The Burgeoning Information Universe: Implication for Social Work Education and Practice

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Hunter College Libraries, City University of New York

Why Does this Matter?

The information universe is fierce and ubiquitous, replete with a 24 hour news cycle, trolls, bots, ‘fake news’, phishing, predatory publishing, and paywalls. The volume of information accelerates exponentially. Technologies evolve, disciplines advance, and resources change. 

Bausman & Ward, 2015

Information Literacy Defined:

“... (a) set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning.”


Critical Information Literacy Defined:

“...takes into consideration the social, political, economic, and corporate systems that have power and influence over information production, dissemination, access, and consumption.”


Information Literate Social Workers:

Possess the capacity to identify the need for new information and effectively traverse the information universe to discover & evaluate the available resources and to ethically integrate new knowledge into practice.

Bausman & Ward, 2015
Our Research on Information Literacy & Social Work Education

2015

- Evolution of Information Literacy Instruction program in MSW program;
- Yearly survey tracked student knowledge of and engagement with Library services;
- Over three years:
  - instruction was increased;
  - class content moved from procedural to contextual;
  - linked to online guide.
- Year Three survey participants showed a moderate, statistically significant increase in engagement with Library services.

2016

The Social Work Librarian and Information Literacy Instruction: A Report on a National Survey in the United States
Margaret Bausman & Sarah Laleman Ward

| Perception: incoming student are IL ready* | 7% |
| Perception: out-going graduate are IL ready* | 53% |

*Agree and strongly agree

Who Cares?
Graded Skills Assessment 11%
Ungraded Skills Assessment 27%

5 or fewer instruction classes per semester 52%

PERCEPTION vs ASSESSMENT
What do we really know?
ON-GOING QUALITATIVE STUDY

Topic:
- Follow up to 2016 quantitative survey of social work librarians in the US
- Inquiry into instruction and research consultative practices in MSW granting institutions.

Cohort:
- Recruited from approximately 350 academic social work librarians at 301 accredited MSW programs in the US
- N=27

Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>n=27</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MLIS</td>
<td>48%</td>
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<tr>
<td>MLIS &amp; 2ND MA</td>
<td>41%</td>
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<tr>
<td>MLIS &amp; PHD</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO ANSWER</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>FACULTY STATUS</td>
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<tr>
<td>NO FACULTY STATUS</td>
<td>44%</td>
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<tr>
<td>INSTRUCTION</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2019

METHODS

Phone interviews:
- Qualitative protocol including 30 questions about
  (a) information literacy instruction
    - in the classroom
    - during one-on-one research consultations
  (b) institutional culture around information literacy and
    librarian status/involvement
- Professional transcription

Current state of the project:
- Coding
  (a) Four coders identifying themes, refining, categorizing, and drawing out quantitative data

Next steps:
- Continue coding and refining categories
- Analysis of quantitative data
- Submit for publication
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Initial trends emerging from thematic coding of 27 interviews suggests a high need for IL instruction among MSW students and the central role of instructor-librarian partnership in meeting those needs.

**MSW STUDENTS**
- MSW students are highly motivated and mission driven
- MSW students often lack a graduate level of information literacy (IL) skills
- Due to the interdisciplinary nature of social work, practitioners benefit from a comprehensive IL skill set

**INSTRUCTOR-LIBRARIAN PARTNERSHIP**
Collaboration promotes:
- Invitation for classroom instruction
- Advocacy for integration of IL instruction into curriculum
- Cultivation of librarians as allies for students

**Who Cares?**
Sources
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Introduction

Completed Research

Current Project

Initial Findings

Professional Standards

Council on Social Work Education

Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Information Literacy

NASW

Critical Information Literacy

Value: Competence

Ethical Responsibility: Competence

Anti-oppressive Pedagogy

Value: Social Justice

Who Cares?

….know the principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and culturally informed and ethical approaches to building knowledge…:
understand that evidence that informs practice derives from multi-disciplinary sources and multiple ways of knowing…"

CSWE Educational Policy & Accreditation Standards, Competency 4

“….become and remain proficient in professional practice…; critically examine and keep current with emerging knowledge…; routinely review the professional literature…”

NASW Ethical Standard 4.01b

Sources

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<th>Current Project</th>
<th>Initial Findings</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
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<td><strong>Module 1</strong></td>
<td>711 HBSE I (Fall Semester)</td>
<td>The Library as Place, Resources, &amp; Services</td>
<td>Online Self-Assessment Exercise</td>
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<td>Module 2</td>
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<td>Module 3</td>
<td>751 Research I (Fall Semester)</td>
<td>Advanced Database Search Strategies for Social Work Research</td>
<td>Linked to position paper/ advocacy memo</td>
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Each module is mapped to EPAS Practice Behaviors, ACRL Competencies, and explicit learning objectives.

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**Social Work Librarians are eager to partner with social work instructors to create and tailor curriculum at the local level.**

- **What you can do:**
  1. **Reach out** to your social work librarian;  
  2. **Advocate** for librarian participation on your curriculum committee;  
  3. **Nurture** an active relationship among both parties.
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Introduction

References


