Western Michigan University

From the SelectedWorks of Maira Bundza

March 26, 2010

Training Students for Reference Desk Work

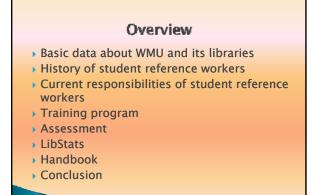
Maira Bundza, Western Michigan University



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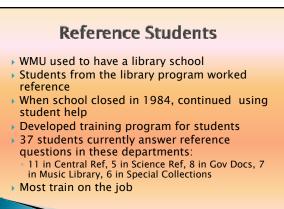
Training Students for Reference Desk Work

Michigan Academy for Science, Arts & Letters Library and Information Science Section March 26, 2010 Maira Bundza Western Michigan University



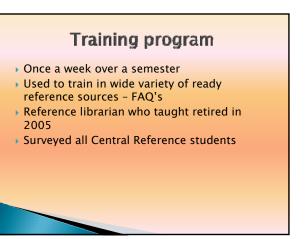
Western Michigan University and its Libraries

- Enrollment nearly 25,000
- Main library Waldo library
- Branches Education, Music, Archives & Visual Resources
- Librarians 25
- Staff 59
- Student employees 157
- > Central reference 8 librarians, 2 staff



Current responsibilities of student reference workers

- Shelve books
 - Doing a usage study, so scan each item before reshelving
- Check-in new materials
- Process weeded materials
- Keep the reference area tidy and clean
- Run errands across campus
 Do projects for librarian
 Search for books etc. from lists in our catalog
 Enter data into Word & Excel, updated guides
- Answer questions at Reference Desk
- In person, phone and IM (not e-ref)



Survey results - what students wanted & needed

- 2 hour sessions seemed right length
- Get to know the librarians in the department more
- More training in online sources than print
- Tour(s) of library useful
- More time to practice
- Learn to do reference interviews

Student Training

- Office work trained by Reference Coordinator, their supervisor
- On the job training in the office and on the desk
- Library offers sessions for all employees on safety, first aid, etc.
- Central Reference -2 hour session every Friday fall semester for 12 weeks
- Also attended by interns and new Central Reference staff

Student Training (cont.)

- Tour almost every session
 - Whole Waldo (main) library
 - Education, Music, Archives
 - Gov Docs, Rare Books, Digitization Lab, ILL
- Reference collection, Literary sources, History sources, Business, sources, etc.
- Tutorials
 - · Formerly Searchpath, now our new ResearchPath
 - Information Cycle, LC-Easy
 - Internal Library customer relations skills

Student Training (cont.)

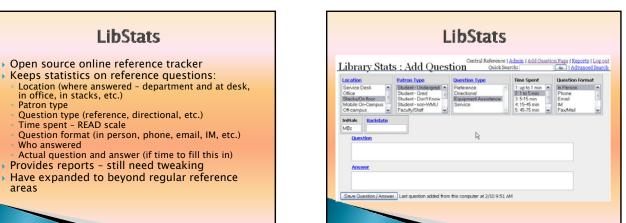
- Learn advance searching skills in catalog and databases
- Cover at least one service each week
- Cover at least one type of resource (biographies, news, etc.)
- Cover one subject area each week
- Reference interview techniques
- Role play have them teach each other
- Have exercises to complete on the resource types and subject areas

Student Training (cont.)

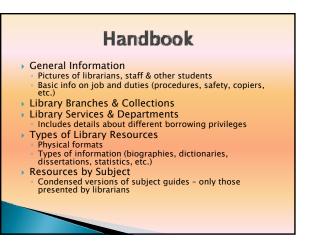
- Central Reference librarians present in their field of expertise:
 - Business (2 sessions)
 - History/political science
 - Sociology/social work/communications
 - Psychology/law
 - Languages & literature
- Plus collection & branch librarians:
 - Gov Docs, Rare Books Archives, Education & Music

Assessment

- Pre and post test last two years
 Showed major improvement
- Evaluated IM responses
- Exit survey every year
 - Have made changes, like increased number of sessions on business
- Could evaluate all questions answered in future with LibStats







Conclusion Librarians and students happy Reference desk coverage 94 hours/week – times when students are the only one's covering the desk Students comfortable answering questions Less comfortable with business, law and science questions Will pass questions on to professionals With LibStats -more quality control

