Chapter 5
BGSU – Firelands College

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Instruction and reference services are pivotal as well as intertwined functions of the BGSU Firelands Library. In addition to promoting a relaxed and inviting attitude toward the library, the librarians strive to keep instruction fresh and current. Instruction is often a students' first introduction to the wealth of information available through an academic library. It further encourages them to come to the library often and take advantage of its reference services as well as its computer work stations and study accommodations - carrels, roundtables, sofa groupings, and study room. The librarians aspire to keep abreast of the new and innovative approaches to delivering both instruction and reference services in ways that efficiently and effectively meet student needs.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CHAPTER

- The reader will understand the methods by which a regional campus library presents instruction to its students.
- The reader will be aware of the methods by which a regional campus presents reference services to its students.
- The reader will understand how the college's library instruction affects its reference services and vice versa.
- The reader will be aware of the future plans of the BGSU Firelands Library.

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND

The BGSU Firelands Library opened its doors in 1968, when the College was founded. It was a small operation at first, one librarian and one clerk. Eventually, in 1974 the staff grew to include an assistant librarian whose main duty was reference while the director concentrated on the administrative tasks. The biggest outreach experience for the students was the library tour. These were performed regularly to orientation groups and classes in all disciplines. In the early 1990's, the librarians began to present library services to

classes by actually presenting in the classroom, which was not the library's common way of interacting with the student body.

By 1994, computers had infiltrated the library scene and the entire staff had to learn how to search for books and other materials through the online catalog. Eventually, computers incrementally wormed their way into all of the processes involved in running a library. Not only was the catalog online but many of the services such as cataloging and serial processing became computerized. The library was now in a new age – one that we are still immersed in.

BGSU Firelands College is a regional campus of Bowling Green State University located in Huron, Ohio, sixty-three miles away from our main campus. Currently there are approximately two thousand five hundred students attending BGSU Firelands. The affiliation with a large University is a unique situation; it allows access to a vast array of electronic databases and inclusion in their catalog. Another service afforded through BGSU is a membership to a sophisticated state-wide consortium called OhioLINK. Firelands library is small, approximately thirty thousand volumes, and the students commute to campus. The atmosphere is a comfortable, down-home attitude toward our students at all levels, not just library services. Basically, as librarians, our responsibilities include everything from reference and user education, to circulation duties. There is a team consisting of two librarians, the library director and the assistant librarian. The assistant librarian is mainly responsible for instruction while both are responsible for reference.

SETTING THE STAGE: REFERENCE

In the early days of the BGSU Firelands Library, reference was a very personal experience because the numbers of students attending the College were very small, giving the Librarians ample time to work with them individually. When a new position of assistant librarian was created, reference was its

focus. The atmosphere remained the same for some time, and most of the reference continued to be conducted on a fairly one-to-one level. The advent of computers changed the atmosphere of reference for Firelands; it became more individualized with students able to sit by themselves at computers and conduct their searches. Computers also engendered a difference in how students searched for information. CD-ROMs were becoming more popular as databases that could be searched to find articles. Students could search more directly and more autonomously. Sandrea DeMinco (2002) asserted that students needed personal as well as electronic help in their searches. She says,

Computerized databases are contributing to highly individualized but not independent learning... Students' intense but short term use of ERIC-on-CDROM does not allow them to develop a sense of mastery over the changeable system or to feel confident in transferring their computer skills to similar databases...More and more, students realize that assistance from both humans and computerized databases produces the most successful result to a search for information. (p. 293)

It was clear that the Firelands librarians' approach to reference needed to change. The library housed better, faster, and more competent computers and it became apparent that a reliable printer was becoming one of the most coveted pieces of equipment. Students were beginning to look for fast, easy, quick information searching and retrieval. The librarians were challenged to find ways to meet the changing reference needs of the student body.

CURRENT STATE: REFERENCE

The reference sessions at Firelands Library illustrate one of the ways being a small regional campus library can benefit students. Having a small student body allows the librarians to answer questions working with students at a computer

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