March, 2013

The Moving Targets of Teaching and Technology: Virtual Reference as Information Literacy Intermediary

Melanie Mills, *Huron University, London*
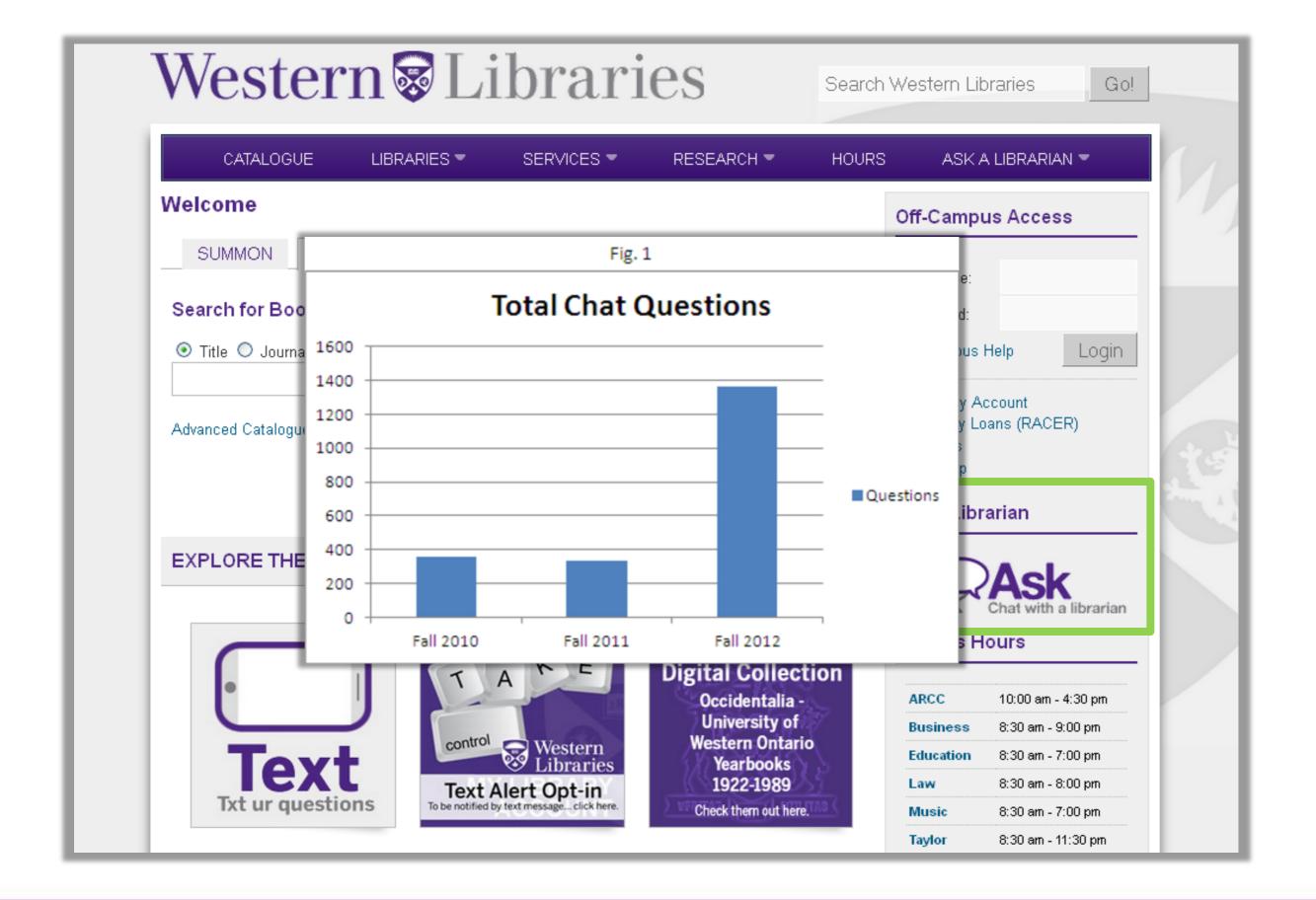Jennifer Robinson, *The Univeristy of Western Ontario*

Abstract

Libraries have been moving traditional services to the digital environment for some time now; first, with a measure of reluctance and now with enthusiasm (Anderson 2011, 290). But is the act of migrating library services to online platforms, in and of itself, enough? Have we sufficiently addressed the challenges and fully realized the opportunities that technology affords? Using virtual reference as a case study, we will explore the pedagogical role of academic librarians in higher education. In particular, we will attempt to address the following questions: What can virtual reference teach us about our role as teachers? Is it possible to make meaningful contributions to the teaching and learning mandates of our universities – despite ever increasing pressures to do more with less – by employing technology to bridge the gap? Given the pervasive culture of assessment on campus today, how can we or will we know if our efforts have been successful? Taking aim at the moving targets of teaching and technology, this session will challenge attendees to reconsider the role of academic librarians and library services in pedagogical practice.

Reference Service Policy

10. Information Literacy

Information Literacy, the abilities and skills required to efficiently access, critically assess, effectively assimilate and responsibly apply information that establish the framework for learning and living in an information rich environment, is a strategic priority for Western Libraries.

Staff facilitate the attainment of these skills by:

Conducting general library orientation and research skills sessions for individuals or groups.

Fostering learning opportunities, exploiting "teachable moments" and using tools such as technology as is appropriate to create instruction that is real and relevant for the learners.

Planning and delivering pedagogically sound sessions tailored to the specific needs of an assignment,
course or group of learners.

Partnering with teaching faculty to embed research and discovery skills into a particular course or across the curriculum.

Association of College and Research Libraries Information Literacy Competency Standards

1) Determine the nature and extent of information needed.

2) Access the needed information effectively and efficiently.

3) Evaluate information and its source critically and incorporate selected information into one's knowledge base.

4) Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.

5) Understand many of the economic, legal and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally.

Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL). "Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education." American Library Association (2000). Accessed 7 March 2013. http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/standards/standards.pdf.

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"Students do not see the beneficial connection that a correctly cited bibliography can offer themselves and other academics in the discipline through research validation [...]."

"Plagiarism continues to grow as a by-product of online full-text availability, cultural clashes, last minute completion of assignments, pressures to achieve high grades, beliefs that one will not be caught, and ignorance of the nature of plagiarism […]."

Park, Sarah, Lori A. Mardis, and Connie Jo Ury. "I've lost my identity–oh, there it is… in a style manual: Teaching citation styles and academic honesty." *Reference Services Review* 39, no. 1 (2011): 42-57.

What can academic librarians and library staff engaged in Information Literacy (IL) initiatives do differently?

✓ adopt a strategic approach to information literacy programming; recognizing that the 'gold-standard' of fully integrated, curriculum-embedded IL (though highly lauded by LIS scholars) is not an attainable goal in practice

✓ forge sustainable partnerships with like-minded teaching colleagues and academic units across campus to address the broader issues associated with academic integrity which impact us all

✓ choose scalable pedagogical practices, such as blended-learning (i.e., the provision of both face-to-face and online instruction) targeting selected ACRL standards only, as appropriate to the medium of delivery

"May the odds be ever in [our] favour."

The Hunger Games

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