Cooperative Reference:
Social Interaction in the Workplace

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Discussions of the reference transaction generally assume one staff member and one patron, but this is not always the case in practice. This paper reports on data collected from users' descriptions of public and academic library reference transactions in which more than one staff member played a part. It analyzes users' evaluations of effective and ineffective staff behavior in three aspects of the reference transaction: the initiation of the reference encounter, collaboration between staff members, and serial encounters with more than one staff member. It suggests some ways that guidelines for reference desk behavior might be extended to accommodate multi-staff transactions.

KEYWORDS. Reference, user satisfaction, cooperation, collaboration, evaluation

A Product of Social Interaction: Tag-Team Reference and Workplace Relationships
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Interacting socially with colleagues creates close workplace relationships. These relationships translate into a dynamic, synergistic environment at the reference desk, also known as tag-team reference. When two people work well together, they can bounce ideas off of one another and serve the users most efficiently. Reference librarians all have strengths and weaknesses and those who work closely together can rely on each other without worrying about the stigma of reference desk boundaries. While traditional training and advice literature do not stress the importance of workplace relationships, there are ways that librarians and libraries can successfully promote social interaction and nurture a collaborative, collegial environment.

KEYWORDS. Interpersonal relations, social interaction, reference, collaboration, competition
Reference Service in the Context of Library Culture and Collegiality: Tools for Keeping Librarians on the Same (Fast Flipping) Pages

Lisa F. Lister

Reference desk service is the public face of our fast-changing profession. Because libraries often have numerous librarians sharing desk duty, consistent service can be a worthy challenge. Practical tools for promoting consistency (in the context of collegiality and teamwork) are explored. Library "culture" and organizational structure influences our professional worklives and personal job satisfaction. Sharing knowledge with one another and interdepartmental collaboration contributes to the advancement of the profession.

KEYWORDS. Reference service, collegiality, cooperation, knowledge sharing, library organizational structure, library culture

The Reference Interview as Partnership: An Examination of Librarian, Library User, and Social Interaction

Celia Hales Mabry

The reflections penned in this article began as a single paragraph contributed several years ago to Charles Anderson's "The Exchange," a column in RQ (now Reference & User Services Quarterly) (Anderson, 1995). I elaborated upon the concept through further reflection and augmented the ideas through a literature review. These ideas are meant to spark interest among library school students, new reference librarians, and veteran reference librarians who perhaps need new reason to show up with a positive attitude at that next reference shift. The thesis is that this moment in time within a given reference interview occurs only once, regardless of how many times a librarian has heard the question. We as librarians must always be alert to respond appropriately to the distinct contributions that the given library user brings to that question. In the process, we are equals in that the librarian knows more of the research technique to uncover the appropriate sources, but the library user knows more of what his specific slant on the topic will be. We would be wise to stay diligent, to listen well, and to take nothing for granted. The reference interview then becomes a lively, energetic, and stimulating discussion meant to lead to library research at its best.

KEYWORDS. Reference service, reference interview, reference desk

WORKING WITHIN THE LIBRARY: INTANGIBLES

Interpersonal Skills in the Reference Workplace

Lorraine J. Pellack

Reference librarians are expected to interact effectively with a variety of clientele and are taught skills such as approachability, showing interest, and verbal and
non-verbal cues. Librarians who have a knack for interpersonal skills do very well both at the reference desk and interacting with their co-workers. An area that is rarely addressed in the literature (or in library school) is that of educating librarians about how to establish professional, collegial relationships with one another. It is assumed that if a reference librarian can interact well with patrons, in a professional manner, he or she will be able to successfully “fit into” almost any reference department. This article discusses the importance of interpersonal skills within the Reference Department and ideas for improving these skills to enhance co-worker relations.

KEYWORDS. Life skills, social skills, interpersonal interactions, workplace interactions, workplace behavior, staff relations, core competencies, value-added, behavioral performance, peer relations, professionalism, personal competencies

Building a Learning Culture for the Common Good

Corinne Laverty
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Librarians are well positioned to embrace the journey towards a learning culture; we have resources and we have incentive! Teetering on the edge of information technology, libraries are committed to continuous change for the benefit of our customers. To fulfill this promise, staff must keep pace with new technologies, products, and an increasing demand for new services in an environment with shrinking human resources. There is more to learn and less time in which to learn it. This paper describes a proactive, team-based approach used to create a learning culture in one library. Staff act as peer learners and teachers to educate themselves and each other about all aspects of their reference work such as approaches to service, orientation for new members, learning and evaluating new tools, and discussing the development of new services. The whole is greater than the sum–this dynamic, shared learning environment embraces diverse learning styles including discovery, discussion, demonstration, presentation, homework, questioning, and hands-on practice. Analysis of feedback from students and challenging questions at the reference desk grounded the experience and made it immediately relevant and useful. This strategy furthers the goal of the learning organization where members share the responsibility of learning. The outcomes are an enriched collective knowledge and understanding, a sustainable model for continuous learning, social connectivity, and team experience.

KEYWORDS. Learning culture, learning community, team-based learning, reference service, librarians’ learning, learning organization

WORKING WITHIN THE LIBRARY: PRACTICALITIES

Crossing Three Bridges: Linking Librarianship and Teaching Across the P-16 Educational Continuum

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Natalia Taylor

Georgia State University Library’s Education and Communication liaisons teamed up to teach a graduate course on the selection and use of reference resources for
the College of Education's Library Media Technology Program. The collaboration between these two librarians can serve as a model for collaboration on three levels: collaboration between two librarians as co-teachers; collaboration between university librarians and academic department faculty; and, finally, "collaboration across work places" between academic librarians and school media specialists in P-12 settings. Unique challenges, benefits, and possibilities for this type of collaborative effort are examined.

KEYWORDS. Collaboration, P-16, media specialists, reference, instruction, college, university

Cooperative Reference Desk Scheduling and Its Effects on Professional Collegiality

Valery King

Since 1995, reference staff at Oregon State University’s Valley Library have engaged in a process of cooperative reference desk scheduling. The system was originally adopted to allow staff to have more influence in tailoring desk hours to their individual work schedules, but the department discovered that it also encourages and reinforces a climate of cooperation and collegiality among the reference staff. This paper describes the creation of the system and examines the reasoning behind it, the steps taken to implement it, and how it continues to evolve in an ever-changing library environment. Also examined is how this system has influenced other work done in the Reference and Instruction Department beyond the reference desk, and how it might be adapted and applied for use in other tasks in the future.

KEYWORDS. Reference desk, scheduling, collegiality, cooperation

Cooperation in a Multi-Faceted Reference Department: Blending Resources, Personnel, and Services of Reference, Instruction, Interlibrary Loan, and Government Documents

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Carla T. Waddell
Heather F. Watters

Cooperative reference is a valuable approach to serving patrons as well as a means of expanding one’s professional knowledge. Members of the reference unit actively participate in cooperative reference for answering patrons’ tougher queries, bibliographic instruction, and reference collection development. The cooperative efforts of our unit have expanded our ability to find better information faster. Cooperative reference extends to all librarians within the University Library as each librarian serves in a rotation to staff the reference desk on nights and weekends. Some of the benefits of practicing cooperative reference are the following: providing a balanced and sometimes more complete answer to a reference question; increasing the knowledge of the reference staff by sharing experiences; and increasing morale and support for the reference staff. All of this is accomplished
by doing what librarians do best: sharing. Successful cooperative reference relies upon good communication within the department, respect for colleagues, flexibility, and commitment to serving our patrons.

KEYWORDS. Cooperation, collaboration, reference, interlibrary loan, government documents

Why Social Interaction and Good Communication in Academic Libraries Matters

Maria Anna Jankowska
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In these times of extraordinary development in information and communication technologies (ICT) many new tools and services, and traditional tools, such as the catalog, could be developed or enhanced by librarians to effectively support the academic community in teaching and learning. This paper will discuss how social interaction between technical and public service librarians could enhance library services to the academic faculty and students during these demanding times of technologies and information overload. The paper will also point out that the team approach to library services can improve social interaction between librarians when the perpetuation of the traditional academic organizational model is not efficient enough for the faculty and students' need-driven use of information. Rapid changes resulting from ICT demand constant social interaction that would be facilitated by establishing working teams for specific tasks.

KEYWORDS. Social interaction, cooperation, collaboration, team work, public services, technical services, reference librarians, catalog librarians

Cooperative Reference and Collection Development: The Science and Technology Group at the University of Tennessee Libraries

Teresa U. Berry
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The science and technology subject group within the reference department of the University of Tennessee Libraries brings together librarians from reference and other departments who have collection development and subject liaison duties. The authors describe the group's composition and explain how the sci/tech librarians work cooperatively toward goals set by both the Libraries' Reference & Instructional Services and Collection Development & Management departments. The sci/tech group's primary cooperative functions are to facilitate librarians' mutual assistance in organizing projects, share insights for reference and collection development/management activities, plan instruction efforts, discuss web site development, promote mastery of resources and tools, and address other concerns. The subject group enables librarians to clarify plans and procedures and to come to grips with complicated budget matters. A fundamental benefit of group discussions is that they provide an opportunity to explore viewpoints from librarians outside the reference team, leading to more well-rounded decisions.
Together with the other subject groups, the sci/tech librarians and their coordinator identify major needs for information and work to provide solutions that improve library services to the academic community.

KEYWORDS. Interprofessional cooperation, reference department organization, reference services organization, collection development management, subject librarians

THE VIRTUAL LIBRARY: OUTREACH TO USERS

Improving Reference Services Through a Library Website: Strategies for Collaborative Change
Debra Engel
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Websites are virtual front doors to the university library for many distance education students and for those simply choosing to access the numerous resources available to them through the library from off-campus. A driving force behind the redesign of the library website was to provide a user-friendly, content-rich website that offers assistance at the point of need, wherever the student is located. The University of Oklahoma Libraries' Web Committee's research and development focus combined with a collaborative environment provided a positive impetus for change to the library website and improved reference services to the University community.

KEYWORDS. Collaboration, website design, reference services, academic libraries

The Role of Cooperation in Creating a Library Online Tutorial
Eve M. Diel
Theresa K. Flett

Reference librarians at St. Charles Community College discovered the benefits of cooperation when they began the process of creating an online library tutorial. In the fall of 1999, librarians realized that their walk-in library sessions were becoming ineffective due to poor attendance by students. The tours didn't fit into on-campus students' busy schedules, and failed to serve distance students at all. Two reference librarians decided to work together to create a web-based tutorial introducing students to library online resources. It was an informal process that started with information gathering on what tutorials exist, how they were developed and what type of software was used. After the librarians decided on the format and appropriate software, they brought together their creative and technical strengths to design an appealing and functional tutorial. To create a "virtual tour" of the library's physical layout, the librarians also collaborated with the Instructional Support Center, a group of educational technology specialists who are part of SCC's community college consortium. The tutorial was completed in only a year, partly because working in a small library allows for constant contact between the
librarians, but also due to the efficiency of using cooperation. This successful collaborative project eventually won the Missouri Community College Association’s 2001 Technology Innovation Award.

KEYWORDS. Online tutorials, librarian collaboration, online library instruction, web-based instruction

E-Mail Reference: Improving Service by Working Cooperatively
Sharon Ladenson

E-mail reference service provides complex challenges, but the service can be planned effectively and improved through cooperative work among reference staff and various library departments. Staff members from the Michigan State University Libraries have engaged in extensive cooperative work to evaluate, improve, and maintain effective e-mail reference services. Two library committees and an e-mail reference team have developed new service procedures, and have worked with other library departments to improve e-mail reference service. This article explores the collaborative work of the MSU committees, and discusses how e-mail reference has improved through cooperative work.

KEYWORDS. Academic libraries, collaboration, cooperation, electronic reference, e-mail, library committees, virtual reference

Collaboration: The Key to Unlocking the Dilemma of Distance Reference Services
Sherry Hawkins Backhus
Terri Pedersen Summey

Distant education offerings are growing at a phenomenal rate for academic institutions, creating new groups of library users that are remote from the main campus with unique library and research needs. Recent studies examining the needs of this unique and growing population note that reference and research assistance are key services needed. Many institutions have appointed or hired distance education librarians to help provide services to distant learners. They are often, however, one-person operations that function more as coordinators rather than full-service providers. Since the coordinator cannot provide all of the reference services alone, the key to providing these services for distant education students is to create and sustain good working relationships both in the library and with external entities. Offerings to distance students include phone reference and accessibility to online resources, plus virtual reference and often 24/7 services. This article will examine issues and experiences in bringing together different groups to provide reference services to distant learning communities. It will also describe key relationships necessary for keeping distance reference services at an optimal level.

KEYWORDS. Reference service, distance education, academic libraries, distant education students, virtual reference, distance education librarians, collaboration
Reference Beyond the Walls of the Library: Interacting with Faculty and Students in the 21st Century

Connie Ury
Carolyn Johnson

The nature of research continues to evolve from accessing print publications in a library building toward retrieving information online, any time any place. Since patrons no longer need to enter a library building to access information, the social character of reference service has also changed. Demand for face-to-face reference interaction has declined, altering the traditional one-on-one venue for teaching information retrieval and evaluation. To develop new opportunities for influencing the information literacy levels of students, librarians at Northwest Missouri State University are creating outreach strategies that facilitate increased interaction with students and faculty.

KEYWORDS. Reference outreach models, remote access, collaboration

COOPERATING WITH FACULTY

Collaborate or Die! Collection Development in Today’s Academic Library

James Cory Tucker
Jeremy Bullion
Matthew C. Torrence

The practice of collection development faces many challenges in the present and likely future library environment. The following text presents concepts for collaboration as viable solutions to these challenges for collection development in academic libraries. In particular, a model of collaboration involving department faculty representatives and library liaisons is discussed. Consulting professional literature on this topic has offered insight into the establishment of librarian-faculty relationships, the process of collaboration, benefits of collaboration, as well as problems that may result from such cooperative relationships. Examples are illustrated from experiences at three academic libraries: University of Nevada Las Vegas, University of South Florida, and Hillsborough Community College.

KEYWORDS. Collection development, collaboration, academic libraries, liaison, case studies

If They Build It Will They Come? Cooperation and Collaboration to Create a Customized Library

Barbara J. D’Angelo

The core mission of Arizona State University (ASU) East Library is electronic delivery of resources and services accompanied by a strong commitment to personalized service and to facilitating the campus educational goals through
cooperative and collaborative partnerships with faculty and programs. The Library and the Multimedia Writing and Technical Communication Program (MWTC) have developed and implemented an instructional program in information skills and system design. The MWTC Program emphasizes information access, management, and design as some of the primary skills taught. The Program's applied nature attempts to give students as much practical experience as possible in environments which approximate the workplace. The Library-MWTC partnership combines the expertise of the Library and the faculty to meet the educational goals of the Program in a real-world setting by facilitating the creation and design of a customized MWTC library information system. The faculty and librarian are collaborating to integrate coursework and activities into the new MWTC online degree curriculum to prepare students to take a proactive and decision-making role in information resource and service selection, organization, and system design. The resulting product will be a truly user-centered designed library portal and an educational methodology which may be used for the design of portals for other campus programs.

KEYWORDS. Portal, faculty-library collaboration, community

COOPERATING WITH OTHER LIBRARIES

A National Laboratory and University Branch Campus Library Partnership: Shared Benefits and Challenges from Combined Reference Services

Karen A. Buxton
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The Hanford Technical Library of the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory and the Max E. Benitz Memorial Library of the Washington State University Tri-Cities Branch Campus have functioned both separately and in combination since moving into the same space within the Consolidated Information Center in 1997. The libraries have successfully partnered to serve different clientele at a combined reference desk since June 1997. Although having separate staffs, catalogs, and collections, the libraries share a single reference/information desk. The reference staffs work together to serve a very diverse clientele including students, faculty, engineers, scientists, contractors, regulators, and the public. The combined libraries offer significant benefits to both library staffs and their users. The libraries have expanded access to collections and information expertise, enhanced staff training opportunities, and provided additional hours of reference service to patrons while at the same time maintaining the individual identities of the two libraries.

This article will look at the historical development of cooperative service and resource sharing in libraries. Interlibrary Loan, union catalogs, library consortia, and electronic reference, have all impacted library work in the past century. The dissolving of walls is one of the main themes of library history in the 20th century. The developments of these years has clearly put the ability to use both human and institutional resources at the heart of contemporary library service. In looking at how this came to be, this article will examine developments in societal infrastructure and technology that made cooperative schemes both possible and economical. This article will also discuss how these developments have forced libraries to consider cooperative ways to respond to their primary service function. Lastly, conclusions will be drawn about how the emerging cooperative environment is changing the educational role of the librarian.

KEYWORDS. Library cooperation, library history, library consortia, electronic reference