

# Facilitating a City-wide Professional Development Program: Edmonton Information Literacy Teaching Triangles

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## Introduction

Edmonton Information Literacy Teaching Triangles [EILTT] is a new information literacy professional development initiative hosted by MacEwan University Library. This opportunity is open to all librarians or library staff in or around Edmonton who teach information literacy sessions, either face-to-face or online, and first ran throughout the Fall 2016 academic term.

## Teaching Triangles

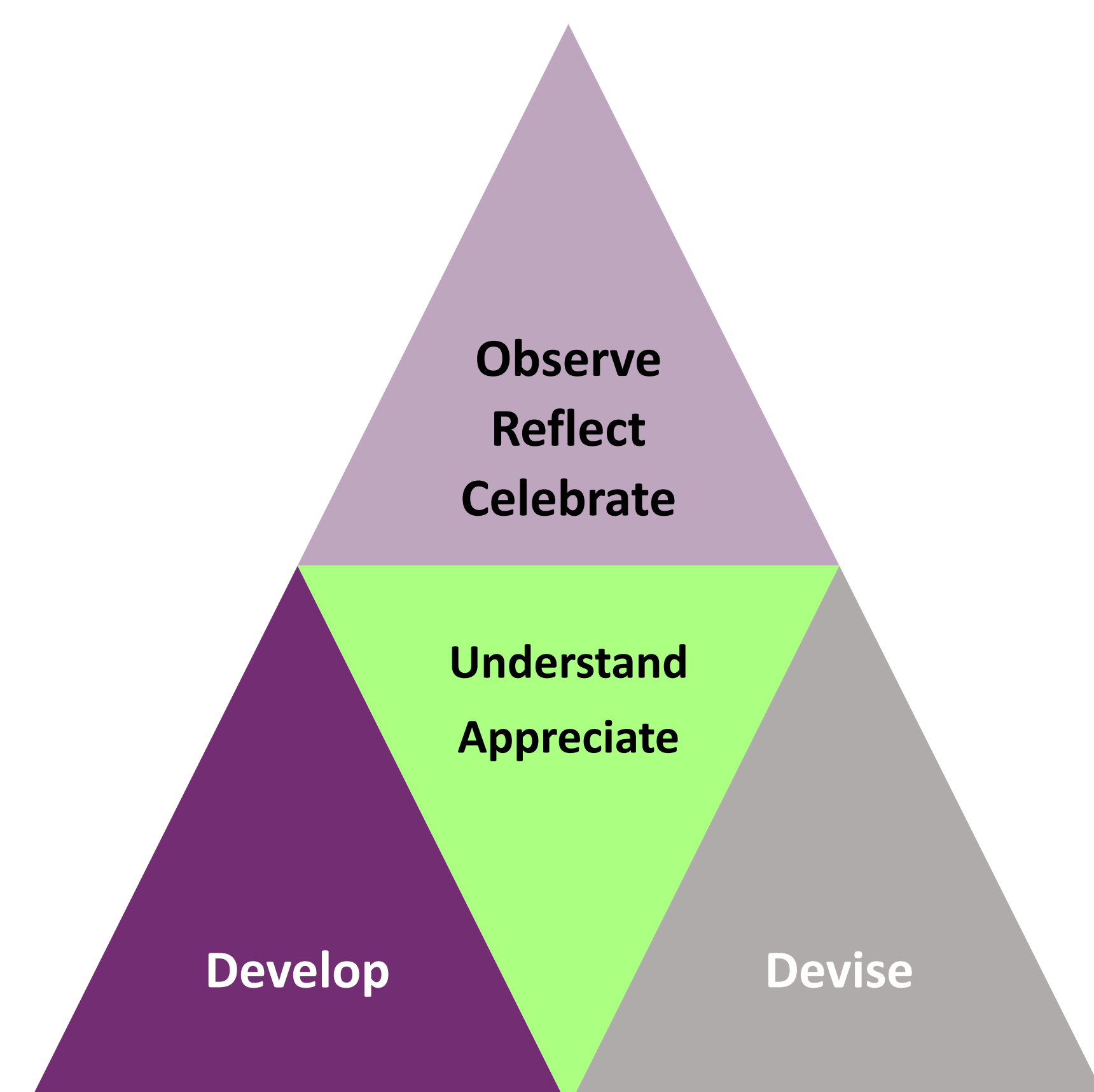
A Teaching Triangle consists of three teaching peers who, over the course of one academic term:

- Teach one and observe two information literacy sessions.
- Reflect on what they learned from their peers' teaching.
- Share reflections with their Triangle partners.
- Share experiences with all EILTT participants.

The benefits of peer observation of teaching in higher education includes observation of new pedagogical strategies, confirmation of effective practices already in use, and implementation of feedback to improve teaching (Hendry & Oliver, 2012). The purpose of teaching triangles is not to evaluate peers' teaching, give them feedback, or comment on how they can improve their teaching: the purpose is to reflect upon individual teaching, and incorporate new strategies learned from peers (Berry, 2008; Colgan & DeLong, 2015a; Haave, 2014; Rheum, 2003). A program such as this is "an inexpensive yet effective way to build community among faculty and to stimulate discussions about good teaching and learning" (Colgan & DeLong, 2015b, p.25).

As evident from the literature, teaching triangles provide a mutually supportive environment in which participants can:

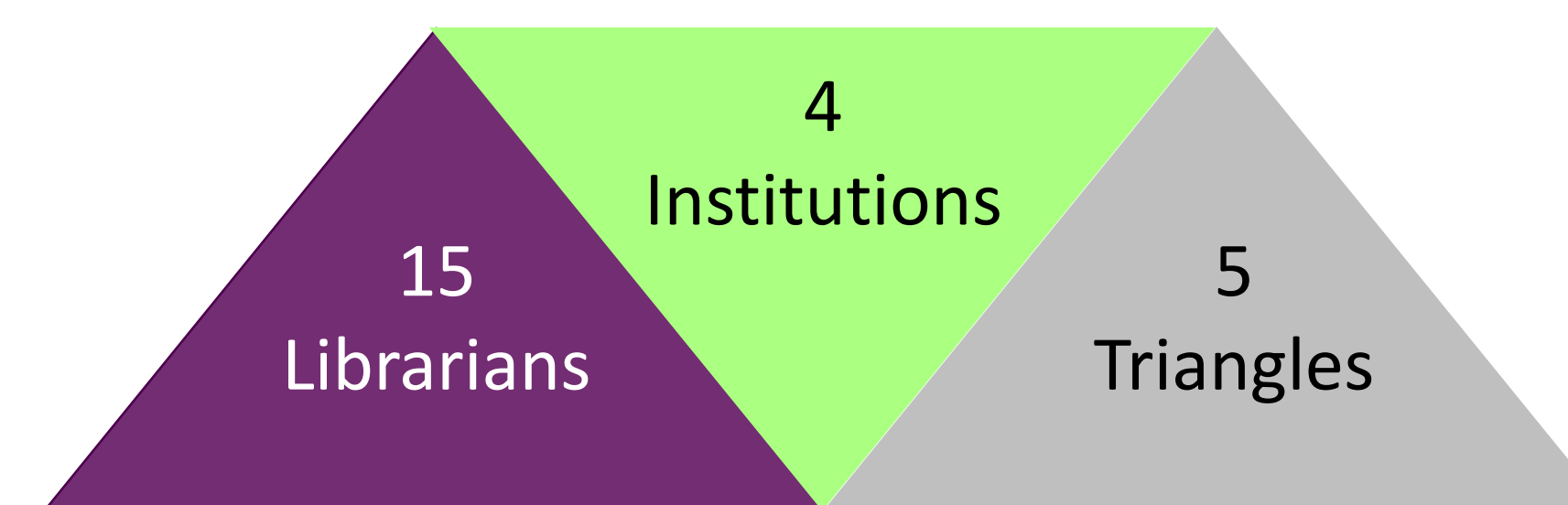
- Observe, reflect, and celebrate good teaching and learning.
- Develop their own teaching and learning repertoire.
- Devise a plan for trying and developing new strategies.
- Understand and appreciate the work of peers.



A teaching triangles program not only improves individual teaching through low stakes peer observation, but also builds local opportunities for connection and collaboration, making the program a perfect fit for a city full of academic librarians who deliver information literacy instruction!

## Organization

The entire EILTT program was organized and facilitated by one librarian. No additional library funds were required, as the only cost incurred was food/drink at the two meetings outside of work hours, which was paid for out of pocket by participants. Triangles (as opposed to squares or polygons) were chosen in an attempt to mitigate time and scheduling conflicts.



### Winter 2016

- Created information video & supporting documents
- Launched publically at local IL workshop event April 2016

### Spring/Summer 2016

- Sent invitation to local listservs & head librarians
- Collected names of interested participants

### Fall 2016

- Paired up & notified participants
- Provided participants with supporting resources
- Organized & hosted social mixer
- Checked in on progress mid way
- Organized & hosted wrap up meeting
- Prepared & sent out debrief survey

### Winter 2017

- Completed report to share survey findings & made recommendation to MacEwan University Library Faculty Council for organizing another round for Fall 2017

## Resources

Watch the informational video: <http://bit.ly/EILTTvideo>  
View the supporting documents: <http://bit.ly/EILTTdocuments>

Thank you to Alison Pitcher for creating the logo and video.

## Results

Twelve of the 15 participants completed the debrief survey. Participants highly rated (4 or 5 out of a possible 5) the quality and effectiveness of the communication, supporting documents, meetings, and overall organization.

Participants enjoyed the networking opportunities, as well as the opportunity to enhance their pedagogy. Comments included:

"I enjoyed catching up with old friends, meeting new people, getting out of my institution and seeing others teach, which refreshed my own pedagogy."

"The chance to visit librarians at a completely different institution was very valuable, and gave ideas and insights that may not have occurred without these visits."

"Having another opportunity to reflect upon my practice in a no-cost, accessible manner was fantastic!"

"I loved meeting with colleagues, brainstorming solutions to pedagogical challenges, observing colleagues -- everything."

"Getting to see other ways of teaching in subjects and levels outside of my normal workload was helpful."

"I found it interesting to observe the two sessions and I liked that it was very low risk for all participants in that no critiquing was part of the plan."

A minority of participants (3) noted it was challenging to schedule observations amongst their triangle.

Suggestion from participants for improvement included: facilitating more opportunities to engage with other triangles (besides the two scheduled meetings), and placing one person who has been through a round before in each triangle to help facilitate the process.

All 12 participants who completed the survey would like to see the EILTT program continue and would participate in the future.

The organizer considers this initial round a great success. Though timing was challenging, both for initial promotion, gathering participants, and scheduling individual triangles, the results of the survey indicate this professional development initiative is a worthy addition to the local library landscape.

## References

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