

**Librarian and Faculty Collaborative Instruction:**

**A Phenomenological Self-Study**

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**Abstract**

Several models of librarian and faculty collaboration are found in the professional librarian literature. The literature on collaborative self-study research in higher education settings indicates collaborative self-study research can improve interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches to teaching and research and facilitate the transfer of knowledge. A research librarian and assistant professor of special education conducted a phenomenological self-study to examine their multiple roles as researchers, collaborators, and educators who collaborated to develop, implement, and evaluate distance-delivered instructional services for public school teachers who live and work in remote, rural, and Native communities throughout the state of Alaska. Several themes emerged from this study, including: (a) the authors' interdisciplinary and collaborative efforts resulted in increased opportunities to team teach and conduct future collaborative research; (b) the authors struggled to communicate effectively with students via audio-conference; and (c) the beliefs and practices of both authors were transformed by their participation in this self-study. The study suggests implications for further and improved interdisciplinary collaboration between librarians and faculty. The authors believe this collaborative approach to self-study research facilitates reflective and authentic teaching and research for academic librarians working in collaboration with teaching faculty.

**1. Introduction**

An assistant professor of library science (librarian) and an assistant professor of special education (professor) at the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) collaborated to develop, team teach, and evaluate a series of distance-delivered learning activities for special education teachers who live and work in Alaska's remote, rural, and Alaska

Native communities. This phenomenological self-study was undertaken to examine the beliefs and practices of the authors in their roles as researchers, collaborators, and educators who provide distance-delivered instructional services. We believe this collaborative approach to self-study research can facilitate reflective and authentic teaching and research for academic librarians working in collaboration with teaching faculty.

## **2. Background**

In the spring semester of 2004, the authors collaborated to teach three sessions on database searching to 13 Special Education Teacher Endorsement Program (SETEP) candidates at UAS. The goal of the sessions, taught by audio-conference, was to teach the candidates to conduct a systematic and reproducible review of the empirical research on effective instructional strategies for educators who work with culturally and linguistically diverse learners with reading difficulties. The process of developing the learning activities and materials for these sessions was highly collaborative, as were the instructional sessions. After we finished teaching the lessons, we discussed ways we could: (a) assess the impact of our instruction; (b) explore the phenomenon of our collaboration; and (c) identify our core beliefs and practices related to collaborative instruction, collaborative research, and distance-delivered education. An initial suggestion to co-author a descriptive article about librarian and faculty collaboration evolved into a collaborative self-study research project.

## **3. Review of the Literature**

*3.1 Collaborative Research within the Phenomenological and Self-Study Traditions of Qualitative Inquiry*

*Phenomenological research* is a mode of scholarly inquiry that describes a phenomenon as experienced by one or more individuals. The researcher, or *phenomenologist*, gathers information (i.e., data) from the individual(s) who have experienced the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 1998). Typically, this information is gathered through in-depth interviews, and is augmented with researcher self-reflection and previously developed descriptions from artistic works (Polkinghorne, 1989). The researcher attempts to set aside prejudgments regarding the phenomenon being investigated. The researcher also relies on intuition, imagination, and systematic methods of analysis to interpret the data. The researcher analyzes the data by: (a) embedding written descriptions of his or her personal experiences within the study; (b) recording the participants' experienced realities of the phenomenon under investigation; and (c) developing written descriptions that convey the *essential invariant structure*, or "essence," of these experienced realities (Moustakas, 1994).

*Self-study research* is a mode of scholarly inquiry in which educators examine their beliefs and practices within the context of their work as instructors (Whitehead, 1993). A *phenomenological self-study* is a mode of scholarly inquiry in which educators: (a) engage in numerous self-reflection activities to generate data about their beliefs and practices; and (b) rely on intuition, imagination, and systematic methods of analysis to interpret this data (cf., Duke, 2001). Researchers who collaborate to design and conduct such studies engage in *collaborative self-study research*. Louie, Drevdahl, Purdy, and Stackman (2003) noted "collaboration in self-study research provides numerous benefits that can enhance the outcomes of research for the individual, the university, and the academic discipline" (p. 155). These authors identified several benefits of collaborative

self-study research, including: (a) enhancement of social support and visibility of the research; (b) deeper reflection among participants and greater clarity of the data through analysis by multiple researchers with multiple perspectives; and (c) increased chances of creating transferable knowledge (pp.155-156).

### *3.2 Librarian/Faculty Collaboration*

Raspa and Ward (2000) noted “in higher education, collaboration is the passionate pursuit of knowledge in dialogue, in the joyful give-and-take of intelligent listening where we hear the other and are heard by him or her” (p.6). Caspers and Lenn (2000) argued collaboration between academic librarians and teaching faculty is increasingly important in higher education. These authors identified the multiple collaborative roles of academic librarians in higher education settings. These roles include: (a) librarians as research collaborators; (b) librarians as collaborative / team teachers; and (c) librarians as co-educators who provide distance-delivered instructional services (pp. 150-153).

Many approaches to collaboration exist between librarians and faculty and are discussed in the literature. Walter (2000) identified five such collaborative models: (a) the course-integrated model; (b) the instructional teams model; (c) the faculty rotation model; (d) the instruction technology model; and (e) the faculty outreach model. In the *course-integrated model* used at Earlham College, “instruction occurs in response to an assignment developed in collaboration between a teaching faculty member and a librarian, and the librarian typically meets with a class...several times during the course of an assignment” (p. 43). The *instructional teams model* of Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis combines learning communities, first-year-experience programs, and multidisciplinary teams (p. 52). These multidisciplinary teams include

librarians and teaching faculty. The instructional teams approach begins at the curricular level; the syllabus and course learning objectives are collaboratively shared.

*Collaboration through faculty rotation* is part of the organizational culture at Evergreen State College. The coordinated studies program at the college rotates teams of faculty across disciplines to develop, deliver, and assess an interdisciplinary program of study. Librarians here are considered teaching faculty and regularly join these collaborative ventures with other faculty. The University of Washington (UW) promotes *collaboration through instruction technology* in the UWIRE program, a well-funded program that uses technology to foster teaching and learning. Teaching faculty and librarians participate in training, development, and lecture series and the UW Libraries plan to work with academic departments to develop instruction on the knowledge structure of specific disciplines (p.64). *Collaboration through faculty outreach*, the final model identified by Walter, was created by faculty at the College Librarian Program of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Librarians are given offices in the academic departments they serve. Librarians and teaching faculty believe this physical proximity improves working relationships and provides opportunities to integrate information literacy and technology instruction into courses (p. 68). Additional approaches to collaboration share characteristics with the models identified by Walter and can be found in the literature (c.f., Farber, 1999; Black, Crest, & Volland, 2001).

### *3.3 Distance-Delivered Higher Education in Alaska*

There has been, in recent years, intense interest in distance-delivered higher education in the state of Alaska, as evidenced by a number of articles that examine this topic. Willis (1992) designed a practical guide and reference tool for faculty and

administrators seeking to develop and implement effective distance-delivered higher education courses. Barnhardt (2002) described distance-delivered higher education as a progressive and democratic process that makes higher education accessible to individuals who live in remote, rural, and Alaska Native communities. Seminal studies of distance-delivered higher education in the state of Alaska by Franks (1996), McDiarmid, Goldsmith, Hill, and Hull (1998), and Sponder (1991) concluded: (a) students in remote, rural, and Alaska Native communities enroll in distance-delivered courses because they have few other options; (b) an excessive number of students fail to complete distance education programs; (c) the lack of student support systems is a primary cause of student attrition; (d) the amount of available resources in remote, rural and Alaska Native communities adversely impacts the learning process; (e) it is challenging, yet important, for instructors to relate course materials to the cultural and environmental contexts of students who live in remote, rural, and Alaska Native communities. Subsequent studies have supported these findings (c.f., Berkshire & Smith, 2000; Reyes, 2002). There remains, however, a general lack of empirical data on distance-delivered higher education in Alaska and a compelling need for empirical research to evaluate and improve distance-delivered instruction and support services.

#### **4. Methods**

We engaged in multiple activities to generate and analyze data for this self-study.

##### *4.1 Data Generation Activities*

In order to examine our beliefs about collaborative research, collaborative teaching, and distance-delivered education, we modified and participated in a number of researcher-as-participant self-reflection activities developed by the qualitative researcher

Valerie Janesick (2004). These self-reflection activities included: (a) the development of autobiographical collages; (b) the development of *YaYa Boxes*; (c) the development of *haiku*; and (d) the development of researcher-as-participant notebooks. In order to determine the *effectiveness* of our practices and improve future distance-delivered instructional services, we evaluated the reviews of the empirical research produced by the SETEP students. We developed a rubric to assess the students' reviews of the research. We independently evaluated each review of the research and then discussed the results of our independent evaluations. We recorded this discussion, in writing, through the use of field notes.

#### *4.2 Data Analysis Activities*

We used a modified version of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of data analysis to systematically analyze the data generated through the in-depth interviews, participant self-reflection activities, and researcher-as-participant self-reflection activities (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). We used the following procedural steps to analyze this data:

1. We identified *significant statements* from each of the data sources and developed lists of nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statements. We constructed word tables to visually represent these *significant statements* [Tables 1-3].
2. We grouped these *significant statements*, thematically, into *clusters of meaning*. We constructed word tables to visually represent these *clusters of meaning* [Tables 4-6].
3. We developed written descriptions of each *cluster of meaning*. These written descriptions describe our beliefs about collaborative research, collaborative teaching, and distance-delivered education and represent the *essence* of our self-study. We constructed word tables to visually represent these written descriptions [Tables 7-9].

## 5. Results

**Table 1 Significant Statements: Collaborative Research**

<b>1a. Librarian Significant Statements about Collaborative Research</b>	<b>1b. Professor Significant Statements about Collaborative Research</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Artifact analysis vs. content analysis</li> <li>2. More discussion more evolution of project</li> <li>3. Background in phenomenology</li> <li>4. Thomas' influence driving force</li> <li>5. Discussing data-generation activities</li> <li>6. Inclusion of student work</li> <li>7. Developing a rubric</li> <li>8. Break-through</li> <li>9. Unclear idea</li> <li>10. Quantitative vs. qualitative research</li> <li>11. Crucial piece</li> <li>12. Reflection</li> <li>13. Aha! moment</li> <li>14. Raising our separate concerns</li> <li>15. Goal</li> <li>16. Examine our beliefs and practices</li> <li>17. Negotiating our aims and viewpoints</li> <li>18. Improve student learning</li> <li>19. Deeply reflecting</li> <li>20. Process help to improve next time</li> <li>21. Confidence</li> <li>22. Contribute equally</li> <li>23. No power struggle</li> <li>24. No posturing</li> <li>25. Very productive collaboration</li> <li>26. Explore how to teach better</li> <li>27. Serendipity</li> <li>28. Convergence</li> <li>29. Process of discovery</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Phenomenological research is an intensely creative and dynamic process</li> <li>2. Phenomenologists generate, analyze, reorganize, recycle, and transform ideas to create new knowledge forms (i.e., new constructions of meaning, new interpretations of reality)</li> <li>3. Self-study research involves intense and systematic self-reflection and self-exploration</li> <li>4. Collaborative approaches to this phenomenological self-study enhanced and accentuated the intensely creative, dynamic, reflective, and transformational processes associated with phenomenological inquiry and self-study research</li> <li>5. Collaborative research efforts were not without struggle and confusion</li> <li>6. Collaborative research efforts were sometimes characterized by frustration and tension</li> <li>7. Occasional disagreements about the purposes and design of this study</li> <li>8. Occasional disagreements about the significance and interpretation of data</li> <li>9. Occasional disagreements about the essential nature of phenomenological inquiry and self-study research</li> </ol>

**Table 2 Significant Statements: Collaborative Instruction**

<b>2a. Librarian Significant Statements about Collaborative Instruction</b>	<b>2b. Professor Significant Statements about Collaborative Instruction</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fun meeting for pizza</li> <li>2. Work together</li> <li>3. Clear ideas</li> <li>4. He developed, I revised</li> <li>5. I was confident</li> <li>6. Rich body of literature on faculty/librarian collaboration</li> <li>7. My aim to teach research skills in classroom</li> <li>8. General communication</li> <li>9. Prepare better assignments</li> <li>10. Integrate objectives and skills</li> <li>11. Interdisciplinary approach</li> <li>12. Shift culture at university</li> <li>13. More integrated approach</li> <li>14. Expanding collaborations</li> <li>15. Collaboration wherever I look</li> <li>16. Sharing strategies with students</li> <li>17. Evolved</li> <li>18. Give and take</li> <li>19. Moving forward</li> <li>20. Future projects</li> <li>21. Invitation to co-teach</li> <li>22. Write learning objectives together</li> <li>23. Construct a study</li> <li>24. Struck gold on interests and strengths</li> <li>25. Fruitful partnership</li> <li>26. Cultivation</li> <li>27. Curiosity</li> <li>28. Inquiry</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Interdisciplinary collaboration resulted in the development of comprehensive, complex, creative, innovative, and sophisticated distance-delivered learning activities</li> <li>2. Learning activities reflected instructors' respective areas of expertise</li> <li>3. Multiple perspectives enhanced development of learning activities</li> <li>4. Learning activities reflected the diverse knowledge-bases and paradigms that guide and inform the instructors' respective disciplines</li> <li>5. SETEP teacher candidates benefited from instructors' multiple perspectives and diverse life experiences, worldviews, knowledge constructs, values, and beliefs about research</li> <li>6. SETEP teacher candidates benefited from instructors' diverse interpretation of course content, issues, and materials</li> <li>7. Instructors' diverse communication styles and different approaches to instruction addressed multiple learning styles</li> <li>8. Instructors engaged in respectful disagreement and debate</li> <li>9. Instructors critiqued implementation of learning activities and instructional strategies after each class meeting</li> <li>10. Instructors systematically generated and analyzed empirical data to evaluate and improve development and implementation of learning activities</li> </ol>

**Table 3 Significant Statements: Distance Education**

<b>3a. Librarian Significant Statements about Distance Education</b>	<b>3b. Professor Significant Statements about Distance Education</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Challenge</li> <li>2. No body language</li> <li>3. No eye contact</li> <li>4. Give and take</li> <li>5. Students learn from differing perspectives and discussions</li> <li>6. Equal footing</li> <li>7. Invested as stakeholder in student learning</li> <li>8. Objectives clearly defined</li> <li>9. Worked together</li> <li>10. Felt high</li> <li>11. Still thinking</li> <li>12. Praise</li> <li>13. How effective as teachers</li> <li>14. Assess quality of student literature reviews</li> <li>15. Germane topic</li> <li>16. Promoting information literacy</li> <li>17. Infusing competencies across disciplines</li> <li>18. Assessing product of instruction</li> <li>19. Distance education component compelling</li> <li>20. Delivering instruction</li> <li>21. Class dynamics different</li> <li>22. Never saw my face</li> <li>23. Handouts needed to be clear to follow</li> <li>24. Only visual piece of learning</li> <li>25. Visually display searching/show</li> <li>26. Tell</li> <li>27. Thomas' contribution essential</li> <li>28. Needed each other to teach this lesson</li> <li>29. Difficult to convey strategy with words</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Difficult to establish intimate relationships with students via audio-conference</li> <li>2. I experienced caring and meaningful interactions with students via audio-conference, but these interactions occurred quite late in the semester</li> <li>3. Communication between SETEP teacher candidates and instructors was almost exclusively verbal</li> <li>4. Few opportunities for non-verbal communication via audio-conference</li> <li>5. Challenging to articulate complex concepts and demonstrate complex skills via audio-conference</li> <li>6. Difficult to immediately assess student understanding of lectures and class activities because I could not see student faces or observe student behavior</li> <li>7. Distance delivered higher education makes higher education available to individuals in remote, rural, and Alaska Native communities</li> <li>8. Individuals who live and work in remote, rural, and Alaska Native communities are disproportionately poor and politically disenfranchised</li> <li>9. Distance-delivered higher education contributes to social justice and educational equity in Alaska</li> </ol>

**Table 4 Clusters of Common Themes: Collaborative Research**

<p><b>4a. Librarian Clusters of Common Themes about Collaborative Research</b></p> <p><b>1. Learning from Each Other</b>  a.) Thomas' influence was the driving force of our research because of his background in phenomenology  b.) We come from different backgrounds: what I call content analysis he calls artifact analysis  c.) The research we were conducting was new to me. It was a process of discovery for me and also for Thomas</p> <p><b>2. Communication</b>  a.) We discussed the project often, each raising our separate concerns and as we discussed more the project evolved  b.) We had many discussions about data-generation activities. Having Thomas share his knowledge of the basic differences between qualitative vs. quantitative research was a necessary conversation for me, as I had an unclear idea about basic premises of this type of research</p> <p><b>3. Equality of Input</b>  a.) I saw inclusion of student work results as a crucial piece of the research. I developed a rubric and hoped to explore how to teach better and improve student learning. I had confidence this was a necessary component  b.) The process of designing the research was deeply reflective. We each negotiated our aims and viewpoints and contributed equally. There was no power struggle or posturing. It was a very productive collaboration</p> <p><b>4. Shared Investment/Success</b>  a.) We experienced the thrills of a breakthrough in understanding how to tie the pieces together several times. Thomas had an aha! moment in my office and I experienced serendipity when perfect research articles seemed to fall in my lap</p>	<p><b>4b. Professor Clusters of Common Themes about Collaborative Research</b></p> <p><b>1. Collaborative Approaches to Phenomenological Inquiry and Self-Study Research</b>  a.) Phenomenological inquiry is an intensely creative and dynamic process in which ideas are generated, analyzed, reorganized, recycled, and transformed  b.) Self-study research is characterized by intense self-reflection and systematic self-exploration on the part of the researcher  c.) Collaborative approaches to phenomenological and self-study research enhance and accentuate the intensely creative, dynamic, reflective, and transformational processes associated with phenomenological and self-study modes of inquiry</p> <p><b>2. Tensions and Frustrations Associated with Collaborative Research</b>  a.) Jennifer and I sometimes disagreed about the purposes and design of the study  b.) Jennifer and I sometimes disagreed about the significance and interpretation of data  c.) Jennifer and I sometimes disagreed about the essential nature of phenomenological inquiry and self-study research</p>
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**Table 5 Clusters of Common Themes: Collaborative Instruction**

<b>5a. Librarian Clusters of Common Themes about Collaborative Instruction</b>	<b>5b. Professor Clusters of Common Themes about Collaborative Instruction</b>
<p><b>1. Fun Process</b> a.) It was fun to meet for pizza and work together on learning activities for the students before we taught the classes</p> <p><b>2. Collaboratively Developing Assignments</b> a.) We each had clear ideas on instructional objectives b.) Thomas developed a template to introduce the literature review section of the students' papers and I revised the template to make it a clearer and more useful exercise</p> <p><b>3. Feelings of Confidence/Success</b> a.) I was confident our collaboration could only improve student learning b.) I was aware of the body of literature on faculty/librarian collaboration c.) Overall I noted our collaborative instruction as a fruitful partnership: I felt we struck gold on our mutual and separate interests and strengths d.) Our instructional collaboration cultivated further curiosity and inquiry for each of us</p> <p><b>4. Interdisciplinary Collaboration for Improved Assignments</b> a.) My aim to teach research skills in the classroom could be integrated into an interdisciplinary approach. Integrating our objectives and skills would help us prepare better assignments b.) After our instructional collaboration and as we reflected on our practices in our research, I envisioned that our more integrated approach could perhaps be used as a model to shift the culture at the university – expanding collaborations across many disciplines c.) Instructionally, it was important to me to share searching strategies with all our</p>	<p><b>1. Collaborative Approach to Development of Distance-Delivered Learning Activities</b> a.) Jennifer and I were interdisciplinary collaborators who brought multiple perspectives, diverse knowledge-bases and distinct areas of expertise to the development of distance-delivered learning activities b.) Interdisciplinary collaboration can result in the development of learning activities that are more comprehensive, complex, creative, innovative, and sophisticated than learning activities developed by individuals from a single discipline working in isolation</p> <p><b>2. Collaborative Approach to Implementation of Distance-Delivered Learning Activities</b> a.) SETEP teacher candidates benefited from the multiple perspectives of the instructors and from the instructors' diverse interpretations of course content, issues, and materials b.) Instructors' diverse communication styles and different approaches to pedagogy addressed a multiplicity of learning styles c.) SETEP teacher candidates benefited from respectful disagreement and debate between instructors</p> <p><b>3. Collaborative Approach to Evaluation of Distance-Delivered Learning Activities</b> a.) Jennifer and I met after each class meeting to critique the implementation of distance-delivered learning activities b.) Jennifer and I conducted collaborative self-study research in which we systematically generated and analyzed empirical data to evaluate and improve the</p>

students present – each could learn from the others' examples  
d.) The assignments we created evolved through much (a couple times a week for a month before the class session) communication and a healthy give and take of knowledge

**5. Future Collaboration Opportunities**

- a.) Our research study
- b.) An invitation to co-teach, we would write learning objectives for the fall class together and develop new learning activities as we learned from our experience

development and implementation of distance-delivered learning activities

**Table 6 Clusters of Common Themes: Distance Education**

<p><b>6a. Librarian Clusters of Common Themes about Distance Education</b></p> <p><b>1. Teaching at a Distance is a Challenge</b>  a.) There is no body language or eye contact to read and allow for some give and take  b.) Delivering this sort of instruction the class dynamics are very different – these students never saw my face</p> <p><b>2. Equality in Instruction</b>  a.) In our case students learn from the differing perspectives and discussions of their teachers. In these classes we were on equal footing and each of us was invested as a stakeholder in student learning  b.) We (Thomas and I) worked together throughout the two sessions and felt high after class was finished  c.) Thomas' contribution and expertise were essential, we needed each other to teach this distance-delivered lesson as it was a very difficult strategy and concept to teach with words alone</p> <p><b>3. Quality of Instruction</b>  a.) He praised my contribution but I was still thinking about how effective we actually were as teachers in this environment  b.) If we could assess the quality of student literature reviews this would be a germane topic for the fields of distance education and for library instruction journals  c.) I knew beforehand that their handouts needed to be clear to follow because this would be the only visual piece of learning  d.) Usually I visually display/show database searching at the front of class with a projector. This time I needed to tell that process</p>	<p><b>6b. Professor Clusters of Common Themes about Distance Education</b></p> <p><b>1. Communication Issues Associated with Distance-Delivered Education</b>  a.) It was difficult to establish intimacy with the SETEP teacher candidates via audio-conference  b.) I was able to establish caring and meaningful relationships with the SETEP teacher candidates via audio-conference  c.) Communication between SETEP teacher candidates and instructors was almost exclusively verbal; the audio-conference format offered few opportunities for non-verbal communication  d.) I found it challenging at times to articulate complex concepts and demonstrate complex skills to the SETEP teacher candidates via audio-conference  e.) I found it difficult to immediately assess the SETEP teacher candidates' understanding of lectures and learning activities via audio-conference</p> <p><b>2. Distance-Delivered Higher Education and Social Justice and Educational Equity in Alaska</b>  a.) Distance-delivered higher education contributes to social justice and educational equity in Alaska because it makes higher education available to individuals in remote, rural, and Alaska Native communities who are disproportionately poor and politically disenfranchised</p>
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**Table 7 Essences: Collaborative Research****7a. Librarian Essence of Collaborative Research**

**We push and we pull**  
**Dynamics negotiate**  
**Discover the path**

As collaborative researchers we shared a common goal to understand our own and each others' respective motivations in our teaching beliefs and practices. The research we conducted involved dynamic and deeply reflective processes of self-discovery and discovery of the other. I feel that together we have made great strides toward improving our future collaborative teaching endeavors by conducting this phenomenological self-study. I experienced serendipitous moments when the perfect study just seemed to appear on my computer screen and I also experienced and shared several "aha!" moments with my collaborator: break-through moments that provided clarity and affirmed that we were "on the right path," (i.e., Oh yeah, that's why we are doing this!). I believe this study is important because it has significantly informed and influenced my knowledge and my motivation to teach and work together in the fall with Thomas. I feel that this study has profoundly shaped the course on qualitative classroom research methods that we will co-teach in the 2004-2005 academic year. I believe that our collaborative research has been so productive and meaningful and this is the reason Thomas has invited me to develop and co-teach the ED626 Classroom Research class. We share common interests of improving the student learning process.

It hasn't been an entirely smooth, painless process, however:

**Need quality work**  
**So many variables**  
**Credibility**

I had a level of anxiety related to the research. In my journal I observed, "at times we seem to be speaking different languages. Thomas is much more versed in this [phenomenological] method of inquiry, so he has had to prep me in my understanding of the data collection activities." Thomas' lecture to me to help me understand some fundamental differences between qualitative and quantitative inquiry and the theoretical underpinnings will serve to be the first day of class lecture to our students this fall!

I do feel as if I have made important and significant contributions to the design of the study. I was insistent that we keep a component of evaluation of student assignments integrated in our research.

**7b. Professor Essence of Collaborative Research**

**Stars birth stars. Data  
Flows cluster. Form galaxies.  
Merge. Generate stars.**

**Stars collide, collapse,  
consume. Ideas recycle.  
Galaxies transform.**

Phenomenological inquiry is an intensely creative and dynamic process in which ideas are generated, analyzed, reorganized, recycled, and transformed. Collaborative research within the phenomenological tradition of qualitative inquiry is an even more creative and dynamic process than phenomenological research conducted by a single researcher working in isolation. I was, at times, frustrated with the collaborative process involved in the conduct of this phenomenological self-study because: (a) Jennifer and I sometimes disagreed about the purposes and design of the study; (b) Jennifer and I sometimes disagreed about the significance and interpretation of data; and (b) Jennifer and I sometimes disagreed about the essential nature of phenomenological inquiry and self-study research. I strongly believe, however, that these disagreements served to clarify, deepen, and transform our respective understandings of this study. Jennifer and I stimulated and inspired one another throughout the conduct of this phenomenological self-study; that is to say, the collaborative process intensified and enhanced the inherently creative and dynamic nature of phenomenological inquiry and resulted in a phenomenological self-study that transformed our respective beliefs and practices.

**Table 8 Essences: Collaborative Instruction****8a. Librarian Essence of Collaborative Instruction****New truths uncovered****Generating new ideas****We fly to new heights**

I felt that it was a fun, satisfying, and valuable process to work with Thomas in developing, delivering, and evaluating these lessons on conducting a literature review. We each came to the table with our own very specific aims as to what the SETEP students needed to learn. Through an evolutionary process of communicating our desired learning objectives and sharing our respective knowledge-bases and skills, we were able to integrate each of the learning objectives into an assignment in which we were both invested. We built upon each others' ideas and, because of this, took the assignment to a new level; in the words of my haiku, as collaborators we were able to "fly to new heights". We were a productive and complementary team. I appreciated Thomas' openness and willingness to allow for multiple perspectives to be shared with the SETEP students. One direct result of this collaborative teaching venture has been Thomas' invitation for me to co-teach graduate education courses on qualitative research methods in the fall semester of 2004. We share responsibility as dual instructors of record of the class ED626 Classroom Research.

**8b. Professor Essence of Collaborative Instruction**

**Two ocean currents,  
Nutrient-rich, merge and nourish.  
The kelp forest thrives.**

Jennifer and I collaborated to develop, implement, and evaluate distance-delivered learning activities for the teachers enrolled in the SETEP. Our collaborative approach to the development of distance-delivered learning activities enhanced and strengthened the educational experience of the SETEP teachers because: (a) Jennifer and I were interdisciplinary collaborators who brought multiple perspectives, diverse knowledge-bases, and distinct areas of expertise to the development of distance-delivered learning activities; and (b) learning activities developed by collaborators from diverse disciplines are often more comprehensive, complex, creative, innovative, and sophisticated than learning activities developed by individuals from a single discipline working in isolation. Our collaborative approach to the implementation of distance-delivered learning activities enhanced and strengthened the educational experience of the SETEP teachers because: (a) the SETEP candidates benefited from our multiple perspectives and from our diverse interpretations of course content, issues, and materials; (b) our diverse communication styles and different approaches to pedagogy addressed a multiplicity of learning styles; and (c) the SETEP candidates benefited from respectful disagreement and debate between Jennifer and I. Our collaborative approach to the evaluation of distance-delivered learning activities was particularly effective because: (a) Jennifer and I met after each class meeting to critique the implementation of the distance-delivered learning activities; and (b) Jennifer and I conducted collaborative self-study research in which we systematically generated and analyzed empirical data to evaluate and improve the development and implementation of distance-delivered learning activities. Our collaborative approach to the development, implementation, and evaluation of the distance-delivered learning activities enriched the educational experience of the SETEP candidates (that is to say, “the kelp forest thrived”).

**Table 9 Essences: Distance Education****9a. Librarian Essence of Distance Education****Blue sky clarity****Above and below the trees****Listen and hear me**

In my haiku writing activity about distance education, I pictured a forest of lush trees staggered, separated by lines of deep blue sky between. I imagined that the distance-delivered course that I co-taught exists as this forest – one whole organism made up of unique parts. Each student (tree) must be cultivated to nourish the understanding of the whole. I worked together with Thomas over audio-conference to assist students in brainstorming search-strategies for each of their research projects, with the intention that the entire class could learn from the strategy used with each students' unique example.

My thoughts and beliefs on teaching these particular lessons to students at a distance were filled with uncertainty. Lack of eye contact or the visual cues associated with body language was a challenge for me. Were the students really listening to what I had to say? I spoke into an unseen void. I relied heavily on the audio-conferencing classroom management skills of my co-teacher. I appreciated his ability to organize the class so that we could give each student adequate individualized attention. I approached teaching the class with the viewpoint that the words I chose were of utmost importance –because I was forced to speak and tell instead of demonstrate how to conduct database searching beyond a beginning level. I worried that my points were not coming across clearly, so I emphasized and repeated important words. What if a student is not an auditory learner? I believe that other methods of reaching students are very important. The handouts explaining the database search process and the assignment had to be clear and thorough as they were the only visual components to the lessons.

We worked collaboratively, together, throughout each class session. I noted in my journal that at the end of each session we were “on a high.” We both felt very satisfied with how the sessions went. I believe that systematic assessments of the results of our distance-delivered instruction (i.e., the quality of the student literature reviews) are a further indicator of our effectiveness as distance teachers.

**9b. Professor Essence of Distance Education**

**Intimate strangers  
co-construct knowledge. Distant  
voices, distant lives.**

I was able to establish caring and meaningful relationships with the SETEP candidates via audio-conference; it was, however, difficult to establish intimacy with these students. Human communication is largely non-verbal; communication with the SETEP candidates was, however, almost exclusively verbal because almost all communication occurred via audio-conference. It was, therefore, sometimes a struggle to clearly articulate complex concepts and demonstrate complex skills to the SETEP candidates. I also found it difficult to immediately assess the SETEP candidates' understanding of lectures and learning activities. Despite these difficulties and struggles, I am a strong proponent of distance-delivered instruction because distance-delivered instruction makes higher education available to individuals who live and work in Alaska's remote, rural, and Alaska Native communities. If distance-delivered instructional services were not available, many of these students would not have access to higher education. I believe that distance-delivered instruction contributes to social justice and educational equity in Alaska because it makes higher education available to individuals in remote and rural communities who are disproportionately poor and politically disenfranchised (e.g., American Eskimos, American Indians, and Aleuts).

## 6. Discussion

This phenomenological self-study was undertaken to examine the beliefs and practices of the authors in their roles as: (a) researchers; (b) collaborators; and (c) educators who provide distance-delivered instruction. Through collaborative self-study, we were able to share our personal experiences and come closer to understanding our own and each others' beliefs about: (a) collaborative research; (b) collaborative instruction; and (c) distance-delivered education. The process was enlightening.

### *6.1 Collaborative Research*

The librarian identified several themes of importance to her related to the conduct of collaborative self-study research. These themes included: (a) shared learning; (b) the importance of communication; and (c) equality of input among collaborators. She noted this phenomenological self-study resulted in opportunities for us to participate in the professional discourse surrounding librarian and faculty collaboration, to disseminate our collaborative procedures and findings in the professional literature, and to share our collaborative experiences, processes, and outcomes with interested professionals at conference presentations and with members of our university and local communities. Similar themes emerged from the existing literature on collaborative self-study research. Louie et al. (2003), for example, argued that collaborative self-study research “increase[s] chances of creating transferable knowledge” and enhances the visibility of the research findings (p. 155). Dettmer, Thurston, and Dyck (2002), Duke (2004), Thomas, Correa, and Morsink (2001), and many others have conceptualized collaboration as a dynamic, interactive, and nonhierarchical process characterized by power sharing and equity among two or more partners who collectively set goals, make decisions, and solve

problems through negotiation, cooperation, and consensus building. These authors stressed the importance of communication (e.g., *negotiation, cooperation, and consensus building*) and of equality among collaborating partners (e.g., *nonhierarchical processes, power sharing, equity*); that is to say, these authors identified themes (i.e., shared learning, the importance of communication, and equality among collaborators) quite similar to those developed by the librarian as she engaged in collaborative self-study research.

The professor felt that collaborative approaches to self-study and phenomenological research enhanced and accentuated the intensely creative, dynamic, reflective, and transformational processes associated with phenomenological and self-study modes of inquiry. Dettmer et al. (2002), Duke (2004), Thomas et al (2001), and others have described collaboration as an intensely creative process that generates synergy, resulting in outcomes that are different from and better than those solutions produced by individual team members working in isolation. Literature by these authors supported the professor's belief that collaboration accentuates creativity, increases productivity, and transforms the beliefs and knowledge constructs of collaborating partners.

The professor noted tensions and frustrations inherent in the collaborative process and the librarian noted anxiety related to the research process. Thayer-Bacon Brown (1995) argued that collaboration is not without struggle and confusion. The professor and librarian both experienced frustration, anxiety, and confusion as they engaged in this collaborative project. We each struggled to understand the tensions and confusions that characterized our collaborative efforts, and we were able to negotiate and learn from each

other through the communication of our respective beliefs. Louie et al. (2003) noted collaborative self-study research encourages deep reflection among participants and results in enhanced clarity of data through analysis by multiple researchers with multiple perspectives. The professor believes the struggles and confusions that characterized our collaborative efforts forced him to reflect deeply on his beliefs about collaboration and his research practices. He noted this deep reflection served to clarify his beliefs about collaboration and enhance his research practices; that is to say, the collaborative process made him a better researcher.

### *6.2 Collaborative Instruction*

Walter (2000) identified five models of librarian and faculty collaboration. These models included the: (a) course-integrated model; (b) instructional teams model; (c) faculty rotation model; (d) instruction technology model; and (e) faculty outreach model. Our collaboration most closely resembled the *course-integrated model*, which is characterized by “instruction [that] occurs in response to an assignment developed in collaboration between a teaching faculty member and a librarian, and [where] the librarian typically meets with a class...several times during the course of an assignment” (p. 43). The librarian noted our particular collaborative approach to teaching a library research skills session was not the norm at the UAS campus; typically, at our university, when invited to teach in another faculty member’s classroom, the librarian develops a lesson independently, without the full collaborative input of this faculty member, and then teaches this lesson, as a “guest instructor,” in a single class session; librarians at UAS do *not* typically participate in the evaluation of the learning activities that he or she develops and teaches in this scenario. Our approach to librarian and faculty collaboration,

however, was *intensely collaborative*: we collaborated to develop the learning activities and learning materials; we team taught the lessons; we both evaluated student work; and we engaged in collaborative self-study research to examine our beliefs about collaboration and improve the quality of our future instructional practices.

The librarian and the professor both identified positive feelings about the collaborative instructional process. The librarian felt it was “a fun, satisfying, and valuable process” that resulted in subsequent collaborations (e.g., the professor invited the librarian to co-develop and co-teach a distance-delivered graduate level seminar on qualitative research methods; the librarian invited the professor to co-author a descriptive article; the professor invited the librarian to conduct a collaborative self-study). The professor believed that our interdisciplinary approach to collaborative instruction resulted in the development of activities that were more comprehensive, complex, creative, innovative, and sophisticated than learning activities developed by individuals from single disciplines working in isolation. His belief is supported by the literature on interdisciplinary collaboration (cf., Dettmer et al., 2002; Thomas et al., 2001), and is in alignment with some of the underlying philosophies of the *instructional teams model* and the *faculty rotation model* of librarian and faculty collaboration (Walter, 2000).

### *6.3 Distance-Delivered Education*

The librarian and the professor identified challenges and struggles associated with distance-delivered education. We each struggled to provide effective instruction to the SETEP candidates, via audio-conference, without the benefit of non-verbal communication cues. We both had difficulty immediately assessing the effectiveness of our lectures because we could not see the faces of our students.

The collaborative aspect of distance-delivered instruction was important to the librarian. She believed it was very important that our collaborative partnership be characterized by equality and equity and that we work together to develop, deliver, and evaluate instructional activities. The librarian was also concerned that we provide the candidates with high quality distance-delivered learning experiences.

It was very important to the professor to develop meaningful relationships with his students. He believed that he was able to establish caring and meaningful relationships with the SETEP candidates via audio-conference; it was, however, difficult for him to establish intimacy with these students. The professor sometimes struggled to clearly articulate complex concepts and demonstrate complex skills to the SETEP candidates via audio-conference.

The professor believes distance-delivered higher education contributes to social justice and educational equity in Alaska. A recent study by Barnhardt (2002) strongly supports this belief. Distance-delivered instruction makes higher education available to individuals who live and work in Alaska's remote, rural, and Alaska Native communities. Individuals who live in these communities are disproportionately poor and politically disenfranchised. If distance-delivered instructional services were not available, many of these students would not have access to higher education. The librarian and professor both believe our interdisciplinary and collaborative approach to the development, delivery, and evaluation of distance-delivered instruction can contribute to the improvement of distance-delivered higher education in Alaska.

## **7. Conclusion**

This initial collaboration between an assistant professor of library science and an assistant professor of special education resulted in many new ideas and opportunities, including: (a) a collaborative self-study that explored teaching effectiveness, beliefs, and practices (i.e., the librarian and professor conducted a phenomenological self-study); (b) increased team teaching opportunities (i.e., the librarian and professor developed and team-taught graduate seminars on qualitative research methods in the 2004-2005 academic year); and (c) further opportunities for collaborative research (i.e., the librarian and professor plan to conduct phenomenological self-studies of their collaborative teaching experiences in the fall and spring semesters of the 2004-2005 academic year). With our collaborative approach to the self-study of teaching, research, and distance-delivered instruction, we have described a model for improving interdisciplinary collaboration between librarians and teaching faculty. It is our hope that the findings of this phenomenological self-study contribute to more collaborative instruction and research among librarians and teaching faculty with the ultimate purpose of improving student learning in distance-delivered higher education settings.

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