Why not take a scientific approach to teaching information literacy skills?

Studies have shown that students retain more when the lessons engage them. Active learning helps all students learn and succeed, especially minorities, like students from low-income families and women (C. E. Wieman, 2014). Based on the best pedagogical evidence we have about learning, the Teaching Practices Inventory—Information Literacy Instruction (TPI-ILI) and the Classroom Observation Protocol for Information Literacy (COPIL) help librarians make instruction more engaging and identify ways to incorporate active learning. The original nationally calibrated tools—Teaching Practices Inventory (TPI) and Classroom Observation Protocol for Undergraduate STEM (COPUS)—were developed to improve teaching by identifying high impact evidence-based practices and measuring their use in the classroom.

We started with an inventory of effective teaching methodologies from the Teaching Practices Inventory (TPI) which drew extensively on literature about effective practices in instruction, and modified the TPI to fit the kinds of one-shot instruction literacy sessions we teach as librarians (C. Wieman & Gilbert, 2014). Our version is called TPI-ILI and is shown, in part, in this poster.

The same people who developed the TPI also developed a classroom observation model (COPUS) that we modified (COPIL) for use as part of a three step peer coaching program (Smith, Jones, Ulbert, & Wieman, 2013).

Finally, the information from TPI-ILI and COPIL is gathered and organized into a report highlighting what the peer coach and instructor-librarian noticed and found (see TPI-ILI-COPIL Reflection Template). The process results in a mix of qualitative and quantitative data about what you and your students are doing. Armed with this information you can clearly see what currently takes place in the classroom, what is working, and where you have room for improvement. More significantly, the data you collect with these tools helps demonstrate your value to education. Having someone observe your classes can seem terrifying. A peer coach using the best evidence-based pedagogy will help your students learn more of what they need to know. And it can improve your teaching too.