Scholarship of Teaching & Learning Publishing Tips

Kathleen McKinney, Cross Endowed Chair in SoTL

As a past pedagogical journal editor, member of many SoTL editorial teams, and author of published SoTL papers, I suggest the following tips for publishing SoTL work.

1. Don't assume you have invented the wheel to the SoTL vehicle. It is very likely there is relevant prior literature on the same or a related SoTL question in your and/or related disciplines. You need a useful, relevant, coherent literature review. We often see papers with missing literature reviews or literature reviews about the research on the disciplinary content, not the SoTL question and method.

2. Make clear, and do so early in the paper, what your SoTL questions and research purposes are, and how they fill a gap in, or build on, past work. Then stick to those questions. We often see the questions or purpose shift in later parts of the paper, leading to confusion.

3. Don't be atheoretical. Too much SoTL work is atheoretical. Are concepts or models from your discipline relevant to the SoTL questions and results? What about concepts, models, or theories from other fields and higher education in general? Theory can be deductive or inductive. Theory can be in your literature/introduction and/or in your discussion.

4. Include information about 'context.' By definition, SoTL work is local, context-specific, action research. Thus, readers need to know your context to understand, evaluate, and use your work. Briefly give some information about the institution, department or discipline, class, and/or students. Don't make readers guess your context or assume it is similar to their own.

5. Provide sufficient detail on methods and measures (and appendices) so that readers can understand your work and replicate or adapt it (or question or criticize it). Such detail is often missing in SoTL papers.

6. Have actual SoTL data (especially on learning; perhaps multi-methods/measures). Do not submit "I tried it, I liked it" or "I tried it, my students liked it" papers with no or only anecdotal data.

7. SoTL is action, practioner, applied research. Spend time in the discussion section talking about how you have used the results and/or plan to use the results (specific changes and actions) to enhance student learning. Make application suggestions for readers. You would be amazed at how often this area is neglected in SoTL papers.

8. Remember you may have a multi-discipline audience for your SoTL work. Watch the use of jargon. Draw on literature from other disciplines. Help readers learn from your results. Discuss applications generally. Suggest adaptations to other disciplines.

9. Be persistent. There are many good SoTL journals in which to publish your work.

10. And, of course, do all the important things you would do submitting any paper for review:

- Know the mission/type of work published in various journal outlets; select an outlet that fits your SoTL work.
- Contact the editor to see whether the paper is a fit to the journal you're considering.
- Don't miss citing literature published in the journal to which you are submitting.
- Let others read/comment on your paper then rewrite before you send it to journal reviewers.
- Give appropriate credit to work you build upon or adapt.
- Carefully, carefully edit and proof read your paper.
- Take reviewer suggestions seriously, doing those that make sense and are "doable."
- When resubmitting, include a letter to the editor and reviewers outling all the changes you made and noting any they suggested that you did not make, and why you did not.

Check us out on twitter:

@ISU_SOTL

Snow, Smiles and SoTL in Miami: Lilly Conference Notes

Michaelene Cox, SoTL Scholar-Mentor, POL

Conferences tend to reenergize and encourage us to engage further with our colleagues, don't they? As a relative newcomer to the world of SoTL, I returned from the 34th Annual Lilly Conference with just that enthusiasm. The November 2014 meeting was hosted by Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, hence the title word Snow instead of Sun! Reception from everyone, however, was very warm. More than 500 faculty, administrators, practitioners, and students from the U.S. and numerous countries abroad registered for the four-day event, and so it was delightful to meet and chat with colleagues from near and far about scholarly teaching. The conference included workshops, concurrent sessions, 20-minute discussions, plenary addresses, and a poster session, with all initial proposal submissions evaluated through a blind peer-review process. There were 18 themed tracks, and it is notable that the track focusing on SoTL outnumbered all others with its 37 presentations. My 40-minute concurrent paper presentation was among those.

Titled, "The Merits of Student Scholarship: Exploring Uncommon Learning Communities," my research was supported in large part through a grant from the ISU Office of the Cross Chair in SoTL (FY2013-14). The project posed the question, To what degree, and how, does learning come about through student conference presentation and/or student journal publication? The paper drew on content analyses of three student political science journals (one of which is published by my department), survey responses of those journal authors, and survey responses from faculty mentors and student participants in the past five years of the ISU undergraduate and graduate research symposia.

The pedagogical merits of student scholarship were then explored from the lens of social network theory. After the Lilly conference presentation, I received numerous questions and comments, and enjoyed subsequent conversation about our "scholars-in-training." But bringing the biggest smile to my face was a thumbs-up signal from one of the audience members immediately after I introduced myself as an associate professor from ISU. Her son, she proudly announced, was one of our graduates! So I found that the community of learning and teaching extends far beyond our campus.

Indeed, the Lilly conferences do much to strengthen ties between institutions of higher education. For the past three decades or so, the organization's conferences on evidence-based teaching and learning are held at various times through the year in several states. Miami University-Ohio has a rich tradition of appreciation for SoTL work. As one of the oldest public universities in the U.S., it was ranked second for best undergraduate teaching in the 2015 U.S. News & World Report. It is also home to three peer-reviewed journals that publish SoTL work: *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, *Learning Communities Journal*, and *Journal on Centers for Teaching & Learning*.

Just a four to five hour drive away, it is relatively convenient for ISU faculty interested in attending a Lilly conference (http://lillyconferences.com/). Faculty may also benefit from postings on the Lilly Conference blog about issues related to teaching/learning— *The Scholarly Teacher* (www.scholarlyteacher.com).

Our New *The SoTL Advocate* Blog Is Up and Running

Jennifer Friberg, SoTL Scholar-Mentor, CSD

The SoTL Advocate is a blog established by the Office of the Cross Chair in SoTL at ISU during fall 2014 to highlight SoTL work of ISU faculty and to encourage discussion in the SoTL community at ISU and beyond. At press, over 15 articles have been posted, with followers from over a dozen universities in the U.S. and other nations. Blog posts represent a variety of categories:

• SoTL News: announcements of grants, programs, awards, conferences, and other opportunities for faculty, staff, and/or students by the Cross Chair in SoTL.

• Reports of SoTL Research: invited posts from SoTL researchers describing their projects, methods, or other unique aspects of their SoTL work.

• SoTL to Inform Scholarly Teaching: practical outcomes and applications from SoTL projects to support the work of course instructors seeking an evidence-base for their course design/implementation.

• Resource Sharing: posts or links to websites, articles, and/or various media to support teaching and learning, and SoTL efforts.

The intent of the blog is to provide information to, and foster discussion among, those interested in SoTL. We hope that faculty will use this blog to follow the projects of fellow SoTL researchers, gain insights into issues germane to SoTL, and gain assistance in translating SoTL research into best practices. To this end, the focus of *The SoTL Advocate* will reflect the interests of ISU faculty, staff, and students with regard to SoTL. Thus, we are interested in hearing from you regarding topics and/or discussions you'd be interested in seeing featured on *The SoTL Advocate*. Send a message to sotl@ilstu.edu with suggestions and/or ideas. Also, please visit the blog, subscribe, and comment to share your perspectives on SoTL with colleagues from around the nation and world (http://www.illinoisstateuniversitysotl.wordpress.com).

Selected SoTL Travel Grant Reports

As space permits we publish travel grant reports in SoTL at ISU*, which may be edited due to space limitations.*

Susan Hildebrandt, Languages, Literatures, & Cultures

I attended the 2014 conference of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). ACTFL brings together world language teachers to share ideas and research on language teaching in P-16 settings and world language teacher preparation. My colleague and I presented a paper, "Researching the edTPA in World Language Teacher Preparation Programs," and a workshop, "Collaboratively implementing edTPA into World Language Teacher Education Programs." Both presentations were based on work we have done with student teachers completing edTPA, a content-specific performance assessment purported to measure beginning teacher readiness in the areas of planning, instruction, and assessment. We gleaned many insights from attendees, including suggestions to those revising the nation-wide assessment in the area of world languages. I obtained new ideas to help Illinois world language teacher candidates prepare themselves for when edTPA becomes consequential here next year.

I also attended sessions on world language teacher preparation and language teaching. The sessions that most resonated with me concerned the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), a summative assessment of teacher candidates' language proficiency. Teacher candidates in our program must earn Advanced-Low proficiency, as measured by the OPI, before taking world language pedagogy classes. Our Spanish teacher candidates, in particular, struggle with verbal skills and earning the proficiency. It helped to hear from researchers who have investigated programs that most effectively prepare their teacher candidates to succeed on the OPI, particularly as the Spanish section of ISU's Languages, Literatures, and Cultures department considers a curriculum change to help Spanish teacher candidates with their proficiency.

Finally, I was able to continue online conversations in person with friends and colleagues who are leaders in the area of world language teacher preparation. Of particular note was the time I spent with Judith Shrum, a co-author of a textbook I use in one of my pedagogy classes. Almost 20 years ago, as a student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, I used the first edition of the textbook; I recently acted as a reviewer for the fifth edition due out later this year.

Maria A. Moore, Communication

What a privilege it was to be in Quebec City, in the fall, for a gathering of scholars! Attending the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL) conference in October provided me with an opportunity to both present my own scholarship in two sessions, and to absorb and ponder so many new ideas from others.

A highlight of the conference was the inspirational plenary given by Bernard Petiot, Vice-President of Casting and Performance for Cirque du Soleil. His discussion of the necessary tension inherent in the creative process affirmed and challenged my own perceptions. While his working environment is radically different from our classrooms, I found many relevant and provocative similarities in the role creativity plays in human inspiration. He spoke of 'delicious uncertainty', the notion that we sometimes kill an idea too soon and thus lose the opportunity to recreate resulting in a valuable collision of knowledge. In addition to the inspirational, I also found very practical knowledge in abundance. Some ideas included the use of audio-based screencasts to provide feedback to students on assignments; a better understanding of 'flipped' classrooms; great ideas for assessment; examples of MOOCS and mini-MOOCS; and some terrific models of interdisciplinary collaborations.

While most of my scholarly travel occurs within my discipline of Communication, ISSOTL provided not just a chance to mix it up internationally, but across disciplines as well. It is a sweet experience to have a discussion with math, chemistry, or history scholars finding common ground through our inquiry into teaching and learning innovation and best practices. If this appeals to you, the 2015 ISSOTL conference is in Melbourne, Australia.

Jennifer Peterson, Health Sciences

I attended the Mid-Western Educational Research Association (MWERA) 2014 Annual Conference on November 13-14, 2014, in order to present my paper, "Perceptions of Adult Undergraduate Students Regarding Online Versus Face-to-Face Courses." I presented this paper during a session entitled, "Technology and Online Education in Higher Education." This session included a paper, "Covarying Characteristics that Affect Outcomes in Online Classes." This was an excellent opportunity to discuss my qualitative research regarding adult undergraduate students' perceptions with a quantitative study analyzing success in online courses by age, sex, race, and socioeconomic status.

Further, I received some excellent feedback regarding my study. I plan to work with a colleague to do a similar, larger scale study so the feedback was quite welcome. Some of the comments included probing further during interviews regarding which courses had been taken online and why students felt less interaction; grouping students by similar characteristics; using Quality Matters; and tying the findings to what effects they have on teaching and learning.

The remainder of the conference was interesting and informative. There were many sessions related to the use of technology in the classroom and/or online education. These sessions provided me with many ideas for future research and/or classroom improvements. The conference was a valuable experience and I appreciate the travel grant assistance in presenting my paper.

Taking the Next Step in Your SoTL Project Workshop

Michaelene Cox, SoTL Scholar-Mentor, POL

The process in a typical research project begins with identifying a "problem" and refining the research question. A workshop conducted in October focused on the next step toward designing a SoTL project; that is, on helping faculty and graduate students consider the appropriate methodology(ies) that might be employed in their projects. The workshop, "Selecting Methodologies for Your SoTL Research Projects," drew 19 participants from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds at ISU.

An overview of SoTL and general methodological issues was followed by presentations on several common approaches taken by SoTL researchers, including case study, content analysis, survey, course portfolio/reflection, experimental/quasi-experimental, and mixed methods. Advantages and challenges of those methods, and examples of how each have been used by ISU researchers in the past were provided. The session underscored the notion that selecting appropriate methods to conduct scholarship on teaching and learning depends in large part on the research question and situational practicalities. To help plan their SoTL projects, workshop participants completed a worksheet and then engaged in pair-share discussions during a working lunch.

My fellow SoTL scholar-mentor, Jennifer Friberg, and I facilitated October's workshop. We encourage anyone interested in learning more about SoTL to contact us. For contact information and for additional information about SoTL, including a bibliography of publications published by ISU researchers, please see the ISU SoTL webpage (http://sotl.illinoisstate.edu).

In addition to handouts, participants in the workshop were given two helpful texts in further guiding their projects, particularly in respect to selecting their method(s): McKinney, K. 2007. *Enhancing Learning through the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: The Challenges and Joys of Juggling,* Jossey-Bass and Bishop-Clark, C. and Dietz-Uhler, B. 2012. *Engaging in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: A Guide to the Process, and How to Develop a Project from Start to Finish,* Stylus.

Several workshop participants expressed interest in attending a future workshop focused on SoTL and IRB— so keep your eyes peeled for further activities emerging from the Office of the Cross Chair in the Scholarship of Learning and Teaching!

Be on the lookout for information on:

- SoTL workshop: *Application of SoTL Results*
- SoTL workshop: *SoTL and the IRB*
- The call for FY16 SoTL Small Grants
- A spring SoTL writing circle
- A *Best Example of SoTL Application* Contest

Opportunities to Publicize/Share Your SoTL Work Locally

- *Gauisus* is the ISU 'published', peer-reviewed, on-line, multi-media SoTL publication. SoTL on teaching/learning at ISU is represented as research papers, notes, essays, posters, websites, videos, etc. All are considered for publication. *Gauisus* is published each spring with submissions due in late fall. Submisson details are available at http://sotl.illinoisstate.edu/downloads/GauisusCFP2014.pdf.

- The *SoTL at ISU* Newsletter is published in September and January. We welcome 250-400 word summaries of your SoTL work about the teaching and learning of Illinois State students for inclusion in the newsletter. Summaries should include the purpose, method, results, implications, and—if appropriate—applications made and relevance to other disciplines of the project. Submissions of summaries are due August 1 or December 1 as a word file to sotl@ilstu.edu.

- If you have made your past or current SoTL work public beyond the local level (through published work or a video or a web site…), please share citations to that work (sotl@ilstu.edu). These will be added to the list of SoTL publications by Illinois State University faculty, staff, or students on the SoTL website at http://sotl.illinoisstate.edu/scholarship/faculty-staff_pubs.shtml.

- Every January a full day symposium on teaching and learning at Illinois State University is organized by the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology. Papers and posters on scholarly teaching and SoTL are presented. Lunch and a keynote presentation are also part of the event. Please submit your SoTL work to the symposium to share with your ISU colleagues (http://ctlt.illinoisstate.edu/events/symposium/).