The Tech Core Curriculum: Teaching Technology as a Core Competence

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ABSTRACT

This panel addresses the ALISE Call for Proposals' "questions of mutual interest" about integrating professional competences into pedagogy by providing interpretations and strategies for including information and communications technology (ICT) core competences into teaching and curriculum at ALA-accredited programs of Library and Information Science. Through an informal roundtable discussion followed by semi-structured and open audience solicitation, four faculty members who teach courses and modules in information technology from two ALA-accredited programs that have recently undergone curricular audits will provide an overview of technology core competences from the American Library Association and the Society of American Archivists (SAA). Discussions will include…

- Interpretations and interpretive problems with the ALA technology competence and sub-competences.
- A comparative interpretation of the Graduate Program in Archival Studies (GPAS) Curriculum's technology competence from the SAA.
- How instructors have adapted these competences in courses and curriculum.
- How instructors have addressed student skill gaps and technophobia.
- A survey of which ALA-accredited programs do and do not have a technology core requirement as well as the types of courses that count for such a requirement.
- The pros and cons of a technology core requirement for ALA-accredited programs.
- Strategies for intentionally embedding technology competences in other required courses.

A technology competence for programs that prepare information professionals of the twenty-first century appears at once essential and assumed. Previous studies show that graduate programs in library and information science have cut ICT core requirements in favor of

embedding technology instruction in other requirements that principally satisfy other competences. Partly this is a solution to economizing core requirements in order to facilitate flexible course paths for students, and partly this is a solution to the vagaries set forth in standardized core competences, which remain media-agnostic.That is, the principles set forth in ALA core competences do not specify the types of technologies to address in any one competence, including the technology competence, making 'technology' an overly fungible term that can be applied to almost any instruction or practice. While theoretically media-agnosticism creates continuity with past and present analog means of information practices, all means of information practices are, of course, mediated. The majority of programs seem to make the assumption that ICT competence necessarily implies digital mediation. For larger, digitally focused programs in the iSchool movement, the assumption that ICT competence means digital competence further means that demonstrations and assessments of that competence are already embedded in the majority of courses. Compounding the assumption that digital practice satisfies ICT competence is an assumption of student digital nativity. While research has dispelled the myth of the 'digital native,' such a mythos persists in programs' imaginations of their own graduate students who must de facto navigate sophisticated digital environments in order to participate in graduate programs of the twenty-first century knowledge economy. This roundtable aims at the outset to lay bare the tenuous relationship between standardized competences' media-agnosticism and curricular assumptions of media-embeddedness. Then, participants will address strategies for curricular demonstrations of technology competence that are intentional, media-situated, student-focused, and strategic.

Intentional: Rather than assume technological competence from demonstrated digital, information practices, instructors and programs should produce Stated Learning Objectives (SLO) and aligned assessment mechanisms that ask students to do more than demonstrate technology use.

Media-situated: Students should understand that barriers to information access vary not just according to social vectors like race, gender, and income, but also by medium of access, which requires on the part of the student or information professional a media-comparative approach to ICT.

Student-focused: Instructors should not assume student digital nativity or proficiency and should instead meet students where they are within a multi-dimensional matrix of technological practices and attitudes. In addition to being good pedagogy, a student-relational approach to technology also models exemplary user services.

Strategic: Moving from the myth of the 'tech savvy librarian' of the early 00s, which largely relied on assumptions of generational digital nativity, instructors and programs should refocus on a model of the 'tech strategic librarian,' one who is not necessarily a coding-multilingual early adopter, but one who understands the stakes and intersections of technocapitalism, information capitalism, library resources, and community users.

The highly interactive 90-minute roundtable will begin with a ten-minute introduction from the chair followed by three five-minute, informal statements from the panelists touching on the above topics. Semi-structured discussion from the panel will proceed for the second 25-minute block followed by open-room discussion and audience solicitation for fifteen minutes. This will leave a final 25-minute block for guided audience small-group discussion and reporting mediated by panelists. In small groups, audience members will be asked to generate Stated

Learning Outcomes and assessment mechanisms based on the ALA's technology sub-competences.

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

Curriculum; pedagogy; standards; accreditation.

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

Technology; ALA core competences; GPAS curriculum; requirements.

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