

Teaching Information Policy in the Digital Age: Issues, Strategies, and Innovation

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As technology continues to advance at a rapid rate, it is increasingly important to consider how information policies are formulated and the impact that they have on both the public's access to information and the roles of information professionals. As such, current and future information professionals must be adequately prepared through education to work with information policies and their ramifications. The breadth of information policy, as it acts as a meta-policy for other policy areas, and the depth of specific information policies that arise from communication, economic, and political issues, inform this discussion of the challenges and opportunities involved with teaching information policy to library and information science students, as well as to other audiences. Drawing from both past research efforts and extensive teaching experience, this article introduces a conceptual understanding of information policy; uses examples of how the library and information studies community has responded to information policies in the past to further this understanding; and finally, provides a discussion of different ways in which to teach this complicated, but critical topic.

Introduction

Within library and information studies (LIS), *information policy* is a term that is used in many ways and to refer to many different information issues. Most commonly in both education and scholarship, information policy is viewed narrowly as a series of separate issues—privacy, security, intellectual property, e-government, etc.—that impact information professionals and organizations, rather than as an interrelated set of issues that comprise a larger entity (Duff, 2004; Maxwell, 2003; McClure & Jaeger, 2008). A significant reason for this gap is that education about information policy does not receive sufficient attention compared to the impacts

of policy on information and information professions.

“Information policy has come to influence most interactions in society” (Jaeger, 2007, p. 842), and it significantly shapes the activities of all types of information professionals. For current and future information professionals to be truly prepared for the far-reaching impacts of policy on their careers and their institutions, LIS educators need to make a commitment to teaching information policy in LIS courses, incorporating policy issues into other types of courses, and emphasizing policy issues in continuing education. Yet the LIS education literature only contains discussions of aspects of policy such as teaching specific issues like intellectual freedom,

privacy, intellectual property, and e-government (Dryden, 2011; Gathegi & Burke, 2008; Jaeger, 2008; Jaeger, Bertot, Shuler, & McGilvray, 2012).

Over the past two years, the authors of this paper have co-written a series of articles (Jaeger, Bertot, & Gorham, 2013; Jaeger, Gorham, Sarin, & Bertot, 2014; Jaeger, Sarin, Gorham, & Bertot, 2013) and books (Jaeger, Gorham, Bertot, & Sarin, 2014; Jaeger, Taylor, & Gorham, 2015; Thompson, Jaeger, Taylor, Subramaniam, & Bertot, 2014) that attempt to analyze the complex interactions between policy and the roles of libraries in their communities. A clear theme across these works is that while information is heavily influenced by policy decisions, information professionals are frequently ill-prepared to engage the policy issues related to information, often being taken by surprise by the ramifications of the policies, public reactions to the policies, or the ethical questions raised by the policies. Building on the insights from these works, this article offers suggestions for educational approaches to facilitate the preparation of information professionals to meet the future challenges and opportunities created by policies that affect the information life cycle—from creation to disposition.

What is Information Policy?

Information policy has been a part of the United States before there was an official United States. The Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, and the Constitution all have a clear emphasis on information policy issues: intellectual freedom, access to government information, protection of intellectual property, and dissemination of information through the free press and the postal service, among others (Relyea, 2008). Over time, many have attempted to define information policy, but these views usually reflect an interest in a specific part of the policy process rather than the entire process. In addition, this terminological quandary is

aided by the fact that the term policy itself is used in a wide variety of ways.

In government and scholarly discourse, “policy” can variously refer to an activity, goal, proposal, decision, program, authorization, output, outcome, theory, model, or process. Which of these meanings is being used partly is based on the field of the person using the term. Different usages of information policy include:

- An organizing social structure (Belisle, 1944);
- The dissemination and control of government information (Cory, 1953);
- Records management and access to records (Stallings, 1974);
- The information that promotes economic growth (Lamberton, 1974);
- The information used in policy-making processes (Bozeman & Bozeman, 1981);
- The design and implementation processes (Regan, 1984);
- The promotion of information industries (Bortnik, 1985);
- Government information management (Cleveland, 1986);
- A competitive business advantage (Jacobides & Croson, 2001);
- The means to promote innovation (Rowlands, Eisenschitz, & Bawden, 2002);
- A reflection of government values (Arnold, 2004; Braman, 1989; Overman & Cahill, 1990); and
- The commoditization of information that requires management and governance (Horton & Lannon, 1989).

This diversity of usage reflects the range of fields of the authors listed above: public policy, business, economics, social science, urban planning, law, public administration, and communication, as well as LIS.

Most publications about information policy do not attempt to define the broad idea, and instead focus on a single specific issue of policy (Duff, 2004; Maxwell, 2003). This is easily seen in the huge number of policy-related articles written about

important information policy issues that treat them as entirely discrete concerns, as though privacy and cybersecurity, for example, are two issues that never intersect. This singular focus and avoidance of the larger picture plagues LIS engagements with policy, which is surprising given that LIS is both a field devoted to information and a field that embraces interdisciplinarity.

Still, LIS does have the distinction of being the only academic field that gives regular attention to information policy as a broad topic area, rather than to the individual issues that fall within information policy. Between the 1930s and the 1970s, the literature reveals that information policy was an area of interest to many disciplines, as demonstrated in the list of definitions above. In the last few decades, however, it has become mainly the interest of LIS, particularly library science, and to a much lesser extent communications and computer science (both of which tend to focus on the infrastructure and technological aspects of information policy).

This shift away from a unified focus on information policy in many disciplines may have been caused by several historical developments:

- Before the 1980s, policy typically drove technology development to the extent that state and federal government agencies were promoting research and development in this area. As innovation has increased in speed of both development and distribution, however, technology has driven information policy. This has forced those studying information policy to depart from traditional views;
- Personal computing has become more commonplace and, as a result information is taken more for granted, making information policy issues both less novel and more invisible;
- Information is intangible and conceptual;
- Information is its own issue, but also part of every issue;

- The revelations in the 1970s about government use of technology for surveillance on citizens may have made some fields hesitant to focus on information policy;
- The lack of interest in the recommendations of the Rockefeller Report issued by the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) in 1976 calling for the development of a centralized national information policy gave the impression of an overall lack of focus on information policy (U.S. Domestic Council Committee on the Right of Privacy, 1976); and
- The shift in focus from information management to information technology management and burden spawned by the Federal Paperwork Commission and the subsequent Paperwork Reduction Act in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Sprehe, 1987).

Ultimately, primarily focusing on information policy as a series of issues rather than a mosaic of interrelated issues badly hinders our understanding of the impacts of policy on information professions and organizations, as well as our ability to engage the policy process and respond to policy developments. The true scope of information policy includes both specific issues—like net neutrality, filtering, intellectual property, e-government, and much else—and large societal issues created by the confluence of policies—such as levels of access to and availability of infrastructure, levels of and social supports for digital literacy, and the digital inclusion of different populations.

Among types of policies, information policy is unique for several reasons. First, it is a meta-policy, in that it affects virtually everything else in a world increasingly dominated by information and communication technologies. Other types of policy have a range of definable impacts, but information reaches everything. Second, many other areas of policy are dependent

on information policy and those policy choices are framed by information policy choices. Economic growth, political deliberations, technological innovation, civic engagement, development, and urban planning, among much else, are driven in no small part by information policy decisions. Third, information policy governs a tremendous range of institutions, including not only those in which information is central to their existence, such as libraries, schools, archives, and museums, but also government agencies, corporations, and nonprofits, dictating the management, collection, sharing, and other aspects of their information usage. Fourth, information policy decisions create clear advantages and disadvantages across society, with a huge range of groups and organizations directly affected by every information policy decision. Finally, information, unlike other resources that are key areas of policy, is not finite (McClure & Jaeger, 2008). Unlike other resources, information cannot be used up and more can always be made, creating unique dynamics. Fifth, although information is theoretically unlimited, its availability over the long term can vary due to a number of issues such as information storage and retrieval, the media on which information is captured, and other factors.

In light of the need to teach the comprehensive nature of information policy, this paper defines it as:

- The broad set of goals created by governments and other institutions to manage the information lifecycle (from creation to disposition), and
- The ways in which these policies affect the everyday use of information by individuals, communities, and institutions (Jaeger, Bertot, & Gorham, 2013; Jaeger, Gorham, Bertot, & Sarin, 2014).

Such policies are created primarily by local, state, and national governments through laws, executive orders, regula-

tions, signing statements, rulemaking, agency memos, and other processes of governing (McClure & Jaeger, 2008; Bertot, Jaeger, & Hansen, 2012). International treaties and the rulings of international organizations are an increasingly important source of information policy (Hosein, 2004). Professional and business organizations can also generate information policies that shape information in much more limited contexts. The stakeholders of information policy decisions are even broader than the sources. Individuals, communities, government agencies, professional groups, cultural institutions, corporations, nonprofits—basically every actor in a society—can be directly affected by an information policy decision.

The implementation of filtering software in libraries in the early 2000s is one example that highlights how one policy issue can span different sources of policy and impact many different actors. Three federal laws are at the core of this issue: (1) The Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) (2000); (2) The Telecommunications Act of 1996; and (3) The Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) (1996). Under CIPA (20 U.S.C. § 7001), any public library receiving "universal service" (E-rate) discounts established by the Telecommunications Act of 1996 or LSTA grants from the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to state library agencies is required to install filters on networked computers so as to prevent children from viewing certain categories of regulated online content (Jaeger & McClure, 2004). Libraries thus found themselves in a difficult position because, at the time of CIPA's passage, many of them relied on E-rate funds to support library technology and Internet access (Jaeger & Yan, 2009). This reliance led a number of libraries to comply with CIPA for financial reasons (Jaeger, Bertot, & McClure, 2004). Libraries may not create the online content that CIPA seeks to regulate—the resources they provide to patrons, however, certainly can be used to create con-

tent—but they were nevertheless caught in the crossfire of the government’s effort to protect children from certain content availability through library infrastructure and technologies. This resulted in the need to balance several different legitimate interests, namely, their need for federal funding, their commitment to providing unrestricted access to information, and their desire to limit children’s exposure to potentially harmful content. In court, the American Library Association (ALA) and others challenged CIPA on its face on several grounds:

- The filtering mechanisms were severely flawed (particularly those prone to overfiltering);
- The mechanisms set forth in the law for adult patrons to obtain unfiltered access were cumbersome and implementation of them was subject to the discretion of librarians; and
- The statutory requirements were far more broad than they needed to be, covering all library networks, technologies, and content that received federal E-rate and LSTA funding—including patrons and staff use, regardless age or purpose (e.g., assisting patrons conducting research).

The case eventually made its way up to the Supreme Court, which held that CIPA neither violated the free speech clause of the First Amendment, nor imposed an impermissible condition on public libraries, so long as the patrons could request that the filters be turned off. The ruling reflected some naivety and poor strategy in ALA’s legal approach (Jaeger & McClure, 2004). Still, debates about the issue continue today—in 2010, the Washington Supreme Court broadly upheld filtering in libraries, equating it to content development and relying heavily on the Supreme Court’s ruling in the ALA case.

Because of how many different actors and stakeholders were involved in the enactment and enforcement of CIPA, and

how many were affected by its requirements, it serves as an extremely useful example of information policy. Even while various groups (including libraries) were debating the constitutionality of the law, libraries still had to figure out the practical implications of filters. It also shows how information policies can impact individuals, institutions, and society, as well as how problems can arise when policymakers fail to fully appreciate the scope of these impacts. These problems are then compounded by the fact that information professionals do not always understand the scope of these impacts either, and thus do not know how to get involved in the policy-making process. The end result is that information professionals find themselves in reactive, rather than proactive, positions.

Teaching Information Policy

Several papers have suggested the need for LIS to focus more attention on teaching information policy to current students and current practitioners, and have suggested strategies for teaching some aspects of information policy (Bertot, Jaeger, Shuler, Simmons, & Grimes, 2009; Jaeger, 2008; Jaeger & Bertot, 2009; Jaeger, Bertot, Shuler, & McGilvray, 2012; McClure & Jaeger, 2008), but no paper has previously laid out the key pedagogical issues in and approaches to teaching information policy. The discussion that follows highlights the considerations of audience, goals, assignments, and instructional methods in teaching information policy. Based on the extensive research about information policy for the publications noted at the beginning of this paper—along with the authors’ experiences teaching a wide array of information policy courses—the lessons below can be employed whether the information policy is being discussed in a face-to-face or online setting and whether the course is devoted to policy or includes issues of policy when discussing other topics.

Audience

The first consideration in teaching information policy is the audience. Information policy is a broad area with many nuances, which presents both opportunities and challenges for teaching. The types of students in the course being taught—undergraduates, LIS graduate students, current information professionals—and their career goals, are significant considerations. The logical place to start is to consider both what the students need and what you want them to take away from the class. These lenses will help to shape what part of the information policy universe will frame your focus. The question of audience will also help to determine how you approach information policy—as a set of interrelated issues, as large-scale societal concerns, or both. These approaches will be different, for example, if one is incorporating internet security and privacy into workplace training as compared to teaching information policy to graduate students in an iSchool.

There are many potential audiences, and their needs, perspectives, and expectations will vary widely. A needs assessment can help you develop a curriculum that aligns goals, content, and audience. Important questions to ask include:

- Who are you teaching and what do you know about their backgrounds? Do you have a sense of their baseline knowledge? For example, we talk about the sources of law—do you think the students understand the legislative process? Is understanding the legislative process important for your course? If you think this is something that should be addressed, how can you walk them through the process as quickly as possible so that you can move onto substantive areas of policy?
- What role do your students play in the policy process? If teaching information professionals, the focus may be on helping them understand how poli-

cies impact them or perhaps on policy evaluation. But, if you are working with public policy students, the focus may be on breaking down the steps of the policy-making process and helping them understand how to analyze policy options. These differences are important—the readings and materials may be very similar but the assignments and in-class exercises are likely to vary.

- What role do your students want to play? Going back to the CIPA example, we can see how librarians' efforts to do more than they traditionally did in the area of information policy were less than successful. This outcome raises the question of what we can do to equip librarians and other information professionals to take on an expanded role in policy arenas, highlighting how crucial it is that they understand the policy-making process better and think about the different roles they can play in this process.

For those of us teaching in this area, it is important to think about what we can do to help students develop a voice, which extends beyond teaching select areas like filtering and net neutrality into facilitating the development of skills with broad application in the public policy arena. This can be accomplished by examining both the big societal issues and the specific issues, placing both types of issues into context so that students understand why they matter. For example the USA PATRIOT Act, like CIPA, raised constitutional questions related to privacy but also raised practical questions for academic and public librarians related to the collection of patron information, the legal obligation to respond to requests from law enforcement officials, and other issues (Klinefelter, 2007). By looking at these various levels of any given policy, students can begin to fully understand the applicability of information policy to their professional lives.

Teaching the skills to recognize policy issues as they appear is extremely impor-

tant as new policy issues for information professionals are being created with great frequency. The importance of net neutrality to libraries did not become part of the discourse until the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit's ruling in *Verizon v. FCC* (2014) struck down key parts of the FCC's Open Internet Order (2010), holding that the FCC overreached its authority in implementing net neutrality rules for broadband providers. Immediately following the Verizon ruling, the ALA, as well as the American Association of Law Librarians (AALL) and the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), came out with strongly worded statements, detailing the reasons for their opposition to this decision (ALA, 2014). In February 2014, the FCC opened up a new rulemaking docket to consider how it should proceed in light of the *Verizon* opinion and the ALA was one of the first to file a comment when this docket opened. In July 2014, the FCC released a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, specifically requesting comment on the role that open Internet has for public institutions, such as public and school libraries. ALA, in a collaborative effort with EDUCAUSE, created a template letter for libraries to use to express their support for ALA and others' comments to the FCC (Clark, 2014). These recent efforts are but one demonstration of the ways in which the library community can make itself a recognized player in these debates.

It is also important to impart an understanding of the policy process—and how to be effective in policy-making. Policy development is often an ongoing process, particularly as technologies and current events influence issues. Take CIPA as an example. What most information professionals, particularly libraries, forget is that CIPA was actually the third attempt to regulate access to certain content in libraries. First was the Communications Decency Act (47 USC § 230) contained within the Telecommunications Act of 1996, followed by the Children's Online Protection Act (47 USC §231). Both of

these were laws were ultimately blocked from implementation, but each also served as a stepping-stone to CIPA. The message was clear: proponents of content regulation affecting minors would continue until they prevailed—and they did. Information professionals had a choice: they could better understand the policy process and policy-making audience, and work towards pragmatic solutions, or they could continue to fight (Jaeger, Bertot, & Gorham, 2013; Jaeger, Gorham, Bertot, & Sarin, 2014). One wonders what the outcome of CIPA—or if there would have been a CIPA—if libraries had been willing to play the policy system and offer a patron-choice option, giving patrons (and parents of minors) the choice of using filtered or unfiltered computers. Sometimes a goal of information professionals is to shape an information policy that is going to be implemented regardless of their lack of support; the strategy then is to minimize its impact.

Types of Information Policy Courses

There are many kinds of information policy courses, and a variety of other courses in which information policy can be an important aspect. Courses or training sessions with words like “policy,” “law,” and “government” in their titles are generally what people think of as policy courses, but courses that delve into specific areas of policy or the impacts thereof, such as human rights, digital inclusion, and literacy, are also important mechanisms for teaching information policy. Examples include:

- *Classes seemingly unrelated to information policy*—This might be a class on collection development that requires a discussion of copyright or censorship, or a class on management that requires a discussion on where an institution gets its funding. A more specific example is a course on digital literacy. Here, the focus is more on familiarizing students with existing laws and policies (e.g.,

BTOP, National Broadband Plan) that promote digital literacy and then encouraging students to think through how to promote the development of digital literacy skills in different environments;

- *A class on information policy writ large*—This course provides an opportunity to tackle both the big societal issues and the more specific issues surrounding information policy and to help students understand how these issues intersect;
- *Classes on aspects of information policy*—These courses might include a government information class that not only introduces students to primary sources but also provides instruction on how to locate primary sources in print and online and how to teach others about using these resources. Policy and program evaluation classes, classes on specific policies, and advocacy classes might also fit in this category; and
- *Classes on issues affected by policy*—These might include courses on human rights, asking students to consider how information access and human rights intersect; how current laws and policy recognize access to information as a right (if they do); and the implications of policies that do not consider access.

If your class is a workshop, training, or some other type of stand-alone class, you need to think about how much you can realistically cover and may not be able to go into as much detail as you would like. An iSchool or other graduate school environment is a little different, offering the potential for a curriculum with different information policy classes that are complementary and build upon one another. With a semester-long class, there is the opportunity to give students a foundation in policy in general, acquainting or reacquainting them with sources of policy, as well as to give them a baseline understanding of the policy process and how to engage in policy analysis. As an example,

a semester-long information policy class might have the goals of teaching students to understand:

- Relationships among policy issues such as access rights, proprietary rights, consumer rights, and privacy rights in the information and telecommunications policy arenas;
- Importance of information policy issues to professionals and to the general public;
- Roles of constitutional and statutory provisions, domestic laws, regulations and federal policies, as well as non-governmental sources of policy;
- Issues of ethics and values raised by policies, as well as potential conflicts of professional ethics created by policy decisions; and
- Processes of policy analysis and research.

In any type of policy course, the context for information policy issues can be examined through the different perspectives of stakeholders on an issue. Returning to CIPA, as filtering software in libraries has generated an ongoing dialogue, organizations like the ALA, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC) have made concerted efforts to educate the public about this issue. The ALA created a webpage (<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/advleg/federal-legislation/cipa>), for example, that pulled together the relevant legal materials (e.g., the text of CIPA, decisions rendered by the lower courts and the Supreme Court, briefs submitted to the Supreme Court) and gives a sense of the variety of policy sources and actors involved. Materials from advocacy-oriented sites should be taken with a grain of salt because they are obviously articulating a particular position, but these kinds of educational resources compiled by interested organizations can be a valuable starting point for understanding the different facets of an information policy issue.

The instructional format may also affect the course. Increasingly, LIS instruction takes place in multiple formats—in-person, online, or blended. Teaching information policy online offers both challenges and opportunities that include the ability to:

- Include content in multiple formats to enhance the student experience (e.g., TedTalks, YouTube videos, interactive lectures via tools such as Camtasia, and other interactive online content).
- Expose students to thought leaders and policy professionals via Webinars and other real-time media (e.g., Google Hangout, Skype).
- Innovate through learning technologies such as Present.me for student presentations; blogs for the debate and discussion of key policy issues and the publication of website reviews; the creation of Websites (through tools like WordPress) on information policy issues; and more.
- Establishing mechanisms for ongoing discussions that provide an understanding of the meta-policy and larger information policy issues.

Online instruction can enhance the learning experience of students seeking to understand information policy issues and solutions by going beyond the limitations of classroom walls.

Key Concepts to Teach

Any discussion of information policy should begin with the issues detailed above: definitions of information policy, policy actors, sources of policy, and the scope of the policies. The level of this discussion again depends on your audience, but regardless of your students' knowledge base, it is a good idea to explain how these foundational considerations are the various lenses that will be used to frame discussions throughout the course.

Having laid out the broad framework for the course, the next choice is the spe-

cific policies to be covered. No course, even a semester-long course devoted to information policy, can hope to capture all of the elements or specific topics that fall under the umbrella of information policy. Instead, selections can be made to provide an overview sampling of the range of issues; a more focused grouping of closely related issues, such as copyright, security, and privacy; or a course devoted to one specific topic, such as a course on e-government or a course on digital literacy and inclusion. A course could also be framed entirely around a large-scale concept in information policy, such as examining the reactions in information policy to societal crises (Caidi & Ross, 2005; Hogenboom, 2008; Jaeger & Burnett, 2005).

In connection with selecting content areas, consideration should be given to how the course will prepare students to understand the impacts of the policies and the various ways in which to engage relevant policy discussions. Performance measurement, program evaluation, and advocacy each focus on outcomes in different ways. And by becoming familiar with the core aspects of each of these outcome-oriented activities, students will better understand the link between policies as written and policies in practice. In covering these topics within the context of the selected information policies, issues related to stakeholders, sources, implementations, and the like will be addressed as well. The evaluation of a government website, for example, can consider usability, accessibility, goals in terms of audience, and number of visits. Having students conduct an evaluation of this nature encourages them to think about stakeholders, their different interests, and how the site does or does not meet these different interests.

The extent to which you choose to have students engage with issues related to the policy impacts and outcomes will depend on the focus the course. General questions to consider include:

- What populations, organizations, or

government agencies are affected by the policy?

- Are there disproportionate impacts on certain populations and/or is the policy biased in favor of or against certain groups? and
- What are the short-term and long-term impacts, as well as the best-case and the worst-case possible impacts of the policy?

Discussion of measurement and impact also allows students to consider different types of data collection—qualitative, quantitative, or mixed method—and to think about the implications of choosing a particular approach to data collection. Program evaluation can include any number of methods to try to understand whether the goals of the policy are being met, including cost-benefit analyses, comparisons among similar programs, and comparisons of goals to outcomes. Bias or political motivation can underlie any measurement or evaluation though, and evaluations often take into account the goals and anticipated outcomes built into the policy-making process. Helping students to understand the political issues surrounding the study of policy impacts is an important component of teaching this particular aspect of information policy.

Equally important is helping students to understand how evaluation fits into the broader policy-making process. To highlight how evaluation can play a role in modifying (and hopefully improving) existing policies, an assignment can ask students to consider the following questions as part of an evaluation of an existing policy:

- Are there mechanisms for citizen or agency input?
- Are there modification processes? and
- Are there timeframes or benchmarks for policy evaluation or reevaluation?

Advocacy also plays an enormous role throughout the various stages of the

policy-making process. Advocacy messages, funding, and the persistence of interested parties—all forms of engagement with policy-making—are essential to this process. Often policies are developed not because they will have the greatest impact for the largest number of people, but because a small group of influential citizens or corporations have the loudest voices. A comparison of the outcomes in CIPA and the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) is informative here (Jaeger, Gorham, Bertot, & Sarin, 2014). The ALA took a firm stance against both policies. In the former case, they were involved directly in legal opposition to the legislation, ending in the rendering of a Supreme Court case against them, and the organization in fact took quite a bit of flak for their position. SOPA, on the other hand, also had detractors in influential positions. In that situation, however, the powerful Internet businesses prevailed in their efforts to stop the legislation, demonstrating the varying levels of influence that organizations wield in the policy-making process. While an in-depth exploration of the power struggles of legislators, lobbyists, and other interested parties may be beyond the scope of most information policy courses, students should be given at least a basic understanding of how advocacy can impact the development, as well as the actual impact, of any given policy.

Types of Assignments

There are as many ways to get your students thinking about information policy as there are opinions on the policies themselves. Below are a sample of assignment types we have found effective in teaching policy courses and the reasons underlying each of the assignments:

Legislative Tracing shows students that most pieces of legislation do not stand alone. For example, a bill might be incorporated into a larger bill for passage, often appropriations bills. Tracing legislation also requires students to consider the bi-

cameral system of the United States. You might ask students to describe the history of certain policies, beginning with their first introduction in the legislature to the last action taken with respect to them, whether it be passage, reauthorization, or another action. This assignment also gets students to discover and evaluate the means in which the government makes this information public. For example, Congress.gov, currently in beta, replaces the old thomas.loc.gov. Whether this is a change for the better remains to be seen and can certainly be a point of discussion among students.

Identification of Legislators is key to understanding the policy environment and the political environment in which the policy context evolves. To better understand this policy context, students should know something about those who create the policies, including their voting records. While this may seem like an incredibly basic exercise, a recent Gallup poll's finding that only a third of Americans surveyed could name their members of Congress suggests the importance of focusing on the fundamentals (Mendes, 2013). Although it is likely that your students will be more aware of political issues than the general public, it is always best not to assume. Some questions you may want to incorporate into this assignment are:

- Identify their members of Congress and their respective political parties;
- Identify the year in which they were first elected; and
- Identify at least one committee on which they serve and/or leadership position they hold.

Policy Analysis can take the form of a research paper that examines one particular policy on multiple levels or compares policies, focusing on a specific area of analysis. A thorough policy analysis would consider a policy's:

- Clarity—Does it have a clear meaning? Can a reasonable person understand

the intent? Are the key terms carefully defined? Are there examples or applications in the policy?

- Consistency—Is the policy internally consistent?
- Ambiguity—Can the policy be interpreted in multiple plausible ways? Are there established parameters for the policy? Does the policy cover one topic or multiple topics?
- Contradiction—Does this policy run counter to another policy? Are there inherent contradictions within the policy? Does the policy comply with related judicial holdings? Is it constitutional?
- Duplication—Does the policy duplicate another policy?
- Implementation—Are methods of implementation defined? Are responsibilities in implementation defined? Are timelines for implementation defined?
- Enforcement—Are methods of enforcement defined? Are responsibilities for enforcement defined? Are timelines for enforcement defined?
- Gaps—Is additional guidance not in the document needed to implement it? Is there sufficient detail to implement and enforce the policy?
- Evaluation and impacts—how would the effects of the policy be measured?

An Elevator Speech describes an issue and persuades the listener in a very succinct manner. Although the name suggests the length of the speech should be around 30-seconds, the concept of an elevator speech simply implies concise and to-the-point communication. For this assignment, you might ask your students to choose an information policy you have covered in class or on one focused on an issue of interest, and then ask them to pitch the policy to the class. The speech should have elements of advocacy and persuasion, but should be factual (however slanted those facts may be). This is perhaps the skill most of your students will use most frequently outside of your classroom, given the increasing importance of “sound bites”

to both the public and policy-makers today.

A White Paper—an informative report on an issue—is another way of having students study a specific policy issue. The most classic examples come from policy research centers like Brookings Institution. An assignment of this nature induces students to consider multiple sides of an issue, the potential costs and impacts thereof, and existing data on the needs for the policy as well on public opinion.

An Issue Brief in the style of the Congressional Research Service (CRS) reports requires the student to think objectively and broadly about policy and exposes them to an exceptional style of presenting these facts. Although CRS does not make their reports available directly, many of them are available online through, for example, University of North Texas library's CRS digitation project (<http://digital.library.unt.edu/explore/collections/CRSR/>). Depending on your students, the use of infographics and other digital data visualization techniques to concisely share information in issue briefs may be an interesting area to explore.

An Op Ed engages student in constructing a persuasive argument to garner support for a particular perspective on a policy topic. Having students write an editorial, particularly in conjunction with a more neutral issue brief, is one way to demonstrate how policy analysis can be manipulated for one's own agenda—or more positively, how to support one's opinions with facts. In an assignment like this, you could have students argue in favor of or opposition to a particular policy or, alternatively, you might give them specific assertions to argue for/against. Such quotations can be found in newspaper editorials, professional magazines, scholarly journals, and reputable online sources.

A Current Topics short paper focuses students on an existing and topically current policy issues and helps them identify the core issue, the stakeholders, and implications for information professionals.

Such an assignment helps students scan the larger information policy space, assess its significance and potential impact(s), and consider strategies and approaches regarding how as professionals we may need to act, engage, and monitor the topic.

A Make a Policy assignment can provide students with the opportunity to think through a controversial issue and what it means to try and create an information policy or set of policies to address the issue. One example is an assignment that has students working in groups as a Community Decency Board, with the idea of creating a set of community standards that govern decency that would affect public displays, library materials, and the like. All too often, students and the public are exposed to sound bites, which emanate from a policy debate—but it is an entirely different matter to legislate and/or govern from a sound bite. Such an assignment forces students to consider a wide variety of viewpoints while attempting to create policy.

These are by no means the only types of assignments that can be used to teach information policy, but the above list demonstrates the range of possibilities. The driver in building a curriculum in information policy is to design a set of assignments that allow students to explore different aspects of the policy-making process and ways to engage it.

Conclusion: Teaching Information Policy for the Future

Given the vastness of information policy and the size of its importance to information professionals and information organizations, a paper such as this can only serve as a primer for more detailed discussions about teaching information policy more comprehensively and effectively to current students and current professionals in the information fields. The most a course devoted to information policy can do is to help students understand information policy as a mosaic of societal-level and more specific information-

related issues, and to provide students with a set of intellectual tools and skills that they can apply as they encounter, evaluate, and engage new policies related to information.

This understanding, however, goes beyond introducing students to the policies, their sources, their stakeholders, and their impacts. Many major information policies have been created in the past twenty years, most of which have had very sizeable impacts on information professionals and organizations. Despite the increasingly central position of ICTs in our lives, information professionals, unfortunately, rarely have a voice in the creation and implementation of these policies, leading to many negative impacts on information professionals and organizations, from new responsibilities without accompanying support to policies that challenge professional values and ethics (Jaeger, Bertot, & Gorham, 2013; Jaeger, Gorham, Bertot, & Sarin, 2013, 2014; Jaeger, Sarin, Gorham, & Bertot, 2013, Jaeger, Taylor, & Gorham, 2015; Thompson, Jaeger, Taylor, Subramaniam, & Bertot, 2014). The consequences of the profession not becoming far more engaged in policy-making and advocacy are great, presenting enormous liabilities for both information professionals themselves and the public sphere in which they serve. Teaching information policy is a vital step toward becoming a profession that is more engaged and responsive to policy.

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