

Teaching Philosophy, Nadine Hoffman, Librarian, Libraries and Cultural Resources, March 2021

As a public services librarian for over 20 years, I continually instruct and assist students and faculty from campus and beyond on legal and historical research and library resources. My disciplinary responsibilities allow me to support students with varying skill sets, ranging from novice to advanced, depending on where they are in their program of study.

My primary teaching philosophy is to empower students to conduct their own research with limited intervention. I have discovered over the years that in disciplines such as Law and History – in contrast to other more collaborative disciplines – practitioners tend to work independently in designing and researching their projects, which means it can be more valuable to work actively with individuals rather than with large groups. These interactions – both formal in-class instruction and many one-on-one discussions – enable me to evaluate students' skills and influence my teaching practices. These interactions also inform me about students' knowledge, including what they think they know and what they need to know. This background knowledge helps me partner with faculty and LCR colleagues to create meaningful learning tools and formal instruction sessions that assist students in achieving learning outcomes.

Another core teaching philosophy is collaborative partnerships with instructors and other stakeholders to help ensure that course learning objectives and program learning outcomes are achieved. Embedding into courses and programs as a teacher-librarian enables me to anticipate learning needs through close partnerships with instructors. I am able to incorporate what I learn to improve my instruction sessions and create relevant learning objects for students to use when they need the information for their own research. These partnerships also allow me to determine appropriate scaffolding opportunities and practice different teaching approaches and methods to ensure the best possible learning outcomes and services for students to improve student success.

I believe student learning experiences are enhanced by creating long-term relationships. Scaffolding learning is an effective way to improve student research skills, building upon student knowledge. I tie my examples to course learning objectives for instruction sessions to build on what students have already done in class or their program. Scaffolding also creates greater long-term interactions with students because it provides multiple opportunities for individual incremental skills development. By building on existing skills, I am able to encourage the use of all types and formats of library materials, as are required for historical and legal research.

I appreciate the individuality of each student and their research skills and needs. I use one-on-one opportunities tailored to each student, allowing me to meet students where they are at their point of need. This is where my teaching began informally to discuss disciplinary and interdisciplinary student needs, building on existing student knowledge and skills. I learned long ago not to assume students know how to create an effective search strategy using correct terminology. Reviewing search terms is a key to student success in finding primary and secondary sources. One-on-one student interactions influence the examples I incorporate in my instruction sessions and my goal to make students self-sufficient. These interactions also help students develop their research skills using best practices for terminology and effective library resources.