The Prepared Mind: Enhancing Creativity in Academic Librarianship

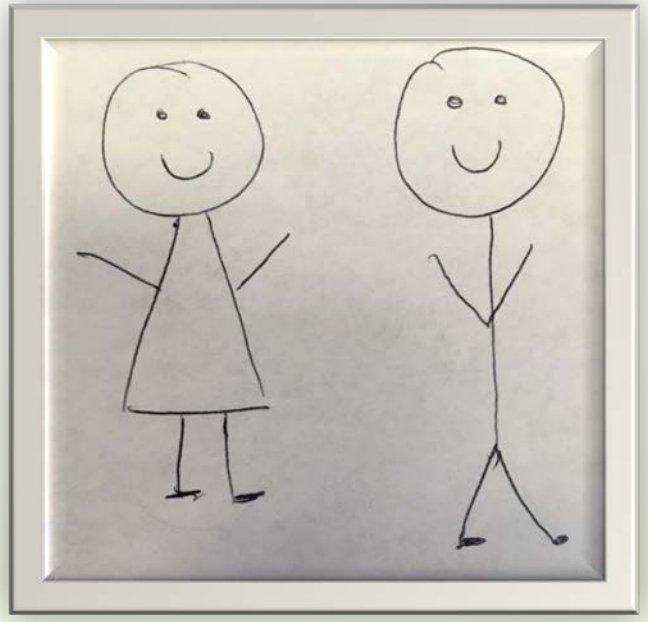
VLA Annual Conference, Norfolk, VA

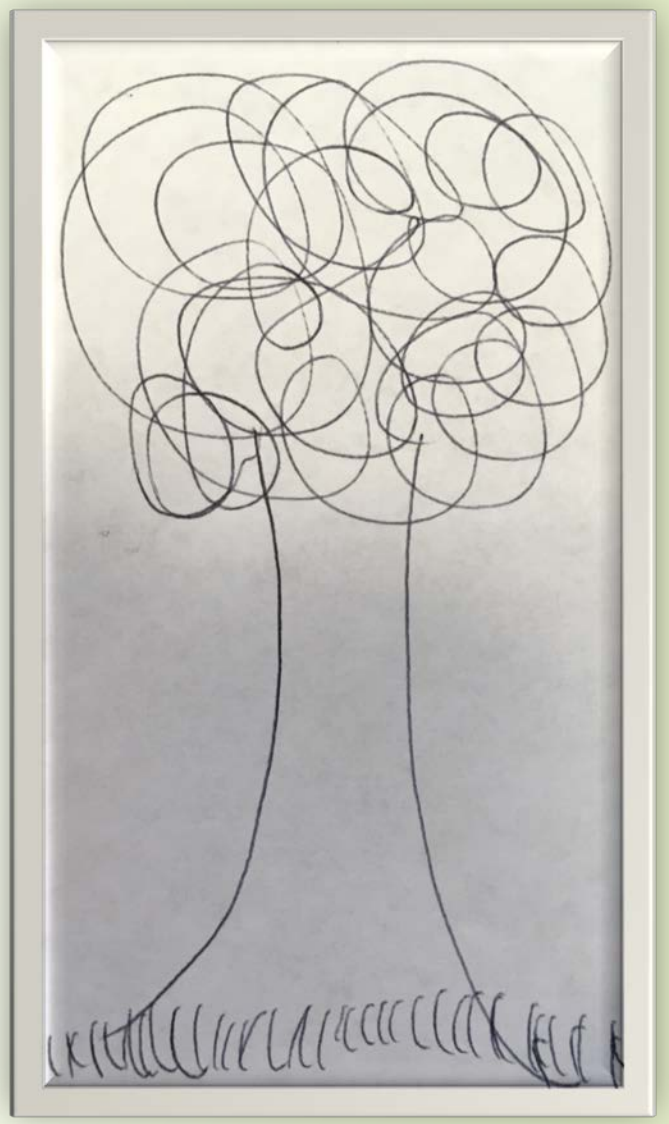
12 October 2017

Nancy Falciani-White, MSLIS, EdD

Randolph-Macon College

NancyFalcianiWhite@rmc.edu





What is creativity?

A novel product, idea, or problem solution that is of value to the individual and/or the larger social group.

(Hennessey & Amabile, 2010)

Original and meaningful

Novel and appropriate

Exercise 1

Why study creativity?

College students are changing.

Higher education is changing.

The role of libraries in higher education is changing.

Technology is changing.

Information resources are increasing.

Budgets are decreasing.

I am a creative person.

Yes

No

Kind of

Start the presentation to activate live content

If you see this message in presentation mode, install the add-in or get help at PollEv.com/app

Poll Everywhere

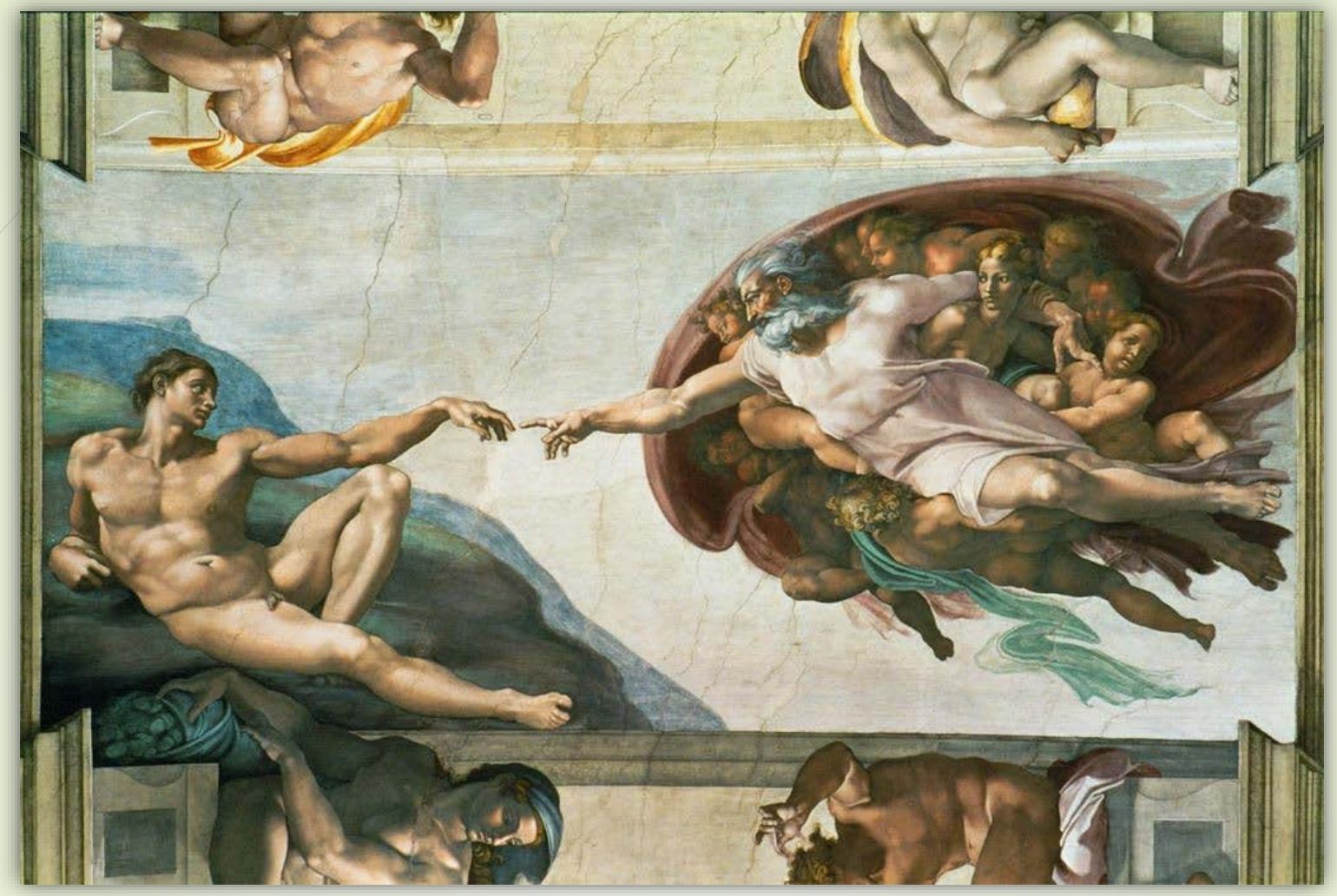
In what role are you creative at work?

Start the presentation to activate live content

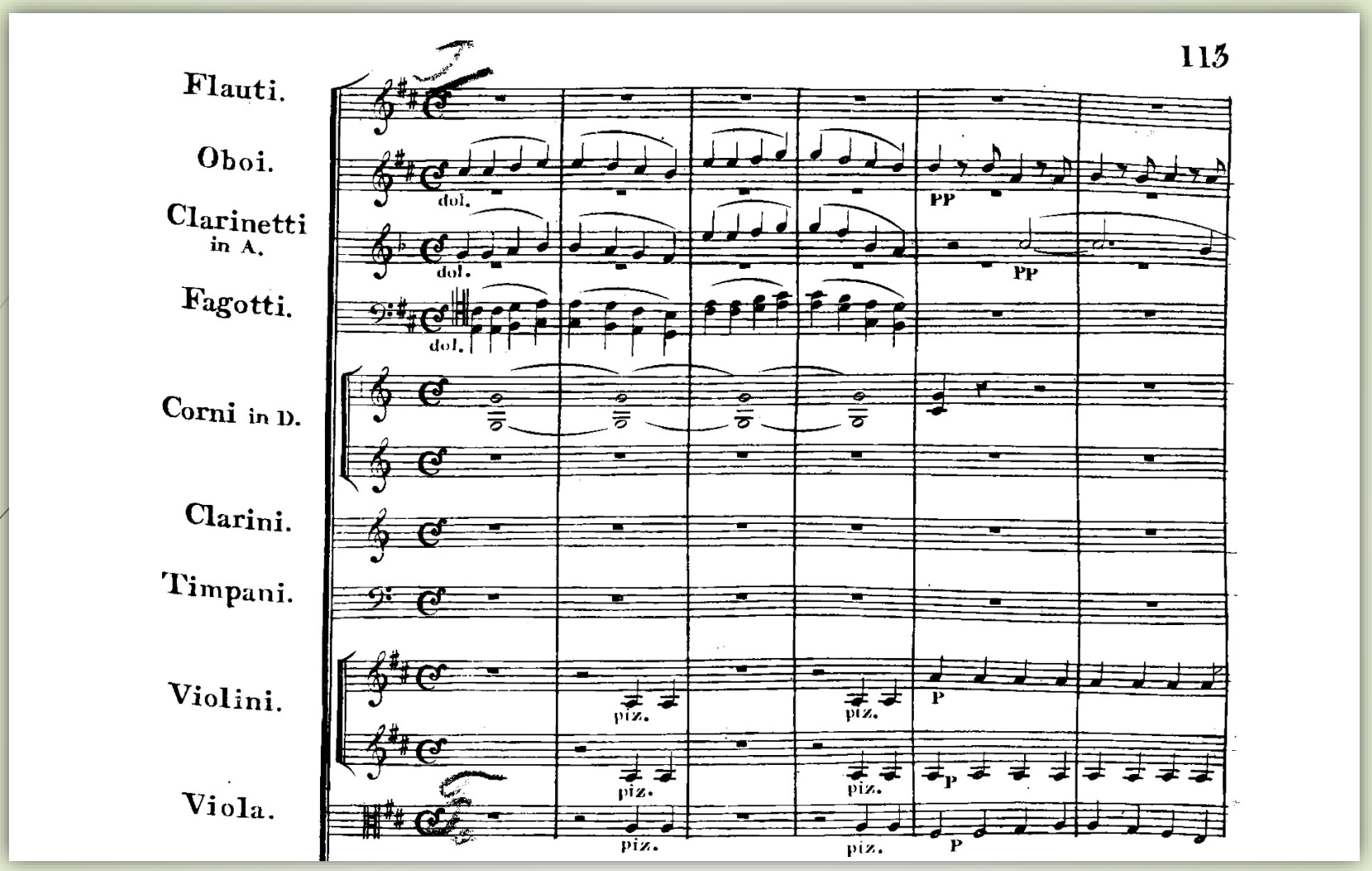
If you see this message in presentation mode, install the add-in or get help at PollEv.com/app

Poll Everywhere

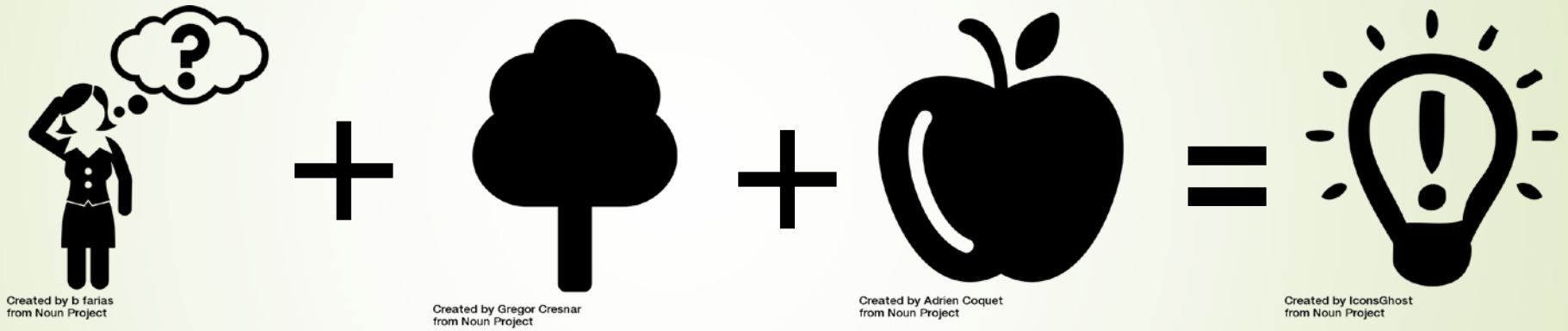
Creativity in Psychological Literature



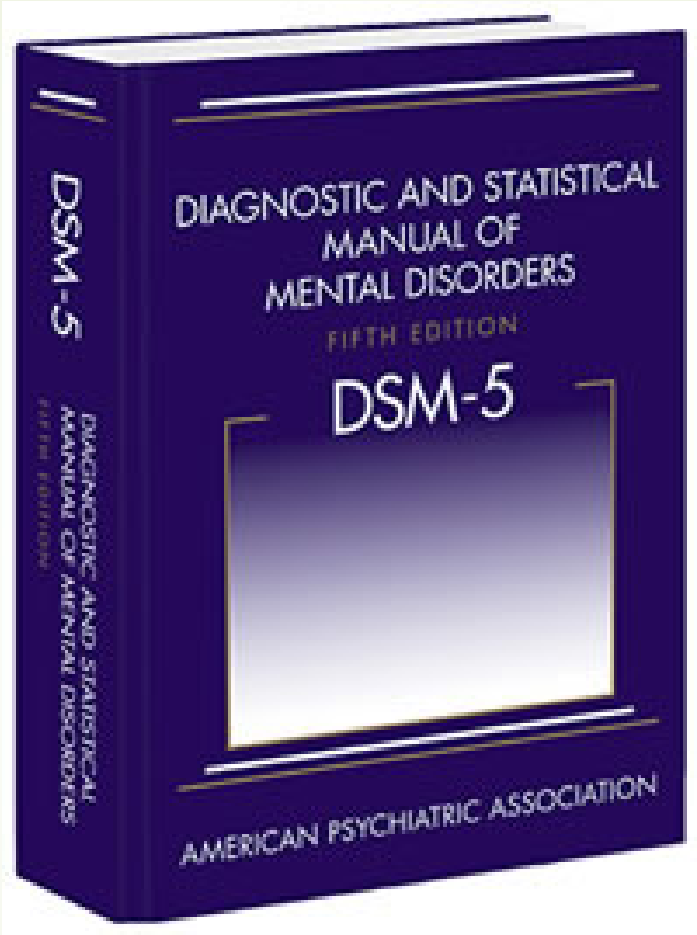
Divinely inspired



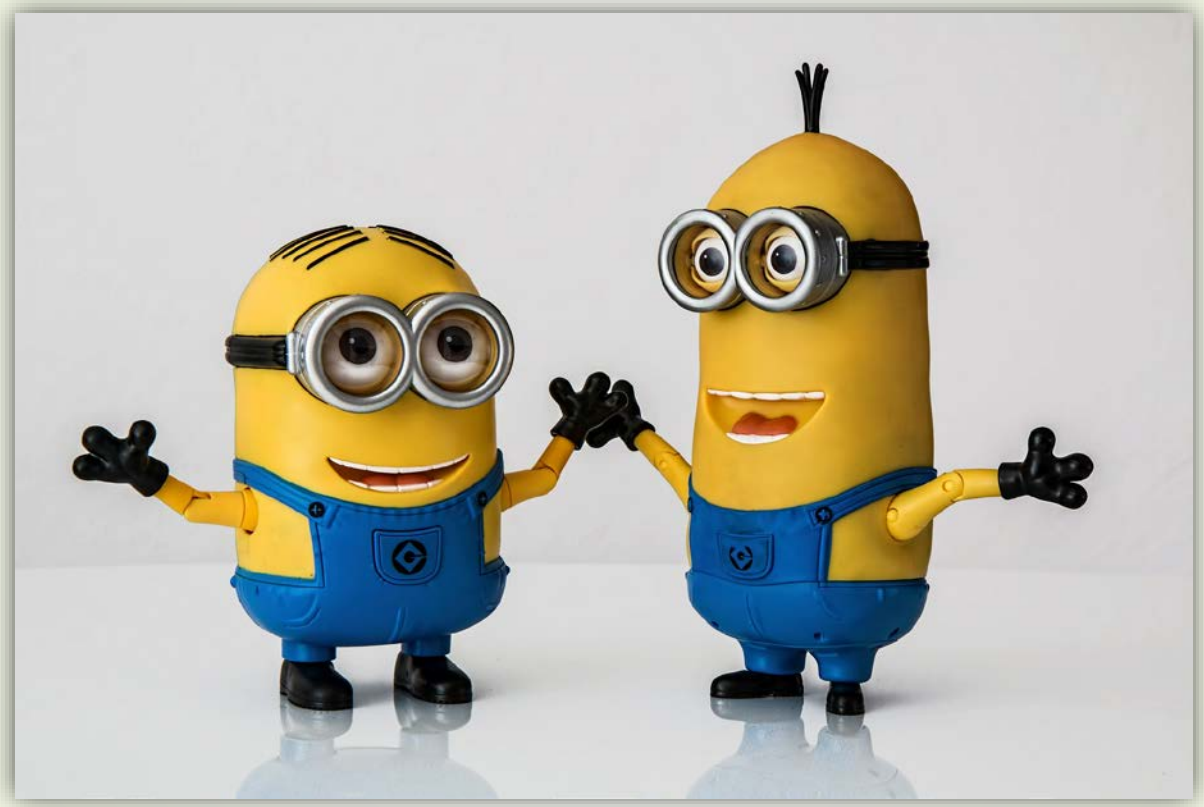
Limited to the artistic domain


Created by b farias
from Noun Project
Created by Gregor Cresnar
from Noun Project
Created by Adrien Coquet
from Noun Project
Created by IconsGhost
from Noun Project

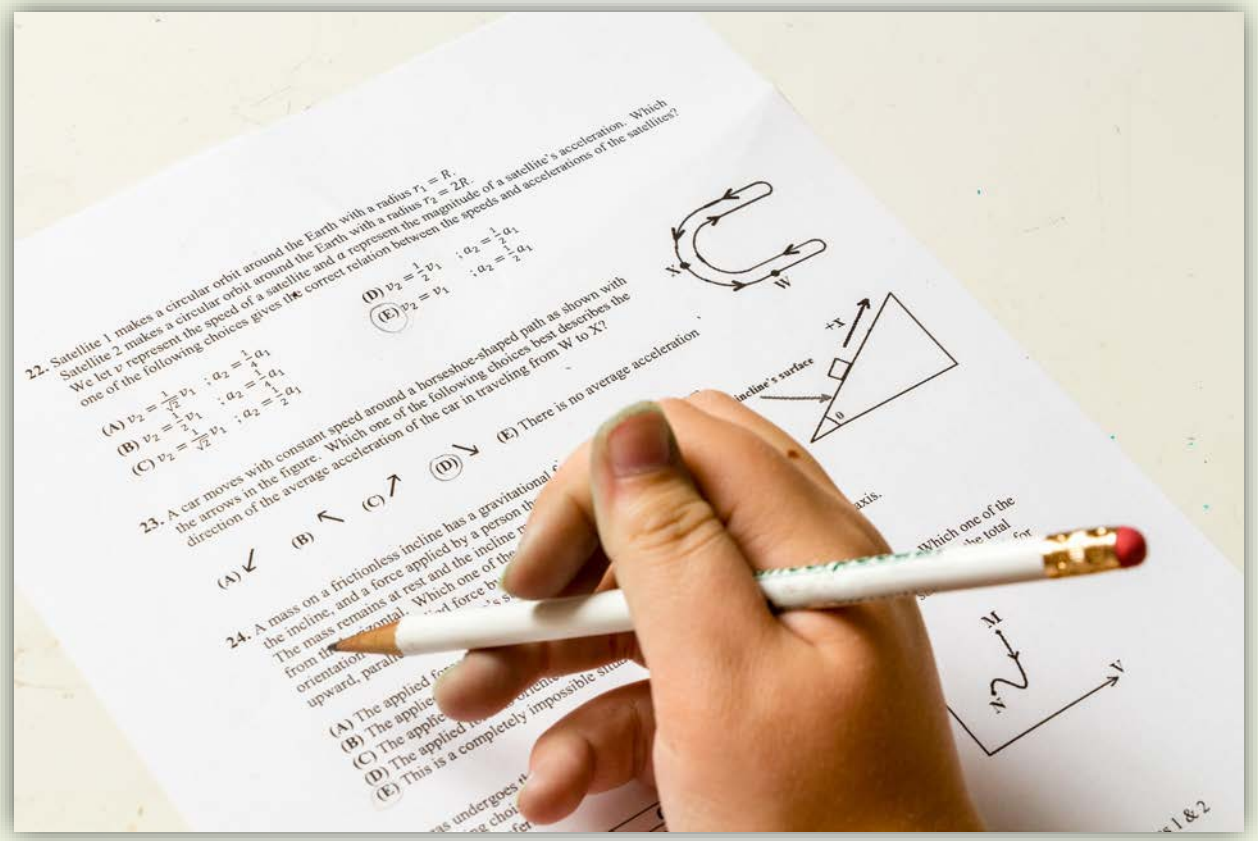
Process



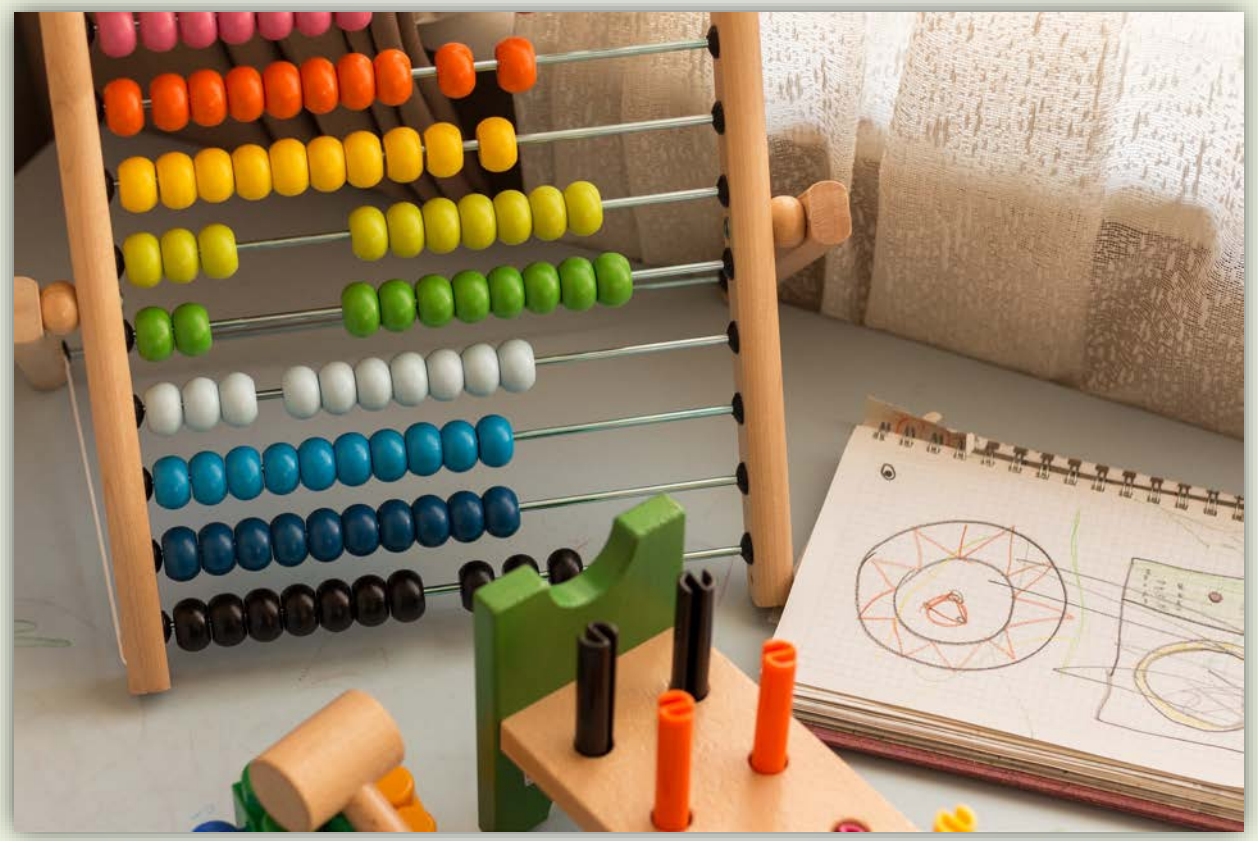
Associated with mental illness



Don’t worry. Be happy.

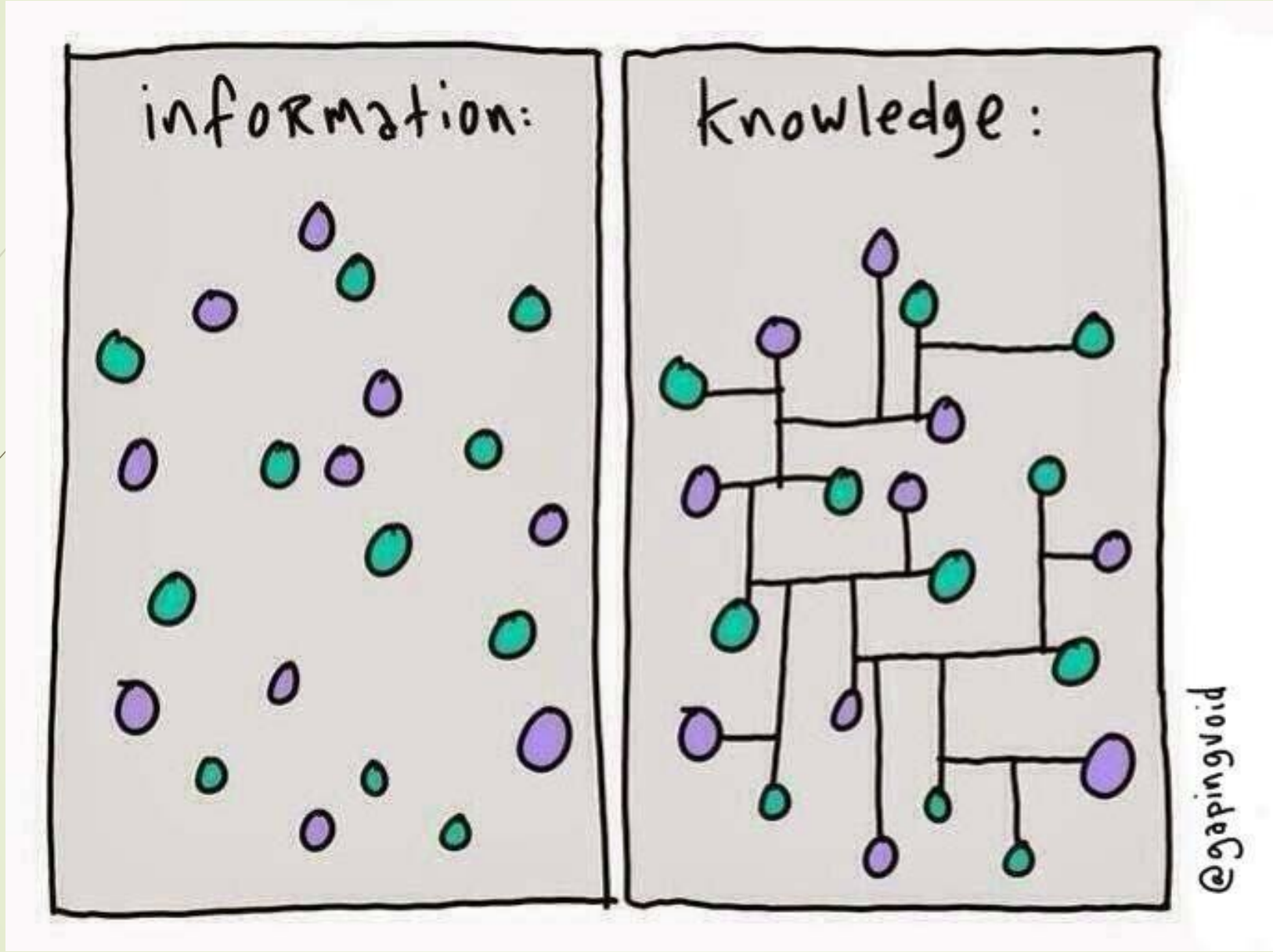


Correlated with intelligence



Influenced by environment

Follows mastery



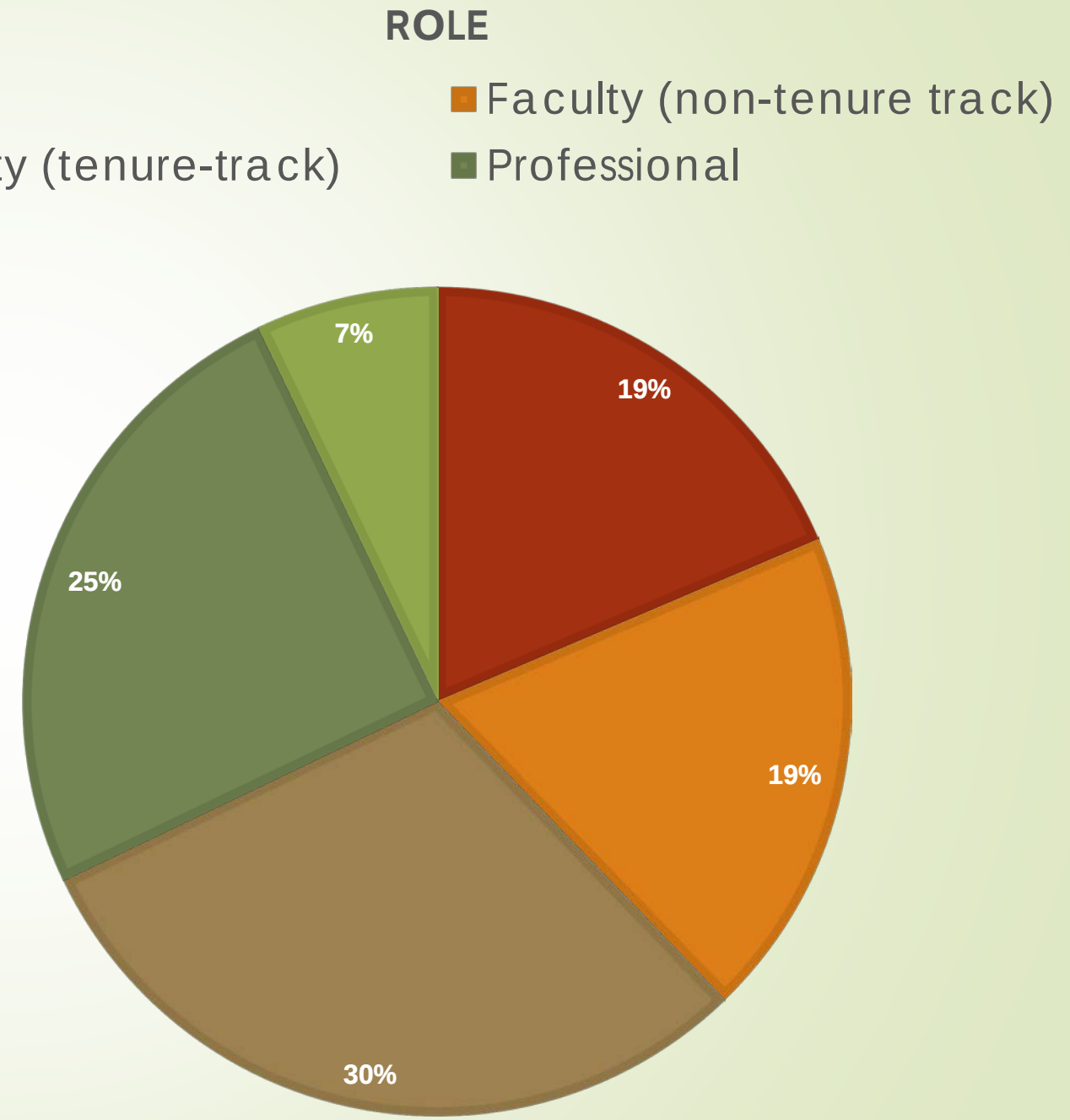
Hugh MacLeod @hughcards 16 Jan 2014

Creativity in Library Literature

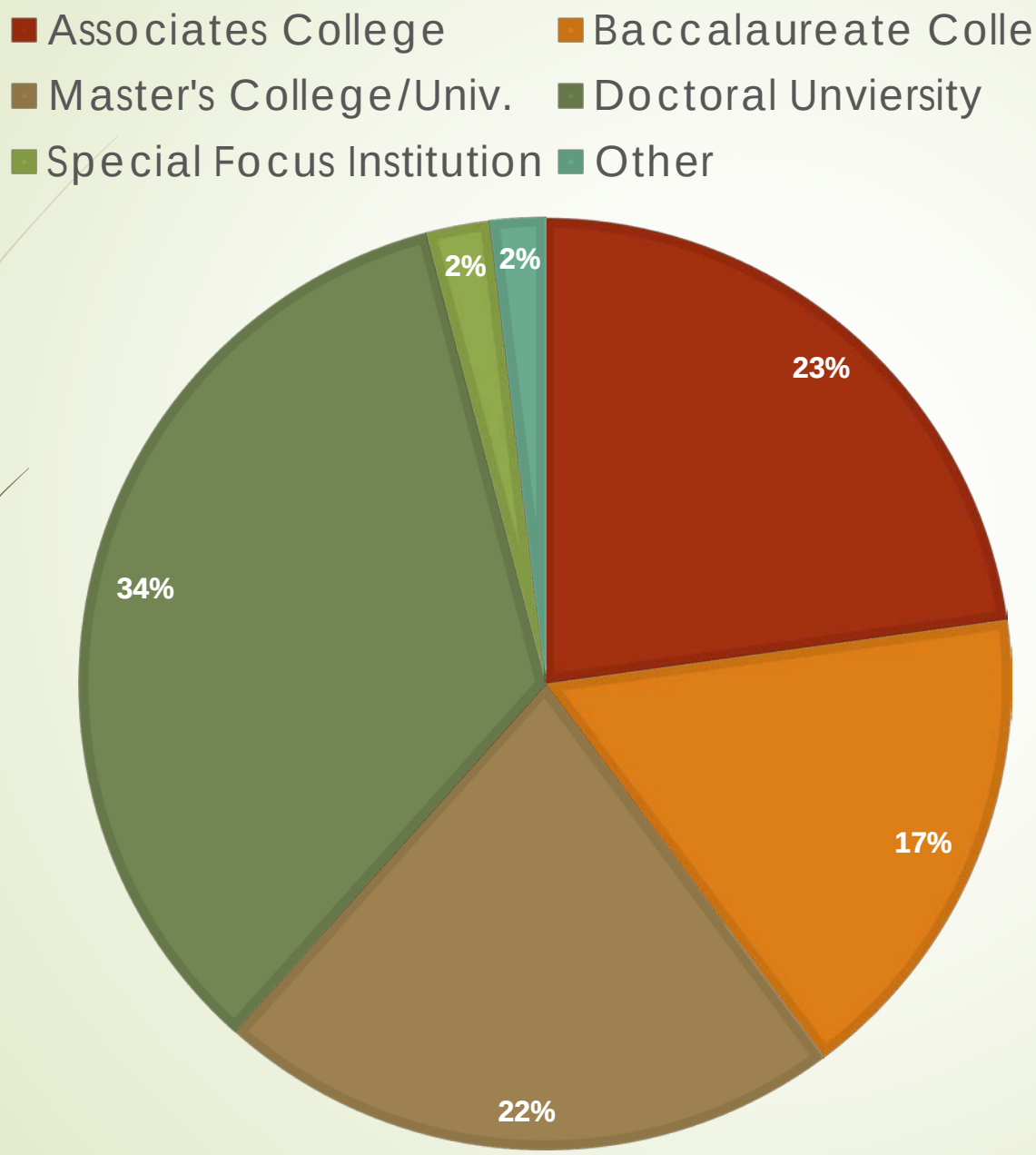
- Creativity is very important
- We need to be more creative!
- We need to help students be more creative
  - Makerspaces
  - Information literacy instruction
  - Design
- Lack of empirical studies

Survey of Academic Library Staff

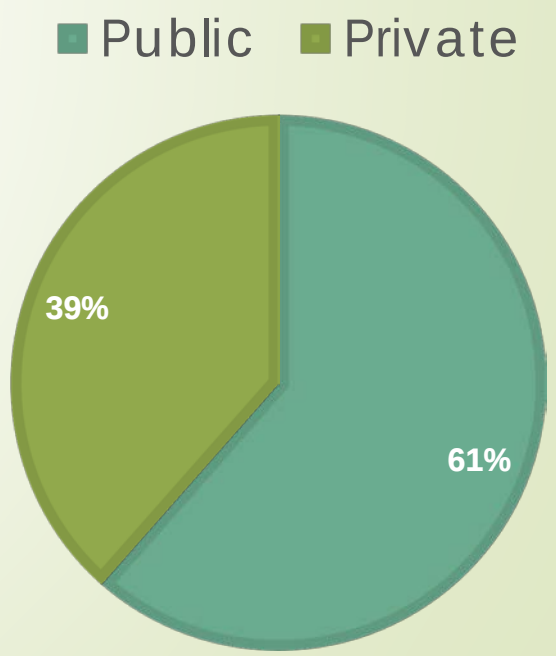
n = 312

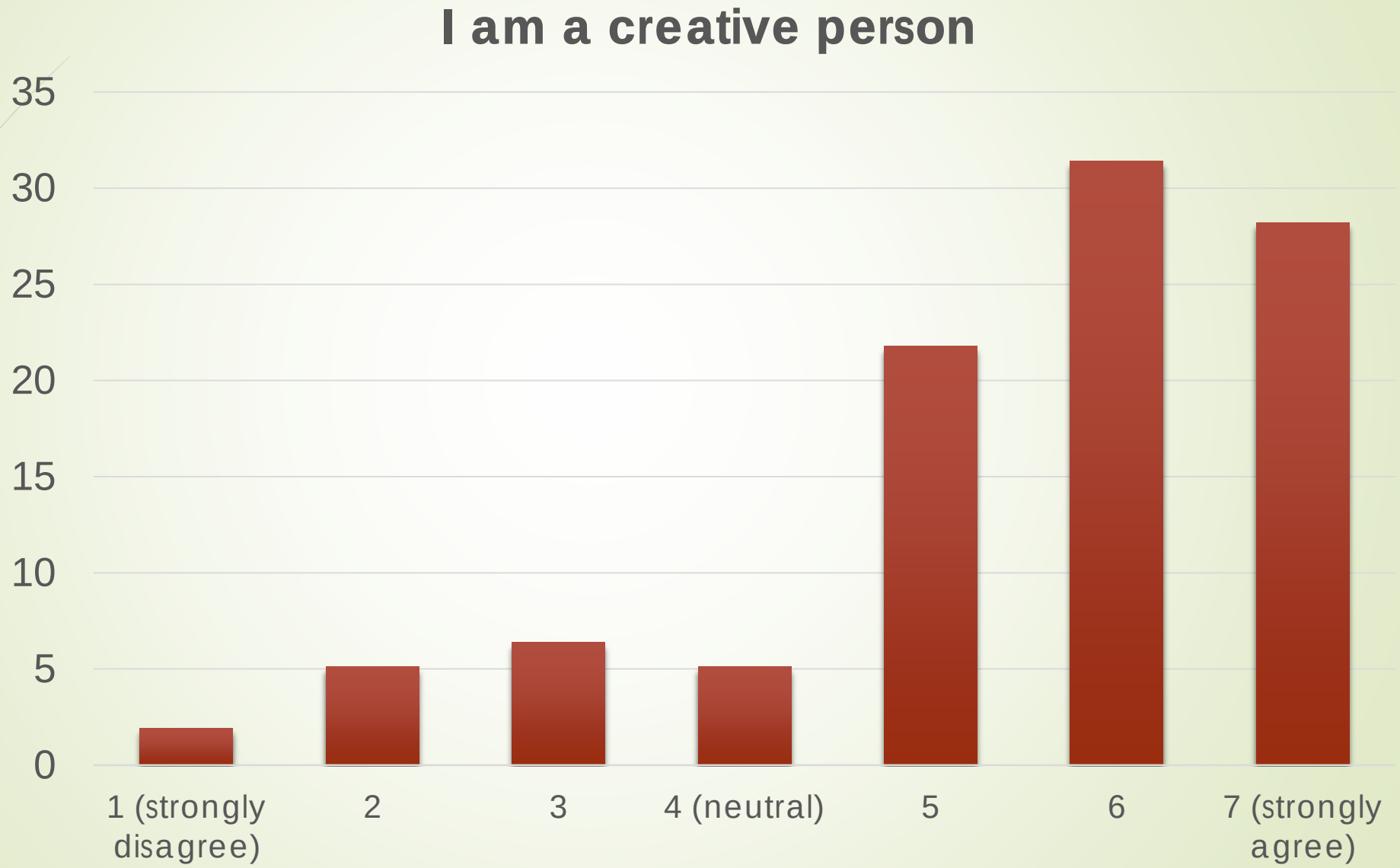

ROLE
Staff
Faculty (non-tenure track)
Faculty (tenure-track)
Professional
Other
19%
19%
30%
25%
7%

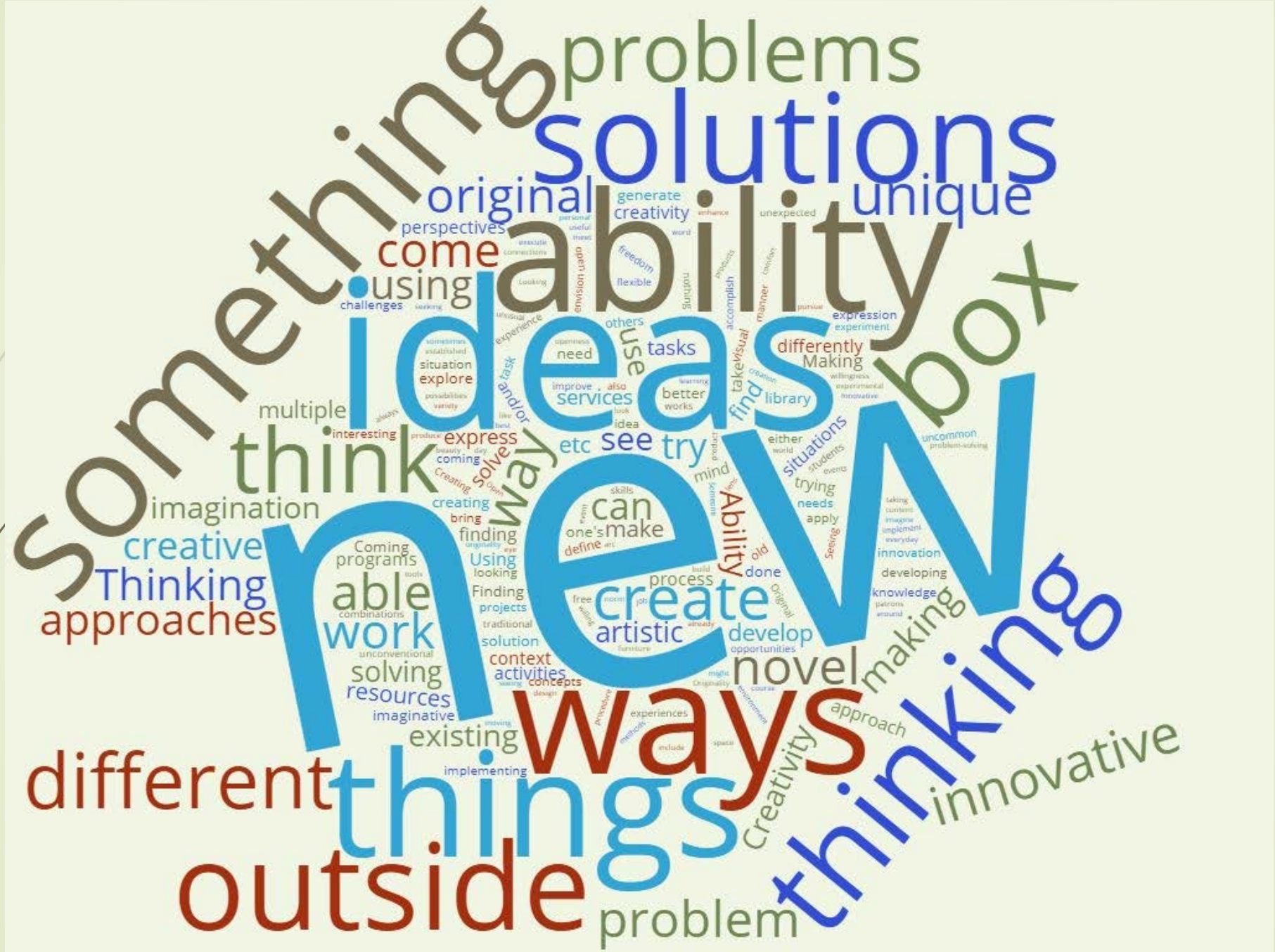
RESPONDENT INSTITUTIONS



PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE




I am a creative person
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
1 (strongly disagree)
2
3
4 (neutral)
5
6
7 (strongly agree)



something
problems
solutions
ability
original
unique
come
using
ideas
box
new
think
way
creative
Thinking
approaches
imagination
able
work
solving
resources
existing
different
things
outside
problem
thinking
innovative
creativity
novel
create
artistic
develop
can
make
see
try
tasks
differently
Making
library
services
better
express
multiple
interesting
creating
finding
Using
Coming
programs
solution
context
activities
concepts
imaginative
implementing
experiences
approach
making
knowledge
developing
innovation
Ability
process
done
Creating
solve
coming
bring
looking
projects
traditional
unconventional
combinations
experience
situation
explore
challenges
perspectives
generate
creativity
unexpected
freedom
flexible
others
need
use
expression
experiment
situations
trying
needs
apply
mind
either
uncommon

What do you feel supports, enhances, or encourages your creativity?

- “Having the freedom to use my creativity in different ways for my work.”
- “Time to think. A quiet place to ponder. Reading and browsing what others have done to adapt their ideas.”
- “Being open to change”
- “Participating in a range of activities; interacting with different kinds of people, doodling”
- “Not being afraid to fail and being willing to try different things…”
- “wine, good leadership. also wine”

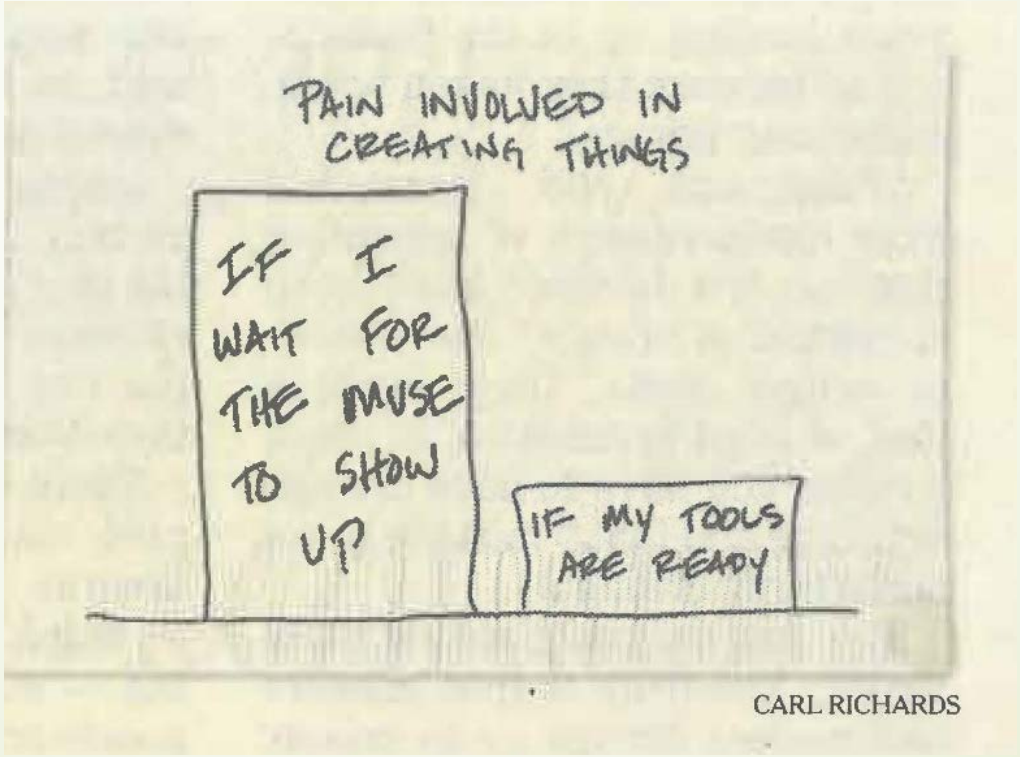
What barriers do you encounter to creative work?

- “Funding, lack of coworker and manager support, lack of time”
- “Budget, Administrative indifference, entrenched and even regressive library staff, faculty turnover, curriculum design”
- “Essentially, that it is often viewed as frivolity.”
- “insufficient sleep, poor leadership, improper funding, and societal disrespect for education, knowledge, and learning”
- “Getting lost in the details; my own lack of seeing myself as creative.”

Enhancing Personal Creativity

Chance favors the prepared mind.

–Louis Pasteur



Cultivate self-awareness

- Find out what you like and what you hate about life
- Do more of what you love, and less of what you hate
- Know what you're good at, and what you could develop
- Recognize when you're stuck in a rut
- Journal, blog, or otherwise reflect

Expand your horizons

- Vary your routine
- Take a class
- Try something that pushes your boundaries
- Explore within your domain, and outside of it
- When something interests you, pursue it
- Play

Establish good habits

- Take charge of your schedule
- Wake up each day with a specific goal
- Make time for reflection and relaxation
- Get enough sleep

Grow

- Develop what you lack
- If you do anything well, it becomes enjoyable
- To keep enjoying something, increase its complexity
- Shift frequently from “openness” to “closure”

Thought Exercises

- Look for problems
- Try to intentionally increase complexity
- Question your assumptions, and avoid premature conclusions

Design a new library chair

Thought Exercises

- Look for problems
- Try to intentionally increase complexity
- Question your assumptions, and avoid premature conclusion
- Collaborate with others
- Practice divergent thinking: Producing
  - As many ideas as possible
  - As many *different* ideas as possible
  - Unlikely ideas

Exercise 3

Exercise 4

The Creativity of Others

- Time
- Freedom to fail
- What if…?
- Model comfort with change
- Encourage work/life balance
- Resource creativity as much as possible

Conclusion

"...No matter how gifted a person is, he or she has no chance to achieve anything creative unless the right conditions are provided by the field...: training, expectations, resources, recognition, hope, opportunity, and reward."

(Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity,* p. 330)

Resources

- Bieraugel, M. & Neil, S. (2017). Ascending Bloom's Pyramid: Fostering Student Creativity and Innovation in Academic Library Spaces. *College & Research Libraries 78*(1), 35–52.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1996). *Creativity: Flow and the psychology of discovery and invention*. New York : HarperCollins Publishers.
- Eysenck, H. J. (2003). *Genius: The natural history of creativity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Foster, J. (2007). *How to get ideas.* San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.
- Hennessey, B. A., & Amabile, T. M. (2010). Creativity. *Annual Review of Psychology 61*(1), 569–598.
- Kurt, L., Kurt, W., & Medaille, A. (2010). The Power of Play: Fostering Creativity and Innovation in Libraries. *Journal of Library Innovation 1*(1), 8–23.
- Olson, J. A. (1999). What Academic Librarians Should Know about Creative Thinking. *Journal of Academic Librarianship 25*(5), 383.
- Petrowski, M. J. (2000). Creativity research: implications for teaching, learning and thinking. *Reference Services Review 28*(4), 304–312.
- Shapiro, S. D. (2016). Engaging a Wider Community: The Academic Library as a Center for Creativity, Discovery, and Collaboration. *New Review of Academic Librarianship 22*(1), 24–42.

Questions?

Nancy Falciani-White

Randolph-Macon College

NancyFalcianiWhite@rmc.edu

(804) 752-7256

Evaluate this session: tinyurl.com/th2017vla