

MINITEX

Reference NOTES

A Program of the Minnesota Office of Higher Education and the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities

March 2008

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Out of the Office & On Site

Jennifer Hootman, Kristen Mastel & Beth Staats



On February 19th, three of us were out of the office and on site for a training session, meeting presentation, and conference presentation. MINITEX Reference staff has been on the road responding to a multitude of requests. Kristen Mastel responded to a request to join and develop discussion materials for an informal meeting at the SMILE office on developing reference collections. Jennifer Hootman responded to a three-part ELM training request from Metronet to participate in their Metronet Information Literacy Initiative. Beth Staats presented at the annual MAAP (Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs) conference sharing information about the ELM resources.

Wonder how a core library reference section is built and maintained? This was the topic of an informal discussion at SMILE with media specialists and librarians from public and academic institutions. I presented on the importance of collection development and reference policies, even in the smallest of libraries, along with selection criteria and reviewing sources to find reference materials and weeding techniques. The engaged group discussed at length experiences they had with online versus print reference materials and observed how they try to not overlap with the ELM databases. The session concluded with trying to generate a list of “must-have” core reference books in a collection (because there has not been a succinct list published in the past ten years) and discussing free online reference sources. - *Kristen Mastel*

The Metronet Information Literacy Initiative involves collaboration between St. Paul Public Schools and its multitype, Metronet, on integrating information literacy skills. This year the program has expanded to also include three Minneapolis Public School high schools and Chaska School District 112. MINITEX Reference Services was asked to present on the “harder to find” features in the ELM databases that would help increase research efficiency as well as integrate technology into the curriculum for school media specialists, teachers, and students. These “harder to find” features included RSS capability in the EBSCO and some of the Gale/Cengage databases and creating web pages/html files in the EBSCO databases. Most of the time was given to hands-on experimenting with these features and discussions on the variety of applications for personal and professional work as well as the classroom curriculum. One of many exciting moments came during the training session at Chaska when one of the media specialists figured out how to add an RSS feed from an EBSCO search alert to her blog! - *Jennifer Hootman*

You may not have heard of it before but MAAP stands for the Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs. I presented two sessions on ELM at their annual conference this year which was held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in St. Paul. I was very pleased with the turnout and the response to ELM. One woman’s comment summed up the general feelings that the teachers had towards my presentation of ELM, “What wonderful resources [especially for those of us with] limited funds. Who knew it was there?!” MAAP began in 1983 and has grown into quite an organization. Their 3-day conference included over 75 break-out sessions and brought in teachers from all over the state. - *Beth Staats*

As you can see we respond to a variety of requests and thoroughly enjoy the experiences. Give us a call or send an e-mail today for any reference and/or training needs you have!
Ph: 1-800-462-5348 or E-mail: mtxref@umn.edu



Check out the
Pew report on
Internet
Early Adopters at
http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Early_Adopters.pdf

Government Secrecy: Censoring the Right to Know

Presented by OpenTheGovernment.org
Wednesday, March 19, 2008, 12:00 PM – 1:30 PM
(Central Time)

Description

Speakers will discuss executive branch power and secrecy, congressional rights and responsibilities, and the role of the press in combating government secrecy. We will be visiting and talking with creators of web sites that help the public avoid having to file official requests or go to offices and meetings to learn what our government is doing. These sites make hard-to-find government information — federal, state and local — easy for the public to find and use and may inspire you to do likewise. A quick report will be given, as well, on an initiative to develop a 21st Century Right-to-Know agenda and recommendations for the next President and Congress.

Speakers

Mickey Edwards - Director of the Aspen Institute-Rodel Fellowships in Public Leadership and former Republican member of Congress from Oklahoma for 16 years

John Podesta - President and Chief Executive Officer of the Center for American Progress, Chief of Staff to President William J. Clinton from October 1998 until January 2001, and formerly in senior staff positions in Congress

Fee

No charge. Registration is required to view the event at Wilson Library (desktop streaming is not available). To register, visit: <http://www.minitex.umn.edu/events/teleconferences/#secrecy>

ence these librarians bring to this service. It is because of the willingness to be involved in this endeavor, communicate and share ideas, that the collaborative process for this program has been so successful. We look to build on the positive framework that has been put in place to make this service grow and encourage more libraries to participate.

We will continue to keep you up to date as we move closer to launching our new service. There will be a new website coming soon as well, askmn.org, that will provide more information about the service, who can use the service, and ways of asking a question.

Why Statistics are Important

Kristen Mastel

Do you know the power of statistics? Are you currently using statistics from the ELM databases? If not, you should be! Statistics can give you an accurate idea of how frequently your students, staff, or residents are using the statewide resources. They also can tell you which resources are less frequently used. For example, if you find that ¡Informe! has low monthly statistics, you could work with Spanish-language teachers to incorporate the resource into assignments or as a resource for students to find Spanish-language current events. Similarly, you could connect with organizations, such as your local Chamber of Commerce or Toastmasters, to promote access to and use of Business Source Premier and Regional Business News. Statistics give you a “reality check” against how much you “think” your patrons are using the resources and what the volume actually is. Statistics are an excellent teaching point and opportunity to champion the resources and explain their uses and benefits in reports to administrators and staff.

Did you know you can even set up monthly alerts that will deliver your statistics right to your e-mail inbox? That way you do not have to log into the administration site every month or annually! It is quite the time saver! Also, EBSCO offers one-click graphs and charts to jazz up text-laden reports.

To view step-by-step directions on how to gather statistics for all the ELM databases, visit:
<http://www.minitex.umn.edu/elm/stats.aspx>

An archived webinar on ELM statistics is available at:
<http://www.minitex.umn.edu/events/training/archived.asp#104>

Check out these useful articles:

Rethinking Library Statistics in a Changing Environment:
<http://www.ala.org/ala/pla/plapubs/technotes/rethinkinglibrary.cfm>

Making Your Case with Library Statistics:
<http://www.nclis.gov/statsurv/surveys/fscs/SDCmain/SDCresources/MakeCaseStats.pdf>

An Update on AskMN: The Librarian Is In

Carla Steinberg Pfahl

Almost all of the participating libraries in the statewide virtual reference project, AskMN, have now gone through training and are practicing with chat and becoming familiar with the new system. The last week of February took MINITEX Reference and CPERS staff to four more libraries for training. We visited St. Cloud State University, University of Minnesota - Duluth, Hennepin County Library - Minneapolis, and College of St. Catherine. After training is completed, the participating libraries and MINITEX Reference Services will perform a two-week test run of the service. This will give us the opportunity to evaluate work flows, discuss issues and correct any technical issues that may arise. From the test run we will determine how the system is operating and look at an official date to go live with the service.

We have had a very exciting time traveling to the different libraries and meeting all the librarians that have graciously volunteered to help get AskMN off the ground. The program has greatly benefitted from the support, enthusiasm, and experi-

Student Learning and School Libraries – As we focus on student learning in building school library advocacy, what role can gaming play?

Library Arcade

Kristen Mastel

Recently, Carnegie Mellon University Libraries created two games “designed to help students develop research skills through entertaining and easy-to-repeat activities.” In the game *I’ll Get It!*, you play the role of a student who helps his/her peers answer research questions. Once you get the hang of this game, it can be quite fun as a library staff member; it takes a while to figure out all the areas of the game. The game begins with a patron sitting down at a table in the library. Next, the player picks up his/her question and brings it to the library catalog; finally, the catalog suggests a database, print material and Internet resource. It is up to you to select the BEST resource for the patron’s need. Give it a try when you need to de-stress and work on your reference interview skills! It would be valuable to use with high school students to engage them in the critical thinking process of gathering and selecting information resources.

Rough on your shelving techniques, or have a new volunteer in your media center? Then try the game **Within Range**. You are provided a book cart full of print materials and you have to inter-shelve items in the correct Library of Congress order.

To play either game, visit:
<http://www.library.cmu.edu/Libraries/etc/index.html>

Reasons for Games

Doug Johnson, Director of Media and Technology at Mankato Public Schools and adjunct faculty member of Minnesota State University, Mankato, recently posted the following to the MEMO (Minnesota Educational Media Organization) listserv.

Though Johnson states that the gaming in schools issue is more complex than “games or no games,” below are his thoughts in part.

TEN REASONS FOR GAMES

1. Games keep busy kids who might otherwise be disturbing other kids.
2. Playing games gives teeth to the threat, “If you don’t follow the rules you will lose your computer privileges.”
3. Games give kids practice with social skills when they work in teams.
4. Games give kids practice learning strategy and logic.
5. Games teach content.
6. Games build reading and math skills.
7. Games build research skills when looking for information about game strategies or solutions to puzzles.

8. Games build intergenerational conversations and relationships. (Four out of ten American adults turn to video games as *their* primary source of entertainment.)
9. Games get kids into libraries who might not otherwise go there, increasing the likelihood of book check out.
10. Games build a positive association with school that might not otherwise be there for a lot of kids.

THREE REASONS FOR BANNING GAMES

1. Kids playing games might be using resources (computers, bandwidth, chairs, oxygen) that other kids might need to do “real” school work.
2. Kids playing games find school fun and we all know life isn’t about fun.
3. Playing games is against school rules

To read a summary of his thoughts on gaming, check out the article, *Game On!*, under “Tech Proof” a column at Education World:

http://www.educationworld.com/a_tech/columnists/johnson/johnson021.shtml

Building True Advocacy for School Libraries

Jennifer Hootman

If you haven’t done so already, take some time to read Debra Kay Logan’s article, *Putting Students First* in the January/February issue of *American Libraries*. This one is worth your time, attention, and discussion.

Logan passionately pursues an essential question, “When we talk about advocating for school libraries, what do we truly mean?” Moreover, she urges readers to think about this question from administrative and budgetary viewpoints. Logan states, “School libraries are traditionally seen as rooms with resources, with school librarians viewed as keepers of materials. Under this pretense, it’s no wonder that libraries and librarians are sometimes thought of as expendable.”

So, what do we do to effectively advocate for school libraries? Logan sums up our strategy by stating that we need to:

- 1.) *Change the nature of our advocacy messages*
“To become effective advocates, our profession must shift the focus of our messages from speaking out about school libraries to promoting and supporting student learning and achievement. Student success is the business of schools. Student learning is at the core of meaningful advocacy messages.”

“We need to have stakeholders advocate for them, and it is our job to build this stakeholder support.”

- 2.) *Motivate stakeholders to advocate*
“When research evidence is presented in isolation, listeners inevitably question the validity of research. Instead of simply sharing research studies, school librarians need to ‘mash up’ research findings with what we know about our specific programs.”

- 3.) *Mash up the data*
“To start, we need to clearly and consistently articulate and highlight the research showing the connections

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between strong school library programs and student learning and success. This forms a firm foundation for stakeholder advocacy.”

“Next, document the connection between research in the library and reading and writing standards as an integral part of the weekly lesson plans.”

“When crafting an advocacy message, focus on specific and essential student needs...”

“Share evidence that ties research findings with what is happening in your school.”

4.) *Remember that it's all about the students*

“All along we have known that school libraries play a critical and unique part in helping schools achieve their goals for students. However, our messages have sounded like school libraries and librarians are an ends, not means. It's time to adjust these messages and become advocates for students and student learning.”

We want to know what you think of Logan's article. Post your comment on our Reference Services blog, <http://blogs.minitex.umn.edu/reference/2008/01/>. In what ways have you promoted your school library? Have you built stakeholder support? If so, how? Have you experienced success with your advocacy efforts?

Logan, Debra Kay. “Putting students first: we must change the focus of our messages from school libraries to student learning and achievement.” *American Libraries* 39.1-2 (Jan-Feb 2008): 56(4). Available in Electronic Library for Minnesota (ELM), Gale Professional Collection. <http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.elm4you.org/itx/start.do?prodId=SPJ.SP00>.

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The Institute of Museum and Library Services, a Federal agency that fosters innovation, leadership, and a lifetime of learning, and State Library Services & School Technology, the Minnesota state library agency, supports MINITEX Reference Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA).

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