Reference Toolkit Revisited

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Abstract

CARLDIG-South was excited to sponsor an Engage Session at this year's CARL Conference in Sacramento. On April 8, 2010, approximately 30 librarians attended "Reference Toolkit Revisited," featuring Michelle Jacobs, Emerging Technologies Librarian and Web Coordinator at UCLA's College Library; Kenley Neufeld, Library Director at Santa Barbara City College; and Amy Wallace, Library Dean at California State University, Channel Islands. As participants entered the conference room at the Holiday Inn Capitol Plaza, they were given the opportunity to post contributions to a "Graffiti Wall" comprised of poster paper eliciting feedback on the following subject areas: topics/issues participants hoped would be presented at the session; technologies participants would like to see their respective libraries implement; technologies participants' libraries have implemented in the last two years; reservations libraries may have about implementing new technologies; unsuccessful implementation of technologies and reasons why they didn't work out.

After the welcome, introductions, and announcements were made by CARLDIG-South Chair Michael Yonezawa, Reference & Electronic Resources Librarian at the University of California, Riverside Libraries, the session began with a presentation by Michelle Jacobs. Jacobs opened the Engage session by talking about the "ING" as it relates to reference: texting, tagging, tweeting, Googling, MicroBlogging, downloading, Facebooking, gaming and feed reading, and asked, "What is the ING"? The Information Now Generation. Among the themes explored in her presentation, Jacobs discussed how technologies can be taken from the concept stage to their final implementation, and how students today have grown up with modern technologies.The adoption and use of technologies is a dynamic process, with mobility a key convenience and user expectations constantly evolving. Jacobs asked the group to consider today's elementary-school students growing up with the iPad and what their expectations will be like when they enter college. Every technology must be evaluated for its relevance to a specific institution, and administrative buy-in is essential when adopting new technologies. Once a technology has been adopted, promotion and marketing are crucial. Included in Jacobs' discussion were technologies such as text messaging, Skype, Yelp, Twitter, Flickr, Facebook, Jing, SenSource,YouTube and LibGuides. In addition to an overview of these technologies, their possible uses within libraries were considered.

Following the session component by Michelle Jacobs, Elisa Slater, Instruction Coordinator at Loyola Marymount University, moderated a discussion involving the questions

and comments contributed by attendees on the various themes introduced on the "Graffiti Wall." As these questions and comments were addressed, Elisa was assisted by CARLDIG-South Chair Michael Yonezawa and Debra Hoffmann, Information Literacy Coordinator at Cal State Channel Islands. Following the general discussion, participants continued discussions at their tables before taking a break. Prior to the break and as preparation for her session component, Amy Wallace asked participants to think and talk about two themes: their respective libraries' climate and capacity for change and also the meaning of reference at their libraries.

Kenley Neufeld continued the Engage Session by discussing technologies in relation to customer satisfaction. One of Neufeld's considerations for adopting a technology at his library is that it be free or almost free. For this reason, he began his presentation discussing open-source tools such as Libstats. Other considerations relate to ease of implementation and ease of use as well as the degree of enjoyment derived from using a technology. Neufeld also noted customization capabilities, which are available in products such as LibraryH3lp and Google Voice. In referring to what he called "people-powered customer service," Neufeld noted the value of positive and negative feedback, questions, and ideas generated from a library's community of users through tools such as Get Satisfaction. Other technology tools presented included text messaging, Gimlet, UserVoice, and the iPad. Neufeld generously shared his iPad with attendees, giving each an opportunity to inspect and sample some of its various features.

As part of the final session component, Amy Wallace presented the administrative perspective involved in the introduction of new technologies into the library setting. She underscored that not all technologies are relevant to every library, nor is the implementation of new technologies an easy feat. Because each library's needs are different, the adoption of a given technology merits reflection. Some of the questions Wallace proposed ask for the following information: can the proposed technology be explained without jargon and in an understandable manner?; what are the relevant improvements offered by the technology?; how will the technology fit into the library/campus as a whole?; can a thorough evaluation of the actual cost of implementing the technology be provided?; and what course of action can be taken in case implementation of the technology is unsuccessful? As she revisited her earlier questions related to a library's capacity for change and its interpretation of reference, Wallace invited attendees to reflect on issues impacting a library's ability to embrace technology, such as: the various work groups comprising a library's operations; campus and user expectations; a library's reference philosophy and assessment plan for reference services; the reference team's comfort level with new technologies; the impact of new technologies on workflows; and the relationship of reference to the rest of a library's services.

The Engage Session concluded with a wrap-up by Michael Yonezawa, who thanked the presenters, participants, and CARLDIG-South members in attendance. CARLDIG-South is grateful to Michelle Jacobs, Kenley Neufeld, and Amy Wallace for their time and preparation for this special event and also would like to express its gratitude to the librarians in attendance as well as the CARLDIG-South members who helped plan this successful afternoon session.

For more information on the CARLDIG-South interest group as well as related links to material presented at this CARL 2010 Engage Session, please visit: http://www.carl-acrl.org/ig/carldigs