Accessing the Library through Virtual Reference Services

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This session will cover:

- Some “historical highlights” in Access
- A new model for analyzing VR questions
- Identifying common VR questions
- And brainstorm uncommon strategies
- Continuing the cycle . . .
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My first Mentor

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Virginia Boucher-OCLC Distinguished ILL Librarian Award

Anne K. Beaubien, Director and Cooperative Access Services and Grants Officer, University Library, University of Michigan, is the 2007 Virginia Boucher-OCLC Distinguished Interlibrary Loan (ILL) Librarian Award recipient. The award recognizes and honors a librarian for outstanding professional achievement, leadership and contributions to ILL and document delivery.

The Sharing and Transforming Access to Resources Section (STARS) administers the award. The award is named for Virginia Boucher, professor emeritus at the University of Colorado-Boulder and former ILL librarian whose significant contributions and leadership enhanced the field of interlibrary loan. The $2,000 award and citation are donated by OCLC, Online Computer Library Center.

"Anne Beaubien embodies the cooperative spirit that is so important in the world of resource sharing," said Denise A. Forro, chair of the award committee. "She has advanced the issues and goals of the new RUSA STARS unit and played a key leadership role in resource sharing initiatives, including the CIC (Big Ten libraries) and the Rethinking Resource Sharing Initiative. Based upon her years of involvement in interlibrary loan on many levels, Anne was selected to receive this prestigious reward."
**American Library Association Interlibrary Loan Form**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Request Sent on</th>
<th>August 25, 1994</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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**From:**
Interlibrary Loan Unit  
Newman Library  
Virginia Tech  
Blacksburg, VA 24061  
(703) 231-9202

**OCLC:**  
**VPI:**

**Patron:** J. Lewis

**Author or Journal Name:** F. Robinson  
**Book Title or Article Author:** Beowulf

**Verified in:** OCLC

**To:** NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE  
CIRCULATION/LIB

**Request Type:**
- [X] Book Loan  
- [ ] Photocopy

**Request Complies with:**
- [X] 108(g) (2) Guidelines (CCG)  
- [ ] Other provisions of copyright law (CCL)

**Request on:**
Requested on:  
New Due Date:  

**LOAN:** Will Pay $_____ fee  
**PHOTOCOPY:** Max. Cost = $20

**Date Shipped:**  
**Via:** ____________

**Charges:**  
**Due On:** ____________

**Please Return Insured**

**Packing Requirements:**

**Library Use Only**
- [ ] Copying Not Permitted  
- [ ] No Renewals

**Other:**

**In Use**  
- [X] Lacking  
**Not Owned**

**Non-Circulating**  
**Poor Condition**

**Rerequest On:** ____________

**Estimated Cost of Item:** $__________

**Type of Item:**
- [X] Copy  
- [ ] Book  
- [ ] Fiche

**Prepayment Required**

**Received:** ____________  
**Returned:** ____________

**Returned Via:**
- [X] Insured for $______________

**Payment Provided:** $______________
Tri-ALSA, Ft. Wayne, Indiana
University of Arizona Libraries

Carla Stoffle
Alliance Borrowing
INN-Reach Visiting Patron

Nancy Nathanson, Systems Manager
nnathans@uoregon.edu  (541) 346-1860

Fig. 1. The principal categories of dissatisfaction in correct order.
... In which Geary Rummler introduced his Anatomy of Performance (AOP) Model
Anatomy of Access in Libraries

"Pure" Reference (16)
Affiliation (4)
Catalogs and Databases (9)
Bibliographic Availability (8)
Training & Consulting
Enabling Users to Create
Production (2)

Where's it physically located? (1)
Can you send it? (1)
Forms (1)
Patron Record (2)

Loanables

Can I access this "directly?"
What are the mechanics of accessing this?

Eureka! Access achieved! Mission Accomplished!
Full-text: Consumables (3)
The Anatomy of Access in Libraries

• Random sample of all 2014 e-mailed Virtual Reference transactions
  • 142 Total Requests
  • 47 transactions analyzed
    • 6 were unusable & next transaction was used:
      • 3 “please buy my book”
      • 1 sent only a link to a book on eBay
      • 1 misuse of Persistent Link Request Form
      • 1 “gibberish;” (perhaps attempt at two keywords?)
  • WSULS uses LibAnswers by SpringShare
How were transactions classified and placed on the chart?

From the Patron’s point of view:

• What was the first ‘barrier’ the patron encountered?

• What did they need to know before they could proceed?

• What was the problem they were encountering?

• What wasn’t working or producing the results they expected?
Response strategies for VR questions

• Patron’s question may enter this model from anywhere at any point (and hopefully they tell us where they’re coming from . . . )

• The most complete responses were those that continued to address potential issues working down the model
A Few Non-Privacy Threatening Examples

• “Pure” Reference:
  • I need statistics with these criteria:
  • Which database for this topic?
  • How can I exchange currency?
  • I have a very specific question of law
Catalogs and Databases

- Database is asking me for institutional login
- I can’t get into a database I accessed remotely yesterday
- Where’s your list of databases?
- Database is prompting me to pay for a subscription
Bibliographic Availability

- Can you find this particular item to which I have a citation?
  - At least title and author
  - Patron usually had more info
Equipment & Services

• Where and when can I fax something?

• How can I have a poster printed?
Loanable items

- Where’s a certain type of book located?
- Will you mail books received through Interlibrary Loan to distance students?
- I can’t request because there’s a “Problem with my library record”
Articles and full-text

- Newspapers on microfilm
- I’m unable to link to this full-text
What are your most frequent VR questions?

- Come up with at least 1
  - Share with others to spark more ideas
  - Can’t decide? 1 to 3 would be great!

- Can you place them on the Anatomy of Access model? Talk it out with others
See you in 5 minutes!

- Be ready to bring 1-3 of your most frequently asked VR questions forward to the group

- We’ll look at them together!
Let’s Brainstorm some strategies

- For responding to the patron
- For toppling the “barrier”
- Is there a “systemic solution?”
• No idea is a bad idea
• Be creative
• Take risks
• No criticism allowed
Blue Sky Brainstorming

• There are no rules or limitations
  • We have enough money
  • We can decide anything, anywhere ("they" can’t stop us!)

• What would delight our patron?
Let’s continue the conversation

• Sign up before you leave, and we’ll continue virtually!
References

