LES Reference Discussion Group

Meeting Location: Loews Philadelphia, Washington C
Meeting Date/Time: Sunday, January 13: 8:00 - 10:00 a.m.

The meeting was attended by 26 people, mostly LES members, two Gale representatives and Barbara Chen, Director of Bibliographic Information Services and Editor, Modern Language Association (MLA) International Bibliography. The group discussed the following topics:

1. Research Competency Guidelines: How have they been used? Have they been adopted into bibliographic instruction and faculty liaison work? How it relates to curriculum mapping and embedding information literacy into programs?

- A few colleagues distribute the Guideline to English Departments' faculty and to teaching assistants.
- Some considered the Guidelines to be too general to be easily applicable in the teaching process
- Some noted that the Guidelines' intent is to be general and it is up to librarians and teachers to interpret them and to formulate specific learning outcomes that can be achieved during specific sessions
- Kathleen Johnson recommended that LES members could create a wide array of exercises that relate to the Guidelines. Such exercises could be linked to the Guidelines document on LES WIKI.
- We discussed the importance of promoting the Guidelines at professional conferences for English professors. Barbara Chen offered to help us place relevant presentation in her slot at MLA Convention. To be included in the program, LES members would need to come up with a proposal by April 1, 2008.
- We also discussed various approached to teaching library catalogs. The importance of pre-tests and post-tests was emphasized.

2. Training student assistants for literary reference: What works? What doesn't? Have some techniques been more effective than others?

- We agreed that it is a good idea to pay students their student wages for the time they spend in training.
- Some colleagues mentioned pre-semester boot-camp trainings; some mentioned training during downtime at service points.
- Comments on the teaching of referral and the teaching of limits of competence emerged in the discussion
- Discussion participants recognized the importance of student help. Their help makes it possible to manage in-person, phone, and chat reference at one service point. Student workers also help librarians to experiment with roving approaching to reference: while the librarian visits the library in search of patron needing help, students staff the desk.
- A colleague mentioned a survey that indicated that despite the popularity of chat reference, our patrons prefer in person contact.
- Two colleagues mentioned their experiences of holding office hours in departments' headquarters. It takes time to gain users (one semester), but once they learn about the service, they are enthusiastic about it.

3. Staying on top of literature reference sources: What strategies have been effective? Which sources are the most useful?

- Certain library catalogs allow users to assemble lists of new acquisitions
- We should think of using the LES WIKI as a professional tool to promote new and old favorite resources
- Attending lectures and other scholarly events on campus helps us to learn about new disciplinary trends
- Attending conference in the area of literature is a good idea

4. Digital and print reference sources: Are people switching from print to electronic reference collections? Has anyone noticed any new trends in student and faculty preference?

- One of our Gale representatives suggested that no print reference publisher will survive the next five years unless they produce digital versions to their new print publications.
- Most colleagues buy very few print reference titles and are more likely to spend their reference dollars on digital products.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Sophie Lesinska