policies, and working on collaborative projects. Libraries should refocus their energy on users rather than collections and consider rebranding or adjusting marketing efforts. Although collaborating is laudable, there is a danger of losing the library’s distinct mission, for example, by combining or blending with support services. Libraries should consider emerging roles related to technology and the way they work in teams. Most importantly, libraries should convey their value to all stakeholders.

Academic libraries should ensure that students have easy access to virtual reference and appointment options on library home pages. Smaller universities should consider participating in a consortium such as Florida’s Askalibrarian.org to extend the number of hours live chat can be offered. Although using chatbots to extend the number of hours chat is an option, libraries should test them out and get faculty and student feedback prior to implementing them. Virtual reference appointments are a great option for students no matter their location, so all academic libraries should consider using some type of video reference.

Future Research

As the interest in Artificial Intelligence (AI) rises and chatbots continue to advance, further research should be done on their effectiveness and students’ perceptions. One study found that students mistrusted answers to questions provided by librarians outside their institution, but more research is needed on this topic. Usability studies of academic library Web sites should be continued, especially related to accessibility, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), student navigation, and visual design. The placement of chat widgets inside learning management systems, password-protected student portals, and databases should all continue to be studied.

Conclusion

Academic libraries and librarians should continue to advocate for visibility on university home pages for the sake of prospective students and community members, and to add to the perceived value and reputation of the university. As the number of online students continues to grow, ensuring fair and equitable access to human support will continue to be an issue. Advocating for sufficient technology resources and personnel to provide “just in time” instruction via live chat, virtual reference appointments, and other methods should be considered vital. Academic libraries and librarians should continue efforts to decrease the transactional distance for all users.

39. Overduin, “Like a Robot.”

40. John Cox, “Positioning the Academic Library within the Institution

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