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Exploring Librarians' Teaching Roles through Metaphor

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Erratum

In Andrea Baer's article "Exploring Librarians' Teaching Roles through Metaphor," *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 21, 1 (2021), the second complete paragraph on page 67 has a formatting error. The passage that begins "Under the spell of metaphor" should properly have been set as a block quotation. It is a direct quotation from Donald A. Schön, "Generative Metaphor: A Perspective on Problem-Setting in Social Policy," in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Andrew Ortony (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 138. *portal* regrets the error.
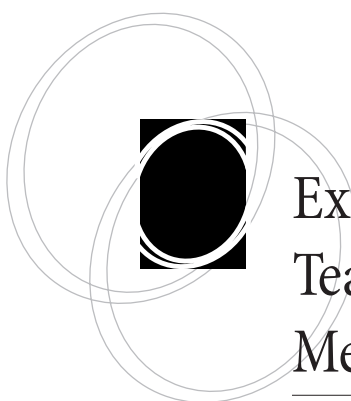
Exploring Librarians' Teaching Roles through Metaphor

Andrea Baer

abstract: As librarians' instructional roles continue to evolve, metaphor can be a powerful tool through which to reflect on and at times to reframe librarians' evolving educational roles and pedagogical approaches, as they consider beliefs and assumptions about teaching and learning and about their unfolding work and identities. This article explores this potential by examining professional documents on librarians' teaching, discussing empirical research on metaphor as a tool for teacher development, examining metaphors that librarians have sometimes used to describe their pedagogical work, and sharing the author's experiences facilitating a librarian workshop on metaphor and librarians' teaching roles.

Introduction

As conceptions of information literacy continue to evolve, so too do librarians' teaching roles and views of themselves as educators. This development has catalyzed a growing interest in reflective practice (reflection on one's actions and daily practice as an aid to learning), and more specifically greater attention to critical reflective practice. Critical reflective practice, as described by Stephen Brookfield, is a process of inquiry in which one considers experiences and ideas through multiple lenses to better recognize and investigate assumptions and thus to inform teaching practice.[1]

Because assumptions, which can operate on individual, collective, and societal levels, are often difficult to recognize, techniques that open new ways of seeing are vital to critical reflective practice. Among the approaches to critical reflective library practice is that of metaphor as a tool for serious thought. As Anne-Marie Deitering, Merinda Kaye Hensley, and Wendy Holliday explored in their 2016 European Conference on Information Literacy workshop "Metaphor and Critical Reflective Practice," metaphor can be valuable for critical reflective teaching practices because it opens new ways of

seeing things that have become routine or seemingly ordinary.[2] Such reflective work illustrates Donald Schön's concept of generative metaphors, those that generate new viewpoints and understandings through reframing problems.[3] As engagement with metaphor enables new perspectives and reveals dimensions of concepts or experiences that previously may have been invisible, individuals can often better reframe problems and develop new approaches to them.

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This use of metaphor for reframing and reflection is relevant to teacher librarians, whose highly social and relational work can be greatly strengthened through ongoing critical reflection. This article explores critical analysis and use of metaphor as a means for librarians to engage in critical reflective practice, as they consider beliefs and assumptions about teaching and learning and about their evolving pedagogical roles and identities.

The article begins by discussing librarians' changing instructional roles, which point toward the potential value of critical reflective practice and metaphor for the profession. These changing functions also provide a lens through which to consider empirical research on metaphor as a tool for teacher development. Such work points to how metaphor can support librarians in reflecting on and at times reframing their evolving instructional roles and pedagogical approaches. The article then examines several metaphors that librarians have sometimes used to describe their work as teachers. This analysis illustrates how inquiry into metaphor can foster critical reflective teaching practice. Such metaphors may open productive inquiry about librarians' teaching more generally, as well as about beliefs and actions that influence their relationships to and interactions with students and fellow educators. Finally, the author shares her experience facilitating a library workshop on metaphor and librarians' teaching roles. All of this work points to how metaphor can help teaching librarians (as well as other educators) to uncover assumptions and beliefs about teaching and learning and at times to reframe their instructional experiences and approaches.

Librarians' Teaching Roles

Librarians have long occupied a unique place in education that comes with distinct opportunities and challenges. For example, librarians possess an interdisciplinary perspective and an ability to work across disciplinary lines, which they frequently apply to helping students develop transferable skills that apply across contexts. In light of this, Michelle Holschuh Simmons has described librarians as "interdisciplinary discourse mediators" who are uniquely positioned to help students and traditional teaching faculty in teaching and learning about disciplinary discourse and practices.[4] At the same time, the abbreviated nature of one-shot sessions and the fact that most librarians are not the instructors of record often limits their involvement in curricular planning and other educational initiatives (though their work in these areas has increased over the years).

Recently, librarians have become more assertive about their pedagogical expertise and, largely because of this, have further expanded their teaching collaborations and partnerships. This increase in working with faculty is reflected in such professional documents as the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education" and the "Roles and Strengths of Teaching Librarians," both of which describe librarians as teaching partners who play a key role in higher education.[5] The ACRL Framework's introduction, for example, indicates that librarians' pedagogical work extends far beyond teaching stand-alone library sessions. Rather, "Librarians have a greater responsibility in identifying core ideas within their own knowledge domain that can extend learning for students, in creating a new cohesive curriculum for information literacy, and in collaborating more extensively with faculty." Similarly, the ACRL document "Roles and Strengths of Teaching Librarians" describes the wide range of instructional work in which librarians engage. As the document authors write,

> Teaching librarians have increasingly explored innovative and creative roles within their institutions, and the document is intended to reflect the myriad activities, projects, and responsibilities that teaching librarians from a wide variety of institutions may find themselves taking on at different points in their work life and throughout their careers, as well as the characteristics and strengths needed to flourish within these roles.[6]

The "Roles and Strengths" document goes on to describe seven key roles of teaching librarians: advocate, coordinator, instructional designer, lifelong learning, leader, teacher, and teaching partner. The authors make an explicit connection between these roles and the ACRL Framework. As they write, "In the spirit of the Framework, the task force intended to present a more holistic perspective of the range of work done by teaching librarians rather than a list of skills needed to do a specific job."[7]

Such descriptions of librarians' pedagogical work, while rightly acknowledging their unique expertise and positions, often remain to some extent aspirational. Engaging in teaching and learning in an extensive and integrated way is a long-term goal, one that involves not only librarians' embracing these roles but also environments in which such engagement is valued. While librarians can do much to foster such conditions, they are beyond any single individual's or group's control. As librarians recognize, their teaching is influenced not only by individual experiences and perspectives, but also by professional and institutional structures and

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cultures and by interpersonal relationships and partnerships. These structures, cultures, and relational dynamics often become so embedded in everyday experiences that they are rendered invisible. That invisibility tends to reinforce the status quo, in which librarians have often been on the sidelines of long-term curricular planning and instructional

initiatives. Metaphor can be one avenue through which the normally invisible status quo becomes visible and thus can be examined critically and constructively, to inform professional and teaching practices.[8]

As librarians' work moves increasingly in the directions that documents like the ACRL Framework and the "Roles and Strengths of Teaching Librarians" describe, librarians can prevent burnout and frustration by remembering that shifting roles and relationships involve a dynamic and most often gradual process that is influenced by numerous factors. Part of that process involves librarians' continually evolving teacher identities and their relationships to follow educators. Metaphor can be a powerful tool for librarians in exploring those unfolding roles and relationships.

Metaphors, Critical Practice, and "Assumption Hunting"

Because metaphors encourage individuals to view ideas or experiences from different angles, they can often help to unearth beliefs and assumptions that lie beneath the surface and that influence thinking and actions in previously unrecognized ways. As mentioned earlier, such investigative and reflective work is what Stephen Brookfield refers to as "critical practice," a process of "identifying assumptions and reflecting critically on them in order to inform teaching practice." Assumptions are important to investigate because they powerfully shape thoughts and actions, often invisibly. In Brookfield's words, assumptions "are guides to truth embedded in our mental outlooks" and "the daily rules that frame how we make decisions and take actions."[9]

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But assumptions are often difficult to recognize, particularly on one's own. (The very nature of an assumption is that it is often overlooked.) To identify assumptions, individuals and groups need to consider their perspectives and experiences through different lenses. This process frequently requires exchanging ideas with others. Reflective practice is thus largely a shared effort, for in a community, we are better positioned to consider others' ways of seeing and experiencing. As Brookfield writes, "Although critical reflection often begins alone, it is ultimately a collective endeavor. We need colleagues to help us know what our assumptions are and to help us change the structures of power so that democratic actions and values are rewarded, both within and outside our institutions."[10] One part of that reflective work can occur through metaphor.

Generative Metaphor

Metaphors provide new lenses through which to consider things that are seemingly familiar, and so they can help individuals and groups to identify beliefs and assumptions that operate below the surface of awareness. In doing so, metaphors can help people

to reframe problems and develop new approaches to them. As mentioned previously, Donald Schön calls such metaphors "generative." For Schön, a generative metaphor involves a process of "problem setting" and "frame restructuring." Through the reframing that metaphors facilitate, "new perceptions, explanations, and inventions" are constructed.[11] As Schön writes, "Problem settings are mediated . . . by the 'stories' people tell about troublesome situations—stories in which they describe what is wrong and what needs fixing."[12] Often these stories are reflected in metaphors.

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Schön illustrates this in the common description of social services as "fragmented" and in need of remedy through "coordination." From another perspective, these "fragmented" services could be viewed as "autonomous," a term that tends to have more positive connotations. Schön's analysis of this metaphor helps to illustrate the process of generative metaphor. As he explains, "Fragmented services become problematic when they are seen as the shattering of a prior integration. The services are seen as something like a vase that was once whole and now is broken."

Under the spell of metaphor, it appears obvious that fragmentation is bad and coordination, good. But this sense of clarity depends very much on the metaphor remaining tacit. Once we have constructed the metaphor that generates the problem-setting story, we can ask, for example, whether the services appropriate to the present situation are just those that were formerly integrated, and whether there may be benefits as well as costs associated with the lack of integration. In short, we can spell out the metaphor, elaborate the assumptions that flow from it, and examine their appropriateness in the situation.[13]

This concept of reframing is a common principle of cognitive psychology that can be applied to numerous circumstances. For example, an individual might view a difficult task or challenge as a problem to be eliminated or might reframe it as a door to new learning. A person might view conflict as combat or might consider it an opening for constructive dialogue. While both ways of framing provide important insight into the experience at hand, considering these different lenses can help people contemplate different perspectives and approaches that can inform their actions. Metaphor can facilitate this reframing process largely because it makes the familiar unfamiliar and thus opens new ways of looking and seeing.

Metaphor and Reflective Teaching Practice

Metaphor, as defined by Dictionary.com, is (1) "a figure of speech in which a term or phrase is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable in order to suggest a resemblance" and (2) "something used, or regarded as being used, to represent something else; emblem; symbol."[14] People use metaphors regularly, often without thinking of them as such. As George Lakoff and Mark Johnson illustrate in their seminal book *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), even such everyday phrases as "I am feeling up" or "I am feeling down" are metaphorical in nature.[15]

As idiomatic language like this suggests, metaphors depend on shared understandings. They are social and cultural and do not always translate well from one culture or language to another. Being in a good mood does not mean literally occupying a higher physical elevation, but in Western culture, greater height is generally associated with a positive change (for example, an increase in a test score or in one's bank account is generally perceived as positive). Similarly, the metaphor "a light bulb went on," used to describe a moment of realization, will make sense to most native English speakers but may confuse those less familiar with English colloquialisms.

Lakoff and Johnson also explore how metaphors can reveal aspects of our thinking that are not apparent, while obscuring other dimensions of a concept or phenomenon.[6] Returning to the metaphor "a light bulb went on," this phrase might describe learning as a moment of refreshing and sudden clarity. While this metaphor presents learning as revelatory and inspiring, it draws attention away from the gradual acquisition of knowledge and understanding that likely led to the "light bulb moment." The light bulb metaphor also diverts scrutiny from the fact that a sudden realization may not be correct or complete, and that uncertainty and ambivalence can also play an important role in the learning process. The light bulb metaphor illustrates that any single metaphor is limited. Exploring multiple metaphors can reveal more aspects of a concept, a phenomenon, or an experience. Discovering the limits in the metaphors we use can shed light on aspects of our thinking that are likewise limited, so that we might shift or expand our viewpoints.

Preservice Teachers and Metaphors as Reflective Pedagogical Tools

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Research from the field of teacher education development suggests metaphor's potential for both new and experienced teachers as they reflect on and further develop their pedagogical approaches, roles, and identities. Metaphor can be an especially useful tool for preservice teachers as they navigate political forces and other external factors that impact curricula and that are largely beyond their control. Education professors Heather Lynch and Teresa Fisher-Ari's work offers compelling evidence that metaphor can be a powerful way for teachers to develop a greater sense of flexibility and agency in relation to their teaching.[17]

Lynch and Fischer-Ari integrated metaphor exercises into their teacher education curriculum to encourage preservice teachers' reflection on their evolving understandings of programs of study.[18] The researchers observed important changes in the participants' understandings and dispositions over time. Though future teachers' perceptions did not change in a straight and linear fashion, they generally moved toward a greater sense of teacher agency in developing curriculum and toward an understanding of a course of study as more flexible. Relatedly, participants tended to increase their comprehension of teaching and learning as dynamic processes in which both the teacher and the students

play important and interactive roles. Metaphor illustrated the preservice teachers' understandings in ways that otherwise might be challenging to articulate, as is apparent in the metaphor examples that will be discussed shortly.

Lynch and Fischer-Ari characterize preservice teachers' views of curricula and curriculum construction as fitting within two continua: agency (that of the teachers versus that of external forces, such as standardized curricula or institutional expectations) and pliancy (flexibility in the creation and implementation of a course of study versus a static and rigid process).[19] This finding may interest many instruction librarians, given the nature of their pedagogical work and their institutional positions. Though the work of preservice teachers and schoolteachers differs in many respects from that of librarians, both groups must negotiate between their own goals and approaches and those of other educators and administrators, who often possess a higher official or social rank.

Some of the more nuanced curriculum metaphors that the study participants developed are particularly illustrative of how teachers can negotiate between their own goals and expectations and those of others, even as they navigate "politically charged contexts" that may at times encourage a "passive consumption of curriculum." Such metaphors can be catalysts for teachers to recognize themselves as agents who can bring their own creativity and flexibility to teaching, even when external conditions impose limitations.[20]

Contrast, for example, the following metaphors from two study participants: that of curriculum as like the weather (continually changing and requiring adaptation) and that of curriculum as a static prescription. In the first participant's metaphor, because the weather "is constantly changing," "we are forced to change, adapt, and find ways to make it work for us." As Lynch and Fischer-Ari observe, this metaphor reflects that "there are externalities that are not negotiable (much like the weather) but we have flexibility to interact with it in ways that are relevant, agentive, and responsive."[21] In bringing flexibility and responsiveness to educational goals that are often unpredictable and subject to change, this teacher asserts agency, while simultaneously embracing that some things are outside a teacher's control.

In contrast, according to another future teacher's prescription metaphor, curriculum is something that "is written down for the preparation and administration of a lesson" to achieve "a desired outcome—learning!"[22] The prescription metaphor suggests that there is little to no flexibility in teaching, a condition that limits the teacher's agency. The weather metaphor may help to reframe this perspective, as it emphasizes dynamic and organic aspects of teaching and curricula.

Looking at different metaphors side-by-side may be a productive exercise. Comparing metaphors can help individuals or groups to identify beliefs and assumptions that are embedded in a shared discourse.

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For example, when the metaphors "curriculum is like weather" and "curriculum is a prescription" are placed beside each other, we might find some truth and value in each, as both highlight some aspects of a phenomenon while detracting from others. "Curriculum is like weather" calls attention to the importance of being sensitive and responsive to context and environment and to accepting the unpredictable factors that

influence teaching, while it deemphasizes the more predictable and structured elements of education (for example, students' previous learning or the curricula and standards that often help to structure teaching). In contrast, "curriculum is a prescription" foregrounds the more structured and predictable elements of teaching, while seemingly ignoring the contextual and social nature of learning. A comparison of the weather and prescription metaphors can open inquiry into beliefs or assumptions about the roles of structures, standards, flexibility, and responsiveness in teaching. All have a valuable part to play, especially when considered in relation to one another. Generative metaphors can foster this kind of relational and reflective thinking.

While Lynch and Fischer-Ari's study centered on analysis of participants' metaphors, the process of metaphor construction also deserves attention. In an earlier study, Aisling Leavy, Fiona McSorley, and Lisa Boté examined preservice teachers' reflections on their own practice of metaphor construction over time.[23] (This study was prompted largely by evidence that future teachers may not develop new views of teaching and learning during teacher education courses unless urged to engage with their current beliefs.)[24] Study participants (preservice elementary schoolteachers from one Irish and one American university) compared the teaching metaphors that they constructed at different stages in a semester. Participants were first presented with the task to create a metaphor of teaching and learning at the beginning of the semester. At the end of the semester, they modified and reflected on those metaphors. During their revision process, the students identified factors that their initial metaphors had failed to address. They also received peer feedback on how to expand their metaphors to apply to those elements.[25] Participants' revised metaphors generally demonstrated more sophisticated understandings of teaching and learning. Constructivist views of learning, according to which learners construct their own understanding of the world by experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences, increased (reportedly from 24 percent to 44 percent). Behaviorist metaphors, on the other hand, which imply that behaviors are learned through conditioning, or a stimulus-response interaction with the environment, remained common by the end of the year—at 42 percent.[26] The use of self-referential metaphors for teaching and learning also decreased, suggesting that many participants increased their focus on factors beyond themselves that influence teaching and learning.[27]

As Leavy, McSorley, and Boté's findings suggest, reflection on how certain metaphors do or do not work and consideration of different metaphors may help teachers to identify implicit and explicit beliefs that influence their teaching, whether in useful or in limiting ways. Such inquiry can be a catalyst for more engaged teaching. Metaphors like these can provide productive ways of framing teaching and learning, while also helping teachers to uncover beliefs that may hinder their pedagogy and to consider ways to reframe their thinking.

Metaphors for Library Instructional Work

Literature on librarians' teaching identities and on faculty-librarian relations suggest that librarians, like preservice or practicing schoolteachers, often experience the conditions of teaching information literacy as rigid and involving a lack of agency.[28] This inflexibility is often reflected in professional discourse, including metaphors. While this

experience is influenced by a constellation of factors that are outside any single individual's control, generative metaphors that foster mental reframing may help librarians to develop a greater sense of agency as educators and at times to challenge a status quo that reinforces the notion of information literacy as rigid, formulaic, or impersonal.

Metaphors of flexibility and agency are also evident in much of information literacy literature, particularly in discussions about the ACRL Framework, as Wendy Holliday observes in her article "Frame Works: Using Metaphor in Theory and Practice in Information Literacy."[29] Drawing on Lakoff and Johnson's work on metaphor, Holliday observes that discourse about the ACRL Framework often makes use of spatial and building metaphors that, when unpacked, can help librarians to "deepen

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our understandings and practices of information literacy."[30] Interestingly, the Framework metaphors that Holliday explores often connect to the concepts of flexibility and agency in teaching that Lynch and Fischer-Ari identified in their analysis of preservice teachers' metaphors for curricula.

For example, terms from the Framework such as "frame" and "threshold" evoke images of structures, spaces, and boundaries. Reflecting on related conference discussions, Holliday recalls colleagues' images of "building frames, scaffolding, and a series of windows." Such structures have "a sense of solidity" (that is, firmness), but they are also surrounded by open spaces (that is, flexibility). As she continues, "The frame provides a structure that is foundational," but "the final results, when you add the siding, paint, adornments, roof, etc., can look much different. A common frame might result in two different buildings, each suited to a particular environment and human needs, and which might reflect a specific cultural tradition or personal aesthetic."[31]

This metaphor shares similarities with some of the curriculum metaphors that Lynch and Fisher-Ari discuss. For example, the metaphor "curriculum as a quilt that you create with your students" similarly indicates a process of creation, one that will likely involve multiple people. The metaphor "curriculum is like the weather," like Holliday's building metaphors, points to the contextual nature of teaching. All these metaphors foreground flexible, open-ended, and context-dependent pedagogical approaches, which contrast a view of teaching or curricula as rigid or prescriptive.

The Library Classroom and the "Gift of Time"

Much like metaphors for the teaching and learning process, the metaphorical language that librarians use to describe their instructional work and roles can be a catalyst for constructive critical reflection. One example comes from Heidi Julien and Jen Pecoskie's investigation into librarians' perceptions of their teaching roles.[32] The researchers found that librarians' ideas are greatly influenced by campus relations and more specifically by their views of their relationships to disciplinary teaching faculty. Though the authors do not focus specifically on the metaphorical elements of their findings, they give consider-

able attention to the language that librarians used to describe interactions with faculty. This language, often metaphorical, frequently reflects unequal power relations and a sense of lacking agency.

Julien and Pecoskie draw on Erving Goffman's work on gift and reciprocal exchange cycles, according to which power relations are reflected in how presents are offered and received.[33] They observe that librarians often describe a faculty member's invitation to teach a session on library use as a "gift of time" that faculty grant them. This meta-

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phorical language suggests that the librarian is indebted to a faculty member who possesses greater power, rather than viewing the relationship as reciprocal and equal. It also foregrounds the interaction between the faculty member and the librarian, while giving limited attention to students. One interviewee, for example, stated, "We're at the mercy of the faculty member . . . will they or won't they allow us that precious 50 minutes?"[34] In this instance, the faculty member appears to hold all the power and to decide whether to offer "the gift of time." The interviewed librarian fails to consider the "gift of time" that he or she gives to the faculty member and the students, but such a view would reflect the librarian's valuing of his or her own time and skill, as well as an acknowledgment of students' role in this scenario.

Another interviewee expressed the "gift of time" as something that librarians must earn: "You work very hard to earn that time they've given you." This process of earning "the gift of time" was also described as a struggle in which librarians must sell their services. As another participant commented, "The hardest part of the battle is getting the faculty members to buy in and give you the time out of their class."[35] The image of battle contrasts with that of a partnership formed by shared goals. The metaphor of "buy-in" (a term that is commonplace in the professional library discourse) implies that the librarian holds a lower position of power and needs to "win over" the faculty member before a more reciprocal relationship can be established.

"Gift of time" and "buy-in" metaphors will likely be familiar to many academic librarians. Over the years, in conversations with colleagues about Julien and Pecoskie's findings about "gift of time" language, fellow librarians frequently recognize how such metaphors describe their own and their colleagues' experiences and language use. The author has also recognized "gift of time" metaphors in her own thinking about her relationship to teaching faculty. Metaphors like this, which imply a sense of deference or a lack of agency and value, reflect not only librarians' individual perspectives but also unequal institutional structures and social relations that have a long history. Institutional and interpersonal dynamics do not change easily or quickly, but they can be challenged and can gradually shift (as is already evident in librarians' evolving roles as teachers and as partners in teaching and research).

Julien and Pecoskie conclude that one way librarians can have agency and reciprocity in librarian-faculty relations is by demonstrating their expertise. Though the authors do not go into detail about what such demonstrations involve,[36] their research implies that an essential part of challenging unequal librarian-faculty power relations is for

librarians to become more aware of the language (and the metaphors) that they use to describe their work, their roles, and their relationships with other educators. By examin-

ing that language (which is often metaphorical) and considering the beliefs or assumptions that it can reveal, librarians can grow their awareness of their teaching practices and roles and, when useful, can reframe how they approach that work.

The potential for reframing through metaphor is evident in Julien and Pecoskie's interviews. One interviewee, for example, described an interaction with a faculty member in terms of "something that we can work on together," a phrase that expresses a sense of inclusivity and membership. This interviewee noted that librarians' relationships to faculty are evolving, even if that process is slow: there has already

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been a "change in librarianship generally, from the servant to the colleague . . . to more of an integral partner in the education process . . . We certainly aren't there yet, but I think that we're farther along the road."[37] Remembering that this is a gradual process, one that librarians might envision as a journey "along the road," can help librarians take a longer view and understand any single experience within a larger context. Such shifts in language (including metaphorical language) not only reflect changing perspectives but also can impact librarians' actions. (Lakoff and Johnson have similarly argued that metaphor not only mirrors thought but also shapes thinking and action.)[38]

Concluding Reflections from a Metaphor Workshop

As librarians' instructional work continues to evolve, they look to support teaching and learning through a widening range of activities and partnerships, and continue to reshape their roles and relationships to other groups and institutional structures. As these processes unfold, metaphor may be a productive tool for engaging in the critical reflection and "assumption hunting" needed to explore and honor our pedagogical philosophies and to pursue our educational goals. Given metaphor's potential for unearthing hidden assumptions, it may be especially valuable for examining instructional roles that are inevitably influenced by institutional cultures and structures and by traditional practices and norms.

The author's recent experience facilitating a conference workshop on metaphor and librarians' teaching roles supports this notion. The relationship between metaphor and reflective practice is a relatively new area of inquiry for her, so she entered the workshop room uncertain of how generative metaphor would prove in examining librarians' instructional roles. She was struck by the rich and constructive conversations, enthusiasm, and creativity that emerged and came away believing that metaphor can be even more valuable for reflective teaching practice than she had initially thought. The large majority of the metaphors discussed in this section surfaced during the short 75-minute

workshop. The author often expounds further on these metaphors, considering ideas that were suggested during the workshop as well as additional potential meanings and interpretations.

The author began the session by introducing participants to much of the theory and research presented in this article. Participants engaged in a series of small and large group discussions in which they generated and reflected on metaphors for teaching and learning. (See the Appendix for the workshop worksheet, which includes the discussion and activity prompts.) Participants created and unpacked rich metaphors, some for teaching and learning more generally and some for librarians' instructional work. Interestingly, the metaphors discussed in this section share a notable parallel with those of the preservice teachers in Lynch and Fischer-Ari's study: in both instances, the themes of agency and flexibility in teaching appear key to teachers' instructional roles.

The theme of agency was particularly evident in metaphors for human relationships and interactions. Some metaphors suggested agency or power as held predominantly by one person (for example, a course instructor, a librarian teacher, or a student), while other metaphors depicted agency as shared and fostered by reciprocity and interconnectedness.

Consider, for example, the following metaphor for teaching: "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't force it to drink." In this metaphor, the horse is analogous to a student, and the one leading is the (teacher) librarian. This phrase suggests that both the teacher and the student have some degree of choice and power, but neither is mutually exclusive, and the two exist in relationship to each other. It also implies that the teacher possesses the main source of knowledge and can guide students to what they need, while the students must ultimately accept what is offered to benefit from it.

In many instances, this may be a useful and accurate way to understand a pedagogical moment. The "leading-a-horse-to-water" metaphor acknowledges that both teachers and students have agency and ideally work together. It also can encourage teachers to challenge a common but misguided reflex to self-blame and place full responsibility on themselves when students appear disengaged or unable to grasp important concepts or skills. On the other hand, as workshop participants discussed, the "leading-a-horse-to-water" metaphor is founded on some assumptions that can obscure other possibilities. Perhaps there are many ways of knowing and of approaching the problem at hand, and students could find an alternative path that leads them to that destination. Or maybe that water is not a destination that students would choose or that meets their learning needs. The expectations for domestic horses are also significant: they are supposed to be obedient and to follow their leader's instructions, but being "obedient" often stands in the way of critical thinking. In many situations, students may learn or benefit more from creating their own path or meandering to another source of nourishment.

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These alternative metaphors reflect another central theme: flexibility. Such metaphors may prompt teachers to consider the degrees of structure and choice that they present

to students. In many situations, students may need more guided direction toward a specific destination, while in other instances, they may benefit from taking a different path or even moving toward a different goal.

The "leading-a-horse-to-water" metaphor is one example of how teaching and learning were often described during the workshop in terms of journeys and movement. Movement tended to also reflect agency and flexibility in the learning process. Consider, for example, the image of a two-way street. The phrase "two-way street" may call to mind reciprocity and underscore possibilities for students and teachers to work together toward a shared goal. In contrast to a one-way street, on which there is only one correct direction and sometimes only one lane, a two-way street offers another possible direction that a student might take and presents the possibility for a student and teacher to meet when they have moved in different directions.

A two-way street, however, still offers limited options and restricted movement. In some cases, having fewer options for travel may make sense: it is harder to get lost or make a wrong turn that could lead to unnecessary confusion. On the other hand, "wrong turns" may lead one to an unexpected and valuable discovery. Often a woodland with multiple hiking paths and no singular destination (a more flexible approach) may provide a richer learning experience for students, though getting lost or meandering endlessly could also lead to paralyzing frustration.

Teachers considering less structured learning environments and experiences might use a metaphor like hiking paths in a forest to reflect for themselves or with students on potential "pitfalls" and "dead ends." Such an exercise might help teachers and students to brainstorm "stepping-stones" and other supports for students during their travels. Much like the leading-a-horse-to-water metaphor, the two-way street and woodland path metaphors might be catalysts for teachers to explore ways to affirm student choice and agency, while also providing a helpful degree of guidance and structure.

The workshop metaphors discussed thus far focused on the student-teacher relationship. Other metaphors, however, concentrated on librarians' connections to other educators, such as teaching faculty and administrators. Here, too, the themes of agency and flexibility are key. Two contrasting metaphors that generated especially fruitful discussion about library instructional roles were "selling" information literacy and advocacy for information literacy. The former suggests that information literacy is a product to sell, while the latter implies that information literacy education matters for many people and is therefore worth championing. In the "selling" metaphor, librarians are positioned as salespeople who attempt to get "buy-in" from a customer (in this case, teaching faculty). As in Julien and Pecoskie's interviews,[39] the librarian occupies a lower position of power and focuses on the goal of increasing sales and proving the library's independent value. Advocacy, in contrast, works from the understanding that information literacy is a shared goal of librarians and other educators, though librarians often initiate the related conversations and collaborations.

Both metaphors reveal truths and realities about librarians' instructional work, and neither is mutually exclusive. Marketing and promoting their services are key parts of librarians' advocacy work. But the association that people tend to make between selling and personal gain obscures the larger importance of information literacy and student learning and of what librarians bring to information literacy education. Drawing from

both metaphors may help librarians to frame their roles as educators who possess a greater sense of agency and purpose, as they keep in focus the larger goals of information literacy education that they share with other teachers. This increased sense of agency and purpose may be actualized in subtle but significant ways (for example, walking into a library session knowing that we are offering our own "gift" and thus feeling more at ease and more responsive to students' learning needs). Feeling more powerful and resolute may even about bring about larger projects (for example, exploring more sustainable approaches to the one-shot sessions or initiating a faculty learning community on information literacy integration).

> **Marketing and promoting their services are key parts of librarians' advocacy work.**

As such examples suggest, metaphors as tools for critical reflection can help librarians become more intentional in the range of instructional work that they do. At the same time, when everyday routines and busy schedules characterize the workweek, it can be especially challenging to slow down and to recognize where our own assumptions or habits may stand in the way of the pedagogical roles and approaches to which we may aspire. Using metaphor to explore our instructional efforts can be one further avenue for this work. Metaphor may open new ways of seeing and approaching challenges in teaching that previously were not in view, as we use metaphors to reframe experiences and the options that are available. As Lynch and Fischer-Ari state, "The main task of the metaphor is to create space for ideas, which are not easily wrapped around language accessible to the thinker/speaker, a construct particularly beneficial to inchoate and emerging ideas and beliefs."[40]

Metaphor offers one means for reflecting on teaching from a new angle, as librarians unearth beliefs and assumptions that influence their work and as they consider new lenses and frames through which to view their instructional roles. This article may help to spark further explorations into using metaphor to foster reflective teaching practices and to further build community among librarians and fellow educators.

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Appendix

Brainstorming Workshop Handout

"Teaching Is Like ...": Metaphor as a Tool for Exploring Librarians' Teaching Roles

Opening activity: Metaphors for teaching and learning

Brainstorm metaphorical language that you use to describe teaching or

learning. For example:

- growth
- stuck place
- threshold
- brilliant
- performance

Write/doodle/draw about your metaphor. Then share your metaphor with a partner. What does it reflect about your view of or experiences with teaching and learning?

Reflection on Teaching/Learning Metaphor Brainstorm

Brainstorm individually for a moment. Then discussion/brainstorm with 1–2 others.
   Reflect on the metaphors about teaching/learning that you generated at the beginning of this session.

- What do they reflect about your perspective?
- Do they reveal certain beliefs or assumptions?
- Could alternative metaphors often another useful lens?

Metaphor Brainstorm: Instructional Roles

Brainstorm individually for a moment. Then discussion/brainstorm with 1–2 others.
   Think of your various activities and roles as an educator/instruction librarian. Do certain metaphors come to mind? (It may be helpful to think of a specific experience.)

Reflection on Instructional Roles Metaphors

Individual/Small Group Reflection

- What metaphors emerged from our brainstorms?
- Are there significant differences or similarities among your metaphors?
- How do certain metaphors resonate/not resonate with you?
- What do these metaphors suggest or reveal about library instruction, our teaching experiences, or our roles as educators?
- In what ways are these metaphors helpful? In what ways are they limiting? If a metaphor is limiting, can it be reframed or contrasted with another metaphor?

Choose 1–2 metaphors to share with the larger group.

Emerging Themes

"Chalk Talk": Share your responses to any of these questions silently on the board. Feel free to use both text and visuals.

- Can we identify themes from our metaphors? Differences?
- What might our metaphors foreground, reveal, or hide?

Closing Reflections

- What metaphors are generative for your instructional work?
- How might these metaphors inform your direct teaching or your conversations and collaborations with other librarians and educators?

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