

Teaching Best Practices for Librarians

Approved by Bloomington Library Faculty Council, December 12, 2012, Amended May 2018

Librarians may use these best practices as a means of evaluating their teaching. Librarians at Indiana University Bloomington engage in instruction as part of their positions. Some instruction involves teaching credit-bearing courses¹, but other forms are for courses in which librarians are not the instructor of record. This teaching may include (but is not limited to) in-class sessions for instructors teaching credit courses, one-on-one consultations, and/or online library guides and tutorials. The quality of this teaching is often difficult to evaluate given the different contexts and limited scope of time during which librarians work with students. Yet, in each instance, librarians should strive for excellence by:

- engaging students with the research subject or content of the session;
- contributing to students' learning by addressing their information needs;
- engaging in various forms of evaluation and assessment of their teaching.
- exhibiting a willingness to consider suggestions for and self-reflect on their own pedagogy;

The guidelines below provide librarians at Indiana University Bloomington with a variety of optional methods for documenting and reviewing their teaching and instruction-related work for the Libraries. While examples are provided, each librarian will use a different selection of tools to document teaching effectiveness based on their preference for frequency, quality, and type of evidence to be gathered. Librarians are encouraged to work with partners such as the IU Libraries' Department of Teaching and Learning, the Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, and the Assessment Librarian to develop an approach that suits their professional purpose and teaching goals.

Engaging Students

Guidelines for engaging students with a research subject or course content and addressing their information needs may include the use of a variety of pedagogical approaches and tools: active learning techniques (e.g., think-pair-share), concept maps, online tutorials, and library research guides embedded in a course site. Additionally, librarians may--in collaboration with instructors--design or revise assignments that will engage students more fully with a research subject. These assignments may include smaller, scaffolded assignments that build upon each other, as well as assignments culminating in student-authored projects (e.g., podcasts, videos, digital exhibits) that incorporate library resources. Librarians are encouraged to consult with appropriate partners when designing pedagogical approaches for engaging students.

Evaluation & Assessment (See Appendices A, B, and C for Examples):

Appropriate assessment and/or evaluation tools should be chosen based upon factors such as subject area, student level, class size, learning outcomes, and type of teaching activity. Appropriate tools,

¹ See Librarians Teaching Credit-Bearing Courses Policy.

depending on the activity, may include a variety of classroom assessment techniques, surveys, pre- and post-tests, and/or analysis of student work samples. It is important to consult with appropriate partners in the designing and planning of evaluation.

Student Evaluation [See Appendix A for Examples]

Measuring student learning is one of the most important aspects of evaluating the impact of librarian teaching activities, but it can also be the most difficult because it may entail a variety of assessment efforts and targets. As mentioned above, teaching activity is not limited to classroom instruction. It may include consultations with students or instructors, online services and materials, and many other activities that support teaching and learning. Using multiple sources of data (e.g., multiple satisfaction surveys, peer observations, etc.) to document teaching excellence provides a balanced view of teaching and may provide empirical evidence to support an argument about teaching effectiveness; including data from several courses or teaching activities demonstrates consistency and diversity in teaching. The number and proportion of students involved in the assessment can be important. It is important to be aware of the potential for bias (both positive and negative) because of the way the data is collected.

Instructor Evaluation [See Appendix B for Examples]

IUB librarians provide course-related instruction in a variety of forms, such as participating in curriculum design, creating online resources for courses, and visiting courses as guest instructors. Librarians are encouraged to ask course instructors for formal assessment of their contributions to courses in which they participate. It is assumed that most teaching librarians already seek informal assessment through discussions with instructors. While this informal feedback is extremely valuable for librarians' development as teachers, it rarely provides adequate documentation of librarians' effectiveness and impact, except when it appears in the form of detailed thank-you notes. Librarians may use such thank-you notes as documentation for the purposes of promotion and tenure, but are also encouraged to solicit more formal assessment of their teaching.

Peer Review [See Appendix C for Examples]

Peer review of teaching is a voluntary formative process that librarians may use to develop and enhance their teaching skills. It is particularly effective for librarians who teach library instruction sessions as part of an existing course once (or more frequently) during the course of a semester.

Self Evaluation [See Appendix D for Examples]

Self-evaluation begins with self-reflection. Documenting the evolution and progress of your personal pedagogy style and instructional approach over time will help you understand your teacherly self and your long-term professional development as an educator. Librarians at any stage of professional development and involved in nearly any type of instructional activity will benefit from gathering data and documenting teaching progress through self-evaluations. Long-term and immediate opportunities for evaluation are offered, as well as options for course-specific or programmatic viewpoints.