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 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 departments, hospitals, computer labs, student unions, residence halls.

• 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%)

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


- 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
Thank you for your attention and patience!

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