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Why Would I Share?
Exploring a Culture of Sharing and Collaboration in Canadian Academic Library Instruction

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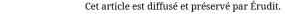
Résumé de l'article

Les cultures de partage et de collaboration sont essentielles pour soutenir les pratiques d'enseignement, mais il existe peu de littérature sur la manière dont ces cultures sont nourries avec succès dans les bibliothèques. Dans cet article, j'explore les cultures de partage et de collaboration entre les bibliothécaires expert.e.s en formation des bibliothèques universitaires canadiennes. Je rends compte d'une série d'entretiens semi-structurés (n=14) que j'ai menés avec des bibliothécaires qui soutiennent ou assurent la formation en maîtrise de l'information dans leurs établissements. Les données d'entrevue ont été analysées utilisant une approche d'analyse thématique (Braun et Clark 2022) et codées dans NVivo. J'explore les obstacles et les soutiens au partage et à la collaboration documentés dans les entrevues. Parmi les obstacles on peut citer a) les silos pédagogiques causés par le modèle de liaison ; (b) un manque de confiance dans le partage de son enseignement avec ses collègues ; (c) le manque de priorisation de l'enseignement dans les établissements ; et (d) le temps restreint pour s'impliquer dans des projets collaboratifs. Les soutiens au partage et à la collaboration comprennent (a) l'intentionnalité dans le développement et l'enrichissement de relations personnelles, (b) l'élaboration d'une structure permettant le partage et (c) le fait de consacrer du temps au travail collaboratif. Partant de ces résultats, des moyens pratiques de partage et de collaboration qui peuvent être cultivés dans les bibliothèques seront explorés.

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Why Would I Share? Exploring a Culture of Sharing and Collaboration in Canadian Academic Library Instruction

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ABSTRACT

Cultures of sharing and collaboration are essential to supporting instruction practices, yet there is limited literature on how these cultures are successfully cultivated in libraries. In this paper, I explore cultures of sharing and collaboration among instruction librarians in Canadian academic libraries. I report on a series of semi-structured interviews (n=14) I conducted with librarians who support or provide information literacy at their institutions. The interview data was reviewed using a thematic analysis approach (Braun and Clark 2022) and coded in NVivo. I explore the barriers and supports to sharing and collaboration as documented in the interviews. Barriers include a) instructional silos caused by the liaison model; (b) a lack of trust in sharing one's teaching with colleagues; (c) the lack of prioritizing instruction in institutions; and (d) limited time to engage in collaborative work. The supports for sharing and collaboration include (a) intentionally building personal relationships, (b) developing a structure for sharing, and (c) having dedicated time for collaborative work. Based on these findings, practical ways sharing and collaboration can be cultivated in libraries will be explored.

Keywords: academic libraries · collaboration · library instruction · sharing

RÉSUMÉ

Les cultures de partage et de collaboration sont essentielles pour soutenir les pratiques d'enseignement, mais il existe peu de littérature sur la manière dont ces cultures sont nourries avec succès dans les bibliothèques. Dans cet article, j'explore les cultures de partage et de collaboration entre les bibliothécaires expert.e.s en formation des bibliothèques universitaires canadiennes. Je rends compte d'une série d'entretiens semi-structurés (n=14) que j'ai menés avec des bibliothécaires qui soutiennent ou assurent la formation en maîtrise de l'information dans leurs établissements. Les données d'entrevue ont été analysées utilisant une approche d'analyse thématique (Braun et Clark 2022) et codées dans NVivo. J'explore les obstacles et les soutiens au partage et à la collaboration documentés dans les entrevues. Parmi les obstacles on peut citer a) les silos pédagogiques causés par le modèle de liaison ; (b) un manque de confiance dans le partage de son enseignement avec ses collègues ; (c) le manque de priorisation de l'enseignement dans

les établissements ; et (d) le temps restreint pour s'impliquer dans des projets collaboratifs. Les soutiens au partage et à la collaboration comprennent (a) l'intentionnalité dans le développement et l'enrichissement de relations personnelles, (b) l'élaboration d'une structure permettant le partage et (c) le fait de consacrer du temps au travail collaboratif. Partant de ces résultats, des moyens pratiques de partage et de collaboration qui peuvent être cultivés dans les bibliothèques seront explorés.

Mots-clés : bibliothèques universitaires · collaboration · enseignement en bibliothèque · partage

THE increasingly complex information worlds of students have permeated discussions around information literacy instruction. Terms like disinformation, misinformation, and malinformation have moved past the library lexicon to become part of the larger societal conversation. The skills that students must develop to be information literate today continue to grow and require instruction that is more nuanced-instruction that is not easily confined to stand-alone library instruction sessions or the expertise of just one person. As today's challenges require new ways of thinking about and questioning information (Fister 2022), collaboration and sharing among librarians who teach are needed to holistically develop students' information literacy skills.

The need to share ideas and expertise and collaborate in instruction speaks to why we do information literacy instruction: supporting student learning. Within the scope of information literacy instruction, there are numerous examples of library collaborations to strengthen student learning including working with faculty to design assignments (Wishkoski, Lundstrom, and Davis 2019); to create modules (Feekery et al. 2021); to engage in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) research (McClurg, MacMillan, and Chick 2019); and to undergo lesson study (Watson et al. 2013). These collaborations with colleagues outside the library are important, but internal librarian collaborations are less discussed and also essential. Cultures of sharing and collaboration among librarians not only support student learning, but also support and strengthen librarian teaching as well.

There are numerous benefits to librarians who engage in sharing and collaborative work. LIS scholars have written about the importance of sharing insights and learning from and with colleagues through activities like teaching observations, mentorship, and developing communities of practice (Booth 2011; Hess 2018). These activities are all part of being a reflective practitioner and help librarians improve as instructors. Furthermore, opportunities to discuss teaching beliefs, approaches, and pedagogies allow librarians to be "more authentic in the classroom" (Moeller 2020, 247).

However, despite this documented value of collaboration, it is often not prioritized in academic libraries where traditional liaison models create siloed work (Phillips 2016; Eskridge and Carroll 2020). In other words, although teaching is central to the work so many of us do in libraries, we often go about it alone. The place of librarians' teaching is often in isolation from rather than in collaboration with other librarians. Thus, isolated instruction practices not only affect the growth of librarians as instructors, but also impacts student learning.

In this paper, I examine cultures of sharing and collaboration among instruction librarians in Canadian academic libraries. I report on a series of interviews I conducted with academic librarians who support or provide information literacy instruction at their institutions. In conducting these interviews, my central questions were:

- What are barriers to collaboration and creating a culture of sharing?
- What factors foster a culture of sharing among library instructors?
- What might collaboration and sharing look like in library instruction?

I explore the first two questions of my research project to establish the current place of sharing and collaboration in librarians' teaching by reviewing the barriers and supports to these practices as documented in the interviews. Based on these findings, I then offer meaningful and practical ways sharing and collaboration can be cultivated in libraries.

Benefits of Sharing in Higher Education

In the literature on sharing in organizations, many scholars have focused on knowledge sharing. De Long and Fahey (2000) define knowledge as "a product of human reflection and experience. Dependent on context, knowledge is a resource that is always located in an individual or a collective, or embedded in a routine or processes" (114). They also state "that knowledge is regularly created and embedded in routines, systems, and tools" (114) and that "cultures that explicitly favor knowledge sharing over knowledge acquisition will create a context for interaction that is more favorable to leveraging knowledge" (121).

In the context of faculty sharing in higher education, the benefits of collaboration and sharing include improving one's instructional practice. Fullwood and Rowley (2017) discuss knowledge sharing factors of UK academics and note that "sharing best practices in teaching would enhance the quality of teaching and programme design" (13). Faculty also report feeling isolated in their teaching and therefore find that opportunities to collaboratively teach as well as talk about their teaching are valuable (Hendry et al. 2021; Stevenson et al. 2005). Faculty see exposure to different

perspectives and greater interprofessional understanding as benefits to sharing and collaboration (Maloney et al. 2013). Furthermore, the process of talking about teaching or "the act of verbalising beliefs for supportive colleagues, described as a kind of articulated introspection, often helped faculty clarify, and redirect, their instructional approaches" (Benbow, Lee, and Hora 2021, 829). Casual conversations with colleagues were valued by faculty as they provided an opportunity to learn about new teaching resources and ideas, leading to greater self-reflection. Faculty also reflected on their teaching practices and enhanced their learning by engaging in teaching observations of peers (Pataraia et al. 2015). Sharing with colleagues within one's own institution is also preferred for more personal reasons. Santosh and Panda (2016) found that faculty preferred sharing with their colleagues rather than broad networks due to a "latent fear of external scrutiny" (260).

The benefits of sharing among librarians are similar to those of faculty. Atkinson (2018) names several advantages of collaborative work in academic libraries: less duplication of effort; more opportunities to learn from colleagues, which increases enthusiasm and expertise; and "development of leadership capabilities, new professional expertise, and confidence" (224). Hess (2018) offers that in addition to personal reflection, sharing insights with colleagues is a valuable way one's teaching transformation occurs. In a survey of the "perspective transformation" of librarians as educators, librarians cited students followed by other librarians as the top two influences on their "transformation process" (64). Interestingly, Hess notes that in qualitative interviews, librarians with greater work experience tend to speak more to how students and faculty influenced their teaching identities "and did not speak as much to the role that their collegial relationships with other librarians in forming these teaching identities, and these relationships seemed to be less important" (67). Some librarians shared that relationships with colleagues in fact limited their development and were competitive. Hess offers that for newer librarians, relationships with colleagues may be more valuable in understanding the instructional norms, while for librarians with some experience, external relationships may provide greater reflection.

Factors Supporting and Hindering Sharing and Collaboration

According to scholars, trust is a crucial factor in supporting a culture of sharing in both K–12 and higher education contexts (Lovett 2020; Saunders and Corning 2020). Trust is also key to creating strong co-teaching relationships (Matlin and Carr 2014); conversely, a lack of trust among colleagues creates a barrier to collegial work and sharing and makes colleagues feel vulnerable from sharing certain aspects of their teaching (Lovett 2020.) Ahmed, Ashraf, and Sheikh (2020) found that effective

leadership and organizational support create trust among library staff and inspires collaborative work, leading people to "increase their knowledge as well as lead them towards new ideas" (149). Several scholars have also highlighted the need for leadership to recognize the importance of sharing. Tan (2016) found that "knowledge sharing occurs only when its rewards exceed its costs" and to encourage knowledge sharing in universities, leadership needs to align "the university's reward schemes to accurately account for the knowledge contribution of members" (538). Ramayah, Yeap, and Ignatius (2013) focused on factors that enhance knowledge sharing among academics in higher education institutions in Malaysia and established that, in addition to institutional recognition (rewards, incentives), "the more supportive the working environment is, the higher the chances of academicians engaging in knowledge sharing" (149).

Related to trust, Marouf (2016) found that strong collegial relationships that promote reciprocal respect increase sharing and collaboration. In their study of instruction coordinators, Douglas and Gadsby (2019) centre relationships and relational practice such as creating teams as essential to work in academic libraries. They stress the importance of leaders working to create connection and reciprocal relationships by prioritizing and recognizing efforts that support practices of "relational awareness, mutual empowerment, and meaningful connection." In their study of collaboration in libraries, Saunders and Corning (2020) found that people "needed to respect each other, trust each other, and feel valued, in order to be able to work together effectively" (464).

Time is also a principal factor for learning and sharing. In their study of middle school teachers, Collinson and Cook (2004) found that time was the most crucial aspect affecting sharing noting that "the lack of time for teacher interactions and dialogue seems to reinforce low expectations for teachers to learn from and share with colleagues" (327). In their study of faculty-librarian collaboration in Vietnamese universities, Nguyen and Tuamsuk (2020) found a "lack of time due to the high workload […] limits the establishment of relationships" (8).

Librarian Teaching in Academic Libraries

The context of librarian teaching influences the capacity of librarians to participate in sharing and collaboration. Many librarians provide information literacy instruction to students through their relationships with academic departments in their role as liaison librarians. Hoffmann and Carlisle-Johnston (2021) highlight three principles of liaison librarianships: "building relationships, anticipating and meeting needs, and drawing on specialized expertise." The liaison model is a common structure used to connect the library to faculty and academic departments and meet the research and

teaching needs of the institution. The work of liaison librarians encompasses research and reference support, information literacy teaching, and collection development centred on communication and active outreach with faculty departments (Johnson 2020). In 2008, Rodwell and Fairbairn wrote about the liaison librarian service model which, at the time, they found to be sustainable. But they acknowledged that "given the personal nature of liaison work and its demands on the individual librarian, expansion and intensification of the work raises questions about its sustainability" (122).

Over the years, the liaison model has expanded to prioritize active outreach to faculty and students, with librarians taking on more responsibilities and feeling the pressure to demonstrate their value and market their services to faculty (Johnson 2020). Kenney (2014) points out that "as demands and expectations rise, it is clear that no one liaison can do it all" (5), especially when "liaison work can be labor intensive and viewed as an add-on to an already full plate" (7). In addition to the increased workload of liaisons, instructional silos are a consequence of the liaison model. After a major review of their library's liaison program, the University of Melbourne found that as each librarian provided broad services to a school or department, it created "silos and discouraged teamwork and collaboration" (Phillips 2016, 156). Similarly, Eskridge and Carroll (2020) found that the liaison model "produce[s] a siloed effect, in which persons or groups do not share information and resources with others in the institution" (566).

In addition to the liaison model, the type of instruction librarians provide is another common feature that defines the structure of librarian teaching. Badke (2011) writes that information literacy instruction within most universities can be defined as "short term remedial" as "hosts of academic librarians perform one-shot library orientation sessions that are either generic or subject-specific" (130). There is no shortage of LIS literature discussing the one-shot instruction session. Nicholson (2016) writes that "because information literacy is developed for and taught within the neoliberal university which embraces the skills agenda, the one-shot format—a format that can result only in a superficial, skills-oriented approach—is in perfect sync with the accelerated, fragmented time of the corporate university" (30). Moeller (2020) points to how one-shot sessions are often devalued and seen to make the "'real work' of others (faculty and students) possible" (241). Pagowsky (2021) write about the "contested one-shot" stating that,

> One-shots are transactional and keep us in cycles of ineffectiveness. They cause burnout. As the antithesis of collaborative work and collective action, they perpetuate silos. It is everyone for themselves measured in quantity. There have to be other options to develop more collaborative relationships with support for different approaches to teaching and measurement. (306)

Within the confines of one-shot instruction that provides limited time with students, librarians have sought several ways to enhance information literacy instruction and student learning such as through active learning and student engagement (Walker and Pearce 2014) and critical information literacy (Tewell 2018).

The existing literature demonstrates many factors that support or hinder a culture of sharing among academics but sharing and collaboration that focuses exclusively on librarians and the context of library instruction are still not fully investigated in the literature. These gaps are areas of focus explored in my research study.

Methods

Over a period of four months, I interviewed fourteen librarians across Canada who were involved in instruction in some capacity at their institution (either someone who provides information literacy instruction or provides support in the form of coordination or management of the information literacy instruction at their institution). Librarians were recruited via email from CARL-member institutions and ranged from those with five to thirty years of professional experience. Interviews were semistructured based on a set of seventeen questions (see appendix).

I recorded the interview audio and created a transcript file. Within one to two days of each interview, I listened to the audio recording to edit each transcript for accuracy. Using a thematic analysis approach as outlined by Braun and Clark (2022), I read and reviewed transcripts multiple times before the initial phase of coding occurred. The first stage of coding was done using the comment feature in a Microsoft Word document. I then reviewed codes and restructured them to merge similar ones. Finally, I sketched a thematic map to illustrate how codes were connected. After consolidating codes, a second round of coding was completed using NVivo software. From this coding, I identified themes and subthemes and then reviewed these using the research questions of the study as a guide. In the process of planning and drafting this article, I revised the themes again. Throughout multiple phases of coding, my analysis of the barriers and supports to sharing and collaboration remained consistent. However, my focus on themes paired down to those related to my main research questions and the organization of content within each theme shifted to include the most salient ideas.

I recognize that my beliefs about teaching and learning motivate me as a researcher. The pursuit of this research project is inspired by the value I place on collaborative learning. My theoretical framework for analysis is influenced by sociocultural theory and the idea that teaching and learning are social practices in which we learn best from and with each other (Booth 2011). Understanding that I am

not a neutral participant in the research process, I worked to incorporate reflection into my practice. Before I began interviewing librarians, I surfaced my assumptions and preconceptions about what I might learn from the librarians I would interview. I did this through a process called "bracketing" where I wrote down what I expected I might hear during the interviews (Tufford and Newman 2012). I also kept a research journal throughout this project to record my thoughts on each interview, the literature I read, and my initial impressions of the work. This process of journaling enabled me to maintain a reflective practice and helped keep me on track in my research project.

Findings

In this section, I present my findings on how academic librarians conceptualized the (a) barriers to collaboration and a culture of sharing (b) the factors that foster a culture of sharing among library instructors. In the context of these interviews, sharing referred to both the materials (e.g., slides, lesson plans, etc.) that support instruction, as well as the experiences and insights of librarians.

Barriers to Sharing

According to the librarians I interviewed, the barriers to collaboration and sharing include: (a) instructional silos caused by the liaison model; (b) a lack of trust in sharing one's teaching with colleagues; (c) the lack of prioritizing instruction in their institutions; and (d) limited time to engage in collaborative work.

Instructional Silos

Many librarians cited the liaison model as a barrier to collaboration. By focusing on an individual librarian's relationship to a department, the liaison model effectively silos their work and creates uneven instruction. One librarian shared:

> We don't as a whole, I think, feel as a team and I don't know if that's just academia. Seems like you end up being very individual sometimes and very siloed and you're doing your thing and you don't even think to collaborate. It's not on your radar, that's been my impression […] that people are like— "Oh, you know I didn't think to reach out to you." Well, why not? If we're both doing a similar thing, it makes sense to me. So, it's just that if you've never had that environment, then you don't know what you're missing.

When instruction is characterized by individual relationships to departments, there is little connection to other liaison areas and other colleagues. When a librarian is singularly responsible for providing instruction to a specific discipline, it does not create natural opportunities to collaborate or co-teach. Librarians may also be inclined to think that their instruction is only relevant to their specific area and

therefore see little value in sharing their work with others. One librarian highlighted the ingrained view of instruction as a solo practice:

> I really do think that [the] liaison model so heavily relies on your sort of individual approach to everything. You know, your individual approach to marketing your own services and your individual relationships to faculty. […] I think it's a big cultural shift to start thinking about our role as a department and as a library and not just the individual.

According to the interviewees, the liaison model creates a dynamic in which librarians feel that everything—their successes and failures—depends on them. This focus on individual teaching creates an environment that fosters an isolated teaching practice.

The librarians also noted that some liaison areas had a greater teaching demand than others, which leads to uneven teaching loads:

> It's very uneven in the distribution of who's teaching and how much different individuals are teaching. So, if one person is completely overwhelmed and teaching a huge amount, they're not necessarily updating their slide deck or double checking to make sure they're using fun technology […]. Whereas other people teach much less, and so they have a lot of time to put together interactive sessions or really tailor what's going on.

As a result, those who are doing the most teaching often do not have the time for reflection or may not have time to keep their teaching materials current. One librarian stated that when an individual is stretched with work, "You cannot expect that person to still be able to offer the same […] quality and quantity of teaching." A few librarians noted their departments were working to make teaching loads more even, although they also acknowledged this was a challenging task.

The feeling that your work might not be worth sharing can be heightened by limited exposure to what others around you are doing. One librarian commented that "often in those liaison roles, it's hard to sort of know-how could I collaborate with somebody on something and who would be the audience for it?" Another librarian remarked that "even as a person who kind of oversees the program, I don't really know what folks are doing in terms of their actual session creation, relationship building, any of those kinds of things." Professional isolation was a concern for one librarian who noted that their institution has a few librarians "who are relatively new and they're not part of a unit, and so they don't really have a team, they don't really report to anyone. They're doing instruction but they're kind of doing it in isolation" and they wondered "how can you be collaborative if you're new and you started a job, during a pandemic, and you don't even have colleagues in your team?"

The individual nature of instruction can also be closely tied to one-shot instruction, which librarians noted is the most prominent type of instruction within their library systems. The librarians also cited one-shots as one of the instructional challenges they face at their institutions, as it leaves them limited with what they can

teach, and provides them with little opportunity to try new approaches to instruction or explore topics they deem important, such as critical informational literacy. One librarian shared "it's all the challenges we know about the one-shot: time constraints, faculty expectations, lack of assessment. How much can you really do in 50 minutes that's meaningful and not skills based that goes a bit beyond the [information literacy] framework [and covers] critical literacy skills?" Another librarian remarked how one-shot instruction not only alters librarians' teaching practice, but how they may view teaching altogether: "you've only got these 45 minutes, so that really changes the way that we teach, and I think that it changes the way we think about teaching." Librarians saw a value in being embedded across student programs and being able to assess their teaching for student learning. However, they feel pressure to provide "quick, procedural orientations" instead of "more abstract or theoretical" exploration of topics. Instruction crammed into a short session offers limited opportunities for librarians to consider their individual instruction let alone where they may work together and what deeper concepts they might explore with students.

Lack of Trust

According to the interviewees, a lack of trust can be a significant barrier to sharing and collaboration. Fear of judgement, a lack of confidence in one's teaching, and a sense of competition with colleagues can contribute to a lack of trust among librarians, and these feelings of judgement can happen both with colleagues and with other faculty members. Librarians commented on instances when their colleagues have shared with them while expressing fear of judgement, including explicitly stating "Don't judge me!" Other librarians mentioned colleagues questioning what professors would say if they tried something new in their teaching, or feeling that their colleagues are going to critique their work. One interviewee described this anticipation of criticism: "People are going to look at and go, 'Why are they doing that? That's a terrible way to approach teaching,' not knowing that this could be the start of a good conversation." This librarian highlighted how assumptions around receiving criticism can block collegial conversations. Another librarian noted, "I don't think people are necessarily super protective or secretive about their work and their teaching. But maybe people are hesitant to put themselves out there and put their work out there, because they don't want to be judged." Moreover, the interviewees described witnessing hesitancy to share with colleagues based on fear or judgement even within collegial and collaborative cultures. One librarian who described their work by saying, "We tend to just be really collaborative and work together," also observed that no one signed up to participate in a peer observation opportunity after the initial enthusiasm waned: "Everyone said 'I don't have time,' but I think it had a lot to do with just that pressure of knowing your colleague is there, watching you

and making notes." As this interviewee described, some librarians feel that allowing themselves to be observed opens them up to potential criticism in an otherwise collegial environment.

Another librarian framed this discomfort within the context of vulnerability: "[Other colleagues might think] I don't really want to share my slides with you, if you think [it will] put myself in a vulnerable position, so you can criticize my slides." The same librarian also noted that believing your work is worth sharing with others has a "level of vulnerability where you're saying, 'I think this is good stuff, do other people want to use it?'" They put in simply: "When I know and I'm confident about my expertise in a topic, I'm going to share it. If I'm not confident and I don't think that I know enough and I think that people are going to look at it like, 'Really who are you to tell me about that,' I won't." According to another interviewee, this vulnerability is directly related to confidence:

> People don't feel very confident in their teaching skills, and I think that makes them reluctant to share their materials or to share about their teaching because they maybe feel like they're going to be judged. They feel like they're not good enough.

A consequence of librarians avoiding feedback, because it might be negative, is that it shields them from any positive insights that can help to bolster confidence; as Hendry et al. (2021) demonstrated, positive comments from colleagues about one's teaching practice can help support and strengthen teaching confidence. A few librarians noted the importance of framing teaching observations around self-improvement which one librarian summed up nicely, "you're doing the observing to get ideas for yourself, you're not there to critique people."

The interviewed librarians also considered the potential for feelings of competition with their colleagues. One librarian mused about the possibility of a colleague doing something innovative and being less inclined to share with others as a result—especially if they are trying to make a name for themselves early in their career or if they are in a contract position. Another librarian shared that others can be defensive trying to "carve out their expertise" and added, "I would hope it's not, but I think there's also the possibility [that] it could be jealousy." In the context of siloed instruction, it is understandable that some librarians may want to keep their expertise, to put it colloquially, close to their chests. When individual rather than collective work is prioritized, it creates the groundwork for competition among librarians and can fuel the desire to demonstrate the uniqueness of individual work.

Collectively, these factors—fear of judgment, feeling vulnerable, lack of confidence around teaching, and competition—all contributed to a lack of trust both in the librarians themselves and in their colleagues. For some librarians, a lack of trust in colleagues was highly individual: "It's tied to the individual and how they feel

about how they connect with their own work […] and their confidence in sharing that with others and whether or not they can enter into that [...] in a non-judgmental way." For others, a lack of trust had to do with eroded trust within the organization that stemmed from administration: "[If there's] a culture of distrust or discontent or [if] there are real fundamental challenges with communication, I think all those things can really damage that culture of sharing."

Lack of Organizational Priority for Instruction

Many librarians noted that a lack of a clear, shared vision for instruction is a barrier to sharing and collaboration. One librarian commented, "I wouldn't say there's a [sharing] culture. They're not working toward a common goal, there's not a shared understanding of what we're doing." Collaborating with others can be difficult when there is no collective focus on learning objectives or institutional priorities. Finding shared instructional objectives as well as interests and practices can make collaboration more purposeful. One librarian spoke about a desire to build more meaningful collaborations. They recalled a past co-teaching experience that "just felt like our collaboration was sort of, you take these slides, I'll take these slides." They noted it was not an organic collaboration but rather "just like regular teaching but with somebody else." Another librarian shared that in instances where people have natural overlap in content areas, there is more collaboration. In addition, they offered that when instruction is based on a broader domain (e.g., social sciences), there can be more of a team approach to instruction, as a few librarians can be responsible for that area rather than solely responsible for their own liaison area. Establishing the instructional priorities and vision for the organization can help to create purposeful goals for sharing and collaboration. It also helps librarians decide what to prioritize in their work and create space and time for them to collaborate more meaningfully on instruction-related projects.

The librarians also commented that, without an understanding about the value of sharing and collaboration, their colleagues have little incentive to share with others: "I think the biggest barrier [to sharing] is a combination of fear and a lack of benefit. [Colleagues wonder] What do I get out of it if I put myself out there?" This question— what is the worth of sharing? —was echoed by another librarian who noted that they have a few colleagues who wonder about the value of instruction. According to this interviewee, their colleagues think, "Why should I bother doing this? It doesn't add to my performance evaluation, I don't add [instruction sessions] to my CV, I could get far more credit if I did a conference session or something else." As these librarians highlight, a lack of recognition for instruction can be a barrier to sharing. Although not all librarians cited this as a barrier to sharing, all the interviewed librarians indicated that there was no formal recognition of teaching at their institutions. One

librarian reflected that "[instruction is] a huge component of my time and I can't really do much else at some points of the year and I don't always feel like it gets acknowledged."

Some librarians noted that instruction might be acknowledged in their annual reporting processes. One librarian commented that because instruction is a regular part of their job, outside of an annual review process it would not be recognized. They added that even then, it might only get recognized "if in the event that maybe you did something that was a little bit exceptional" and new. A few librarians mentioned the potential for librarians to be nominated for institutional awards, but none of these awards were exclusively focused on instruction. One librarian remarked they were sparked to think about how instruction could be recognized within their libraries and how their department could take the lead on this initiative. However, for most librarians, a lack of recognition around instruction seemed so commonplace, it did not stand out as something on which to elaborate. For example, one librarian responded "Are you kidding me? No" when asked if their library provides recognition around people's instruction. As previously noted, scholars have found that recognition and rewards are important factors to support efforts in sharing (Ramayah, Yeap, and Ignatius 2013; Tan 2016). One of the interviewed librarians astutely mentioned that recognition means different things to different people; an award or public recognition may not be what some individuals seek. Therefore, understanding what type of recognition is important to an individual and then meaningfully acknowledging their contributions is important to sustaining a culture of collaboration and sharing.

Related to wondering about the value of sharing, librarians spoke about how instruction was not considered to be important at their institutions:

> I would say that, at the library, I don't know if they value the instructional work that is going on by the librarians. So, it's not necessarily treated with a lot of respect, or maybe [they don't know] necessarily how much time and effort goes into making a good class — that it's not just popping up in front of a class and pointing at a couple of things and walking back out again.

The assumption that teaching is an easy task devalues the actual time and effort that goes into library instruction. As Pagowsky (2015) observes, both librarianship and teaching are undervalued because the work is not clear to others: "Teaching is perceived as simplistic transmission and appears easy because teaching, learning, and pedagogy are not transparent" (140). One way to clearly show the effort required for instruction is through onboarding and training processes. Most librarians I interviewed reported having no formal onboarding process in instruction for new librarians. The interviewees made comments such as, new librarians were

"woefully ill served" by the training; "they're just kind of thrown in"; "it's pretty much nonexistent; "we have not necessarily done a fabulous job"; and that "basically [I've] been told I can't require anything" with regards to training. There were a few librarians who noted more formalized onboarding programs for new librarians at their institutions. Of these, one librarian mentioned that they have not hired a new librarian in a long time, and one librarian in a leadership position commented on feeling "very proud" about their training and onboarding. This positive expression of onboarding stood out as an outlier in the interview data. The overall lack of formal onboarding and training around instruction perpetuates the false idea that instruction is an easy task that requires no special training. It also speaks to the lack of attention that librarians noted instruction receives at their institutions. Making instruction visible through collaboration and sharing is one way in which librarians can show the dedicated work and time instruction requires, and therefore, the need for more formalized support in this area.

According to the interviewees, lack of oversight around instruction also sends the message that teaching is not particularly important. One librarian noted that although teaching is in people's job descriptions, "There's no kind of accountability for what that looks like." They continued:

> The library hasn't really put a lot of thought into how they would like to resource and support teaching other than throwing it in their strategic plan and saying, "Oh well, this is a point of distinction." […] You can say that, but everything in your actions doesn't necessarily represent that.

Ongoing support for instruction varied across the institutions with most places having a mix of formal and informal initiatives to support librarians. Most librarians spoke about how their university teaching centres were a valuable resource for professional development at their institutions; they took workshops or achieved certificates through their teaching centres. A few of the librarians I interviewed were responsible for providing training to their colleagues and shared their approach to creating professional development opportunities that address the specific needs of their colleagues, tailoring their work to the context of library teaching. Some librarians mentioned professional funds that colleagues could use in a self-directed way to support development activities. However, some librarians who mentioned this funding also commented on having no formal support from the library. For example, one librarian noted they have access to professional development funds to use for conferences or webinars but "a lot of that is self-initiated." Another mentioned their funding and the teaching centre, but "specific instructional support within the library system doesn't really exist." This distinction that some librarians made between instruction support from within and outside the library points to a pervasive, underlying feeling that instruction does not seem important within their libraries. As noted earlier, effective leadership and organizational support create trust among

library staff and inspire collaborative work (Ahmed, Ashraf, and Sheikh 2020). Receiving the message, whether explicit or implicit, from leadership that teaching is not a priority within the academic library can emphasize the idea that teaching does not matter and therefore provides little motivation to share with others.

Lack of Time for Teaching and Collaborative Work

In the interviews, time was also a commonly cited barrier to sharing and collaboration which is consistent with the literature. The librarians noted how a lack of time made it more difficult for librarians to be inclined to upload materials to a shared space. One librarian commented, "You can share learning outcomes or learning activities or concepts, or whatever, and that has worked. The only issue that we're seeing is that now it's an additional thing for people to do." Contributing to that lack of time is, as noted earlier, uneven teaching workload distributions due to the liaison model. As a result, those who are doing the most teaching often do not have the time for reflection or may not have time to update or keep their teaching materials current. One librarian commented, "It's one thing to look at a slide deck and be able to take that to another class but depending on how robust that presentation is […] you might need a little bit more to be able to actually take that." The librarians suggested that having discussions around instruction challenges and the thinking behind the development of lesson plans, as well as sharing questions that came up during instruction sessions, were necessary when sharing materials. They also pointed out that materials require updating and that this takes additional time.

Sharing and collaboration also required dedicated time to work on a project with someone. As one librarian noted, "With competing priorities, collaboration can sometimes seem like more work, especially if you're doing something new." Another librarian affirmed this view of collaboration as an additional time pressure, stating that although collaboration may seem like it could ease workloads, in their experience, people "find it more efficient to just do the work themselves" as meeting with others and doing extra planning for collaboration is "more of a burden and more challenging."

Factors that Support a Culture of Sharing and Collaboration

In the previous section, I presented the barriers the interviewed librarians saw as preventing a culture of sharing. In addition, the interviewees also had insights to share about the factors that support a culture of sharing and collaboration: they offered many reasons that motivate them to share, including reducing redundancies and helping with workload, feeling inspired by learning from others, improving their own teaching practice, and contributing to the type of positive, supportive work

culture they appreciate. The overarching factors that they believe support a culture of sharing were (a) intentionally building personal relationships, (b) developing a structure for sharing, and (c) having dedicated time for collaborative work.

Intentionally Building Personal Relationships

The strongest sentiment expressed throughout the interviews was the importance of relationships in building a culture of sharing. In addition to trust and curiosity about what others are doing, the librarians noted that having a "positive working environment," a "culture of acceptance" where individuals are "accepting other people's skills and strategies, accepting that other people have different ways of teaching, different teaching philosophies," and "a culture of collegiality" were necessary for fostering a culture of teaching. One librarian shared they felt it was important to develop "that safe space where people do feel comfortable sharing and getting feedback" and going beyond just sharing to having discussions, but to reflect, ask questions, and offer advice. Moreover, trust is crucial to how intentions behind sharing are perceived; one librarian commented that "the idea that you share with good intentions, and you receive the share with good intentions, I think that's critical to overcoming barriers."

A librarian in an instructional leadership position shared that "developing that culture of sharing and trust, I think it has to come from building personal relationships." They also noted that "just because you have a policy of sharing, it's not going to work if you don't build the interpersonal relationships." In other words, developing a work plan, strategic plan, or policy requires concrete actions on how collaboration and sharing will be incorporated into librarians' work. To that end, librarians described how important it is for leadership to prioritize collaborative instruction and relationship building to signify its importance in the organization. As one librarian said, "I've told leadership I think it's important that we have these conversations about sharing and why we're kind of doing this stuff and if I don't get leadership support, I can do my grassroots getting people on board, but it doesn't mean anything."

Another way librarians felt relationship building could be reinforced is through recognizing the strengths of fellow colleagues. One librarian wondered "how do you encourage people to be curious about each other? [… Because] in order to have a culture where people feel comfortable sharing, they need to have that feeling of curiosity to want to know what others are doing." Encouraging curiosity can help foster reflective teaching practice by normalizing the belief that librarians can learn from the effective instruction practices of their colleagues. Moreover, recognizing the professional strengths of other librarians can lead to respect for their contributions and giving credit where it is due. One librarian commented, "I've often wondered

what makes people want to share and what makes people not want to share and I don't really have an answer for that one either, but often I find it just has to do with credit and respect given to what people have created." Other librarians echoed this idea—giving credit for the work of others—during the interviews and named it as an important factor in building trust among colleagues.

There are many activities that librarians already undertake to strengthen their professional practice, such as communities of practice, journal clubs, peer observations, mentorships, and formal and informal teaching committees and groups that provide opportunities to share about teaching. A few librarians commented that they felt most comfortable sharing with a few trusted colleagues and in smaller groups. One interviewee shared, "We're collegial but I know I would only feel comfortable with a few people really sharing some of the stuff that I was working on and asking for that feedback and being willing to receive constructive criticism." According to this librarian, keeping their circle small and trusting that feedback would be constructive rather than destructive was crucial to building relationships. Another librarian shared that they found peer observation activities worked best when done with two to three other colleagues with whom they feel they can share openly. However, they felt that "once the groups get bigger in terms of attendance and discussion, people may be less willing to kind of be open in that way." As noted previously, sharing in smaller networks of colleagues is also something that faculty prefer due to their fear of public scrutiny (Santosh and Panda 2016).

The librarians indicated that, in smaller groups, sharing tended to happen organically in informal ways among certain colleagues. Individuals established trusting relationships on their own that were mutually beneficial, reciprocal, constructive, and safe:

> I think those of us who are interested in establishing a culture of sharing and talking about teaching, we found each other. And we keep putting ourselves out there and maybe just by continuing to do that—one of the things that we put out there, maybe somebody hadn't thought of collaborating or sharing something like it might spark something.

According to this interviewee, the culture of sharing is relational—those who want to share put themselves out there and like-minded colleagues respond in kind.

Developing a Structure for Sharing

Many librarians asked rhetorical questions during their interviews, such as:

- How do you make sharing work?
- What does sharing look like in a sustainable way?
- What are the best ways to share?

Others made statements like "I wish I had a better idea of how to make sharing work well and collaboration too." Librarians described instances where sharing happened informally within small group settings or when one person reached out directly to another. In these scenarios, sharing tended to happen informally without a defined structure and librarians expressed they were happy to share if others asked them but that they lacked formal, structured ways of sharing.

The librarians felt that having opportunities to share was a way to encourage collaboration. Some librarians in instructional leadership roles saw this as work they might take on. Others observed the need for library leadership to help to create systems and structures. One librarian offered that "to foster [a culture of sharing], you probably also need to create systems that push people towards that a little bit too." Interviewees suggested that creating regular activities, like establishing consistent teaching squares (where typically a group of four people engage in peer observation that focuses on self-reflection on one's own instruction), and ongoing ways for people to share and collaborate could create a supportive structure. For example, one librarian said,

> There should be a more formal structure for organizing sharing within a teaching community. So, if you arranged for example collaborative teaching experiences or co-teaching experiences, if you had fairly shared responsibilities of goals within the teaching unit where people were working together towards those goals.

According to this librarian, a formal structure could transition collaboration and sharing from being informal activities among a few people to more sustained and scalable approaches for the larger team. Librarians also mentioned that tools like shared drives, learning management systems, repositories, and LibGuides could facilitate the sharing of resources.

According to the interviewees, it is also important that sharing systems or workflows do not create additional burdens. Librarians mused about ways to make sharing easy:

> I do wish that I had a better idea of how to make a more organic collaboration—also how to share resources. I think, having a bunch of PowerPoints in a space, like in [the learning management system], I just don't know how well it would be used.

As this interviewee indicated, the tools are not the magic solution for sharing; hosting slides and lesson plans in any space without the rationale or reflection around instructional decisions can turn a system into, as one librarian put it, a "filing cabinet" rather than a useful resource that people can easily use. Librarians spoke about the need to tailor instruction and that teaching from another person's slide is a "disaster"—they emphasized that instruction is not simply finding slides and lessons plans and walking into a class to deliver them. Teaching using another librarian's

materials requires customization, reflection, and context. The librarians felt that having opportunities to talk about why lesson plans are structured a certain way, the decision making behind instructional choices, and the questions that came up during instruction sessions were examples of necessary discussion points when sharing materials.

The interviewees also indicated that formal sharing structures can clarify who is involved in sharing and collaboration and the level of engagement that is expected in such activities. For example, one librarian spoke about their library's shared teaching resource that "never took off": the call for others to contribute was not taken up by anyone and the librarian was unsure why. They shared,

> I just feel like if we could figure out a structure and the process and the logistics of what sharing could look like in a sustainable way because another problem […] is], how do you sustain something like that? It takes constant updating. So, I think sustainability and also identifying who's going to do it, like actual ownership.

As this interviewee indicated, sharing requires a thoughtful structure that is designed to achieve buy-in and sense of ownership from the librarians expected to share. Several librarians also spoke to the importance of considering the processes of updating teaching materials.

Structures, tools, or processes alone do not create sharing and collaboration. One librarian pointed out that they use the same chat tool with their library colleagues as they do with some faculty colleagues, and the chats with their faculty colleagues "are lively, they are a lot more organic, there's a culture of celebrating and sharing and all those things so, even though the tool is the same, the culture is different." Having structural processes in place for sharing is helpful, but they are only beneficial if the relationships among people are strong.

Dedicated Time for Collaborative Work

The common factor in many of the barriers and solutions librarians mentioned was time. Time is required for relationship building and creating supportive sharing structures; institutions signal what is valued by how and to what they dedicate time. Overall, the librarians indicated that time commitments and effort need to be intentional to make collaborative work happen:

> If you want to go from the siloed situations where everyone does their own thing to a more collaborative approach, and by that, I don't mean you just divide up a portion, you just divide responsibilities, but where you're really working together, and you're really co-teaching, it just takes a lot of time and effort […]. If you don't create that time, if you don't allow for that time, chances are that kind of collaboration and sharing isn't going to happen.

Strengthening librarian teaching practice requires dedicated and prioritized time set aside to participate in activities that will build relationships and improve teaching practices. For this to become a reality, administrations need to show that instruction is prioritized and spending time on that work is important. One librarian estimated that with the competing responsibilities that liaison librarians have, they may have twenty percent—one day per week—of their time to dedicate to instruction: "There is no way 52 days a year, minus a few weeks that you're on vacation so let's say 48 days a year […], maybe a month and a half, is enough to invest in teaching to do it really well. It's just not." If librarians do not feel that they have enough time to devote to their individual teaching, it is unlikely they will feel they have the time for collaborative work. Signifying the importance of collaboration and sharing through time is not a theoretical concept—it plays out in the daily work of librarians and has a direct impact on student learning. Instruction requires time to develop and deliver learning outcomes that support student learning.

Devoting more time to instruction also helps librarians build confidence in their teaching abilities. The interviewed librarians were eager to use their time to explore different teaching approaches: "If we had more time and more opportunity to do more exploratory teaching, we can approach it with a very different pedagogy than we do." A common feeling among the interviewees was they could improve as instructors and engage in collaborative work if they had the time:

> I think my colleagues, we want to share more; we want to be more collegial; we want to develop new projects; we want to do them collaboratively and you know it's just finding the time to do that. It is difficult, so I think that's probably the biggest impediment.

This librarian neatly summarized one of the overarching themes across the interview data: although there is a desire to collaborate and share, it is simply too difficult because of time constraints and lack of institutional priority.

Discussion

Despite the benefits and value attributed to collaborative work, existing structures and ways of working do not support connected practices. Isolated, siloed, and overloaded practices in instruction are so normalized that librarians have accepted they may not have time to teach to the same "quality" as others. This idea is particularly troublesome considering both the key role librarians have in supporting student learning and their desire to be effective teachers who offer meaningful instruction. In working with other librarians to collaborate on teaching and share resources and expertise, librarians can strengthen their teaching and better support students who navigate complicated questions around information.

Consistent practices of sharing and collaboration allow for a sustained focus on professional learning which enables us to deepen our practice as educators. As collaboration and sharing require time, these practices ask that librarians slow down and work in ways that counter the fast-paced nature of the neoliberal university. Nicholson (2016) advocates for slow scholarship and "moving away from an exclusive or predominant focus on teaching within the curriculum to explore ways to engage students and faculty outside of it" with the hopes that this "might enable us to extend our teaching beyond the skills paradigm by affording us the time and space to work toward a more critical information literacy" (32). Collaborating with colleagues provides us with opportunities to collectively explore new pedagogies and ways in which we might expand our teaching from the traditional one-shot. Furthermore, outside of instruction contexts, sharing and collaboration deepen relationships with our colleagues on which to build a foundation for all the work we do.

A theme that recurred throughout the interview data was the question of why librarians would bother to share. As librarians, we can become stuck in a circular loop: a lack of confidence in our teaching and a fear of judgement keeps us from connecting with others because without trusting and supportive relationships, people are not inclined to share; however, people must share to build the trusting, positive, and supporting relationships based on reciprocity and mutuality that help promote confidence in teaching and reduce fear of judgement. A similar circularity arises in external perceptions of librarians' teaching:

> [...] A damaging circular argument—if information literacy is primarily taught through one-shot sessions, then it must be remedial and easily accomplished within the time allotted, otherwise more time would be devoted to it. But, because universities devote so little time to it, the assumption of faculty is that the one-shot is sufficient and that little more can be done to improve student abilities through specific instruction. (Badke 2011, 132).

Leadership sets the tone for librarians about the value and importance of instruction in the organization, and thereby the place of sharing and collaboration within instructional work. Ultimately, librarians are receiving the message from their institutions that their teaching does not matter—there is no time for it and there are many barriers to meaningful instruction. Therefore, seeking a place for collaboration and sharing in librarians' teaching becomes another burden for librarians to carry on their own. Finding time for a place for sharing and collaboration will continue to be a difficult task. Organizations create time for what they prioritize, so it may require an examination of the work in which librarians are currently engaged to see what could be shifted, changed, or stopped to prioritize instruction. Changing the thought process from *finding* to *creating* time implies an active, intentional decision to strengthen sharing and collaboration. There are some concrete ways that

administrative leadership can demonstrate the importance of collaborative work, including embedding collaborative practices from the start: academic institutions hiring new librarians can include collaboration and sharing in their onboarding, mentoring, and training in instruction. From there, institutions can ensure that librarians have the time to collaborate, as a culture of sharing will not thrive without broader, top-down institutional support.

Once given that time and institutional support, librarians can devote the required resources to building relationships and trust. It is also important to recognize where and how sharing around instruction is already happening in small and organic ways among librarians. Building from the sharing efforts that already exist helps to ensure that structures are not forced, overly complicated, or arbitrary. Librarians could build upon any existing relationships and gradually add new collaborative team members. Starting collaboration efforts too quickly or large scale may undermine the existing relationship-building work that is already occurring. It is also crucial to consider how the practical processes of sharing can be sustainably maintained and fit into already tight schedules. These considerations involve thinking about the purpose of sharing and collaboration, what types of teaching collaborations make sense in your library, and what success in collaborative work means. Although the ideal may be that everyone is sharing and working together, the reality might be to focus on the depth versus the amount of collaboration.

Ultimately, academic libraries need to clearly articulate their vision and why sharing and collaboration matter in their instruction practices. A cohesive vision around the purpose of librarian teaching will require administrative accountability around what sharing and collaboration look like in our libraries. This will vary by institution, but one common focus of information literacy instruction is supporting student learning. Hess (2018) writes that "students are at the core of information literacy librarians' work" (63). Bringing students back to the centre of the institutional vision can help administrations place importance on sharing and collaboration, as they demonstrably strengthen and support librarians' work. In addition, ensuring that the focus of sharing and collaboration is on one's own growth and improvement, and not a judgement or critique of others is an important distinction to make.

There are many factors, such as organizational structure and one-shot instruction, that librarians are unable to change on their own. Not every librarian works within the traditional liaison model and those who do are not necessarily seeking to dismantle it. Only one librarian I interviewed firmly believed that the liaison model did librarians a major disservice, and they recognized that their view was singular among their colleagues. However, other librarians recognized the limitations of their ways of working and were searching for ways within these

systems to support sharing and collaboration. Although we may not desire to change the structure, we can change what is valued and rewarded within the structure (Douglas and Gadsby 2019). In seeking a way forward, it is important to remember that a common—and succinct—theme in the data around creating a culture of sharing and collaboration was that it is "hard work." This work cannot be done quickly, in silos, or alone.

Conclusion

There are a number of circumstances contributing to the isolation of librarians' teaching. The structure and nature of most instruction in academic libraries involves people working on their own in silos and based on their own relationships to departments/faculty. Working solo can be more efficient and protect against criticism. However, a lack of sharing and collaboration has significant consequences on librarians' teaching practices. This individual approach to instruction can create vulnerability, fear, and a lack of trust—all of which can make librarians less inclined to collaborate and share. Limited connection with colleagues creates professional isolation which stifles professional growth and inspiration, which can impact confidence in ourselves as instructors. Our belief in our teaching abilities also has direct consequences on student learning. Therefore, the benefits of sharing and collaboration among instruction librarians support both librarian and student learning.

The work of fostering sharing and collaboration cannot be done by a few librarians alone. Sharing and collaboration require that library leadership create a collective vision for instruction, implement a structure for sharing, and provide the time to do this work. Sharing also requires dedicated time to build trusting relationships among colleagues; sustainable sharing practices take work. The purpose of this work is invaluable: collaboration provides the necessary conditions to spark new ideas and ways of thinking about teaching and learning that may not be present when we remain fixed in individual ways of working. It also requires us as librarians to embrace a degree of vulnerability to engage in sharing and collaboration and be open to the ways this might transform and enhance our professional practice.

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Appendix

The following questions formed the basis for the semi-structured interviews.

1. Who provides information literacy instruction within your library system? (e.g., librarians, library staff, student employees?)

2. What types of instruction do you/your colleagues do? (One shot? course embedded, course credit instruction?)

3. How is library instruction coordinated at your institution?

4. What types of instructional support are available to instruction staff within your libraries?

5. How would you describe the teaching culture at your library or within your library system?

6. How are library staff onboarded/trained in instruction at your institution?

7. Does your library or library system provide recognition around people's instruction or positive contributions to the teaching culture?

8. What factors do you think foster a culture of sharing amongst library instructors?

9. At your institution, what specifically are people sharing with each other?

10. Do you share outside your institution? If so, how?

11. What tools/technologies/activities help to facilitate sharing?

12. What are your channels for discussing instruction at your institution? (e.g., departmental, inter-departmental, instruction committees?)

13. What are some challenges librarians/library staff face with instruction at your institution?

14. What do you consider are barriers to collaboration and creating a culture of sharing?

15. What additional comments do you have about sharing at your institution?

16. How many years have you been an instructional librarian/instruction coordinator?

17. How long have you been in your role at your institution?