Role of Reference Librarian on Campus
(really turned out to be a discussion on changing nature of reference work)

Reference

These days, reference work seems to have a lot less of a “ready reference”/factual orientation, and a greater emphasis on information literacy and consultation.

- This may conflict with the idea of doing “short”, 15-minute chat sessions – is this the service that our patrons want and need?
- The line between Reference and Instruction is breaking down

We need to spend more effort teaching critical thinking, not just information-seeking.

- ex: teaching the difference between the general internet and the invisible web / specialized info.
- also: need to teach this skill independent of specific media.
- need to inform faculty as well as students

We need to not wait for questions to come to us

- prowl the reference room
- get into the computer labs where so many of the questions are

Instruction / Information Literacy

A library director asks: would it be better/more efficient to spend more effort on instruction sessions, less on reference desk?

- one response: instruction needs to be reinforced with individual attention

Approaches to instruction sessions

- Several days: Day 1 = lecture; Day 2 = hands on; Day 3 = let them work on their own
- Must be tied to an assignment
  - Entice faculty cooperation with grant money to integrate library component into class
  - Get support from deans/provosts for library component to classes
- Require classroom faculty to be present during instruction / we’re not babysitters

Computer literacy v. information literacy:

- libraries need more professional development support to keep up our own tech skills
- someone on campus needs to be supporting computer literacy, but librarians need to have time to do information literacy; can someone else please be in charge of basic computer literacy?
- libraries are often only place with any computer support “after hours” – we need to get the IT people to be available on “real student hours”
- libraries seem to provide more friendly and sometimes better desktop support than the IT folks
  - on the other hand, some in the session suggest:
    - yes, we do provide better support; lets run with it. we’re service oriented and we’re getting more computer questions these days, well that’s where people’s information needs are.
    - some libraries have policies limiting the extent of tech support provided by library staff. maybe it’s time to eradicate those policies

Some actual discussion of the Role of Librarians on Campus

“We’ll try anything – we’re desperate for use” [note – this was said not as a statement of position but as a criticism of the extent to which libraries are foundering.]

Librarian as ambassador for library services – get out of the library, proselytize, advertise, give out candy.
We need to get connected with faculty on campus

- This can be difficult without faculty status
- A suggestion: get on the General Education / Curriculum committees and lobby for information literacy components. This will get you in touch with library allies among the faculty and may enhance the recognition of the librarians by the faculty at large.
- Do more serious faculty orientation to the library. Mount Union College has a year-long faculty orientation to the university (called the “Faculty College”) that includes a significant library component. (This was mentioned by Robert Garland from Mt. Union)
- Get involved with faculty’s attempts to fight plagiarism and educate students about proper documentation and use of sources.