

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Consistent with the ALA nine core competencies for library and information professionals, in my teaching, I am focused on providing students a solid understanding of the foundations and theories of the discipline, the technical knowledge, skills, and methods required of the discipline, and access and understanding to current research which will allow them to continue their education and learning beyond graduation. My teaching is further influenced by George Sieman's Connectivism Learning Theory, which stresses the creation of distributed networked learning environments that do not end with formal education but instead form the foundation for lifelong learning and which have been shown to be particularly applicable to online learning.¹

Foundations: In my classes, I typically begin with a discussion of how the course topic fits into the larger LIS discipline, including how it is related to other areas and other courses students may have already taken or will take. Such a beginning allows students to immediately connect their learning in this class with their learning in other classes, thus creating a conceptual and connected network that strengthens their overall learning in the program and beyond. Similarly, my teaching seeks to further extend the student's conceptual learning network by placing core ALA concepts, such as information lifecycles, information organization and representation principles, and the cultural bias implicit in information as central and essential to all topics in LIS. For example, in Z556 Systems Analysis and Design, I discuss information lifecycles, information organization, and cultural bias, as these concepts are essential to thoroughly analyzing information systems. This is similarly true in Z513 Organizational Informatics, where information lifecycles are fundamental to how organizations manage their information needs. I believe that always approaching topics as within and related to other LIS areas and ALA core values provides students the contextual clues to understand the given topic readily and gives them the scaffolding necessary to extend and continue their learning beyond the classroom.

Technical Knowledge: The ALA recognizes, acquiring technical knowledge and skills is an ever-increasing and ever-changing need for information professionals. In teaching technical skills, I am cognizant that not all students learn the same way. Thus, I take a student-centered approach by offering multi-modal learning. For example, in the canvas site for Z603 XML Workshop, I include written resources, video resources, and online tutorials to supplement the in-class demonstrations and hands-on learning for each core skill to allow students to learn in a way that best fits them. I continue this multi-modal approach in both course delivery and student evaluation. My classes are often once-a-week, two-and-half-hour classes (Z556 Systems Analysis & Design and Z551 Management for Information Professionals) in which the length of class time can create challenges for student engagement. Taking a multi-modal approach by incorporating pre-check questions, lecture/discussion, small group work, class surveys, video presentations, student presentations, and demonstrations into class time, I believe, increases both student engagement and conceptual learning. Finally, I take a multi-modal approach to student evaluation as well. While my courses typically include a related final project either designed by the student or in a group, I believe it is beneficial for

¹ See Utecht & Keller (2019) Becoming relevant again: Applying connectivism learning theory to today's classrooms. *Critical Questions in Education* 10(2), 107-119 ; Boyraz & Ocak (2021) Connectivism: A literature review for the new pathway of pandemic driven education. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology* 6(3), 1122-11-29.

students to have additional small assignments and projects throughout the course. For example, in Z556 Systems Analysis & Design, students must complete a group service learning project of their own design as a final project, with a presentation to both the class and the client. However, they also complete smaller assignments throughout the course, like diagramming their project system, which allows for intermittent feedback and assessment before completing the final project. Such a method additionally simulates real-world project management with staged planning and assessment.

Current Research: Part of the work of any graduate education is to become a critical consumer and synthesizer of research. This is particularly true when that graduate education prepares students to become information professionals. The ALA recommends that information professionals be able to discover, engage, and synthesize existing research from the field. In my teaching, I am committed to incorporating current theoretical and applied research into the course readings and discussion to make students aware of current views on a topic and develop their ability to read, synthesize, and discuss these topics critically. However, I believe it is additionally essential that students develop the ability to apply research to current practice. As such, in both Z513 Organizational Informatics and Z551 Management for Information Professionals, I ask students to apply their reading of current research to organizational and informational environments through group and individual case study analysis projects. In doing so, students develop a framework for both interpreting and applying current research to the real-world environments they will experience as information professionals after graduation. Similarly, in Z551 Management for Information Professionals, I created a final project in which students select a management topic they are interested in doing additional research on, including identifying the prominent and current research. As we discuss the project, students are given the methods and tools to search for relevant research, critically evaluate that research, synthesize that research, and present that research.

My primary goal in my teaching is to provide students with the ability to develop the knowledge and skills necessary for them to be successful as information professionals. I believe the best way to do this is by focusing on the ALA core competencies and incorporating a connected learning approach, which allows students to build a network of knowledge that they can access and build on after graduation. This approach recognizes that learning happens best when students have ownership over their learning experience, are afforded a variety of ways to access knowledge and skills, and are encouraged to build a network of knowledge, resources, and experiences unique to their needs. It is my hope that my students learn not just the fundamentals of the given topic but also how to take the topic and apply it to other topics and, in other situations, to keep learning throughout their careers and beyond.