

SLO#3: The Student Applies and Values User Education Principles in the Teaching of Information Literacy.

Whether it is a child, a baby animal, or even a budding civilization, they all start out as being completely dependent on a parental figure for survival. They show the young go-getter the ropes and how to live this crazy, exciting adventure that we call life to the fullest. Over time, as they grow and hone their skills, they gradually gain more and more independence to the point where they can stand completely on their own. As that happens, the parental figure then shifts to being an advisory resource that they can use to help themselves whenever they need it.

That evolution encompasses the modern mission of today's libraries. To teach users how to search for information themselves while still leaving their doors open for assistance. That is the best way to make sure that users can exercise their right to be informed without being taken advantage of. It is the best way for them to look for information and make their own interpretations without having to rely on the interpretations of others to inform their own decisions. Personally, I believe that that is what it truly means to be independent. With that being said, this MLIS program that I have been fortunate enough to be a part of has given me the skills to allow me to really make my own decisions and analysis as both an external and internal user. That way, it will allow me to be able to teach users who come from different walks of life and professional fields the same way that this program taught me as well. For me, this particular learning objective is all about connecting me, the student, to my local community.

When it comes to connecting with the local community that comes to the library for information, one class that immediately comes to mind for me is LIS 620 – Information Services and Sources. For me, this is the class that opened the door to this learning objective, because it is mainly about helping users in being able to locate the information that they are looking for. It was an interesting class, because it allowed me to sort of experience what it was like to work behind the reference desk that I have come to rely on as a user. Throughout that class, I got to perform a series of exercises that involve searching for sources that are relevant to the subject that the patron is seeking. What compelled me to put this class in the spotlight is that one of the things that I learned from it are different styles of reference services that are used to assist users who are looking for sources. Those styles of reference services are the following:

- Conservative/Minimum – Instruction over answer
- Moderate/Middling – Equal instruction and answer
- Liberal/Maximum – Answer over instruction

These styles are some of my personal takeaways from that class, because it symbolizes the struggle that most libraries face when deciding which method is the best. For me personally, doing all of those reference exercises has taught me that it is

important to find a balance between helping the user find the answer and teaching them how to find the answer for themselves in the future. Even so though, if the user is having difficulty locating the answer, then they can still turn to us for assistance, which in turn will help them become more familiar with the research techniques and sources that they may not have known about before. That is precisely the reason why all libraries should practice the “Moderate” philosophy, which symbolizes this learning objective. This magnificent tool that LIS 620 gave me will be my guide in instilling information literacy values and techniques into the minds of the users who will be coming across my reference desk.

Those are the kinds of services that I would like to provide to users. Truth be told, I actually tried my hand at creating some of those services in my LIS 662 class. With the data that I gathered from my research into my chosen client group, I tried to write out a blueprint that details events and seminars that includes teaching them how to distinguish fake information from the genuine article. Along with that, I tried to address another key issue with my chosen group, which was to increase their familiarity with the latest information technology. My overall goal with this “product” was to try to implement the Moderate/Middling style, with a bit more emphasis on the Conservative method, from LIS 620. I admit that I felt that this was a daunting task at first. However, I remain steadfast and determined, which allowed me to come out on top in that class. For me, this was the first time that I took user education principals and tried to applied them into an information literacy service. Even though the entire thing was one big exercise, it allowed me to really build a connection with the community I was serving by helping them be more familiar with information literacy.

These teachings and more have led me to the question in regards how we as information professionals can serve users. How can we as professionals make sure that users can fully exercise their right to be informed? I believe that this is a case of “we ask the question and we are the answer.” What I mean by that is that we ourselves can personally help users achieve this goal by teaching them how to exercise this right without needing others to do it for them. In other words, we want to be a pillar of reference for the user as opposed to being their crutch. If I continue forward with this as my guide, then I know that I will go the distance in the library information field.

Artifacts

LIS: 620 – Information Sources and Services – Introduction to LIS 620

LIS: 662 – Information Services for Diverse Client Groups – Term Project