Professional Prologue: Building a Community of Practice for Assessment and User Experience Librarians

Rachel Fleming-May
Teresa Walker
Kristina Clement
Brianne Dosch
Jordan Kaufman
Who’s Involved?

• Carol Tenopir, UTK Chancellor’s Professor and UX-A Principal Investigator
• Rachel Fleming-May, SIS Associate Professor and UX-A Co-PI
• Teresa Walker, Associate Dean for Learning, Research, and Engagement, UTK Libraries; UX-A Student Mentor
• Regina Mays, Coordinator of Assessment and Strategic Planning, UTK Libraries; UX-A Senior Staff and Student Mentor
• Dania Bilal, SIS Professor and UX-A Co-PI
• Representatives from UX-A Co-hort:
  Ø Kristina Clement
  Ø Brianne Dosch
  Ø Jordan Kaufman
What are we talking about today?

- Challenges for new academic librarian “Functional Specialists”
- The *Community of Practice* model as a blueprint for professional support and development
- ”Experience Assessment (UX-A),” an IMLS-funded Master’s program offered by the University of Tennessee School of Information Sciences, as an example of CoP in action
Changes in Academic Librarianship

To meet users’ needs for new resources and services, over the past several years academic libraries have shifted staffing from more “traditional” areas of librarianship to “functional specialist” positions.
What is a “Functional Specialist”?

These include digital scholarship, data management, copyright, electronic resources management, and assessment.
Assessment:

• Survey in 2015-16
• Informed by recent studies by Askew & Theodore-Shusta and Passoneau & Erickson
• 212 Responses
• First presented at Northumbria Conference, 2015


## Assessment: What do you need to know how to do?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structuring/writing reports</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources for professional development</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structuring effective presentations</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivering effective presentations</td>
<td>91%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Managing team-based projects</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting/presenting assessment data</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning/leading meetings</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment initiatives</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matching research model to question</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processing/analyzing qualitative data</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Converting assessment need into research question</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designing and distributing surveys</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools for analyzing input data</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistical analysis</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessment: How did you learn to do what you do?
How did you learn assessment?

Informal consultation/querying of/discussion with colleagues at this institution but in other departments

Personal knowledge seeking (webinars, web searches, etc.)

Self devised on the job training (i.e., no instructor, mentor, etc.).

On my own - on the job (no instructor or guidance), graduate statistics certificate program (I pursued because I was interested in this) - none of this was in my master's program.

In a very real way I am also teaching myself every day. All of the answers aren't necessarily "out there" some where. Also lots of webinars.

This is an area of professional interest to me, and since our library was not doing assessment, I took it on. I had to teach myself, essentially.

Informal mentoring by colleagues at my institution. Also, formal peer-mentoring through an "assessment fellows" program at my institution.

Primarily I am self taught based on the types of information needed and what each system I work with provides in the way of data.
I have found assessment is something you pick up as you move along in your career, not something easily taught in Library School (though I have come to value my statistical analysis class, lo these many years later).

Assessment seems like a very scary thing for people who know nothing about it, especially people who come to librarianship from a humanities discipline. I felt very under-prepared to conduct assessment. It has taken me years of proactive dedication to learn what I have learned up till now, and I still feel like I have huge gaps in my knowledge.

Education in assessment needs to be designed as an integral course linking courses in information resource use instruction and library services management.

Any postgraduate Library / Information Management course should have a compulsory core course on assessment / evaluation.

I graduated from a highly ranked library school in 2005...I certainly hope that programs have gotten better about incorporating assessment.

While serving on a search committee for an assessment librarian position at my institution, looking at the pool of applicants it was clear to me we are currently not preparing librarians for this important career path.

How well are LIS programs preparing Assessment Librarians?
“every practice is dependent on social processes through which it is sustained and perpetuated, and that learning takes place through the engagement in that practice.”

Communities of Practice:

Lave and Wenger, 1991

• Learning happens...
  - In situ
  - By observation (social)
  - By peripheral participation
  - from other learners (social)
  - Informally, driven by the task (elements of apprenticeship are formal)

• Learning is as much about understanding how to behave as what to do, and is an identity change.


Cox: Indicators of CoP

1. Sustained mutual relationships – harmonious or conflictual
2. Shared ways of engaging in doing things together
3. The rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation
4. Absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process
5. Very quick setup of a problem to be discussed
6. Substantial overlap in participants’ descriptions of who belongs
7. Knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise
8. Mutually defining identities
9. The ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products
10. Specific tools, representations, and other artefacts
11. Local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter
12. Jargon and shortcuts to communication as well as the ease of producing new ones
13. Certain styles recognized as displaying membership

Collaboration:
• Sustained mutual relationships – harmonious or conflictual
• Shared ways of engaging in doing things together

Shared Knowledge:
• The ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products
• Specific tools, representations, and other artefacts
• Knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise

Communication:
• The rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation
• Absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process
• Jargon and shortcuts to communication as well as the ease of producing new ones

Fitting in:
• Local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter
• A shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world.

Experience Assessment (UX-A):

A NEW COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE FOR ASSESSMENT AND USER EXPERIENCE PROFESSIONALS
Need for and History of Program

- Increasing need for information professionals with assessment and/or user experience expertise
  - Library and Information Science (LIS) education meeting that need?
- Carol Tenopir’s extensive work in area of Assessment (Fleming-May, Mays, and Walker involved in Lib-Value)
- Relationships with/network of information professionals in Knoxville and Oak Ridge, TN
Timeline:

October, 2015: 2-pager submitted to IMLS LB21 Program (education)

December 2015/January 2016: IMLS requests full application

(Late) April, 2016: Success!

May-July, 2016: Recruitment and Program Development

August, 2016: Students arrive and begin program!
Program Structure

Curriculum

- Core classes in LIS
- UX Testing
- New curriculum in Assessment
- Courses in statistics, research methods, higher education administration and organizational communication

Partnerships

- Mentorship by assessment and UX professionals
- Practical, hands-on experience
- Lasting relationships with participating organizations

New emphasis for LIS

- Diverse teams of professionals from LIS, STEM, social sciences and humanities
- Focus on continual improvement and user engagement
- Focus on information intensive environments
But.
“...learning is more than simply acquiring knowledge, it is about an identity change. Peripheral participation, active involvement in the practice, is identified as a key process in learning.”

Cox, P. 528
Co-Curricular Elements
1st year – Workshops & Meetings

- Online Technology Training
  - Excel, Powerpoint, etc.
- Mentor Introductions
- Student-led discussion
- UX and Assessment “Tools”:
  - CITI and IRB Training
  - Usability Lab
  - Nvivo
  - SPSS
  - Qualtrics
  - LibQUAL+

- Lynda.com Modules –
  - Time management
  - Teamwork and collaboration
  - Project management
  - UX design (multiple topics)
  - Data analytics
  - Design principles
  - Web design
  - Data visualization
  - Communication and business writing
1st year - Projects

ACADEMIC LIBRARY TEAM: LIBRARY SPACES STUDY

INFORMATION CENTERS TEAM: WEB USABILITY STUDY
Experiential Learning as a Key Component of UX-A

“Experiential [learning] is a philosophy and methodology in which educators purposefully engage with students in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, and clarify values.”

Association for Experiential Education, 2014
1. Students will value the importance of engaged scholarship and lifelong learning.

2. Students will develop and apply knowledge, values, and skills in solving real-world problems.

3. Students will work collaboratively with others.

4. Students will engage in structured reflection as part of the inquiry process.
Practica & Mentoring Goals

We intend for the program to provide:

• Theoretical foundations **AND** hands-on training in assessment and user experience

• A significant edge in obtaining positions in assessment and user experience

• A broader understanding of the organization than one might develop in a practicum devoted to a particular department or task
## Practica & Mentoring Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Placement &amp; Mentor</th>
<th># Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UTK Libraries:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Dean, Learning, Research, and Engagement</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Librarian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Literacy Librarian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oak Ridge National Laboratory: Library Director at Oak Ridge National Laboratory</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oak Ridge National Laboratory Distributed Active Archive Center: Chief Scientist</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripps Networks International: Manager of Enterprise Metadata at Scripps Networks Interactive</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USGS Scientific Data Integration &amp; Visualization: Chief</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.DOE Office of Scientific and Technical Information (OSTI): Quality Assurance Specialist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Communication &amp; Information/Oak Ridge National Laboratory User Experience Laboratory: Manager</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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</table>
## UX-A Academic Libraries’ SLOs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Specific Outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Success Initiatives:</strong></td>
<td>➢ Develop and conduct assessments that inform student engagement and student success according to indicators identified by the UT Libraries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partnerships:</strong></td>
<td>➢ Participate in efforts to create and foster meaningful liaison programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Space Planning &amp; Design:</strong></td>
<td>➢ Study ethnographies of user spaces and experiences within academic libraries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Library Reputation:</strong></td>
<td>➢ Work at academic library service points that most frequently need to be assessed to meet the needs of the academic community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practitioner Scholarship:</strong></td>
<td>➢ Learn how to do my own research in an academic library setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➢ Discover how academic librarians approach scholarship.</td>
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Practica & Mentoring: The Literature

**BENEFITS:**
Students -
• Real-world experience
• Connections
• Variety / Diversity

Practitioners -
• Fresh perspectives
• Giving back

**SHORTCOMINGS:**
Students -
• Too task-oriented
• Lack of a broader context
• No tie to in-class learning

Practitioners -
• Maintaining relationships with practitioners and educators
• Time-commitment

All - Disconnect between theory and practice
How is UX-A different?

A broader context for the experience!

• Intentionally Connecting Theory and Practice
• Guided learning outcomes
• Collaboration between LIS educators, practicum supervisors, and students
The UT Libraries Experience
Student Voices
# Academic Library Concentration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Photo</th>
<th>Concentration Details</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sian Carr</td>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Sian Carr" /></td>
<td>BA in History (Early European) and Classical Studies from Wellesley College.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexa Carter</td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Alexa Carter" /></td>
<td>Originally from Knoxville, Tennessee. BS in Chemistry from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristina Clement</td>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Kristina Clement" /></td>
<td>BA in Italian Literature from the University of Kansas and MA in Italian Literature from the University of Notre Dame.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brianne Dosch</td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Brianne Dosch" /></td>
<td>BA in English Literature with a minor in Psychology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren Johnson</td>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Lauren Johnson" /></td>
<td>BA in English and Theatre from Presbyterian College and MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan Kaufman</td>
<td><img src="image6" alt="Jordan Kaufman" /></td>
<td>BA in English and Linguistics from Indiana University – Purdue University Fort Wayne.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Specialized Information Centers Concentration
(Public Libraries, Government Agencies, Private Corporations)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Institution</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hannah Blanco</td>
<td>BA in Political Science from Virginia Wesleyan College</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connor Esterwood</td>
<td>BA in International Relations and a minor in Asian Studies from The</td>
<td>University of North Carolina Asheville.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia Frederick</td>
<td>BA in English Literature and Linguistics from the University of Tennessee.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyler Martindale</td>
<td>BS in Business Economics from the University of Arkansas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris Whalon</td>
<td>BS in Graphic Design and New Media with a concentration in Print from</td>
<td>Johnson &amp; Wales University in Providence, Rhode Island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abby Wintker</td>
<td>BFA in Printmaking from the University of Tennessee-Knoxville</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Mentorship Experience - Communication

“The rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation”
- Take ideas and run with them
- Information could change on a daily basis
- Always expected to keep up

“Absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process”
- Jumped right into projects, no baby stepping
- Expected to take leadership roles on projects without waiting for mentor direction

The only option was to do what was needed to be done, knowing we could ask questions along the way.
Mentorship Experience - Collaboration

“Sustained mutual relationships – harmonious or conflictual”
- Engaging and collaborating as peers, rather than as interns
- Dealing with and overcoming conflict

“Shared ways of engaging in doing things together”
- Collaborating on meaningful and impactful projects
- Not just for a grade, but for a real outcome
**Mentorship Experience - Shared Knowledge**

“We are all gifts to each other.” -- Michael Dell

“The ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products”
- Turning theory into practice
- Plan of action

“Knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise”
- Working directly with a practitioner in the field
- Diverse backgrounds and individual experiences
Then...
Now...

experienced
confident
knowledgeable
new
excited
curious
inspired
gaining
skills
passionate
hopeful

tired
Communities of Practice:

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS
Recommendations:

• Professionally:
  - Develop “Best Practices” and Competencies for more areas of librarianship
  - Centralized repositories for training materials?

• Locally:
  - Recognize that Functional Specialists have different training and professional development needs
  - Facilitate peer learning
  - Mentor students and new professionals
  - Get/stay involved with LIS education
Questions?

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Experience Assessment Graduate Research Assistants,  
School of Information Sciences, The University of  
Tennessee,  
kcleme10@vols.utk.edu,  
bdosch@vols.utk.edu, and  
jkaufma9@utk.edu
Thank you for your Time & Attention!
# Program Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>For-credit coursework</th>
<th>Co-curricular experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semester 1</td>
<td>INSC 510, 520, 530 (9 hours)</td>
<td>Workshops and tutorials</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Weekly meetings with program mentors/on-site supervisors</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Graduate Research Assistantship—PI and Co-PI faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semesters 2-3</td>
<td>INSC 504, 588; Statistics; INSC 552 or 553; Electives (9 and 6 hours, respectively)</td>
<td>Research Projects</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Graduate Research Assistantship</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Half-day Assessment Workshop</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Half-day Statistics “Bootcamp”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Semester 4</td>
<td>INSC 590; Electives related to specialized information setting, Statistics, INSC Electives (6 hours)</td>
<td>INSC 598: Practicum (3 hours)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Monthly cohort meetings</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Graduate Research Assistantship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Semester 5</td>
<td>Electives related to specialized information setting, Statistics, INSC Electives (6 hours)</td>
<td>INSC 598: Practicum (3 hours)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Monthly cohort meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Graduate Research Assistantship</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Significant research about new areas of academic librarianship:

References: