



Finding Your Own Compass: Teaching With Intention in Shifting Instructional Waters



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Introduction

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- Librarians building teaching community

Librarian teaching self-efficacy
Librarian-faculty partnership
The scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL)





Agenda

01

Finding Your
Own Compass

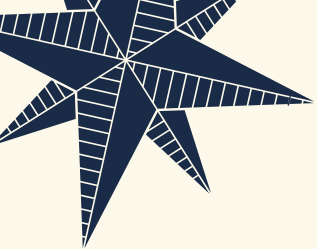
02

Shifting
Instructional
Waters

03

Toward the
Horizon





01



Finding Your Own Compass

Teaching Style

Combination of:

- Context (learners, programs, topics...)
- Tools (strategies, activities, technologies...)
- Philosophy (theories, values, ideas...)

Reflect:

- How would you describe your teaching style?

Share:

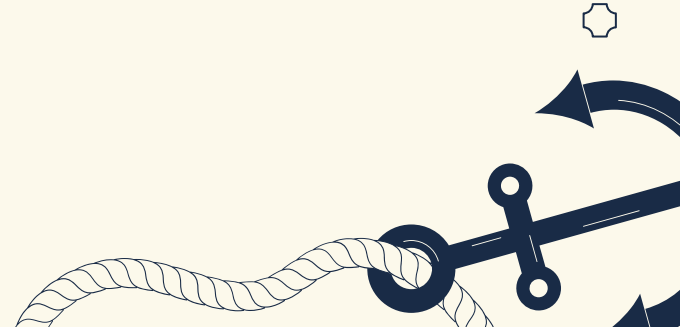
- Discuss at your table: what is your teaching style?

Cultivating Your Style

Learning about your context – charting the waters

✧ Creating a toolkit – building the boat

Crafting a philosophy – finding your compass



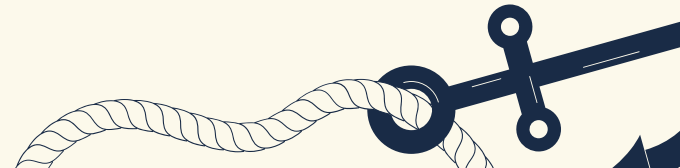
Context / The Waters

Sets the scene

Who are you teaching? This can affect the way you teach – my speech today is one example

What are you teaching? Topics can affect strategies

When, where...



Charting the Waters

Learning about your learners (see Mattson et al., 2025)

✦ Getting to know your institution

Observation

Different tools for different topics

The world around us can affect teaching style, too



Example – GMU

Primarily commuter students (over 80%)

✧ Over 25% first-generation college students

About 1/3 of our new students are transfers

101 with a public writing focus; 302 with an academic writing focus

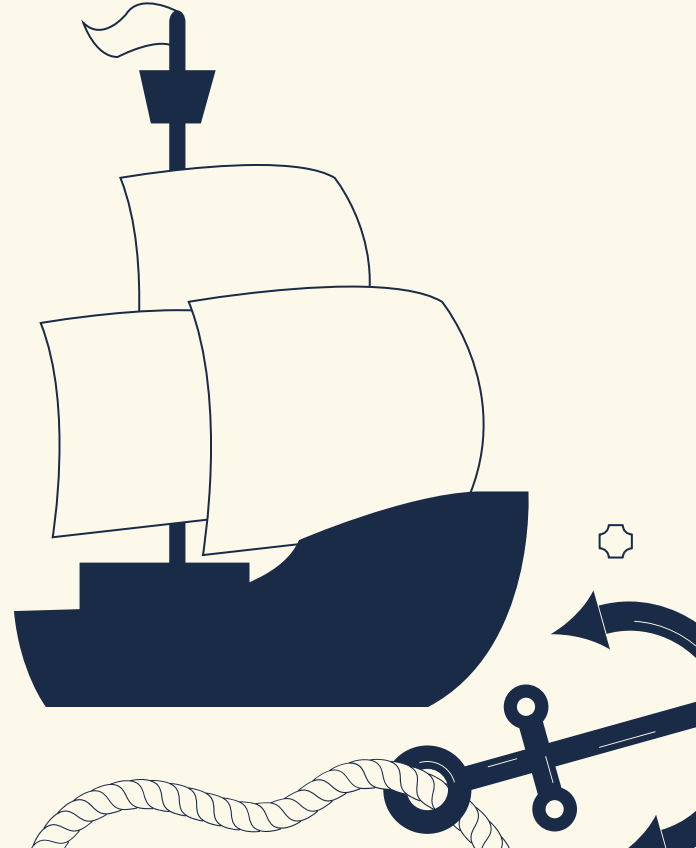
Area with many government workers; being near DC

Tools / Your Boat

✧ Your repertoire of activities, techniques, and strategies

The “how” of teaching

Often matched to context – what and who are you teaching?



Observing Others

Whenever possible – seeing how others teach



Can provide inspiration, ideas

Everyone is different – observe many people

Co-teaching and -planning

Doesn't have to be in the classroom – for example, this conference!



Building a Community

Talking it out with others – “how would you approach this?”



Creating space at your institution

Locally, regionally, nationally

Doesn't have to be live – listservs, ALA Connect

We're all facing similar “emerging issues” – let's navigate together

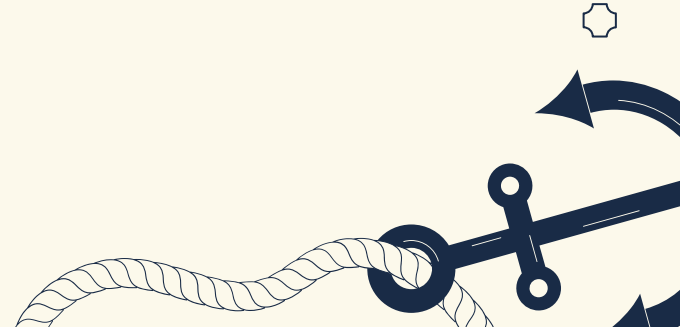


Outside Libraries

Engaging in community outside the library

✦ Looking at lessons online, especially K-12

Content vs. the tools



Examples – Tools

Student learning assessment – from a colleague, from books

✧ Orienting to the space – from observation

Jigsaws – from looking at K-12 lesson plans



Taking the Boat for a Spin

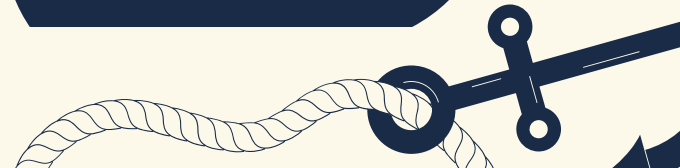
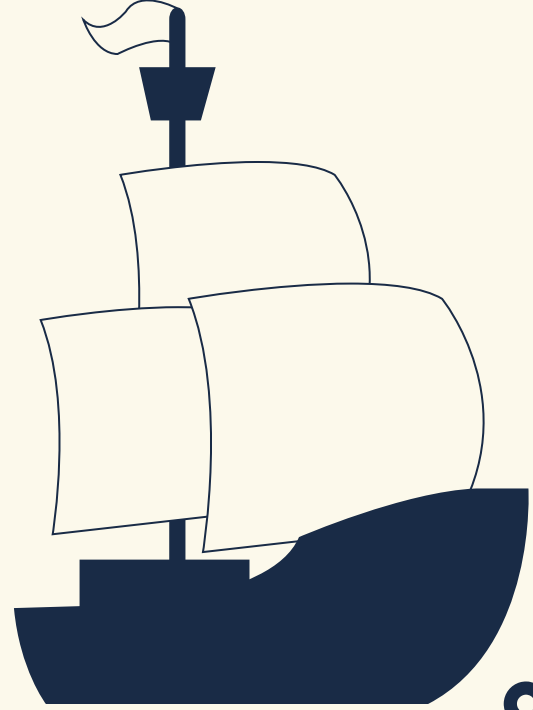
Trying things on for size – does this work
for me?

Taking notes, reflecting, and refining

Not everything works for everyone –
and that's OK!

Trying new things can be re-energizing

Productive failure – what can you learn
from what doesn't work?

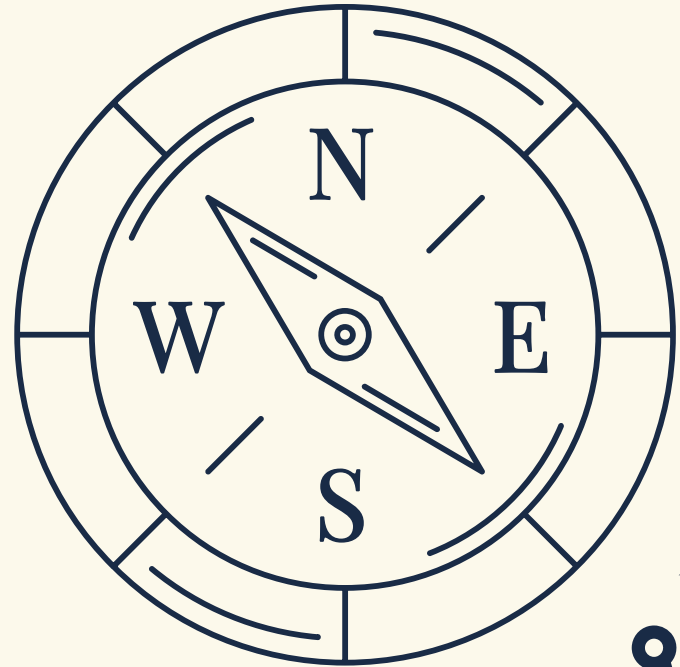


Philosophy / Your Compass

✧ What you think and believe about teaching

The theories and frameworks which guide your approach

Deeply connected to authenticity – your philosophy is your own



Talking it Out

Engaging with others: what guides your teaching practice?



Can expose you to new ideas and theories

Combined with reflective practice, can help you determine what feels right/authentic to you

Professional networks are another key place for this

Outside the library context, too



Reading / Listening

Engaging with scholarly and professional sources – reading, listening to podcasts...

Some articles have theoretical frameworks, others will have new approaches to try

SoTL and other teaching literature can also be applied to libraries

ACRL Framework, Roles & Strengths



Examples – Philosophy

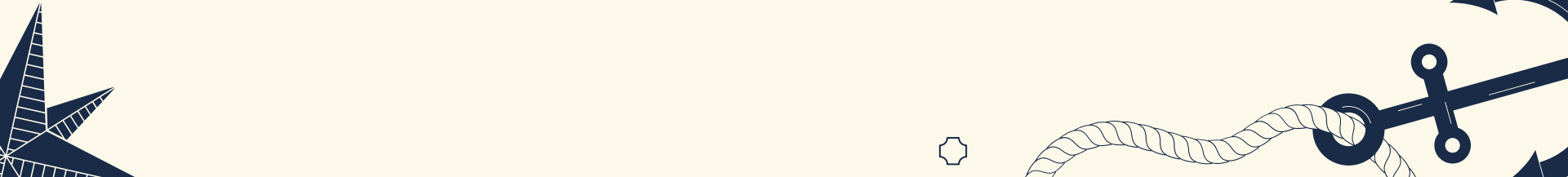
Transparency in learning and teaching (Winkelmes, 2026) – from taking a class



Indigenous information literacy (Chong, 2022) – from a colleague

Experiential learning (Kolb, 2015) – from research

Just having the words to search can be huge!



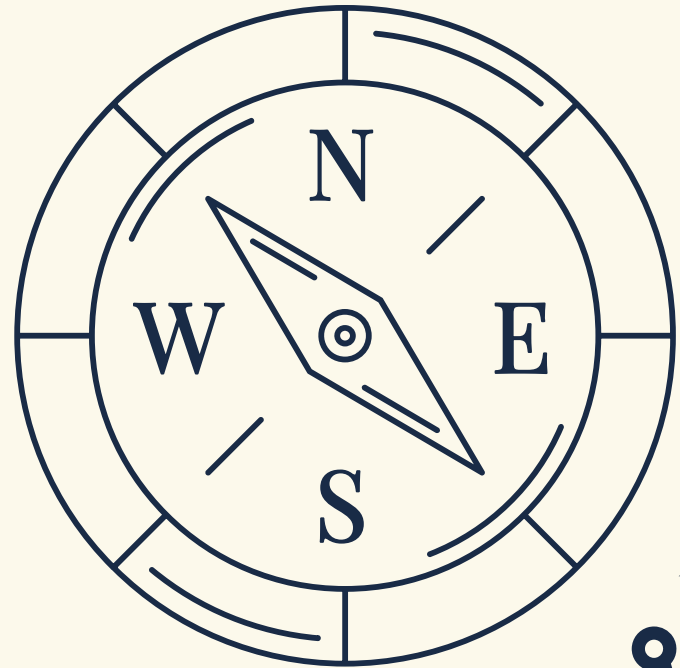
Your North Star

Through talking with others, you'll learn more about the **options**

But what works for **you**?

What do you notice in the classroom that can be explained? What's missing?

This is about what works for you and your learners



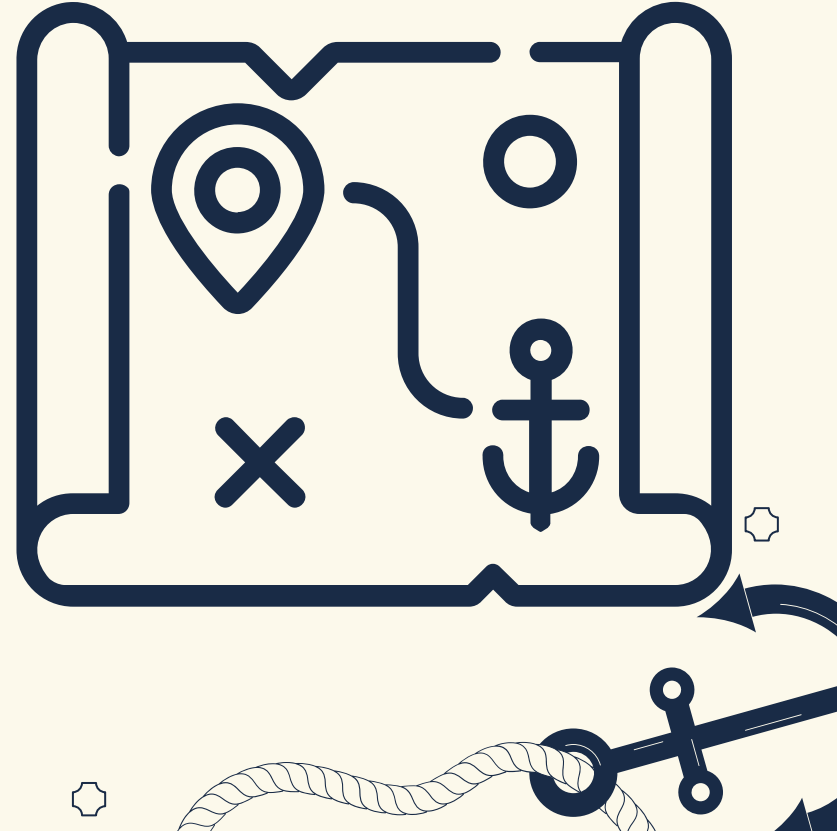
Charting a Course

Now, you've got your boat, your compass, you know the waters

It's time to try it out!

Create some space to plan, to reflect, to think and rethink

Experiments aren't commitments



Reflective Practice

Engaging with yourself: how did that feel? What would I do differently?

✧ Connected to experiential learning (Kolb, 2015)

My approach(es):

- Semesterly themes/goals
 - Examples: having more fun, managing my workload/boundaries
- Before, during, after
- Building a repository of questions and ideas

An Iterative Cycle

Teaching is never “done” or “solved”

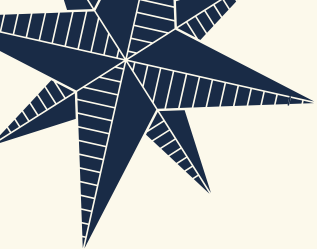
✧ Teaching style is constantly evolving

Engaging in community will expose you to new ideas and strategies

Your approach is your own

Take the pressure off – if it’s never done, that means it doesn’t have to be done right now

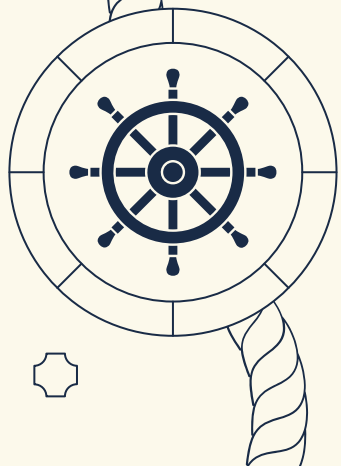




02



Shifting Instructional Waters



A Moment to Reflect

What has changed about your teaching world in the past 3 years?



Some prompts to help:

- Technology?
- Institutional context?
- National and global context?
- Your own knowledge, feelings, ideas?



Always Changing

The world is always changing around us – and library instruction responds to it

What's changed about *my* world?

- The rise of generative AI
- Accessibility requirements
- My program's curriculum

How do we maintain our process and approaches to teaching while everything is shifting around us?

Let the Compass Guide You

You've got a set of tools and philosophies, and an understanding of your context

New topics and ideas might not require much change – you're still *you* even if the world around you is changing

Example:

- Curricular change incorporating more algorithmic literacy
- Can use the same tools + philosophy
- My knowledge of these topics is expanding

Allow Yourself to Evolve

Keeping a consistent compass doesn't mean never changing



Incremental change is one way to evolve sustainably

Working with others – how are they evolving? What can you try?

Keep an open mind – this is always a work in progress!

Examples:

- COVID remote learning
- I now use more technology – anonymous Padlets



Reflecting + Experimenting

Reflective practice allows for “guided iteration”

✧ Experimenting doesn't commit you to anything – just try it!

Find the faculty partners who will be good thought partners

Working with others can extend your reflective practice – send the calendar invite!

Example:

- Managing boundaries... a work in progress...

It Doesn't Have to Be You

You don't have to do every new thing – in the fleet, different boats serve different purposes

The pressure to be cutting edge is real, but is it useful?

Allow others to build capacity + try things out

Learn at conferences!

Example:

- Generative AI – leaning on my colleagues' expertise

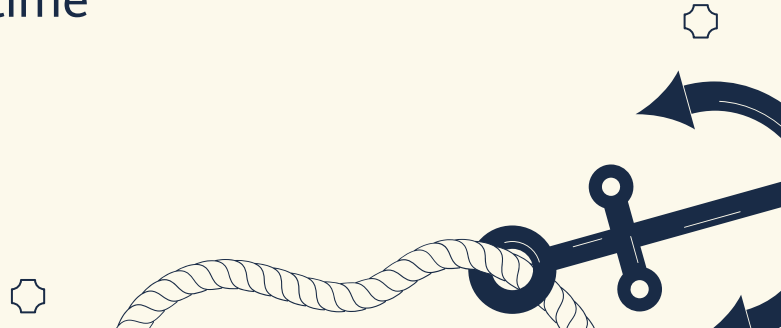
Shifting Waters

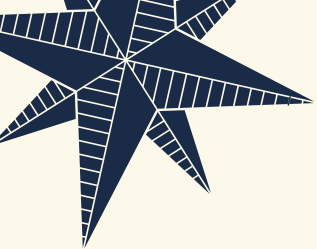
As things change, keep an open mind

✧ Try to change one (or two!) things at a time, rather than the whole thing

Move gently and intentionally

Remember: it doesn't have to be you every time

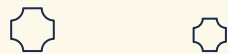
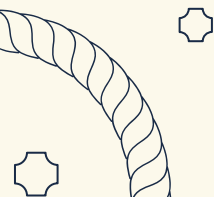
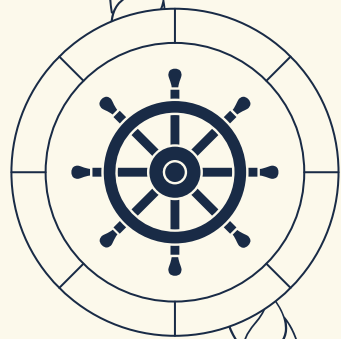




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Toward the Horizon



Into the Unknown

What will the next 3 years bring?

✦ How will your toolkit expand?

Who will join your communities?

What will higher education even look like?

We can't know.



What We Do Know

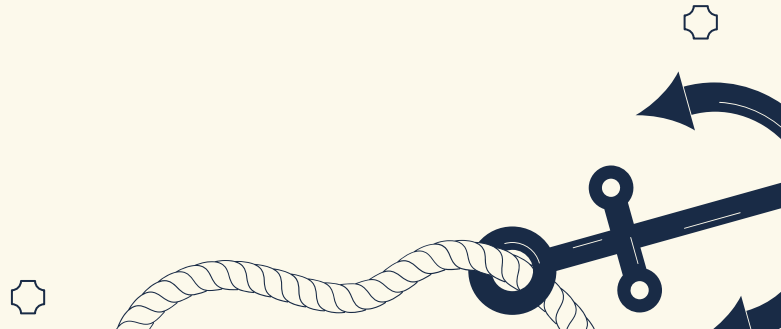
It's lighter together – find new members of your community here!

✧ Be gentle with yourself – progress, not perfection

Keep an open mind (and a critical stance?)

Productive failure – it's all about learning

Mentorship goes back and forth



Take the Leap

An experiment isn't a commitment

✦ Trying one new thing every semester

Making progress looks a lot of different ways

Stay connected to your context



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Chong, R. (2022). *Indigenous information literacy*. Kwantlen Polytechnic University. <https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/indigenousinformationliteracy/>

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Thank You!

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