Article

Academic librarians' development as teachers: A survey on changes in pedagogical roles, approaches, and perspectives

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Abstract

This article reports on findings of an online survey of teacher librarians about their instructional work, approaches, and roles and how these aspects of their teaching have changed over time. Academic librarians who had at least one year of library teaching experience and who had been actively involved in library instruction within the past two years completed the online survey. Participants were asked a series of questions, the majority of which were open-ended, about the types of instruction-related activities in which they presently and previously engaged, if/how their views of their instructional work and their instructional roles had changed over time, what experiences had been particularly influential in their teaching, and if they identified as teachers. The responses were analyzed through manual textual coding, through which emerging themes and variations in participants' responses were identified. These findings provide further insight into academic librarians' ongoing teacher development and their experiences as teaching librarians. Fuller understandings of this development and experiences can inform professional development and communities of practice in which librarians foster a sense of agency, confidence, responsiveness, and purpose in their teaching, cultivate and sustain meaningful teaching practices, and prevent burnout.

Keywords

1. Introduction

Since the beginnings of academic library instruction, librarians' views of and approaches to teaching and learning have evolved in response to technological, societal, and cultural changes and to shifts in people's educational and information needs. Librarians' instructional work has also expanded to a wider range of activities and roles. In recent years growing attention has been given to the changes in not only information literacy (IL) education but also to librarians' teacher development and teacher identities. Most of this work has focused on librarians' perceptions of their teaching at a single moment in time and has given less attention to the evolution of librarians' views of their pedagogical work and roles as they progress in their careers.

This study seeks to help fill this gap by investigating librarians' perceptions of how their pedagogical work and roles have changed or remained constant over time. Fuller understanding of librarians' teacher development can inform professional development and communities of practice through which librarians foster a sense of agency, confidence, responsiveness, and purpose in their teaching; cultivate and sustain meaningful teaching practices; and prevent burnout. More specifically, this article discusses findings of a recent research study about librarians' development as teachers and their perceptions of their instructional roles. The study set out to explore the following questions:

- How have the instruction-related activities of academic librarians as individuals and as a collective changed or persisted over time?
- How have academic librarians' approaches to and views of their instructional work changed or remained constant over time?
- How do academic librarians identify – or not identity – as 'teachers'?

Changes in librarians' instruction activities, approaches to and views of their instructional work, and teacher identities might be due both to individual experiences and/or to broader shifts in the profession. These changes might also be attributed to individual librarians' experiences and to environmental factors. The study results, however, provide the greatest insight into shifts that are most directly tied to an individual's accumulating teaching experiences (rather than to obvious changes in the profession at large). These teaching experiences are, of course, inevitably influenced by a combination of personal and environmental factors that include broader changes in the library profession and in higher education.

2. Literature review

The evolution of library instruction and IL education has reflected an overall movement away from skills-based instruction toward more holistic and conceptual models of learning, and away from librarian as service provider toward librarian as teacher and teaching partner. While the expanding and evolving nature of academic librarians' instructional work and roles has been evident throughout the history of library instruction (Ariew, 2014; O'Connor, 2009), there appears to be an increased emphasis in academic librarianship on librarians' teaching roles in the past ten to fifteen years, as evidenced in in library literature (Ducas & Speare, 2020; Walter, 2008) and in professional documents (Association of College & Research Libraries [ACRL], 2016; Coonan et al., 2018; Standards and Proficiencies for Instruction Librarians and Coordinators Revision Task Force, 2017). Descriptions of these expanding teaching roles are paired with descriptions of IL as key to understanding and engaging in dynamic information environments that are central to everyday life and to sociopolitical realities.

The ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education, for example, describes IL 'as an educational reform movement' that 'will realize its potential only through a richer, more complex set of core ideas' (ACRL, 2016). The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) 2018 Definition of Information Literacy similarly shares this emphasis on students' developing deeper understandings and conceptual knowledge that they can apply to their everyday lives and to the social and political worlds that they inhabit. According to the CILIP definition, IL involves, among other things, 'critical thinking and awareness, and an understanding of both the ethical and political issues associated with using information' (Coonan et al., 2018).

As concepts of IL education evolve, so too do librarians' teaching roles and views of themselves as educators. The ACRL Framework asserts that in light of a more nuanced and holistic understanding of IL, '[l]ibrarians have a greater responsibility in identifying core ideas within their own knowledge domain that can extend learning for students, in creating a new cohesive curriculum for IL, and in collaborating more extensively with faculty' (ACRL, 2016). CILIP's definition similarly concludes that 'information professionals have a crucial role in advocating, supporting and enabling information literacy' in their diverse work settings (Coonan et al., 2018).

Despite the expanding teaching roles that academic librarians play, most librarians still receive limited formal teacher training prior to beginning their librarian careers. Rather, most librarians grow their pedagogical knowledge and experience primarily on the job (Walter, 2008; Julien & Genuis, 2011; Austin & Bhandol, 2013; McKinney & Wheeler, 2015). While library literature on

librarians' professional and teaching identities provides a better understanding of librarian's instructional work and approaches to librarian teacher development (Walter, 2008; Julien & Pecoskie, 2009; Julien & Genuis, 2011; Austin & Bhandol, 2013; McKinney & Wheeler, 2015; Corrall, 2017; Saunders, 2012), little research has been done on how librarians' views of and approaches to teaching change over time, as they gain more pedagogical experience and as the profession evolves.

Though librarians have taken on a wider range of instructional responsibilities in recent years, most library instruction still takes place in the form of the 'one-shot' library session, in which the librarian is often viewed as more of a guest lecture than a teaching partner with the instructor of record (Bewick & Corral, 2010; Galoozis, 2019; Ducas et al., 2020). This can stand in the way of librarians feeling at ease in the classroom, limiting the potential for meaningful engagement with students. This frequently requires that librarians bring to teaching a great deal of creativity, flexibility, and openness. These qualities are much easier to enact when accompanied by confidence in one's expertise and assertiveness about one's instructional and professional goals and values. While meaningful partnerships do occur and can be greatly beneficial to students, teaching faculty, and librarians, navigating the role of instruction librarian is often a balancing act that librarians practice and learn largely on the job (Christiansen et al., 2005; Julien & Pecoskie, 2009; Shupe & Pung, 2011). Such negotiation often involves navigating power relations and ambiguous roles (for example, to what extent class planning for a library session is in the hands of the librarian vs. the course instructor). As this suggests, in managing librarian-faculty relations librarians may experience role stress, and more specifically role ambiguity and role conflict.

Role stress deserves particular attention when considering librarians' teaching experiences and identities. As Shupe and Pung discuss in *Understanding the Changing of Academic Librarians from a Psychological Perspective: A Literature Review* (2011), among the major contributors to librarian burnout is role stress, which more specifically involves role ambiguity, role overload, and role conflict (p. 409). Ennis (2005) and Affleck (1996) further suggest that academic librarians engaged in public services like teaching and reference experience a high rate of burnout. Affleck's research moreover points to role-related reasons for this burnout. Given the close relationship between one's professional roles and professional identity, the role conflict and role ambiguity evident among many librarians are important to consider when exploring professional and teacher identity.

The unique nature of library instruction inevitably influences librarians' professional and teacher identities. The complexity of teacher librarian's professional identity and development is evident in numerous studies, particularly in the last 10-15 years. In 2008 Scott Walter reported on the findings of semi-structured interviews with six academic librarians about their teaching and 'teacher identity'. Noting the often conflicted nature of librarian professional identity and of librarians' teaching roles, Walter identified several themes that emerged from interviews with the participants, all of whom were particularly committed to their teaching roles (p. 63): the centrality of teaching to their everyday work, the importance of collegial and administrative support, the stress of multiple demands, problems with professional education, and stereotypes and misperceptions regarding librarians' work. Though Walter's study did not focus on burnout, the themes of role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload (evident in Shupe and Pung's (2011) literature review on librarian burnout) also surface in Walter's findings.

Walter's interviews were done with teacher librarians who identified strongly with their teaching roles. In contrast, McKinney and Wheeler's (2015) investigation into whether and how librarians describe themselves as teachers aimed to offer a more representative picture of librarians' ranging views of their teaching roles. The researchers conducted interviews with six academic librarians who had different levels of experience and different lengths of career. Though this

sample size was small and consisted only of the researchers' professional contacts, the researchers' findings indicate that librarians' sense of teacher identity varies considerably. Participants' descriptions of their teaching roles tended to fall into one of these four categories: teacher-librarian, learning support, librarian who teaches, and trainer. The authors conclude that librarians' views of their teaching roles could be strengthened with more support and professional development both within the profession and in library and information science graduate programs.

Julien and Pecoskie (2009) similarly found in semi-structured interviews about librarians' perceptions of themselves as teachers that participants (48 Canadian academic librarians) had complex relationships with their teaching roles. The teaching experiences were often characterized by unequal power relations with faculty in which librarians experienced a deferential role. This dynamic tended to limit the actualization of instructional goals. Austin & Bhandol's (2013) librarian interviews further suggest that librarians often experience a lack of legitimacy in their teaching role.

While teacher identity can be deeply personal, institutional discourses (Austin & Bhandol, 2013), structures and cultures (Julien & Pecoskie, 2009; Christiansen et al., 2005), play a powerful role. Structural and institutional factors cannot be neatly disentangled from the affective dimensions of library instructional work. Considering the emotional labor involved in library instruction, Galoozis (2019) found in interviews with instruction librarians that several factors were key to librarians' motivations to adopt new instructional practices, including a sense of autonomy in the classroom (p. 1041), maintaining a long-term view of one's teaching practices and goals (p. 1042), and being proactive in response to 'the emotions and emotional labor involved in learning about, reflecting on, and incorporating new teaching practices' (p. 1043). These factors can again be viewed not only in terms of an individual's teaching practices, but also in terms of professional and institutional cultures and structures.

Research on teacher development and agency from an ecological view, affirms the significance of structural factors. Although such research is generally focused on future and practicing school teachers' work, many of the issues evident in these studies are also influential in librarians' pedagogical work (for example, the challenges that structural hierarchies present for teacher agency). As Priestley et al. (2015) write, while teacher agency has often been discussed in more individualistic terms, an ecological view of agency that considers the many environmental and structural issues that influence one's pedagogical work provides a more holistic and useful model through which to understand teachers' experiences, possibilities, and actions.

Priestley et al.'s ecological view suggests that agency is not static and does not exist in isolation, but rather that agency is 'an emergent phenomenon of the ecological conditions through which it is enacted' (p. 3). This ecological understanding 'highlights that actors always act by means of their environment rather than simply in their environment [so that] the achievement of agency will always result from the interplay of individual efforts, available resources and contextual and structural factors as they come together in particular and, in a sense, always unique situations' (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 137). An ecological understanding of agency may be particularly beneficial for librarians as they navigate common challenges of library instruction like the constraints on one-shot library sessions and interpersonal relationships and institutional structures in which librarians are not always viewed as teaching partners or as professional equals.

An ecological view of agency is also evident in Fisher-Ari and Lynch's (2015) research on metaphor as a pedagogical tool for pre-service teachers. Examining over time pre-service teachers' shifting metaphors for curricula and curricula development, the researchers found that

these metaphors could be characterized along two major continua: degree of personal agency and degree of flexibility. As pre-service teachers gained more experience, many shifted toward experiencing a greater degree of agency and flexibility in relation to developing and implementing curricula. Toward the latter part of the study those individuals with the most nuanced conceptions of curricula recognized external factors that limited their degree of choice, while also pursuing pedagogical approaches that would nonetheless enable them to meet their instructional goals.

The research described thus far provides generative lenses through which to consider this study. Limited research has examined librarians' views of the evolution of their approaches to and views of teaching, learning, and their related professional roles. When analyzing the survey results, the author takes into consideration participants' unique views and experiences, while also identifying commonalities across experiences and ecological and structural factors that are evident in the emergent themes.

3. Methods

The author conducted an online survey of academic instruction librarians. The study was approved by Rowan University's Office of Research Compliance (Study Protocol #2019000771). The survey invitation was sent through the American Library Association's main listserv for academic IL instruction (ili-l@lists.ala.org) in November 2019. Librarians with at least one year of experience in library instructional services and who had been involved in library instructional services in a college or university setting within the past two years were invited to participate. Responses were analyzed through manual textual coding. The author generated codes based on close analysis of all of the responses.

3.1 Participants

87 individuals participated in the survey, in which they were asked a series of questions, most of which were open-ended, about the types of instruction-related activities in which they presently and previously had engaged, if/how their views of their instructional work and their instructional roles had changed over time, what experiences had been particularly influential in their teaching, and if they identified as teachers. At the end of the survey each respondent was asked if they would be willing to participate in a thirty-minute interview. Several interviews were subsequently conducted with volunteering participants. The interview findings will be a focus of subsequent research.

3.1.1 Geographic location

The large majority of participants were located in the United States (85.06%, or 74). The remaining participants were based in Canada (8.33%, or 7), outside of North America (2.3%, or 2), or were located in an unspecified location (4.6%, or 4).

3.1.2 Institution type

The largest group of participants (42.53%, or 37) worked in a research university, and the second largest group (27.59%, or 24) worked at four-year undergraduate colleges. The remaining participants were at regional comprehensive universities (13.8%, or 12), community or technical colleges (10.34%, or 9), or a different setting (5.75%, or 5) [Figure 1].
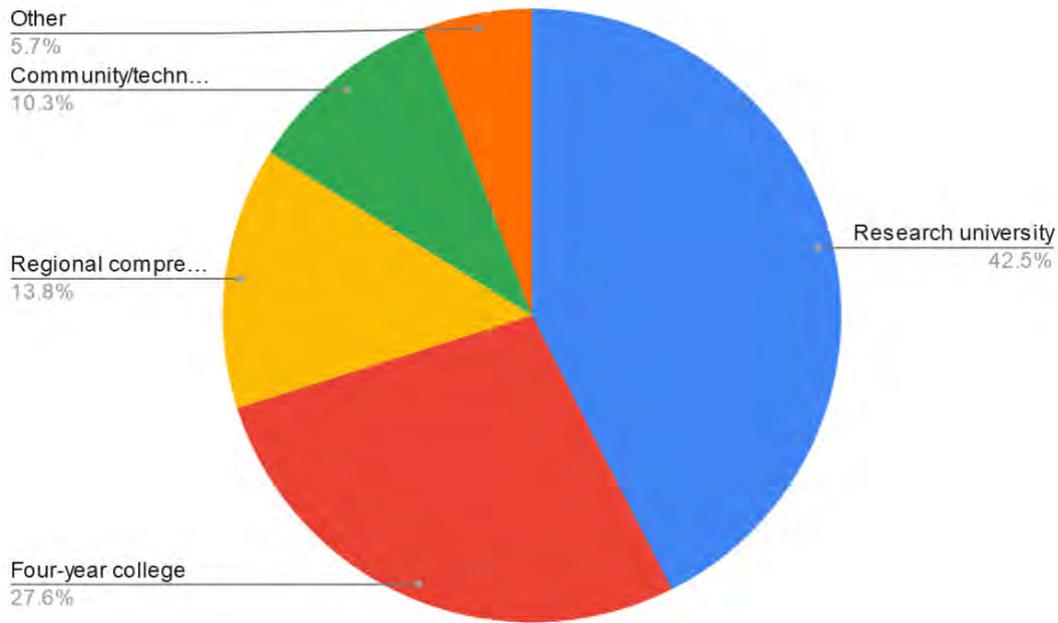
Figure 1: Type of institutional employment

3.1.3 Years in the library profession

Participants' years of experience in librarianship varied considerably, with the largest groups having 2-5 years of experience (22.99%, or 20), 6-9 years of experience (21.84%, or 19), and over 20 years of experience (22.99%, or 20). 13.79% (12) of respondents have 10-15 years of experience, 16.09% (14) had 16-20 years of experience, and 2.3% (2) had over one year but less than 2 years of experience [Figure 2].

Figure 2: Number of years participants have worked in the library profession

3.1.4 Years of engagement in library instruction

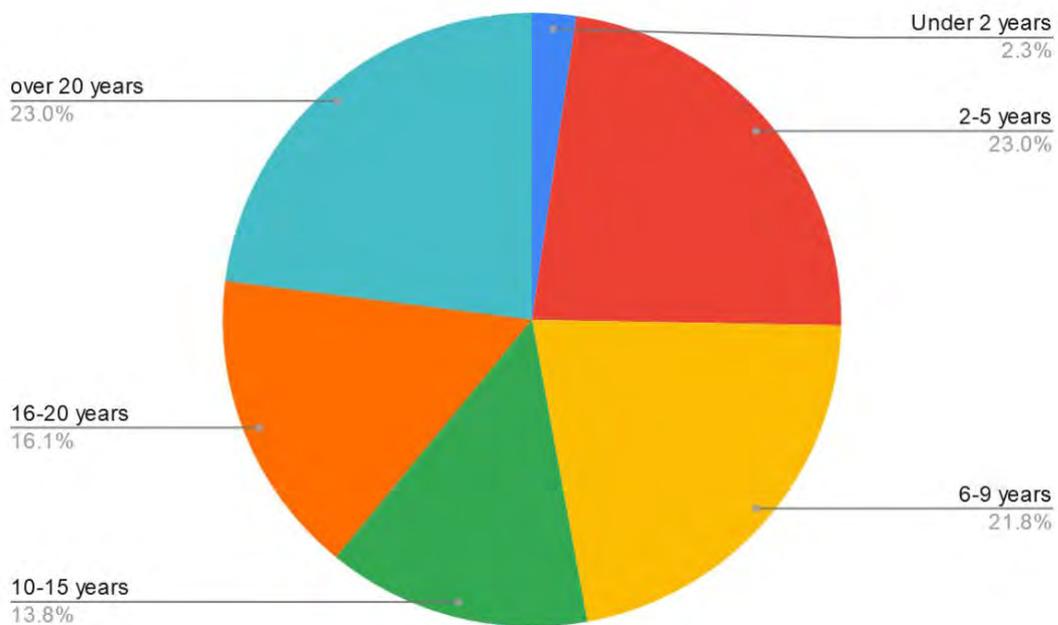Since not all librarians teach during any or all of their professional life, participants were also asked how many years they have been involved in library instruction. The largest group had 2-5 years of experience (31.03%, or 27), and the second largest group had 6-9 years of experience (25.29%, or 22). 13.80% (12) had 10-15 years of experience, 16.09% (14) had 16-20 years of experience, and 11.49% (10) had over 20 years of experience. 2.30% (2) did not provide a response to this question.
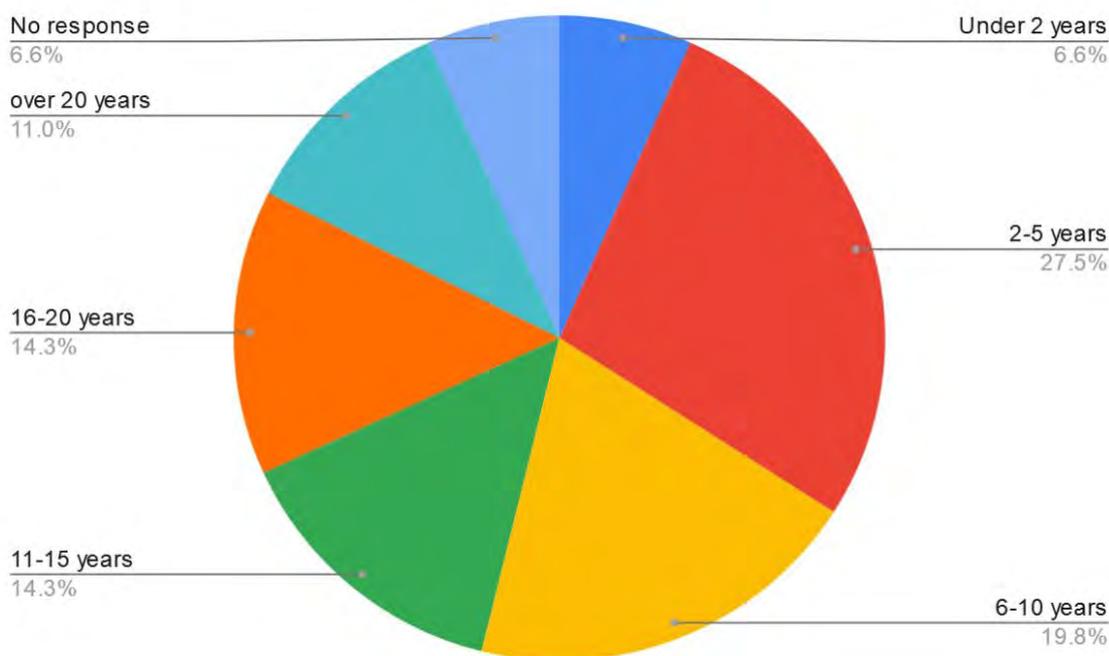
Figure 3: Number of years participants have engaged in library instruction

4. Results

4.1 Key findings

Through their survey responses the large majority of participants confirmed that their instructional work had changed over time, including in terms of instructional responsibilities, views of and approaches to instructional work, and views of their instructional roles. In summary:

- 81.61% of respondents (71) reported important changes in the nature of their instructional work.
  (This included engaging in a wider range of instructional work, integrating more active learning into teaching, and working more collaboratively with faculty or librarian colleagues.)
- 92% (80) reported changes in their view of or approach to their instructional work.
  (Prominent emergent themes were making learning more active, focusing more on conceptual knowledge and critical thinking, approaching learning with a more holistic

view of students and learning, being more flexible and experimental in teaching, and feeling more confident.)

- 67.82% (59) reported important changes in their view of their instructional role. (Prominent emergent themes were having greater trust in their own expertise, being more partnership-oriented, recognizing limitations of library and one-shot instruction and managing expectations, and being more aware of contextual and structural factors that influence library instruction.
- 71.26% (62) of participants identified as teachers. 14.94% (13) indicated that they do not identify as teachers, and 13.79% (12) expressed ambivalence about ascribing the term 'teacher' to themselves. Of those who expressed ambivalence about a teacher identity, over half (58.33%, or 7) indicated that teaching was not their primary role and/or that they instead identified with a different professional title such as 'librarian', or in some cases 'educator'.

Though each respondent's experiences and pedagogical approaches are unique, common overarching themes also emerged from the participants' responses. These include:

- Participants' teaching approaches becoming more student-centered, more interactive, and more collaborative over time
- Participants' teaching approaches becoming more flexible, unscripted, and spontaneous over time
- Participants' growing confidence and ease in their instructional roles
- Variations in the extent to which participants identified as 'teachers', ranging from strong identification to ambivalence to non-identification
- Variations in participants' relationships to faculty and other educators, sometimes characterized as collaborative and mutually beneficial and sometimes described as challenging or restrictive
- The importance of institutional and library context and culture in one's experience of their teaching role

These themes often surfaced in participants' responses to numerous survey questions. Because these themes reflect participants' self-articulated thoughts (rather than concepts or terms that were presented to participants) and because participants' responses were limited to brief survey responses, it is likely that the emergent themes expressed in this study's coding could be ascribed to a larger number of participants' experiences than is evident in these findings. The emergent themes provide a useful starting point for exploring aspects of pedagogy that librarians view as particularly important.

4.2 Overall findings

A fuller examination of the responses to each survey question provides deeper insight into the emergent themes. Some of these themes are evident across responses to various questions, as is explored in the Discussion section.

4.2.1 Types of instructional work

The first two survey questions asked participants about 1) the types of instructional work in which they had been involved during their library careers and 2) if/how those instruction-related

activities had changed during their library careers. Participants' reported engagement in instructional activities as follows [Figure 4]:

- Librarian-led instruction sessions for credit courses ('one-shots'): 95.4% (83)
- Librarian-led student-centered workshops (not tied to a credit course): 81.61% (71)
- Librarian-led faculty- or researcher-centered workshops: 63.22% (55)
- Creation of online learning objects: 88.51% (77)
- Collaborative assignment or course design: 63.22% (55)
- Instruction-related consultations for teachers/faculty: 64.37% (56)
- Credit IL course: 18.39% (16)
- Other: 16.09% (14)
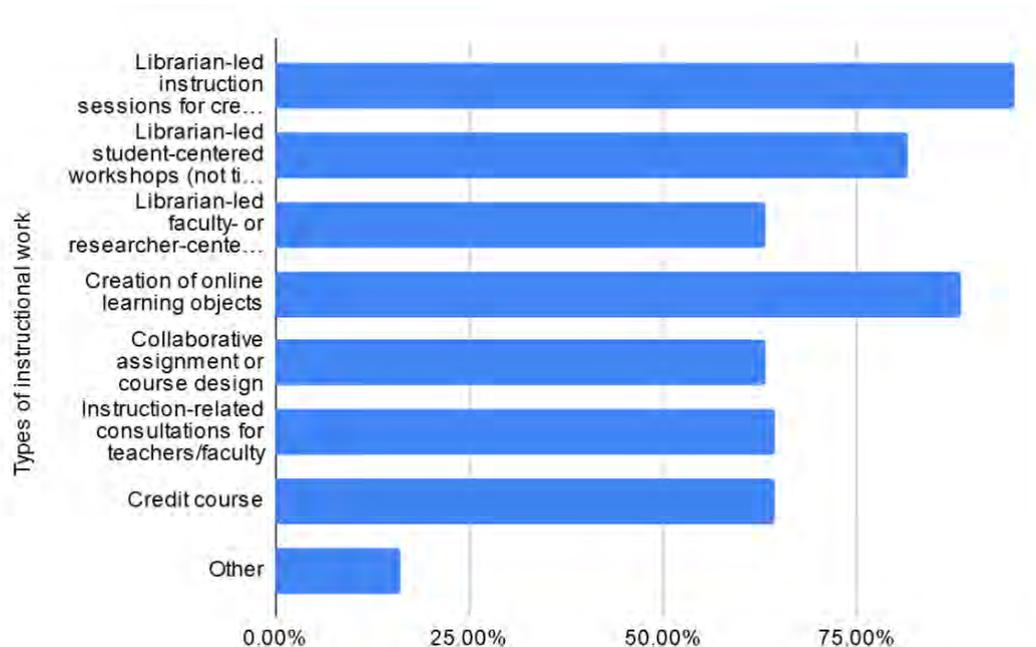
Figure 4: Types of instructional work in which participants have been involved

4.2.2 Changes in types of instruction activities

The large majority of respondents (81.6%, or 71) indicated that the types of instruction-related activities in which they engage had changed during their library careers, while 14.94% (13) reported that these activities had not changed. 2.99% of participants (2) did not respond to this question [Figure 5]. It is not entirely clear from the survey respondents to what extent these changes can be attributed to individuals' gained experiences or to shifts in instruction librarianship as a whole, though the responses make clear that both individual factors and broader shifts in the profession play important roles.
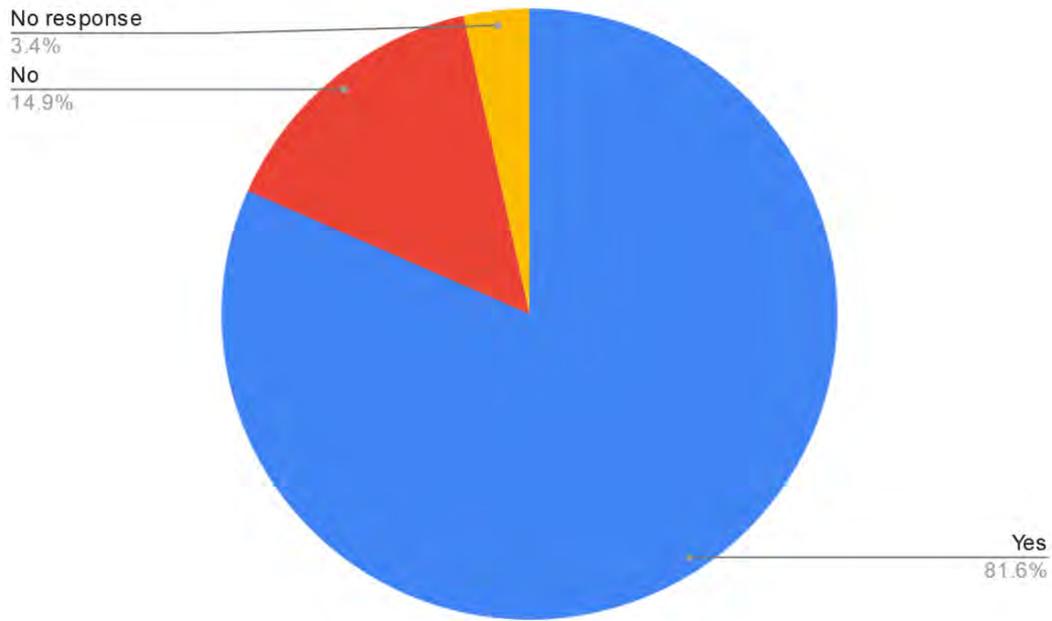
Figure 5: Reported changes to nature of instructional work during library career

Of those who stated that their instruction-related activities had changed during their library careers, themes that emerged could be categorized in two main ways: 1) activity type and 2) the librarian's conceptual or cognitive approach to activities.

4.2.3 Activity type

Of those who affirmed changes in their instruction-related activities (81.6%, or 71), 35.21% (25) described that work as having expanded to a wider range of activities. A number of respondents (12.68%, or 9) noted that their instructional activities varied due to a change in their job position and/or in their workplace institution. Numerous participants identified increased involvement in two particular types of instructional activities: creating online tutorials/resources (18.31%, or 13) and course/assignment design (14.08%, or 10) [Figure 6].
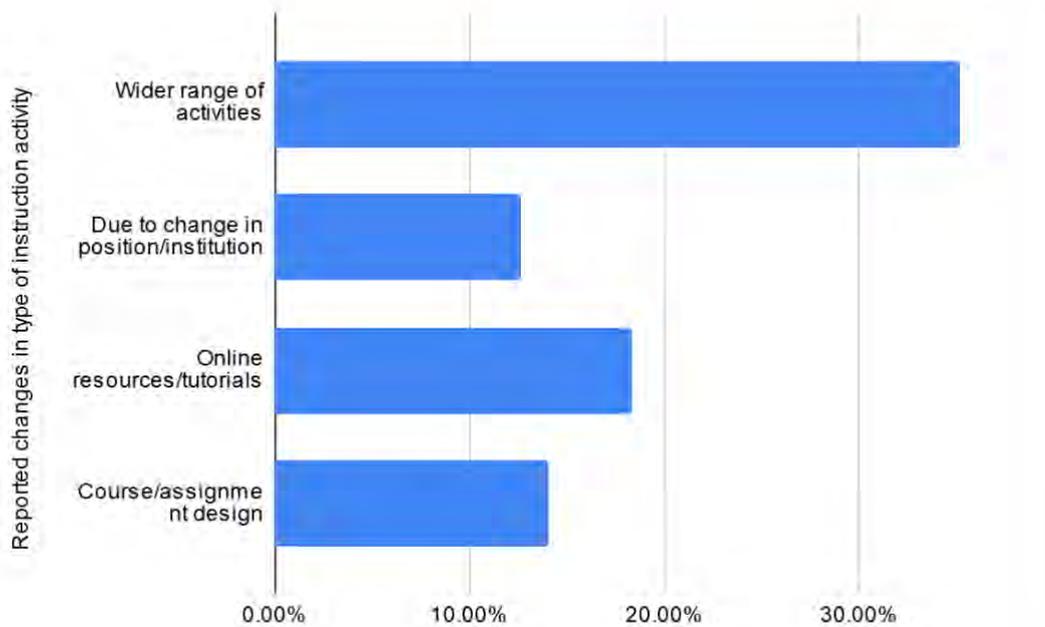
Figure 6: Nature of the changes to instructional work during library career

4.2.4 Conceptual or cognitive approach to activities

Of those who reported changes in the type of instruction work they do (81.6%, or 71), many described changes not just in activity type, but also in their instructional approach [Figure 7]. The most prominent emergent themes were:

- More collaboration with other educators or librarians 32.4% (23)
- Incorporation of more active learning 30.99% (22)
- Increased use/importance of technology 16.9% (12)
- More tailored/context-specific instruction 16.9% (12)
- More pedagogically informed approach 15.49% (11)
- Dialing back on amount of direct instruction from librarian /seeking more sustainable and scalable teaching approaches 12.68% (9)
- Greater emphasis on critical thinking and/or source evaluation 8.45% (6)

Again, the reasons for these shifts are likely due to a combination of factors, including individual teaching experience and changes in the profession.
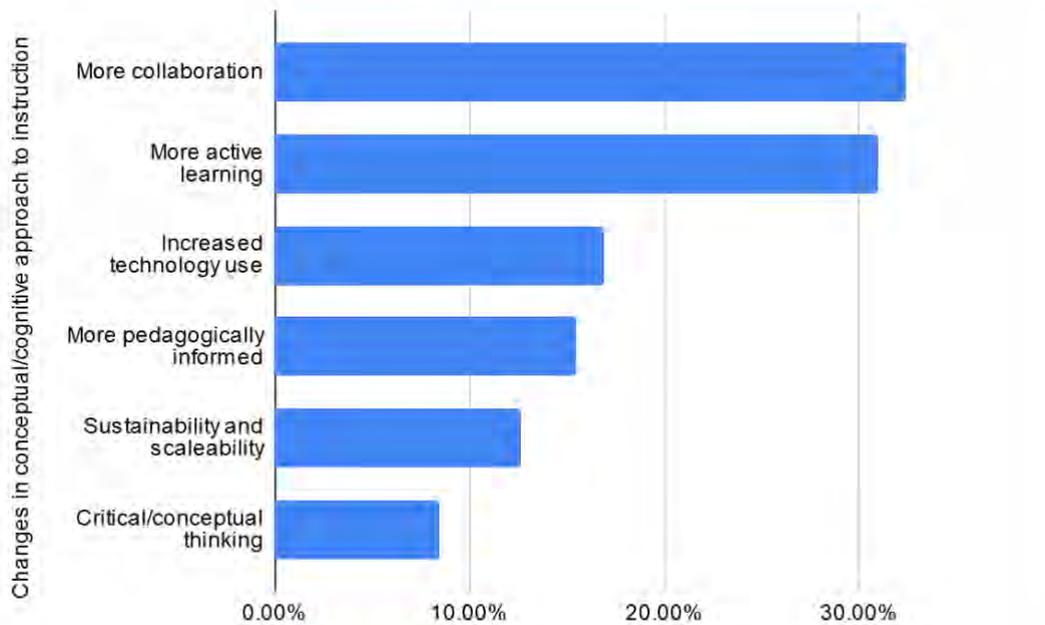
Figure 7: Changes in the conceptual or cognitive approach to instructional work during library career

Many of these themes are mirrored in responses to later survey questions, and in particular in responses to the subsequent question about changes in participants' views of or approaches to IL instruction.

4.2.5 Changes in view/approach to IL instruction

In response to the question 'Has your view of or approach to teaching information literacy changed in certain ways during your library career? If so, how?', the majority of respondents (92%, or 80) answered in the affirmative. 4.6% (4) answered no, and 2.3% (2) provided no response [Figure 8].
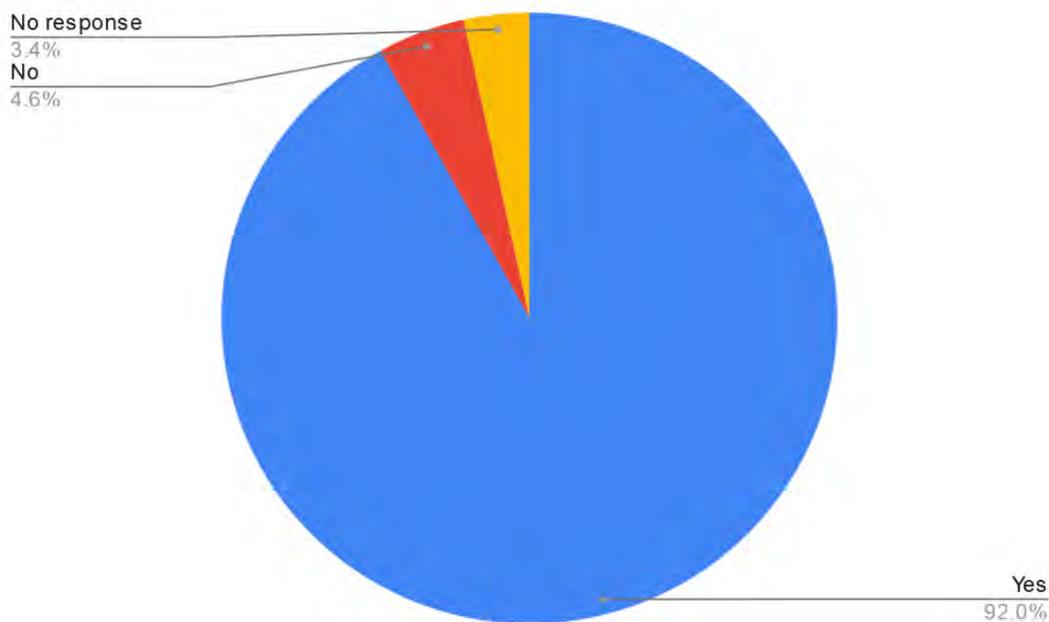
Figure 8: Reported change in instructional view or approach during library career

Among those who responded 'yes', the most salient emergent themes are listed below [Figure 9]:

- More active (20.69%) (18)
- More conceptual/critical thinking 19.54% (17)
- More holistic view of learning/focus on integration of IL 14.94% (13)
- More flexible/experimental 13.79% (12)
- More confident 9.2% (8)
- More collaborative 8.05% (7)
- Recognizing barriers to meaningful teaching 4.6% (4)
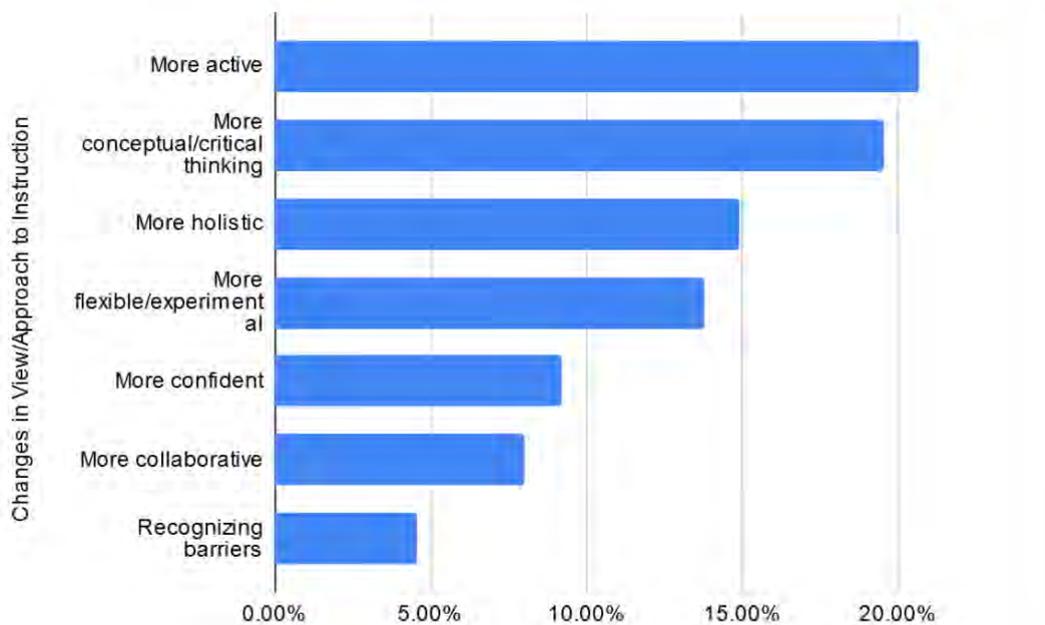
Figure 9: Nature of changes in instructional view or approach during library career

4.2.6 Changes in view of instructional role

Has your view of your instructional role changed in certain ways during your library career? If so, how?

The majority of participants (67.82%, or 59) indicated that their view of their instructional role had changed over the course of their library career, while 17.24% (15) stated that it had not shifted. 2.3% (2) responded both 'yes' and 'no' to this question, 2.3% (2) who were newer to librarianship indicated that their view of their instructional role had not yet changed (suggesting that this may still occur as they gain more experience), and 1.15% (one) responded that they were unsure. 9.2% (8) of the participants did not respond to this question [Figure 10].
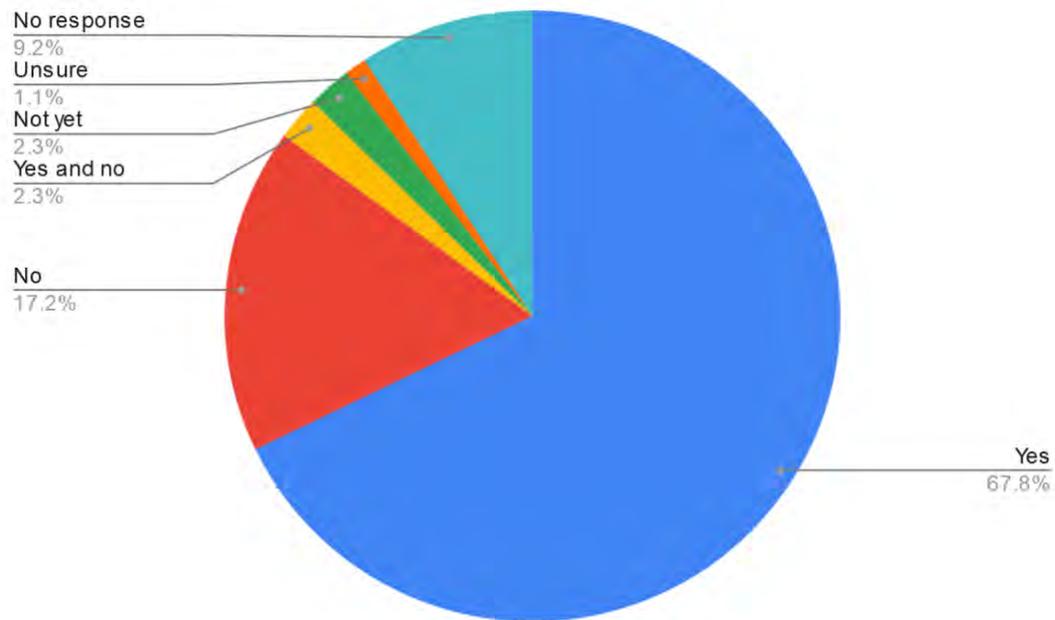
Figure 10: Reported changes in participants' view of instructional role

Of the 18.4% (16) of respondents who indicated that their view of their instructional role had not changed, 43.75% stated that they have always viewed teaching as essential to their work. It is also worth noting that of those who stated that their view of their instructional role had changed, 9% (6) indicated that this was due to a change in their job position and/or institution (not necessarily an internal shift in one's view of their teaching role, but rather a change defined primarily by external conditions).

Among those who affirmed that their instructional roles has changed (67.82%, or 59), prominent themes were as follows [Figure 11]:

- Trust in one's own expertise (38.98%) (23)
- Being more partnership-oriented (35.59%) (21)
- Increased awareness of contextual or structural factors (25.42%) (15)
- A more holistic view of teaching and learning (16.95%) (10)
- A sense that non-librarians do not recognize librarians' teaching roles (13.56%) (8)
- Being less concerned with status and others' perceptions (11.86%) (7)
- Being a coach and/or co-learner (10.17%) (6)
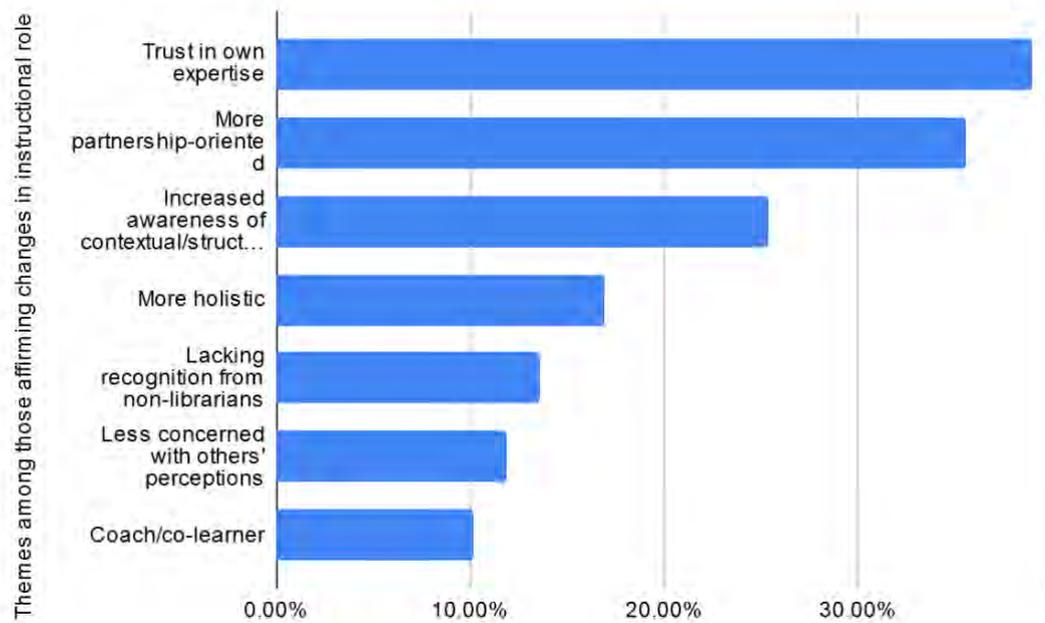
Figure 11: Themes among reported changes in in participants' view of instructional role

4.2.7 Do you identify as a teacher?

The majority of respondents (71.26%, or 62) indicated that they identify as a teacher, in comparison to 13.79% (12) that did not and 13.79% (12) who expressed ambivalence with the term [Figure 12].
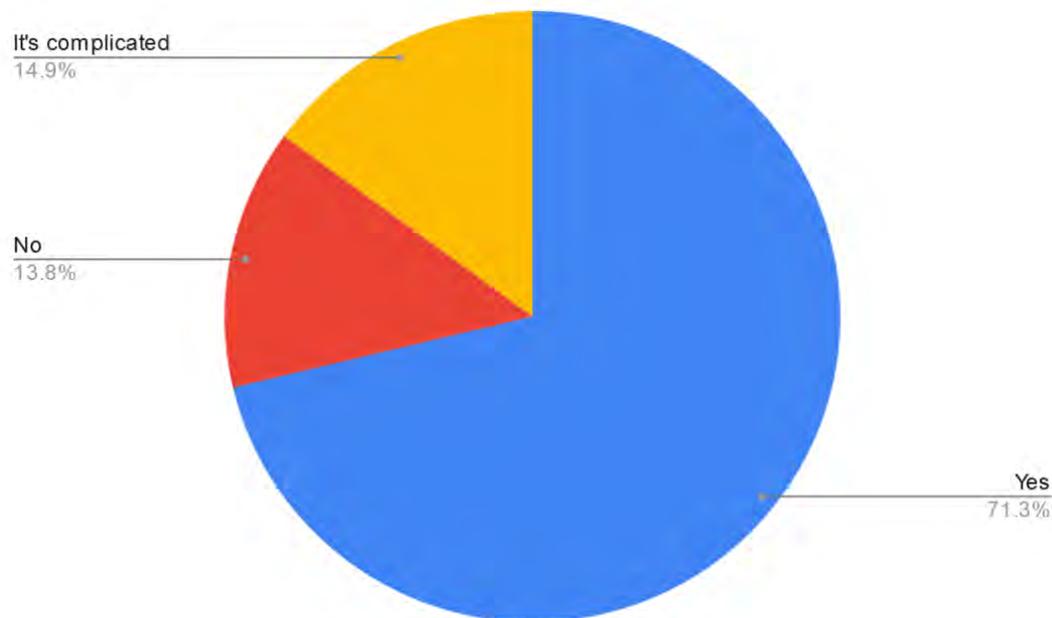
Figure 12: Responses to the question 'do you identify as a teacher?'

Of those who identified as teachers, 72.7% (16) expressed noticeable enthusiasm in their responses, 18.2% (4) articulated reservations about the term, and 9.1% (2) stated that their identification as teachers had developed over time.
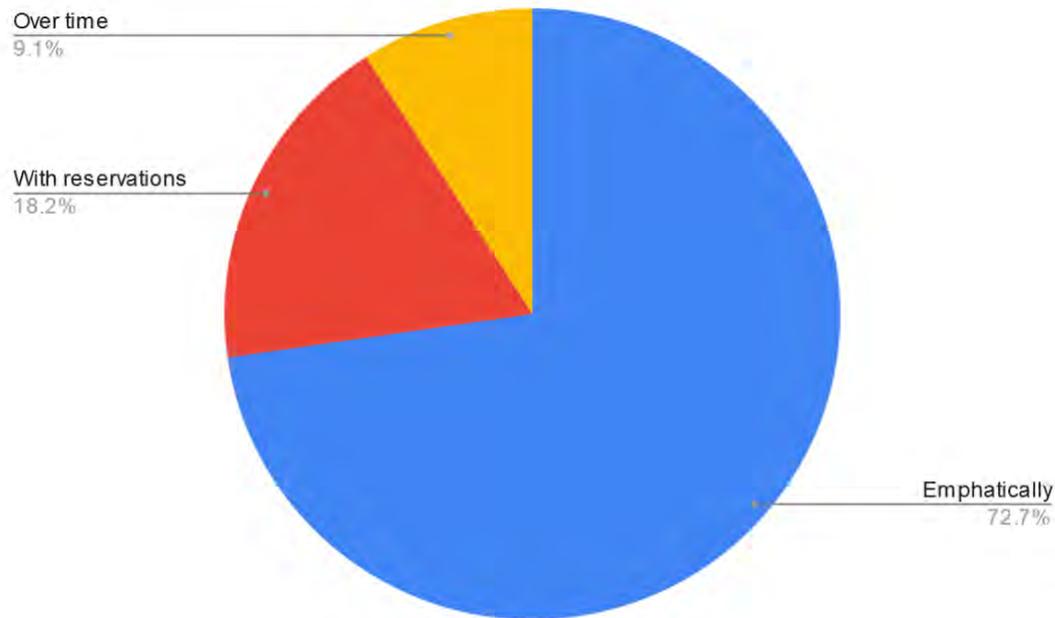
Figure 13: How emphatically do participants identify as a teacher?

Of those who expressed more ambivalence about a teacher identity than identification (reflected in the 'It's complicated' category), almost half (46.15%, or 6) indicated that teaching was not their primary role and/or that they instead identified with a different professional title such as 'librarian', or in some cases 'educator'. Participants' responses to this question illustrate that while many and perhaps most instruction librarians identify strongly with their teaching role, engaging in the act of teaching does not necessarily equate to identifying as a teacher. The ambivalence about the title of 'teacher' that some participants expressed aligns with research on teacher identity in general and research on librarians' teacher identity specifically: engaging in the act of teaching often but not always coincides with identifying as a teacher (Walter, 2008; McKinney & Wheeler, 2015; Julien & Pecoskie, 2009; Austin & Bhandol, 2013).

5. Discussion

As noted in the Introduction, this study was driven by the following research questions:

- How have the instruction-related activities of academic librarians as individuals and as a collective changed or persisted over time?
- How have academic librarians' approaches to and views of their instructional work changed or remained constant over time?
- How do academic librarians identify – or not identity – as 'teachers'?

As suggested previously, these changes might be attributed both to individual experiences and to broader changes in library instruction and higher education. The extent to which one's teacher development can be attributed to individual experiences vs. to broader professional/sociocultural shifts cannot be neatly disentangled. For example, as the nature of academic librarians' instructional activities has expanded along with changes in library and IL programming, librarians gain experience with different aspects of teaching and learning. These experiences are likely to influence their individual and their shared pedagogical perspectives and approaches, as well as their teaching identities. Acknowledging the roles of individual, collective, and environmental factors may help in investigating the conditions that influence

librarians' teaching activities, perspectives, and roles. That said, participants' responses frequently suggested that experience gained over time was one of the most important factors in participants' teacher development. This point is discussed further throughout this section.

5.1. Instruction-related activities

How have the instruction-related activities of academic librarians as individuals and as a collective changed or persisted over time?

It is evident across responses to several survey questions that a large portion of the participants' have become engaged in a wider range of instructional activities over time. The nature of these instructional activities and participants' approaches to them often involve a higher level of collaboration with other educators. At the same time, many respondents reported being involved in instructional work that can involve a considerable amount of autonomy and choice, such as teaching credit-bearing IL courses and creating online learning objects. 'One-shot' library instruction continued to be the most common instructional activity (with 95.4% indicating engagement in one-shots), though some participants commented on the limitations of stand-alone library sessions and the need to further grow more sustainable and scalable models for IL education. (12.68% of respondents (9) remarked on their efforts to scale back on the amount of direct librarian instruction and the need for teaching approaches that are more sustainable than one-shot instruction.) A wide range of instructional activities is also evident in Ducas et al.'s (2020) librarian survey, in which classroom teaching was the most widely reported instructional activity (78.42% of respondents), while respondents also engaged in numerous other teaching activities (for example, one-on-one teaching - 74.74%, tutorial creation - 48.42%, teaching workshops for faculty - 47.37%, copyright consultation - 43.16%, short videos and screencasts - 38.95%, online learning - 38.42%, participation in course management systems - 36.32%, instructional design - 24.74%).

5.2 Instructional approaches and views

How have academic librarians' approaches to and views of their instructional work changed or remained constant over time?

While the survey question about librarians' approaches to and views of their instructional work most directly relates to this question, participants' descriptions of their instructional activities and instructional roles also provide insight into this question. Those newer to instruction librarianship (under 2 years of experience as a library staff or faculty member) reported less change in their view and approach; otherwise there was not a clear correlation between years of experience and view of IL instruction or of librarians' instructional roles.

Participants frequently expressed a shift toward more active learning; collaboration with other educators and at times with students; and a deepened understanding of pedagogy that often coincided with a more holistic and integrated approach to teaching and learning. Often greater trust in one's own teaching expertise and an eagerness and ability to be more flexible and experimental in one's teaching accompanied these changed approaches.

Though many participants expressed enthusiasm about teaching and learning, four expressed frustrations with barriers to deeper student learning and to librarians' opportunities to support that learning. More in-depth research interviews like those from Walter (2008), Julien & Pecoskie (2009), Austin & Bhandol (2013) suggest that such frustrations are common and more pervasive than is reflected in this study's survey responses.

Some participants who articulated frustrations with the constraints of their instructional roles appeared to navigate challenges through simultaneous acknowledgement of limitations and flexibility in response to their circumstances. (This is evident in the responses of ten of the fifteen participants who described their changed views of their instructional roles in terms of awareness of contextual or structural factors.) The capacity to work within and around limitations is in keeping with Fisher-Ari and Lynch's (2015) findings about pre-service teachers' conceptions of curriculum and curriculum development, which, as discussed previously, were characterized as existing along two continua: teacher agency and pliancy. In their study those pre-service teachers who appeared to have developed a greater sense of agency recognized external conditions that were outside of their control, while also responding flexibly to developing and implementing curricula in order to achieve their instructional goals. The recognition of external factors and flexibility in response to those conditions also reflects Priestley et al.'s ecological view of teacher agency, according to which agency is dynamic, 'an emergent phenomenon of the ecological conditions through which it is enacted' (p. 3).

5.3 Instructional approaches and roles

Responses to the questions about changes in participants' instructional views and approaches and changes in their instructional roles provided particularly rich insight into participants' teacher development. Responses to each of these questions therefore deserve further analysis.

5.4 Trust in own expertise

The most common theme in response to this survey item, greater trust in one's own expertise (evident in 34.28%, or 23 of the responses), appears key to many librarians' sense of agency, purpose, and satisfaction in teaching. Galoozis's (2019) interviews with instruction librarians similarly indicate the importance of trusting one's own expertise: among the key factors to interviewees' adopting new instructional practices was a sense of autonomy in the classroom (p. 1041), which one might expect to coincide with confidence in one's teaching.

In this study trust in one's expertise also appeared to be valuable for collaborating with faculty and navigating the challenges of collaboration. Greater trust in one's expertise was frequently reported alongside being partnership-oriented (co-occurrence in 14 responses) and being less concerned with others' perceptions of oneself (co-occurrence in 6 responses). As one participant stated,

> As I've become a mid-career librarian, I've realized that I am also a subject matter expert in IL [information literacy] who is a really good instructor, and when I work with faculty, my approach is that we are an instructional team, and that IL content is just as important as the other course content.

Another librarian considered how their frustration with the common perception among instructors of library instruction as limited to database demonstrations has more to do with those instructors' limited knowledge of IL and librarians' work than with the actual potential of IL education:

> I also have begun to realize how little outside disciplines know about the depth of expertise librarians have. My theory is that instructors ask for database demos not because they find them effective but because they don't know what else to ask for.

Such comments suggest that for at least some participants trust in their expertise strengthens their ability to collaborate with faculty and students while also managing uncertainties and

challenges of outreach and partnership building. Trust in one's own expertise is likely to provide a sense of security that enables one to recognize the many internal and external factors that influence their teaching, while simultaneously collaborating with faculty and students.

5.5 Ambivalence

But not all respondents expressed overall positivity about navigating the challenges of library instruction. A less encouraged tone was apparent in some respondents' expressions of ambivalence about their teaching roles and their levels of teaching expertise. (Again, 13.79% of respondents (12) expressed ambivalence about ascribing the term 'teacher' to themselves.) Such comments usually implied a sense of lacking agency, even when participants did view themselves as possessing relevant expertise. Consider the following statements:

> *I go back and forth between feeling like a guest in someone else's classroom with little autonomy and a professional in my own right who can set standards for how and what I will teach.*

> *Only insofar as I see what is possible in other libraries and realize it will not be possible in my environment, but due to chronic budget / leadership issues.*

The frustration that these participants express, which appears to be tied in part to role ambiguity and role conflict, is reminiscent of Shupe & Pung's (2011), Ennis's (2005), and Affleck's (1996) work on librarian burnout, as well as of previously discussed interviews with librarians about their instructional roles and identities (Walter, 2008; Julien & Pecoskie, 2009; Austin & Bhandol, 2013; McKinney & Wheeler, 2015).

Some participants who expressed frustration with the limitations of their instructional work nonetheless found value in particular aspects of that work. One librarian reflected,

> *I have recognized my limitations in the classroom. One-shots are not effective in addressing all aspects of information literacy. I think of what students' most immediate needs are, but I strongly encourage them to come and meet with one of us for more.*

This process of recognizing the possibilities and the limitations of different types of teaching reflects Biesta & Tedder's (2007) ecological view of agency (discussed previously), according to which 'actors always act by means of their environment rather than simply in their environment [so that] the achievement of agency will always result from the interplay of individual efforts, available resources and contextual and structural factors as they come together in particular and, in a sense, always unique situations' (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 137). Again, recognizing factors that are beyond one's control may help some librarians to identify ways in which they can exercise great agency (for example and as is reflected in the above quote, encouraging students after a one-shot session to meet individually with the librarian).

5.6 Barriers to meaningful instruction

While many participants expressed enthusiasm for teaching, four individuals also acknowledged frustration with the challenges of library instruction, in particular in relation to the predominance of 'one-shot' sessions and an apparent underappreciation in many institutions of IL and of librarians' roles as educators. As one respondent articulated,

> *I still have to work with instructors wanting one-shots and they often don't want to collaborate on more beyond that. It is frustrating because the profession has one idea of how things should be while professors' perceptions tend to be completely*

different, and the concept and term 'IL' hasn't addressed this but tells librarians to soldier on.

Another participant similarly noted a disconnect between librarians' hopes and expectations for IL, on the one hand, and those of teaching faculty and administrations, on the other. This individual at the same time saw potential in working with those faculty and administrators who do recognize IL's value:

Librarians as instructors are valued by some faculty and administrators and definitely not by others. We just keep struggling to connect with those who do and shake our heads at the rest.

These responses resemble experiences of role ambiguity and role conflict that were evident in the previously discussed theme of ambivalence. Comments like these, given in response to the question of how participants' views of or approaches to instruction had changed, also relate to the subsequent survey question about if/how participants' instructional roles have changed.

5.7 Awareness of contextual/structural factors and managing expectations

Recognition of contextual and structural factors that constrain librarians' instructional work, while frustrating, appeared key to some librarians' abilities to experience a sense of agency while navigating obstacles to their instructional goals. (This is again apparent in the responses of ten of the fifteen participants who described their changed views of their instructional roles in terms of awareness of contextual or structural factors.) The following librarian statements are particularly indicative of the intersecting themes of trust in one's own expertise, a partnership orientation, and a recognition of limiting contextual or structural factors:

I can say no now. When faculty say no to me, it's not as painful as it used to be. There is relationship building, but some things are just transactional. In the beginning, I was stiff in my lesson but approachable. Now after more experience... I really see the power in my partnership with faculty. I have content and instructional technique that I can contribute to the classroom.

I used to think that whether a session went well or poorly was all about me as an instructor. Now I understand that while I still have a lot of agency, there are bigger systematic issues at work. For example, if a faculty member decides to schedule a library session during a day when he/she is at a conference and too early for students to start thinking seriously about their research project, how engaged students are during the session has partly to do with me, but also partly with the broader situation. I am more now that I am working against poor timing and a faculty member who has sent a clear message about the (un)importance of the session.

These wider lenses through which to consider librarians' interactions with other instructors suggest that with increased trust in one's own expertise, many librarians also become to a healthy degree less concerned with others' expectations of them and better able to act with a sense of agency, as they balance their own pedagogical approaches and perspectives with considerations of other educators. Such comments also suggest an ecological view of agency (Biesta & Tedder, 2007; Priestley et al., 2015), through which participants recognize the numerous environmental factors that influence the possibilities and limitations for their instructional work.

5.8 More partnership-oriented

Participants' recognition of the larger ecological environment in which they work was evident in an increased valuing of teaching partnerships and in a view of IL education as extending far beyond library instruction and stand-alone class sessions. As noted previously, of the 67.82% (59) of respondents who indicated that their view of their instructional role had changed, 35.59% (21) expressed being more partnership-oriented in relation to teaching and learning. The following comments express this perspective/sentiment:

> *Yes. Initially, I was all about the students and teaching & learning with them. Now I see that true change will happen if I focus on faculty and engaging them in metaliteracy instruction embedded within their disciplinary instruction, so my activity may focus on assignment design, sourcing content, showing faculty tools, games, activities to teach their content along with the IL content.*

> *I'm now a teaching partner. That means that I don't just come into the classroom for a one-shot and never see those students again. Instead, I work with the faculty member on pedagogy, help them design assignments, figure out how my instruction fits into the larger course, etc.*

As these comments demonstrate, participants' views of their instructional roles often intersected in important ways in both the types of instructional activities that they do and with how they view IL and teaching and learning more broadly.

The themes of collaboration and partnership were evident not only in descriptions of librarian-faculty relations, but also in librarian-student interactions. A number of respondents (six) described themselves as coaches or co-learners working alongside students, as is apparent in these comments:

> *I rarely talk for more than 5-6 minutes. I prefer if possible to let the students teach[] themselves, explore more and discover.*

> *It has matured through practice and study of pedagogy. Learning is hard and time intensive. So I don't try to "cram" in more than humans can responsibly learn. I see my role as assisting students, and being available for those who seek to learn more.*

5.9 Intersections of increased confidence, flexibility, and social interaction

The themes of increased confidence and trust in one's own expertise, flexibility and openness to experimentation, and social interaction (often reflected in participants' descriptions of active learning and of collaboration) frequently intersected and appeared to reinforce one another. For example, increased flexibility sometimes coincided with a more holistic view of teaching and learning (four co-occurrences), as well as with the use of active learning (six co-occurrences). One participant responded,

> *I have loosened up over the years. I used to need a script to teach and now I barely need to look at notes. I teach very informally, preferring to let the students explore search tools on their own rather than spend a ton of time demonstrating them. [...]* ***I no longer see information as black and white*** *(popular vs. scholarly, for example), but* ***see all information as potentially useful****. [my emphasis]*

Another respondent similarly linked their increased flexibility and spontaneity to an appreciation for the uncertainties that often arise during the research process:

> *Teaching is so much more organic now. I used to worry about "making a mistake." Now I embrace the chaos, which helps students get a realistic experience of the challenges to research.*

The open-ended and dynamic nature of information seeking and use often goes hand-in-hand with a more collaborative relationship with students, in which the librarian and the students work together and learn from one another. As another participant stated,

> *There's a give and take to learning and I find that the information I give is retained better if I'm open to learning from the students as well.*

Comments like these about flexibility, active learning, and collaboration with students also reflect a focus on process over product. As one librarian expressed,

> *Over the years, I've come to focus more on **processes rather than products**. [...] I want to spend my time with students talking about the research process […] and less about how to use database interfaces. I also no longer spend time teaching them to craft a search string; rather I spend time **asking them to analyze** the results they get from a search and think about how the results inform their next steps. Do they need to do a different search with different terms? Do the results help them narrow in their research question? Do the results suggest a perspective on their topic that they had not previously considered? I also see what I do as **planting a seed**, recognizing that students won't necessarily become proficient in research processes after one or two library sessions.* [my emphasis]

This respondent, like others, stressed the importance of process and of applying metacognition to by analyzing search results and strategies and by asking critical questions about the process. With this attention to process, the librarian also recognizes the long-term nature of learning and thus understands their work as a starting point, 'planting a seed' for learning that will continue.

The metaphor 'planting a seed' suggests an attitude of 'less is more' that was evident in three other respondents' comments. One individual indicated,

> *I have... embraced more of a cyclical or spiral style curriculum where I don't feel the need to cram every concept into one "library day", rather we can revisit core ideas throughout a student's academic career.*

This description implies a flexible approach to teaching and learning that goes hand in hand with a holistic view of learning as an ongoing process that is unconfined by the number of minutes that a librarian or other teacher spends with students in a class session.

Participants who described their teaching in terms of flexibility and experimentation sometimes simultaneously expressed increased confidence in their teaching (three co-occurrences). This is implied in comments like this one:

> *I'm much more willing to experiment and branch out in my instruction, rather than doing things the way I was taught to do them or have always done them.*

The willingness to experiment requires loosening control and predictability over precisely what will happen during a class interaction. This increased comfort with uncertainty implies a greater confidence in one's ability to adapt and to respond in the moment and an interest in teaching effectively. This is again in line with Galoozis' (2019) findings that librarians who adopted new instructional practices experienced a sense of autonomy in the classroom (p. 1041), possessed a long-term view of their own teaching practices and goals (p. 1042), and were proactive in responding to 'the emotions and emotional labor involved in learning about, reflecting on, and incorporating new teaching practices' (p. 1043).

5.10 Changes in view of instructional role: Emerging themes

Perhaps unsurprisingly, participants' descriptions of their instructional roles and of their approaches to IL instruction frequently overlapped, though the percentage of respondents who indicated that their views of their instructional roles had changed (67.82%, or 59) was less than that of those who stated that their views of their instructional approaches had changed (92 %, or 80). Emergent themes from participants' descriptions of their instructional roles provide further insight into how participants did or did not view their positions and relationships to others with whom they interact in teaching environments.

Of those who indicated that their views of their instructional role had not changed during their librarian career (18.4%, or 16), a slight majority (56.25%, or 9) did not provide further commentary on their responses. However, a large percentage of these respondents (43.75%, or 7) indicated that they had always viewed instruction as key to their work and that their view of their instructional role therefore had not fundamentally changed. As one participant stated,

> *Not really, my perception as a teacher has always been at the fore-font and a reason why I chose to be an academic librarian.*

Another participant related their long-held views of their teaching role and of teaching concepts over tools, both of which have persisted despite changes in professional terminology and discourse:

> *As I began in the library profession 30 years ago, it was called bibliographic instruction. Now it is information literacy. At both times, there were many articles etc. touting a 'new' focus on teaching concepts rather than tools. I was a convert from the beginning...teach concepts. I am teaching students how to find/organize/use information for the rest of their lives. That has remained unchanged.*

This participant's understanding that their teaching over time has consistently concentrated on conceptual understandings (which are often associated with transferable critical thinking skills) is in line with Ariew's (2014) description of IL's long history of focusing on lifelong learning and critical thinking.

Two participants who indicated that their views of their instructional roles remained unchanged commented on the challenges of building meaningful teaching partnerships, being seen as equals to teaching faculty, and frustration with not feeling recognized for their teaching roles. This is evident in the following responses:

> *No, I have always needed to advocate to faculty and negotiate the very real limitations of autonomy related to our role.*

> *Not really. Librarians as instructors are valued by some faculty and administrators and definitely not by others. We just keep struggling to connect with those who do and shake our heads at the rest.*

A similar view was shared by a respondent who answered both Yes and No:

> *I go back and forth between feeling like a guest in someone else's classroom with little autonomy and a professional in my own right who can set standards for how and what I will teach.*

This ambivalence points to the varied roles that librarians play in large part because of their relationships to teaching faculty and to students. Role ambiguity and role conflict again are relevant here, as is evident again in both 'No' and 'Yes and No' responses to the question about one's teaching roles.

5.11 Intersections between instructional approach and role

The results of this survey suggest that participants' views of their instructional roles are frequently interconnected with their approaches to IL instruction. Though participants' descriptions of their instructional roles often resembled their responses to the previous survey question about their views of and approaches to IL instruction, the percentage of respondents who indicated that their views of their instructional roles had changed 67.82% (59) was less than that of those who stated that their views of their instructional approaches had changed (92%, or 80). As these numbers demonstrate, descriptions of participants' teaching roles, when compared to those of their instructional approach, varied more. This greater range of responses suggests that teaching identity (and professional identity more broadly) is less easily defined and less quick to change than are their views of their instructional approaches. (Walter's (2008) librarian interviews similarly suggest the difficulty of defining professional and teacher identity.) Employing new teaching strategies or approaches is likely to be more common and more immediate than is shifting one's view of their professional identity.

The range of responses and the number of non-responses to the question about instructional roles also suggests that some participants experience uncertainty or ambivalence about their instructional roles and how to define or describe them. This is in keeping with the previously discussed findings of Walter (2008), McKinney & Wheeler (2015), Julien & Pecoskie (2009), and Austin & Bhandol (2013), all of whom found that librarians' frequently expressed conflict, ambivalence, or a sense of lacking legitimacy in relation to their teaching roles and identities. Some respondents who have developed new teaching approaches do not necessarily view these changes as having clear implications for their broader teaching role.

5.12 Identification as a teacher

Many participants expressed great enthusiasm about their teacher roles and clearly saw those roles as central aspects of their professional identities and of their everyday work. (Again, of the 71.26% (62) who identified as teachers, 25.81% (16) expressed noticeable enthusiasm about their teaching role.) The following statement is characteristic of such expressions of enthusiasm:

> *I do! It [teaching] is a primary part of my identity as a librarian, as I have always been in roles that required teaching (in the classroom, online, at the reference desk, etc.).*

Others saw their instructional work as a key part of their library work but were uncertain about the label of 'teacher'. (Again, 13.79% (12) expressed ambivalence with the term 'teacher'.) This ambivalence is evident in comments like these:

> *I identify primarily as a librarian, only secondarily as a teacher.*

> *The title is difficult, I certainly feel that I am an educator and faculty in the academic environment - "teacher" "instructor" "professor" - each indicating a sort of delivery or depository relationships - I'm wishy-washy about.*

A small but notable number of participants (13.79%, or 12) clearly did not identify as teachers. Over half of these individuals (58.33%, or 7) stated that they instead identified as a librarian, thereby implying that they viewed their professional identities as mutually exclusive.

Participants' (non)identification with the term 'teacher' show that while most (71.26%, or 62) did perceive themselves as occupying this role, many (18.39%) expressed some degree of ambivalence about the term, with twelve individuals emphasizing their ambivalence about the term (as reflected in the 'It's complicated' category) and four individuals who identified as teachers qualifying this statement with reservations. It is likely that a higher percentage of the participants experience ambivalence about identifying as a 'teacher': the survey did not ask respondents whether they had uncertainty about the label of 'teacher'. The phrasing of the survey question likely encouraged many participants to respond with a simple 'yes' or 'no' answer instead of expressing ambivalence. A more nuanced survey item, such as a Likert scale on which participants could rate their level of identification with the term 'teacher', would have better enabled fuller insight into participants' perceptions.

5.13 In summary

Teaching and teacher development are at once personal and collective experiences that are influenced by the interplay of a range of individual and environmental factors. Each of this study's participants has their own unique experiences and contexts in relation to teaching and learning, while also sharing similar experiences and views about their pedagogical work and roles.

Many participants expressed great enthusiasm for and valuing of teaching in their responses to various survey questions, regardless of whether they identified with the label of 'teacher' or had ambivalence about the term. Many participants also expressed a growing sense of confidence and agency over time, an increased comfort with and interest in approaching teaching and learning as a collaborative effort of librarians, students, and other educators.

Some respondents expressed frustrations with barriers to meaningful instructional work. These obstacles, which can contribute to a sense of paralysis and burnout, also appear to be better managed and constructively responded to when recognizing environmental factors and the degrees to which those conditions are in or beyond one's control. Research on an ecological view of agency suggests that this acknowledgement can help teachers (and I would argue teaching librarians) identify constructive ways to experience agency and thus respond to instructional constraints with flexibility and an appreciation of their expertise and strengths. This again points to the value of an ecological view of teacher agency (Priestley et al., 2015; Biesta & Tedder, 2007) and of recognizing the affective dimensions of teaching (Galoozis, 2019). With this appreciation of the many internal and external factors that influence teaching, librarians may be better positioned individually and collectively to experience a sense of agency and to act upon it, to recognize and attend to signs of burnout, to experiment with new teaching practices, and to experience a fuller engagement with teaching.

6. Limitations

While this study and its findings provide insight into many instruction librarians' experiences and perceptions of their teaching and its development over time, it is also important to recognize the limitations of this research. First, only librarians who subscribe to and read the ACRL Information Literacy Instruction (ILI) listserv and who chose to complete the survey are represented in the results. These individuals are more likely than a random sample of academic instruction librarians to have interest in and enthusiasm about their instructional work. They are also more inclined to have time to engage in reflection about their teaching. Most respondents are also librarians from the United States and Canada. In addition, the very strengths of relying on individual's perceptions and memories – offering offer insight into people's experiences, thoughts and beliefs, and emotions – also come with limitations. Memories are imperfect and selective and change across contexts. Data gathered through self-reporting and data captured only at one moment in time will inevitably exclude or minimize certain phenomena and perspectives while foregrounding others.

As suggested previously, another limitation of the survey design is the use of the closed question 'Do you identify as a teacher?' The phrasing of this question may have led many participants to respond with a 'yes' or 'no' answer that did not accurately reflect the complexity of their thinking. Revising this survey item by asking participants to rate on a Likert scale the degree to which they identify as a teacher might better capture the variations in respondents' teacher identity.

Also importantly, the survey's emergent themes reflect issues and concepts that participants articulated independently. Given the limited scope and depth of the survey, these themes provide a window into aspects of the participants' instructional experiences that they view as important. At the same time, many participants might relate to a given theme without expressing this in their responses. The number of participant responses associated with each emergent theme therefore is not a complete representation of the number of participants for whom that theme may be relevant.

7. Conclusion

This study offers one snapshot into librarians' experiences and perceptions of their instructional work and roles and how these may change over time, whether due to individual experience or to broader changes in academic librarianship and higher education. The results have implications for library professional development, librarian communities of practice, curricula for future librarians, and practices for library instruction programs and departments. This research may be particularly beneficial for library instruction departments, programs, and communities of practice, as they establish practices that prevent burnout and foster supportive environments in which librarians are recognized for their instructional work and empowered to exercise agency in their teaching roles. This research may also contribute to understandings of teacher development more broadly.

Perhaps most notable is that an ecological view of agency provides a constructive lens through which to appreciate environmental factors that influence librarians' instructional work. This perspective may help librarians to critically examine more traditional service models of librarianship that sometimes reinforce a deferential stance toward faculty that limits librarians' potential to cultivate meaningful teaching partnerships (Julien & Pecoskie, 2009; Christiansen et al., 2005). An acknowledgement of agency as involving numerous interacting agents within a dynamic environment may help librarians strengthen their trust in their own expertise and thus

feel more confident to approach teaching with flexibility and a collaborative spirit, while simultaneously honoring their own pedagogical values and goals.

Engaging deliberately with the ecological view of teacher agency, librarians, library educators, and library administrators might explore the implications of research on teacher agency for librarians as individual teachers and as a collective. Communities of practice and professional development offerings through which librarians recognize and value their own and their colleagues' ongoing development as educators could help to prevent and to address burnout among instruction librarians, which frequently can be attributed largely to role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload (Shupe & Pung, 2011).

Longitudinal studies would provide fuller insight into librarians' development as teachers that is not possible through a one-time survey like the one that was the object of this study. Given the importance of contextual and structural factors and interpersonal relationships to librarians' individual and shared teaching experiences, future research could examine more closely librarians' experiences and conceptions of teacher agency from an ecological perspective of teacher agency. Further investigations could also examine more closely other aspects of teaching such as the role of institution type and institutional culture in one's teaching.

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