

Where are the Librarians? Innovative Approaches to Reference and Instruction, and Implications for the Librarian's Role

1. Changes in Reference and Instruction (Teaching and Learning)

- Reference
 - ~ Reference Desk + mail reference + mediated searching - mediated searching -> new models: info desk + ref desk; info/ref desk + individual consultations with librarians + email reference and/or digital reference and/or IM and/or text reference and/or embedded librarians in locations outside the library proper and/or ...
- Instruction
 - ~ One on one instruction at the reference desk + short shots (brief presentations to large classes in the lecture hall and/or workbooks and/or one shots and/or librarian taught credit course and/or embedded instruction within a subject course and/or remote online instruction and/or ...
- Reasons why
 - ~ Ongoing technology change and development
 - ~ Development of distance education programs
 - ~ Growth of electronic resources
 - ~ Changing user need/demand

2. Changes in Reference and Instruction Staffing Patterns

- Librarians w/MLS and/or Librarians with PhDs and no MLS and/or Library Assistants and/or Graduate Students, especially those in a MLS/MLIS/MIS program and/or Undergraduates
- Reasons why
 - ~ Shrinking librarian staffs due to budget cuts
 - ~ Growth in size and complexity in librarian job portfolios
 - ~ Provide growth opportunities for other library staff. Make use of their strengths
 - ~ Addition of PhDs and UGs to the staffing mix – Peer to Peer provides benefits for students on either end; new areas of subject expertise added

3. What changes mean for librarians (?)

- Additional time for librarians to address growing/more complicated job portfolios
- Added task of assessing appropriate roles for non-librarians based on their knowledge base/experience
- Added task of developing appropriate in-house, ongoing training programs for all non-librarian staff
- Added task of supervision of all non-librarian reference staff
- Possible loss of face to face time with primary users -> loss of user input in collection development, instruction needs, instruction design
- Possible loss in quality of service to primary users
- Need to carefully address these questions:
 - ~ What *is* librarian work in Reference and Instruction?
 - ~ How is the librarian's role different?
 - ~ Where does their specific expertise come into play?
 - ~ Is there a growing sense that Librarians aren't really necessary to providing excellent user service in these areas?