

The teaching tube: reflections on a journey

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Stuck on the Circle line..

For me, in songwriting, I have a route I can take. Maybe there's some forks, I can go this way, this way. But I know those roads. I still have the experience behind me.

Dave Matthews

Three weeks after I started my current job, almost 15 years ago, I was expected to teach. It was my first job where teaching was the main point in my job description. I had other teaching experience, mostly within music, I had been substituting and held some classes here and there, but I had never held a job that was primarily about teaching. Starting to teach was like aimlessly riding the tube without a map.

My first session of my new job had been booked via my predecessor. I was to teach students how to use the library catalogue, and quote: “show them a couple of databases”. In I came, and there they were – 100 engineering students that presumably were not very keen on spending 30 minutes on the library catalogue. Thanks to my experience on the musical stage, I wasn’t nervous, but I remember feeling “What have I done?”.

My predecessor had left me a bunch of power point presentations and manuscripts she used when she was teaching. I never really liked slides, and I have never been good at using manuscripts. With my youthful energy still intact at that point, I worked hard to give the presentations my own touch, and I spent a lot of time learning all the new databases. The faculty teachers that had worked with my predecessor called me and booked sessions, I taught, and I waited to be contacted again. This, I am ashamed to say, kept going for a few years. I tried to make the sessions as entertaining as I could, with a few jokes here and there, inserting a cartoon on some of the slides etc. But of course, deep down, I knew that it was spiritless and insipid. Inadvertently, I had become a “delivery on demand” kind of librarian. More on that later.

Just because we teach something that doesn't mean our students have learned it. Students need to engage with what we teach in order to make sense of it. John Dewey called it "learning by doing".

I had been teaching for four or five years when I suddenly had a lightbulb moment. A couple of nursing students came to the library right after one of my classes. The lesson plans had evolved somewhat over the years, but they were still very transmitter oriented, sage on the stage, lectures. The nursing students asked me a basic question on something that had just been covered (a word I am trying not to use anymore because it implies that once something is said, it is immediately understood) in class. That was when the realization first entered my head, that it was possible, even probable, that my lectures had little or no effect. That was the moment when it really sunk in that, just because I teach something, doesn't mean that the students have learned that something. I don't think that I have had a similar experience of *Eureka* either before or after that moment. It was like an explosion, that both flattened and saddened me, but also changed the entire landscape so that other options came into view. It was only afterwards that I truly realized that I had been stuck on the Circle line for years.

.. without a map

Being on the teaching tube has sometimes felt energizing and sometimes lonely, sometimes rewarding and sometimes exhausting, but I can honestly say it has always been interesting. Being on a tube without a map is impractical and confusing, but perhaps it would be more precise to say I was on the teaching tube with a map that had no markings on it. Did I truly understand what it entailed to be at Flipped Classroom Station before I had walked around a little?

The platform

Breaking free from established modes is never easy. In fact, I am still struggling to find the right form for each group of students. Which students can I expect to participate in active learning situations? What kind of participation can I expect? Which students will benefit from group study? Which students would be more comfortable with a lecture and workshop? Some experience can help, to be sure, but I can never be 100

percent certain that I get it right. The only thing I am sure of is that there is no such thing as “one size fits all” when it comes to teaching.

In 2013, I was a part of a group at my library that looked into our teaching efforts with a goal of gaining better understanding and overview of our teaching practice, and how we should prioritize. Giving priority to some students over others was a hot potato then, as it is now. However, for a small university with growing numbers of students, and no massive hiring of new librarians in sight, we needed to have a discussion on how to deal with the lack of resources and the staff fatigue. The result was a strategy document that we named *Pedagogiske plattform* (= “Pedagogical platform”). The strategy had a background chapter on various issues connected to information literacy, a description of the teaching situation at the library, a list of user groups, and who we would give priority as well as the outline of two different teaching approaches (Øvern, 2014).

The two teaching approaches we alighted on were called the tutor approach and the team-teaching approach. These two approaches, though very different in execution, were dependent on active collaboration with teachers. The tutor approach was based on an active intervention by the librarian, who not only would do classroom activities, but also actively engage with the writing process of student groups, and give feedback on everything from style and argumentation to how well the students had interacted with literature. It is a model that received very good feedback from students and teachers, but it was work intensive for the librarian. The team-teaching approach was about utilizing the expert knowledge of both teacher and librarian as we were giving courses together. We would decide on learning goals for each class, discuss the relevance of any assignments for the students beforehand, and lectures and classroom teaching would take the shape of part presentation from both of us followed by a discussion between us. Then we would usually have some sort of feedback from students and meet up after class and discuss the outcomes, and whether or not we had succeeded in our plans. Adjustments for next time would also be discussed. Both approaches were rooted in the belief that both teacher and librarian could be the “more knowledgeable other”, as Vygotsky (Vygotskij et al., 1978) put it, to the students, as well as Biggs’ (Biggs & Tang, 2011) ideals of constructive alignment.

These approaches did something to the relationships I had with the teachers at some of the courses. I was more aware of the unique perspectives the teacher and I had, and I felt like it increased the level of respect we had for each other. However, one of the things I had not

expected from having a pedagogical platform was that it gave me the power to say no to teachers who wanted to book me for sessions that I knew would have little or no effect. Typically, these sessions would be of the sort like the first assignment I described, coming into class and giving a session on using the library catalogue and showing students where to click in a few databases, and I would usually feel like a substitute teacher, someone who was called in at the last minute and had little or nothing to say with regards to the overall planning of the session. Saying no to a teacher felt strangely unpleasant at first. I think I had developed an inherent need to please and to say yes, no questions asked. Saying no felt like I was letting teachers down and that I was tainting the good name of the service-minded library. The pedagogical platform had been ratified by the board at the university so it was a formal document that I could refer to. While I have never said no just to say no, I had that document in my pocket that would justify my not spending time on teaching to no purpose. After a while, I reconciled myself to the notion that saying no also gave the teachers opportunities. They could spend the time usually allotted to my lecture more meaningfully with their students, and they always had the option of collaborating with me to make a more suitable lesson plan. Most of the power in our relationship remained largely with the teacher, but the pedagogical platform was a starting point to a more balanced relationship.

Who is driving the train?

Collaboration with teachers is vital, but it must be a real collaboration, not just an unequal cooperation. Having a framework or an approved platform can help both you and the teacher design something that works well for all parties and supports student learning.

Generally speaking, when we enter a train or a tube, we do not know who is driving. We only know that, unless a self-driving tube, it is a person. The passengers depend on being transported safely to their destination. What about the university? Who is driving that train? In Norway, the universities are led from the Ministry of Education, and every university has a board and a principal. There is a national qualifications framework (NOKUT, 2011), and guidelines for each programme area, like nursing, design, computer science, electro engineering etc. However, on the level where I usually work, the teacher in charge of a certain course is the real power

broker. Nothing I want to do, or even access to students, can be done without her. One of the things that I find really hard is that information literacy is poorly embedded on a system level. Buchanan & McDonough (2014) offered the advice to collaborate on a personal level instead of trying to engage the whole department at once (p. 10), and while I find that to be good advice as long as the system is what it is, it also poses problems. Little or no focus on information literacy on a system level means that every time a certain course gets a new teacher in charge, I have to start building a personal relationship to that teacher. First, I have to establish who the new teacher is, because the department doesn't always inform me. After that, I have to contact the new teacher and tell her about who I am and what has been my contribution in her course under the previous teacher. If I am lucky, the new teacher accepts that my contribution will get time slot as before and I just have to have a few conversations with the new teacher to set the time, talk about assignments, any changes she is planning to implement etc. However, even with this in place, I need to prove myself (or that is what it feels like, at least) before she trusts me. If the teacher remains in charge of the course for years – then I usually get a good working relationship with her, and I can experiment more. Or – the teacher retires or gets a new job or a new position within the university, and then the boulder has once again rolled down from the hill, and Sisyphos (aka me) has to start all over again. This is not meant as a lamentation, but as a backdrop on why the power structures in the classroom matter for teaching librarians.

Power structures naturally also influence students. Through various feedback and assessment forms, I have found that the students, generally speaking, see no distinction between the teacher and me. The students think of us both as teachers. For them, we are the ones that have power. As long as I am in lecture mode, the students see me as the expert who is there to tell them something. How easy is it for them to tell *me* something, or even ask? That being said, students also wield a certain power. Arum and Roksa (2011) introduced the term “The art of college management” when they described how, even though students use less than half the time for studies now than the average student in the 60s, this has not had a severe impact on grade point average. This phenomenon “[...] in which success is achieved primarily not through hard work, but through controlling college by shaping schedules, taming professors and limiting workload” (p. 4) could also be said to be a sign of student power. Perhaps Kuh (2003) was right when he suggested that we have struck “the disengagement compact” with the students. The “I’ll leave you alone, if

you leave me alone” (p. 28) kind of deal that is struck, not individually, but collectively. It is already there when we enter the system (Becko, 2011).

I may not talk very often about feminist pedagogy, but I frequently use some of the principles connected to this theory. Feminist pedagogy is closely related to critical pedagogy, or liberatory pedagogy, as Paulo Freire (Freire & Ramos, 2000) put it. While feminist pedagogy certainly is about making sure that women’s lived experiences and unique stories are attended to, it is also about seeing the bigger picture. Feminist pedagogy is concerned with democratic ideals in the classroom, about engagement and participation, and it is about empowerment, critical thinking and reflection. Feminist pedagogy is against cramming, classic lectures and summative assessment as a basis for learning, and emphasises instead the need for negotiation, collaboration and conversations. Feminist pedagogy is hardly talked about here in Norway, and I first became aware of this through an American conference. After reading Freire’s book, searching through journal articles and websites, I realised how many of these issues were relevant for me as a teacher. I decided to start with the little things, like using example texts and search terms that emphasised social injustice and inequality. I have also tried to find room in class for the students to explore subjects that mean something to them, through search and critical thinking, thus hopefully sparking that important interest in them. According to Crabtree, Robbin and Sapp (2009, p. 5), the vision of feminist pedagogy is to have an egalitarian and empowered society of students that share a joint and societal responsibility in a participatory classroom with respect for individual differences. I am not sure I will ever be able to completely fulfil this vision, but being aware of power structures in the classroom, and to try to even out some of them, is crucial.

Why am I so interested in power relations? It is because the power relations decide how much autonomy I have as a teacher, how much time I get to spend with the students, and how much say I have in dealing with constructive alignment (Biggs & Tang, 2011). I know that it is possible to do one-shots and still be involved in planning and assessment, but it has not been my experience that this is common practice. Pagowsky (2020) stated that librarians doing one-shots become transactional, rather than relational, and that librarians are considered helpers and assistants by faculty. Appreciated service staff, but service staff all the same. This has been my experience, too, especially in courses where I have yet to prove myself to the teacher in charge. Rimsten (2009) noted that teachers might have an out-dated vision of the library and not consider librarians as educators in their own rights, a view supported by Ekstrand and Seebass

(2009). However, teachers also struggle with power relations. Teachers are given a certain amount of time with their students and they may have had little control over learning goals etc. I do not wonder, therefore, that the teachers may be reluctant to give up precious time with their students unless they know they get their money's worth, so to speak.

The university hired me to teach our students to write better, to know good information from bad, to be able to think critically about what they read and to give them advice on how they can combine their experience and new information into a whole new picture. I was hired to be a partner for faculty staff who needed assistance in their research, and to make the library a good hub for students and faculty alike. If I only spend my time trying to please everyone, and only wanting a gold star (i.e. an enthusiastic "Thank you!") for my effort, the patrons will like me, but they will not necessarily look to me when they need a partner. This is what I mean when I talked about "delivery on demand" earlier. "Delivery on demand" libraries, and librarians, are like islands with good produce. Every time patrons need something to eat, like a nice coconut, they push a plank over to us, walk over and take the coconut, and then take the plank with them when they leave. Unless we build a bridge that gives us a more permanent connection to the faculties, we are doomed to an existence where we are passively waiting for someone to reach out to us. For me, that is not an acceptable option, and I cannot fulfil my work duties that way. I have no problem with "delivery on demand" when it comes to document fulfilment, but I do not think it is a sustainable option in the information literacy field. The power structures matter, and being a real partner instead of service staff, makes me a better teacher and a more motivated professional.

If we want to have real impact on student learning, we have to be in class at the right time and to be able to help design real assignments. The power structures both in and out of the classroom decide if we can succeed.

The guides on my journey

Learning to teach has been a long journey, and it is far from over. Every day, I come across new landscapes that I want to explore. It can be a little sidetrack in form of a fun new application or program, or it can be a main track that I have yet to travel, in form of a theory that I haven't found the entrance to. Even though I might have felt a little lonely on the teaching tube sometimes, I have never been without guides. I have been inspired by Carl Rogers and his ideas on unleashing curiosity, fostering relationships and providing resources that can be discovered by the student (Rogers, 1974). I have in equal parts loved and been frustrated with Vygotsky and his ideas on the proximal development zone and "more knowledgeable or capable other" (Eun, 2019). I have struggled to understand the psychological processes of how we learn and how that could be transferred to my teaching. I fell in love with Paulo Freire's ideas on power distribution (Freire & Ramos, 2000), and I have spent a lot of time reading the "classics" of library teaching literature, like Kulthau, Bruce and Edwards, Lloyd, Limberg, Latham and Gross, Pilerot, Sundin - the list is almost endless. All of these theorists and practitioners have contributed to how I see my role as a teacher. They have given me the confidence to explore the different tracks I have found along the journey.

Much of my own early education was spent doing teacher-led exercises and tasks, typically reading a chapter on a subject and answering questions about it, solving math problems given by the teacher, and most of my exams up to higher education were designed to test my memory rather than complex thinking or creativity. In a way, that worked well for me as I actually had quite good memory. However, it led me in to a paradigm of learning which I really do not believe in. I think that we easily fall into the same patterns in adulthood as we were trained for in childhood. If my early education had been more inquiry-based and student-led, I believe that breaking free from the banking mode of teaching had been easier.

The many guides on my journey have given me a foundation of beliefs. I believe that people learn by constructing new knowledge by integrating it with their previous experiences and knowledge. I believe that if I am to teach well, I need to be "the more knowledgeable other" and to share the power in the classroom. I believe that the students must engage in activities and that I have to stimulate the students' curiosity and help them develop their critical thinking. Unfortunately, I have found that the idealist in me, who strives to live up to the constructivist ideals is often in conflict with the pragmatist who just needs to make the best of things. The system

that I, and I suspect many other librarians, work in is based on teaching as many students as possible, with the least cost to the university. It is much cheaper for the university to gather 200 students in a lecture hall than to put them in small groups and assign one teacher to each. Especially for big student groups, like engineers or nurses, the lecture hall is where most of the big classes are held. For these student groups, I am almost always invited to give a lecture. How do you teach critical thinking, information retrieval and academic writing in a lecture hall and maintain your beliefs?

Arum & Roksa (2011) 's excellent book "Academically adrift" spread through higher education like wildfire. I read the entire book with my eyes wide open and hairs standing on end the whole time. The authors found that at least 45 percent of the students they followed had little or no significant increase in their critical thinking, complex reasoning and written communication skills after two years of college (p. 36). That is astounding when 99 percent of college faculty said that critical thinking is "very important" or "essential" (p. 35). Would it be fair to assume that the way we teach has something to do with it? Albert Einstein said: "It is nothing short of a miracle that modern methods of instruction have not yet entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry." ("Assails education today; Einstein Says 'It Is Miracle' Inquiry Is Not 'Strangled'," 1949, p. 34). While it seems like more and more teachers engage in inquiry-based learning, it is hard to disagree with Einstein here, while the classic lecture features so prominently in higher education.

The first time I read Carl Rogers' essay "Questions I would ask myself if I was a teacher" (Rogers, 1974) I found myself nodding vigorously the entire time. Rogers posed seven questions and he reflected on how education could change if he could answer "yes" to all or most of them. The overall theme was: what does it feel like to learn something significant? There are questions like: can I let myself be a real person and build meaningful relationships with these students, and can I help students nurture their curiosity and be creative when I put them in touch with resources? These questions might not be easy to answer but asking them might be almost as interesting as the answers. What does it feel like to be in my classroom? What are the students interested in? What are their motivations? How can I give the students room to explore and remain on good terms with teachers who may have their own opinions on what I should be teaching? These are some of the questions that I try to ask myself. For me, this has helped me connect in a more meaningful way to the students. Caring about what they are interested in has made me look at my teaching practices in a different way. For instance, I came to the realisation that my students were

less interested in the methods behind finding good sources and that most of them were happy just to find something they could integrate in their papers. That much may have been obvious for others, but being a librarian, I have always enjoyed the search just as much as the actual result. It reminds me of the saying: Only librarians like to search. Everyone else likes to find. It had never really occurred to me that the students would have skipped over the entire search process in order to find something they could use. Listening to the students tell me about their goals and seeing their mind maps describing their processes on academic writing changed the way I approach the students now.

According to Klipfel & Cook (2017), information literacy used to be just a

Showing genuine interest in what the students think and forming a relationship with them is a key to sparking their curiosity and engagement.

practical issue, a way to solve a problem. As time went by, information literacy became more concerned with the process. With that, information literacy became something more theoretical and conceptual. Information literacy became a more humanistic concept where we ask questions about how and why information is produced, something that is emphasised in ACRL's framework (Association of College & Research Libraries, 2015). Every now and then I like to remind myself that information literacy is not one single thing or issue, and that even among us in the library profession, there is no absolute consensus. That is one reason why I hardly ever use the phrase "information literacy" anymore. As Kapitzke (2001) pointed out, librarians need to shift their focus from looking at information literacy as a "single, dominant theory [...] to the social and cultural construction of its pedagogies and, in turn, their variable political and discursive outcomes" (p. 64). So – how do I do that? I do not have the answer key to that question, but I have come to believe that it all starts with facing some issues, no matter how much it deflates me. Coming to terms with the failure of my lecture-based efforts was the start of trying to renew myself. It was the key to unlocking new opportunities. Finding out that I needed to awaken the students' interest and curiosity meant valuing their opinions. Trying to get them to voice their opinions meant that I could no longer just enter a lecture hall and press my internal "play" button and deliver my lecture. This, in turn, meant that I had to give up some control. Why is it so hard to give up some control? Because it makes me more vulnerable. John Cleese is supposed to have said: "Nothing will

stop you from being creative so effectively as the fear of making a mistake”. That is one of the truest things I have heard. Fear of making a mistake, of not knowing the answer, of not seeming knowledgeable or professional, of losing that authority – this is all making the loss of the monologue in the lecture hall so nerve racking. Luckily, it is possible to overcome that fear, or at least controlling it to some extent.

In the famous book, *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (Freire & Ramos, 2000), Paulo Freire talked about the banking model. The banking model describes a way of thinking about education where the students are passive receivers of information. In Norway, we usually call this the empty bottle pedagogy. The teacher is handing out information that is received and stored in the student, like they were empty bottles or containers. Freire was highly critical of this way of teaching students. He found that if students themselves are not involved in the search for and development of knowledge, they will not feel ownership to the knowledge, and they will become oppressed victims that are not able to separate good and bad information.

For me, I would say that the first years of teaching, what I described earlier as being stuck on the circle line, was very much the banking model in action. I think it was when those nursing students woke me that I not only understood that teaching that way was ineffective and dull, but also that it had made me frustrated and that I inadvertently had conformed against my inner wishes and beliefs. I feel certain that, had I continued in the same way as before, I would have suffered from burnout long ago. This is not to say that I have been able to quit all teaching that is based on the banking model. When teaching the mechanics of searching, it is easy to fall back into that banking mode. The banking mode feels safe and well-known, and I think that is why it is so easy to get stuck in it. However, being aware of the fact makes it somewhat easier to prevent it from making myself a hostage again. I may still not have the full map of the tube, but I know some stations where I can get off.

A criticism of critical pedagogy and constructivism is the tendency to downplay the role of the teacher. If the teacher is to hand over power to the students, what do we need the teacher for? Freire (2000) made it clear that the point of levelling the power structures is not to make the teacher superfluous. Rather, the goal is to enhance the role of the teacher as the enabler, the wayfinder and supporter in the quest for knowledge construction. The dialogue and constructive debates are to help both student and teacher. My problem of having constructivist ideals is the time

limits and nature of the one-shot. If I am to be a good guide, a supporter and teammate for the students they need to trust me. If my students are to learn, they need to trust that I wish them well and that I am genuinely interested in their quest. How do I create that trust in 90 minutes? How do I create that trust if I am minimally involved in planning the assignments and many times cannot choose the timing of the one-shot? This is why I still believe in the two teaching approaches in our pedagogical platform. Being involved in the discussions and decisions concerning learning goals and assessments, either in team-teaching situations or the more work intensive tutor approach, means that the students tend to see me and the teacher as equals. According to Miller and Murillo (Miller & Murillo, 2012, p. 57) students ask their teachers for help rather than librarians because they feel that teachers are obliged to help them, whereas librarians do not have that same obligation. However, if the students see me as any other teacher, they may find it easier to ask me for help.

Heidi Jacobs (2016) wrote: *“Reflection has to be a habit of mind: we need to make considering what we do in the classroom and why and how we do what we do a regular part of our teaching lives. Moreover, we need to put our reflections into action so that we can stay in praxis, that dynamic space between theory and practice”* (p. 3). It is hard to disagree with that. Reflection can be a way of understanding yourself and the students, and it has been one of the methods I use when I feel myself getting stuck on the circle line again. Reflective practice is about examining an experience to process your thoughts and feelings to understand what happened. Taking a step back and looking at a particular class or method I used can sometimes help me understand why it worked or failed. Being a reflective practitioner *can* take a lot of time, and I think that is what keeps many from engaging with it more. However, it doesn't have to take all your time. Simply asking yourself questions like: why did I make the students do this assignment? What was the goal of that activity? How did it make me feel as a teacher? How did the students react? What non-verbal communication did I pick up? What is the connection between the activity and life in the real world? It can simply be to invite the students to share what they think or if they have had real life experiences. It is easy to ask them, and it can help them make the crucial connections between concepts in theory and practice. Zetterwall and Nienow (2019) described the reflective practice as a three step model: 1. What happened? 2. What does it mean? and 3. What's next? I think that is a good way to look at it.

As part of my master's thesis, I did an experiment which entailed weekly classes during a research course for radiography students. I used the book *Becoming a critically reflective teacher* by Brookfield (1995) as an

inspiration. Brookfield's Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) consists of five open-ended questions:

1. At what moment in class this week did you feel most engaged with what was happening?
2. At what moment in class this week were you most distanced from what was happening?
3. What action that anyone (teacher or student) took this week did you find most affirming or helpful?
4. What action that anyone took this week did you find most puzzling or confusing?
5. What about the class this week surprised you the most? (This could be about your own reactions to what went on, something someone did or something else that occurred.)

I used this every week, during the last five minutes of my class. I had a form online that could be filled out anonymous while sending a copy to the sender. At the opening of next week's class, I would sum up the answers on CIQ from the previous week. At the end of my part during the course, the students had to write up all their CIQ forms into a reflective summary of no more than half a page long – just to sum up what they had learned or what they had discovered and whether they thought that it would help them in their academic work from then on. I have never since had the opportunity to teach the same students for seven weeks in a row. However, I have found that the CIQ can also work on a one-shot experience, both for students and myself. The students have reported that reflecting on the class, even a single one, can help them connect to the ideas and activities better. For me, having some feedback in form of those CIQ forms can be of material help, especially in larger classes with up to 200 students, as it is difficult to gauge their interest level and how well they understand basic principles in such a large crowd.

Making reflection a part of my own learning process has not only helped me understand myself and my teaching processes better, it has also help me understand the students better. It need not take all your time. Use the small pauses in your classes for reflective student activity.

Building new tracks

One of my professional hobby horses is that librarians need more formalised teaching training. No map, remember? It would be natural to assume that there are variations between library schools in different countries, so I will not generalise too much, but at least in Norway, the library programmes do not emphasise pedagogy. Given that more and more librarians teach as part of their work in academic libraries, it is strange that it has not been given more of a priority here. Many, if not most, of the teaching librarians I know in Norway have little or no formal training, something that others also have noted (Buchanan & McDonough, 2014, p. 1). The fortunate ones have been offered a kind of university teaching training programme, traditionally about 10 to 15 ETCS courses that deal with some theory and some practical assignments as well as a final in the form of a report and oral exam. Many librarians only have teaching as part of their jobs, and therefore they also have the disadvantage of not teaching nearly enough to systematically improve their methods. I believe that if librarians are to be taken seriously as educators, and seen as real partners for faculty members, we need to up the effort in our approaches. I believe that we need more formal training, we need to learn from each other, for instance via peer supervision and discussion, and we need to get more practical training in the classrooms. I have, in many ways, been very fortunate. I got to take the teacher training course at my university, alongside faculty members. I had good mentors at work and family members who were fantastic teachers themselves. I had a flexible and inspiring manager who encouraged me to pursue teaching and he redistributed some work tasks to move even further away from the generalist toward the specialist view among the library staff. Even with all these advantages, becoming a better teacher, a more reflective practitioner has been hard work with many frustrations and setbacks. I have found, though, that the library profession has been publishing ever more frequently about pedagogy, and the knowledge is there for the taking. If we can manage to create a culture for learning and for pedagogic development among ourselves, anyone can find pieces of the tube map.

Why get on the tube without a map?

Why would anyone get on the tube without a map? Why put oneself in that position? Simon Sinek (2011) argued that one should always start with the “why”, and then the “how” and “what” would follow. I think I would be lying if I said that I began with my “why”. I got on the teaching tube in

the first place because I got a job. I'm afraid my starting point was that I needed a non-temporary job. I knew that I liked to teach, and I felt like it would be a good match for me – but it was only much later that I discovered my “why”. I think this is far from a unique story. I know plenty of librarians who fell into teaching because they got a job that just happened to have some teaching attached to it.

Teaching is never done. It is never something I can check off my to-do list and then move on. More importantly, I do not think that I am looking for a final destination. The journey is the destination, to use a cliché. For me, teaching may have started as just a part of my job, but it has become much more than that. I believe that librarians are in a unique position in a university. The sometimes lonely and frustrating existence on the library island is troubling and unsatisfying, but as long as we have a good connection to the mainland, it can also give us privileges. Students have confided in me and admitted their struggles with literature searching and academic writing much more than they would have to their other teachers. I have no power over their final marks, and so they tell me about their frustration with being in the liminal spaces or failure to understand what they are supposed to do. The inside, but outside position can help us create safe spaces where the students can explore and construct new knowledge free from the watchful eyes of faculty members. My “why” is to help students discover their path to knowledge. That might sound a little too high-minded and pompous, but helping students discover their path can take many shapes and forms. When students try to develop deep reading skills, I hope that they use them when they encounter something they do not fully understand. When we discuss the quality of a scholarly article, I hope that they see the difference between assertions and facts. When I teach the mechanics of searching, I hope that the students see the difference between looking strategically for something as opposed to finding something because an algorithm gave it to them. My goal is to avoid the normative approach so that students feel the need to hide their real habits and opinions from me. I want to help students understand that information is far from neutral, and that the sources they use are a result of ideology, tradition, politics, and power. I want to help them see that how we think and what we write is a result of our upbringing, our families and friends, and our education.

I want to be a better teacher. Even though I believe I have come quite far from my starting point, just showing students how to use the library catalogue, I still have many more tracks to discover. I have long ago stopped looking for the perfect track or the perfect station. They do not

exist. However, I am still looking for more ways to collaborate with teachers to make more meaningful experiences for students, I still try to get information literacy integrated in to course plans and on a system level, and I am always on the lookout for new articles, books, and conferences to challenge myself to do better. This is what motivated me to get on the teaching tube, even without a map, in the first place, and it is what has kept me on this tube ever since. Maybe the map was less important to me than I expected it to be? Maybe it was unrealistic to insist on a map in such a changing landscape? I haven't got a clear answer to this.

As I mentioned earlier, the idealist and pragmatist within me are constantly fighting. Sometimes the idealist wins, and sometimes the pragmatist wins. As long as it is not always the pragmatist, I think it will have to do.

There is no one track that fits every teacher and every student. I do not have a favourite track myself. Rather, I have picked up pieces at every station and tried them out. Some have been discarded, some have been carried on to the next station. Every teacher must find his or her own journey and not be afraid to try something new.

Enjoying the ride

I firmly believe that every teacher must find his or her own journey, but I do think we could make this journey easier and more enjoyable for new teaching librarians. Making pedagogy and didactics a more prominent part of the education for librarians would be a good starting point. (One should never underestimate the power of having a solid foundation.) National and international collaborations to get information literacy recognised as a concept worthy of a place in every course description would help librarians have a little more leverage overall within higher education. More free webinars, digital conferences and courses on teaching for librarians could help those who are new or those who have few teaching colleagues get more of a network.

If there is one thing, however, that I feel is more important than anything else, it is that librarians who teach should feel free to play around with ideas and to test new ideas. No amount of reading and conferences can make up for practical training, and the more we defy the notion of us

being service staff, the more we challenge ourselves to dare test new theories and ideas, the more we will grow. Even the times when you end up with a train wreck kind of a lesson, you have built a new track for yourself.

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