

Spring 2005

The Southeastern Librarian v. 53, no. 1 (Spring 2005) Complete Issue

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The Southeastern Librarian

Volume 53, No. 1 Spring, 2005

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Cover: Bowling Green (Ky.) Public Library's Friends of the Library organization donated this bronze statue, located at the entrance of its Main Library, in 2000. An image of the statue is featured on the library card and key tag set issued to all new patrons. It has been affectionately named "Charlotte" in honor of a long time library supporter and active member of the FOL group. Thanks to Ashley Fowlkes for this submission.

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President's Column

Spring has finally arrived in Kentucky, accompanied by that wonderful feeling of exhilaration that accompanies the season. Libraries and librarians also tend to thrive in the spring. We take the opportunity to attend conferences and meetings that recharge our professional batteries.

Spring has traditionally been a transitional time for librarians. Academic and school librarians' watch their students mature and learn new life skills. Public librarians juggle multiple patron requests on projects as varied as learning basic computing skills to planning for a summer renovation project. Many of us are involved in budget preparations and staff allocations for the forthcoming year.

A recent editorial in *The New York Times* noted that this is the appropriate time for Laura Bush to make her mark as First Lady. Improved funding for libraries could be the foundation for a Bush administration legacy. The editors note that Mrs. Bush "would be doing a real service if she spoke out more forcefully to encourage states, local governments and private donors to give libraries the resources they need."

This is also time for us to think about our contributions to librarianship as a profession. Active participation in advocacy efforts, professional development opportunities and mentoring potential and emerging librarians should be an ongoing part of our personal commitment to our chosen career. Involvement in our national, regional and state associations will not only enhance our personal growth but contribute to the stature of the profession.

The Southeastern Library Association will be holding our biennial Leadership Meeting on Friday, May 13 in Decatur, Georgia at the Holiday Inn Select. This will be our opportunity to examine the state of our association and also to make plans for our future. Much of the focus will be on the Strategic Planning recommendations made by Wil Weston, Mary Smalls, Carol Brinkman, Diane Brown and Ravonne Green that were published in the Spring, 2004 edition of *The Southeastern Librarian*. As an association, this is our chance to chart the future of SELA. I strongly encourage you to attend and to fully participate in these efforts. If you are unable to attend the meeting, please e-mail me with your comments and recommendations. I can be reached at judith.gibbons@ky.gov.

All the best,

Judith Gibbons

From the Editor

As the new editor for *The Southeastern Librarian*, I would like to first thank Judith Gibbons and Carolyn Tassie, editor of *Kentucky Libraries*, who met with me early last fall to review the editorial requirements for this endeavor and helped me make the decision for acceptance. I would especially like to thank Frank Allen, previous editor, for all of the guidance he has (and continues) to give, helping me “learn the ropes” of journal editorship. I have a tough act to follow. Frank has done an outstanding job in making *The Southeastern Librarian* a journal with an excellent reputation. I can only hope that I can keep the tradition going. Just like going swimming, you can test the waters, but you don’t really know what it will be like until you jump in. I have now jumped in and hopefully I can keep my head above water with the help of my Editorial Board, reviewers, and of course Frank! I have learned so much putting together this first issue, and look forward to what is in store for the future. As a manager and “systems person” I don’t always get to see tangible results of my work. Putting together this issue helps give me the satisfaction of actually putting my hands on a finished product. I ask for your support and forgiveness for any blunders I make in the first few issues.

The articles for this issue were confirmed last fall, prior to my acceptance of editorial duties. I mention this for those of you who are interested in submitting publications. It may take six months to a year **after acceptance** before a submission is published. Each submission goes through a process of blind review by three reviewers. The reviewers also make comments on changes to the text, which may be incorporated into the final version of those accepted for publication. Since the reviewers and editor are volunteers, “real jobs” have a priority. Please be patient when submitting an article for publication.

The articles in this issue cover a variety of topics. Dana Mervar and Matthew Loving compare two popular chat reference products (OCLC’s QuestionPoint and Docutek’s VRL*plus*) and compare operation for both the basic and advanced versions of both. Kathy Campbell, Debbie O’Brien and Jean Flanigan cover aliteracy and ways to improve leisure reading on a college campus. Jennifer McClure addresses the licensing issues involved in providing information from databases to virtual patrons, whose affiliation with a library is sometimes difficult to determine. Brad Marcum describes a program which helps first-year students gain the library information skills necessary to make them successful college researchers. D. Brett Spencer and others offer practical advice to reference graduate assistants to give them a successful library experience. William Hubbard and Donald Walter elaborate on the LibQual+ survey performed in their library and the applications of service improvements based on the survey responses.

Enjoy this issue of *The Southeastern Librarian*. If you have any comments, feel free to contact me at bratcher@nku.edu.

Perry Bratcher

Chatting About QuestionPoint and Docutek

Dana Mervar, Matthew Loving

Matthew Loving is currently a Librarian working with Info Current in New York City. He can be reached at mwloving@hotmail.com. Dana Mervar is a former Reference Librarian at the Winter Park Public Library. She can be reached at danamervar@yahoo.com.

This year the Winter Park Public Library, a small to medium-sized municipal library located in Central Florida, will continue its third year of providing the latest in chat reference service to the public. Feeling that our community was increasingly turning to the Internet to find answers to reference questions, we began actively seeking opportunities to meet them online. Along the way, we changed chat software vendors three times and transformed our reference librarians into well-seasoned virtual librarians able to manage several different kinds of chat software.

The following article describes our experience using two popular interactive chat services: OCLC QuestionPoint and Docutek VRL*plus*. A search of the library literature revealed that no similar comparisons had been done. Regardless of the future of chat technology, the current buzz surrounding its use is prompting libraries across the country to seek out ways of acquiring a chat service. OCLC has strong name recognition due to its traditional role in providing library technology solutions. This factor plays an important role in marketing its QuestionPoint chat product. Docutek also offers library technology solutions with the idea of making technology simple and easy to use. Before the release of VRL*plus*, Docutek had already entered the library market by providing technology that enabled libraries to manage their electronic documents. In the following article, we will give our impressions of the overall functionality of QuestionPoint and Docutek chat based on our observations.

We began using OCLC's QuestionPoint not long after it was introduced in March 2002. At that time we were already

members of OCLC's Collaborative Digital Reference Service (CDRS) but used a separate vendor for our electronic chat service. We felt that moving to the new chat service would provide a good opportunity to help promote and expand our existing chat and email services. Our decision to switch was based on the fact that QuestionPoint was relatively inexpensive, promised new and advanced features, allowed multiple librarians to login simultaneously, and combined our chat and email services into one electronic reference system. Furthermore, any question that our staff was unable to answer could be referred to OCLC's Global Reference Network. After considering these points we were confident that we were making the right decision by migrating to QuestionPoint.

QuestionPoint separates its electronic chat service into two separate products referred to as standard (basic) and enhanced communications. The basic chat provides typical chat features but does not include voice, video, URL share, or the application sharing offered by the enhanced chat. The enhanced version of QuestionPoint is completely independent software from the basic chat. In order for patrons to use the enhanced version, a plug-in must be downloaded which is not required for the basic. If patrons refuse the download, they cannot access enhanced chat. Due to this and other concerns, our library depended mainly on the basic chat to carry out electronic reference services.

With QuestionPoint basic the librarian is alerted to incoming chats by a small pop up box indicating "New Chat User" and a brief audio alert. The operator screen

automatically appears after the librarian has accepted a chat. This Java pop up screen appears in front of other Windows applications, which allows the librarian to monitor chat while working on other tasks. Both the librarian and patron screens are similar in appearance and have more or less the same layout. This layout design is flawed because most of the screen has a uniform blue background that makes reading difficult. The screens readability is further diminished due to an automatic time stamp that appears to the right of each new message. The text box, however, has a more standard white background and is easier to use. Also, when a new message is sent or received, the entire transcript area goes momentarily blank. Waiting for the text to appear slows down the interaction and can be frustrating.

Pushing web pages is one of the primary ways of sending online material to patrons using QuestionPoint basic chat. To achieve this, the librarian can do one of two things: type the URL directly into the textbox, or paste it in after copying it from the Web browser. Once the address is entered into the text box, the librarian then pushes the page to the patron by clicking "send". Whenever a librarian pushes a page, it appears on the patron's screen in a separate Java box. Developed after basic chat's initial release, the page pushing feature is really an afterthought and more tedious than other chat programs that simply have a "push page" button allowing the operator to send whatever URL is showing in the browser.

We had a vision of eventually using QuestionPoint's enhanced chat to offer patrons more advanced features. Directly assisting remote patrons with using the catalog and database research was not possible in the past. We were excited about the possibility of having the technology to share applications and to better serve patrons who contacted the library from their home or office. Wanting to add the advanced features, but not knowing if patrons would accept the

download, we experimented by providing a choice between the basic and enhanced chat.

QuestionPoint enhanced communications was revamped and improved in June 2003. Previously, the enhanced chat relied on software originally released in summer of 2002 that functioned by embedding itself in the user's browser toolbar. In working with this earlier version of enhanced chat, our librarians found the system too unstable for public use. During testing, it would sometimes cause computers to freeze, resulting in lost sessions. In experimenting with application sharing, a delayed response time made the feature too frustrating and unwieldy for practical use. Knowing how quickly the librarian must react during a chat session, we felt that any software glitches could impede communication. We also disliked that the enhanced chat required the patron download a permanent software plug-in onto their computer. Staff thought this was not something the average computer user would be willing to do.

With the new improvements to the enhanced chat, QuestionPoint fixed many of the problems that kept our staff from introducing it to the public. Although it still requires a patron download, the software is now more stable and advanced features are easier to use. Perhaps one of its best additions is the URL share. This feature is useful for escorting patrons through online material and helping them locate electronic resources. However, this is different from true co-browsing in that neither the patron nor the librarian can see what the other is typing into a search box. This limitation is a problem when helping patrons access library catalogs and choosing effective search terms. Our staff encountered problems using the URL share to access certain library catalogs. For example, when sharing the Library of Congress catalog, the user could not see the search results. Each time we attempted to search the catalog the user's screen would report an error. We found

this also happened when attempting to share other library catalogs. Strangely enough, we were able to share our own library catalog with no problems.

The application sharing feature of the enhanced chat allows the librarian and patron to both view and work within an application. But unlike true co-browsing, the patron and librarian do not have simultaneous control of the application. This requires each to take turns and creates a back and forth exchange that is at times awkward and frustrating. However, this back and forth sharing is practical in that both parties can see what the other is doing. This allows the librarian to help patrons with search terms and also accommodates scrolling movements. Another challenge to application sharing is the "screen within a screen" design that makes scrolling and moving around difficult and occasionally obstructs the view. After testing earlier versions of this feature, the improvements that now make it functional do not take away from its fundamental flaws.

After using OCLC's QuestionPoint service for close to a year, Florida's Collaborative Statewide Live Reference project approached our library about becoming a member of a new virtual reference service. The two founding organizations, College Center for Library Automation (CCLA) and the Tampa Bay Library Consortium (TBLC), chose Docutek as the chat vendor for this project. The new service is funded by an LSTA grant and is growing monthly with the ultimate goal of being available seven days a week, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. As we learned more about Docutek and the Florida collaborative project, we decided it would be a good choice for our library. The LSTA grant would cover system costs for at least the first year, enabling us to expand our current hours while reducing staff workloads, and all of the required files would reside on a centralized server in Tallahassee. So after using QuestionPoint for a year, we decided to join the Collaborative.

During training for Docutek, we were impressed with the features and general ease of use on both the librarian and user ends. The feature that most caught our attention was Docutek's co-browsing ability. Although QuestionPoint offers URL share and application sharing, it does not technically offer true co-browsing, where the librarian and patron view the same page at the same time and have mutual control of the browser. Docutek requires an applet in order to co-browse but it is not a permanent download as with the QuestionPoint enhanced. If patrons do not accept the Docutek applet, they can still use the service. In this case, patrons automatically enter Docutek in the "Classic Mode" instead of "Pro". Patrons are also defaulted to Classic Mode if they are Mac users or if they are using AOL, Netscape, and sometimes Windows XP. Entering chat in the Classic mode prohibits patrons from co-browsing but the librarian can still push pages to their screen. One of the drawbacks of page pushing in Docutek is that it takes several steps to initiate. However, the biggest problem we experienced with Docutek is that the *VRLplus* co-browsing feature is not always compatible with the Windows XP operating system. This problem forces many patrons using the XP operating system to enter chat in the Classic mode. With XP becoming more and more prevalent, it poses a real problem for Docutek users who want the advantages of co-browsing in the Pro mode.

The basic layout of Docutek *VRLplus* chat does not change between Classic and Pro modes. The only difference is that the browser toolbar does not appear in Classic Mode. When *VRLplus* opens, the main operator screen is divided into two windows. The top window contains the text box and other navigation tools. From here the librarian can accept new patrons, save frequently used responses as scripts, and save commonly used Web sites as bookmarks. The operator-to-operator chat feature is useful if a librarian needs to consult with another librarian on duty. Also, patrons can be transferred

between librarians or their questions can be referred on to other member libraries. The bottom half of the operator screen is a co-browse window that allows the librarian to assist patrons with locating online resources. This window is also used for pushing pages if the patron does not enter chat in the Pro mode.

When a patron enters the Docutek chat, two separate windows appear side by side on their screen. The left-hand window is a text box and chat transcript that is easy to read and simple to use. The right-hand window is a co-browse screen where the librarian can share online information with the patron. When a patron finishes chatting they simply click the "Quit" button to log out. A short survey pops up immediately following the patron logout. QuestionPoint also provides this type of survey; however, because it appears in the patron's email it is less likely to be completed. These surveys provide statistics on patron satisfaction and overall chat experience. In Docutek, patrons are then given the option to view the chat transcript and links to the sites visited during the session. A duplicate copy of this transcript can be sent to the email address provided when signing on. Docutek's layout is one of the best our staff has tested. Its readability and ease of use for patrons is noteworthy.

After three years of providing virtual reference, Winter Park Public Library staff has developed an understanding of the type of library service that patrons are seeking online. The electronic reference chat tools used by the staff all have positive and negative aspects. Overall, they allow the librarian to respond to the information needs of patrons in new ways. Whenever a screen freezes, a patron is dropped and lost, a page cannot be pushed, or co-browsing just does not work, the need for foolproof chat software is apparent. QuestionPoint and Docutek both have strengths and weaknesses, but we feel that streamlined reliable features win out over less functional bells and whistles. In considering the types of chat questions we have received over the past three years, there does not seem to be a need for advanced features that do not work consistently. QuestionPoint's basic chat is a fairly reliable example of how simple chat tools such as page pushing can consistently respond to patrons' online needs. The enhanced version, while offering advanced features, diminishes its utility by offering ineffectual fluff. Docutek provides a good balance by offering a true co-browsing option that does not require a patron download. In conclusion, our comparison of these chat services demonstrates that in the case of online live reference, a consistent and reliable product wins out over a service with questionable high-end features.

Creating a Reading Culture in an Academic Library

Kathy Campbell, Debbie O'Brien, Jean Flanigan

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Introduction

In 1984, Librarian of Congress Daniel Boorstin concluded that "in the United States today, aliteracy is widespread" (Weeks 2001). In the time that has elapsed since that statement was made, aliteracy is still a concern for librarians. What exactly is aliteracy? Is it the same as illiteracy? No, aliteracy, the lack of the reading habit in capable readers, is quite different from illiteracy, the inability to read. In 1999, a survey by the NDP Group [a company that provides sales and marketing information to industries] found that only 45 percent of Americans read a half-hour or more every day (Weeks 2001). While most of us would instinctively agree with the above findings as far as the general population is concerned, we would like to think that the reading culture is alive and well on college campuses; however, is that really the case?

Aliteracy is becoming a growing concern on college campuses, including East Tennessee State University (ETSU). Several years ago, a colleague emailed the librarians at Sherrod Library an article from the online edition of the *Washington Post* (Weeks 2001) about a graduate student at Park University in Kansas City who was making it through school by skimming texts, drawing information and themes from dust jackets, watching television, and listening to audio books. Jeremy Spreitzer, the focus of the *Washington Post* story, represented the growing number of students in the United States who are aliterate. After discussing this article at our faculty meeting, we

came to the conclusion that there were a number of students on our campus that fit this description, and that the library must be creative in encouraging students to cultivate a lifelong reading habit.

According to Philip A. Thompsen, Professor of Communications at West Chester University in West Chester, Pennsylvania, "Students today are less capable of getting full value from textbooks than they were ten years ago" (Weeks 2001). Other complaints are that students either are not reading the assigned class readings or are reading the minimum required to get by. Why aren't students reading? There are a number of factors that are involved according to students, including time limitations, money constraints, outside demands, and other leisure time interests.

A glance at ETSU's student population shows that 81 percent of ETSU students commute to classes. Seventy-two percent of our students live in the 15 counties that are closest to campus, which in some cases could mean a commute of up to 3 hours per day. Approximately 70 percent of the student body work as well as attend classes: 40 percent of students work on campus 1-20 hours/week while 30 percent report working off campus 1-20 hours/week. Thirty-one percent of our students were awarded Pell grants for the 2002-2003 academic year. In 2002, 6,588 students out of the enrolled student population of 11,131 were 22 or older (Lee). Several things can be surmised from these statistics. First, that time spent working and commuting to classes is time not available for reading, although

students may have the option of listening to audiobooks. Second, those students who work during the school year as well as those going to school on Pell grants probably have limited funds to buy reading materials. Third, since many of our students are older, they may have family obligations that limit their reading time. In order to encourage our students to become life-long readers, the librarians at Sherrod Library have concentrated their efforts in three areas: creating an inviting physical environment, developing more extensive collections for leisure reading and listening, and participating in community outreach activities.

Physical Environment

One of the most exciting additions to the East Tennessee State University landscape has been the new C. C. Sherrod Library. The library, an architecturally stunning building that opened in January 1999, is situated on a site that has shade trees and shrubs to the right of the front entrance. Immediately in front of the building is Borchuck Plaza, an open area with benches where students can meet to relax, study, socialize, or play hacky sack. Sculptures on loan have even been displayed on the plaza.

Everything about this library is designed to invite students to come in, sit down, and stay awhile. Florescent lighting is supplemented with ample natural light. The second floor has a relaxed reading area, the Silvers Reading Area, where students can browse the latest editions of popular magazines and newspapers or settle down with a book from the Barbara Jaffe Silvers Collection of current popular reading books. Scattered throughout this area, as well as the stack areas on each floor, are chairs with ottomans. Sherrod Library also boasts a 24-hour study area with carrels for individual study and long tables for group work, as well as comfortable chairs. The 24-hour area also contains a room with drink and snack

vending machines and a separate smoking room.

Okay, so we have an enticing physical environment. Now what? One of the first things that a student would see upon entering the library is a display area. These themed displays usually rotate on a monthly basis, but occasionally a display will be left up for a longer period. For example, we usually do one display for the entire summer with a theme involving recreation or travel. At other times, we might have two to four exhibits on display simultaneously. Some themes are obvious--February is Black History Month and March is Women's History Month--while others are selected from *Chase's Calendar of Events* with the hope of encouraging patron interest, reading, and discussion. Displays vary in size and scope, and often include bibliographies, quizzes, timelines, fact sheets, and objects, as well as a cart of books related to the topic. The pictures from our "We Read Banned Books" display, which featured campus personalities reading banned books, were downloaded onto the Sherrod Library website for a short period of time. The display committee encourages other departments to create exhibits.

One of the ways that the library publicizes the new books we purchase is to shelve them in the main lobby, where they are easily visible. New books are assigned a temporary holdings location of "new books shelf". A weekly list of titles by call number is generated from Voyager and posted on the library's web page. By clicking on a title, a patron can see if a book is available and where it is located.

As in most academic libraries, the policy at ETSU is to remove book jackets from all new books and apply barcodes and labels directly to book spines. The book jackets are therefore removed by the vendor when being processed and are shipped along with each book order. Once the books are cataloged, additional spine labels are printed and applied to

especially colorful book jackets or those that include details about the book on the inside front or back flaps. The jackets are placed in wall mounted display cases on each floor. Call numbers on the jackets correspond to books located on that floor, making it more convenient for patrons to find the book. These displays are changed every few weeks. It is not surprising that these jacket displays attract attention and help generate interest in the books.

Leisure Reading Collections

Read ETSU

One result of our discussion of the *Washington Post* article was Read ETSU, a collection of popular used paperback books that readers can borrow without going through the circulation process. Begun in 2001, Read ETSU was the brainstorm of our Associate Director, Jean Flanigan. Located in a carousel in the Sherrod Library lobby, the collection was started and is maintained with donated books. These books are branded with a Read ETSU logo on the inside cover and placed in the carousel. Borrowers can take as many books as they like and return them at their leisure. There is no due date. The Read ETSU coordinator estimates that one to three percent of the books are returned.

We have publicized Read ETSU in several different ways. Initially, Read ETSU bookmarks were printed and distributed. A link from the Sherrod Library homepage briefly describes the program and tells readers how to donate their books. Pleas for donations have been sent to the faculty/staff mailing list. The ETSU Library Associates has also purchased used books for the collection. Although we have no way to keep accurate statistics since Read ETSU books are not checked out through our circulation system, the coordinator of the program estimates that 2,100 books have been put out since the program began. The success of the program is evidenced by a constant need for new donations.

Barbara Jaffe Silvers Collection and Reading Area

The Barbara Jaffe Silvers collection and the Silvers Reading Area were established by Herb Silvers through an endowment to the library. He designated that it be used to initiate and continue a book collection to honor the memory of his wife, Barbara Jaffe Silvers, an ETSU alumna and instructor in the university's history department. A separate reading area was created in the periodicals department next to the daily newspapers. This area provided ample space in front of large windows for the furniture, new bookcases, and signage requested by the benefactor. Seventy history titles from the Silvers' private collection were initially placed in the collection, along with additional books donated by ETSU faculty. Recent issues of more than seventy popular periodicals were also placed on open shelves in this area and shelved alphabetically by title for easy browsing.

Mr. Silvers later agreed to the idea of using a lease plan to add a large number of new titles to the collection. The library selected a lease plan with Baker & Taylor that provided a core collection of 100 titles and 10 new books per month. Since this reading area is located on the second floor and not readily visible when one enters the library, several new lease books are placed on display in the lobby along with an announcement of other new arrivals. This display has helped to publicize the leisure collection and provide ready access to several new books without going upstairs. Due to the popularity of the leased book collection at Sherrod, a second lease plan was initiated for one of the ETSU off campus libraries in the fall of 2003.

Audiobook Collection

ETSU is a commuter campus and the library's audiobook collection has become very popular. The first titles were purchased in the fall of 2000 and as of fall 2004, 747 titles had circulated more than 2,000 times. The collection is housed in

the Library Media Center, where the audiobooks may be checked out by students, faculty, and staff. Approximately 100 titles are added each year. The collection is divided into fiction and nonfiction on the shelves for browsing, or one can search the online catalog using the keyword "audiobooks" to get a complete list of titles.

Titles are selected individually rather than through a subscription plan. The collection has been developed with an emphasis on titles that are course-related as well as classics. We try not to duplicate titles held by the local public library. According to our records, science fiction titles have the highest circulation. Audiobooks in either cassette or CD formats are purchased complete with physical processing and bibliographic records from Recorded Books, LLC.

CAMPUS INVOLVEMENT

Academic Advantage

Academic Advantage is the name of a cohort of first year students as well as an academic course. It was designed to orient first year students to university experiences. The faculty who teach Academic Advantage classes are asked to provide the library with each semester's reading list in advance, so that the appropriate books can be added to the collection. Faculty agree that this collaboration with the library helps them to emphasize the importance of reading by providing book titles on course related topics, thus increasing library use by their students.

Winter Cruise and Community Showcase

The Library staff and faculty continually look for opportunities on campus to promote the library and reading. Participation in events such as Winter Cruise and Community Showcase are two examples of this. Winter Cruise is held every year in the D. P. Culp University Center. Each "cruise" has a theme and

student organizations and campus offices will sponsor booths. Sherrod Library sponsored a booth in 2002, when the theme was "New York! New York!" In keeping with this theme, librarians created a Harlem Renaissance display as well as a bibliography entitled "Literary Tour of New York." To enhance the interest, the booth also included copies of a make-your-own Statue of Liberty handout, library bookmarks, and free used paperbacks from the Read ETSU display in the library. Due to staff limitations, Sherrod Library only participated in one Winter Cruise; however, we considered our participation a success and would be open to participating again.

Community Showcase is an annual outdoor event jointly sponsored by the Johnson City/Jonesborough/Washington County Chamber of Commerce and the ETSU Alumni Association. Area chamber members as well as other organizations participate in this event, which is held at the beginning of the fall semester. In order to introduce new students to the library's services, Sherrod Library has a booth at the showcase. Giveaways include Read ETSU books and library bookmarks with the library hours and department phone numbers.

Community Outreach

Library Associates

The ETSU Library Associates group brings together those in the ETSU community and region who share the desire to support the library. Activities include book and media sales, participation in workshops, sponsorship of library speakers, reading discussion groups, awards ceremonies, and other activities developed by the organization's membership in cooperation with Sherrod Library. The Associates' annual book sale and book discussion group are two activities that are helping promote a reading environment at ETSU.

The Associates' annual book sale serves as both a fundraiser and an event to

promote reading. The two day event, which is held during homecoming weekend, draws a large crowd from both the campus community and area residents. It is publicized in the ETSU campus newspaper and students are some of the most enthusiastic customers. Book donations for the sale are collected throughout the year and the titles cover a wide range of subjects. The books are sorted by subject, priced, and placed on book trucks that are moved outside on the day of the sale. Most items sell for \$.25 to \$2.00.

The Library Associates' book discussion group meets one Monday a month, September through May at 5:30 in the evening. The group selects four or five titles ahead of time, selecting a mix of fiction and non-fiction and alternating between shorter and longer works. Attendance has ranged from three to eleven participants. Light finger foods and soft drinks are served following the book discussion.

Celebration of Books and Authors

ETSU's first Celebration of Books and Authors was held on Saturday, April 13, 2002. The purpose of the celebration was fourfold: to honor the profession of writing; to promote the joy of reading and the love of books; to provide an occasion for readers and writers to meet and to share their mutual interest; and to nourish a culture of reading and writing at ETSU and throughout the region. More than 100 authors from as far away as New York and Los Angeles came to the Culp Center to meet their readers and sign copies of their books. The authors were treated to a free marketing workshop and social

gathering on Friday, while participants were treated to free author showcase events on Saturday. The Celebration was sponsored by the ETSU Library Associates, with corporate sponsorship provided by Sprint. More than 30 businesses provided support, as did more than 100 community volunteers. A second celebration was held on March 27, 2004.

Conclusion

At the present time, the Sherrod librarians are looking at two more possibilities for making ETSU a place where recreational reading is encouraged. One possibility is the placement of a coffee bar in the library. We envision an inviting area where patrons can linger over the newspaper or a popular periodical. Another possibility would be a Reading Across the Curriculum program. Librarians could work in conjunction with teaching faculty to create bibliographies of non-scholarly fiction and nonfiction books related to a discipline. By focusing on reading the entire book rather than selections, students would expand their knowledge and appreciation of that discipline. In the future, Sherrod Library will continue to look for ways to create a reading culture at East Tennessee State University.

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Live Virtual Reference and the Database Dilemma

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Live virtual reference programs in the university setting have blossomed in recent years as librarians have aspired to become as “virtual” as the resources they offer. While some libraries have chosen to limit their service to affiliated members, many have preferred to open their programs to the wider community.¹ The motivation to do so is perhaps particularly strong among public university librarians, who often feel a dual responsibility to their own affiliates and to the citizens of their state. However, the decision to offer a chat reference service to the public raises a number of legal, ethical, and practical questions concerning the use of subscription databases.

Although some librarians place non-affiliated chat patrons in the same category as walk-in patrons, to whom database access is generally allowed, most consider the use of subscription databases with non-affiliated patrons to be a clear violation of licensing agreements – and herein lies the dilemma. Do these access restrictions place an unreasonable burden on the chat librarian, who must determine the patron’s affiliation and adjust the level of service to match the patron’s status? Is a two-tiered service, in which some patrons receive more in-depth answers

than others, ethically acceptable? Can libraries devise strategies to minimize these apparent discrepancies in service? Discussion of these questions has been largely speculative and has provided few useful conclusions or guidelines for the practicing virtual librarian. This study attempts to examine the issue through the prism of real questions in a functioning, live virtual reference program: the QuestionPoint chat service at the University of Alabama. The goal of the study is three-fold: 1) to define the issues in the context of current discussion in the field; 2) to assess the nature of the problem as evidenced by transcripts of actual live virtual reference exchanges; and 3) to evaluate the options available to librarians who must find alternative sources when database use is not permitted.

Defining the “Virtual Patron”

The virtual user is a relatively new species of library patron, and neither libraries’ policy statements nor database licensing agreements appear to have fully incorporated this category. Because few licensing agreements directly address the question of database use with the virtual patron, librarians have been tempted to equate the virtual user with other, more familiar types of patrons. Most attractive of these equations, perhaps because most expansive, is the definition of virtual reference patrons as “virtual walk-ins.” Bernie Sloan, whose online “Digital Reference Services Bibliography” has guided many start-up programs, has floated this idea on several online library

¹ In a 2001 survey by the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL), more than 80% of responding libraries (24 of 29) reported that they offer live virtual reference service to non-university as well as university patrons. Survey results are available at <http://www.aserl.org/projects/vref/surveysumcomplete.htm>.

lists and has received mixed responses. In a question to the DIG_REF discussion list, dated September 27, 2002, he reported that database use in the virtual reference setting had been a topic of discussion at two recent conferences; he concluded, "The consensus was that this should be no different than serving a walk-in patron who asks for help at the physical reference desk. With most vendor licenses, it is OK for a walk-in user to make use of licensed e-resources." He noted, however, that this comparison is not perfect, and ended his query with a qualification: "But when it comes to providing virtual reference service . . . the licensing terms and conditions are less clear" (Sloan, 2002).

An online publication from Nylink, a group of New York State libraries, argues the case more emphatically:

If a digital reference service provides service to non-constituent users of the library, and provides them with access to searching via escorted use, or to content, say with access to a single full text article, is that within the license agreement? When a non-constituent user comes into a library to use resources, they are often allowed to use the available online resources that the library makes available to its own patrons. It could be argued that the provision of content via a digital reference service is doing the very same thing, and is in fact more controlled because the librarian is escorting the access. (Nylink, 2003)

Well, maybe. The fact that access is "controlled" does not necessarily mean that it is legal. By this logic a little bit of theft is acceptable, even if a lot is not. Tempting though the walk-in analogy

may be, it does seem to challenge the spirit, if not the letter, of most licensing agreements.

A more conservative analogy likens the virtual patron to the telephone patron and implies a fairly straightforward set of service guidelines (see, e.g., Goodman, 2002). What librarian has not used a database to verify a citation or a fact for a telephone patron? And who has ever doubted that such use is acceptable? Because there is no option of going farther and presenting the material directly – because there is no slippery slope to tumble down – telephone policies seem clear in a way that virtual reference policies often do not.

A final model for the virtual patron is at once the most difficult and the most realistic, for it argues that the virtual patron is *sui generis* – that he is in a category by himself. From a practical point of view it may also be helpful to remember that virtual patrons in fact often represent several constituencies simultaneously. Some are our affiliates; some are residents of our state, who are thus privy to state database resources; and some are affiliates of other universities or regions, who can be directed to resources available elsewhere. If the virtual patron is indeed a new species, then librarians must perhaps forge new policies rather than simply adopting analogous ones.

Defining "Database Use"

To say that database use is prohibited in live virtual reference exchanges with non-affiliated patrons would seem to be a fairly simple and straightforward statement of policy, but any librarian who has attempted live virtual reference knows that there are in fact many different levels of database use. At one extreme is "co-browsing" or "page pushing," by which the patron is effectively granted full entry into a

database. As a more moderate measure the librarian might email or copy and paste a single full-text article, or send a list of citations, but no full text. Finally, at the most conservative extreme, the librarian might consult a database to inform herself, and then merely paraphrase the information to the patron. The first example would be consistent with the view of the virtual patron as virtual walk-in, with full access to the digital resources of the library. The last example suggests an analogy to the telephone patron, who encounters the resources of the library only through the mediating presence of the librarian. So exactly what type of "database use" do the licensing agreements prohibit?

While Bernie Sloan stated that the consensus in conference discussions favored the walk-in model, the policies reported in the responses to his query suggest a definition more analogous to that of the telephone patron. Susan D. Barb (2002) of 24/7 Reference described a policy common to virtual reference consortia in which the librarian uses only the databases available to the patron. This clearly legal policy is most easily applied in a consortium in which all patrons have access to some databases, though it presents some challenges to the librarian who must determine what databases are available to the patron and navigate numerous databases other than her own. A simpler and equally acceptable solution for a consortium is to identify a set of core databases shared by all members and then limit use to these resources. 24/7 also reported the example of a service subscribing to a database, OCLC FirstSearch in this case, for the exclusive use of virtual reference patrons. In another response to the same DIG_REF query, Larry Schankman (2002) of the Keystone Library Network's Virtual Information Desk in Pennsylvania described a less conservative, but also reasonable,

policy of sending no full text, but instead providing citations and abstracts to non-affiliated patrons. This policy reflects the tension between copyright issues (lists cannot be copyrighted) and licensing agreements (lists can be licensed) that is at the heart of the legal questions.²

The DIG_REF librarians, perhaps representing the good intentions of service providers, seemed inclined to stretch the definitions, to provide as much service as possible to the non-affiliates. In contrast, the librarians who have discussed the topic on Liblicense, a list devoted to electronic resource licensing issues, have tended to take a more conservative stance, perhaps typical of those entrusted with protecting legal agreements. One Liblicense respondent noted that answering a question from a database is acceptable, although page pushing or co-browsing probably is not (Connell, 2002), while another noted that "the provision of assistance is one thing, and the provision of documents is another" (Goodman, 2002). Interestingly, but not surprisingly, both of these positions were endorsed by Bob Bolick (2002) of McGraw-Hill, a self-described "e-resource provider," in a rare reply from a vendor's perspective. Faced with such contradictory positions, many practitioners have clearly found the conservative paths to be the most prudent. For example, a policy from the University of Illinois, dating from 2001, prohibits any database use with non-affiliated patrons: "Bibliographic citation verification; database searches; requests for online articles, etc. These questions fall outside the scope of service to non-affiliated users and licensing restrictions prevent sending information from proprietary databases" (cited in Ronan, 2003, p. 134).

² For discussions of the relationship between copyright and licensing agreements, see Davis (1997) and Button (1999).

In the evolving story of virtual reference, some of the most thoughtful observations have repeatedly come from those actually involved in the service, as evidenced by the electronic message list comments cited above. These precise, even if sometimes contradictory, suggestions contrast sharply with the more equivocal statements found in some policy manuals, “how-to” guides, and theoretical discussions of the topic. The “Library of Congress QuestionPoint User Guidelines,” a detailed 44-page document so helpful on many issues, states only “Issue pending” under the heading “Database Licensing Agreements” (Library of Congress, 2003, p. 7). One author, addressing the issue of “fair digital use” warns, “Libraries planning to offer electronic reference services can expect to face a complex and unclear legal position for the next decade or more” (Butler, 2003, pp. 91, 100). Another start-up manual identifies the questions, but likewise concludes that answers are in short supply:

[Do] copyright law and your current database licenses permit you to push pages of a proprietary database to your patrons? What about patrons who don't attend your institution or are not in your state? What about escorting them to a database and leaving them there? Will you ever be able to tell for sure who is really in your state or not? Guess what: no one really knows the answer to these questions. Approaches are still evolving. (Meola & Stormont, 2002)

Exasperating though such fence-sitting statements can be, they are accurate reflections of the legal reality, and their authors are wise to acknowledge the

ambiguities and to resist the temptation to provide easy answers. The body of literature on digital copyright, intellectual property, and licensing – generated by lawyers, librarians, and the digital information industry alike – is enormous, yet answers will not clearly emerge until Congress and the courts have had time to define the rules of the Information Age.³

Learning from Experience

Thus warned, but not enlightened, what is the practicing librarian to do? In the absence of reliable guidelines, it seemed worthwhile after a year of service at the University of Alabama to look at the evidence in the question logs themselves. What kinds of questions were the different constituencies asking? What resources were required to answer these questions? How often did the virtual librarian face the database dilemma – a question from a non-affiliate that could be answered only from a proprietary database?

The first year of the University of Alabama's QuestionPoint program, which began on September 9, 2002, taught many lessons. We learned that the virtual librarian needs good friends among the technical support staff; that an improved name can nearly double the business; that librarians work best when left to their own resources, free to use their own strengths and styles. With a full transcript of every chat session, we had at our disposal a body of evidence that could test the

³ For a useful overview of these issues and a history of the relevant legislation and legal cases, in the context of virtual reference, see Chou and Zhou's (2003) “Examining the Impact of DMCA and UCITA on Online Reference Service.” For a discussion of related legal issues, see also Minow's (2003) *The Library's Legal Answer Book*.

assumptions of all who had speculated on the nature of the database problem.

The first year of QuestionPoint chat yielded 158 viable live virtual reference exchanges. Training questions, a handful of inappropriate questions, and questions fatally interrupted by technical difficulties were excluded to yield this number. The pool was smaller than expected, in part because of technical problems that plagued the service periodically throughout the year. With these issues now resolved, the service has averaged 33 questions per month in the first five months of the second year.

Who are our patrons?

The questions were first analyzed to determine the percentage of affiliates and non-affiliates represented in the question pool. The QuestionPoint chat form, unlike the email form, provides no easy mechanism for tracking affiliation. This information could, however, be determined in most cases from the return email address or from evidence within the chat transcripts. Of the 158 usable questions received during the first year, 67% came from UA affiliates, 27% came from non-affiliates, and 6% came from unknown sources.⁴

⁴ The information used for this study was culled from a larger set of data, gathered to evaluate the first year of the library's live virtual reference service. The questions were coded to provide other information not relevant to this study, including the length of the reference exchange; number of referrals to University of Alabama subject specialists or to the Alabama Virtual Library; the UA orientation of a question (i.e., whether it could have been answered successfully by a librarian at a member institution in a consortium); the incidence of questions from distance education and international students, two constituencies initially expected to be heavy users of the service; and the quality of the answer.

What types of questions are they asking?

Some kinds of questions are more likely to require database use than others. For insight into the database issue, it was necessary to determine the types of questions the two groups were asking. Questions from the two groups were therefore classified into one or more of five categories: Reference; Catalog/Database Access; Library Services; Technical Issues; or Other. While university affiliates tended to ask a wide variety of questions, many related to library services or technical matters, the community users asked a high percentage of substantive reference questions, many requiring considerable effort on the librarian's part. Because the affiliates were asking so many questions about the logistics of using library resources, particularly databases, the *percentage* of true reference questions was lower for this group than for the non-affiliates. Of the affiliates' questions, 46% were classified as reference questions, while of the non-affiliates' questions, 60% were judged to be true reference questions. With the non-affiliates needs so clearly reference oriented, would the demand for database use among these patrons be unacceptably high?

What resources do they need?

To judge the relative need for database use among the two user groups, questions were analyzed according to the sources used or recommended to answer them. Categories included Databases, Catalog, Internet, Print/Manuscript, and Other. In spite of the higher percentage of true reference questions among the non-affiliates, their need for the databases was considerably lower than that of the affiliates. Only 16% of the questions posed by non-affiliates required databases as opposed to 36% of questions from affiliates. If one looks only at the reference questions asked by

each group, the difference is even more striking: 60% of UA reference questions and 19% of non-UA reference questions required the use of databases.

Conclusions

The results of this brief glimpse into the first year's question logs are encouraging. The questions of the two user groups tended to be largely self-regulating in terms of the sources required to answer them, with each group generally asking questions that could be answered from the resources available to them. The transcripts confirmed this quantitative conclusion on a qualitative level as well. The questions from the non-affiliates were generally more factual and less open-ended than those of the affiliates, whose questions tended to be research oriented, with more emphasis on compiling a bibliography than on locating a particular piece of information. University students, repeating the language of their class assignments, tended to phrase their questions in a way that more or less demanded database use: "I need three scholarly articles that discuss...." Community users, however, tended to focus more on the quality of the information than on the source: "I need some good information about...." This more accommodating phrasing usually allowed the librarian to consult high-quality Internet sites, sources that are often explicitly prohibited for class assignments.

But what about the small number of non-affiliate questions that seemingly did require the use of databases? The question logs reveal that even these questions could in most cases be adequately answered through legal means. In several cases, the librarian determined in the course of the reference interview that the patrons were students at other universities who

could be directed to their own libraries' resources. These students apparently wanted access to our virtual librarians, rather than to our virtual resources – a lesson, perhaps, for librarians who question the value of live virtual reference assistance in the university setting. Several other patrons were directed to the resources of the Alabama Virtual Library (AVL), a set of databases available to all citizens of the state. Our virtual reference exchanges have, in fact, provided some opportunities to educate Alabama residents about the wealth of electronic resources available to them. In the end, of 43 questions from non-affiliates, only one presented a legitimate question that truly could not be answered because of database restrictions. In this case, a student at a community college in another state was hoping to gain access to databases not available through her college's small library or her state's resources.

The transcripts of the exchanges with the non-affiliated users provide some lessons for the virtual librarian. In one case, after the librarian had asked whether the patron was affiliated, the patron responded that she was not and promptly disappeared, apparently convinced that she was not welcome. We have learned that it is usually most effective not to ask directly whether a patron is affiliated, but rather to offer several options of service: "If you are a UA student . . . ; if not" With this sort of prompt, patrons usually state their affiliation and clarify the direction of the exchange. The direct question is clearly threatening in a way that the statement of options is not, and virtual librarians must be sensitive to language that is welcoming rather than forbidding. While most of our virtual reference transactions were judged to be successful, some would have proceeded more gracefully if the librarian could have known the affiliation

of the patron at the beginning of the session. The ability to customize the QuestionPoint chat form to acquire this information would be a vast improvement in the program.

In terms of database policy with non-affiliated users, the University of Alabama has chosen a cautious path. Our policy states that a librarian may consult a database while answering a non-affiliated patron's question, but that she may not send the database page to the patron, copy and paste any information (citations or full text) from the database, or email content from the database to the patron. This policy provides clarity for the librarian and the patron alike, and is clearly in compliance with all licensing agreements.

Early in the planning stages of the University of Alabama's QuestionPoint chat service, some librarians expressed reservations about opening the service to the public because of the database issue. The results of this investigation suggest that those concerns were

largely unfounded and that affiliates and non-affiliates alike have been served thoughtfully and well, with appropriate resources and equal consideration. Patrons have tended to ask questions that could be answered from the sources available to them. University students and faculty generally ask university-library questions, while other patrons generally ask public-library questions. Like many state-funded university libraries, the University of Alabama Libraries have long acknowledged two complementary missions, and we continue to open our doors – virtual and otherwise – to all. As live virtual reference services become more common, our virtual users will likely be written into licensing agreements, and the ambiguities of database use will disappear. Meanwhile, our experiences at the University of Alabama indicate that the demand for database access by non-affiliated patrons is surprisingly low, and that the benefits of providing service to all far outweigh any difficulties encountered in applying licensing restrictions.

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EKU Libraries and the NOVA Program: Collaborating to bring information literacy to first year students

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During the fall semester of 2003, Eastern Kentucky University libraries and the NOVA program for first year students initiated a collaborative effort aimed at achieving two goals: 1) better prepare the one hundred students selected to participate in the NOVA program for their career at ECU, and 2) provide those students with information literacy skills needed to function as discriminating consumers of information throughout their lives.

This article will discuss the creation and outcomes of our first year of collaboration. It will touch on our positive experiences and on some of the challenges ECU librarians encountered as we worked with NOVA faculty to create an information literacy program designed to complement the freshman experience while at the same time teaching basic information literacy skills in such a way as to encourage retention. It will also share some of our experiences to demonstrate the value of true collaboration between different departments of a university in positively affecting the lives of college students and thereby serve as a model for others who might wish to develop similar programs.

The NOVA program at ECU is part of the federal TRIO program, which includes the Upward Bound, Educational Talent Search, and McNair programs. As stated on the TRIO website (2004), all these programs seek to "help low-income Americans enter college, graduate and move on to participate more fully in America's economic and social life." TRIO

programs are not limited to providing financial aid, but offer a variety of services that "help students... overcome class, social and cultural barriers to higher education." Each of the TRIO programs targets a specific demographic, with NOVA specifically aimed at assisting first generation students in their transition to college life. As participants in a federally funded program, NOVA students must meet the following criteria:

- Is a first year, full-time learner enrolled in a minimum of 13 credit hours at the ECU Richmond campus.
- Be a "first-generation" university learner (meaning neither parent has achieved a four year degree).
- Able to demonstrate financial need (as determined by the U.S. Department of Education).
- Willing to enter their first university semester as "undeclared in major".

To ensure a high level of individual attention, only one hundred students are selected to participate each academic year. NOVA faculty then divides students into small groups of four to six students. Each of these groups is led by a more experienced student recruited and paid by the program to serve as a guide and mentor for the students throughout the program. This mentor-mentee relationship is a key component of the program and facilitates the acclimatization process. To make the transition to college as painless as possible, the NOVA staff offers their

students a variety of services including: sponsored tours, on campus activities, and instruction on university policies and tutorials to help them become more familiar with the ECU campus. NOVA also coordinates one-on-one peer mentoring, small group and individualized learning assistance, and professional academic advising.

ECU librarians' first exposure to the NOVA program came in the spring of 2003 when Kate Williams, the director of the ECU NOVA program, approached Carrie Cooper, the Coordinator of Research and Instruction at ECU Libraries. Kate hoped to develop a more immersive library experience tailored to first-generation students. Carrie was only too happy to work with Kate. Since the library was already in the midst of redesigning its general library orientation component, both felt free to brainstorm and be as creative as possible. Both sides came to the first meeting with different ideas of what they wanted, but both were willing to compromise and work together to come up with the best program possible. After a couple of such brainstorming sessions, the concept had matured enough that Carrie recruited four other librarians interested in participating in the program: Brad Marcum, Julie

George, Kevin Jones and Victoria Koger. After a brief orientation meeting, Carrie introduced the librarians to the NOVA faculty, and the nuts and bolts process of creation and implementation began.

We, as ECU librarians, knew from hard experience that students receiving library instruction should have some sort of assignment; otherwise they would have difficulty in retaining the information presented. We knew that we would be challenged to design an assignment related to their library instruction sessions yet still tied to the NOVA program and centered on their first year experience. After considering the situation, we eventually agreed that after the instruction sessions, students should write a one to two page essay exploring a career they found interesting. They would comment on their impressions of the career before their library instruction session and on how their attitudes changed after researching the career using search tools and research techniques taught by the librarians. ECU Librarians also devised the following "Learning to Use the Library" worksheet so students could use it to comment on the process of researching their topic.

Career Exploration Assignment

Learning to Use the Library

Choose an occupation that interests you as a future career. Research the topic, using the following information sources as your guide:

- a. One book
- b. One library resource that you've accessed online through a database
PAID for by ECU Libraries
- c. One FREE resource that you've accessed online

Taking A Closer Look at Information

	Comments:	Quality Rating: 1=Highest Quality 4=Lowest Quality	Ease Rating: 1=Easy 4=Not Easy
A. Book Use eQuest to find a book about your career			
B. Database Use a library database to find information about your career.			
C. FREE online Resource Use Google, or any search engine, to locate information about your career.			

The Assignment

Prepare a 1-2 page paper that summarizes the differences between each of the information sources you've identified in the chart above, and how your perceptions about the career have changed after researching the topic. Your comparisons may include an examination of the quality of the information, the types of information you found in each information source and the depth of the information presented. **Don't forget to tell how the information has helped shape your opinion of the career and the choices you'll make for your future!**

Initially NOVA faculty felt the librarians could instruct the peer mentors, who could then in turn teach their “mentees” about library services and research techniques. NOVA faculty believed this “train the trainer” approach would reinforce the strong role student mentors play in the program. The librarians, while understanding the reasoning behind this approach, strongly disagreed. After some discussion, the NOVA faculty and the librarians reached a compromise in which the student mentors would retain a high level of responsibility, but librarians would perform all library instruction. In this arrangement, the librarians would give the student mentors extra training so they could provide assistance and help guide their groups through the research process outside of the scheduled library instruction sessions. They would also have a variety of organizational duties such as signing up their students and ensuring attendance at scheduled library instruction sessions.

As part of the training process for the student mentors, the librarians organized a “get to know you” session, complete with food and drinks. To break the ice, the librarians introduced the much dreaded “Haiku exercise.” The Haiku exercise involved the presentation of Haiku poetry composed by each individual librarian describing their life and personality, followed by an exercise in which the student mentors composed their own poems and explained their composition to the group. After this activity, the librarians walked the mentors through the classroom exercises the librarians had selected for use in the library instruction sessions for the NOVA students. Finally, to wrap up the session, each librarian split off from the main group

with their three to four assigned mentors and interacted on a personal basis. The librarians invested a great deal of effort into making the meeting a fun and informal experience that would encourage a comfortable rapport between the librarians, mentors, and NOVA faculty.

Very early within the planning stage, it became obvious that one instruction session would not be enough to communicate the required information and provide a satisfactory experience for the NOVA students. Therefore in the spirit of compromise that permeated the whole association, the NOVA faculty agreed to devote two sessions to library instruction. The first session would teach basic library service and information literacy activities while the second would address the assignment and effective use of ECU journal databases.

The two activities settled on for the first session were dubbed “Who am I and what do I need to know?” and “Where am I in the library?” The first activity involved helping students to understand that everyone has information needs, no matter who you are or what you do. Librarians asked students to form groups and passed out cards with a single profession written on one side. The professions were wide ranging, including vocations such as truck driver, CEO of a corporation, mother of two, and graduating college senior. The student groups then put themselves in the shoes of someone in that particular position and tried to identify three to five information needs that person would have in a typical day. After brainstorming, each group reported back to the rest of the class. Using these results, librarians demonstrated the actual benefit students would garner

from becoming wise consumers of information.

Following this activity, librarians led student groups in mapping out the library. Using a white board, the librarian mapped each floor of the library, coached the students as they went, drew various icons for different departments of the library and explained their role in the library, floor by floor. The librarians used creative representations for the various departments as much as possible -- scales of justice for the Law Library, an apple for the Learning Resources Center, and so on. The artistic ability (or lack thereof) of the librarian often served as a point of humor the librarian could use as a means of building a friendly and informal relationship between student and librarian.

The second round of instruction sessions took a much more traditional

approach, relying on the familiarity developed from the previous interactions and the benefit of having a concrete assignment to enhance the effectiveness of the presentations. In form and content, the instruction sessions would be familiar to most instruction librarians, concentrating on research techniques as well as on how to use library databases and effectively search the web. A few of the issues covered include: Boolean searching, truncation and wild card characters, how to evaluate information and discern good websites from bad, and defining scholarly journals and their differences from popular magazines.

In order to improve our future NOVA collaborations and first year programs for students in general, we circulated a pre-test and post-test to the students to measure the effectiveness of our activities.



Eastern Kentucky University
(Pretest) Nova Students, Fall 2003

Name _____ Instructor _____

Hometown: _____ Librarian _____

Gender: _____

1	Never
2	Once
3	2-5 times
4	More than 5 times

For each item identified below, circle the number to the right that best fits.

Think back to high school:				
1. Did you receive instruction on how to use your local library or your school's library?	1	2	3	4
2. Did you use a local library or your school's library to use or check out books, articles, or other materials for your classes?	1	2	3	4
3. Did you use resources from a local library or your school's library to prepare a research paper or bibliography?	1	2	3	4
4. Did you use the Internet or World Wide Web to prepare a research paper or bibliography?	1	2	3	4
5. Did you use the library as a quiet place to read or study?	1	2	3	4
6. Did you ask a librarian or a staff member for help in finding information on a topic?	1	2	3	4
7. Did you use a computerized index or database (of journal articles or books) to find information on a topic?	1	2	3	4

Clearly list all of the steps you would go through in order to perform the following tasks?

8. Find a book in The ECU Libraries on the subject of earthquakes?

9. Find a journal or magazine article on the subject of earthquakes?

1	Strongly Agree
2	Agree
3	Disagree
4	Strongly Disagree
5	Don't Know

For each item identified below, circle the number to the right that best fits.

Do you agree?					
10. Everything is on the web.	1	2	3	4	5
11. A step in using Web-based materials for research is to examine the Web page for information about its author's qualifications and affiliation.	1	2	3	4	5
12. You must always document information found on the Internet.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I will have information needs for the rest of my life.	1	2	3	4	5
14. The term "information source" can include all of the following: phone book, journal article, website, map, video, and an expert in the field.	1	2	3	4	5
15. If I find information in an article, I can use it in my paper, and not include the article in my bibliography, as long as I change the wording.	1	2	3	4	5



Eastern Kentucky University
(Post Test) Nova Students, Fall 2003

Name _____ Instructor _____

Hometown: _____ Librarian _____

Gender: _____

1	Never
2	Once
3	2-5 times
4	More than 5 times

For each item identified below, circle the number to the right that best fits.

Look back at the Fall 2003 semester:				
16. Did you receive instruction on how to use EKU Libraries?	1	2	3	4
17. Did you use EKU's library to check out books, get articles, and/or gather information for class assignments?	1	2	3	4
18. Did you use resources from EKU's library to prepare for assignments <i>other than the Career Exploration assignment?</i>	1	2	3	4
19. Did you use the World Wide Web to prepare for assignments <i>other than the Career Exploration assignment?</i>	1	2	3	4
20. Did you use the library as a quiet place to read or study?	1	2	3	4
21. Did you ask a librarian or a staff member for help in finding information on a topic <i>outside of the Career Exploration Assignment?</i>	1	2	3	4
22. Did you visit the EKU Libraries website <i>outside of working on the Career Exploration Assignment?</i>	1	2	3	4
23. Did you use the EbscoHOST database <i>outside of working on the Career Exploration Assignment?</i>	1	2	3	4

Clearly list all of the steps you would go through in order to perform the following tasks:

24. Find a book in The ECU Libraries on the subject of earthquakes?

25. Find a journal or magazine article on the subject of earthquakes?

1	Strongly Agree
2	Agree
3	Disagree
4	Strongly Disagree
5	Don't Know

For each item identified below, circle the number to the right that best fits.

Do you agree?					
26. Everything is on the web.	1	2	3	4	5
27. A step in using Web-based materials for research is to examine the Web page for information about its author's qualifications and affiliation.	1	2	3	4	5
28. You must always document information found on the Internet.	1	2	3	4	5
29. I will have information needs for the rest of my life.	1	2	3	4	5
30. The term "information source" can include all of the following: phone book, journal article, website, map, video, and an expert in the field.	1	2	3	4	5
31. If I find information in an article, I can use it in my paper, and not include the article in my bibliography, as long as I change the wording.	1	2	3	4	5
32. I am comfortable asking a librarian for help.	1	2	3	4	5
33. I will use library resources to meet my information needs.	1	2	3	4	5
34. The Career Exploration exercise was useful.	1	2	3	4	5

After collecting the data from both the pre-test and post-test, Kevin Jones (2004) analyzed the results and made the following conclusions:

NOVA: SUMMARY OF RESULTS OUTLINE

NOVA students:

- Received more library instruction in their first semester at ECU than they did during their entire high school careers (p=.001).
- After instruction were much more likely to indicate that “a step in using Web-based materials for research is to examine the Web page for information about its author’s qualifications and affiliation” (p=.05).

In terms of finding books and articles on earthquakes, after instruction, NOVA students had:

- Less uncertainty (Don’t Know + Blank-No Answer) in their approach (31 vs. 16 books) (31 vs. 17 articles)
- A clearer sense of how to find these materials, as indicated by a greater number using the appropriate source, or by asking a librarian (Books: 30 pretest vs. 40 posttest) (Articles: 15 pretest vs. 28 posttest)
- A greater sense of “information independence” (“Ask a librarian for help” for articles: 15 pretest vs. 6 posttest).

NOVA Short Answer Questions:				
Earthquakes	Finding A Book		Finding An Article	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Ask A Librarian	16	11	15	6
eQuest/Online Catalog	14	29	14	6
EBSCOhost/ Academic Search Premier	0	3	0	22
Blank/No Answer	11	16	17	17
Don't Know	20	0	14	0

Even with this newfound “information independence,” over 80 percent of NOVA students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement:

- “I am comfortable asking a librarian for help”
- “I will use the library to meet my information needs”
- “The Career Exploration exercise was useful.”

The results of the post-test indicated that our efforts had a positive effect on the information literacy and attitudes of the NOVA students. Although the results were generally positive, one disconcerting fact came to our attention. A large number of the NOVA students reported they had received little or no formal library instruction or research training in high school and that they had received more library instruction in their first semester at EKU than in their entire high school careers. This finding validated our belief in the importance of reaching out to first-year students to teach information literacy skills.

Many of the challenges that arose during our collaboration with NOVA were organizational or procedural in origin. Some of the choices made early on caused some problems later in the semester. Relying solely on the student mentors to sign up their mentees for the instruction sessions resulted in some confusion and last minute scrambling to make sure every student received instruction. Choosing to err on the side of student convenience, we offered four instruction sessions scheduled at differing times and days that students could attend. This approach resulted in an imbalance in class attendance, with some sessions overloaded and others scarcely attended. Additionally, allowing students to sign up for any of the sessions weakened the link we had worked to

build between librarians and students since many of the students attended instruction sessions taught by librarians they had not interacted with as much as “their” librarian. Looking back, this procedure should be modified to allow either NOVA faculty or librarian oversight to avoid the recurrence of these problems.

Once the semester began, librarians, NOVA faculty and students alike became immersed in the new semester. Burgeoning numbers of library instruction requests made for one of the busiest fall semesters in recent memory. Communication between librarians suffered somewhat as a result, producing a loss of conformity in teaching approach.

The amount of time that elapsed between the first instruction session and the second also became an issue. The first session took place early in the fall semester, while the second was delayed to the latter half of the semester. While scheduling difficulties caused the delay, the result was that some of the information and concepts imparted to the students faded from their memory over the long interval.

Aside from the demonstrated information literacy results, other key outcomes of the collaboration included the close interaction fostered between the librarians and students and the increased comfort level of the students with library and

research related matters. Creating a foundation of information literacy skills and giving students an opportunity to use their new skills to explore possible careers also proved rewarding.

The level of enthusiasm we encountered from NOVA faculty and students fostered a community of cooperation and both impressed and inspired us to do our best for them. Participating in such an endeavor

undoubtedly served as a good public relations tool that can only help attract more faculty and students to the library. From this beginning, ECU libraries have impacted the lives of one hundred first year students that we might not have otherwise been able to reach and have launched what promises to be a long running and fruitful association with the NOVA program.

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Striving for Success: Practical Advice for Reference Graduate Assistants (and Other New Reference Providers)

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Introduction

With a little reflection, most librarians can recall the excitement, anticipation, and fear that filled their early days at the reference desk:

“What will people ask me?”

“What if I don’t know how to help someone?”

“What do I need to do to be successful?”

Many librarians first experienced this emotional turbulence while working as graduate assistants (GAs) in academic library reference departments. Although demanding, working as a reference graduate assistant yields many benefits. An assistantship introduces participants to basics of reference librarianship like customer service, search techniques, and teamwork. Assistantships also help

students get their foot in the door of the profession by giving them practical experience that can boost their employment prospects. Furthermore, participants profit greatly from networking with librarians who can offer guidance and encouragement. In view of the potential rewards and challenges of assistantships, we seek to provide current GAs with practical advice that can turn their assistantships into a successful debut into the field of reference.

In reading about graduate assistants at reference desks, we discovered that LIS graduate students help provide reference service in many American academic libraries. For example, one survey of thirty-six reference departments at universities with MLIS programs found that twenty-six of the departments employed GAs, and eighty-seven percent only hired LIS graduate

assistants.⁵ LIS schools sometimes encourage their students to work in reference departments to expand the students' hands-on knowledge, and numerous academic libraries gladly accept the additional labor provided by the GAs. For their part, LIS graduate assistants often seek out positions in reference departments on their campuses because they have hopes of launching a career in information services. Thus, all parties benefit from the arrangement.

While several articles focus on the role of the supervising librarian in these reference assistantships, very few authors concentrate on graduate assistants. In one article, Qi Wu stresses that both the supervisor and the LIS student must work hard toward mutual ends in order to achieve a "win-win" situation. If one party lacks a full commitment, the assistantship will founder:

Graduate assistants may not come into the position with the right kind of motivation, or are not sufficiently motivated while on the job, and thus may not be as committed as much, or perform as well as expected. Sometimes the library is not able to provide the best environment or training program for them to develop in the ways they deserve. When either party is not investing enough, this partnership is doomed to fail despite its perceived glory. This dichotomy will result in the sub-standard services provided by the graduate assistants, the negative impact on patron perception of the library, and

⁵ Kay Womack and Karen J. Rupp-Serano, "The Librarian's Apprentice: Reference Graduate Assistants," *Reference Services Review* 28, no. 2 (2000): 121-122.

a mutually unsatisfying relationship between the graduate assistants and the library.⁶

Although written for supervisors, Wu's article highlights the responsibility of students in helping to achieve a successful outcome. Supervising librarians have an obligation to create a sound training program, but graduate assistants must put forth their best efforts as well.

While Wu and other authors call attention to the necessity of initiative on the part of GAs, few articles supply advice to GAs about how to actually work at a reference desk. GAs need advice on how to negotiate goals with supervisors to ensure that they have a structured experience tailored to their professional aspirations. They must also grasp the importance of communication, openness to learning, and proactive efforts during their rite of passage into reference. In addition, they should know timesaving techniques for learning the basics of electronic and print searching. Most importantly, they need tips on how to treat patrons and build rapport with librarians and other staff. The present article addresses the scarcity of this advice in the professional literature.

While supervising librarians often have years of experience from which to draw advice, it is also helpful to take into account the perspectives of recent graduates who can readily identify with the challenges facing current GAs. Accordingly, the majority of us worked as graduate assistants in the Information Center of the Amelia Gayle

⁶ Qi Wu, "Win-win strategy for the employment of reference graduate assistants in academic libraries," *Reference Services Review* 31, no.2 (2003): 141.

Gorgas Library at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa during the 2002-2003 academic year. In partnership with the Gorgas Library, the University's School of Library and Information Studies offers its GAs the chance to work in various library departments each year. The Information Center's graduate assistant program has characteristics similar to graduate assistant programs at other libraries.⁷ GAs provide basic reference service and carry out routine clerical duties. Occasionally, GAs may co-teach a library instruction session or design a web page, but reference service is the heart of the GAs' experience.

Along with our former supervisor, we draw upon our GA experiences at the Gorgas Library to offer counsel for current or prospective GAs in other reference departments. Many of these tips will also assist new reference librarians, interns, and paraprofessionals. While some readers have perhaps already completed a course in reference theory, we can add many unique and practical ideas that will help them learn reference in an on-the-job environment. We hope that GAs and their trainers will find our suggestions creative, helpful, and even fun!

Tips for Reference Graduate Assistants

- 1. Join forces with your supervisor in planning your assistantship.** Participating in a graduate assistantship differs from taking a formal course that has a syllabus set by the professor; instead, you must take an active role in devising the plan for your work. Here are the

⁷ Womack and Serano, "Apprentice," 119-129.

three basic parts of planning for a successful assistantship:

- **Goal-setting**

Negotiate with your supervisor at the *very beginning* of your assistantship to ensure that you have clear, reasonable goals--don't wait until mid-semester to clarify a vague expectation. As a new worker, you have the right to know your supervisor's exact expectations and have these ideas put on paper. In a reference department, you will tend to set service goals rather than productivity goals. Fortunately, you don't have to start from scratch when developing a set of goals because the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) has already established benchmarks for quality reference service known as the "Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Services Professionals."⁸ In collaboration with your supervisor, tailor the guidelines to your specific library. RUSA's advice reflects the opinions of thousands of librarians about what makes up top-notch reference service. Thus, if you succeed in providing reference according to these tried-and-true principles, you will develop a style that will win you praises at your current library as well as the library where you will work in the future.

- **Training Program**

⁸ Reference and User Services Association, "Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Services Professionals," <http://www.ala.org/ala/rusa/rusaprotocols/referenceguide/guidelinesbehavioral.htm> (accessed March 18, 2004).

Training equips you with the skills to accomplish your goals. While you'll definitely learn a great deal from your reference desk experiences, you'll also want to allocate an hour or more to training each week. Your supervisor may have training activities planned for you, or you can use some of the self-teaching ideas in this article as a guide. In addition, you might want to "audit" a few instruction sessions taught by librarians at your school to find out about important resources in your collection and how to use them. In planning your regimen, emphasize *progress* rather than *mastery*. For example, an overly ambitious training program might seek to attain a searching mastery of all of the library's databases by the end of the semester. A more realistic training program would aim for an increased skill in searching a few specified databases.

- **Evaluation**

Your supervisor will evaluate you on how well you accomplish your goals. Since you will likely work on the reference desk with multiple librarians, ask your supervisor to ensure that these librarians know your goals and participate in your final evaluation. Involving several librarians in an appraisal of your work will assure you of a balanced, fair evaluation by minimizing personality factors and individual differences. You and your supervisor should also discuss whether you'll receive grades on each of your goals or only a letter of reference describing your accomplishments. At any rate, mapping out your goals, training, and evaluation at the start of your reference journey will chart a clear-cut and realistic course for success.

2. Be a humble apprentice

One of the best practices to follow as a rookie to the reference desk is to *actively learn from more experienced librarians*. You will find that most librarians will gladly let you tag along with them as they assist people. This "shadowing" offers an invaluable way to learn about serving patrons as well as the tools available to you. By watching at an unobtrusive distance, you will witness the verbal and non-verbal interaction that happens during the reference interview and see which sources librarians actually use. If possible, shadow more than one librarian so that you can pick up different search strategies from each.

Know your limitations. As an eager pre-professional, you may want to tackle all the questions that come your way. However, even after you become familiar with common sources, you'll encounter questions that you just cannot answer well. In these cases, always ask a librarian who knows more. Your patron deserves the most accurate and informed answer possible! Remember that even experienced librarians know when to call upon someone with more specialized knowledge. From our own experience, here are a few types of reference questions that you should ask librarians for help with:

- Questions that you have worked on for 10 minutes and have not made any progress toward finding the answer.
- Questions that involve the use of unfamiliar resources.
- Questions that you are unsure of how to even start.

In addition to consulting librarians for help with reference questions, elicit daily informal feedback from librarians throughout the semester by asking

questions like “how would you have handled that reference question?” Asking for frequent feedback will let you know how well you are realizing your dream of becoming a stellar reference librarian. It will also help you earn a great letter of reference by spotlighting weak areas in your service and giving you a chance to improve well before your final evaluation.

3. Find a mentor.

While many reference librarians can help you refine your searching style, you will also want to connect with a librarian who can offer professional guidance. Seek out a mentor—someone who can advise you on what classes to take, how to write an effective resume and cover letter, what to do during an interview, and how to thrive in your first professional job. Some students prefer a fairly new librarian as a mentor because they feel that these librarians can better relate to a student’s needs and offer more relevant advice. Others feel that older, more experienced librarians make wiser mentors and “know the ropes.” In either case, you will discover that many librarians will gladly build a relationship with you and help you over hurdles that they have already cleared. A mentor can bestow reference advice as well as encouragement, consolation, and often friendship during your assistantship and beyond.

4. Keep a journal.

Keeping a journal provides another effective technique for maximizing your learning during your trial run in reference. Log unusual or challenging reference queries (as well as questions that you have about procedures) in your journal each week and share these with your supervisor as well as two or three other librarians. This debriefing technique allows you to tap into librarians’ knowledge by seeing how

they handle the tough questions. A journal can also prepare you for professional job interviews by reminding you of notable anecdotes that you can recount to a search committee (such as a time when you defused a difficult patron or nailed the answer to a particularly hard reference question).

5. Develop flowcharts for common reference queries.

As you begin your reference work, you will probably feel overwhelmed by the sheer number of resources and wonder where to start searching when a patron poses a question. Ask librarians to help you devise flowcharts for common reference requests so that you will know how to launch your searches. Starting with a broad question that you might ask a patron, flowcharts steer you to appropriate resources by grouping the resources according to the type of information they offer (biographies, book reviews, primary sources, secondary sources), the level of information needed (consumer, scholarly or reference), or by the time periods covered in each resource. For example, the flowchart in Figure 1 offers a plan of action for finding historical information.

6. Create a “Quick Guide” for Databases.

We also found it helpful to build a table comparing databases that can serve as a “quick guide” whenever you need to know the Boolean operators, truncation and wildcard symbols, limiters, and any other searching features for a database. Librarians may have already created tip sheets for each database, and most databases do offer extensive help menus that you can browse through. However, a handy chart listing just the basics of each resource can quickly give you pointers during a search. Plus, the

act of creating such a guide orients you to the databases. A word of caution: databases constantly change in today's highly-wired world. While librarians often receive emails when the library purchases new databases or changes occur to existing databases, students are often left out of the loop. Ask your supervisor to forward these emails to you.

7. Make a list of “magic” words.

In stepping out onto the stage of reference services for the first time, we sometimes feel like magicians trying to pull information out of a hat, particularly when searching OPACs for specific types of information such as primary sources, literary criticism, pictures, or speeches. Compiling a list of “magic words,” or cataloging descriptors that can be used as keywords in searches, will help you conjure up the call numbers for these kinds of materials. Some of the most common descriptors found in catalogs include:

- **Sources, accounts, or memoirs** for primary sources in history
- **Criticism** for literary criticism
- **III.** for illustrations
- **Speeches, orations, or addresses** for speeches.

Ask librarians for help in developing a list for your library since cataloging descriptors vary from place to place.

8. “Memorize” your library’s classification system.

Perhaps the easiest way of learning to navigate the reference collection is by memorizing the broad headings of the Library of Congress Classification System. Relax, though--you do not have to memorize every subdivision (just the broad headings), and learning the classification scheme can be fun if you

use a memory aid like the one found in Figure 2. After you master the subject headings, you will have the ability to walk to an appropriate section of the reference stacks, scan the shelves, and retrieve relevant books for a patron. Just imagine how you’ll dazzle patrons by laying your finger on just the right information without even going through an OPAC search! In our experience, knowing the Library of Congress headings has proven much more effective than trying to remember the physical location of reference books since most libraries shift their books periodically. By learning the standard classifications, you will also gain knowledge that you can apply across libraries, including the library where you will work after graduation.

9. Hone in on the library’s key reference books.

A select few of the reference books in your library will answer most of the questions that you receive. In consultation with experienced librarians, identify these key tools and write their titles on separate note cards along with the scope and searching tricks for each book. Remember, the title of a reference book often fails to reflect the full range of information within the book, so make special note of any content that is not obvious at first glance. Another not-so-obvious point for newcomers to reference: make sure you remember the *exact* titles of sources so that you can plug the title in the catalog and pull up the call number. Otherwise, you will find yourself leading a patron on a wild goose chase looking for that big orange book that you just know has the answer! During your assistantship, note reference questions that you see answered by each book on the back of the respective note card. Tracking how librarians use a reference book at your particular library will help you garner practical knowledge about the title-- instead of just the generalized,

theoretical understanding that comes from a formal reference course.

10. Stay on top of the nitty-gritty work.

While you will concentrate on learning reference during your fieldwork, you will also have to perform various clerical duties, such as re-shelving books or replenishing paper in printers, during slow times at the desk. Don't think that these activities are beneath you! Make these chores a priority, and ask your supervisor to create a checklist of duties so you won't be left guessing about what to do. Offer to re-shelve reference books as this activity will acquaint you with the collection, especially the books that your library's patrons use the most. Also, to add a really nice touch to your work, ask librarians if they have any work that they want you to do as soon as they arrive for their shifts. Avoid letting personal work interfere with your desk duties (even if you see undergraduate workers doing homework). Overall, take responsibility for whatever happens in the reference area and strive to make the place run as smoothly and efficiently as possible. Identify any problems, like low toner in a printer, and fix them before they impede patrons.

11. Be a missionary—not a Buddha

Instead of sitting at the desk like a wise Buddha, waiting for pilgrims to come to you, put on your missionary hat, go out to your patrons, and zealously "save" them from their information problems. Many times, patrons do not know who to approach for questions or think librarians are too busy to help them. For this reason, the Reference and User Services Association suggests that librarians should "rove through the reference area offering assistance

whenever possible."⁹ Don't ignore your desk duties by wandering around the stacks for long periods of time.

However, do take the time to scout around a bit and look for patrons who need help, perhaps at a consistent time each hour. Try to make eye contact with patrons and look for red flags that might reveal confusion or bewilderment. Wear an identifying badge if your library offers one, and cue the other staff about your intentions whenever you leave the desk to rove.

12. Ask, listen, and consult students' assignments.

As we learned (sometimes the hard way), newcomers to reference often overlook a vital part of the reference transaction, the reference interview. The reference interview means asking a patron plenty of questions, both before and during your search, to discern what they need. Developing a personal set of questions, perhaps similar to the newspaper writers' list of who, what, where, when and why, can keep your searches from going astray.

However, the reference interview question that we recommend the most is: "Can I see your assignment?" This simple shortcut often saves a great deal of time and frustration for both you and the student. When explaining their reference requests, students often overlook a key element of the assignment. For example, a patron may say that they need articles on heart disease and so you find articles from *Time* and *Newsweek*. Then, the patron suddenly remembers that the articles should come from scholarly journals so you must go back to start anew. Simply asking for the assignment at the beginning of the conversation speeds up the searching process.

⁹ RUSA, "Guidelines," "Approachability," Point 1.7.

13. Coach your patrons along in their searches.

When helping a patron with a search, try to coach and let the patron do the actual page-flipping or mouse-clicking. Simultaneously searching two computers (or two different volumes from the same series of reference books) with them offers the best way to train patrons. Explain each step of the research process as they work their way along, instead of giving multiple instructions at one time (people often only remember the last suggestion you made). Pump up your patron's searching confidence with cheers like "great idea" or "you are really getting the hang of this!" Point out the help screens and tip sheets. Before you leave them, ask what they intend to try next and redirect their search if needed. Always end the scrimmage by encouraging the patron to return for more help if they need it, and ask them to let you know what they find before they leave. This follow-up communicates to the patron that you have a strong interest in their success, lets you see whether your suggestions worked, and (if you are like so many of us) allows you to share that fantastic idea that you had right after the patron left the reference area.

As a library coach, you should take pleasure in the opportunity to help patrons develop research skills that will benefit them throughout their lives. As former UCLA basketball coach John Wooden once said, "You cannot live a perfect day without doing something for someone who will never be able to repay you."¹⁰ That truism brings us to our next point.

14. Keep the Patron Paramount

¹⁰ Michael Moncur, "The Quotations Page," Quotations by Author: John Wooden," accessed on July 28, 2004, at http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/John_Wooden/.

Even though you might have taken an assistantship to further your career, remember that your ultimate obligation is to the patrons at your library. As a reference provider, you have the responsibility for corralling a dizzying array of library resources (catalog, reference books, databases, web sites) into meeting the unique needs of each person who approaches you for help.

Remember, even if you cannot find the answer to a question, you will please many patrons if you serve them in a gracious, well-mannered way and go the extra mile for them. *Friendliness and helpfulness* are the keys to a successful assistantship and professional career. While it may seem trite, remember to pepper your conversation with polite words like "thank you" and "please." Also, learn to discern your patron's underlying needs and exceed their expectations. If you help a patron find literary criticism, go a step further and point out an MLA handbook so they can cite their sources. If you help a patron find a book for a seminar, volunteer to show them how to find reviews of the book as well. In essence, apply the Golden Rule to reference by treating people in a way that you would like to be treated during an information search. If you have a wholehearted desire to help people, your attitude will shine through in all that you do for patrons.

Conclusion:

If you are an LIS student participating in a reference assistantship, you should realize that the success of the experience lies in your own hands. The partnership that you forge with your supervisor and the proactive approach that you take toward learning provide a firm foundation for success. As a new reference provider, you should also strive to develop flowcharts, memory aids, and other personal strategies that can guide your initial searches. Bear in

mind that searching skills seem very important, but people skills—such as reference interviewing and good communication—rank equally high in importance.

Most importantly, don't panic because you don't know everything right away. Help the patron to the very best of your ability and then refer them to someone who knows more. Stay and watch the rest of the reference transaction so that you can learn from a seasoned reference professional. To sum up using one last analogy, you will sometimes find yourself in a sink or swim situation during your assistantship. While we have shown you some basic strokes, always feel free to call the “lifeguard,” the reference librarian, who can save you and the patron from getting in over your heads in a search.

Please view the assistantship as a learning experience: becoming a good librarian does not happen overnight. However, by taking our experience into account, you will surprise yourself at how much you can accomplish during your first stint at a reference desk. Along with working side-by-side with librarians, our tips will help you forge a real-world reference skill-set and accelerate your growth as a librarian. Reflecting back on our experiences, we have found that our assistantships helped not only develop search skills but also establish a lasting professional rapport with other librarians and each other.

Although GAs can use the tips in this article as part of self-teaching efforts, supervisors can also apply our ideas in their training program to create a “win-win” situation for themselves and their

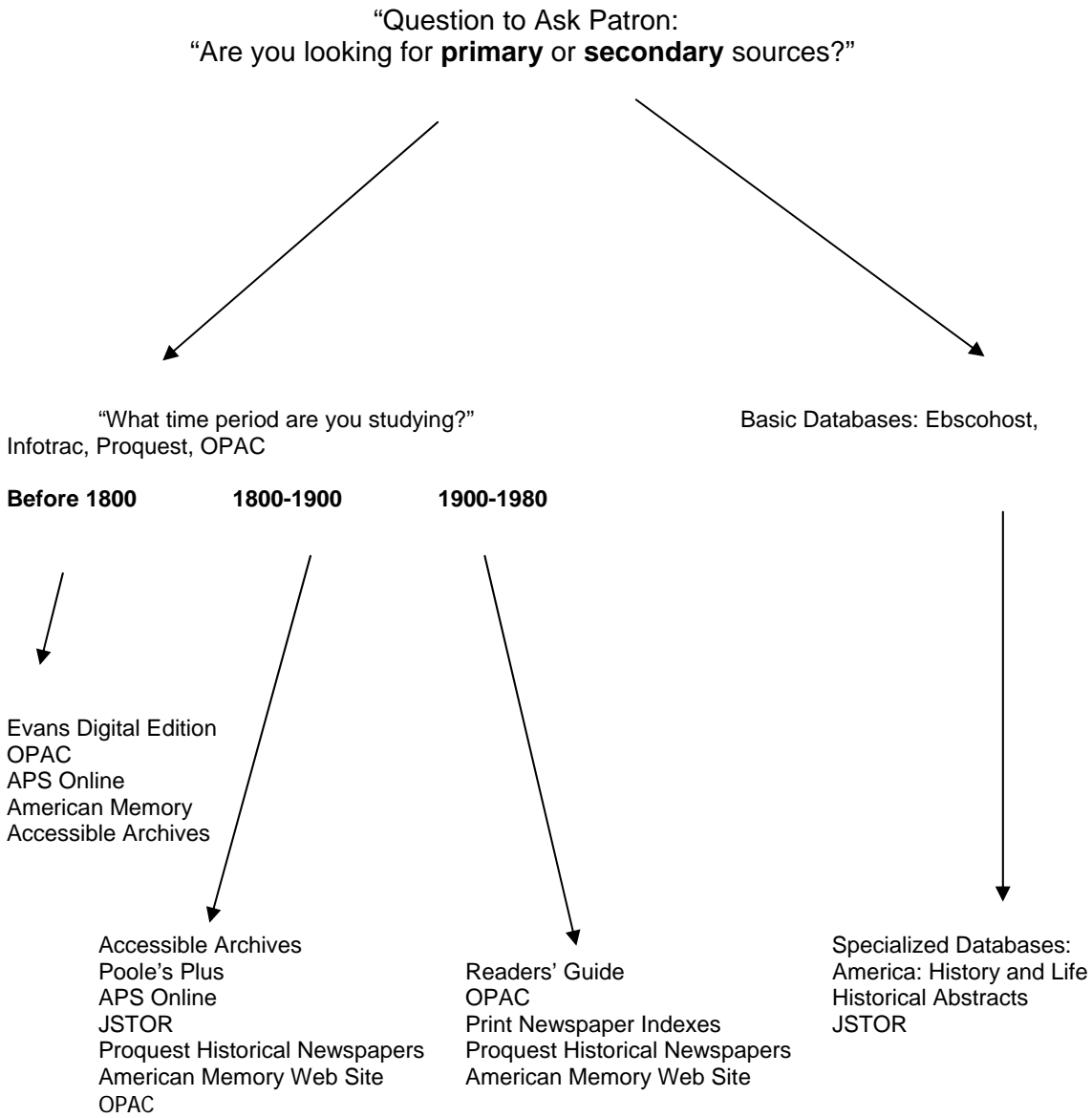
GAs as Wu suggested.¹¹ Everyone—students, supervising librarians, and LIS faculty—should remember that an investment in a graduate assistantship is an investment in the future. GAs will blossom into the reference librarians who will lead the profession in meeting the needs of patrons in the twenty-first century. Most librarians would agree on the necessity of working on the frontline in mastering reference service: earning an MLIS degree without any practical experience leaves students woefully unprepared for providing reference in the real world. Developing foundational search skills and establishing sound service precedents are vital tasks that librarians, students, and all others concerned should approach with sincerity.

As a profession, we should focus greater efforts on nurturing new reference providers. Conference forums or special journal issues might help call more attention to the training of graduate assistants or interns. LIS faculty should also encourage greater numbers of students to take assistantships in libraries. Finally, more reference librarians who have recently mastered the trade themselves should share their experiences with graduate assistants, interns, and new reference professionals—the often overlooked voices of the library profession.

Special Note: The authors originally presented this paper as a poster session at the Alabama Library Association Conference in Mobile, AL, in April 2003, and as a poster session at the American Library Association Conference in Orlando, FL, in July 2004.

¹¹ Wu, “Win-Win,” 141.

Figure 1: A Flowchart for History Topics



Backtracking:
Remember that one of the best ways to find primary sources is to find relevant secondary sources—and then look in the bibliographies for primary sources.

Caption: Starting with a broad question that you might ask a patron, flowcharts steer you to appropriate resources by grouping the resources according to the type of information that they offer. This flowchart is based on resources available at the Gorgas Library. You will want to consult librarians for help in creating a customized flowchart for your library.

Figure 2: Library of Congress Memory Aid

- A=Anything (general works, encyclopedias, almanacs)
- B=Bible (religion, psychology, supernatural, philosophy)
- C=Classical Stuff (auxiliary sciences of history such as classics, archaeology, genealogy, heraldry, archival science, civilization, biography)
- D=Datelines (history of Europe, Asia, Africa, Gypsies)
- E=E Pluribus Unum (general U.S. history)
- F=For every other kind of history (history of U.S. localities, Canada, and Latin America)
- G=Geography (atlases, anthropology, fashion, costume, human culture, holidays, sports)
- H=How Society Works (sociology, social statistics, social work, criminal justice, women's studies, social pathology, social classes)
- J=Jurisdictions (political science and government)
- K=Kourts (Law)
- L=Learning (preschool-college education)
- M=Music
- N=Fine Arts (artists, painting, drawing, architecture, pottery, antiques, handicrafts)
- P=Poetry and Stuff (language and literature)
- Q=Quest for Knowledge (hard sciences)
- R= Rx (medicine)
- S=Seeds (agriculture)
- T=Technology
- U=Uniforms (army, air force)
- V=Voyages (navy, marines, coast guard, shipping)
- Z=Bibliographies and Librarianship

Caption: A memory aid like this one can help you remember the Library of Congress subject headings. The authors would like to credit Barbara Dahlbach, Reference Librarian at the Gorgas Library, for giving us the idea for this memory aid.

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Further Reading

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Assessing Library Services With LibQUAL+: A Case Study

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There is a growing body of literature on the development of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) assessment tool, LibQUAL+ (Cook, Heath, Thompson). Because LibQUAL+ is a fairly recent innovation, there has been little published on its use in individual libraries. The 2001 LibQUAL+ survey at Texas Tech (Kemp) and the 2002 survey at the University of Washington (Hiller) are two exceptions. Both were conducted at ARL libraries, which is appropriate as LibQUAL+ is an ARL program. ARL has announced a forthcoming title, *From Data to Action: Libraries Report on Their Use of LibQUAL+™ Survey Findings*, but this has yet to be published. According to the publisher's announcement, "This special collection of articles will highlight practical examples of how libraries are using LibQUAL+ data in their local libraries as an assessment and evaluation mechanism. It will present the continued efforts in which librarians have engaged to promote service quality assessment within their respective organizations as well as externally across peer institutions." (Askew) When reading this blurb one would expect to learn how the results of the LibQUAL+ survey were used to improve services, but nothing is promised regarding the mechanics of instituting the survey. This paper will elaborate on the survey process at a non-ARL library, from conducting the survey through the implementation of

service improvements in response to the results as provided by ARL.

Background

Jacksonville State University's (JSU) Houston Cole Library has a history of assessment going back to the late 80's. JSU is a regional, comprehensive, Master's I institution serving 9,000 students in northeastern Alabama. Its library has a collection of 650,000 volumes in addition to several thousand full-text electronic journal titles and a growing collection of E-books. It is somewhat unique in a university of its scope and size in that the collections and services are housed in a twelve story building with eight subject divisions, each staffed and maintained by a subject bibliographer. The University and, consequently, the library became serious about assessment after the 1984 publication of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) *Criteria for Accreditation*, (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges) which was based, in large part, on the concept of institutional effectiveness. Institutional effectiveness depends on an ongoing cycle of planning, assessment, and action in response to the assessment. Because JSU was due for reaffirmation of its accreditation in early 1993, planning and assessment became a priority before conducting an institutional self study.

Library assessment at JSU was done both internally and externally. While faculty and students had never been reluctant to express opinions regarding the library and its services, beginning in 1989, the library became proactive in trying to determine user satisfaction, or dissatisfaction, as the case may be. About that time the University went into assessment mode, appointing a full-time director of assessment and undertaking several campus-wide surveys preceding the arrival of the SACS visiting committee. Every survey conducted by the Office of Assessment had a library component (e.g. graduating seniors, alumni, undergraduates, employers). The library initiated its own assessment program in 1989, when it conducted the first faculty survey of library services. That survey has been used, with minor modifications, every five years since, thereby providing historical data to track improvement. In 1991, the library began a series of annual general satisfaction surveys based on Nancy Van House's *Measuring Academic Library Performance: A Practical Approach* (Van House). This, too, could be tracked year-by-year to note progress in satisfying library users. The aforementioned instruments were used until a new series of University-wide surveys was introduced coincident with the self study in preparation for the 2003 SACS reaccreditation visit. These, too, had a library component. Consequently, library personnel had a pretty good idea of user demand and perceptions when ARL introduced the LibQUAL+ survey to Alabama academic libraries.

Introduction of LibQUAL+

Each spring the directors of Alabama academic libraries that support graduate education meet for a two-day Network of Alabama Academic Libraries (NAAL) Planning Retreat. In 2002, the main topic for this event was LibQUAL+. An ARL representative presented an

overview and history of the development of LibQUAL+ and described "...the process by which gap theory, as expressed in SERVQUAL, was re-grounded for the research library environment through a series of interviews with faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates at participating universities across North America." (Kryllidou & Heath). The first application of LibQUAL+ was in a pilot program with twelve libraries in Spring 2000, and was partially supported by a U.S. Department of Education Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) grant. The second iteration of LibQUAL+ involved 43 libraries and the third would include 168 libraries in the spring of 2002.

The presentation explained how LibQUAL+ is conducted, the concept of gap theory, which measures ideal, minimal, and perceived service levels, and the benefits of peer comparisons through one standard survey administered over the Internet. Following the presentation, NAAL included in its Annual Plan as Objective 5.1.3 to "Encourage the implementation of LibQUAL+ for assessment of library services in an electronic environment." (Network of Alabama Academic Libraries).

By then Jacksonville State University was ready to sign on. NAAL had blessed LibQUAL+ and an accreditation visit was pending. The library determined to participate in the 2003 application of LibQUAL+ along with 307 other libraries in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, and the Netherlands.

LibQUAL+ Description

LibQUAL+ is a web-based survey administered annually by the Association of Research Libraries. Participation in the 2003 survey cost

\$2,000 for an individual library. The survey used a sample of an institution's online population broken down by demographic (faculty, graduate student, undergraduate) and asked a battery of 25 questions grouped in the categories of Access to Information, Affect of Service, Library as Place, and Personal Control. These determinants of collection adequacy, user services, facilities, and ease of users' access to information were fine-tuned over the previous iterations of the survey. Using a nine-point Likert scale, participants rated their minimal acceptable standard, their desired level of service, and their perceived actual level of service for each of the 25 criteria. Gap theory expects users' perceptions to fall within the range of minimal acceptable and desired level of service. Those dimensions where perceptions fall below minimum standards are prime candidates for immediate attention. Conversely, when perceptions exceed desired levels, the library excels in those dimensions. Most perceptions, however, fall within the minimum and desired levels of service. In late spring, ARL reported the library's demographics (who responded and when) and the scores on minimum, desired, and perceived in the 25 core categories and the four dimensions of service. Color radar charts graphically illustrate the degree to which perceptions fall within or outside the minimum-perceived boundaries, while bar charts of the four dimensions show strength and weakness among them. All of the aforementioned raw data and charts can be compared by individual library, type of library, consortium, peer group, or with the total universe of participants. In 2003, those participants numbered 308, including 221 American colleges and universities, 30 American community colleges, 22 American health sciences libraries, six military institutions, five public or state libraries, one law library, 20 British libraries, two French-

Canadian libraries, and one Dutch library. Several consortia, including NAAL, had scores reported for their participating members, and those provided a basis for comparison as well.

JSU Participation

The decision to participate in the 2003 LibQUAL+ survey was made in fall, 2002. Funds were very tight in fiscal year 2002-2003, with nothing budgeted for assessment. Consequently, a good bit of discussion took place as to the advisability of undertaking the survey in 2003. Those in favor cited the forthcoming SACS visit and the comprehensiveness of LibQUAL+ as opposed to the self-administered general satisfaction survey the library had used since 1991. The major drawback was the unbudgeted expense, although there was also some concern with the requirement that the library's designated LibQUAL+ specialist attend a two-day training session at the American Library Association (ALA) Midwinter meeting and then attend a session at the ALA Annual Conference to receive the results of the survey. The Midwinter meeting was in Philadelphia in 2003, and the Annual Conference was in Toronto that year. The library could not support out-of-state travel unless the traveler was presenting a paper, in which case partial university funding was available. Fortunately, the recently-hired Documents Librarian was presenting at the Government Documents Roundtable in Philadelphia, so that source of funding could be tapped. He was designated the LibQUAL+ contact and attended the training session in Philadelphia. While two days of training seemed like overkill, the requirement that someone go to Toronto to pick up the results of the survey almost doomed LibQUAL+ at JSU. As it turned out, the SARS epidemic in Toronto placed the ALA Conference in doubt. ARL relented on

the attendance requirement and provided the survey results over the Internet. The issue of the non-budgeted \$2,000 cost of LibQUAL+ was resolved, in part, by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, which was responsible for university assessment. In preparation for the SACS visit, that office agreed to split the survey cost with the library. With the addition of the Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs, who provided partial travel funds, and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness as stakeholders, LibQUAL+ became a university project rather than being limited to the library.

Survey Implementation

In preparing for the LibQUAL+ survey, one of the first steps was to determine the sample populations. The recommended sample counts for a large institution are 900 undergraduates, 600 graduates, and 600 faculty members. At the time of the survey JSU had only 366 faculty, excluding library faculty who were ineligible to participate, and administrative users with e-mail addresses in the database. It was decided that survey invitations would be sent to all patrons with a faculty or administrator status. For students, it was determined that JSU's proportion of undergraduates to graduates was a little higher than the average large institution, so the numbers were adjusted by moving 100 from the graduate count to the undergraduate count. The resultant numbers for the sample populations to be solicited for survey participation were 366 faculty, 500 graduate students, and 1000 undergraduate students for a total of 1866 invited participants.

JSU, like many schools, provides students with an e-mail address using a web-based mail client (the IMP Webmail client from the Horde Project). This e-mail address is used in the library patron database and by the University to

communicate with the students. Despite efforts by the University administration to promote the usage of these e-mail addresses, many of the students elect to use other e-mail addresses and do not read their University e-mail at all. University network administrators estimated that about a third of the students were actively reading their University e-mail. Under these conditions, a mass mailing sent to 1000 randomly chosen undergraduates would only be read by a little over 300.

In cooperation with the University network administrators, the library was able to get a list of all students who had read their e-mail in the last 30 days or who were forwarding their University e-mail to another account. It was believed that this would not introduce a significant sample bias, nor would it be significantly different in coverage from institutions that rely on self-reported e-mail addresses for their patron database.

The systems manager used this list of active e-mail accounts to write a program to look up each address in the library database and divide the list into undergraduates (2775 patrons) and graduates (679 patrons). Another program was written to randomly select, without replacement, 500 graduates from the list of active graduate e-mail addresses and 1000 undergraduates from the list of active undergraduate e-mail addresses.

Participation in the survey for undergraduates was 84 or 8.4 percent of the patrons invited. For graduates there were 38 participants for a 7.6 percent response rate. For faculty there were 89 respondents for a 24.3 percent response rate. In all, the survey generated 211 responses out of 1866 invitations, for a total response rate of 11.3%. JSU's number of respondents falls in the 203-293 range shared by six

of the nine Alabama participating libraries. Two other Alabama libraries had fewer than 100 respondents while the ninth enjoyed a sample of 657 students and faculty.

Survey Results

LibQUAL+ recommends a carrot and stick approach in administering the survey. The carrot takes the form of a small prize to be awarded through a blind drawing to one faculty respondent and one student respondent. In the JSU survey this prize was a meal for two at a popular local restaurant. On the other hand, the stick consisted of follow-up emails to those who did not respond to the initial mailing. Two follow-ups were sent, and with the help of the restaurant lottery, JSU fielded a representative sample.

When the results of LibQUAL+ were posted on the Internet there was great interest in how the library did. Were users' perceptions within their expectations and how did they compare with perceptions at other libraries? LibQUAL+ asks participants not to discuss head-to-head comparisons with other libraries. However, one can assess a library's survey results against the average of all participants or the average of a consortium. Results are reported in several formats. The aforementioned radar view of the 25 core survey questions (fig. 1) and the histogram showing the service adequacy gap on the four dimensions of library service quality (fig. 2) are useful for illustrating the general results. For analysis, the listing of Minimum Mean, Desired Mean, and Perceived Mean for each of the 25 elements (fig. 3), the four Dimensions of Service (fig. 4), and the General Satisfaction and Information Literacy Summaries (fig. 5) are most useful. Those numbers can be compared directly with the means for the entire LibQUAL+ population or

consortia. They also can be used for direct comparison with peer libraries.

In the overall survey results JSU did quite well. The radar chart (fig. 1) shows service quality perceptions falling well above minimum acceptable quality. While perceptions on none of the elements exceeded desired levels, LP-1 (quiet space for individual activities) came close. Likewise, quality perceptions for the four dimensions of service (Access to Information, Affect of Service, Library as Place, and Personal Control) are well within the range of minimum to desired quality. Interestingly, Library as Place had the lowest user expectation but user perception came closest to meeting the desired level of service among the four dimensions (fig. 2).

For benchmarking, comparisons were made with peer institutions, three academic library consortia, and the mean values for all 221 college and university library participants. All comparisons were quite gratifying. On the four dimensions of service JSU exceeded the perceived means of all colleges and universities, the NAAL consortium libraries, the New York 3R's College and University Libraries, and the OhioLINK consortium libraries. On the individual elements, the JSU perceptions exceeded New York 3R's and OhioLINK on all 25 aspects of service, and all but three elements of the NAAL averages. Those three were: A comfortable and inviting location (JSU 7.55 vs. NAAL 7.63); Modern equipment that lets one easily access needed information (JSU 7.31 vs. NAAL 7.38); and Making information easily accessible for independent use (JSU 7.37 vs. NAAL 7.38). Besides the 25 elements of service quality, LibQUAL+ asked three questions relating to general satisfaction and five questions on information literacy outcomes. JSU exceeded the means of NAAL, New

York 3R's, and OhioLINK on all elements of both series of questions.

Use of Survey Results

While the survey results are very helpful in pointing out service quality strengths and weaknesses, results alone cannot identify specific problems. Fortunately, LibQUAL+ provides space for written comments and 70 of the respondents made use of that space. While most comments were positive, and in some cases very complimentary, a few areas of concern were identified. Those comments indicating the need for improvement tracked the three elements that scored lower than the NAAL averages, so there was confirmation of where to focus attention to quality. All three of those areas have since been addressed by the library.

The desire for a comfortable and inviting location could be explained, in part, by a major exterior renovation project completed just before the survey. Exterior marble sheathing panels were removed because, through expansion and contraction, they were working free of their building anchors and presented a potential hazard. They were replaced with granite panels which, on a 12 story building, is a major project. Construction involved much disruption in terms of entrance and egress, noise (drills, jackhammers, etc.) and dirt. The interior and furnishings of the library were 30 years old and were very worn in places, so respondents made exterior versus interior comparisons in the comments. This quality deficit has been addressed by a major interior renovation including painting, new carpeting, new elevators, and reupholstering of 30 year old soft seating. While there is no solution to the collection fragmentation problems inherent in the subject division arrangement over eight stack floors, the interior refurbishing will go a long way in

improving any "comfortable and inviting place" shortcomings.

An interesting observation on interpreting this presumed shortcoming is that the two lowest superiority means registered (the gap between Desired Mean and Perceived Mean) occurred within the Library as Place dimension. In fact, the Comfortable and Inviting Location element enjoyed the second smallest superiority gap (-0.21), behind only Quiet Space for Individual Activities (-0.10), which indicates that users either had lower expectations for these two elements than other NAAL participants or else they were very forgiving of the recent construction disruptions.

Comments on modern equipment centered on computer response times and adequacy of copying and printing equipment. Access to the library catalog and databases is through Endeavor's WebVoyage. Equipment to support access was adequate but web access was slow for several reasons. Since the survey the library has upgraded its local area network and the University upgraded the campus backbone. Further improvement was made by switching faculty and administrative Internet access to a new service provider (BellSouth) while leaving student and dormitory access on the existing provider (Alabama Supercomputer Network). Response times in the library, and campus-wide, have benefited greatly from these changes.

The concern with copiers and printers was addressed with the campus-wide implementation of the Uniprint debit card system. Card readers have been installed on computer print stations and eight public service photocopy machines, all of which previously operated on a cash-only basis. There is still a need to upgrade microfilm printing equipment, although the four reader-

printers now available seem to handle the demand for printing. Quality-of-print issues will be resolved with the purchase of microform digital scanning equipment.

The third area where JSU fell short of the NAAL average was in “making information easily accessible for independent use.” Comments fell in two areas, both of which were concerns of non-traditional students. Off-campus access to library databases was difficult going through the University’s proxy server. To improve that access the library purchased its own server and EZ Proxy software, which allowed off-campus access based on identification number and last name. That eliminated the need for reconfiguring one’s browser and resolved individual problems with various service providers encountered with the earlier proxy server.

The other cause for comment was the weekend and evening hours, especially in the summer, which were deemed inadequate by non-traditional students who may be holding down full-time jobs while working on a degree. This was addressed by eliminating the summer schedule, which had reduced library hours from 87 per week to 67 from May through July. While library hours are never adequate for all users, the change to one schedule will make the library much more accessible in the summer.

Summary

Running LibQUAL+ was a valuable experience. The information derived from it was much more detailed than that obtained from earlier General Satisfaction surveys or the University-wide surveys conducted by the Assessment Office. A good bit of preparation went into JSU’s first iteration of LibQUAL+. Training at the ALA Midwinter meeting was extensive and

expensive, but was needed only once. Likewise, development of programs to extract a sample of library users required some effort by systems personnel. The actual conduct of the survey was web-based, so no mailings or handing out forms in the library were necessary. The results were tabulated and distributed by ARL, and they were presented in clear tables and meaningful graphs. Comparisons with individual libraries, selected peer groups, consortia, and the universe of LibQUAL+ participants were easily made.

Most importantly, the survey results and accompanying comments of users provided enough specificity that direct action could be brought to bear. In fact, library personnel had a pretty good idea of the shortcomings identified by LibQUAL+. Confirmation by the survey provided funding impetus in some cases or the ammunition to follow through on a controversial administrative change in the case of summer schedule expansion. Finally, the positive written responses and above average elements of service quality reaffirmed the library’s mission and objectives while providing a roadmap for future direction.

JSU will not sign up for LibQUAL+ in 2004, but will consider a two-year cycle with participation in 2005.

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Book Review

Johnston, Carolyn Ross.

Cherokee Women in Crisis: Trail of Tears, Civil War, and Allotment, 1838-1907.

Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003. 227 pp.

During 2004, the Classical Theater of Harlem opened a new production of a 2,400 year old play entitled, *The Trojan Women* by Euripides. The script adaptation contains words from women survivors of current day conflicts in Sierra Leone, Somalia and Iraq. The ancient and modern testimonies on the horrors of war and its aftermath blended seamlessly into one another.¹ Wars fought elsewhere in time or place are all the same for the women and children caught in them. Seldom are their tribulations given center stage save for this ancient, exceptional, and transcendent drama.

Recently, historian Carolyn Johnston placed Native American women at center stage in her examination of wars waged in the New World. The Cherokee women she studied bore three major, brutal assaults on their lives and culture. These were staggered campaigns to destroy, played out intermittently through two centuries unlike a single theatrical climax that ended the ten year siege of Troy.

Author Carolyn Ross Johnston is a professor of history and American Studies at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida. She examined the impact of three significant events in Cherokee history through the non rose colored lens of gender. Like the Trojan women **what** was endured is a part of their story. But **how** Cherokee women endured and eventually triumphed remained largely untold. By looking at the heretofore neglected history of female members of the nation who survived removal, the Civil War and allotment she added a new and more complex dimension. Her vast bibliography impresses scholars and laymen alike.

There is a necessary preface to these calamities. Cherokees lived in present day Georgia, North and South Carolina, Tennessee and Alabama. Alongside their men, Cherokee women lived contentedly in the Southeast. All spoke a language devoid of gender bias. Supernaturals worshipped were the Corn Mother, Sulu and Kana ti, the Lucky Hunter. In the matrilineal and matrilocal society of pre-contact times these women were sexually liberated, worked the land, owned property, deliberated on matters of war and peace and divorced husbands with ease. Yet white ministers viewing them for the first time labeled such practices as scandalous and sinful in their personal journals. Through the contact period, influential white missionaries in essence preached adoption of a patriarchal social system. A prosperous, anglo-european like upper class of mixed ancestry, due to intermarriage, began to emerge. For females, it favored domesticity, school attendance and church going over farming and conjuring. The adopted anglo legal system pushed women outside the circles of decision making as well. Class and ancestry became the dividing lines between resisting, selectively incorporating or totally accepting these more passive notions of female conduct. Johnston argues that repressed tension over contested gender roles finally erupted during periods of highest stress –removal, the Civil War and allotment. In other words, women did not comfortably or quickly accept the upset of their central role in Cherokee society.

A series of formal cessions of land to white settlers and then gold seekers begun as early as 1814 deprived the Cherokees of their homeland. The last ghastly chapter of land grabbing in the East occurred in defiance of a Supreme Court ruling. We know it as “The Trail of Tears.” During the harsh winter of 1838-1839, the U.S. Army rounded-up and force marched Cherokees to

Oklahoma. Four thousand souls perished en route. During the walk west, women were often the most vulnerable population. Many of them were pregnant or nursing babies, while many others were raped. Yet with their men unarmed, powerless and demoralized, the women kept families together. Upon arrival in Oklahoma, their agricultural skills kept tribal members alive.

When Cherokee men went off to the Civil War, women resumed farming duties withstanding raids on livestock, robberies of precious household goods and rape. There were Cherokee women fighters, raiders and spies for both sides. Divided loyalties brought on factional fighting among women of the elites and the traditional non-slaveholding class.

Communal land holdings were reinstated once the Cherokees were west of the Mississippi. Disrupted clan and familial ties were patched back together. Then the allotment policy began the twentieth century onslaught on tribal sovereignty as railroads homesteaders and the discovery of oil on Indian land conspired to reduce much of the Cherokee land base in Oklahoma. Tribal members fought it with myriad stalling tactics, legal actions and reintroduction of traditional ceremonies for spiritual uplift.

Professor Johnston looked for more than a chronology of victimization that this trio of events certainly calls to mind. Her treatment restores dignity and agency to these “conquered” women who really never gave up. She examined the confusion and contentiousness among the sexes and social classes over gender roles. She looked at their collective strength, and sagacity over time. It all led to present day re-emergence of powerful women symbolized most notably by the rise of Wilma Mankiller. From 1985 to 1995 she won tribal elections to serve as the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma.

¹ Jefferson, Margo, “After the War, Before the Slavery, Steeping in Civilization’s Tatters,” *The New York Times*, April 7, 2004 [newspaper on-line] available from <http://theater2.nytimes.com/2004/04/07/theater/reviews/07TROJ.html;Internet>; accessed 12 April 2004.

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