Preserving the Wonder of Stories: The Role of Reflection in Reading Education in Library and Information Science Programs

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Building on the concept of transformative learning and exploring the role of reflection in graduate professional education, this article uses student and educator reflections from the graduate course on reading practices to narrate four stories of learning. These stories, structured based on the "4Ls" model of reflection, describe what was Learned and Liked in the course and what both the student and the educator Lacked and Longed for as a result of the course. An argument is made in support of not limiting Library and Information Science reading education to techniques and skills for providing reading suggestions (i.e., readers' advisory) but for enriching this education with reflective exercises, a theoretical foundation of reading behaviors, and challenging intellectual and affective engagements that will contribute to a well-rounded practitioner education that facilitates the reading experience.

Keywords: affective knowing, readers' advisory, reading experience, reflection, story, transformative learning

Introduction

In her book *Story Genius: How to Use Brain Science to go Beyond Outlining and Write a Riveting Novel*, Lisa Cron (2016) writes: "A story is about how the things that happen affect someone in pursuit of a difficult goal, and how that person changes internally as a result."

A course on reading and readers should be such a story, or a constellation of stories stitched together into a larger transformative narrative. Teaching and learning about reading and readers in graduate Library and Information Science (LIS) programs should not be primarily about techniques of engagement; it should not be just about genre classification, marketing strategies, acquisitions, and even reading behavior. All of those are important, of course, but there is something that, philosophically, should take centre stage and ground this entire enterprise: stories. Stories that our readers desire when they come searching for reading materials. Their own stories as individuals who engage with the stories of others in order to get through the day, make decisions, choose careers, escape reality however temporarily, cope with life challenges, and navigate relationships (e.g., Dali, 2015; Littau, 2008; Ross, 2000; Sabine & Sabine, 1983; Schutte & Malouff, 2006). Our professional stories when we deal with reading and readers professionally. Stories situated in time, space,

KEY POINTS:

- The notion of story is paramount to an understanding and analysis of graduate courses, student and educator experiences, and the learning process; developing stories of transformative learning can be facilitated by student reflection.
- Student reflection and self-reflection, utilizing the 4Ls (Liked, Learned, Lacked, Longed for) retrospective technique, is a valuable pedagogical instrument in graduate Library and Information Science (LIS) courses related to reading and readers, especially when built-in course activities allow students to process feelings and experiences and to achieve affective knowing, not only address the course content.
- Graduate LIS courses on reading and readers should not be limited to the topics and skill acquisition traditionally seen in readers' advisory classes and should include interdisciplinary reading scholarship and training in human communication akin to that in psychology and social work.

geographic locations, and cultural spaces and stories transcending them (Rothbauer & Cedeira Serantes, 2022). Stories in multiple languages that we may or may not have mastered. Stories from the past and stories about the future. Stories real and imaginary. Stories of us as individuals, communities, and societies in the complicated and interconnected world going by.

In essence, it is our emotional and intellectual attachment to stories and our constant quest for discovering them that contribute to our professional enjoyment when working with readers. Practitioners who keep the wonder of stories alive can overcome the challenges of reading work and reader services, such as time pressures and staff shortages, the inability to always facilitate a satisfactory reading experience, the imposter syndrome and anxiety of "not knowing the right answer," unpreparedness to help those who read in languages other than English, frustration when no one comes to attend the carefully planned reading programs, and so on. The love of stories makes challenging situations worth it, turning them into valuable learning experiences rather than a source of exasperation and defeat that affects professional performance and workplace engagement and satisfaction.

If preserving the sense of wonder and fascination with human and artistically created stories is an essential quality for a professional who works with readers, then the question is, of course, how much attention we give to cultivating and nurturing this quality in our courses on reading. In reality, these courses are often oriented toward more cerebral, rational, and informative aspects of professional practice and education. Amid assignments that prepare our students to write book reviews, retrieve fiction and non-fiction from databases and catalogs, talk to readers effectively, and become genre experts, do we design learning opportunities that focus students on their own feelings and thoughts, help them become cognizant of their professional transformation and maturation, and allow them to process personal change that they undergo as a result of learning in class? In other words, do we allow them to tell a story of their own journey—the learning journey of professional transformation?

This article is, therefore, a story. As any other story, it has the plot, protagonists, and settings. The settings and the foundation for our argument and contemplation is a graduate course called "Working with Readers in Libraries & Beyond," taught by one of the article

authors. The story protagonists and the article authors are one and the same: an LIS educator and a librarian/recent LIS graduate, whose course-related assignment, analyzed and framed through the theory of transformative learning, is used in this article as a case study. Growing out of this case study is the main plot of the story we are trying to tell and the core of our article: the role and centrality of reflection and self-reflection in the education and professional development of library professionals who work with readers. Specific examples of topics and themes from the course, which proved to be memorable and impactful, are given in order to drive our point across. This plotline intersects with another one, no less important: what educators can learn from the reflections by their students and how it transforms them personally, in addition to improving their courses.

In this article, we intentionally mix first- and third-person language. It is neither oversight nor carelessness, as we are fully aware that it is not a scholarly convention. However, in this article, we choose to do so to emphasize the fluid quality of reflection, the constant motion between inner and outer, the self and the external world, the introspection and the vantage point of a third-party observer. We hope that this stylistic choice does not serve as hindrance to reading the article but helps our case by aligning with the complex and peripatetic nature of reflection.

The Literature Review

Examples of Reflection in Library and Information Science Teaching and Learning

Reflective practices are commonly used in LIS teaching, both in library classes and in LIS programs. Reflections prove integral to Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) as self-critique may reveal personal biases and help instructors overcome them in interactions with students (Cowden et al., 2021). Reflection is unsurprisingly crucial to the development of cultural competence because it allows for a holistic evaluation of instructional practices (Foster, 2018). Reflective instructors become more mindful of assumptions and teaching approaches through the consideration of both outsider perspectives and their own. Students also benefit from self-critique when reflections are designed to enhance an understanding of service learning (Bloomquist, 2015), professional performance (Miller et al., 2020), and engagement with material (Luetkemeyer, 2021). Reflections induce learners' and teachers' thoughts to be presented and confronted, and their recognition and acknowledgment informs how they apply to the learned matter.

The Role of Reflection in Learning

Many foundational writings in adult learning address the role of reflection and self-reflection, specifically, in the types of learning that are considered impactful, such as transformative learning championed by several researchers, including Mezirow and Taylor (2011). Transformative or transformational learning is "a practice of education that is 'predicated on the idea that students are seriously challenged to assess their value system and worldview and are subsequently changed by the experience'" (Quinnan, 1997, p. 42, cited in Taylor, 2011, p. 3). Transformative learning is facilitated by the following core components: individual experience, dialogue, "a holistic orientation, awareness of context, […]

an authentic practice" and, finally, critical reflection[1] (Taylor, 2011, p. 4). Critical reflection can be defined as "questioning the integrity of deeply held assumptions and beliefs based on prior experience. It is often prompted in response to an awareness of conflicting thoughts, feelings, and actions and at times can lead to a perspective transformation" (Mezirow & Associates, 2000; cited in Taylor, 2011, p. 7).

Critical reflection is no longer seen as a purely rational undertaking, and "the affective ways of knowing that prioritize experience and identify for the learner what is personally most significant in the process of reflection" are usually viewed as having the greatest impact (Taylor, 2011, p. 4). "Affective knowing" is a path for "developing an awareness of feelings and emotions in the reflective process" that is "inherent in critical reflection" (Taylor, 2011, p. 10).

Affective knowing is also something that connects reflection to self-reflection, that is, evaluating the self by looking within, the process of introspection. Critical reflection and self-reflection are never decontextualized and are tightly connected to all the other elements of transformative learning. As Taylor (2011) notes, creating conditions for meaningful reflection and the impactful application of reflection should be supported by the educator's overall theoretical orientation and, in this course, they were supported by the educator's humanistic orientation that grounded the course design and relationships with students, as described below.

Three forms of reflection in terms of direction and scope can be distinguished: "content (reflecting on what we perceive, think, feel, and act), process (reflecting on how we perform the functions of perceiving), and premise (an awareness of why we perceive)" reflections (Taylor, 2011, p. 7). In terms of "relationship to three domains of teaching knowledge," an additional categorization could be discerned: instructional (design and processes), pedagogical (student learning), and curricular (goals and purposes of courses) types of reflection (Kreber, 2004; also cited in Taylor, 2011, p. 8). Written format proves to be particularly beneficial for articulating reflections, because, according to Taylor (2009, p. 9), it

> strengthens the reflective experience by creating artifacts of ideas of the mind. It requires learners to externalize their reflective experience, taking the "discussion away from the merely affective and/or psychological domains and forces a kind of reconciliation with the material-inherently perspective altering, socio-communicative activity" (Burke, 2006, p. 85). Writing helps address a limitation of making sense of reflection, that which challenges learners to both recall from memory and verbally articulate reflective moments during their teaching practice, particularly about a phenomenon (teaching) that often operates at a tacit level. Writing provides a means for both reflecting and recording previous thoughts that can be shared with others and returned to and reflected on when most relevant.

Mezirow and Taylor (2011, p. 9) also describe conditions for the most impactful and transformative reflection, some of which are "accurate and complete information"; "freedom from coercion and distorting self-deception"; "encouraging an openness to alternative points of view"; "empathy and concern about how others think and feel; developing an ability to weigh evidence and assess arguments objectively"; developing "greater awareness

of the context of ideas and more critically reflective [*sic*] of assumptions" (citing Mezirow & Associates, 2000, p. 13–14).

Arguing specifically in the context of adult education, Mezirow (1981, cited in Jarvis, 2010, p. 114) distinguishes seven different levels of reflection, as follows:

1. reflectivity: awareness of specific perception, meaning, behavior;
2. affective reflectivity: awareness of how the individual feels about what is being perceived, thought or acted upon;
3. discriminant reflectivity: assessing the efficacy of perception;
4. judgmental reflectivity: making and becoming aware of the value of judgments made;
5. conceptual reflectivity: assessing the extent to which the concept employed is adequate for the judgment;
6. psychic reflectivity: recognition of the habit of making percipient judgments on the basis of limited information;
7. theoretical reflectivity: awareness of why one set of perspectives is more or less adequate to explain personal experience.

Awareness-related, affective, judgmental, and theoretical types will figure prominently in the below analysis.

One of the useful and practical reflection techniques—and one chosen for data analysis in this study—is the "4Ls" technique developed and popularized by Gorman and Gottesdiener (2010). 4Ls stand, respectively, for Liked, Learned, Lacked, and Longed for, the elements elicited in the course of retrospective reflection about a learning event, training, or professional development. Originating in the Information Technology (IT) world, this model is useful for higher education as well because it is focused on processing feelings and thoughts and is elastic enough to be applicable in various disciplines.

The Humanistic & Student-Centered Course Design as Supportive Environment for Reflection

Reflections in the classroom should be supported by the overall pedagogical design and the educator's choices. While many approaches can work, one of the most logical choices is humanistic pedagogy. This is what the design of the course in question relied on, specifically, the principles of humanistic pedagogy as articulated by Carl and Natalie Rogers (Corey, 2009; Rogers, 1959, 1969, 1989, 1995). Central and integral to this design were Rogerian core conditions of empathy, unconditional positive regard, and the authenticity of an educator (Rogers, 1959), as well as the external conditions for fostering critical thinking and sustainable learning, such as psychological freedom, psychological safety, and intellectually stimulating experiences (Corey, 2009). Psychological freedom can be interpreted as "a complete freedom of symbolic expression," a freedom "to think, to feel, to be" (Rogers, 1995, p. 358) and psychological safety—as the ability to express opinions freely, without fear of negative consequences to the self. Both the core conditions and external conditions formed the foundation of trusting, productive relationships between students and educators, conducive to creative expression and reflective learning.

The Reflective Exercise: A Case Study

The engagement that generated material for this article was a logical outcome of the humanistically oriented and student-centered course design described earlier. One of the practical manifestations of this design was the customization of assignments. For example, students were invited to engage in online forum discussions based on the guiding questions, scenarios, and case studies. Although participation in online forums, overall, proved to be a successful and effective instrument of engagement and communication for many students in the course, it did not work with every student's personality and/or life circumstances, nor did it ensure a complete freedom of expression for every student. As a result, alternative ways of completion were built into the course. Specifically, instead of participating in forum discussions (the course was offered online), students were given an option of reflecting—on their own terms—on any and as many aspects of the course as they wished. There were no further instructions. Students were given agency to decide for themselves what, how, and how much to reflect upon, that is, a complete freedom to write it up the way they wanted to. This exercise was conceived of as a pedagogical "door" into the learning experience (Dali, 2017) that facilitated students' professional growth through the course experience and ensuing reflection. "Doors" are statements in course syllabi and/or other guidance given to students in the course that "allow for flexibility and present options, fostering students' creativity and self-direction" (Dali, 2017, p. 413).

As mentioned earlier, responses by the student, who later on co-authored this article, are used as a case study. It consists of four vignettes, each of which is analyzed using the 4Ls reflection technique (Gorman and Gottesdiener, 2010). The categorization of themes within each vignette is found in Table 1, rows 2–4; Table 1 provides a graphical representation of our approach. Given the freedom to reflect on his[2] own terms on any component of the course, the student has chosen to focus on four aspects: non-fiction reading, the genre of magical realism (offered in the course as an optional lecture), bibliotherapy, and ways we talk about reading in social and professional settings.

The 4Ls-based analysis leads into the four stories about what was Liked (L1) and Learned (L2) in the course; what Lacked (L3) from our experience; and what we Longed for (L4) as a result (found in columns 2–4 in Table 1). For the purposes of this article and analysis, we operationalized the 4Ls as follows:

- Liked: refers to themes, experiences, or course elements that are found enjoyable or satisfying;
- Learned: refers to a wide array of lessons, observations, introspective discoveries, and practical take-aways; while all other components (liking, identifying lacking elements, and naming something we long for) are, technically, part of the learning process, we operationalize "learned" as specific take-aways;
- Lacked: a theme, an experience, or a course element that could have been part of discussion and would have made the learning experience more complete; an experiential or content-related addition that could be considered;

Table 1: Reflective Stories and Vignettes by Reflection Type (Mezirow, 1981; Kreber, 2004; Taylor, 2011)

	Stories	Story 1 (L1). What We Liked		Story 2 (L2). What We Learned		Story 3 (L3). What Lacked from Our Experience		Story 4 (L4). What We Were Left Longing for	
Vignettes	*Reflection Types*	*Taylor's*	*Kreber's*	*Taylor's*	*Kreber's*	*Taylor's*	*Kreber's*	*Taylor's*	*Kreber's*
		Mezirow's							
Vignette 1. Non-fiction Reading		Content Premise	Pedagogical	Content Process Premise	Pedagogical Instructional	Content	Pedagogical Instructional Curricular	Content Process Premise	Pedagogical Instructional Curricular
Vignette 2. Magical Realism									
Vignette 3. Bibliotherapy									
Vignette 4. Talking about Reading									

- Longed for: an indication of how the issue or discussion could be extended beyond what was immediately obvious, as well as possible avenues for branching out through intellectual or affective exploration.

Moreover, the four stories are told through the lens of different types of reflection mentioned earlier: direction- and scope-based—content, process, and premise reflections (Taylor, 2011, p. 7); knowledge-domain-based: instructional, pedagogical, and curricular (Kreber, 2004); and awareness-related, affective, judgmental, and theoretical (Mezirow, 1981). These stories, in turn, merge into a larger narrative of professional growth through the course elucidated by means of reflection.

It should be noted that although we primarily focus on student learning, it is not the only type of learning that occurred. Albeit to a lesser degree, we address the professional growth and learning of the educator. The four stories below summarize our observations and conclusions derived from the analysis of the four vignettes which, in turn, build on the student's course reflections. The full text of these vignettes is found in Appendix A, "Four Critical Student Reflections Through the Lens of 4Ls." As a reminder, these four vignettes present student reflections on the following topics: non-fiction reading, the genre of magical realism, bibliotherapy, and talking about reading (see also, Table 1).

The Four Stories: What We Liked, Learned, Lacked, and Longed For

Story 1: What We Liked

Liking, as previously defined, refers to something that the student found interesting, satisfying, or enjoyable. Liking is where reflection often becomes self-reflection. It is personal, introspective, self- and inwardly bound and relies on the relatability and relevance of the encountered experience or content to the student's personal life, situation, and character. It can be a reflection on something that brings joy, awakens our inner child and adventurous spirit, helps us preserve the sense of wonder, makes us believe and have faith, encourages identification with and learning from story characters, and includes deep reflection on our own behavior and consciousness. For example, it could be specific genres (e.g., graphic novels, non-fiction, magical realism); it could be an appeal of stories (e.g., discovering the natural world, remembering childhood experiences, seeing the extraordinary in the ordinary); or it could be the effects that stories have on us (e.g., ruminating on the process of growing up, changing behaviors under the influence of fictional characters). Liking can also be tied into feelings of relief, validation, and solidarity that students experience when they learn about reading reception and reading behaviors. One prominent example was the student's response to Pierre's Bayard's (2009) liberating opus about reading as a potentially oppressive social institution and Bayard's sobering call to dispense with the notion of reading the nebulous "canon," or reading incessantly and indiscriminately, in order to be considered well-read and socially accepted.

In Taylor's (2011) classification, these reflections are both content reflections (i.e., what is perceived, felt, or acted upon) and premise reflections (i.e., resulting from awareness of

our reflective act). In Kreber's (2004) terms, these reflections are pedagogical reflections because they signify student learning and are tied into the learned content.

Student reflections are also an opportunity for educators to gain insight into how the learning experiences and contents that they developed, designed, and presented affect their students. When students like something, when they find course material enjoyable, exciting, and interesting, it serves as a validation of educational efforts, time, and energy invested in preparing and delivering the course. It also lends an incentive to continue doing a good job and trying to do even better. Students' enthusiasm is doubly important for educators not only during the draining pandemic but also amid the perpetual lack of positive or constructive student feedback, every reasonable opportunity for which has been replaced with often unfair anonymous evaluations (Dali, Caidi, Thompson, & Garner, 2021; Esarey & Valdes, 2020; Flaherty, 2019; Lakeman, 2021). While these evaluations, lacking pedagogical merit and measurable validity, often have a demoralizing and demotivating impact on educators, liking expressed in student reflections appears as counterpoise to the feelings of disenchantment, resignation, and futility that have become an inseparable companion of almost everyone who has ever taught in academia at any level. It also allows an educator to look at the course through students' eyes, effectively turning it into a process reflection, eliciting awareness (Taylor, 2011) and insight into the course design (Kreber, 2004). On a more personal level, witnessing students' emotional response, externalized and expressed in words, is a liberating and uplifting experience for an educator and a point of human connection beyond course interactions.

Story 2: What We Learned

Compared to the part addressing Liking, more attention in "what we learned" reflections is paid to third-party observations, analytical conclusions, and practical applications; the quality of personal relatability and relevance—and, by extension, that of self-reflection—is also retained. For example, a self-analysis of the student's personal characteristics as a reader, and the comparison of his reading practices to those of the collective reader from published research, are mixed with ruminations on genre appeals, the meaning of reality and context, and the exploration of how certain types of media, styles, and art forms interplay with individual preferences of readers and viewers. There is a complex iterative process of meaning making and the rethinking of acceptable definitions and convention: what are "realness," its variations, and its relationship to "truth"? what are personal and psychological, rather than sociopolitical, aspects of magical realism resonating with some readers? and so on. This, specifically, is a very important indicator of out-of-the-box thinking and creative interpretation, uninhibited by established standards and conventions. In turn, intellectual and emotional liberation in the process of learning can be seen as one of the most significant achievements of the humanistic pedagogy that guided the course.

Another difference between the Liked and Learned parts of reflection is the exploration of professional growth in addition to personal transformation, with clear indicators that said student is becoming a reflective practitioner and a mindful, holistically oriented decision maker, not only a rule follower who can effectively implement acquired techniques and act in prescribed ways. There is a meaningful discussion, an internal student's dialogue of sorts,

about the professional responsibility of those who work with readers to be cognizant of the line between therapy and reading experience facilitation; to be acutely aware of not only benefits but also shortcomings and downright dangers of reading, hidden in specific characteristics of stories and in the highly individualized and varying reader perceptions of the same story. There is an intriguing recognition of the need for "a new classification system" of stories, based on the type of experience they secure, that "transcend[s] styles, genres, and subjects," with the concomitant recognition of the ubiquitous and often intrusive and overwhelming nature of not just formats and reading materials but also stories themselves. There is an astute distinction between an authentic firsthand opinion of reading matters and an impression-based conception thereof, often acquired through the proxy of expert reviews and other people's viewpoints.

The volume and richness of educators' own learning at this juncture increases exponentially compared to the Liking stage. Student reflections on learning may affect educators in a more profound way. If students' liking of course content can be healing balsam to educator souls, their account of transformative learning makes educators proud of having an impact. To be sure, said impact starts with liking; but liking is just a launching pad for the transformative process, the essence and details of which are recorded in student accounts of what they Learned. Reflections on what was Learned take both students and educators beyond the specific units of knowledge and toward the holistic experience of transformation which, as evident from student writings, influences their mind, psychological state, and behavior. Liking is also a point of departure on the journey of self-discovery through the medium of not only reading and engagement with stories but also through the medium of scholarship about reading.

Students' boldness and candor in redefining convention stand to provide educators with new perspectives, disrupting traditional approaches in their own teaching. One notable example from this study is the student's interpretation of magical realism. Of course, both the student and the educator understood the complexity of the genre and knew its conventions and features. However, while for the educator the genre was primarily associated with unfavorable socio-political circumstances and the imperative of literary allegory for creative expression, for the student it was chiefly a constellation of literary devices that embedded the dreamy, the hallucinatory, and the imaginary in real-life situations. This could be a function of two individuals growing up and being educated in different sociopolitical milieus; a result of a habit to search for political subtext versus personal relatability; and/or an indication of how prior knowledge and formal training (in the educator's case) foreclose the recognition of more personal aspects and interpretations.

Considering the fact that this reflection was completed as a coursework requirement, albeit in elective format, it is not surprising that the lion's share of it is given to reflecting on the learning process, which falls under the same Kreber's (2004) pedagogical reflection classification. However, as opposed to the Liking stage, it's not the only type of observed reflection. It is also instructional reflection, that is, reflection on the process and design, noted and addressed by both the student and the educator, albeit in different ways and at different points in time. This reflection is also much more complex in Taylor's (2011) terms

as it seems to encompass all three classificatory types: content, process, and premise, that is, "awareness of why we perceive" (p. 7) what we perceive and how we perceive it.

Story 3: What Lacked From Our Experience

With all the rich learning experience that the student was able to achieve in the course, certain components were lacking. These components fall into two categories: expanding the knowledge of select aspects of reading practices and reading materials and getting more in-depth training on certain psychological aspects of working with readers. For example, by way of expanding knowledge, the student wanted to know even more about the genre of magical realism, which is not one of the genres traditionally seen in the North American reading milieu. In this course, it was covered as an optional/bonus lecture provided to students; apparently, it whetted the student's appetite for in-depth learning about international genres, something we do not hear about very often in our professional practice or LIS courses. Similarly, the student wanted to have a more in-depth and multi-faceted understanding of macro- and micro-level factors affecting reading behaviors and specific reading practices, such as non-fiction reading. Wishing for additional psychology-oriented training, the student was hoping to acquire more confidence differentiating between providing bibliotherapy and facilitating the reading experience; such training cannot stop merely at the classroom discussion or even at a few in-class simulations; a more significant practical experience is required, akin to that pursued in helping occupations (e.g., psychology, social work). By the same token, the student was interested in additional practical experience of talking freely and candidly about reading in professional settings, while acknowledging the limits and limitations of personal knowledge about specific titles, and the mediated nature of this knowledge (i.e., acquired through book reviews and not through personal reading).

To be sure, these student reflections provided valuable information for the educator, very much resonating with her own concerns about the acknowledged, but inevitable, limitations of the current course design. To understand these concerns, the context of the corporate university education needs to be recognized. As part of a graduate *professional* program, LIS courses tend to be oriented more toward the job market demands and applied skills than toward intellectual exploration and broader theory-to-practice education. Of course, in some areas of LIS, it is possible to successfully combine both and facilitate a more well-rounded education. For example, in the realm of information behaviors, data management, information retrieval, libraries and technology, information literacy, or metadata, we have a chance to address issues through several courses, progressing from core (overview and high-level) to elective (covering specific aspects in depth). With reading education, it is usually a one-shot deal. Many LIS programs do not offer courses on reading practices at all; the best-case scenario is a single course on readers' advisory. In the constraints of a single course, geared toward practical applications, hands-on training, and specific skills and knowledge acquisition, there is rarely room for exploring the context, providing students with a well-rounded reading education, and meaningful connection between theory and practice. The latter would include elements from sociology and psychology of reading, reader response theory, education, and literary studies (Dali, 2015). Realistically, that would require having more than one course on reading. When only a single elective is available

(which may or may not even be rooted in core courses), instructors need to become selective and strategic about what is included in the course. As a result, more general and more theoretical topics that provide much needed contextualization and understanding rarely make it into weekly schedules or reading lists.

The corporate university environment also shapes student expectations, and many students may come to see contextualizing matters as unnecessary, irrelevant, and distracting from the direct goal of acquiring specific skills and practical techniques. Under the circumstances, students who seek a broader evidence-based understanding of reading behaviors and guidance for professional practice are left lacking the crucial background. Expanding the coverage of topics to international matters can also become problematic, for much the same reasons and despite the fact that in such countries as the United States or Canada, "international" often translates into "multicultural." When professional education is oriented toward immediate needs and applications, local considerations prevail over global and international ones. With this frame of mind and a short duration of the course affecting one another, international coverage, especially an in-depth one, can fall by wayside. As a result, such things as translated fiction, international genres and authors, freedom to read, and reading trends from around the world (that could be echoed in reading practices of multicultural communities in North America) may stay overboard in terms of course planning.

It could be similarly hard, albeit not completely impossible, to dedicate time to a more thorough psychology-based training of library staff who will soon work with readers. For that, though, instructors need to be skilled in this kind of professional approach. Some may be comfortable doing so, thanks to their formal qualifications and/or many years of practical experience working with readers; others may not, preferring instead to focus more heavily on the study of genres, materials, and professional tools. If this is the latter, then, courses on reading will be more akin (in design, goals, pedagogy, and outcomes) to reference courses. The course discussed in the article had much more contextual knowledge, psychology-based training, and mindfulness techniques built into it than could be expected of a course on readers' advisory; and yet, even then, the student felt that something was lacking. Commonly seen courses on readers' advisory could therefore be lacking even more interdisciplinary and training context.

For the situation to change, there should be support from multiple players, with the community of practicing reading advocates as the most influential party. There should be a strong message from the professional community that not only specific techniques and concrete knowledge but also a more well-rounded and broader education, including an international component, are crucial for the improved, mindful, and culturally sensitive professional practice. Only then could it significantly change student expectations of LIS courses on reading and give confidence to instructors to modify and expand their graduate offerings. Finally, it could serve to justify the expansion of reading education in LIS programs, that is, having more than one elective on reading and having an integral reading study component in core courses.

Lacking experiences accounted for a content reflection (Taylor, 2011). However, in terms of Kreber's (2004) classification, all three types of reflection took place: instructional, pedagogical, and curricular, which touched on the goals and purposes of courses.

Story 4: What We Longed For

We have taken a less poetic and more pragmatic approach to Longing in this story, defining it earlier as an indication of how the issue or discussion could be extended beyond the course and how we, as learners, could progress from intellectual to affective exploration. A cross-sectional analysis of all four reflections yielded two types of conclusions: self-directed (e.g., directed at the student and/or the educator) and directed at professional interactions with readers.

Self-directed reflections showed that the entirety of learning about reading does not have to be tied into immediately applicable and utilitarian knowledge. Students may want and need a space and a forum to engage in intellectual exploration, and not only in sharing and practicing applied skills. If the course format or length do not allow for this, then it could be useful to create extracurricular spaces that would provide opportunity for more creative and philosophical communication through the medium of stories. Another conclusion that followed from this experience is that the time may be right for reconsidering and restructuring courses on reading as courses on leisure. Alternatively, new electives on well-being and meaningful leisure in libraries can be developed and become a mainstay, in addition to classes on the reading experience. With multiliteracies and multi-modal entertainment proliferating, and leisure more intimately bound to general well-being and health, more substantial attention should be paid to all types of leisure activities beyond reading.

By the same token, curricular or extracurricular spaces could be developed for students to negotiate their identities, process feelings, and explore memories and personal histories through the medium of stories—stories delivered and consumed in any format. Spaces for student well-being and personal growth are just as crucial as professional development opportunities. Those who intend to engage with the public for years to come should have the opportunity to learn and practice mindfulness, relaxation, introspection, and self-care in order to grow into professionals who can sustain the sense of wonder, keen interest in the world and people around them, and dynamic professional motivation.

In the context of conclusions applied to improving engagement with readers in professional settings, as a professional community, we may need to advocate for more sustainable and impactful training for LIS students aimed at developing empathy through different techniques. Some methods can use guided imagination exercises, autoethnographies, and shared personal narratives, while others may rely on the power of stories, specifically, fiction (Mar, Oatley, & Peterson, 2009). This will move LIS one step closer to helping occupations and the type of education pursued in social work, counselling, or psychology programs.

Additionally, student reflections provide a great idea for an in-class or extracurricular workshop whereby students will not only learn to access, evaluate, and form opinions about a large number of cultural artifacts and reading matters effectively and efficiently but will also get comfortable with forming conceptions of these works by proxy and discussing these conceptions with others. It may seem like an exercise in information literacy and reading

experience, and thus as purely LIS activity; however, it is just as much cognitive-behavioral transformation which, once again, prompts LIS to reach out to helping professions. Whether this training and spaces will be created within the existing curriculum or offered as extracurricular activities remains to be seen and will depend on the individual characteristics of each LIS program.

Reflections on longing were the most complex instance of reflection, accounting for all elements from both Taylor's (2011) and Kreber's (2004) classifications, namely reflections on content, process, and premise (Taylor, 2011) and instructional, pedagogical, and curricular reflections (Kreber's, 2004).

All four stories manifested the signs of awareness-related, affective, judgmental, and theoretical reflections. See Table 1 for the graphical representation of our analysis and reflection classification. Jointly, these stories have provided a fascinating view into the aspect of learning that is often hidden from educators: an inner intellectual and affective journey of a student that does not manifest itself in course assignments and even class discussions but may come to light through personal, written free-floating reflections.

Discussion

A Story Within a Story

The notion of story and the concept of reflection have been paramount to our argument. Contextualized through the classifications of reflection types, they have helped us develop a conceptual base for courses on reading in LIS programs (see Table 1). Encouraging students to reflect in writing, on their own terms, on course-related experiences and content and inviting them to capitalize on their ability of "affective knowing" (Taylor, 2011) elicits and elucidates their learning journeys, their stories of professional development and personal maturation. We can refer to them as stories of transformative learning (Mezirow & Taylor, 2011).

Story is the best format and outlet to document a learning journey because stories, as Cron (2016) wrote, is precisely about "how the things that happen affect someone in pursuit of a difficult goal, and how that person changes internally as a result" (pp. 20–21). Viewing a transformative learning process as a story helps with understanding our students. Encouraging students to view their learning as a story helps with keeping their minds and hearts excited; if they love to read stories, they may love writing one of their own transformation.

Our experience also shows the potential of reflection as a pedagogical tool that allows us to arrive at unexpected discoveries about what our students want and what they experience and feel in the courses on reading. Reflection is not only a way to measure what specific skills they've acquired; it is also a road to their personal stories of professional and personal growth, an affective and intellectual journey through the course and the stories that comprise it.

Reflections Through Theoretical Classifications

To compose these stories of transformative learning, we filtered student reflections through four facets of the 4Ls model (Gorman and Gottesdiener, 2010): Liking, Learning, Lacking, and Longing for. Later on, we analyzed them through three different classifications of reflection: (1) the direction- and scope-based classification that divides reflections into content, process, and premise reflections (Taylor, 2011, p. 7); (2) the knowledge-domain-based classification that distinguishes among instructional, pedagogical, and curricular reflections (Kreber, 2004); and (3) Mezirow's (1981) multi-dimensional classification from which we chose the four relevant aspects: awareness-related, affective, judgmental, and theoretical reflections (see Table 1). Stories 1–4 highlighted the first two classifications and their manifestations. Mezirow's (1981) classification also merits more attention as a culminating summary.

To reiterate, *awareness-related reflections* refer to specific perceptions, meaning, and behavior. For instance students become aware of their perception of reading experiences and elements of stories that invoke creativity, bring joy, and uplift spirits and their perception of themselves as readers. They become aware of the meaning of reading as a social institution and a potentially oppressive structure, not only a positive influence in our lives. Students debate the transformation of their professional behavior from one restricted by conventions to one marked by enjoyable interactions and honest discussions of reading, which recognize the limitations of their personal reading knowledge.

Affective reflections, resulting from the awareness of how students feel about what is perceived or acted upon, abounded in this research. Feelings of joy, liberation, unexpected clarity, sudden realizations, relief, excitement, wonder, satisfaction, surprise, being in the moment, validation, solidarity, and existential well-being were all part and parcel of reflection.

Judgmental reflectivity refers to making a judgment and becoming aware of its value. Through written reflections, which allow students to organize their thoughts in a mindfully formulated statement, free of formatting requirements, students make *judgments* about different content-related matters (e.g., redefining genres, evaluating different types of professional activities related to reading) and elucidate the value of the learned contents to their personal growth and professional practice.

Finally, *theoretical reflections* have also emerged spontaneously in the course of free-floating reflections. They were reflections on the need to ground practical skills in a broader context and to provide evidence- and research-base to the practice of reading and conversations with readers; they were ruminations on reconsidering genre conventions and definitions and forging stronger disciplinary and behavioral connections to other leisure and entertainment media.

Seen through the lens of different theoretical classifications, student reflections provide a roadmap for educators with regard to the kinds of experiences that need to be designed into courses on reading and, as such, provide conceptual grounding for improved course development.

The Significance of a Case Study and Future Approaches

Our argument and conceptualization are based on a case study. One legitimate question that can be asked is how much we can generalize from a single case and whether the same experience would be shared by a significant number of students going through courses on reading. A follow up study, where larger numbers of students in several offerings of reading courses would be involved in reflective exercises, would answer this question more definitively. Alternatively, we can apply the principles of analytical, logical generalization, by analogy to "methodologies used by clinicians and by court justices" (Kennedy, 1979, p. 661), and argue that this experience would be common to many graduate students interested in reading.

However, we also think that it would not be the best question to ask about the study at hand. Our goal is not to present a generalizable case. Our goal is to alert the teaching community to the tremendous potential of reflection in the courses on reading and the practical application of this potential to improving and enriching the course design. Our goal is also to draw attention to student learning needs that may be overlooked and unsatisfied if immediate practical applications and current job market guide our course development. In fact, without reflections, students may not know what they might be missing or what in-depth education on reading entails. Reflection therefore gives them the opportunity for expanding their horizons.

Students may be familiar with the practical demands of the job market, with skills required in libraries, primarily in public libraries, to facilitate their day-to-day work with readers. But this is pretty much the case with every other subject, including reference, information literacy, or cataloging. Student expectations, especially earlier in the program, may be shaped by a partial or fragmented view of the field (e.g., Dali & Caidi, 2016); however, progressing through well-rounded courses, they often acquire a a broader understanding of LIS and ground their professional skills in the context of more comprehensive and in-depth education. As has been noted, while we are successful in providing this balance in many other areas of LIS, education for reading is often limited to skill acquisition in readers' advisory. As student reflections have shown, though, more well-rounded professional training and education are needed in the increasingly complex and diverse library environment.

Among others, said professional sophistication and well-roundedness can be achieved through learning opportunities that focus students on their own feelings and thoughts, help them become cognizant of their professional growth, and help them process personal change that they undergo as a result of learning in class. Do we create these opportunities? Do we allow them to tell a story of their own journey—the learning journey of professional transformation? Judging by the Lacked aspects and aspects we Longed for—not enough and not always.

Those who intend to engage with the public for years to come should have the opportunity to learn and practice mindfulness, relaxation, and introspection, and self-care to grow into professionals who can sustain the sense of wonder, keen interest in the world and people around them, and dynamic professional motivation. Integrating these components in the course design is a way to help students become just this kind of professional.

The Joy of Writing and Doing Things Their Way

Reflection can bring an incredible joy of engaging in free-floating writing: writing uncorrupted by mandatory reference styles, arbitrary assignment restrictions—the proverbial "walls" that stifle creativity (Dali, 2017)—and, not in the least, by exposure to numerous uninspiring and stale academic publications structured according to the positivist formula of study reporting. Those tease the mind at times, if findings are novel and design is rigorous, but they rarely invoke lasting feelings and, drenched in platitudes and boilerplates, lack rhetorical gems, leaving no noteworthy quotes in students' memory. To be sure, reading student reflections is also a joy for educators. Engaging with stories of others, real and imaginary, and writing their own can therefore serve as a counterpoise to the formulaic academic writing.

Individual written reflections are also a chance for the much-needed customization of assignments. In online discussion forums, some students cannot always express what could be expressed in solitary reflective pieces for reasons of format, public exposure, grading expectation, or excessive structure. It's an avenue for quieter introverted voices that we may regrettably miss in the proverbial crowd.

Conclusion

We have shared our thoughts and conceptualizations based on the student reflection from the course on reading practices. The drawn conclusions and observations had both general implications for a curriculum in a graduate professional program and specific implications for courses on reading. Our concern is primarily with the latter. The student's insight brought to light the aspects of learning and pedagogy that were previously obscured from the educator. It elucidated the impact and transformative power of the study of reading, facilitated not only through strategically designed assignments and guided exercises but also through free-floating, unstructured conversations, random comments, and the mere "being in the moment" with peers who loved reading and appreciated stories.

It showed, once again, that the study and teaching of reading should not rely solely on professional tacit knowledge and the mastery of professional skills. It should be enriched with exciting, provocative, and intellectually stimulating theories that spin mundane matters and familiar practices in a new light, expand students' horizons, and facilitate new understanding and perspectives. To that end, the scope of the course should go beyond the traditional assortment of topics seen in the courses on readers' advisory and include scholarship that provides students with a foundation of reading as a social and individual activity. Some examples include the status of reading scholarship in LIS in light of tensions between librarianship and information science, bibliotherapy, reader response criticism (not limited to Rosenblatt's [1969] concept of reading as a transaction, thus far prevalent in LIS), and quirky approaches to reading like, for example, Pierre Bayard's (2009) take on how to talk about books one has not read. This will also remedy the situation when education for reading does not compare favorably with education in other LIS areas, such as information behavior, for example. The latter always relies on a solid combination of information behavior/information seeking theories and examples of practical application for reference services, information literacy, information systems, information retrieval, and

so on. Education for reading, on the other hand, is often heavy on skills, practical tips, techniques, and foundational genre studies, and light on theoretical fundamentals, especially ones that reach beyond LIS.

The study and teaching of reading should integrate exercises, activities, and assignments encouraging students to deeply reflect on the world of stories around them, on professional and leisure activities undertaken by them and others, and on their own professional and personal transformation, encouraging them to narrate their own stories. Even if it is not immediately obvious, these exercises are no less useful than writing book reviews, analyzing reader requests, and doing genre presentations. As such, these assignments and activities cannot be considered meaningless academic exercises that do not have a clear applied purpose; however small and short, they are essential for intellectual growth, introspection, and preserving the sense of connectedness to both the story and the self.

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Notes

1. "Reflection" and "critical reflection" are used in this article interchangeably and refer to the same thing.
2. When "his" is used, we refer to the experiences of the concrete student whose reflection served as a basis for this article; in other instances we use the pronouns they/them/their(s).

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Appendix A:

Four Critical Student Reflections Through the Lens of 4Ls

The below vignettes are written in the first person by one of the article authors, who was a student in the course under discussion. Writing in the first person, therefore, is a narrative approach that seemed to make most sense under the circumstances.

Vignette 1: Non-Fiction Reading

Preamble: One class in the course was dedicated to non-fiction reading and included characteristics of non-fiction readers versus fiction readers; reasons for non-fiction reading; sociocultural circumstances accounting for the growing popularity of non-fiction in the 21st century; personal, contextual, and material-related appeals of non-fiction; informational versus narrative non-fiction; non-fiction genres vis-à-vis fiction genres; access to non-fiction in libraries and other venues, among others.

Liked

I found the lecture on non-fiction reading to be particularly interesting and relevant as I've recently been reading more non-fiction books than my usual go-to—graphic novels. I love learning about the natural world and our shared reality. Non-fiction amazes and excites me as it explores our growing understanding of how things are.

Learned

I would consider myself somewhere between an information seeker and recreational reader, though I don't consider reading fiction a waste of time. I have a deep love for documentaries (sometimes more so than fictional cinema), and the "partial realness" or "reality in the right context" is a theme I regularly consider. While reality TV and click-bait media from the internet fall into this category, the shallow, or at times vapid, nature of the content does not engage me in the way documentaries or non-fiction books do. I seek depth in all forms of media or art, but great non-fiction presents a "truth" that can be applied to real life in a unique way. For me, the "realness" of non-fiction adds weight and certain validity to its meaning. I also found the characterization of informational non-fiction readers to be fairly accurate in describing my own non-fiction reading style. Depending on the topic, I often find myself reading, as Rosenthal (1995) says, really quickly, or diagonally, skimming and scanning the text, just searching for specific bits and pieces of information. Some non-fiction readers tend to engage in a constant dialogue with the author as they read. They may agree with the author, they may argue with the author or against the author, but they find themselves in this constant process of dialoguing with somebody who wrote a specific text (Rosenthal, 1995). However, I don't see myself trying to argue with the author or disprove information. My preferences are more subject-based and driven by general but genuine curiosity. I simply love to learn about new discoveries or realizations that humanity has arrived at.

Lacked

I do not believe the interest in "reality" has to stem from the fascination that Chuck Klosterman (2004) attributes it to. I have little to no interest in "reality TV"; in fact, it played a role in driving me away from television and toward focusing on other media. I remained somewhat vague on what other macro- and micro-factors could account for the increasingly growing popularity of non-fiction.

Longed For

I realized that non-fiction exploration can extend into other media and art forms. This lecture, for one, reminded me of the filmmaker Werner Herzog. He has been a personal sort-of-hero of mine as he seems to insist on filming only what he sees as highly interesting or moving aspects of the world or humanity. He has considered his documentaries as attempts to reach an "ecstatic truth" (Herzog, n.d.). Werner believes that an ultimate truth is inconceivable and that we can only *try* to describe what truth as our descriptions are inevitably subjective. Resulting from this pursuit are documentaries based on somewhat fictionalized (at times) scenarios, with real people in real contexts, that depict what he considers to be a greater truth than a reality as we know it. He believes that an "ecstatic truth" is "truer" in the sense that the narrative, story, or emotion that it captures connect and resonate with the viewer in a more powerful—real—way than the straightforward recording, or documenting, of reality.

Vignette 2: Magical Realism

Preamble: One of the classes in the course includes an optional lecture on translated fiction, a big part of which is the genre of magical realism. The genre history and conventions are briefly addressed, and several examples from Latin America, Eastern and Western Europe, and North America are reviewed, with the corresponding subgenres of culinary fiction, adventure, romance/love story, LGBTQIA+, saga, historical, and religious fiction.

Liked

It pulls you into the wondrous lands. Magical realism reminds me of being a kid again, of a child's sense of wonder and marvel of the world, but also of the way children instinctively color the world with their imagination. There are no "minor" events for a child. The snow is not just "pretty" or "needs to be shoveled"; it is radiant, magical, and ought to be thrown around. I don't think adults lose this playfulness and wonder; we are just better at acknowledging the practical things. Magical realism reminds us that we can always build a sandcastle or make a snowball.

Learned

Magical realism can be defined in a variety of ways, reflective of the diversity of its depictions. It is a space where creators can reach freely into their imagination and splash it into our everyday life. The idea that keeps reoccurring to me is how an inner world is expressed in our outer reality, to find external and tangible manifestations of deep-seated emotions … The impact of the style is interesting in its way of normalizing fantasy. For those averse to supernatural or unrealistic elements, magical realism helps create a bridge between genres,

a bridge between our day to day existence and imagination. As a film director Ali Abbasi put it,

> The most important literary device they use is to combine fantasy and realism. To capture life, and inner life, you need different layers. This is why the dreams, hallucinations of the characters are as real as their everyday life and part of their reality. (Pham, 2018)

Lacked

I wanted to see more examples of how magical realism has been presented. As any genre can integrate the elements of the style, and it would be intriguing to see the different places where magical realism has emerged. For instance, I wanted to know more about the use of magical realism in response to the political climate after the Cuban Revolution.

Longed For

I feel that our inner-child's-eye-view of life is often overlooked as the crux of our curiosity and creativity. As ubiquitous and ineffable as dreams, our ability to imagine seems to know no bounds yet our base for exploration is reality. Magical realism is ultimately an exceptionally compelling means of transcending reality and getting in touch with our inner child. As Terry Gilliam said in an interview with Salman Rushdie (2003),

> It's about expanding how you see the world. I think we live in an age where we're just hammered, hammered to think this is what the world is. Television's saying, everything's saying "That's the world." And it's not the world. The world is a million possible things.

Vignette 3: Bibliotherapy

Preamble: A class on bibliotherapy focuses on the history of bibliotherapy; types and mechanics of the process; on both benefits and dangers of reading, especially for the audiences of vulnerable readers; the difference between delivering bibliotherapy and facilitating the reading experience; and qualifications required of library staff who wish to practice bibliotherapy.

Liked

The lecture on bibliotherapy got me thinking a lot about the effects of books on our lives. I've witnessed and experienced the strong influence that a title or series can have over you. This can range from the appropriation of an esthetic, embodying a character's behavior or demeanor, obsessing over lore, or—my personal favorite—books that change how you perceive the world.

Learned

As stories put structure into the narratives of our lives, books like other art forms, can have an immense power or influence over the reader. So, it seems intuitive to me to see books in a therapeutic context. While I agree that a librarian shouldn't take the role of a therapist or psychologist as far as recommendations (without proper training), I think, at

times, suggested titles can have a great impact on the reader's condition, both positive and negative.

Lacked

Considering bibliotherapy in a professional setting invokes a nagging feeling that librarians underestimate the power that suggesting books can hold. Typically, I imagine a librarian seeks to get some positive feedback or constructive criticism. It is rewarding to learn that their suggested title received a "Thanks, I loved it" or "Maybe next time something with more … ," and I assume the majority of interactions go down as such. But I can't help but wonder if we should be giving more consideration before suggesting titles that could potentially harm our readers.

Longed For

I feel the discussion of bibliotherapy could easily transition into a discourse of the impact of day-to-day recommendations and suggestions. I try to consider this impact of the titles I suggest as I often gravitate toward non-traditional topics or stories. When I warn a patron that a title may be graphic, I also describe the way in which it could potentially disturb them. I feel this is akin to the now commonplace "trigger warning" seen in all types of media. This consideration also extends to positive associations as I try to imagine how the reader will experience the title. I try to elucidate the impression, mood, or feeling the title could have. The different ways we encounter media will always be contextual and varying depending on the individual. Branching out into this kind of discussion would be exciting and educational.

Vignette 4: Talking about Reading

Preamble: Many classes in the course are focused on how to talk about reading in professional settings and about effective communication in the context of reading practices; on different questions that elicit context, a type of desired story, and specific titles; as well as the social space whereby we communicate about reading, with its unwritten but clearly understood conventions, power struggles, deceptions and myths, peer pressure, expectations, and social status tied into reading. Students are also introduced by Pierre Bayard's *How to Talk about Books You Haven't Read* (2009), which questions the very core and foundational definition of reading.

Liked

I felt a sort of weight lifted when reading Pierre's Bayard's (2009) work and engaging in discussions. I felt I was one of few to acknowledge the pressure of needing to read "important" books or those topical/popular titles in order to stay in the loop of what librarians should be keyed into. I was relieved to know there were others who felt this pressure and validated my belief that we don't have to read everything. We can have constructive and enlightening discussions around books without having read them all cover to cover. Bayard's focus on reading and the inevitable process of forgetting resonated with me as I've recognized that information we obtain from books will inevitably fade. What's left is an impression, a reaction, or an overall feeling about the work. We don't hang onto the details of what we read unless they continue to resonate with us. What we do recall is the experience and feelings

we had when reading—a diluted yet personal reflection of what the book means to us. This also brought me to understand what a "conception" of a work is.

Learned

The boundless stream of books and media accessible today places every reader on a constant journey of exploring tastes and finding what's right for them at the moment. The diversity and multitude of titles also imposes a reality that they will never be able to read everything or even most of what is available. For a librarian working with readers, one can only attempt to have a complete comprehension of what is popular or worthy of suggesting. This essentially forces a process of gathering information and responses on books to form a *conception* of titles that have not been read. This is necessary considering time constraints and to achieve an understanding of the wide variety of stories, genres, and styles for the benefit of the reader. As I practice the skill of sifting through titles and listening to readers speak about titles, I focus on *how they have experienced* the book instead of resorting to a scale of good versus bad. This essentially creates a new classification system of works, as stories "that inspire you," "for a cozy winter morning," or "make you consider your existence" transcend styles, genres, and subjects. There are moods and feelings connected to stories that are not found in keywords and genres but reside in reviews. I try to mentally catalog reviews of and responses to different titles to form a picture or an impression of what that the story is.

Lacked

One revelation I had is that we always form a conception of a work, regardless of whether we interact with the book directly or develop an opinion by proxy (i.e., a mediated opinion), for example, an opinion based on book reviews and other people's accounts. I feel that, often, we lack the skill of distinguishing one from another, and I think this distinction is important for providing authentic and honest service. While your goal may be to understand as much as possible about a title without expending much time to read it cover to cover, I think it is important to disclose the limit and limitation of your knowledge. It is particularly essential for building trust with the reader. When an opinion is formed by proxy but passed as a firsthand one, honesty is undermined, and trust is broken. It is entirely possible though to describe a story in limitless ways while remaining candid about the source of your information, opinion, or experience.

Longed For

More discussion and openness about sharing and exchanging information about the books we have not read. Amassing a collection of impressions and opinions, gathered through conversations or reviews, the librarian can be adequately equipped to communicate the feel and characteristics of a story. I believe this process of getting the gist of many stories, rather than reading a more limited number of titles in their entirety, should be a more commonly shared and discussed practice. The mission to grasp and share the immense world of stories is not achieved through conjecture or incessant reading of everything, but through the careful listening and thoughtful communication of our emotions and experiences of reading.