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A Model for Reflective Practice in Libraries

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Introduction to Reflective Practice

- Technological and societal changes
- Crisis of confidence in professional knowledge
- Turbulent environments characterized by dynamic situations, complex systems, and conflicting demands or practices
- Unprecedented requirement for adaptability

The Reflective Practitioner
How Professionals Think in Action
Donald A. Schön
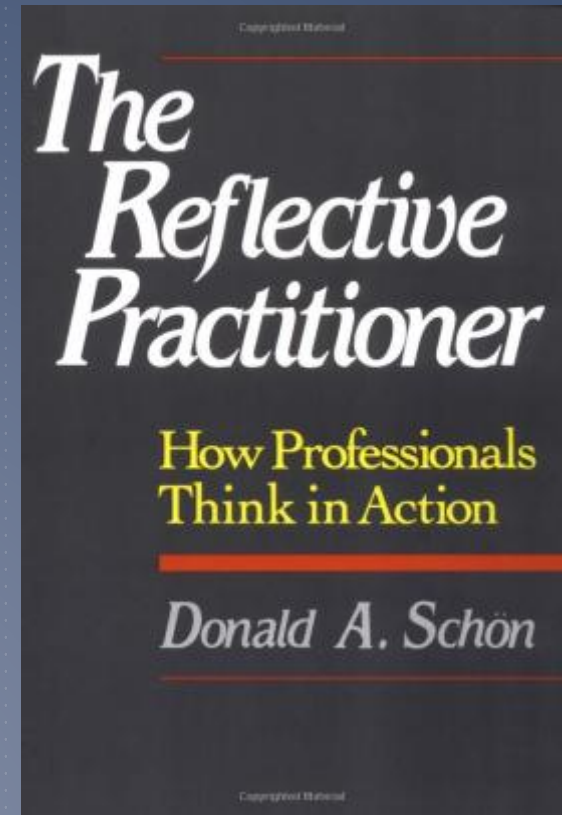
"The Irreducible Element of Art in Professional Practice" (Schön, 1983)

- In addressing unique or difficult cases, a good professional "searches for new ways of making sense of such cases."

- Draws on tacit knowledge, which is rooted in context, experience, practice, and values, as well as explicit, or formally learned, knowledge.

- Reflection helps to bring tacit knowledge to the surface, so we can consider other perspectives and try alternative actions to improve our outcomes.

The Growth of Reflective Practice

- Widely adopted by educators and other professionals around the world
  - *Reflective Practice* journal published since 2000
- But library professionals apparently slow to embace reflective practice, despite turbulent environments
  - Other than publications on facilitating reflection in others, little evidence of reflective practice in LIS literature

A Systematic Review of Reflection in LIS Literature (Grant, 2007)

- Free-text search for "reflective or reflection* or reflexion*"
- Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA) database
- Of 929 citations retrieved for the years 1969 through 2006, only 13 publications met the inclusion criteria:
  - Pertaining to _reflection_, in or on practice, _by_ LIS workers
  - Publications pertaining to the _facilitation_ of reflection, in or on practice, by LIS workers _in others_ were excluded

A Survey of Reflective Practice in British LIS Sector (Greenall & Sen, 2014)

- Sample drawn from LIS professionals subscribing to JISCMail
  - Notable because CILIP recommends reflective practice
- Do you consider yourself to be a reflective practitioner?
  - 92% of respondents answered "Yes" or "Sometimes" (n=493)
- Do you engage in reflective writing?
  - Only 52% answered "Yes" (n = 363)

A Survey of Reflective Practice in British LIS Sector (Greenall & Sen, 2014) cont'd

- Do you consider any of the following to be barriers to engaging in reflective practice? (Select all that apply)
  - Lack of time – 311 responses (89%)
  - Lack of motivation – 160 (46%)
  - Not supported by organisational culture – 139 (40%)
  - Lack of guidance – 122 (35%)
  - Lack of experience – 89 (25%)
  - Lack of training – 87 (25%)

Facilitating Reflective Practice Among Library Professionals

- Reflection as a tacit skill
  - Cannot simply ask or tell one to reflect
- Some aspects can be taught
  - Qualities of reflection
  - General techniques
- But development of reflective practice requires
  - A structure that supports and motivates reflection
  - Guidance and mentoring

Qualities of Reflection (Grant, 2007)

- *Analytic reflection*
  - "… a systematic approach to revisiting experiences or situations, questioning motivations, attempting to pinpoint the reason why they experienced a situation in a particular way, and contemplating how this might impact on future practice."

- *Non-analytical*
  - "largely descriptive in content, without any critical reasoning or consideration of the implications of events or experiences"

Qualities of Reflective Writing (Moon, 2006)

➤ *Descriptive writing* – no evidence of reflection; no discussion beyond description of events or situation

➤ *Descriptive reflection* – evidence of the possibility of alternative viewpoints in description, but reflection mostly from one perspective

➤ *Dialogic reflection* – inconsistent evidence of analyis or integration that demonstrates a recognition that alternative judgment and explanations may exist

➤ *Critical reflection* – evidence of awareness that actions and events are not only explicable by multiple perspectives but influenced by multiple contexts

Qualities of Reflection (Thompson & Thompson 2008)

- *Cognitive Dimension* – mindfulness, analytic thinking, creativity

- *Affective Dimension* – empathy, emotional intelligence, anxiety and uncertainty, grief, gender and cultural differences in emotion

- *Values Dimension* – partnership, empowerment, equality and social justice

General Techniques (Thompson & Thompson, 2008)

Question-Based	Emancipatory	Problem-solving
Systematic practice	Visioning	Cost-benefit analysis
Objectives tree	If I were …	Rehearsing
Embedded whys	Chunk up, chunk down	Using dissonance
Risk assessment models	Reframing	Elegant challenging
Head – Heart – Habit	Noticing	Force-field analysis
Think – Feel – Do	Avoiding drama triangle	Mind mapping
What? So What? Now What?	CIA: Control, Influence, Acceptance	Process recording
Prompts	Drawbridge exercise	Differing perspectives

A Model for Reflective Practice in Qualitative & Quantitative Methods

▶ Sustainable change is more likely to occur when a vision of desired outcomes is accompanied by small concrete steps toward achieving those outcomes.

   ▶ Reflective practice and the research we conduct in our libraries share a desired outcome – to improve practice.

   ▶ Together they provide a more complete and balanced picture.

   ▶ Our research generally has a limited scope, unlike the unbounded landscape of general practice.

   ▶ The research process provides a structure of concrete steps, at which reflection may be introduced.

Existing Models of Reflection in Research

- *Action research* – a participatory or team process of progressive problem solving
  - Commonly envisioned as a spiral of Plan – Act – Observe – Reflect
- *SEA-change model of reflection* (Sen & Ford, 2009; Sen & Lee, 2011)
  - Reflection in an evidence-based approach to professional development – (S) consideration of the situation; (E) consideration of the evidence used during the practice of reflection; and (A) action

Proposed Model

Steps in Research Process	Possible Focus of Reflection
Identify problem	Nature of problem; potential for action
Review literature	Contexts and perspectives
Define research question	Objectives
Design methodology	Assumptions and perspectives
Collect data	Integrity of data
Analyze and interpret data	Assumptions and perspectives
Disseminate results	Inform actions; share practice

Sample Questions to Prompt Reflection

Step 1 – Identify Problem

Cognitive Dimension	How will researching this problem improve my practice? My library's practice? The profession?
Affective Dimension	What do I feel about this problem? What are my motives for doing this study?
Values Dimension	Are there ethical, moral, or political issues that should be explored?

Sample Questions to Prompt Reflection

Step 2 – Review Literature

Cognitive Dimension	What do I already know about the problem? What other information do I need?
Affective Dimension	What are my feelings about the information I am finding? How am I addressing other perspectives?
Values Dimension	How does the information address social justice or empowering others?

Sample Questions to Prompt Reflection

Step 3 – Define Research Question

Cognitive Dimension	How will the potential answers to the research question address the problem?
Affective Dimension	How do you judge your ability to be open to unexpected answers to the question?
Values Dimension	Does the question disadvantage any stakeholders?

Sample Questions to Prompt Reflection

Step 4 – Design Methodology

Cognitive Dimension	How is the methodology appropriate to the problem and research question?
Affective Dimension	How does the methodology address gender or cultural differences?
Values Dimension	How can I partner with others to ensure the methodology does not disempower any stakeholders?

Sample Questions to Prompt Reflection

Step 5 – Collect Data

Cognitive Dimension	How are the data collection protocols working? Has anything occurred to affect data integrity?
Affective Dimension	What fears or uncertainties might you have about the data?
Values Dimension	Are response rates representative of all demographic groups?

Sample Questions to Prompt Reflection

Step 6 – Analyze and Interpret Data

Cognitive Dimension	What analysis is needed to address the problem and the study objectives?
Affective Dimension	What are your feelings? How can you ensure consideration of relevant interpretations?
Values Dimension	How does your interpretation promote social justice or empowerment of others?

Sample Questions to Prompt Reflection

Step 7 – Disseminate Results

Cognitive Dimension	How can the results inform actions to address the problem?
Affective Dimension	How have your feelings about the problem changed over the course of the study?
Values Dimension	How can you share the results to empower others to take action?

Recording Your Reflections

- Reflective journal, or other means
  - Documents decisions made during the research process.
  - Provides useful language for the writing of internal reports or journal articles.
  - Provides transparency and accountability.
  - Reviewing and evaluating reflections provides opportunity for learning from mistakes and successes.
  - Provides evidence for professional evaluation.

Guidance and Support

- Guiding individual reflection through group means
  - Reflective supervision and mentoring
  - Reflecting in teams
  - Social networks
- Organizational support
  - Recognize need for time to reflect
  - Require evidence of reflection in performance review

In Conclusion

❖ Reflective practice takes time, but in the end it saves time. It helps us get things right the first time, or to correct errors before they become ingrained.

❖ We can encourage and facilitate reflective practice by providing training, guidance, and organizational support.

❖ Individuals can become comfortable with reflection by practicing it within the structure of research.

❖ Eventually it may become natural to engage in reflective practice in our daily activities.

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QUESTIONS?

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