

---

# Editorial: Library learning for the future: sustaining, reinventing and revitalizing how, when and where librarians support learning

---

Libraries support learning for the future. The information, skills and habits that users and students can gain with librarian intervention and partnership support and facilitate lifelong learning. The past three years have largely been focused on what was needed in the moment. The COVID-19 pandemic put many future-oriented initiatives on the back burner as libraries focused on how to transform basic services and programs into accessible, digital and socially distant formats. After three years of this, many libraries have been able to advance these pandemic-related initiatives into sustainable services that continue in meaningful and relevant ways. This shift has become a trend in the professional conversation as recent and upcoming conference themes focus on future-oriented discussions: presentees at the 2022 Library Assessment Conference discussed sustainable assessment, a track at the 2023 LOEX conference highlights how librarians are revitalizing and transforming teaching, the ACRL 2023 conference theme is “*Forging the Future*” and the Medical Library Association | Special Library Association upcoming annual conference highlights “Looking back, forging ahead.”

The articles in this issue represent unique and important ways in which libraries support learning and learning habits with library users beyond the traditional, “show the library” sessions. Instead, our authors share strategies to take learners and learning beyond a one-time interaction and focus on learning that lasts for the future. Authors in this issue discussed methods they use to identify opportunities and integrate librarian support in different points in the research process, including and beyond the reference desk. The authors in the current issue described how librarians at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse assessed reference desk interactions based on library program student learning outcomes, rather than a traditional user satisfaction scale, and also illustrated how teaching could and should occur in reference desk interactions, going beyond basic transactions. Lantz *et al.* highlighted the sometimes missing support from a middle part of the research process: academic reading. Librarians are often asked to support students in finding information, and writing centers support students in integrating information into their final products, but there is not always support for the act of academic reading. Many students enter or reenter higher education and quickly discover that they do not know how to read for academic purposes. Lantz *et al.*, studied student preferences and needs for academic reading and highlighted ways in which librarians and partners support academic reading, filling a support gap in the research process.

Finding sources for research, particularly primary sources, became a challenge for many researchers during the pandemic. Librarians such as Peggy Keeran of the University of Denver found new resources and methods and used the pandemic constraints as an opportunity to closely examine and reinvent teaching practice. Keeran’s project assessing digital primary source instruction examined how the teaching methods combined elements of information literacy, visual literacy and digital literacy in new ways, developing new teaching methods to carry into the future.

Communicating the results of a research or inquiry project remains a less taught area by librarians; however, many librarians, such as Ford–Baxter and Faulkner, presented an



approach to connect aspects of the ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* with lessons on synthesizing and communicating information. They used a Pixar Pitch framework in their lessons, an under-researched tool in higher education. Their framework can be adopted for one-shot librarian-led sessions, offering a new and innovative approach to teaching information communication skills through the ACRL *Framework* that can be adapted for many contexts.

Translating research skills beyond the classroom can be a challenge for many students. Both academic and public libraries can support continued learning by providing high-quality information, providing training in various literacies and connecting users with community programs. Health equity and literacy continues to be an important initiative for many types of libraries, as highlighted by Wilson *et al.* Even as SARS-CoV-2 transitions from a world-wide crisis to more of a routine health threat, other pathogens will affect libraries in the future. Libraries and librarians must continue sustaining, transforming, reinventing and revitalizing how and where they support learning.

We continue considering how libraries do and will innovate in learning for the future. In our next issue, we focus on initiatives related to peer-to-peer learning and support. A special issue, the *Future of Peer-led Research Services*, with Guest Editor Christopher Granatino of Seattle University, will consider how learning occurs when students are empowered to support each other on the front lines, with librarian support in the background. We look forward to the continued conversation on how to create, maintain and empower users to create learning within library spaces and take library learning into the future. Please join us!

**Elizabeth M. Johns and Sarah Barbara Watstein**