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Embedded Librarian: Meeting Users on their Turf

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Embedded Librarian: Meeting Users on their Turf

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First Year as a Subject Librarian

- 2005 became a subject librarian for for Germanic Studies in addition to cataloging
- Office in Cataloging Unit located off-campus
- Official office hours at Main Library underutilized.
- Departmental lectures and social events became "office hours."

Becoming Embedded

- Regular office hours in convenient setting– In the Department.
- Presented idea to Library and Dept.
- Finding space and a computer was a problem.
- Some faculty volunteered their offices.
- "Oh, didn't we tell you? You've got an office."
- 2 to 2.5 hrs a week in the Dept.

Advertise and Be Visible!

- Promote through all means possible.
  - Email, newsletter, signs
- Don't stay put in your office!
- Strategically walk the halls.
- Strike up conversations with faculty and students.

•Informal conversations can be productive.
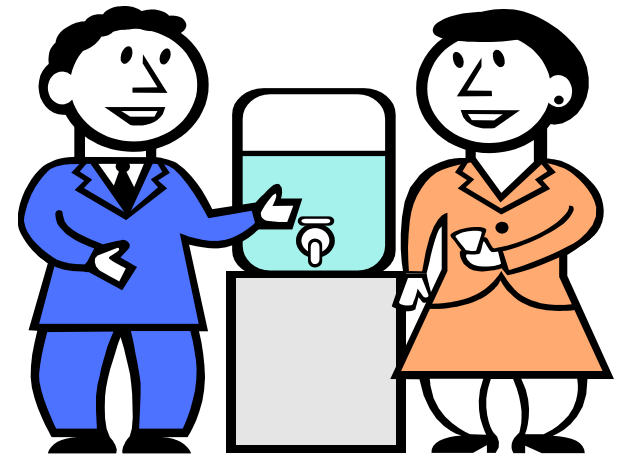
Results-- Personal touch back into librarianship

"It's great you're always in the Department. I don't have to remember to email you."

"I was just passing by and wondering if …"
- you could help me with a copyright question.
- the library could purchase this book.
- you could help me get an article.
- we could meet to talk about my dissertation.

Experiences from other WU Librarians

- Political Science Dept.
- African & African-American Studies
- School of Art (off-campus)
- School of Education

Benefits

- Convenience.
- Being seen will prompt questions.
- Good PR for library.
- Collegiality with faculty.
- More in-depth knowledge for librarian.
- Market other services.
- Increased amount of queries, library visits.

Drawbacks/Challenges

- Commitment of time.
- "Somewhat or rarely busy" – bring your own work along.
- No print resources available.
- Space at Department's whim
- Culture of Department
- Difficult to assess?

Suggestions

- Have relationship established with Department beforehand.
- Buy-in and email from Dept/Chair about service
- Walk the halls—meet people.
- Be patient, no immediate results.
- Consult other librarians holding hours in departments.

ARL Survey on library services in non-library settings

- 75 of the 123 ARL member libraries participated in 2004 survey
- 55% offer in-person services in non-library settings.
- Location: *academic deptartments*, hospitals, computer labs, student unions, residence halls.

Aamot and Hiller 2004, 15-16.

- Major factors in starting such services.
  - Individual librarian initiative – 80 %
  - Changing service philosophy – 65%
  - User demand – 58%
- Will you offer such services in the next 3 yrs?
  - Already have this service (Yes-90%; No-10%)
  - Don't have this service (Yes-18%; No-82%)

Aamot and Hiller 2004, 20, 50.

Different models of on-site services

- Set office hours in academic departments, schools
  - Univ. at Buffalo, SUNY
  - Saint Louis Univ.
  - Washington Univ.

- Full-time in academic department
  - Univ. of Michigan's Field Librarians
  - Virginia Tech's College Librarians

- On-site reference elsewhere on campus (e.g.) student unions, dormitories
  - Southern IL Univ.-Carbondale
  - Bowling Green State University—not successful

Making a Connection with Users

Bibliography

- Aamot, Gordon, and Steve Hiller. 2004. *Library services in non-library spaces*. SPEC kit, 285. Washington, D.C.: Association of Research Libraries, Office of Leadership and Management Services.

- For other references mentioned, see the annotated bibliography which will also be posted on MOBIUS website at: http://mobiusconsortium.org/conferencesession/embedded-librarian-meeting-users-on-their-turf

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Thank you for your attention and patience!

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