

Bibliographic Instruction and User Education: A New ILA Discussion Group

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A library is more than just a warehouse for books, magazines and videotapes; the role of the librarian goes far beyond that of a mere custodian of knowledge. A library's mission is to organize information, store information, and make that information available to those who need it. We teach users how to find the information they need. This is what librarians do . . . every day.

The work of helping users find information is not limited to school librarians or to reference librarians in college libraries. User education is more than helping the term paper writer. Anne F. Roberts defines this activity succinctly (1982):

"Library instruction" as we think of it today, refers to the use of buildings, locations, facilities, and materials in teaching users how to employ libraries to handle their information needs. (p. 15)

Schools of library and information science now introduce students to basic concepts of user education. But how do we get practical new ideas after graduation? What about those of us who graduated ten or more years ago when bibliographic instruction was rarely discussed in the classroom? How do we keep up with new concepts

and theories or new technological developments? Where can we get ideas to use in solving a particular problem? As budgets shrink, we depend on resource-sharing with our sister libraries throughout the state; it seems only natural to share our ideas and skills as well as our collections.

A New Discussion Group

In early 1988, the Indiana Library Association (ILA) Board approved a petition establishing a Bibliographic Instruction and User Education Discussion Group. Signed by more than 25 Indiana librarians, the petition read in part:

Although there are several organizations . . . that provide a national forum, there is a need for a local (Indiana) forum. an ILA Discussion Group . . . would meet this need. It could provide a comfortable, easily accessible forum for the discussion and exchange of ideas and expertise among Indiana librarians.

The first meeting of the Steering Committee was held June 24, 1988. The group represents a wide range of libraries and locations. Members include:

- Jim Cline, LaPorte County Public Library

- Margit Codispoti, Walter E. Helmke Library, Indiana University-Purdue University, Fort Wayne
- H. Scott Davis, Indiana State University Libraries
- Barbara J. Elliot, Bluffton-Wells County Public Library
- Jill Gremmels, DePauw University Library
- Janet Meek, University of Evansville Library
- Marsha Miller, Indiana State University Libraries
- Sally Jo Milne, Good Library, Goshen College
- Ingrid Norris, Lake County Public Library
- Emily Okada, Indiana University Libraries, Bloomington
- Mary Popp, Indiana University Libraries, Bloomington
- D'Anna Shotts, Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library
- Arena Stevens, Indiana University Northwest Library, Gary
- Byron Swanson, Indiana State Library
- Nancy Totten, Indiana University Southeast Library, New Albany

Goals and Objectives

As one of its first actions, the Steering Committee adopted goals and objectives to guide the group's activities. These goals were developed to assure that the discussion group acts as a statewide body for everyone active or interested in bibliographic instruction and user education, whether in an academic, public, school or special library. It was also felt that the goals should help further the cause of libraries as vital centers of information and resources for cultural, recreational and educational pursuits accessible to all segments of the population.

Goals. The goals of the new ILA Discussion Group are:

1. To increase awareness of user education as an essential library service and to play an active role in the development of ILA policies promoting user education.
2. To provide a forum for broad discussion of user education issues within Indiana libraries.
3. To provide opportunities in which library workers from all types of libraries and from throughout the state of Indiana can share user education ideas, materials, and solutions.
4. To help practitioners develop, improve, and promote user education by providing information, skills and tools.

Objectives. Objectives adopted to meet these goals are:

- A. To review the current Indiana clearinghouse for user education materials and to broaden its scope.
- B. To sponsor workshops, conference programs and informal discussions on topics of interest in user education and bibliographic instruction.
- C. To publish articles, bibliographies and other useful information.
- D. To develop a formal network of user education librarians in the state of Indiana who share ideas, information, and materials.

Work has begun on most of these objectives. The Discussion Group co-sponsored a Fall 1988 workshop with the ILA Reference Division. Clearinghouses in Indiana are being reviewed and several plans explored. A survey of libraries in Indiana to determine their user education activities will be sent out in early 1989. The result will be a directory of Indiana instruction/

user education programs and contact persons. The Discussion Group also plans to sponsor a program at the ILA conference in May.

An Active Membership

Many issues—online catalogs, end-user searching, accountability and evaluation, the development of critical thinking skills—face us as we promote library and information literacy. We can deal with these issues better if we pool our ideas and share our successes and failures.

Anne F. Roberts (1982) reminds us that

Library instruction programs have similar goals in whatever types of libraries they occur. Instruction librarians share mutual concerns and common efforts in trying to meet the same ends—to get users to locate information efficiently and effectively—and they use the same skills to accomplish their goals. . . Instruction librarians in academic, school, public, and special libraries can all learn from each other and try out the various methods and techniques that have been developed. (p. 21)

The new ILA Discussion Group needs members from all types of libraries. It needs people who want to do more than just pay their dues, people to establish a tradition of active membership in which projects are undertaken because members see a need.

You have the opportunity to shape this new ILA Discussion group on Bibliographic Instruction and User Education. Contact:

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Reference

Roberts, Anne F. *Library Instruction for Librarians*. Littleton, Co.: Libraries Unlimited, 1982.