

Final Thoughts

A paradigm is, as Adam Smith says, like water to a fish. It's the way the world looks—the way it is. When one is deep within a paradigm, it's difficult to see another.

Many librarians and staff inhabit a teaching paradigm that is sometimes referred to as the “education paradigm.” In this paradigm the job of library instructors is to transmit content to the people sitting in their classrooms. These “content transmitters” are able to pack enormous amounts of information into a short workshop, show numerous databases, and even have time for some unstructured hands-on time at the end. And then their job is done. In other words, they pour, and it's the recipients' responsibility to catch that information, make sense of it, apply it, and learn from it. This paradigm is handy, because then the library instructor can take little (or maybe even no) responsibility for the students being able to apply the content in their real lives. What makes this a paradigm is that for many people it is the water to the fish. It is the way education *is*. “Everybody” knows that because “everybody” grew up being taught in that paradigm. But not so anymore.

In contrast is the paradigm this book takes and the one that more and more teachers, professors, and trainers are taking. In the “performance-based instruction paradigm,” the instructor is responsible for increasing learning and performance. Instead of downloading information, the instructor's job is to coach and facilitate learners to master a specific task or come to an understanding about something that they are fully prepared to apply outside of the classroom.

It is much more fun to work with a performance-based instruction paradigm than it is to follow the “just pour it on 'em” education paradigm that we all know. It is also more challenging. Once you learn how to engage students in learning, however, the magic begins. Instead of being a distant, somewhat hostile talking head, you become a coach who makes it possible for students to better achieve what they have come to do: conduct good research that will facilitate their success in college.

—Debra Payne Chaparro, PhD Student and Teaching Assistant, University of Minnesota Libraries–Twin Cities

Tip

The next time you hear someone say that teachers need to move from being “the Sage on the Stage to the Guide on the Side,” you know you are hearing someone from the “performance-based instruction paradigm.”

The challenge can be that some people in the library organization operate within the “education paradigm,” while others operate within the “performance-based instruction paradigm.” For some, this conflict isn’t a problem. But if the person or people who evaluate and reward you operate under the education paradigm, and you operate under the performance-based instruction paradigm, you have a problem.

First, as you have garnered from learning about the instructional design process, performance-based instruction takes time. You can’t just throw together some handouts, pull together an outline, and march in with your lecture–demo–hands-on formula. The key to success in this paradigm is a learner-centered approach with a studied, thoughtful preparation process and a careful analysis of evaluation data. The rewards are learners who are actually learning and performing at a higher level and who are succeeding at their goals. The question then becomes: is this what is valued in your library? I don’t mean what people in your organization *say* that shows this is valued, but rather what they *do* to value it.

By fighting for even just minor changes in the library, you and your performance-based instruction paradigm colleagues will help to make two things happen: your efforts will be acknowledged and rewarded, and you will begin to shift the library’s instruction program from the education paradigm to the performance-based instruction paradigm.

CHANGING PARADIGMS

One of the interesting things about paradigms is they can operate simultaneously. Your library organization already holds multiple paradigms about all kinds of things. These can include, “The longer you are a librarian, the more you get paid,” or “If patrons are really having problems with their research, they will seek help at the reference desk,” or “We can get better work done if we decentralize and become team-based.” So what has this got to do with the performance-based instruction paradigm? The important thing is that once one paradigm starts to change, often others do too.

Look around. Are other paradigms changing? If not in your organization, what about in the larger organization, such as your college or business? What this means is that people are causing other rules to change and creating new games to play in. This is a good sign that bodes well for shifting to the performance-based instruction paradigm.

In order to understand where you might currently be in the shift, it might help to think of your colleagues falling roughly into three categories: the paradigm shifters, the early adopters, and the laggards or late adopters.

Paradigm shifters

Paradigms are often instigated by someone considered an outsider who doesn’t fully understand the current paradigm’s rules and boundaries.

Because they are outsiders (e.g., new to the field, consultants, without an M.L.S. degree, or people who lurk at the fringe), they don't typically have institutional power behind them.

Early adopters

The catalysts are the paradigm shifters, but they are soon followed by the early adopters. In this case, the early adopters might be those instruction librarians who have an intuitive sense that the new paradigm will help them be much more effective and build a stronger reputation as educators. This group is convinced that it is worth the time and energy to learn the new skills, build the new knowledge, and change the way they teach.

Laggards or late adopters

After watching and hearing and learning from the current adopters, they are finally convinced that the new paradigm is worth the time and energy to move into it.

So the million-dollar question is, how might you support your laggards and late adopters to move into acceptance of this new paradigm? As much as I would like to now give you a formula for causing a paradigm shift in your organization, the bad news is that this topic is worth a whole other book.

Give this book to an educational paradigm person and note their strongly negative reaction: "All these steps and all this time for what? To spoon-feed those people? If they don't know enough to want to learn how to do research [or fill in the blank] the right way, why bother?"



So what you're saying is that maybe we need to start thinking outside of the box.

When a paradigm shifts, everyone goes back to zero.

—Joel Arthur Barker, *Paradigms: The Business of Discovering the Future*

There are a few classics that I would recommend if you'd like to explore this further:

John Kotter's *Leading Change* (Harvard Business School Press, 1996) is as close to a blueprint for leading a change effort that I have seen. Kotter breaks down the process into eight stages that end in a transformed culture.

Peter Senge, Art Kleiner, and others have gotten together again to write a wonderful book called *The Dance of Change: The Challenges of Sustaining Momentum in Learning Organizations* (Currency/Doubleday, 1999). This book brings theory and practice together into a practical work about organizational transformation.

Joel Arthur Barker's book *Paradigms: The Business of Discovering the Future* (HarperBusiness, 1993) strikes me as Thomas Kuhn (remember him?) for the masses. His book is full of concrete examples of paradigm shifts and the early adopters who make new paradigms a success.

And, of course, the instructional design process itself may very well be a key driver in creating a new performance-based instructional paradigm for several reasons.

The ability to report on a rich body of evaluation data can create valuable outcome measurements for library administrators and turn their attention to more opportunities for instruction that has clear outcomes.

Closer partnerships with clients can be the catalyst to move the one-shot workshop approach into a more substantial and effective educational partnership.

Involving education paradigm librarians and staff in the instructional design might very well convert them one by one.

In parting I wish you great luck! May this endeavor lead to your library taking on even greater educational roles that have higher impact and value to our communities.

Forms and supplementary materials to help you design your next workshop are available at <http://www.tc.umn.edu/~jveldo/WorkshopDesign/>.