

Title: The role of stories in informed learning

Keywords: narrative, informed learning, mimesis, wisdom, problem-based learning

Abstract

Current practices in the information profession need to better address individuals as whole persons. Individuals are imbued with an historical past, a current situation, future aspirations, their own beliefs, values, and the stories that have shaped them. Our profession needs to recognise that individuals are unique, living in and amongst other processes in the world. The 'cookie cutter' approach often deployed in teaching our users has limited the great capacity libraries have to stimulate learners' innate creativity in enabling their lives to flourish.

Lacking a holistic perspective of individuals as complex evolving beings, has limited our approach to teaching information literacy (IL) to a mere process of finding information, rather than encouraging learners to reflect on their information experiences as it applies to their own unique situations. Individuals are agents of their own becoming through time. Through reflection and examination we develop a greater awareness of agendas important to us as individuals, and we can enact that knowledge through ethical and wise decisions. Current practices do not fully nurture the development of reflective and sound use of information, which is crucial for the individual's own growth and development.

This paper aims to provide an alternative way of understanding the learning process by reframing Christine Bruce's (2008) seven faces of Informed learning as relational to the creative process of narrative construction which Paul Ricoeur (1984, 1986, 1988) identifies as essential to human life.

Stories have a vital role in IL as a process of human self-creation affecting all people across their entire lives. Narrative is the process through which learners make sense of themselves and the world by processing information to construct a story as an intelligent whole. Ricoeur refers to the process as a mimesis.

It is important to acknowledge narrative as the process by which humans make meaning, as this empowers us to author our own lives as creative agents. Awareness of narrative as the structure by which people learn, opens

up a new perspective of our understanding of Informed learning. Thinking of learners as story makers, and as a character in an unfolding story will inform libraries how to best support and encourage learners to re-author their narratives. The mimesis of narrative highlights the holistic nature of narrative structure as a creative process of becoming.

A pedagogical approach such as Problem-based learning (PBL) offers a suitable method for the effective integration of narrative and learning. PBL encourages the forms of self-reflection that enables awareness of the narratives relevant to the individual learner. Libraries can adjust the delivery of their learning programs to include the use of PBL to teach informed learning – a process of using information to solve problems guided by reasoning. The PBL technique replicates the mimetic process. Drawing from Narrative and Informed learning allows learners to use information to assess the problem as a whole, enabling the practice and exercise of wise solutions.

References

Bruce, C. (2008). *Informed learning*. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries.

Ricoeur, P. (1984-1988). *Time and Narrative* (Vols. 1-3). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.