Information Literacy Instruction Response

Samantha Shandy

University of Denver

My first of the two instructional literacy sessions I attended was a webinar entitled "Thinking Sideways: Computational Thinking and Early Literacy" that was offered through the Public Library Association (PLA), which is a division of the American Library Association. This hour-long webinar session was comprised primarily of a forty-five-minute instructional presentation, followed by a fifteen-minute question and answer session at the end. We started off the session webinar with a simple hands-on activity, which required us to draw a house on a scratch piece of paper. After our one minute to draw had expired, we were told we would be given more explanation about why this uncomplicated task draws in all four points of today's lesson. Their method of engaging participants at the beginning and leaving them wondering how a doodle of a house relates to computational thinking and early literacy was creative, fun, and eased me into this instructional presentation that I was sure was going to go right over my head.

The program included visual information presented through a PowerPoint. The slides were concise, and the two presenters (Paula Langsam of the DC Public Library and Claudia Hanes of the Homer Public Library) expanded on the information shown in the slides throughout their presentation. They broke the session into sections based on the four main areas of computational learning and addressed different learning styles appropriate for various ages, locations, and interests. Examples of projects were given for each area discussed, (which included visuals of the projects and thorough instructions), which was extremely helpful for me and other visual learners alike. They also included a downloadable pdf of their PowerPoint, along with a list of other resources mentioned throughout the lecture.

My second meeting was a fifteen-minute one-on-one tech help instructional session specifically focused on setting up E-readers for the library's stream and download services. Unlike the previous instructional session, this was an in-person opportunity, with those fifteen minutes dedicated to step-by-step instruction, and no dedicated time for questions or follow-up

conversation. This instruction took place in one of the library's study rooms which were private, comfortable, and notably well-lit -- (I have bad eyesight and find it difficult to focus on computer or phone screens in dimly lit settings.) The instructor did not welcome me into the room, instead just waited for me to have a seat while she tinkered with her cell phone. As we discussed in week four of User and Access services, a more positive and engaging demeanor sets the tone for a more positive and engaging class in many cases; therefore, I took the opportunity to find a comment card after our session and make note of this information for the sake of future tech sessions. Because this was a one-on-one, I do not have the ability to compare how my session went with other patrons' sessions, but I will mention that verbal instruction was lacking. After a brief conversation about what I intended to use my tablet for, I handed over my E-reader to her upon her request, and she began to set up my streaming and downloading accounts. This was less of an instructional session as the promotional blurb on the library's website described, and more of an opportunity to get one-time setup assistance. Due to us sitting on opposite sides of the table, I was not able to visibly follow her actions either. I did however receive a pamphlet after the session with the step-by-step instructions necessary for installing E-reader apps (in case I wanted to recreate what the instructor had done during our tech session). I think take-home materials are wonderful tools to use, especially for one-shot instruction sessions like the one I experienced. My primary comment there would be to hand this out at the beginning of the program so patrons could take notes throughout the instruction. The pamphlet was a bit wordy, included no visuals, and without being able to watch her initial set up of my E-reader, it took me longer to replicate the results. Including screen shots in the how-to pamphlet would have broken up the information and made directions clearer. The last few minutes of our time together, she did show me how to look up e-books and e-audiobooks using the newly installed apps, which was helpful and appreciated. I left the session with what I had intended to leave with – a few new

streaming and downloading services on my tablet – but my understanding of how to independently replicate these results was less than what I had expected.

In both sessions, I felt that I was working with professionals who had a strong understanding of the material they were covering. Though I generally prefer in-person interactions, the webinar instructors' use of visuals and examples proved more useful than the in-person session. As discussed in our User and Access class sessions, what often separates a successful information literacy instruction program from an unsuccessful one is the level of interest, both from the instructor and from the participants. In my case, my interest in the first program grew due to the passion I felt from the instructors, along with the engaging material. In contrast, my enjoyment of the tech session dwindled due to the instructor's lack of enthusiasm and engagement.