

New Roles of Government Information Librarians
Notes: October 7, 2005

Group:

Texas Tech, University of Washington, Washington State, Washington University, and Arkansas

New skills needed:

Do librarians really have “the latest skills?”

Frequently not, we are secondary adopter

Recruit students as substitute teenage children to teach us tech skills

Administrators need to insure that librarians/staff have “10 basic tech skills to survive in higher education” (reference from *Chronicle of Higher Education* article)

Calendaring, spreadsheet, etc.

Technical understanding, search engines, how software works (to interpret results)

Knowledge of standards (ex. Metadata, digitization)

Initiative to take care of own professional development

Ability to define and redefine competencies, e-competencies

Ability to synthesize/pull customized data in support of remote users (Duncan’s GIS example)

Willingness to put services where users are

Willingness to share reference queries (move away from the Greedy Librarian Syndrome). May have (untapped) expertise in unexpected places on staff (community of reference librarians)

Willingness to be more like catalogers (have transcripts of our work examined by others)—trust each other, show our vulnerabilities, face our ignorance

Can’t stop the face-to-face interactions; have to be willing to add other modes through. Lessen number of people desks more on chat.

Make choices about collection development activities

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Group: *CIC*

Future roles of government information services

1. Using consortial arrangements to provide services
Have built a community of collaboration around ILL and collections
 - a. National question point project—has demo'd government organization info. Project—demo project to show that there can be a national reference service. Questions at all levels—state, fed, etc., from everywhere. 65 documents librarians who volunteers to answer. Don't have to use OfP (?) software;
 - b. Train the trainer approach—to provide training to general reference staff. Future use of the web—understanding patrons' use, needs; using the already answered questions to build a database. Screen user questions—concern about user attention span on the web; need to look at and emulate Amazon, Banders, Google models. Patrons are very different in their needs—from computer savvy undergrads to non-computer seniors. Have to keep them all in mind.
 - c. Appropriate state and local materials—“great cities” libraries becomes that agoras for the U.S.
 - d. Capturing the born digital materials. Fertile area with demo software. GPO is trying two softwares. Need a set of [illegible] with technical skills. Computer science and datamining, medical folks—informatics. TIFFIA—int'l born digital info in education.
 - e. Using government information online to highlight librarian skills and resources “collectives of info”
 - f. Proposal to CIC directors—how to hold and manage the info captured by Google. Begin with a segregated file of government docs materials. Government docs folks also made the proposal
 - g. OCLC has Content DM w/ WIKI—govdocs librarians could add metadata. WIKI approach to reference—problems like it's not “refereed”

Group:

North Carolina State University, University of Nevada – Tahoe, Arizona State Library and Archives; University of New Mexico

What's the future role of government information service?

At several different levels: not just federal, but state, local, and international?

- Need to build knowledge bases. If done collaboratively, this could free up people's time on the reference desk. Concern that when knowledge bases are developed, they're in such a closed environment that the public doesn't know to look for them.
- Importance of finding the staff resources to coordinate collaborative efforts. Could this be done through a subscription fee? This is not GPO's job; they're printers. GPO could be associated, but not necessarily.

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- Reference may shift from a one-on-one interview to the documentation of experiential knowledge that patrons can browse themselves. Development of an online Andriot plug in that would help searches. Maybe a wikipedia developed by government librarians.
- One day preconference on who to disintermediate and organize the large body of complex information so that it's easy for patrons to use.

What skills and values of the past must be retained?

- Govt Docs community is a very tight community. Invaluable for doing this.
- There's a key knowledge base that needs to be mainstreamed to the larger community of professionals and patrons.

What new skills do we need?

- Need for increased knowledge of IT and specific skills for different types of data sets (e.g., GIS). It's a need for basic fluency; being as comfortable with digital materials as we are with paper?
- Importance of opening up the club and pushing club members into other areas.

Group:

University of California

New services

Reference—e-reference technology

As part of a UC-wide reference technology. Build in gov info expertise and referral—not a separate system. Contribute to knowledge base

Instruction

Integrate gov info better into library instruction. Use technology—e-seminars, streaming video—to provide components that gov info instructors and other librarians can use in library instruction

Work more closely with other bibliographers/instructors to show how gov info can support subject area such as health, environment, etc.

Web: gov info page are usually separate—integrate them better into the library and other units

Data Services and GIS

Integrate map reference into reference

Provide low-end easy to use map software with humanities/social sciences, health, agriculture sets

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Future Services Model

Users within our buildings still want to contact us electronically. Embrace this.

Gov info—oriented chat (national vs. regional already started)

Really become a virtual network of expertise

Question point-type service can help us build network of “instant expertise” plus knowledge base

Local govt info has to be collected, services, collaboratively

Don't trust state govt to do this

Work on a state equivalent of GPO-level cataloging (urgent). Need to catalog, preserve state and local docs.

Realize that patrons use our online catalogs as a last resort (faculty wanted an A-Z journal list only) Should we throw this (online catalog) out? Present it in a different way?

Red Light Green—give you opportunity to download results in APA, MLA style.

Clusters results for a single title (Nature, Tom Sawyer, etc.) in an easier-to-read format. Good model!

1. Focus of our institution and our possible collaborative projects

Is there are role for DLF?

Do we risk duplication and reinventing wheel without broader ARL coordination?

2. Harvesting and validating/authenticating digital info—we need to collaborate

3. Telling our story/getting the attention of our administrators

4. What value do we really add when all we do is point elsewhere?