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Critical reflection in librarianship: where does the library end and the librarian begin?

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Critical Reflection in Librarianship: Where does the library end and the librarian begin?

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Overview

Background: This research is based on an Ed.D. dissertation at Boise State University completed in Winter 2015.

Project: A cohort of 6 academic librarians were lead through a series of reflective exercises for 12 weeks in the Spring 2015. The exercises use the currere methodology as developed by William Pinar (1976) to scaffold the reflective process.

Need: Critical reflection occurs as a part of library instruction practices but not often for the profession as a whole in a holistic or structured manner (Stoddart, 2015).


Guided Reflection Process

- AUTOBIOGRAPHY
  - Readings: Brookfield (1995); Shadlow (2013)
  - Writing Prompt: Describe your first encounter and ongoing relationship with libraries.

- PERSONAL NARRATIVE
  - Writing Prompt: Write creatively about your future relationship to libraries.

- SELF STORY
  - Paper & Performance: Write a personal reflection incorporating insights from this process and prepare a presentation for cohort peers representative of your experience.

- AUTOETHNOGRAPHY
  - Readings: Ellis (2004); Denzin (2013)
  - Writing Prompt: Describe your current relationship with libraries in a cultural and social context.

- SYNTHESIS
  - Weeks 10-12

- ANALYTICAL
  - Weeks 8-9

- PROGRESSIVE
  - Weeks 6-7

- REGRESSIVE
  - Weeks 1-5

Pre / Post Reflection Word Association

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Responses</th>
<th>Pre-Reflection Mindset</th>
<th>Post-Reflection Mindset</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ambivalent; Tired</td>
<td>Renewed; Thoughtful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Frustrated; Blocked</td>
<td>Unblocked; Rejuvenated; Aware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Unfocused; Engaged; Unconnected, Thoughtful; Indifferent; Uncertain; Outmoded; Biding Time</td>
<td>Positive, Curious; Engaged; Focused; Optimistic; Moving Forward</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Post-Reflection Experience

Librarian Observations

I'm spending more time thinking about what I want to do going forward. Thinking about my career reflectively made me realize that if I wanted to change anything, I needed to do it now and I needed to be serious about it, so I'm working (its a process) on looking for and being open to new opportunities to carve out some new turf for myself in terms of interests and activities. I'm already starting to see a difference in what I am doing and how I think of myself as an academic (mid-career) librarian.

I'm approaching my work with a longer perspective in mind. I think about how who I was in my first job as a librarian and the changes I've experienced. I'm thinking about the parts of my job that still compel me to be invested and doing my best.

I have reached a new level of understanding with myself, about myself. The experience re-invigorated some scholarly interests of mine as well. Not sure what this will mean for my practice of librarianship, but I feel a bit more sane around the edges.

I think I've become more experimental in what I do. Perhaps some of this was starting already before the class, but going through the writing exercises has helped me feel that I can figure out what I want to do, and find a way to do it. I feel like I got a lot of the thinking out of the way, and now I'm looking at ways to do what I want. This means I'm learning new technology, and am determined to use it as an expression of my professional ideals.