

## Flyer 226

### Introduction

THIS ISSUE of *Transforming Libraries* reports on eight ARL members that were interviewed at some length about how they have addressed the results of their user surveys. The fourth in the *Transforming Libraries* series, this publication complements *SPEC Kit #205, User Surveys in ARL Libraries*, which presents the findings of a 1994 survey on the use of user surveys by 69 ARL members, as well as a number of sample surveys.

Although libraries have recognized the importance of user surveys, sometimes the surveys get filed and forgotten. Through the use of user surveys, the institutions interviewed for this issue have discovered what their users want, and reveal their strategies—and struggles—to meet and anticipate those needs.

### A Few Issues

While institutional differences require context-specific user surveys, a disturbing fact consistently emerged from the survey results: library users, faculty and students alike, are often unaware of programs and services that their libraries already offer. How best to increase awareness of existing library programs and services is a common concern and of paramount importance if libraries expect to maximize their usefulness by serving informed users. Some libraries have library or faculty newsletters (print or electronic), advertise their programs and

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services in campus newspapers, and are part of their university World Wide Web sites, but still find their patrons are often in the dark about the library.

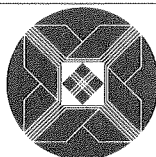
Libraries must also be aware that their physical environments are very important to users, including lighting, noise levels, temperatures, furniture, and access to electronic resources. Some perennial problems, such as photocopying, are those over which libraries can exert some control, but others—parking being the major one—are not library problems, but continue to be seen by users as such.

Whereas faculty want everything at their desktops, students want 24-hour access to the physical buildings, and they want them to be comfortable and safe.

Libraries are creating ways to balance the demands of all types of users, while continuing to investigate through user surveys how library services can be improved.

### Reports From the Field

The eight ARL members interviewed for this issue represent a range of stages in libraries' responses to their user surveys. Some have transformed their cultures into user-centered ones, some are striving to meet newly discovered needs, and some are just starting to formulate responses to their user surveys.



Staff from the following libraries were interviewed:

- University of Arizona
- University of California at San Diego
- University of Connecticut
- MIT
- North Carolina State
- Ohio State:
- Rice University
- University of Virginia

Details about these surveys, including some survey documentation, appear on the *Transforming Libraries* accompanying World Wide Web site for this issue: <http://www.arl.org/transform/us/index.html>.

*The SPEC Kit was written by GraceAnne A. DeCandido, with editorial advice from Julia Blixrud, Senior Program Officer, ARL Statistics and Measurement Program.*

*The electronic component of Transforming Libraries can be found at <http://www.arl.org/transform/index.html>.*