

WILU 2013: University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, Canada

Gillian Siddall,
Academic Librarian,
University of Northampton,
gillian.siddall@northampton.ac.uk

The Workshop for Instruction in Library Use (WILU) conference has been celebrated annually for 42 years, travelling across Canada, looking at improving Library instruction in Universities. This year the conference was in Fredericton, the capital of New Brunswick in Eastern Canada at the University of New Brunswick. Unlike many conferences, WILU does not have a committee but instead has a new committee managing the conference each year, according to where it is hosted. This year the topic was 'Synchronicity: the time is now', reflecting the competing demands on the time of Academic and 'instructional' Librarians. I attended to WILU present a paper based on the research Hannah Rose and I had done on reading lists as a pedagogical tool for information literacy development. I was the only Librarian to attend WILU from outside Canada and the USA – so I got a mention in the welcoming keynote!

WILU is a small and friendly conference, just 120 attendees from across North America, looking at sharing good practice and promoting information literacy instruction strategies. There were two keynotes, one focusing on MOOCs and the other on marketing 'changing the conversation'. Honestly, the first key note did not grab my attention as I got lost in the to-ing and fro-ing of the presenters. However, the sessions offered interesting discussion points and areas for reflection. I learnt about 'iAnnotate' for annotating PDFs. The presentation from Gwendolyn MacNairn highlighted an area to explore with my students back in the UK – how did they manage their files, their electronic lives? Was this an area where I could offer some additional advice and support? We offer Refworks at my institution for managing bibliographical references, but we don't overtly discuss how students manage and save their files, if they back them up etc., perhaps we are making too many assumptions about how technically savvy students are.

In their session the Librarians from Portland Community College highlighted our preference for teaching the ideals of research rather than the reality. They illustrated how we tend to teach a very linear approach to researching that does not reflect the

unexpected discoveries that can knock us off path during our research journey. Torie Scott and Rachel Bridgewater explained that we often assume students know that research IS learning, but perhaps we need to emphasise this more. The research journey is helping them to explore and learn more about their chosen topic. Information Literacy instruction has progressed from teaching the tools, to teaching the concepts, now Torie and Rachel say it is time to combine the two and teach the concepts and the tools and the attitude of mind. We need to have open minds in order to take advantage of the surprises that arise during literature searching. Although the language was quite intense, referring to 'prevenient grace' and 'sagacity' Torie and Rachel were able to highlight the need for us, as Librarians, to take a step back from teaching the ideal, to teaching our students what really happens – the positives and the negatives and what can be gained from both.

When I presented the paper I'd written with Hannah I received a lovely reception from my Canadian counterparts. At 9:15am I had them discussing the purpose and value of reading lists, making them earn their breakfast. The attendees made some very astute observations of the reading lists I gave them to

discuss, highlighting how the 235 item history list offered students no sense of discovery or contribution – everything was on that reading list that had looked at the subject, so how could students ever feel they had something to add to the subject area? A reading list would only ever be as good as the instruction/Academic running it – if a tutor was passionate about their subject and getting students to engage with it, they would often have an interesting and responsive reading list. Others obviously use their reading list as a part of the course validation checklist, a time capsule of what was relevant to the subject when the course passed.

Other presentations explored the use and benefit of Wordpress as a teaching tool, holding all the content that the students and staff could then refer back to. I found the process of following a presentation on Wordpress quite disjointed as the presenter flicked between tabs and zoomed in and out of relevant areas, so I think I'd need to explore this a bit more before I used it for any of my teaching. One interesting example the presenter used of a task she gave her students was to get them to trace a scientific research paper from a newspaper article, highlighting how information can become a commodity as it is harvested for

different purposes. One presentation highlighted the importance of using the professional subject language to discuss IL interventions for students rather than our own Library specific vocabulary, especially in relation to accreditation standards. This is something I'm going to be looking at soon, as I think we do get too caught up with our own language and forget that it has very little meaning to the academics that we're trying to communicate with. Therefore we need to use the language from their professional body's accreditation standards if we're going to make much of an impact with them.

For the first time this year WILU included 'ignite talks' five minute presentations, similar to Pecha Kucha, where presenters gave a snap shot of their areas of interest which were then available for questions later in the session. Two that really caught my attention were one on infographics – they are appearing everywhere but are we teaching our students to read these critically, i.e. to evaluate how these are put together and what data sources are used? Apparently Florence Nightingale used infographics to help communicate her ideas. The prize for the best presentation had to go to Sharon ~~Domier~~ for her ignite talk on 'teaching about toilets' she was an incredibly interesting

presenter who engaged the audience with her insightful links of toilets and databases. Ignite talks could be a great way of updating staff on developments within Libraries during their staff development activities.

The director of LOEX (an IL conference in the USA) shared his knowledge and ideas around new presentation media for conferences and teaching. So much depended on the company ecosystem – how well the different software integrated with different packages and browsers. GoogleDocs and ZohoDOcs were recommended if you needed to create forms, Prezi was an example of a good tool to create a library orientation video, but we need to remember that movement does not add meaning! Project offered a presentation that could integrate live streams, e.g. from Twitter, so you could engage in real debate and see the current situation (rather than a snap shot in time). However, the key things to consider for everyone considering using any software for teaching or presenting were: your budget, the equipment available; how the file will be accessed by the user (solo or group work on a project); what functionality was needed; the background of the individual and their temperament (would they get motion sickness from Prezi)?

One area that I think I need to do more work on is the area of faculty instruction or training – how do we help our academics to keep up to date with the changing digital environment? What support do we offer to academics that need to manage their professional profile? Do we help students to understand the importance of their digital footprint and how to manage their profile online? I think that this is something I would definitely like to explore further; it links back to the presentation by Gwendolyn MacNairn looking at how students manage their digital files and downloads. If you think about it, iTunes is set up so you can automatically file and organise downloads, but the PDFs we download from our databases are often labelled with random numbers that mean little to ourselves or our students – how can we encourage them to manage these so that they are useful for them?

The closing keynote was the best, a highly engaging speaker Terry O'Reilly took us through a journey of how different brands and labels had changed their identity to engage with their consumers. Based on the premise that you should have one overwhelming promise that defines you and that your brand is

the shorthand for this – we need to look at what we are communicating to our users. What does our Library mean to them – can we change that perception, make ourselves more useful and relevant? However, Terry stressed that you need objectivity to market well and few of us are really prepared to ask our users honestly “what do you hate about us?” and face the truth. His engaging examples explained his meaning beautifully. Did you know that Marlboros were once female cigarettes (advertised as “mild as May”) with red filter tips to hide the lipstick marks? In order for Librarians and our libraries to discover our greatest opportunity to support and add value to our students and users, we need to define what our problem is. What do people currently think about our Libraries and what do we want them to think? When we work this out, we will discover our area of greatest opportunity.

The University of New Brunswick Libraries hosted a lovely conference in Fredericton, with friendly committee members and gorgeous food. Where else would they serve but fabulous food including Lobster to guests – only in the Maritimes! WILU was a great opportunity to share ideas and learn from our North American colleagues which I would recommend to everyone.

Interesting sites:

- WILU website: <http://lib.unb.ca/WILU/>
- WILU Ignite talks overview: <http://lib.unb.ca/WILU/ignite/>
- Seneca Wordpress sites:
<http://senecaspark.wordpress.com/>
- Training for academics at Seneca SPARK:
<http://library.senecacollege.ca/Faculty/SPARK/workshops.html#elearn>
- Spotplagiarism wordpress site from Seneca:
<http://spotplagiarism.wordpress.com/>