

Research Incentive Fund Report

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I am grateful to InULA for supporting my travel to LILAC (Librarians' Information Literacy Annual Conference) in Sheffield, England in April. The funds covered my conference registration and the hotel cost during the conference. As a result of this generous support, I had the opportunity to co-present with a librarian colleague from IUB to an audience of primarily UK librarians on our collaborative research project that employs ethnographic methods toward better understanding students' experience of the research process. While my three collaborators in this project and I are still analyzing data, our presentation at LILAC was centered around the broader concepts of ethnographic methods and how librarians can apply these practices to decision-making, problem-solving, and instructional practice. Our presentation, "Watch, Listen, & Learn: Ethnographic Methods for Information Literacy Assessment," was an interactive workshop that provided a brief background on ethnography in academic libraries and common methodologies for gathering and analyzing qualitative data. That was followed by two activities in which participants practiced applying these ways of thinking and assessing to specific scenarios related to information literacy. The participants were very interested in the background information we provided, as this type of assessment has not been widely applied to academic libraries in the UK. It was at once validating and satisfying to bring new knowledge and evidence-based practices to our UK colleagues.

We had approximately 38 attendees at our workshop and several attendees approached us at other presentations or social events throughout the conference to tell us how informative the workshop had been. One colleague who attended is planning a User Experience Conference in Spring 2015 entitled "UXLib" that will explore ethnography, usability and user experience in libraries through keynotes, workshops, and fieldwork projects. He told us that our presentation is what sparked his interest in attending LILAC in the first place. In addition, we had the pleasure of having one of Britain's premier scholars in information literacy education, Geoff Walton, attend our session. Speaking with Geoff later in the conference, we learned that he is hopeful that more librarians in the UK will embrace research methodology to inform their pedagogical practice. He thanked us for bringing our knowledge and experience to the LILAC community. I share this information because, at this stage of our research project, having such feedback is incredibly helpful. To know that we are encouraging other librarians to apply ethnographic methods in their libraries and creating opportunities for colleagues to consider opportunities for further investigation is very rewarding.

This opportunity has laid the groundwork for another interactive workshop to be delivered in the United States at the LOEX Conference on May 9, 2014. LOEX is similar to LILAC in that it is a community of practice gathering annually to discuss trends and issues in information literacy. The LILAC experience helped us to hone our ability to convey the complex theoretical framework of our research project in a brief amount of time in order to inform hands-on practical activities for participants. Two of my project collaborators and I are looking forward to engaging a different audience in order to continue our process of discovery and learning through sharing the methodology of cultural anthropology.

Once again, I appreciate the committee's ability and interest in funding my travel to LILAC. The experience was invaluable in terms of furthering my understanding of our research project and how it fits into the current ecosystem of librarian research practices both in the US and abroad.