2010: Managing and Delivering Reference Services
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JLAMS, the electronic Journal of the Library Administration and Management Section of the New York Library Association, continues its fifth year, and we are privileged to introduce the Spring 2010 JLAMS.

JLAMS provides a valuable outlet for the dissemination of articles, academic papers, and essays of interest to administrators and managers of all types of libraries: academic, public, school and special libraries. As administrators and managers, we have a lot in common, but we have few places to share what we know. JLAMS was the first peer-reviewed journal in NYLA, and the goal was to set a high standard for future publications. Readers of JLAMS are well-served by our team of referees, as are those whose contributions are published here. Submissions are always welcome. For information on article submissions, editorial policy, a submission form and more, visit the JLAMS website page at http://www.nyla.org/index.php?page_id=922.

This issue is our first themed issue and we would like to thank Carol Lee Anderson for helping to coordinate the effort and her team at UAlbany for proposing the idea last year. We are pleased with the results and happy to present information on a topic that has been in the last few years of even greater interest to libraries with the advent and growth of new electronic forms of data presentation.

JLAMS is made possible by NYLA membership. LAMS receives funding based upon the number of people who select LAMS as their primary NYLA section, as well as by those who pay an additional $5.00 to add LAMS as a secondary section. Please keep this in mind when renewing your NYLA membership. And thanks for your support!
How can we deliver relevant services and research support to our constituencies in an environment of shifting resources and evolving user expectations and needs? As a result of ongoing discussions at regular departmental meetings at UAlbany, we proposed a theme issue to JLAMS editor Richard Naylor who enthusiastically supported our project.

Members of the Reference Department at the University at Albany continually investigate, discuss, and initiate alternative service delivery responding to an ever-changing information landscape. 2010: Managing and Delivering Reference Services address some of the issues we are grappling with as we consider services in our shifting environment. At the same time, we recognize we are part of New York’s library community and that we all benefit from sharing information regarding current practices.

Critical to planning the delivery of services and justifying and deploying resources are methodologies for reference data collection and analysis. Jean McLaughlin discusses reference transaction data analysis in Reference Transaction Assessment: A Survey of New York State Academic and Public Libraries. Also described are automated assessment methods that add value in many library environments. McLaughlin focuses on reference services and continuous improvement in light of rapidly changing technology options.

While not always a traditional part of reference departments, federal depository collections have an impact on reference services. In New York State Federal Depository Libraries: Entering a New Era, Catherine M. Dwyer looks at the changing nature of federal depository collections saying that “New York State is an excellent microcosm for examining the dramatic changes facing federal depository libraries.” Dwyer examines the current state of New York federal depositories as reference librarians grapple with the transition to online government information.

Jane Kessler’s Reference Collections in New York State: Report of a Survey, presents the practices of managers of reference collections at public and academic libraries in New York State regarding their reference collections including usage, size, composition, weeding practices, etc. Kessler notes: “Much has been written about the impact of digital reference on print reference collections. What has the impact been on libraries in New York State?” Read her article to find out.

UAlbany’s Reference Department significantly supports the University Libraries’ outreach initiatives. Carol Lee Anderson’s Reaching Out: Programming and Partnerships discusses utilizing programming to further serve the library’s community and to bring users to the library, whether in person or virtually. Outreach and programming initiatives enhance the library’s profile in its community, and, in turn, garner additional support for the library, inform users about the library, its resources and services, and add value and quality to the community.
Reference Transaction Assessment: A Survey of New York State Academic and Public Libraries

by Jean McLaughlin

Abstract: Due to ongoing library skill development needs, technology impacts, and different patterns of librarian-patron interactions at the reference desk, librarians are seeking the best ways to provide reference services. Really understanding reference service activity requires tracking and assessment. This study reviews reference transaction assessment methodologies of New York State academic and public libraries. Results indicate that the majority of organizations use transaction data for internal and external reporting, with 50% or more also using data for adjusting service hours, staffing, and monitoring trends. More than 70% would like to improve their assessment of transaction data. The majority continue to use handwritten tick mark or tally sheets, while a number of tools designed or adapted for reference assessment provide options for additional automation of the process.

Introduction:

More than 130 years ago, Samuel Swett Green (1876) published some of the first reference service recommendations, including the personal assistance librarians could provide to patrons seeking information. He suggested four points within his discourse on libraries’ and librarians’ roles: (1) engage the patrons and direct them to the best sources of information, (2) determine patron needs and apply that to developing the collection (3) promote the library and its usefulness, and (4) provide assistance in selecting good works. For decades, the personalized service embodied in Green’s plea has differentiated libraries from the self-service model common to all consumers. More recently, authors of journal articles and speakers at conference sessions question the need for reference service in the way it has been delivered to date. Patrons now have direct control of tools for access and discovery: databases, indexes, full text searches, and other portals to virtual and print collections. This trend and other observations relat-
ed to library service prompt the need to appraise the evolving library-patron interaction. How is reference transaction assessment providing data for decision making to support the changes needed?

This study examines one aspect of assessing reference services, the reference transaction. A survey of a targeted library population provides a perspective on current practices of reference transaction assessment in New York State academic and public libraries. Although the type of reference questions may differ by library, assessment may take similar forms, enabling libraries to share assessment practices to establish efficient data collection systems, to analyze trends over time, and to pursue actionable items or implement change. Transactions may take place at the reference desk or in other locations in and outside the library. The focus on reference transaction data, alone, is intentional. Counting transactions has long been the standard measure of activity at the reference desk. External organizations gather and publish library data, including quantitative data about reference transactions: Association of Research Libraries (ARL), Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), and other organization-specific entities such as the State University of New York (SUNY). After gathering and reporting these data, libraries may find that data usefulness is limited; it is difficult to make meaningful changes with traditional quantitative views of reference activity. As a result, some libraries may be considering or making changes to assessment practices. Study results presented here indicate confidence in the current and future importance of reference transaction assessment for issues ranging from staffing to collection development to patron satisfaction. Further, the results strongly indicate that those responsible for assessment would like to improve and make more informed decisions for their organization based on these data.

**Literature Review**

Literature on reference transactions covers a broad range of topics, from the personal interaction first characterized by Green (1876) to a contemporary array of mediated and non-mediated searches and services. Green, as noted in the introduction, provides an early description of the core functions of reference service. He was attentive to the personal interaction of the librarian and the library user. In 1992, *The Reference Librarian* published a series of articles about the librarian as mediator or information intermediary. Ten years later, Saxton and Richardson (2002) describe intermediation services as a class of activities representing interpersonal question-answering scenarios, a description that may be more relevant to the librarian-patron interaction that occurs today. These interactions, in multiple forms, are the activities assessed at the reference desk and beyond. Katz’ (2002) introduction to evaluating reference services discusses qualities of tools used for assessment: validity, reliability, ability to assess multiple factors, and outcome factors that demonstrate cause and effect relationships. Others focus on levels of assessment and studies for replication and implementation (Saxton and Richardson, Baker and Lancaster, Whitlatch).

In 2008, the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) Board of Directors of the American Library Association (ALA) approved the definition of a reference transaction developed by a subgroup of the Reference Services Section (RSS) Executive Committee. “Reference Transactions are information consultations in which library staff recommend, interpret, evaluate, and/or use information resources to help others to meet particular information needs. Reference transactions do not include formal instruction or exchanges that provide assistance with locations, schedules, equipment, supplies, or policy statements.” Developed by the RUSA/RSS Evaluation of Reference and User Services Committee, *Measuring and Assessing Reference Services and Resources: A Guide* is an assessment resource (RUSA 2010). As noted in section 3.1, the RUSA/RSS guide suggests that both demand for reference service and patterns of use are information available from tallies of reference transactions. In addition
to suggestions to aid in planning assessment activities, this guide provides guidelines on measurements for generating quantitative and qualitative data.

Hiller and Self (2004) state that a simple definition of data is a record of observations, facts, or information collected in different forms: from transactions, observations, surveys, or interviews. Analyzing data provides information from which to draw inferences. With a focus on overall library assessment, Ackermann (2007) describes the Association of Research Library (ARL) assessment tools such as LibQUAL+® and related software. These tools do not have a specific reference service focus, but promising tools in the reference environment, Libstats and Desk Tracker™, can capture newer views of transactions at and beyond the reference desk. In his review article, Kuruppu (2007) highlights evaluation methodologies in the literature of reference service evaluation, describing both quantitative and qualitative methods and approaches for meeting internal goals and addressing external professional standards. The best approach, he states, is using the one most suitable to the task, is an ongoing process, and is an integral part of reference service. He cites Van House, et al., when suggesting measures should be valid, reliable, practical, and useful.

Methodology
The focus of this study is New York State academic and public libraries. Using the 61st edition of the American Library Directory 2008-2009, the population included libraries noted as College and University (C), College and University Law (CL) or Medicine (CM), and Public and State Libraries (P), including libraries in the City University of New York (CUNY) and State University of New York (SUNY) systems. University Centers, Health Science Centers, Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Specialized Colleges, Colleges of Technology or Agriculture and Technology, Community Colleges, Statutory Colleges, and one other affiliated school comprised the SUNY library population. In all populations, focus was on the main college or university library and excluded departmental libraries as defined in the American Library Directory (Information Today 2009). Exceptions to this were the inclusion of law libraries, medical libraries, as noted above (CL or CM designations), or libraries primarily used by another entity such as a SUNY school physically located on the campus of another university. The total academic library population was 197 libraries. The public library population, defined by a search of the Library Statistics Web page of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), focused on “central libraries,” providing a result list of more than 750 libraries (IMLS Library statistics: Search for public libraries). To further limit the population, a search of Fiscal Year 2007 IMLS Library Statistics Data Files generated a list of public libraries that met these criteria: libraries that recorded 1000 or more total annual reference transactions and had 9.5 or more total staff (IMLS Library statistics: Data files). This qualification yielded a public library population of 213 libraries for study. With an aggregate of 410 New York State academic and public libraries, the author selected the contact for each library, typically those persons with the assumed day-to-day responsibility for collecting and reporting reference transactions. In academic libraries, this might be the head of reference, the head of public services, or an assessment librarian. In public libraries, the limited number of generally available library staff listings made it difficult to identify specific contacts so the preferred contact for public libraries was the library director. The exception was in large metropolitan library organizations, where branches were excluded and where there was a person identified as head of public services, reference, or assessment for the central library organization. Assisting in compiling possible contacts and contact information, a reference professional and a library school graduate student worker searched Web pages and other sources to help compile the most up-to-date contact information available.

In November, 2009, the author sent e-mails to specific contacts and addresses, inviting each person to respond or forward the Web-based survey link to the person most directly responsible for assessing reference services. Using a generally available commercial survey tool, the author sent the same survey to academic
and public libraries. Included in the e-mail was a link to RUSA’s (2010) description of measuring and assessing reference transactions to ensure that all participants understood that assessment encompassed a broad span of activities: from capturing transaction activity only to in-depth analysis of activities. After the initial contact, a “thank you” and follow-up e-mail message provided a second chance for the identified contact to respond or forward the survey to another contact. The survey close date was November 30, 2009. Because this survey was anonymous and voluntary, responders or specific institutions that participated were not tracked. The intent was to gain a better understanding of a process of reference assessment in these libraries, to gain a sense of whether libraries are in transition with the process, and to understand how libraries would like to use data more effectively in the future.

The survey focus was on five areas: assessment methods, data collection and use, data collection and analysis tools, satisfaction with the assessment process, and information about the organization. To facilitate categorization of organizations and responses, responders were asked to identify their organization as a college or university library, community college library, or public library; as a general academic, general public, or specialized library; and whether or not the organization was part of SUNY. In addition, responders were asked to identify collection size, the number of reference transactions in a typical month during peak use, and the title of the person who oversees day-to-day operations of reference transaction assessment activities at their institution. Categories for responses and space for identifying other titles for the person responsible were provided. Survey questions were designed to elicit responses related to these questions about New York State academic and public libraries:

- Is reference transaction assessment practiced?
- How are assessment data used?
- Are libraries satisfied with their assessment practices?
- Which tools are used to collect and analyze data?

With regard to the survey responses, the author was particularly interested in understanding the following:

- Is there a methodology employed that goes beyond tick marks?
- Is reference transaction assessment useful?
- Is most data collection automated or not?
- How do the data collected match the information needed for decision making?
- How can the responses from the survey help libraries go an additional step or more beyond current practice and enhance data-driven decisions?

Library Profiles
Ninety-four contacts responded to the survey. With a total of 410 surveys sent out, this is a 23% response rate. Response data are available for 88 of the 94 or for the 93.6% who completed the survey. Table 1 shows a summary of responders and type of organization. This includes the organization’s focus: college or university, community college, public, or other. Table 2 shows the number of responders that identified themselves as part of a SUNY organization. This included SUNY university centers, health science centers, colleges of arts and sciences, technology or agriculture centers, community colleges, or statutory colleges such as the ones physically located at Cornell University. Eleven responders noted an organization with a specialized focus, e.g., art, medicine, law, agriculture, business, technology, and theology.
Table 1
Number and percentage of responses by type of organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of organization</th>
<th>Non-SUNY</th>
<th>SUNY</th>
<th>Responders</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College or university library</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community college library</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public library</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of these</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total responses</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This organization described itself as having a specialized focus, but did not categorize itself as an academic or public library.

Additional organizational characteristics provide further detail about the library population studied. These characteristics include collection size and number of reference transactions (Table 3) and identification of the person who oversees the day-to-day operations of reference transaction assessment at the organization (Table 4).
Table 3: Number of academic, including community college, libraries by collection size and number of reference transactions per peak month view

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collection Size</th>
<th>Number of Ref Transactions -- Academic Libraries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 250,000</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250,000 to 1 million</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;1 million</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Number of public libraries by collection size and number of reference transactions per peak month view

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collection Size</th>
<th>Number of Ref Transactions -- Public Libraries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 250,000</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250,000 to 1 million</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;1 million</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Titles of those with responsibility for reference transaction assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Academic Libraries</th>
<th>Public Libraries</th>
<th>Total N=87</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Library Director</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Public Services</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Reference or Reference and Instruction</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Librarian/Other title with an “assessment hat”</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference Librarian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Learning Commons</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Information and Educational Services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager of Library Services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Family Services (Teen, Adult, Reference)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessment Methodologies Findings: Organizations that assess transactions

For those who affirmed that they assessed reference transactions, sixty-four or 72.7% note that their primary assessment method is to record every transaction. Twenty-four or 27.3% use sampling as their primary method. Almost 96% use transaction counts on a regular basis. At the same percentage rate, 20.5% use transaction feedback (e.g., satisfaction) and sampling for specific studies or reporting requirements. Only 11.4% use obtrusive or unobtrusive testing or observation and 2.3% did not list any kind of assessment related to individual transactions. The range of data collected is extensive but, by far, the most common data collected are number of transactions, type of question, transaction day or date, and the type of service. See Table 6 for details.

Table 6: Data collected about transactions for organizations that assess transactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data collected</th>
<th>Number of organizations N=87</th>
<th>Percent of organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of transactions</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>98.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of service (in person, virtual)</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of question (reference, directional, equipment)</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>80.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transaction location (reference desk, office, outside of library, other service points)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transaction time, shift, or range of times</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transaction day or date</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>81.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of transaction (minutes or range)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of transaction (descriptive categories such as brief, extended)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources used</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number or type of referrals</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call number, subject, or discipline</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific question asked</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty or complexity of question</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic data</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked about current and future uses of transaction data, most responders will continue to use data for reporting. More than 50% use data for staffing decisions and to monitor trends. Some comments about additional uses included data for library annual reports, to inform the development of instructional efforts, and to keep track of what is not clear to library users, e.g., where books are located. One comment noted the need to keep better demographic data about who is using reference services and how. Future uses of data showed significant increases in desired use of data for decisions about collection development, training, reference question database development, and measuring patron satisfaction.
Table 7: Current and future uses of transaction data: academic and public libraries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of data</th>
<th>Current use of data N=84</th>
<th>Future use of data N=78</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal reporting</td>
<td>92.9%</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External reporting</td>
<td>81.0%</td>
<td>64.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracking or adjusting service hours</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffing</td>
<td>56.0%</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring trends</td>
<td>53.6%</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection development</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To build a reference question database</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure patron satisfaction</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not collect data or do not use</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked how satisfied they were with their assessment of transaction data, 17.9% stated that they were satisfied. Significantly, 72.6% stated either that they were satisfied, but would like to improve, or that they would like to improve their assessment of transaction data. Only 6% noted that there were not satisfied. Based on these responses, it appears that the majority of responders believe that assessing reference transaction data is of value and most responders are satisfied with their assessment, but would like to improve.

Table 8: How satisfied are you with your assessment of reference transactions?

When asked about the most important decision or improvement they hoped to achieve by reviewing or analyzing reference transaction data, thirty-two of seventy-one or more than 45% of the responders
noted staffing in multiple dimensions: how and when to staff, use of librarians versus other staff, number needed, hours to staff or, in general, optimizing staffing. One comment echoed the comments of others: “We want to make educated decisions about staffing, and to have a knowledge of the types of services that are important to our school. Eventually, we hope to incorporate more on satisfaction of reference transactions for reporting and self-improvement.” Almost 20% mentioned, specifically, that they would like to use data to understand customer satisfaction, while 14% would like to use data for collection development. One responder noted that data collected validated an observation that more complex transactions and the time required to answer them offset the lower number of transactions, while another responder seeks to determine whether the investment in staffing a traditional reference desk is justified. Should other models be considered? Other responses included data needed to:

- understand trends
- document reference activity
- measure the quality of reference service
- identify training needs
- understand resources and tools used and needed
- comprehend the types and complexity of transactions and services needed
- develop the reference collection and make general collection changes, including filling in collection gaps
- recognize “how we can continuously be reflective about our service and constantly strive to improve… and adjust to the changing demographics of our students”
- decide on service points
- justify budgets and the need to hire more librarians
- define data needed to build a reference question database
- demonstrate the relationship between reference, instruction, and circulation and meeting student needs
- identify data not collected but needed, and to advance data collection efficiencies

Data collection tools used by organizations that assess transactions
Sixty-nine or 82.1% of the responders use handwritten tick mark or tally sheets. The next most frequent response was use of spreadsheets at 41.7%. Specific to reference, 15.5% use tools that are part of a virtual reference package. Also reference-related or adapted for reference assessment, 19% stated that they use commercial or open source software or were in an evaluation stage for a tool. See Table 9 for more discussion on data collection tools.

Assessment Methodologies Findings: Organizations that do not assess transactions
Those who said that they did not assess reference transactions totaled six of the ninety-four original responders or 6.4%. Three provided enough data to note that two were academic libraries and one was a public library. Two noted that they did collect counts for transactions or types of service. One was satisfied with their assessment of reference transactions; one would like to improve; and one was not satisfied. When asked how they would like to use transaction data in the future, two of the non-assessors responded. One wanted to track/adjust service hours for staffing per traffic patterns and to monitor trends, while another responded that they did not collect data or did not plan to use transaction data in the future. Not surprisingly, no data collection tools were noted, except for the use of virtual reference software tools.
Reference desk staffing and patron satisfaction

There have been a number of journal articles written with a reference desk staffing focus, which may be of interest to those who would like to use data for decisions on staffing. Dennison (1999) proposes a statistical approach to staffing, with methods to determine the best time for double staffing or for para-professionals to field the simpler questions in a tiered reference approach. Ryan (2008) reports on a study of reference desk transactions that focused on matching staffing needs by transaction categories, determining costs per transaction, and determining the cost-effectiveness of the reference desk. Ryan concludes that study results in the Stetson University environment prompt a need to look at reference desk staffing, but suggests that more investigation is needed to determine the costs of new reference models. Understanding satisfaction with service was also a recurrent theme in response to the “single, most important decision or improvement.” To address user satisfaction, academic librarians in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania developed a questionnaire that captures both the provider’s and patron’s perspectives. “This questionnaire measures user and provider perceptions of the success of individual reference transactions as measured by whether users received the information they needed, learned something about how to find information, learned how to evaluate information, and whether both parties were satisfied with the reference interaction. [That w]e consistently rated ourselves lower was a positive lesson for our reference providers. One final example from our test: the users’ mean responses for transactions involving a librarian were consistently higher than for those involving staff…This result may help us justify why we have them [librarians] on the reference desk instead of less formally qualified staff” (Miller 2008).

Automating Data Collection

Automation is critical to making improvements in the data collection process and in freeing up time for analysis that leads to effective decision making. Per survey results, more that 82% of the libraries surveyed continue to use handwritten tick mark or tally sheets. This means that all tick sheet data must be transcribed into a reporting medium such as a spreadsheet. This process can be time consuming, prone to errors, and inflexible. Features in free or commercial products add value by enabling libraries to define data and reporting requirements, although it is necessary to strike a balance between creating easy to use forms and the desire to generate more complex data for reporting. Some tools may produce easily used data (depending on how forms are designed); other reporting may require additional analysis efforts and refinement of data to meet libraries’ needs. In any case, free software or even commercially available products do have associated costs in terms of the development of forms, definition of standard reporting requirements, and ongoing evaluation to ensure that the appropriate data collection are being collected. Some libraries may decide that the value added is not sufficient; others may view the evaluation of tools as a starting point in improving assessment practices. Some common, general-use tools reported in the survey include Microsoft Word, Excel®, and Access® software; FileMaker® Pro database; open source or freely available software such as OpenOffice.org, Google Docs™ program, Zoho® Creator program; tools that are part of a virtual reference software package or part of the ILS; and software developed at the institution. Table 9 lists commercial or freely available packages used to capture reference transaction or services data. Finally, SurveyMonkey.com was listed as a possibility for satisfaction surveys. No one listed the use of statistical analysis software packages or information technology help desk software.
Table 9: Reference Transaction Data Collection Software

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Software</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Cost?</th>
<th>More information</th>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gimlet</td>
<td>Web-based tool for information desks. Track questions, build a knowledge base, and tag data for searching.</td>
<td>N (for first service point)</td>
<td>None found</td>
<td><a href="http://gimlet.us/">http://gimlet.us/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Inclusion in or exclusion from Table 9 is not an endorsement or lack of endorsement for any tool. Software functionality and availability is subject to significant change in even brief time frames. Libraries should follow standard evaluation procedures including, for Web-based tools, any issues related to data privacy, guarantee of access, and ownership of data.

**Qualitative Data: Classification Systems for Reference Transaction Data**

RUSA (2010) asserts that both qualitative and quantitative data may add value in the analysis process. Henry and Neville (2008) tested reference question classification systems, a form of qualitative transaction data, as an accurate view of desk activity to inform staffing and training decisions. They favor Warner’s system as more applicable when compared to Katz’ classifications due to Warner’s skills...
Reference Transaction Assessment

and strategy-based approach versus Katz’ resource type or time-based approach. Gerlich’s (2010) Reference Effort Assessment Data (READ) Scale© provides additional classification categories, ranging from READ Scale 1, a directional question, to READ Scale 6, a question that may extend to in-depth research beyond that reference shift and not possible to answer on the spot. With the READ Scale, questions are rated according to the effort, knowledge, and skills used by the service provider. This rating tool provides qualitative data measures and can be used for training, continuing education, staffing, and reporting. In 2004, in the quest to develop tiered reference, the newly merged academic and public libraries, the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Library in San Jose, California, adopted the Warner model and determined it would be useful in almost any library (Meserve et al. 2009). Neville and Henry (2009) provide follow up on all three of these classification systems (Warner, Katz, Gerlich) along with a plea for national reporting agencies to create new standards for reference transactions that better reflect twenty-first century libraries. Depending on the flexibility of the data collection software, libraries can customize their data collection tools with their classification system of choice to capture qualitative aspects of the reference transaction.

University at Albany

With assessment practices driven by local needs, organizations’ configuration of tools, requirements, and objectives will vary. University at Albany’s reference transaction assessment configuration contains these components: Desk Tracker from Compendium Library Services LLC for automated data collection; use of the READ Scale to categorize transactions by complexity and professional expertise required and built into Desk Tracker forms; and a MS Access database for more complex reporting. The University Libraries capture reference activity at three locations: the University Library, Science Library, and Dewey Library, which caters to graduate students. With this configuration of data collection tools and analysis of data, among other actions, we have been able to change University Library hours and staffing on Saturdays to meet less complex reference needs; adjust hours on Friday to reduce morning and late afternoon staffing due to less traffic; and analyze trends relative to historical staffing needs close to holidays or breaks. This may include increasing staffing as students gather resources and clarify research strategies as they head out the door or decreasing staffing when most of the students are actually gone. Although it would be ideal to drive staffing with concrete algorithms for each two-hour reference staffing slot, data per reference shift are not that consistent. More useful is targeting hours for further observation and potential future adjustment as more semesters worth of data become available. Some reference transactions transpire in different locations, including librarian offices and campus locations; these supplement regular reference desk hours and are recorded as “away from the desk.” Reference transaction assessment strives to encompass all locations.

Expanding Assessment Parameters

A New York State study at the University of Rochester sought to answer the question about what students really do when they write their research papers. Reference service was assumed to be in great demand during this endeavor and one area of study was the use of the reference desk. Foster, the library anthropologist, compares the personal and relationship-oriented service models of the librarian, typically two or more decades older than the student population, to the self-service models most familiar to the student library patron. Students, who feel comfortable with “good-enough” Google results do not expect or sometimes are not aware of the services of a librarian who can help guide them in their research (Foster, Gibbons 2007). Much has been done in libraries to help promote self-service models (knowledge databases, pathfinders, LibGuides course and subject guides, etc.). Balancing these self-service needs with needs for guidance in face-to-face dialogue presents some conflicts. Although we want to encourage self-sufficiency, we, as librarians, strive to foster library and information literacy skills, not just for completing homework and course assignments, but for life-long learning. In the
words of Samuel Swett Green (1876), “[b]e careful not to make inquirers dependent. Give them as much assistance as they need, but try at the same time to teach them to rely upon themselves and become independent.” Consciously deciding where we need to spend time with patrons, where we can create self-service models, balanced with staffing realities that accompany tight budgets, may help us focus our efforts to best advantage. Librarians should be wary of shortchanging recognition of efforts as we move into new models. By expanding individual libraries’ definitions of what constitutes reference service and measures, other statistics may be justifiably incorporated into reference services reporting. Welch (2007) describes the National Information Standards Organization’s new standard, NISO Z39.7-2004, Information Services and Use: Metrics & Statistics for Libraries and Information Providers. In addition to capturing virtual reference transaction use, Welch notes virtual visits to reference Web pages and prompts thought about what other services and responsibilities, e.g., creating Web pages, reference librarians may have assumed but have not yet considered part of the total picture of reference assessment. Although librarians may be swapping some traditional practices for other kinds of reference help, it doesn’t mean that the new work is insignificant, negligible, or maintenance-free. It requires expertise and time to keep tools up-to-date.

Conclusion
Whitlatch (2002) asserts the important questions to ask are ‘why am I evaluating reference services’ and ‘what do I plan to do with the study results?’ Answering these questions first may provide direction. Is there a need for assessment of the process or of a product or a service? Is there a need for internal study for productivity improvements or external verification of service value? RUSA RSS Guidelines for Measuring and Assessing Reference Services (2010) lists questions to consider: the question that needs to be answered; the use, measurement, and triangulation of data; the tools, benchmarks, and analytical techniques; and, finally, identification of the audience for the results.

After reviewing responses to the Reference Transaction Assessment Survey and desired future uses for assessment practices, certain observations become apparent. Although not an aspect of the survey or study, it is likely that the number of librarians supporting reference, or contributing to reference services, is fixed or unlikely to increase. Setting priorities and maximizing return on the time invested is critical to designing or evolving an assessment process. With that in mind, what are the organization’s top priorities for reference assessment? Is there a match between the data needed for decision making and data actually being collected? Only one response to the Reference Transaction Assessment Survey indicated that reference transaction assessment is not valid; it appears that the majority of the survey respondents believe that there is value in assessing transactions. That value goes beyond simply reporting data to using data for improvements to processes, services, and more. Determining the best means of accomplishing that end, e.g., ongoing data collection, surveys, and other means of assessment is key, as is the continuous improvement of assessment instruments. Returning to the idea of the importance of the librarian-patron interaction, in her address to the ACRL Ninth National Conference, Susan Szasz Palmer (1999), then a reference collections coordinator at Cornell University, speaks to advocates who support removing reference desks due to declining statistics and available technology. She suggests that technology is a tool we employ and its ease and ubiquitous nature doesn’t eliminate the need for human assistance; it may heighten that need, “if not in frequency… then in the intensity for it when needed.” With each organization a unique microcosm of the community it serves, reference assessment is variable and complex but, with carefully selected time investments, it can evolve to provide the framework for data-driven decisions.
References


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New York State Federal Depository Libraries: Entering a New Era

By Catherine M. Dwyer

Abstract: Since 1993 the availability of online government information has skyrocketed and its impact on Federal Depository libraries has been dramatic. New York State is an excellent microcosm for examining the dramatic changes facing federal depository libraries. This article examines the results of a survey of New York State federal depository libraries and some of the changes they have undergone as they transition to online government information.

INTRODUCTION

The 79 United States depository libraries in New York State are representative of the nation as a whole. New York’s depository libraries include large, medium and small academic libraries, public libraries, military, and law libraries. They are spread across the state serving large urban areas as well as rural communities. They have designations dating back to 1800s (including two too old to date, the New York State Library and West Point) and as recent as 1987. Since 2000 eight libraries have chosen to drop their depository status. This makes New York State an excellent microcosm for examining the dramatic changes facing federal depository libraries. This article will examine the current state of New York federal depositories as we grapple with the transition to online government information.

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THE FEDERAL DEPOSITORY SYSTEM

In 1813 the Government Printing Office (GPO) was charged by the United States Congress with making the work of the three branches of the federal government available to the general public by being the “primary centralized resource for gathering, cataloging, producing, providing and preserving published information in all its forms” (Frequently Asked Questions). As part of that mission a select group of libraries around the country began to participate in the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) which is governed by 44 United States Code §§1901-1616.

Currently there are 1237 federal depository libraries in the United States. All types of libraries are represented but the largest number, 869, are academic (including community colleges and academic law libraries). Public libraries are next but with a smaller representation of 216. After that numbers begin to drop dramatically from 42 federal agency libraries on down to the four service academies (i.e. military academies). (Welcome to the Federal Depository Directory)

There are two types of depositories, selective and regional. Most states, including New York, have a number of selective depositories and a regional depository. The regional library receives all FDLP material available to depositories. In addition they are charged to maintain their collections in perpetuity and provide leadership and assistance to the selective depositories in their state. Selective depository libraries select FDLP materials to create their depository profile and are allowed to discard material after five years of receipt and within the discard guidelines set forth by the FDLP.

Libraries are designated to participate in the FDLP in one of two ways, they are designated by an elected official or they are designated “by-law.” These designations are spelled out in the Designation Handbook for Federal Depository Libraries.

• Designation by Elected Officials
  Members of Congress, Territorial Governors, and the Mayor of the District of Columbia may designate depository libraries in the boundaries of their constituency. With few exceptions, all congressional districts and territories of the United States have at least one Federal depository library.

• Designation By-Law (Title 44, United States Code)
  Within Chapter 19, Title 44 are provisions for libraries in land grant colleges (land grant systems, historically black colleges, Native American Tribal colleges, or special provision), the highest appellate court of a State, accredited law schools, State libraries, and Federal agencies (service academy libraries, major bureaus or divisions of Federal departments, major libraries of independent Federal agencies) to qualify as official depositories.

  Each congressional district may have two depository libraries designated by a U.S. Representative. In addition, each State may have two depository libraries designated by each U.S. Senator. Each U.S. territory and the District of Columbia may have two depository libraries designated by the territorial Governor or Mayor.

  If a vacancy exists, a petitioning library works with their State Library, other depository libraries in their state, GPO, and their elected official to obtain depository status. (Designation Handbook)
Libraries within the FDLP receive regular shipments of government documents free of charge with the understanding that they will maintain, organize, and preserve these collections. Government documents are to be maintained to the same standards as other collections within the library. Most importantly, libraries must provide free access to the public. Over the years the nature of shipments has changed from primarily paper to a mix of paper, microfiche, maps, videotapes, CD-ROMs, DVDs, etc.

Federal government publications are distributed to depository libraries based on item numbers. Item numbers can reflect a group of information, for example: all the hearings of the Senate Committee on Finance (item 1038-A), or the Army Historical Series (item 344-G). They might also represent a single title, The World Factbook (item 856-A-07) or the Statistical Abstract of the U.S. (item 150). Sometimes the selection options are murkier: ephemera from the National Endowment for the Humanities (item 821-B-32), general publications of the Homeland Security Department (item 520-E-01) or the bibliographies and lists of publications from the National Center for Education Statistics (item 461-A-17). Item numbers may also represent a format within a title, paper vs. microfiche for example or paper vs. electronic. Selective depositories choose from within the list of item numbers, keeping in mind the needs of their primary clientele and their responsibility as a depository to serve the public at large. Regional libraries receive all of the item numbers available to depositories.

The list of item numbers is generated by GPO. As GPO becomes aware of new titles or agencies they assign new item numbers. Item numbers are assigned to government information that is born digitally as well traditional formats. Libraries selecting similar item numbers begin to receive the new item as well. When new item number 0122-A-30 (Hawaii Tropical Specialty Fruits) was announced, it was automatically added to the profile of libraries already receiving item 0122-A-27 (Hawaii Avocados). Libraries are encouraged to do an annual or continuous evaluation of their item number profile. Once a year it is possible to add new items numbers. It is possible to drop item numbers at any time.

With the passage of the GPO Electronic Information Access Enhancement Act (P.L. 103-40) in 1993, GPO began to actively seek to expand its use of technology to make government information available. Online government information became available for ‘selection’ using the item number process. In the process of cataloging on OCLC GPO staff create a PURL (persistent uniform resource locator used to access government information online through the FDLP) which will appear in the Catalog of U.S. Government Publications formerly known as the Monthly Catalog of U.S. Government Publications. The Catalog is created by GPO and used like an OPAC to identify government publications. The Catalog contains descriptive information in MARC tags and SUDOC classification numbers. Users can click on a PURL or URL to see full text or they can click on “locate in a library” to identify libraries that select that publication. Libraries often choose to make government publications available through their own OPACs as well. MARC records may be loaded into OPACs for tangible and/or online titles. PURLS provide users with full-text access to virtual government information through the local OPAC.

Now, more than 10 years after P.L. 103-40, the availability of online government information has skyrocketed and its impact on Federal Depository libraries has been dramatic. Shipments of tangible docu-
ments have decreased from 12,888 titles distributed in 2005 to 9,738 in 2009. Simultaneously the number of new PURLs created has climbed from 9,562 in 2005 to 13,343 in 2009. (Annual Cumulative Performance Metrics) Depository librarians across the country and the state are struggling with this seismic shift.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

While there is much written positing the future or extinction of federal depository libraries there is no literature specifically on New York State federal depositories. A search of “FDLP and New York State” in LISA: Library and Information Science Abstracts, Library, Information Science and Technology Abstracts: LISTA and SCOPUS yields no results. A search of “FDLP and future” in LISA yields fourteen results, seven of which are from 2000 or later. Of the twenty-two results from the same search in LISTA there are eleven from after 2000. A similar search in SCOPUS also yields fourteen results, five of which were published after 2000. Four of the results were duplicated in LISA or LISTA. The majority of these articles focus on the FDLP as a whole and none are surveys. One article looks at the online transition in University of Florida libraries and another examines the FDLP in Indiana.

Recent articles (2008-2010) on the FDLP as a whole have a strong focus on online information and technology issues. Titles such as “Age of Aquarius: the FDLP in the 21st Century, Electronic government information dissemination: Changes for programs, users, libraries, and government documents librarians,” and “Who will be responsible? The authentication and preservation of government digital information reflect the shift in focus to online government information.” Less formal literature including *Documents for a Digital Democracy: A Model for the Federal Depository Library Program in the 21st Century*, a report produced by Ithaka S+R for the Association of Research Libraries, and *The Federal Depository Library Program Strategic Plan, 2009-2014*, a draft discussion document created in April 2009, also focus on changes to the Federal Depository program in light of burgeoning availability of online information. The very titles of the literature underscore dramatic changes the depository system has undergone in the last decade.

**METHODOLOGY**

A survey instrument was designed to elicit information from the libraries and created using SurveyMonkey®.

The FDLP maintains a directory of all their depository libraries. This information is kept up to date by regular surveys of libraries and the ability of the individual library to edit information as needed. From this directory the name of the library and the depository coordinator were obtained. Contact information is not provided for the coordinator but website information is often available. Using the coordinator’s name and any website information available email addresses were obtained by searching the web. In a few cases, especially with public libraries, individual emails were not found. In these cases the survey was sent to the “Ask a Librarian” or “Contact Us” email address.

The FDLP newsletter *Administrative Notes Technical Supplement* was examined from January 2000 through November-December 2008 (ANTS ceased in paper with this issue) and a list of eight New York
State Depositories who had dropped their status during that time frame was compiled. These libraries were not included in the survey.

The survey was first sent on October 2, 2009 and a reminder was sent October 27, 2009. Of the seventy-eight libraries contacted (the author’s institution was excluded) a total of forty-seven replied. The survey was anonymous.

All FDLP libraries are required by law to respond to GPO’s Biennial Survey of Depository Libraries. The Biennial Survey is issued every two years and compiles a wide range of data on depositories. In 2007 questions were asked in the following categories: Collection Development, Bibliographic Control, Maintenance, Human Resources, Physical Facilities, Public Service, Cooperative Efforts, Digitization Projects, and Collection Strengths and Specialization. The Survey helps GPO assess whether libraries are meeting their depository obligations (e.g. Question 13. Are depository discards regularly processed in conformance with GPO instructions and regional guidelines or state plans, if applicable?). It is also an opportunity for GPO to learn whether libraries are able to manage new technologies, new delivery mechanisms, and other possible changes to the depository system (e.g. Question 34c. Would your institution be interested in partnering with GPO to ensure permanent public access to that digitized material?) The most recent Biennial Survey was completed in January 2010 but the most recent results available are from the 2007 Survey. In some cases the Biennial Survey results were compared to the author’s results for New York State.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library Type</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>New York State*</th>
<th>Nation*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic /Community College</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic/Law Library</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Library</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Library</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest State Court Library</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Court Library</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Agency Library</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Academies</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*2007 Biennial Survey Results

**RESULTS**

**Demographics**

Of the forty-seven libraries who replied thirty (64%) identified as academic, eight (17%) as public libraries, six (13%) as academic/law library, two as an academic/community college and one as a state library. This breakdown closely follows the total makeup of depository libraries in the state with 58% identifying as academic, 20% as law libraries and 15% as public. It also follows the makeup of depositories in the nation with 70% academic and 17% public. (Welcome to the Federal Depository Directory)

Fourteen of the respondents currently have depository collections of 10,000-50,000 pieces. Eleven had collections of less than 10,000 pieces. Eleven libraries have collections between 50,000 and 250,000
pieces and six have collections between 250,000 and 1 million pieces. Two libraries had depository collections of over 1 million pieces.

**Selection**

All of the respondents plan to maintain their depository status. But almost all (73.7%) have also substituted online for tangible sources. Thirty seven libraries or 80.4% of the respondents have chosen to substitute. Academic and public libraries were evenly matched in deciding to substitute tangible for online titles (82.8% and 87.5% respectively) This is an increase from the 2007 Biennial Survey when of the seventy none depository libraries in New York thirty answered NO to the question “Are you substituting any official online resources for tangible depository materials?” 73.7% of the respondents have also reduced their item number profile.

Twenty four libraries have replaced 10%-25% of their collection, five libraries have replaced 25%-50%, four libraries have replaced 50%-75%, one library 50%-75% and one library has replaced their entire collection with online selections. Libraries with smaller depository collections were more likely to replace tangible with online. Twenty one of these were Libraries with depository collections of 250,000 pieces or less.

Having chosen to shift toward online selections libraries (68.2%) are discarding existing tangible materials in favor of using online versions. A larger number of academic libraries were choosing to discard tangible titles in favor of online (75.0% of academics vs. 66.7% of publics). One academic librarian specifically noted that only tangible titles with an online version were being discarded while “most tangible titles without a replacement are being kept.”

While depositories across the state are rethinking their item number profile and adjusting their collections to address the burgeoning availability of online government information, almost none have decided to go entirely electronic. Only six libraries have plans to transition to an entirely online depository and only one library expects to complete the transition within the next two years. Again academics and publics are fairly evenly matched with four academic libraries planning to transition as well as two public libraries. Public libraries were less specific in their time frame for the transition. One has plans to proceed “as time allows” and another states “we are in the middle of the process.”

**Staffing**

How have dramatic changes to depository collections in conjunction with an economic downturn effected staffing in depository library operations?

According to the Federal Depository Library Handbook, “While several staff members may be responsible for different areas of depository operations such as technical services or public services, it is still important to have one staff member designated as the depository coordinator. The depository coordinator should be a librarian.” Of the respondents twenty five indicated some reduction of staffing. The majority (53.6%) have lost support staff. But 42.9% also indicate the loss of librarian staff. One comment indicates that the transition to online has reduced processing workload and therefore staff was reduced. 64% of the respondents indicated that either depository staff had other responsibilities within the library or that depository duties had been assigned to staff in other areas. A number of comments indicated that the de-
pository collection is not a primary responsibility. In the 2007 Biennial Survey the majority of libraries had steady state staffing and one depository coordinator.

**DISCUSSION**

*Demographics*

Since 2000, eight depositories (10%) in New York State have withdrawn from the depository system. Across the nation 105 (7.8%) federal depositories have withdrawn from the program. While New York is a state rich in depository libraries, slow but steady erosion in depositories may have a negative effect on the public’s ability to access government information. Whether there are geographic patterns or patterns in library type as depositories are lost is an area for further study.

New York is a state with a population in transition. In addition to a changing racial make-up, New York is losing rural population and gaining urban population (State Fact Sheets). With more and more government information available online, what is the impact of widespread internet access and how does this vary across the state? How does internet access vary by educational attainment, income or population size? How will these changes and others (age of population, education, language spoken at home) impact the choices that librarians make for their depository collections?

*Selection*

While the results indicate that most libraries across the state are reducing their item number profile (the amount they select from the FDLP), changes to the item number system may affect this finding. One respondent noted that there are fewer item numbers to select. In actual fact there are more. In 2004 there were 7,600 item numbers available to select from, (Depository Selection: History and Current Practice) and as of January 2010 there were 8,632. In October 2008 GPO formalized their policy to create single cataloging records for each format of a title. No longer would a Uniform Resource Locator or Persistent Uniform Resource Locator appear in the record for a tangible government document. That information would appear in the online record for the title. As an outgrowth of this, item numbers specifically for the online versions of Congressional “Hearings, Prints, Miscellaneous Publications” were created and approximately fifty one new item numbers have been added. Libraries who already receive item numbers for Congressional “Hearings, Prints, Miscellaneous Publications” would now automatically be assigned the item numbers for the online versions. If they did not want these item numbers, they would have to actively amend their selection profile, removing the new items. Libraries who had not automatically been assigned the new item numbers could add them through the amendment process. Libraries dependent on their item number profile to receive MARC records with PURLs for their users would need to select these additional item numbers. If they chose to maintain a paper or microfiche collection of these titles, libraries would need to retain the item numbers for tangible copies as well. Libraries were warned by GPO that:

> Online and tangible formats do not necessarily have a one to one correlation; there are tangible versions of Hearings, Prints, & Miscellaneous Publications that have no online equivalent. If a library needs to provide access to all Hearings, Prints, & Miscellaneous
Publications for a particular Congressional Committee, selecting the EL item number will merely supplement existing collections, but cannot replace it. (Separate Record Cataloging)

The single record approach has increased the total of item numbers available but has not necessarily represented new content. According to FDLP metrics the total number of titles distributed in tangible format has dropped from 12,888 in 2005 to 9,738 in 2009 (Annual Cumulative). Libraries tangible collections of federal government information are declining twofold, first through the proactive decision to reduce their item profiles and secondly through the reduction in what is distributed. Some libraries commented that their profile size had remained steady, the increase in online items offset with a decrease in selected tangible item numbers. Two libraries also specifically mentioned that they were modifying their item number profile to reflect their community needs. An area for further study is the impact of changing populations on New York State federal depositories.

The survey respondents clearly are embracing a migration to online format. As with periodical or reference collections, ease of access is a chief reason for the migration. Users can access materials offsite and in a variety of formats (.pdfs, spreadsheets, etc.) For government information immediacy is also a bonus to online information. Users are no longer waiting for the Federal Register to be received and processed at their library; it is uploaded daily on the web. GPO and individual libraries are digitizing large collections of government documents and making them available, and often searchable, on the web. Projects like the Historical Publications of the United States Civil Rights Commission at the Thurgood Marshall Law Library (digitization of the documents of the USCRC from 1957 to current) or the OTA Legacy at Princeton (digitization of the documents of the Office of Technology Assessment from 1974-1995) provide government information to libraries and users who in the past would have limited access. GPO is also making fee based titles available free via password to depository libraries. Public Health Reports (the official journal of the U.S. Public Health Service), NTIS/DARTS (the National Technical Information Service/Depository Access to Reports, Technical and Scientific) and the Homeland Security Digital Library, are examples of titles accessible free of charge to depository libraries and their users with a GPO issued password.

While the respondents are moving to digital format their comments reveal some concern about the transition. These can be broken down into two major categories: “How do I continue to justify depository status?”; and “How do I best help my users with the transition?”

How Do I Continue to Justify Depository Status

- Relavency (SP)
- Answering the question if it’s all online why maintain the status?
- Staffing; budget
- Space; leadership
- Administration wants to convert our space to other uses
How Do I Best Help Users with Access

- Maintaining access to electronic resources
- Making transition to electronic smoothly with less staff
- Keeping up with new electronic titles in so far as selecting what to represent in our online catalog.
- Electronic access and patron reeducation towards less paper materials
- Maintaining high quality service

Of existing collections 68.2% of the respondents said they were weeding or discarding materials that they replaced with online versions. But the majority, twenty two of the respondents, has only discarded 10%-25% of their tangible collection in favor of electronic. Only two libraries have given up 75%-100% of their tangible collections. One librarian commented that they while they were adding PURLs to the OPAC they were holding off on discarding materials until space became an issue. Librarians mentioned that some titles or material types (e.g. census) “work better in paper.” One librarian commented on the importance of retaining historical tangible collections. The comments overall leave the impression that New York State depository librarians are moving cautiously through the online transition. They are focusing on titles which work well for users electronically or that are born digitally. Titles which present issues for users in electronic format (e.g. large .pdfs), or titles which have historical value are being retained in tangible format. GPO sometimes seems to be the prime mover. Despite GPO’s caveat about Congressional “Hearings, Prints, Miscellaneous Publications” some libraries specifically mentioned these titles as targets in their transition to electronic. One library increased their holdings of Congressional “Hearings, Prints, Miscellaneous Publications” by adding online versions of titles they had never received in tangible format.

In some cases the change is driven by outside forces. Space was cited a number of times as an issue. Librarians have had to give up space being occupied by tangible collections or anticipate having to give up space in the future. In one case even storage space was lost. The 2009 Biennial Survey asked librarians if they would be willing to receive “digital files on deposit” and one library mentioned space for storing online government information as a growing concern.

Staffing

Forty three respondents indicated that they had some loss of staffing during the last five years. A number of libraries cited the decline in tangible documents needing processing but others mentioned the workload generated by online government information. In the 2007 Biennial Survey only nine New York State libraries were not including internet accessible government information in their OPACs. The seventy other New York State depository libraries must devote staff time to adding and maintaining PURLs in their OPACs. Having chosen to transition to online government information librarians must also educate their patrons. Making users aware of the wealth of government information available in depository libraries is a perennial problem. Helping users to understand what is and is not available electronically and the best way to access that information is a new twist on an old dilemma.
Conclusion

As one respondent commented, New York State federal depository libraries are struggling to maintain “relevancy.” According to the 2007 Biennial Survey, 58% of depositories nationwide were substituting some official online sources for their tangible counterparts. In New York State in 2007 60%, were making this substitution. Clearly we have already embraced the transition to online government information and are now struggling to manage the process. Depository librarians who responded to the survey indicated that they are committed to their depository status, their users and their collections. But they need help. In their comments concerning their greatest challenge in the next five years, librarians asked for: more coordinated collection development and sharing of resources, leadership, solutions for keeping their colleagues up-to-date and informed, and ways to demonstrate their relevancy.

Depository librarians have many specific challenges and unique opportunities. Their homogeneous collections and common directives from GPO create a singular community. One solution to the challenges that depositories face may be to organize on a local level. Librarians should actively use existing organizations (NYLA’s Government Information Roundtable, local 3Rs Councils) to pool their expertise and coordinate their efforts as well as their collections. NYLA GIRT in particular is charged to “improve access to government information…,” “share expertise...,” and “exchange information and ideas to improve and enhance government information service.” (What is GIRT?) The New York State Library, our regional library, should be encouraged to update the New York State Plan for Federal Depository Service which is now almost thirty years old. Using local knowledge to expand and protect depository access across the state may insure that its’ citizens will have access to federal government information for generations.

REFERENCES


New Item Number Procedure for Selecting Congressional Publications. 


Abstract: An up-to-date, well-managed reference collection is essential to the provision of quality reference service in all types of libraries. This article presents the results of a survey of managers of reference collections at public and academic libraries in New York State.

Introduction

New York State has made a significant investment in libraries, both public and academic. In 2006, New York had 755 public libraries and 261 academic libraries, containing approximately 183 million volumes and having annual operating expenditures of $1.6 billion. (2008 New York State Statistical Yearbook)

Reference collections are a vital part of these libraries and the print portion usually occupies prime space. An up-to-date, well-managed reference collection is essential to the provision of quality reference service in all types of libraries. Written policies and data on resource usage can help librarians make rational decisions in their management of this important resource.

The reference environment has changed dramatically in the past decade. Many standard reference sources such as indexes, encyclopedias and dictionaries have migrated online. Users typically start their search for information on Google or another search engine. Much ready reference type information once only available in print reference sources is now easily retrievable on the Internet. All this had led to a decline in the use of print reference collections. Other challenges facing those who manage reference collections include limited budgets, and competing demands for space for other uses and collections.

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Objectives

The objective of this article was to better understand how print reference collections in New York State public and academic libraries are managed and to determine if print reference collections are shrinking.

Literature Review

Much has been written about collection development and management, but the literature focusing specifically on reference collection management is not extensive. This is surprising since the nature of the reference collection is such that it presents unique management challenges, including no readily available measure of use like circulation statistics. There are a number of articles about the weeding process, but these were primarily rationales for weeding and suggestions on how to weed. The literature review for this article was limited to empirical studies, with one exception. The articles on reference collection management with empirical data focused mostly on academic libraries, the development of written policies for the collection, and use studies and weeding.

Engeldinger (1986) and Mary and Victor Biggs (1987) are advocates of a more objective approach to reference collection management. They believe that good collection management requires the existence of policies for reference collection development and weeding as well as regular systematic weeding of reference collections based on empirical data from use studies. Writing before the widespread inclusion of online resources as part of the reference collection, they focused on management of the print reference collection.

Engeldinger (1986) surveyed academic libraries nationally about their reference collection management practices and found that the majority did not have written reference collection development policies (79.2%) or written weeding policies (88.1%). Over half reported never weeding or weeding less than every two years. Those who did weed relied upon librarian’s subjective assessments of how much use an item received. In a later use study at one academic library, Engeldinger (1990) found that 51.4% of the reference collection had never been used, or had been used only once in 5 years.

In a survey of academic libraries, Mary and Victor Biggs (1987) found results that were very similar to Engeldinger. Of academic libraries, 76% did not have written collection development policies and 86.5% did not have written weeding policies. For those who reported making weeding decisions based on low use, the most often reported method of determining low use was commonsense judgment and informal observation. Very few libraries reported conducting use studies of the reference collection. Librarians also reported that they believed that over the course of a one year period, less than half of the reference collection was used. The Biggs concluded that most academic library reference collections are “too large for effective physical or intellectual access” (Biggs and Biggs, 1987, p. 67) and “tend to be too large for the thorough exploitation by librarians in the service of information and delivery.” (Biggs and Biggs, 1987, p. 69)

Mary Biggs (1990) also provided a review of various types of use studies for print sources: touch techniques; re-shelving techniques; user tallies and self-administered questionnaires; unobtrusive observation; and other user questionnaires and interviews. While all methods have some limitations, Biggs encouraged the use of complementary methods to obtain useful data.

Truett (1990) looked at reference collection weeding and evaluation policies and practices in academic and public libraries and county library systems. She interviewed 14 libraries in the Midwest and West and found that 86% did not have written policies related to the reference collection. None reported conducting formal use studies, but most did continuous or year-round weeding of the collection. Librarians also noted that periodical indexes on CD-Rom were causing a decline in the use of print periodical indexes.
Individual use studies done since the advent of electronic full-text databases and the Internet show an even more dramatic lack of use of print reference collections than reported by Engeldinger and Mary and Victor Biggs.

In a study at the University of Toledo, Sendi (1996) found that 43% of the materials in the ready reference collection were not used during a one year period.

Bradford, Costello and Leholt (2005) conducted a use study at Stetson University. They tracked reference questions and the sources used to answer the questions. Only 9.38% of the questions were answered by consulting a reference book, which represented less than 2% of the titles in the reference collection. Almost 60% of the questions were answered with an online source. In another study done at Stetson, Bradford (2005) found that the print collection did not get much use. During one academic year, only 8.5% of the volumes in the reference collection were used. Use was low for all call numbers. These studies provided useful data for the librarians at Stetson in making collection development and management decisions, including providing a rationale for increasing the percentage of the budget devoted to electronic sources, and for sending some volumes in the reference collection to the circulating collection. Bradford agreed with Engeldinger and Biggs that most reference collections are too large, especially now that electronic reference sources are an increasingly important part of reference collections.

In a yearlong study of reference book usage at the Winter Park Public Library, a medium-sized public library in Florida, Heintzelman, and Ward (2008) found that only 13% of the collection was used. They concluded that (2008, 63) “a reference collection should evolve into a smaller and more efficient tool that continually adapts to the new era, merging into a symbiotic relationship with electronic resources. Based on this theory, weeding will become less painful.” Their study also provided guidance for training and collection development.

Colson (2007) reported on a 5-year long use study begun in 1999 at a small academic library. The study used Engeldinger’s method of placing dots on items before re-shelving. Use was classified as heavy, moderate, and light. 35% of items in the reference collection were not used at all, 36% were lightly used, 17% were moderately used, and only 12% was heavily used.

Hellyer (2009) conducted a survey of law libraries and found that print reference collection usage is declining and expected to continue to decline, and collections are growing smaller relative to overall collections. He argues that (2009, 27) “the declining use of print reference collections doesn’t have to be viewed as a problem. As long as user’ needs are being met, it should make no difference whether information is found in print or online.” He suggests reallocating funds to the purchase of electronic sources by cancelling print`, creating online reference pages on the library web site, and moving less frequently used items to the stacks and allowing them circulate. He believes that smaller print collections are easier for patrons to use.

**Methodology**

A survey consisting of 21 questions about different aspects of reference collection management was created using Survey Monkey®. The first few questions dealt with responsibility for the collection, the existence of written collection and weeding policies and the frequency of weeding. Regarding usage of the collection, respondents were asked whether use studies were conducted and how, and to estimate the percentage of the collection they felt was used in a one year period. Additional questions focused on whether the collection size had changed in the last five years and whether they were plans to change the size in the near future. Respondents were also asked about preferences for print versus online. Finally, respondents were asked to describe their library and provide the size of their print reference and total collections.

The survey was distributed to public and academic libraries in New York State. A spreadsheet with an email distribution list was created using the 61st edition (2008-2009) of the *American Library Directory* published by Information To-
day. All libraries in New York coded as J (community college), C (college and university), or P (public and state) and reporting 50,000 or more book titles in their holdings were included. Law and medical college libraries were included, but cooperative library systems and special collections libraries were not. For library systems or colleges and universities with multiple libraries, all libraries within the system or college meeting the criteria were included. A very small number of libraries did not include holdings information in their American Library Directory entry; these libraries were not included in the survey.

If provided, the library director’s name and email were recorded in the distribution list spreadsheet. If no email address was provided, the library’s Web site was checked to obtain the director’s email address. In cases where the email address for the library director was not listed on the Web site, the library’s information or reference email address was used. For nine of the public libraries, no email address was found.

An email with the survey link was sent in October of 2009 and a reminder email was sent after several days. Undeliverable email addresses were investigated and if corrected addresses were found, the email with the survey link was resent. For college libraries, 177 emails were successfully sent. For public libraries, 219 emails were successfully sent. In total, 396 emails were successfully sent. The survey responses were anonymous.

**Results**

The response rate for the survey was 33.4%, with 133 surveys completed from the 396 emails successfully sent. An exact breakdown of all respondents by type of library is not available because the question on type of library was not mandatory and was not answered by all respondents. Eighty six respondents completed the entire survey. The 86 respondents were divided equally between public libraries and some form of academic library. A breakdown is shown in Table 1. Throughout this article, results are provided for all libraries responding. When appropriate, a breakdown between public and academic for those libraries who identified their category of library are also included.

Table 1 - Responses by Library Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library type</th>
<th># responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community college</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law college</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical college</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Responsibility for the Reference Collection**

Overall, responsibility for the management of the reference collection lies with the Head of Reference in 44.4% of libraries, while 30.8% reported that reference librarians were responsible. Only 7.5% said that subject librarians were responsible for the management of the reference collection. Of the 16.5% who answered other, more than half indicated that the library director or branch manager was responsible. For public libraries, 51.1% reported that the Head of Reference was responsible for reference collection management, and 34.9% reported that reference librarians were responsi-
ble. For academic libraries, the Head of Reference is responsible for 30.2% of libraries, while reference librarians were cited by 25.6% and subject librarians by 18.6%.

Table 2 - Responsibility for Management of the Reference Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head of Reference</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>51.1%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference Librarians</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject Librarians</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference Bibliographer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Written Policies

Concerning written policies for the reference collection, the majority of respondents, 58.6%, do not have a written collection development policy and 72.9% do not have a written weeding policy. Several respondents commented that there was a general collection development policy, but not one specific to reference, while a few noted that the general policy included a section on the reference collection, and some reported having a very dated policy. Public libraries reported not having a reference collection development policy in 65.1% of the responses, while academic libraries fared slightly better, with 46.5% reporting not have a policy. Similar results were found for written weeding policies for the reference collection. The majority of public libraries, 74.4%, reported not having a written weeding policy, while 69.8% of academic libraries did not have one. Some noted that there was not a separate weeding policy for reference, but there was an overall weeding policy, and a few noted that the collection development policy covered weeding.

Table 3 - Existence of written reference collection development policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have a policy</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have a policy</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>53.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t have a policy</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>58.6%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>65.1%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 – Existence of written reference collection weeding policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have a policy</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t have a policy</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>72.9%</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>69.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>133</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Weeding**

Weeding of the reference collection is done continuously or at least once a year by the majority of respondents, 60.8%. Only 2.3% reported weeding less than once every 5 years. For those listing other, most replied that there was no formal schedule for weeding. The percentage of public libraries who weed continuously or at least once a year was 67.4%, while the percentage of academic libraries that do so was 53.5%. Weeding is done mostly by reference librarians, but also by the Head of Reference, subject librarians, and library directors.

Table 5 - Frequency of weeding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At least once every year</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least once every 2-3 years</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least once every 4-5 years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than once every 5 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuously</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>133</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Usage**

The majority of libraries (66.4%) responding to the question about use studies reported not conducting use studies of the reference collection. Only 12.3% said they conducted use studies regularly, while another 12.3% said they did so infrequently. The remaining 9% reported having conducted use studies in the past but not lately. The results for public and academic libraries were similar, with 71.5% of public libraries and 61.9% of academic libraries reporting that they do not conduct use studies.
Table 6 – Responses to “Do you conduct use studies of the reference collection?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, regularly</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, infrequently</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, in the past but not lately</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>66.4%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>71.5%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>61.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of a subjective assessment of the percentage of the print reference collection respondents felt was used in a one year period, 41.1% thought 0-20% was used, 37.1% thought 21-40% had been used, 16.9% thought 41% - 60% had been used, 3.2% thought 61%-80% had been used, and 1.6% thought 81%-100% had been used. Put another way, almost 80% of librarians thought that 40% or less of the reference collection was used in a one year period. For public libraries, 72.1% thought that 40% or less was used and for academic libraries it was 86%.

Table 7 - Estimates of percentage of print collection used in a one year period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 20</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>41.1%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 40</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 - 60</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 - 80</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81 - 100</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Measuring usage by some type of re-shelving tally was the most frequently cited method of measuring usage of the reference collection, at 49%. Re-shelving tallies are done manually, recorded on forms or into a spreadsheet, or by scanning the barcode of the book into the library’s ILS to record in-house circulation. Some libraries using re-shelving tallies said that they placed signs around the reference area asking users not to re-shelve books. Other methods reported were having reference librarians record reference questions and sources used to answer the questions, moving selected sources to the reference desk and recording usage when patrons requested them, and surveying patrons about which titles they use. The other large category, at 31%, did not describe usage measurement methods. Some of these respondents indicated that they use subjective, qualitative assessments of use, such as reference librarian observations and the level of dust on books.
Size of Print Reference Collection

The size of the print reference collection as a percentage of the total collection was similar in academic libraries and public libraries. The average reference collection size reported by the public libraries was 3,755 volumes, or 3.02% of the total collection. The average reference collection size for academic libraries was much larger, at 12,199 volumes, which represented 2.63% of the total collection.

Overwhelmingly, respondents reported that the size of their print reference collections had decreased in the last 5 years (82.9%). Only 6.5% said that the reference collection size had increased in the last 5 years, and 10.6% had not changed the size in the last 5 years. Both academic and public libraries had similar results (for the percentage that had decreased the size of the print reference collection) but academic libraries reported a greater percentage of increases while public libraries reported a greater percentage of no change in size.

Table 8 – Responses to “Has the size of the library’s print reference collection changed in the past 5 years?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, increased</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, decreased</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>82.9%</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the libraries that had reduced their reference collection size in the past five years, seventy eight responded to the question asking how many volumes or linear feet had been removed. The results ranged from 20 volumes to 20,000 and from 1 linear foot to 11,200 linear feet. The average number of volumes removed was 1,190 and the average number of linear feet removed was 417.

Volumes removed from the collection were discarded (94.7%); put in storage (27.4%); or moved to other collections (37.9%). Other dispositions (13.7%) included putting volumes in the library book sale, selling volumes through Better World Books, and offering them to other libraries.

Replacing print sources with online was the most frequently cited reason for reducing the size of the reference collection (80%), followed by not using print reference books (72.6%) and needing the space for other purposes (49.5%). Other reasons for reducing the size of the print reference collection were the prohibitive cost of print reference materials, moving reference materials to the circulating collection to increase usage, directives from administration, renovations or new buildings, and weeding outdated and obsolete materials.
Table 9 – Disposition of volumes removed from the reference collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discarded</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>94.7%</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>97.3%</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>91.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other collections</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# responses: 95 | 37 | 35

Space freed up by reducing the size of the reference collection is being used for other collections (50.5%); computers (22.0%); and reading areas (20.9%). Some libraries are using the space to incorporate Information Commons features into the library, such as a café, a Center for Reading and Writing, a math/business lab, and collaborative study space. Other libraries reported that the space was not being used for anything else at this point, or that it allowed librarians to leave bottom and top shelves empty. Academic libraries reported using the space for computers much more frequently than public libraries, while public libraries reported using the space for other collections more often.

Table 10 – Current use of space made available from reducing size of print reference collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computers</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other collections</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>62.9%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading area</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# responses: 91 | 35 | 33

The majority of libraries (80.3%) also have plans to reduce the reference collection size in the next 5 years, while 18.0% reported that no change was planned and 1.7% plan to increase it. Responses were very similar for public and academic libraries.
Table 11 – Responses to “In the next 5 years, do you plan to change the size of the library’s print reference collection?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, plan to reduce it</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>80.3%</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>83.7%</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>75.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, plan to increase it</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change planned</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Print vs. Online**

When asked if they planned to increase the amount of the reference collection budget allocated to the purchase of online sources, 64.9% said yes, with very little difference between public and academic libraries. Some respondents noted that online resources are selected and paid for by the state or local library system, and some mentioned that there is no separate budget for reference. One respondent pointed out that because of price increases, the percentage of the budget allocated to online sources increases every year automatically.

Table 12 – Responses to “In the next 5 years, do you plan to increase the amount of the reference collection budget allocated to the purchase of online sources?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>64.9%</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>67.4%</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>69.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only a small percentage (12.1%) of libraries reported that they are not currently choosing to buy online instead of print. 41.4% are choosing online instead of print once in awhile, 31.0% choose online over print frequently, and 7.8% choose online all the time. The remaining 7.8% noted that these choices are made at the consortia or system level. The most popular reasons for choosing online over print were that it provides access off site (89.3%) and to multiple users simultaneously (79.6%), that it doesn’t take up space (65%), and users prefer it (57%). Price was only cited by 16.5%, presumably because online sources are usually more expensive than print. Other reasons mentioned include providing access to multiple campuses, reduction of staff time to process, currency, 24/7 access, ease of use by patrons, and that online sources can’t be stolen. One respondent noted “It’s how people are living now.” For those libraries that listed their library type, there were no public libraries choosing online all the time, while 21.4% of academic libraries said they were choosing online all the time. Conversely, 20.9% of public libraries said they were not choosing online over print, but no academic libraries reported doing this.
For those who are not choosing to buy print over online, the most frequently cited reason was that users prefer print (60%). Price was mentioned by 46.7%, followed by the source not being available online (40%), and not enough computers (13.3%).

Table 13 – Responses to “Are you currently choosing to buy online instead of print for reference sources?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, all the time</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, frequently</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, once in awhile</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>51.2%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14 – Responses to “For what reason do you choose online over print?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t take up physical space</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>65.0%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>73.5%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>62.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides off-site access</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>89.3%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>88.2%</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>93.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simultaneous users</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>79.6%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>73.5%</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>88.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Users prefer online</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>55.3%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>69.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Responses</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

Writing polices for the reference collection is not a popular activity, but this survey showed a higher percentage of libraries with collection development policies for the reference collection than past studies (58.6% compared with 79.2% from Engeldinger’s study, 76% from the Biggs’ study and 86% from Truett.) However, in all of the earlier surveys, the majority of libraries do not have written collection development or weeding policies for the reference collection, although some do cover reference in an overall collection development policy. In many cases, those responsible for the management of the reference collection also have other duties, such as providing reference service, that take precedence over writing policies. However, one could argue that now that most reference collections contain both print and electronic sources, a well-thought out collection development policy is more necessary than ever. Not only do librarians need to decide on what to include in the collection, but decisions must also be made about whether to choose online or print if a source is available in both formats. Does the library want to choose online over print in all cases? Or only when the online price is less than or equal to the print? Or when the online price is not more than a certain percentage over the print? Or perhaps online is only preferred when there is some advantage to the format, such as additional content. Print may be preferred in some subject areas. Are there any cases in which a source should be purchased in multiple formats? Writing a policy can provide the impetus for discussing these types of issues. Specific guidelines in a policy can be very helpful in making consistent decisions for the collection and spending limited funds wisely. Collection development policies can also help maintain continuity in the collection when there is staff turnover.

This study also found a higher rate of weeding than Engeldinger’s study. His results show that over half of the libraries reported never weeding or weeding less than every 2 years, as compared to 60.8% of the respondents in this study reporting that they weed continuously or at least once a year. One explanation for this could be declining use of the print reference collection. Engeldinger’s survey was done in 1984, before the Internet and online reference sources. His use study published in 1990 found that 51.4% of the reference collection was not used, or used only once in 5 years. The Biggs’ survey in 1987 found that the majority of librarians believed that over half their reference collection was not used. With the advent of online reference sources and free ready reference information available on the Internet, even more of traditional print reference collections go unused, as evidenced by the more recent use studies. These had much lower rates of usage of the reference collection than the studies done in the eighties and nineties, ranging from 2% to 13%. Clearly, both public and academic librarians see the necessity of not just weeding, but reducing the overall size of their reference collections. Outdated reference materials are being discarded, and materials that are still useful but not frequently consulted are being moved to circulating collections.

However, use studies are clearly still not popular, so we must conclude that most weeding is being done on the basis of subjective assessment. No questions were asked in this survey about why libraries do not conduct use studies, so we can only speculate. Use studies do take time to organize and carry out, and librarians may feel that it is not worth the effort. It should be noted that those who reported on use studies in the literature remarked on how helpful the hard data was in making decisions on what to weed, and that the information was also useful for other purposes, such as selection of new resources, training and promotion of the collection. As reference collections become increasingly digital, this may cease to be an issue, as use data is more readily available for electronic sources.

Conclusion

Reference collection managers in New York State have been responding to the changing reference environment. Online is replacing print in the reference collection, collections are being weeded and have been reduced in size, and will continue to be reduced, and the vacant space is being reallocated. Moving to more online resources in the reference collection eliminates some concerns and challenges, such as space and stealing and lack of readily available use data, but it also raises new concerns and challenges. Identifying and assessing the impact of these challenges on reference collection management is an area for further research.
References


Abstract: The development of outreach goals and supporting initiatives are described in fostering and developing strategic community alliances.

Introduction: What is Outreach?

What is “outreach”? According to Prytherch (2005, 515): “Outreach is the process whereby a library service investigates the activities of the community it serves and becomes fully involved in supporting community activities, whether or not centered on library premises.” Regarding the emergence of “outreach,” John W. Fritch (2003, 165) says: “it is difficult to quantify early outreach activities in American libraries, largely because the term “outreach” did not exist with its present meaning until the mid-1960’s. The heading “Outreach programs” did not appear in Library Literature until 1970-71. An earlier heading that encompassed what we now refer to as outreach was “Library extension.” This included a broad range of activities: building more branch libraries, providing service to non-English speaking immigrants or rural residents, and reaching new constituencies via electronic technologies.” Outreach was once primarily an initiative for public libraries, however, in recent years, academic librarians have turned their attention to outreach activities and their benefits. Julie Todaro (2005, 139) notes: “An older term, outreach in both public and academic libraries has historically meant identifying, locating, and reaching out to serve typically eligible clients or patrons but non-users. Contemporary use in public libraries remains primarily the same; however, in academic libraries it is now used more for identifying, reaching out, and establishing partnerships to service potential users heretofore unable to access or use resources.”

The University at Albany

The University at Albany, State University of New York (SUNY), is a doctoral degree granting university established in 1962. Predecessor institutions were the Albany Normal School for training teachers established in 1844, renamed the New York State College for Teachers in 1914. UAlbany operates three campuses: the School of Public Health is based on the East Campus across the Hudson River in Rensselaer;

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the downtown campus, the former New York State Teachers College near Washington Park in Albany; and the “uptown campus” designed by Edward Durrell Stone and built in the 1960’s. The College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering occupies recently constructed facilities near the uptown campus.

The current student body is comprised of 13,250 undergraduates and 5,000 graduate students, including representatives of 100 different nations. On campus residential facilities house about 7800 students, less than half of the student population. A large portion of the students are “first generation” students, the first in their families to attend college or university. Another large portion of the undergraduate student population is transfer students, coming to UAlbany after completing coursework at other institutions of higher education.

Outreach and the University Libraries

Although others in the University Libraries provide what could be termed “outreach,” the Reference Department’s goals for outreach are to bring students into the building, inform users of virtual resources and services, to stimulate inquiry, and to connect the reference librarians to our larger community. Outreach efforts have evolved into two basic categories: those which are core, or on-going plus the special, one-time or supplemental outreach initiatives.

Information Fairs

Throughout the year, the University hosts “information fairs” for prospective students and their parents, accepted students and their parents, and during summer orientation when accepted students are on campus. Some of the fairs are larger than others, including representatives of academic departments and programs as well as representatives from various campus and student service organizations such as Career Development, University Police, Dining, the commuter student organization (the Driving Force) and so on. In 2009/2010, the Reference Department participated in more than twenty information fairs.

Typically, one or two librarians or other library personnel staff the Libraries’ information fair table. We are conscious of connecting with the parents as well as the students. Our primary message is “the library has authoritative resources you cannot get for free on Google; we pay money so that you have these resources.” A three-fold display, handouts developed for the attendees, and a PowerPoint slide show on continuous loop with photos of students using resources and facilities comprise the basics for the information fair display. Handouts include fact sheets, contact cards, employment information, and special event announcements.

Fair attendees are drawn to give-aways such as the paw print pencils representing the UAlbany Great Danes. Reference service echoed the Great Dane theme by naming the one-on-one research assistance by appointment service Personalized Assistance with Searching, PAWS. The give-away provides an opportunity to interact with attendees and to promote a reference service in a memorable way.

Participating in the Information Fairs is another way to connect to others in the campus community as other offices and services also participate. A few minutes conversation allows us to meet new people on campus, to catch up on projects, learn of opportunities to collaborate on new initiatives or a new taskforce, or to find out that another initiative will no longer receive support or funding.

Going to the residence halls

Connecting with engaged Residence Hall Directors (R.D.’s) has resulted in a number of sessions in the residence halls. The student Resident Assistants, known as R.A.’s, are required to do programming for the students living in the residence halls. An important place to connect with the new Residence Hall Directors is at an Information Fair held for them prior to the start of fall semester.
Programs and presentations developed for the residence halls and in collaboration with the R.A.’s and R.D.’s include *Stay in your room and visit the library; Locating stuff in the University Library—another ten minute tip; Creating an annotated bibliography, using a style guide…and…plagiarism; and Smarties* use the University Libraries.

**Opening weekend and LibraryPalooza**

“Opening weekend” is a series of programs and events primarily for new students, both incoming freshmen and transfer students, and takes place on the weekend just before Fall semester classes begin. Planning for opening weekend officially begins after spring commencement. A librarian is usually invited to participate on the campus-wide planning team.

The big event held during opening weekend is LibraryPalooza, traditionally held the day before classes begin. In 2004, the University Library hosted the first LibraryPalooza, basically an open house with a name to attract student interest. LibraryPalooza is a "welcome" for freshmen and transfers and "welcome back" for returning students. The UAlbany Great Dane mascots, Damien and Li’l D participate and attendees eagerly pose for photos with them. Since 2008, photos were posted on our UAlbany Reference Services Facebook page as the event was happening. The campus radio station spins the tunes and a prize drawing is held for a major prize, such as iPod Nano or a laptop. The prize drawing box is in the Interactive Media Center attracting attendees into the IMC so they learn about IMC services, classes, authoring and production software, and equipment available on site and for loan.

LibraryPalooza is partially funded by the Dean of Libraries and by a competitive grant supported by University Auxiliary Services (UAS) programming funds. UAS contract vendors have been invited to participate; banking services, the bookstore, UAS, have all participated in LibraryPalooza. In past years, campus services and offices invited to participate included: Middle Earth peer counseling, University Police, NYPIRG (they ran voter registration during the event), Sustainability Office, Career Development, Rapid Copy and Mail Services, and ASDAC, the Albany Student Dining Advisory Committee. Brochures and information regarding other campus activities at the Art Museum, Performing Arts Center, Writers Institute, and sports schedules are made available during LibraryPalooza.

Give-aways are requested from library vendors and are very popular with student attendees. Chartwells, the campus food service vendor secures snack donations and provides table drapes. Students have expressed interest in leisure reading books; a couple of years ago, leisure reading book donations were solicited from University Libraries staff and books are given away during LibraryPalooza.

The LibraryPalooza planning group expanded a couple of years ago to include representatives from Residential Life. During the event, the R.A.'s are an important element of welcoming students. They apply paw print tattoos (capitalizing on the Great Dane theme), serve as greeters, and work with the prize drawing registration.
During the summer orientation information fairs, information about LibraryPalooza is made available. A LibraryPalooza website and posting on UAlbany’s Reference Services Facebook are other ways potential attendees find out about Palooza. LibraryPalooza is listed in the opening weekend brochure made available to all students. Slides for the LCD screen in the lobby of the University Library are created using photos from the previous LibraryPaloozas; slides are also sent to the campus television station and for posting at other LCD screens in the dining halls. The campus bookstore has been an enthusiastic supporter of LibraryPalooza and bookstore staff includes Palooza info in every box of advanced textbook purchases shipped out as well as having LibraryPalooza cards at the cash registers.

As an Association of Research Libraries (ARL) library, UAlbany’s library is much bigger than the libraries most of the freshmen and transfer students have ever used. Many times students have been overheard to say, wow, this is SO big; it's much bigger than my high school library. LibraryPalooza extends a warm and friendly welcome to their University Library.

The University Libraries has participated in other opening weekend activities. Librarians have attended R.A. “section meetings” to invite students to LibraryPalooza taking place the next day and librarians have also participated in the Student Association’s “block party,” distributing Smarties candy along with a message of Smarties use the University Libraries.

**Orientation Advisors**

The UAlbany Orientation Office hires approximately 20 students as Orientation Advisors or O.A.’s to work with incoming students. Incoming freshmen and transfers number approximately 2800, and family members participating add another 2100, bringing the total reach of the O.A.’s to approximately 5000 people total. The O.A.’s work with incoming students and family members at 13-16 sessions held over a six week period and just prior to the start of classes.

The O.A.’s ensure that incoming freshmen and transfer students and their family members attend various informational and orientation sessions and meet with advisement as necessary. The O.A.’s lead tours for both students and family members and generally try to help each group have an excellent experience while visiting for orientation.

The Orientation Advisors participate in a two week intensive orientation and training program. The University Library hosts a breakfast and information session for the O.A.’s. Following a brief building tour, the group breaks into two teams for an informational scavenger hunt designed to build on key points provided during the building tour. Following the hunt and discussion of the questions, each O.A. is requested to use the whiteboards and write which one item will be important for incoming students to learn about the Libraries when attending LibraryPalooza.

O.A.’s have been an important link to incoming students. First, as students themselves, learning more about the resources and services of the University Libraries assists each one achieve personal academic success. Secondly, many of the O.A.’s are R.A.’s during the school year providing peer mentoring and advice to students in the residence halls. Finally, with the O.A.’s interacting and offering leadership to new students and family members, providing positive information and soundbites to these key campus tour leaders and student role models provides big dividends.

**Community outreach and programming**

https://scholarsarchive.library.albany.edu/jlams/vol6/iss2/1
Librarians’ participation on planning groups carrying out campus and community programming is another outreach initiative. Opportunities abound for participating in various projects in the University community: continually networking and keeping alert to various opportunities and upcoming programming is a way to step forward and reach out, offering library support and informational resources to these programs and initiatives.

A number of opportunities have been capitalized upon in the recent past. In support of the traveling exhibit *Frankenstein: Penetrating the Secrets of Nature* developed by the National Library of Medicine with the American Librarian Association, and the University’s architecture-themed year celebrating Edward Durrell Stone’s design the UAlbany’s campus, the University Libraries supported creative competitions for students. The creative competitions engaged students and also engaged selected faculty and staff as they were invited to devise competition guidelines and serve on the selection juries. Active participation during the last several years on the campus planning group for Sexuality Week, observed annually early in the spring semester, has been another outreach opportunity. Displays and slides for the University Library’s LCD screen, and collaboration with the campus bookstore regarding book displays and author signings have strengthened Sexuality Week offerings. The *Why Melville Matters Now* symposium held in 2006 was yet another outreach opportunity, with a library representative participating in the planning and executing a series of events, programs, exhibits, and a symposium.

**Conclusion**

Each outreach activity must be relevant to its target audience. Constant monitoring and fine-tuning takes place. For instance, one year at LibraryPalooza library building tours were offered and only five students took a tour; building tours were scrapped for future LibraryPaloozas. As we see the last of the Baby Boomer parents at information fairs and transition to Gen X parents, our messages must stay fresh and on-point for Gen X and Millenials’ concerns. If an initiative does not work well, it is either eliminated or adjusted so that it is successfully accomplishing our objectives.

Outreach and programming initiatives build on and enhance service to the library’s community and bring users to the library, whether in-person users or virtual users. Outreach adds another dimension to the library’s profile in its community, and, in turn, garners additional support for the library, informs users about the library, its resources and services, and adds value and quality to the community.

**References**


“Come On In!” Welcoming Exceptional Patrons to the Library

By Lisa C. Wemett

Abstract: Patrons with developmental disabilities can receive exceptional customer service when library policies and staff work in sync to make all patrons welcome in the library. Beyond the accessibility of the facility itself, driven by ADA legislation, acceptance and awareness in every day interactions and advocacy should be institutional standards to ensure patrons with developmental disabilities receive equal treatment. Policy development, assistive technology, staff training on disability awareness, volunteer and employment opportunities, collaboration with community agencies, broad-based collection development, and program adaptations can make the library more accessible to persons with disabilities.

This article is based on a NYLA Institute held at the New York Library Association’s 2009 annual conference in Niagara Falls and repeated at the Rochester Regional Library Council and the Nioga Library System. NYLA is grateful to the NYS Developmental Disabilities Planning Council for their support of this training endeavor.

The Building Bridges Project: Library Services to Youth with Disabilities

Providing library services to persons with disabilities—whatever those disabilities may be—is an important topic to libraries of all types. In 2003, I helped to develop a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant proposal for the Monroe County Library System in Rochester and then carried out the project over two funding cycles. Webster Public Library, where I was the Assistant Library Director and Teen Services Librarian, participated over the four years (2003-2007) as one of thirteen libraries in the “Building Bridges Project: Library Services to Youth with Disabilities.” The total funding received was $99,150, which was supplemented with in-kind services for staff, programs, and additional collection development funds from the participating libraries.

The project was a collaboration between public libraries in the Rochester metropolitan region, advocacy agencies, parent groups, and community groups. The project’s purpose was to raise awareness and promote acceptance of children and teens with disabilities through inclusive library programming, giving youth with developmental disabilities appropriate supports and accommodations to meet their needs. Parent meetings and programs were held on topics such as estate planning and insurance to increase their ability to support their children’s growth. Materials collections for all family members were expanded county-wide, adding over 1300 items about disabilities and parenting in many formats. Staff training on disability awareness reached more than 300 staff members in all job titles across the county. Direct assistance to youth

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with developmental disabilities helped these children and teens to acquire basic library skills, including a library card of their own, positioning the library as an enjoyable place for lifelong learning.

**Exceptional Customer Service, Not “Problem Patrons”**

A magazine entitled *Exceptional Parent* influenced the title of the NYLA workshop. Library staff certainly need to distinguish people with developmental disabilities from “problem patrons.” People with disabilities are not problems. They are members of the community who have needs that may at times seem problematic to staff members and the general public, especially if those staff members and other patrons do not use some “out of the box” thinking in their efforts to assist the patrons with their needs. Library staff and administrators might feel these ways to help patrons with disabilities are “exceptions” to the usual library rules and procedures, but planning, training, and collaborating will help all staff to provide these “exceptional patrons” with “exceptional” customer service.

**Who Are Our Exceptional Patrons?**

Who are these patrons with disabilities? According to the definition in the NYS Mental Hygiene Law, a developmental disability means a person has a disability which:

- is attributable to mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, neurological impairments, autism, or any other condition found to be closely related to mental retardation
- originates before the individual reaches age 22
- has continued or can be expected to continue indefinitely
- constitutes a substantial handicap to such person’s ability to function normally in society

One condition people generally associate with developmental disabilities is Down syndrome. But beyond this state-approved definition, several other disabilities will be addressed here in relation to providing good customer service in libraries. Many individuals in the general population may have autism spectrum disorders, learning disabilities and attentional disorders like ADHD, hearing impairments, low vision or blindness, or psychological disorders (e.g., post traumatic stress disorder, bipolar depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder). Always remember that disability descriptors are medical diagnoses. Many people are not comfortable sharing this type of personal information. Library staff members need to be sensitive to a person’s feelings about their disability.

**Language: “Spread the Word to End the Word” Campaign**

The word “retard” is extremely emotionally charged. People react differently to it, depending on who says the word, what age they are, young or old, and whether or not they have a person in their lives that has intellectual challenges or even may have those challenges themselves. The R-word, retard, is slang for mental retardation. Mental retardation is how medical professionals describe a person with significant intellectual impairment. But the R-word today has become common, used as an insult for someone or something stupid. For example, high school students may say, “That’s so retarded!” or “Don’t be such a retard.” Used in this way, the word can apply to anyone or anything. But even when the R-word is not said directly to someone with a disability, it is hurtful.

Across the USA, colleges, schools, and offices have launched a campaign, “Spread the Word to End the Word.” The goal is to make people stop and think about the disparaging use of the word “retard.” In fact, states are rethinking their use of the word in the names of their agencies. In 2009, Massachusetts changed their “Department of Mental Retardation” to the “Department of Developmental Services.” On the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Web page, the department stated “Our new name reflects the positive changes in language and expectations about the people with disabilities and recognizes the importance of a more inclusive framework for services and support to individuals and their families.”

Disrespectful language excludes people. It is used intentionally by insecure and biased people. Language shapes attitudes – words can hurt or they can welcome. The terms “handicapped” and “crippled” are outdated and hurtful. Respectful language makes a difference to dispel negative perceptions of people with disabilities. As a leader in promoting acceptance
of people with intellectual disabilities, the Special Olympics opposes prejudice and discrimination, working continuously to eliminate negative stereotypes associated with intellectual challenges. The R-word is one such stereotype. The “Spread the Word to End the Word” campaign is one element of the Special Olympics’ vision of a world where everyone matters, where everyone is accepted, and where everyone is valued. In a world that has worked to eradicate pejorative language about race and ethnicity such as the N-word, the campaign to eliminate the R-word is gaining ground.

Disabilities Without Physical Attributes

Often Down syndrome is recognized by its physical features or we will see a person with a service animal or a person with cerebral palsy using a wheelchair. But some disabilities are “invisible,” i.e., without any physical attributes, such as autism spectrum disorders, Asperger’s Syndrome, learning disabilities, attentional disorders like ADHD, hearing impairments (from mild to profound hearing loss), epilepsy or seizure disorders, brain injuries, and psychological disorders (e.g., bipolar depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and Tourette syndrome).

Not everyone who is legally blind uses a white cane or has a guide dog. Library staff need to be aware of other cues when assisting patrons: Is the person who is consulting their reading list holding it up right in front of their glasses to read it to the reference librarian? For a person with low vision or blindness, staff can not just point the way to the stacks. Librarians may need to accompany the patron and provide assistance in browsing the large print books. Even those large print spine labels specially designed by the Technical Services Department might be too small for the patron to read.

Developmental Disabilities – What Are The Difficulties?

All people with developmental disabilities are not alike. But there may be common themes—impairments in communication (e.g., speech delays or struggles to form words, as well as trouble understanding what someone is saying to them). There may be difficulties with social interaction skills and behaviors since they cannot process information well or need to make a great effort to effectively communicate their needs to other people.

An intellectual disability can have a significant effect on an individual’s education, leisure activities, employment, and social opportunities. On the other hand, children with disabilities whose parents were told they would never walk, talk, go to school, or hold a job have proven medical professionals totally wrong by making strides unheard of several decades ago.

Accessibility

Accessibility in libraries is not all about ramps and parking spaces. Architects and designers have learned and changed buildings to remove their architectural barriers. Staff have even discovered that a lower counter at the public service desks makes everyone more approachable, not only to people who use wheelchairs, but also to those patrons who are just not very tall yet, like children getting their first library card. Restrooms have been remodeled or enlarged to make the spaces accessible to persons with disabilities. (By the way, when staff point the way to these accommodations, the bathroom is not “handicapped,” unless of course there is something wrong with its fixtures! The term is “accessible.” So think about a sign: “Accessible Restroom”. Similarly, it is not “handicapped parking,” unless the lines are painted crooked! Refer to the “accessible parking spaces.”)

Signage is another way to make library materials more accessible. But are all the signs for the collections hanging from the ceiling? A person with low vision may be able to make out the shape of a bookcase at a distance, but cannot read an overhead sign that says FICTION. Large, clear directional signs should be installed at a variety of heights. Signs on the end of book stacks make it easier for people with various disabilities to navigate through the library and find materials on their own. Using universal symbols or icons that are easily recognizable are a helpful addition. One of the accomplishments of the Building Bridges grant was a new “way-finding system” offered for non-readers, with icons developed to accompany the Dewey Decimal classifications. As with many changes the grant implemented, these icons ended up assisting typical children who were non-readers as well as the children with disabilities.
Acceptance and Awareness

Library staff are modeling behavior with every patron interaction. Other patrons, family members, caregivers, and agency staff are watching library employees’ dealings with a person with special needs. The goal is promoting acceptance and awareness, not only by staff members but by the entire community as they visit the library and see staff welcoming all individuals that live in the library’s service area.

Here are some general tips on every day interactions for welcoming patrons with disabilities to the library. These strategies will make a library visit more successful for a patron who has special needs.

**Tips:**

1. As with any library user, if you see that a person may need assistance, ask how you may be of help. Listen carefully to the individual’s expressed needs (or the needs expressed by their caregiver.)

2. Identify yourself by your first name and identify your role (“I’m one of the librarians”). Use the question “How may I help you?” rather than the yes-no question, “May I help you?”

3. Do not assume that a person with a disability that you can observe will need special assistance. A person with no visible disability may, in fact, need an accommodation. The person may be able to tell you how to provide assistance or he may not be able to.

4. Wherever possible, address the person with an intellectual disability by their first name. They are accustomed to being addressed by their first name, even if your usual library etiquette might be to say “How can I help you today, Mrs. Bennett?”

5. Always speak directly to the individual you are helping—not to their companion, assistant, or interpreter. Maintain eye contact, use simple instructions, and avoid library jargon. (This is a good rule to follow when helping any patron.)

6. Consult with the person: “Do you want that information in a book? Would a video be better?” Eye contact shows you are listening carefully and want to help.

7. Do treat the individuals and caregivers with respect. Do not be offended by a lack of response or unconventional behavior, such as crowding your personal space or just fiddling with objects on your desk without answering your question.

8. As in any readers’ advisory situation, finding out about the person’s likes and dislikes about books or their reading ability may give better direction to your search. Many persons with developmental disabilities may read on a basic reading level. Do not march everyone toward the children’s room. “Eyewitness Books” and other graphically-heavy “coffee table” nonfiction books in the teen and adult sections may work just fine.

9. Take the patrons to the materials. Avoid pointing, but if necessary, use descriptive language and landmarks (e.g., “the black desk over there where the computers are”) rather than pointing to signs the person might not be able to read.

10. Try not to have the patron wait too long for assistance. Moving away from the Reference or Circulation desk to a quieter part of the library can lower the stress level for the staff member and patron alike.

11. Be patient, both with yourself and the library user. Relax and be prepared to spend a little extra time communicating and assisting the patron.

12. If there is truly inappropriate behavior, address it immediately. Explain what the person should do in a straightforward way. People with intellectual disabilities need to know the parameters of acceptable behavior. If the
instructions do not work right away, be prepared to continue giving the same direction until the behavior does improve.

Advocacy

Advocate—is this word a noun or a verb? It can be both. “AD-vo-kit” makes it a noun—one who pleads the cause for another. “Ad-vo-KATE” makes it a verb—to defend publicly, such as a plan.

Similar to the mission of the NYS Developmental Disabilities Planning Council, libraries need to affirm the dignity, value, respect, contributions, and worth of all persons with developmental disabilities.

The advocate is YOU, advocating on behalf of exceptional patrons to the library staff, to the library administration (i.e., library manager, director) and Board of Trustees, and to community funders (there might even be grant opportunities to help the library expand services in this area).

Advocates need to support, encourage, and promote, becoming passionate champions for the residents in the community that have special needs. “Exceptional patrons” may need exceptions to library policies, but library staff need to be certain to uphold equality for all patrons and allow for self-determination. Advocating for patrons with disabilities becomes advocacy for all patrons.

Policy Development and Flexibility

Policies that affect everyone include the library’s “patron behavior policy” and any rules governing the use of the public computers. For example, if the rule is one person to a computer, what will the library staff do or say when the program assistant from the group home wants to supervise and assist two people with developmental disabilities at one workstation?

Flexibility is the key, striving to remove barriers to using and accessing the library and all it offers the community. Adaptations to the facility, procedures, or policies generally assist all patrons, not just those with disabilities. Think about mothers with baby strollers, a toddler in tow, and a huge stack of materials to return—doesn’t the automatic door opener on the handicapped accessible door work for that mother, too?

An exception to think about: What if you allowed a patron with a service dog to keep dog treats at the Circulation Desk, so the dog would learn to take the patron directly to the check out desk when she visited the library? What would happen? Dr. Katherine Schneider, who is blind, used this training technique with her service dog at her local library.

Libraries need to develop some “out of the box” thinking when they review policies that affect all patrons, including persons with disabilities, in the areas of lending rules and procedures, confidentiality of library records, acceptable patron behavior, and emergency procedures (e.g., building evacuation). A library can certainly make reasonable modifications to their policies, practices, and procedures when necessary, unless doing so would fundamentally alter the nature of the service being provided.

Some examples might include:

- signing a library card. Suggest that staff members assist a user with completing library forms if the patron is unable to fill it out independently. Many people can provide the necessary information and will be able to sign a completed form, even if they cannot fill out the form completely on their own.

- acceptable ID for a group home resident—what does the resident have as proof of their address? Staff members need to have alternate ways to prove identity or mailing address beyond a driver’s license.

Assistive Technology

Sometimes we think we have made our library accessible, that we have added technology or made a physical change in the building to meet the needs of our patrons with disabilities. But sometimes accommodations need to be made beyond the “legal” accommodations. Disabilities advocate Harriet Johnson who uses a wheelchair states that “not all bodies meet
ADA requirements.” She tells how arduous it was to maneuver up the ramp at the back of a building on her campus to avoid the steps at the front entrance, only to be confronted with a sign “Ring door bell for admittance” and finding a doorbell button so high up on the wall that she could not reach it.

An exception to think about: If the person cannot raise their arms to the height of our computer work desk, is there a way to have a lower, “pull out” keyboard surface or have a wireless keyboard the person could hold on their lap?

Each library should do an assessment of its programs, services, policies, and staff attitudes to welcome all patrons. Assistive technologies help make it possible for users with disabilities to access library materials in a variety of ways and also to participate more fully in public programs.

Think about your responses to these questions:

1. Do you offer any kind of assistive technologies to help people with hearing impairments?

2. What computer workstation adaptations do you have, such as screen magnification? Can people change to “large print settings” with larger icons? Are your monitors oversized?

3. Do you offer headphones for the computers that have software applications to read text aloud?

4. Is your Web site accessible to people with low vision? Many patrons do not necessarily come to the building any more; if you have low vision and cannot drive, the Internet is the way you access community services, such as the library and government agencies. Your Web site design needs to include evaluation of visibility of the text on the screen.

5. Does your collection have books in a wide variety of nonprint formats, such as compact discs (i.e., talking books) and electronic books that can be downloaded onto personal listening devices? Can your staff tell someone clearly how to access the downloadable books?

But think “low tech”, too. Simple tools can often provide practical solutions. Does the Reference Desk have a hand-held magnifying glass to loan to patrons when needed? Is it large enough to be effective and is the lens unscratched? A step-up might be a lighted standing magnifier at a reader carrel.

For libraries interested in purchasing assistive products, AbleData (www.abledata.com) provides objective information on assistive technology and rehabilitation equipment to consumers, organizations, professionals, and caregivers in the United States. They do not sell the 36,000+ products listed on their Web site, but offer objective descriptions of each product, its function and features, price, manufacturer, and distributor information. They do not print a catalog; all information is online. There is also a searchable list of books and articles (both print and electronic) relating to assistive technology.

It does no good to make the considerable investment in technology adaptations if staff – meaning all staff – have not been trained. Can the library staff:

- use the Interpretype® machines to communicate with patrons who are deaf or speech impaired via a keyboard and screen?
- change the settings on the computer monitors to increase the size of the icons and fonts for those with visual impairments?
- demonstrate the video magnifier so a patron can read personal or library print materials?
- use headphones with the computer?
- show a patron how to use the auto-reader software that reads text?
drive the electric cart, so they can know how it operates, not just hand out the key?

There is nothing more frustrating to a person with a disability than the library having the technology, but then a staff member is unsure of how to operate it. If a patron says, “Can you show me how to use this?”, do staff members say “Only Tom knows how to work that, and he’s off today.”

An exception to think about: What if the instructions on all public computers were “reader friendly” in large type? (Not just at the workstation designated accessible with the “large print” monitor.)

Staff Training and Disability Awareness

Staff training in the area of disability awareness can go a long way to increase the comfort level of the staff in providing exceptional customer service to persons with disabilities. It may be that the individual patron may have anxiety about visiting the library. A staff person who can better relate to the patron because he has been exposed to information on disabilities will make the visit successful and less stressful.

The steering committee for the Building Bridges project found it is a necessity to offer consciousness-raising workshops to help all levels of staff to understand and have a heightened awareness of disabilities, whatever those disabilities are. In welcoming all patrons, the library will give better customer service to everyone. When library pages, clerks, and reference desk staff learn together at disability awareness training sessions, they can assist each other as team members to better provide patrons with what they need. Training sessions can also help staff decrease their unknown anxieties about helping exceptional patrons.

Agencies in the community may be able to provide free or low-cost training for the staff. Lifespan Community Education in Rochester offers “Elder Aware,” a workshop that educate participants about their interactions with older adults through a simulation component: wearing mittens to simulate arthritis, earmuffs to mimic hearing loss, and dark glasses that cloud vision like cataracts might. Becoming more aware of age-related impairments can help staff to become more empathetic to patrons of any age with disabilities.

People First Language

Respectful and inclusive language is essential to ensure the dignity and humanity of people with intellectual disabilities. “The mentally disabled” is not people-first language. The ideal is to avoid anything that starts with “the,” that is, “the handicapped,” “the blind,” “the deaf,” etc.

People First Language recognizes that a disability is just one aspect of a person’s identity. The disability alone does not define that person. People should not be referred to as “crippled,” “deformed,” or “afflicted by” a particular condition. A person who is paralyzed uses a wheelchair; he is not “confined to a wheelchair.” Most advocacy groups stress the need to place the focus on the individual before the disability. Here are some examples: instead of “blind child,” say “a child who is blind;” instead of “deaf students,” say “students with hearing impairments;” instead of “children with special needs (or children in special ed),” say “children who receive special education services;” instead of “toddler with birth defects,” say “toddler who have congenital disabilities.”

In some government agencies, it has now been legislated to use People First Language in government publications. More information about People First Language can be found here: http://www.disabilityisnatural.com/explore/language-communication.

Collaboration

Libraries need to realize that exceptional patrons – patrons with all types of disabilities – do matter, that exceptional patrons need acceptance and are valuable. Library staff should be at the front door, gesturing welcomingly, saying “Come on in!” In order to be most effective in being hospitable to all patrons, library staff must work to establish relations in the community and to develop a good system of information and referral for their library users.
Networking in the community requires a three-pronged effort. It includes discussions with advocacy agencies (e.g., The Advocacy Center, Rochester), the community agencies that serve individuals with disabilities (e.g., The Epilepsy Foundation, Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired), and also those agencies that provide service coordination for families and their dependents, such as The ARC or Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES). BOCES offers services for pre-schoolers right through high school level.

Once staff members start to look for them, collaborative opportunities abound. Even if the library does not ultimately work with these groups, it is the perfect agency, in its “information and referral” role, to connect families, agencies, and other patrons with the resources throughout the community. Whatever plans develop, whether services, programs, or other cooperative ventures, it is vital to include people with disabilities in the planning, implementing, and evaluating stages, to be certain the library will be providing services that will be used and that are appropriate to their needs. An advocacy tag line often quoted is “Nothing for us without us.”

As the Building Bridges project developed and was marketed, it was obvious the participating libraries needed to work with parent groups and organizations and service providers for families and children with disabilities. The Special Education Parent-Teacher Association (SEPTA) was one group crucial to the project’s success. SEPTA is a division of the national PTA primarily for families with children who receive special education services. School personnel can connect library staff to the leaders of these groups. Word-of-mouth marketing by these families will increase usage of library programs and services, provide support for future funding proposals, and energize the staff when they are thanked for their efforts. The national PTA Web site contains a “frequently asked questions” section on how to establish a PTA chapter or committee for families with children who receive special education services (www.pta.org/3455.htm).

Most libraries have one or more community group care homes (often just referred to as “group homes”) in their service area. Group residences are sponsored by the NYS Developmental Disabilities Service Office (DDSO), The ARC, and other private agencies (e.g., Heritage Christian, Cerebral Palsy). By talking with the managers or administrators of the houses, library staff may ascertain what the individuals who live in the homes might need in terms of library services. Each home is required to offer programming opportunities for their residents and a weekly outing to their community library can be one such program.

Volunteerism

Volunteerism allows persons with developmental disabilities the opportunity to learn new skills, contributes to their well-being, and permits them to participate more fully in their community. Day habilitation sites often are looking for volunteer service opportunities and other avenues for community participation, such as serving meals at a soup kitchen. Approach them if the library has a project that needs volunteers. They will send staff to supervise their clients as they carry out tasks for the library. These organizations know that partnering with libraries or other non-profit agencies is a way to have local residents see people with disabilities as more than “clients” or “group home residents,” but as true citizens of the community in which they live.

For volunteers with disabilities, tasks can be explained by a mentor, aide, or job coach using checklists, visual supports, and planners for regular tasks to be completed. Breaking down a task into a sequence of steps makes it achievable. A valuable resource is “Tip Sheet 9: Library Accessibility—What You Need to Know—Volunteers with Disabilities” at www.ascla.ala.org (developed by the Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies, a division of the American Library Association).

What can volunteers with developmental disabilities accomplish for the library? Here are just a few examples:

- photocopying and cutting routing slips
- basic processing of library materials
- straightening and cleaning bookshelves and washing book jackets
Together Including Every Student (TIES) is a national organization with chapters in many school districts. TIES Coordinators help train student volunteers to work with students with developmental disabilities. These pairs of students select traditional activities to do together, such as extracurricular clubs in school, sporting events, and other community activities, including volunteerism. Most matches are typical children working with children with disabilities, to encourage social interactions and friendships. But in some instances, an older child with developmental disabilities may be paired with a younger student who also has special needs. The Webster Public Library has had a TIES pair work regularly, one hour a week, on tasks that assisted with the children’s department services. A young girl with autism and her TIES partner made nametags for storytime using the Ellison die-cut machine, cut yarn for craft projects, and assembled “make-and-take” craft kits for giveaways at the Children’s Desk. The volunteer also came with her service dog and her mother provided transportation for her daughter and the TIES volunteer.

Hiring and the ADA

It may be surprising how dedicated volunteers can be and the library administration should pave the way for hiring people with disabilities. There are many resources on employment and hiring practices and how workplace accommodations can be made for workers with disabilities. (Consult the “Selected Resources” list.)

People receiving services due to their disability may be aware of ways they are eligible to receive assistance in gaining employment skills. Two such agencies are Jobpath, a division of The Arc of Monroe County, and the Epilepsy Foundation. Library administrators and supervisors of library pages (a.k.a. shelvers) should learn about these services that are available at no cost to the library. Essentially, library pages may be hired on a trial basis with a job coach to assist them. The library does not pay the coach—just the pages during the time they are training, which is the usual work arrangement. The person on the staff that normally trains library pages will train the new page and the coach as a team. Then the coach is there to help with a smooth transition, as the new page continues to do the job alone.

Shelvers can be high turn-over positions. Here is a way to try employees. They will probably exceed everyone’s expectations! At a suburban library in Rochester, Jobpath was instrumental for a young woman with a brain injury from an automobile accident to be hired. She was trained as a library page (shelver) until she was comfortable with the tasks of the job. She has now been a successful library page for more than five years.

An exception to think about: What if you hired a library page (shelver), assisted by a job coach, who could only shelve videos with great speed and accuracy? The page’s learning disabilities prevent her from being able to reason out the Dewey Decimal system, but alphabetizing is a snap. She really is not capable of carrying out any other page duties.

Collection Needs

It is a given that the library’s collection needs a variety of formats for various learning styles and abilities, e.g., audiobooks, Braille materials, videos. Whatever the age level, the offerings should include materials both about disabilities and for people with disabilities. Another target audience is parents who need reliable information on disability issues. Materials need to be accurate, current, and understandable to the lay person to help families make informed decisions on medical, educational, and therapeutic options for their children. The Building Bridges project’s collection development grant money bought materials for parents, but also for persons with disabilities, age 0 to 21 years old.

There is also a great need for age-appropriate reading materials (essentially “high interest/low vocabulary” titles) for older children and teens who may struggle with their reading skills. Children and teens want to read about people “like me.” That is, they are looking for validation. As readers, they want to identify with a child in a story that might be experiencing similar challenges, everything from wearing eyeglasses, having asthma or peanut allergies, making friends, or doing well in school despite learning disabilities.
The children’s department might consider adding a toy collection, both for in-house use and for loan. Through play, children develop curiosity, coordination, and even self-esteem: “I can do it!” The Lincoln Branch of the Rochester Public Library houses the “Toy Resource Center,” a lending library of toys for parents, their caregivers, and educators. The toys can be borrowed by anyone with a county library card. Toys help all children progress towards educational and developmental goals. Toys assist in the development of communication skills and language concepts for children. Just like typical children, children with disabilities can use toys for the development of sensory motor skills, taking part in pretend play, making choices, and learning to take turns. Toys can also be incentives for appropriate behavior.

To expand the offerings of the library’s video collection, consider purchase of described videos for patrons with visual impairments. The Media Access Group at WGBH in Boston includes the Descriptive Video Service (DVS®) which makes television, film, video, and other visual media more enjoyable to audiences who are blind or visually impaired. DVS® provides descriptive narration of key visual elements, inserted with the natural pauses in dialogue, to help viewers better understand the story. Key visual elements are those which viewers with vision loss would ordinarily miss, such as actions, gestures, facial expressions, scene changes, etc. No special equipment is needed; the descriptions are just part of the movie audio. The DVS® Home Video catalogue is online at http://access.wgbh.org.

Referrals

If assistance is beyond the scope of the library’s collection, staff should be informed about area resources so they can clearly make community referrals with assurance. (Nothing is worse for a patron to hear than, “Gee, I think they can help you…”). A brochure or bookmark, in sufficient quantity and in an obvious place, should be available to pass along to the patron. Developing such a brochure can also be a first good step towards collaboration, to work with an agency or group to design a public relations piece that librarians could use to refer families to this community service. Do not forget to reciprocate, giving the agency a service brochure from the public library system or closest libraries for their clients.

One can only imagine the turmoil or shock parents go through when they hear a diagnosis for their child. And where do they usually turn? The Internet. But there are often much better local resources that can winnow through all that “stuff” on the Web. One such group is the Parent-Educator Resource Library at Monroe #1 BOCES in Rochester, a source of up-to-date information on disability related topics. The library’s resources are organized by topics. There is an extensive vertical file collection of articles, along with books, audio books, and videos. Their clients include parents and family members, teachers, other professionals working with children with disabilities, and sometimes individuals with disabilities themselves. Some topics are available by e-mail (e.g., autism spectrum disorders, behavior modification, oppositional defiant disorder); see their Web page for a list of the available packets. www.monroe.edu/perl.

Another agency to which parents can be referred is Parent to Parent of NYS, a nonprofit group whose mission is to connect and support parents of individuals with special needs. (www.parenttoparentnys.org) Their Parent Matching Program pairs a trained support parent with new parents that may be struggling with the same diagnosis for their child, whether it is a similar disability, chronic illness, or other health care concern. The trained parent helps the new family with parenting issues. Parent to Parent currently has more than 1200 parent volunteers to help other families all across NYS. The group’s regional coordinators are very willing to make presentations to family groups or at library programs about the agency’s services. They will also provide brochures for the library’s literature racks to inform parents of their services.

At the Reference Desk, have a folder or pamphlet file box with materials for staff to make referrals to the NYS Talking Book and Braille Library. Most librarians know that this is a free service for NYS residents of any age who cannot use standard print materials. Beyond patrons with low vision, other individuals may also be eligible. If the person has a physical disability or even a temporary physical limitation that prevents him from holding a book or turning pages, the individual would qualify for services. This includes people with multiple sclerosis, impairment from a stroke, cerebral palsy, severe arthritis, paralysis, or prolonged weakness. Students with a learning disability that is severe enough to prevent reading in the usual manner may also be certified by their physician for the library services.

Adaptations for Programs

A parent who has an older child who was just diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome shared this comment:
“When my son was younger and I would take him to library programs, I never knew when he would have an ‘incident.’ It is difficult for people around you to understand. If your child was in a wheelchair, no one would insist that they walk. But kids with Asperger’s look normal [and] are very bright; their reaction to something or lack of picking up on social cues catches you off guard. As a parent, you are always educating [other people] that your child is not doing something on purpose.”

It is not difficult to imagine how this parent would feel: should I take my child to that library program? Will he sit through storytime? Will he have a “melt down” when the librarian asks him not to shout out during the story? Will the staff let me go in the program room with him? All this second guessing—it is understandable that it just might be easier for the family to stay home, even though the child would enjoy the activity and craves socializing with other children.

One parent of a child with special needs advised the Building Bridges project committee that up through 7 years old, a child with special needs should just be included in regular library programs. By age 8, programs should be offered that are of special interest and within the abilities of children and teens with special needs. For example, the young adult librarian might consider offering a cartoon drawing workshop for tweens or teens. But this type of program is not really feasible for someone with limited fine motor skills. Instead of the drawing workshop, the librarian might decide to use the library’s movie license and show a short “festival” of anime films that all students can enjoy together. A “Pizza Taste-Off” program is another event that can include people of all ages and abilities. With careful planning, most library programs can include simple modifications to accommodate exceptional patrons.

**Bridges for Brain Injury**

Library programs are not always for people with disabilities, but can be presented by people with disabilities. Bridges for Brain Injury, based in Canandaigua, works with individuals with acquired or traumatic brain injury. The program trains volunteers as part of a speakers bureau. Included in their talks is information on brain injury awareness and the importance of safety to prevent brain injuries. Programs such as this can provide a way for individuals with brain injuries to serve their community. This outreach group educates the general public about the abilities of persons with disabilities.

The Wildlife Defenders is the Bridges for Brain Injury’s wildlife conservation outreach group that visits libraries, schools, nursing homes, and other community events. They conduct formal education programs and displays, providing facts about diverse animals and their habitats. In 2009, the Wood Library in Canandaigua held a “Creature Feature” program during the summer. Through the Wildlife Defenders presentations, the children were introduced to a different wild animal every week, such as a fox, porcupine, and wild birds. Several other public libraries in the Finger Lakes also took advantage of these programs.

**Statement of Welcome and Accommodation**

How do families know that library staff will work with them? Add a statement of inclusion on all event fliers, in press releases to the media, and on the library’s program Web site. The Building Bridges group developed this welcoming statement to use on program fliers and in public relations materials:

> Library programs are open and beneficial to all teens, regardless of their level of education, experience, physical, or cognitive abilities. We invite everyone to participate. In order to make your experience positive and enjoyable, please inform us in advance of any special accommodations you may require to meet your needs. For further assistance, please contact the staff of the Teen Services Department at xxx-xxxx ext. xxx.

“Open the door” by encouraging families to ask. Some parents are reluctant to request accommodations and a statement in library promotional pieces offering to make changes may encourage the family to discuss the program with the library staff. Staff members need to be receptive to parents’ suggestions for improvements. Changes will often make the activity better for everyone.

Be aware of the language that you use. In the first year of the Building Bridges grant, some families did not participate because they did not see their child’s learning, neurological, or physical disability as a “developmental disability.” In the second funding cycle, the grant’s title was changed to “Library Services to Youth with Disabilities,” a more inclusive phrase chosen to help reach more children and teens.
Ways to Make a Library Event More Accessible to Persons with Special Needs

Here are some concrete ways to give people with disabilities the chance to participate more fully in library programs:

1. Does the program include reading instructions or rules of a game? Provide instructions in large size typeface or fonts using upper and lower case letters (rather than all capitals which are hard for dyslexic readers to decipher).

2. Print a set of discussion questions ahead of time and provide it to the participant, to read at a comfortable distance and to encourage him/her to formulate responses ahead. A nonverbal participant can write out responses to be read to the group.

3. Does the program include snacks? Ask the participant if smaller pieces are needed for ease of chewing and swallowing. Find out if there are food allergies (e.g., dairy) and offer an alternative snack or choices for everyone.

4. Does the activity require individual participation or decision-making? Provide a personal assistant for one-on-one help so each person can be fully involved.

5. Have the instructor-in-charge spot check everyone’s progress, offering encouragement and reinforcement.

6. Talk directly to the participant and use the person’s first name.

7. Use a team approach for trivia games, etc., so participants can help one another and increase their social skills. Proximity to typical children and teens helps youth with disabilities become included in the action.

8. Does the program require individual writing? Arrange students in small work groups and have one child or a teen volunteer write notes to share on behalf of everyone in the group.

9. Are your crafts “cookie cutter” style or as unique as every individual who attends? Be flexible and encourage creativity by selecting activities that allow for individual decision-making, rather than “when you are done, it should look like this.”

10. Provide peer partners or assistants to encourage people with disabilities to do as many steps as they can by themselves.

11. Put supplies at every table within easy reach or make “place settings” for every person (an accommodation for persons with mobility impairments).

12. Offer a variety of craft experiences that are not dependent on fine motor skills (e.g., painting vs. pencil drawing, tie dye T-shirts vs. macramé bracelets, clay sculptures vs. stringing beads).

13. Along with verbal directions, provide a written instruction sheet using simple sentences. Demonstrate the steps before everyone starts, to meet several different learning styles.

14. Use icons on directions (e.g., an image of scissors, as well as saying, “cut out….”).

The target audience for some programs may be people with developmental disabilities, but publicity should make clear that the program is open to all interested patrons. When author Terry Trueman came to the Webster Public Library to discuss his writing with teens, college students in the special education major program also came to dialogue about his title, *Stuck in Neutral*, based on his personal experience with his son who is profoundly developmentally disabled.

Have open discussions with staff on how persons with disabilities can participate in activities geared to various age groups. If the wildlife rescue educator visits with live animals and the program is geared to elementary age children, could adult patrons with disabilities also attend? Does the children’s specialist think the adults would be a distraction? Would loud outbursts scare the animals? Would adults be taking away seats from children if the program room has a limited capacity? Talk about these issues before the group home program assistant calls to ask about bringing his clients.
Remember that children want to make friends with typical children, not only with children who receive special education services or who have a disability. Introduce program participants to one another and provide large name tags. For persons with developmental disabilities, the library’s program is an opportunity to meet new people and make friends with people they did not know before. When school districts include children with disabilities in the regular classroom, rather than in separate education classes, they find typical students learn how to be more compassionate to children with disabilities. Classmates find out that “being different” does not have to be something negative, plus the students with disabilities truly enjoy their newfound socialization with their classmates.

Books for Dessert

The Port Washington (NY) Public Library hosts a book discussion group for adults over 21 years of age with intellectual disabilities. “Books for Dessert” assumes no level of reading skill—many of the participants have little or no reading abilities. Now in their sixth year of existence, there are three different groups that meet in the evening from 7 to 8:30 p.m. each week to discuss the participants’ reading.

The group reads books and stories of all kinds in high interest – low vocabulary adapted versions, such as “The Prince and the Pauper” and Shirley Jackson’s “The Lottery.” They have also read Shakespeare and acted it out! Some groups use workbook-like formats. Depending on the reading level of the group, some original, complete fiction has been used, including Steinbeck’s The Red Pony and Cynthia Barnett’s Ben’s Gift.

Lee Fertitta, Director of Adult Services (fertitta@pwpl.org) is encouraging other libraries to reproduce this program in their community. Contact Lee for a free “Books for Dessert Program Manual” which gives step-by-step directions to implement this type of book club, outlining how the meetings are run, recruiting participants and session leaders, fund-raising, measuring success, and lists of book titles and publishers. Another library in the Upper Hudson Library System, Altamont Free Library in the Town of Guilderland, also has a very successful book discussion group similar to “Books for Dessert.” Altamont uses nonfiction books that combine simple text and copious illustrations that work well for the participants whose literacy skills range from non-existent to elementary school level.

Wrap-Up: Points to Remember

1. Remember to always think of the person before the disability. Use People First Language when talking or writing about people with disabilities. Each and every library patron has unique needs—not just people with disabilities, our “exceptional patrons.”

2. Collaborate and share your experiences – you’ll find others with similar stories.

3. It is essential to involve people with disabilities in planning for library services and programs. Remember, “Nothing about us without us.”

4. Learn what agencies and support services are available to people with disabilities and have their brochures on display so library staff members can make referrals in the community with confidence.

Footnotes:


Selected Resources on Library Services for Persons with Developmental Disabilities

All resources were retrieved April 21, 2010.

This issue has several articles on library services to children with special needs, including early childhood literature about disabilities, Spanish-language resources for children with special needs, preparing a storytime adapted for children with autism, and a view of the library from a parent of children with learning differences.

http://www.infopeople.org/training/past/2006/beyond-ramps

The Infopeople Project hosts training materials from “Beyond Ramps: Library Accessibility in the Real World,” presented by Marti Goddard in 2006. Documents are available in both .pdf and .doc formats, including a PowerPoint presentation, an outstanding 7-page annotated list of resources on the Web, handouts, and exercises for staff training. One handout to be certain to review: “Library Services for People with Disabilities Policy,” approved by the American Library Association Council in January 2001.

www.access-board.gov/ada-aba/final.cfm.

Americans with Disabilities Act and Architectural Barriers Act accessibility guidelines for buildings. 304 pgs. There is also a 6 pg. summary (PDF version).


www.ABLElibrarian.org

“ABLE: Administering Better Libraries—Educate,” a Federally funded project supported by Federal Library Services and Technology Act funds, awarded to the New York State Library by the Federal Institute of Museum and Library Services via the Nioga Library System, 2005-2007. See Module #1, Public Library Governance and Board Relations, for Teaching Aid #9 on library policies. See Module #4, Planning, Personnel, and Community Relations, for Teaching Aid #6 on hiring and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

www.eeoc.gov/facts/ada17.html

The ADA: Your Responsibilities as an Employer. Page last modified 8/1/08 and has links to changes in the ADA Amendments Act of 2008. Useful FAQ format, with good details on “reasonable accommodation.”

www.loc.gov/nls/reference/bibliographies/awareness.html

Reference Bibliography (8 pages) of resources (2004 to date) on providing library services for persons who are unable to read or use standard print materials due to blindness or physical handicaps. Posted 8/6/2009. Also online is the 2006 “Reference Bibliography: Library and Information Services for Blind andPhysically Handicapped Individuals” with titles published between 2002 and 2006.

www.openroad.net.au/access/dakit.

Disability Awareness Kit: A Training Resource For Public Library Customer Service Staff. This online resource was developed by the State Library of Victoria in Melbourne, Australia. There are handouts, activities for staff training sessions, and resources on disabilities of many types: print, hearing impairments, physical, intellectual, and psychiatric disabilities.

http://dpi.wi.gov/pld/ysnpl.html

Full text of Youth with Special Needs: A Resource and Planning Guide for Wisconsin’s Public Libraries, developed by Barbara Huntington, Youth and Special Services Consultant for the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (1999). Includes planning, staff training, diverse collection development, suggestions for technologies, marketing ideas, and