
The Innovative Library Classroom (TILC)
Conference

Jun 2nd, 2:10 PM - 3:00 PM

Course Design and Teaching Research: Faculty Reflections and Implication for Librarian Practice

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Course Design and Teaching Research

Faculty Reflections and Implications for Librarian Practice



TILC 2023
June 2, 2023

ZOOM LINK -

<https://sfsu.zoom.us/j/5583831492?pwd=dEQ0Mi9yRHNYUmFwSno3NTdMQWRtUT09>

CATHY

Who We Are

Meghan Kowalski

Outreach and Reference Librarian
The University of the District of Columbia
she/her

Catherine Meals

Assessment and Reference Librarian
The University of the District of Columbia
she/her

Faith Rusk

Lower Division Research Assistance and
Instruction Coordinator
San Francisco State University
she/her



MEGHAN and CATHY and FAITH (from Italy)

The University of the District of Columbia

Only Exclusively Urban,
Land-Grant University

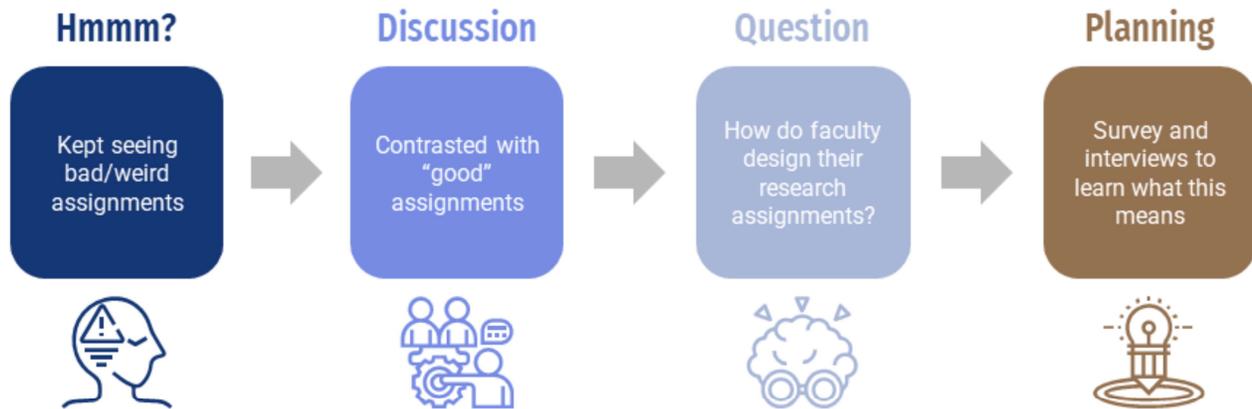
HBCU Offering 2-year, 4-year,
Advanced Degrees, and
Workforce Certifications

Mostly Non-Traditional
Student Population,
Commuter Campus



CATHY

How the Project Came About



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Honestly, the project first came about because a student came to us for help with a bad research assignment

We'd see all the normal request for support, but sometimes we'd see students who were totally lost because the assignments were really weird/not good!

We'd see these weird/bad assignments (e.g. use three scholarly sources to answer the question "what is sociology"). But we also see some really thoughtful, interesting assignments – so what's going on here? So we decided we wanted to know more about how faculty design their research assignments. How do they decide on the details of the assignments (topic, source requirements, etc.) and why? How do they understand research and how do they teach it?

Initially, we wanted to do a mixed methods approach, starting with a survey and then follow-up interviews for more detail/depth. We sent the survey to all faculty, and the results showed us that it really varies by discipline how folks approach things. Past that, it didn't give us enough information to get at what we were interested in.

- Survey asked about a specific assignment - requirements, outcomes, how and what they teach skills-wise

- Got lots of different disciplines and class levels

So, we pivoted to in-depth interviews and decided to focus just on the three-course general education composition sequence.

- Since that is a common place where librarians work with students and where students often “learn research”
- Multiple people teaching a course with the same SLOs (even if the delivery is not standardized) - opportunity to look at something more comparable

Project Goals

01

How do faculty develop their research assignments?



03

How can librarians support instruction beyond “teaching the databases”?



02

How do faculty identify and prioritize which skills to teach?



Stretch Goal for our patreon supporters

Improve assignments before they are assigned



FAITH (CATHY as backup)

Understand how faculty approach developing their research assignments

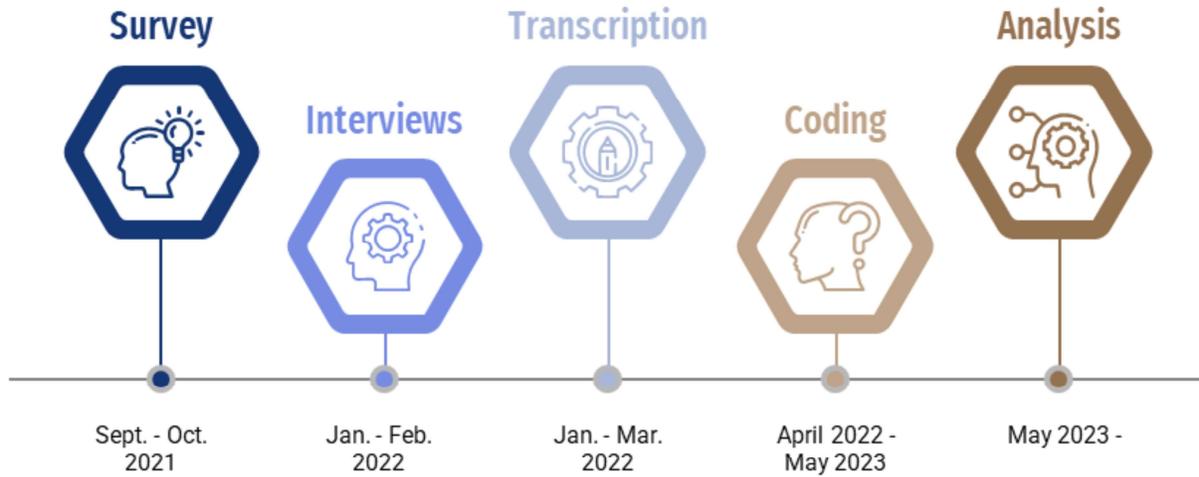
Understand how faculty identify and prioritize which information literacy skills to teach

Find ways for librarians to support research instruction beyond “teaching the databases”

Stretch Goal for our Patreon Supporters: Improve assignments before they are assigned

- In understanding how folks approached their research assignment design and teaching research, we were hoping that we could determine how we can best support faculty, and hopefully improve the quality and significance of the assignments students are seeing

Methodology



FAITH (CATHY as backup)

Officially launched this project in the Fall of 2021 with our survey

- From there, we got a better sense of the scope of the project
- Used the survey to identify IGED writing courses as our initial focus.

Conducted 1-hour individual interviews with 7 general education (IGED) composition instructors over zoom.

- Offered a letter for their tenure file as incentive.
- Recorded the interviews in zoom.

Used zoom transcription as the base, then edited that transcription.

Used Dedoose for coding.

- Initial coding - individual, but then came to discuss commonality in our codes and how we organized
- From there we created a standard codebook and we all coded using that codebook.
- Updated codebook to v2
- Joint coding
- Coding review

Where we are now

- Finished coding!!!! (it only took a year)
- Now we are working on our analysis.
- Qualitative analysis of interviews using applied thematic analysis

Code Categories

01

Assignment
Content

05

Scaffolding

09

Student
Difficulties

02

Explicit
Instruction

06

SLOs

10

Teaching
Challenges

03

Faculty & Student
Emotions

07

Source
Parameters

11

Topics

04

Definition, Goal,
& Pedagogy

08

Student Previous
Experience

12

Other

FAITH (CATHY as backup)

To give folks a sense of what we were coding for, our codebook consisted of over 100 codes, but there we have here some overarching categories. To highlight just a few:

1. Assignment content - whenever they mention a piece of an assignment, or an assignment. Their annotated bibliography, their topic proposals, that sort of thing.
2. Explicit instruction and SLOs looks at what they say they are teaching and what the goals of the class are
3. (5) Scaffolding - we used whenever they talked about scaffolding research. We also had some sub categories for their rationale for scaffolding. For example are they discussing scaffolding because they saw that students needed it, or because it helped to avoid plagiarism?
4. (09) Student difficulties was to capture what faculty said their students struggle with, and (10) teaching challenges looks at what the faculty find to be difficulties.

I won't go into detail about all of them, but hopefully this can give your a birds eye view of our codebook. That said, if you see a category and you are like, "huh that's interesting", or "what would that category include," please do ask about it during the Q&A, we'd be happy to discuss these, and our code book/coding process with you more.

Initial Findings

The purpose of this class is...

Research is a core component

Definition of Research

Variety of ideas but includes:

- Questions
- Varies by...
- Intertwined with writing and rhetoric

Topics, Connections, & Community

Getting students to engage and adding meaning



Themes



Scaffolding

Pedagogical approach and student need

Tension

Hard to teach writing AND research at the same time

Challenges

Structural and institutional issues

FAITH (CATHY as backup)

Themes that arose during coding:

The Purpose of This Class Is... All faculty articulated that one of the core components of the IGED writing sequence is to introduce students to research.

Definition of Research Faculty provided a variety of definitions of research, including:

- Research is asking and/or answering questions
- Research varies by discipline, approach, or goals
- Research is intertwined with writing and rhetoric

Topics, Connections, + Community: Faculty want their students to personally engage with their research subject. They allow students to select their topics as a way to foster meaningful connection which resonates outside of the classroom. *Faculty felt this led to greater engagement, more meaningful and empowering research experiences, and higher quality work.*

MEGHAN

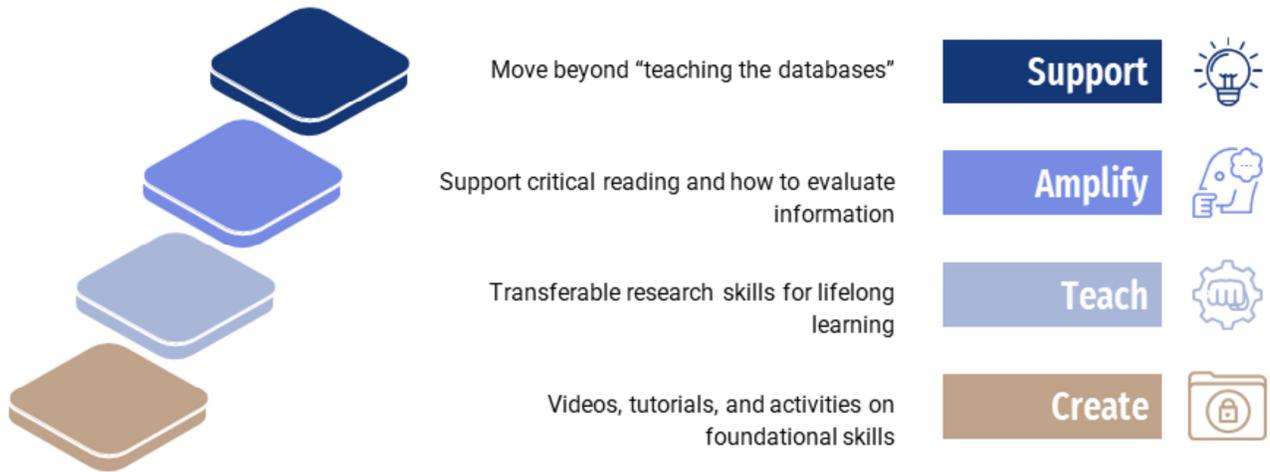
Huge amounts of scaffolding: Trying to make a complicated process more legible, both as pedagogical approach and due to student needs and/or addressing the variety of student previous experience/needs

Tension Between Writing and Research: Faculty expressed that having to teach writing and research simultaneously is challenging. Neither writing nor research is a linear activity and one necessarily impacts the other. Faculty understood the interconnectivity as necessary but found the entanglement difficult to demonstrate to students.

Structural and Institutional Challenges The faculty in our study all taught in the same general education program and each expressed similar challenges with providing writing and research instruction.

- Silos between courses and programs mean faculty are unsure about the foundational knowledge students will arrive with and what may be covered in future courses.
- Often assume having to teach everything
- Required course content means there is too much to do in a single composition course. Faculty are expected to cover both writing and introductory research and feel that they must teach the entire research process since students enter their courses with a range of previous research knowledge.

Implications for Librarianship



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As librarians, we aim to better support students and faculty in all areas of research and information literacy, and the goal of this project is to improve our services. Librarians are often called to "teach the databases," but our findings suggest we should also provide more meaningful support in specific areas for student research learning. In the future, we will seek to:

- Amplify the library's role in supporting critical reading of material and how and why to evaluate information.
- Provide instruction on transferable research skills for lifelong learning, such as identifying information needs and the role of different types/formats of information.
- Create videos, tutorials, and activities on foundational skills like developing a research question, synthesizing sources, research resilience, and deepening research methods.

What We Will Do Now

01

Faculty PD

August PD Days
Webinar Series



02

Videos

Fall Webinar Series
Snippets



03

Library 101

Update Modules
Create New Modules



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Faculty Side Professional Development

- August PD Events
- CAL Webinar Series

Fall Webinar Series and Snippet Videos of the Explicit Instruction Skills

New modules in Library 101

Add maybe extending to different types of institutions? (I think as a verbal note, not a slide item - MK)

Up Next in Analysis

Dominance & Frequency

Which codes appear the most often, how often?

Co-occurrence

Which codes overlap or appear together?

Assignments

Which assignments do they use for X thing?



Common Words

You know we have to make a pretty word cloud

Crosswalk

How do the codes translate to the ACRL Framework?

What?

Definition of research & The purpose of this class is

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What codes do all/most have and frequency (dominance and frequency)

Co-occurrence of codes (e.g., what are the SLOs for each assignment? Overlap between student difficulties and explicit teaching? Which explicit teaching is taught by professor, which is taught by librarian?) (Note: Dedoose co-occurrence analysis covers any overlap in codes)

What assignments/approaches do they use for X things?

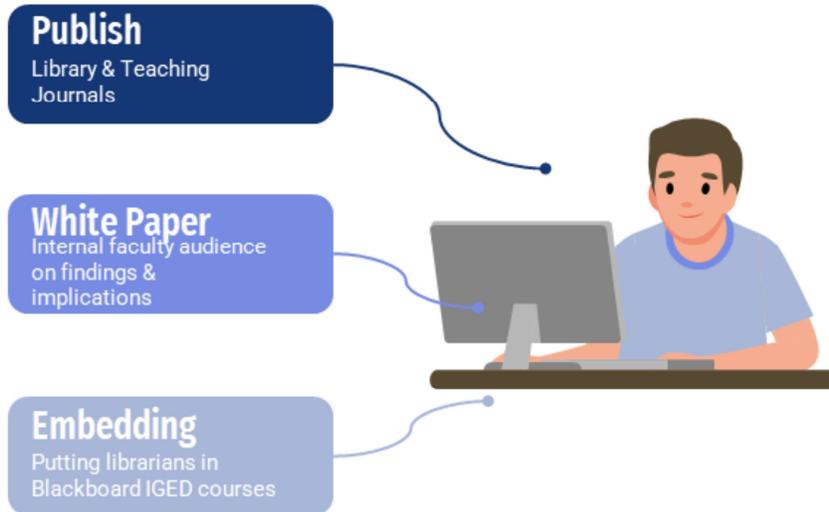
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Most common words/phrases?

Crosswalk between ACRL Framework and codes - GIVE AN EXAMPLE

Definition of research + the purpose of this class is

Sharing Our Work



CATHY

Publish in library literature about findings and practical implications for librarianship

White Paper for a faculty audience about our findings and implications for practice (communicating within WRLC and in our institution but also in teaching journals)

Pushing for embedding in writing sequence at UDC to support faculty in teaching research to students

Q & A

Thank you!

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