EXAMINING THE PREPARATION FOR REFERENCE-BASED INSTRUCTION AMONG ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS

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CAS Project

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Certificate of Advanced Study in Library and Information Science in the Graduate College of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2009

Urbana, Illinois

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ABSTRACT

In the course of a reference transaction, academic librarians are expected to help patrons both find the information they are seeking while educating the patron about the process of finding, evaluating, and using information. For many academic librarians, however, the pre-service preparation for these teaching expectations is woefully limited. This study examines how the education and training of academic librarians prepares them for the teaching expectations of reference work. The professional experiences of librarians at a research university are considered in the context of the current curricular focus of American Library Association-accredited degree-granting institutions, as well as of the training curriculum provided at the institution where they are currently employed. The results of this study indicate that while academic librarians are keenly aware of the instructional expectations inherent in their reference work, they are poorly prepared to meet these expectations by both their pre-service education and on-the-job training. The results of this study have implications for both library and information science educators and for the libraries that hire new librarians.
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Introduction

The last twenty years have seen a sharp decline in reference transactions and a growth in “group presentations”, the Association of Research Libraries term for classroom or bibliographic instruction (Elmborg 2006). As bibliographic instruction has branched off from the reference desk, librarians have taken responsibility for “one shot” instruction sessions, course-integrated library instruction, and even for-credit courses (Blazek 1982; Donnelly 2000; Desai & Graves 2008). In addition to these formal instructional responsibilities, librarians who provide reference services often are expected to provide guidance and instruction while helping patrons find information – rather than simply providing them with answers to their questions.

While coursework exists in library schools to prepare future librarians for their classroom teaching responsibilities, and many come to librarianship with some teaching experience, many are still startled to discover the extent to which a reference librarian is expected to function as an instructor. How, then, are these academic librarians gaining the preparation necessary for the teaching that they are expected to do in the course of their reference work? Is ‘instruction’ as a constituent part of library work adequately addressed in the library and information science (LIS) curricula? If not, how are libraries contributing to the professional development of their librarians in this area?

It would seem that librarians fall prey to the same assumptions as many university instructional faculty with regards to their preparation for teaching. Because a librarian is an expert practitioner in the field and holds a graduate degree in LIS, he or she should be able to teach about the field in any context. However, this assumption of an apprenticeship
This paper presents a study designed to examine how academic reference librarians are prepared for the teaching they do in their reference work. Interviews were conducted with practicing librarians to gather data about their education, teaching experience prior to entering the library profession, and training they received in their current and previous positions. The findings from the interviews were then compared with the training materials provided by the library where they are employed to identify ways the materials can be adjusted to address the training needs of current and future librarians. In addition, the curricular materials from American Library Association (ALA) accredited degree granting institutions were analyzed in order to examine the prevalence of instruction-related courses. These three types of data provided a holistic picture of the role of and relative weight given to instruction in the context of reference work throughout librarians’ careers. The results of this study provide insight into teaching and teaching preparation for practicing librarians, which will be informative for both library administrators and LIS educators.

**Literature Review**

**Reference and Instruction in the Literature**

Instruction in the context of reference service has remained a critically important service despite changes in institutional support and the rapid increase in classroom instruction (Ellis 2004). The expectation of reference-integrated instruction has existed since at least 1876, when Samuel Green encouraged librarians not only to provide information but also to help patrons learn to find information themselves (Woodard & Arp
Public libraries take their instructional role a step further, offering education and professional development opportunities for adult learners (Beilke 1982). Budd (1982) argues that an amalgamation of reference and instruction services is most beneficial to the patron, providing information and support in the seeking process at the point of need. Indeed formal instruction programs and reference desk services provide mutual reinforcement for both the librarian and the patron. For the librarian, the skills learned in preparation for classroom instruction inform the decisions made in instruction interactions at the reference desk (Coleman 1982; Reichel 1982). For the patron, the service they receive at the reference desk reinforces the values and concepts taught in the classroom (Farber 1982; Kissane & Mollner 1993). Teaching at the reference desk, when done well, is consistent with pedagogical models in which the teacher becomes a coach or a guide, supporting the learner through a process of sense making (Ellis 2004). Research on library services consistently indicates a strong and integrated relationship between instruction and reference services (Rice 1982).

As a result of the increased institutional emphasis on classroom instruction, reference librarians have diversified their service offerings, making an effort to reach patrons at the point of need by incorporating virtual reference and “roving reference” in addition to the traditional reference desk. Even as the very presence of the reference desk changes, the expectation for instruction remains, whether the reference interaction takes place in person or mediated by phone, email, or chat client (Desai & Graves 2008). “One-on-one instruction has always been a part of reference work, but in the paper environment getting a learner started with an index usually involved a brief and straightforward introduction. In the electronic environment, however, learners may need to learn
everything from how to use a keyboard to using search languages and downloading and printing” (Campbell & Fyfe 2002). As the use of databases and other web-based or mediated sources has increased in libraries, librarians have found themselves in the role of technology educators as well as information intermediaries (Cargill 1992). With the significant growth of formal instruction programs has also come an increasing focus on pedagogy; however it is unclear how librarians come to possess this knowledge (Coleman 1982).

Teaching at the reference desk can take many forms, but best practice suggests a focus on fostering the critical thinking skills learners develop in the classroom (Kissane & Mollner 1993; Christian & Blumenthal 2000). In the course of a reference desk interaction, a librarian may help a patron identify the types of resources needed to complete an assignment (Isbell 2008) or suggest terms for more effective searches (Desai & Graves 2008). Librarians are encouraged to ask questions of the patron, model effective problem solving, and talk through their thought processes in order to bring patrons into a teachable moment (Beck & Turner 2001). By modeling, librarians can help patrons understand that research is a messy and imperfect process, helping them to place value on both the process and the end result (Swan 1982).

Elmborg (2006) stresses the importance of recognizing the learner’s literacy as being contextually bound, arguing that the concepts of literacy taught by academia and the library are based on a specific value system that may be foreign to learners. Instruction at the reference desk can draw on these personal contexts to help the learner develop information seeking strategies that transcend the strategies’ academic applications. While previously oriented towards contextually bound skills and literacies, librarians are now
realizing that their teaching is most effective when it can be translated beyond the immediate academic applications (Estrin 1998). Along these lines, bringing patrons into the role of “information producer” can be an effective teaching technique. In this approach to reference, patrons are asked to share their strategies for information seeking utilized in non-academic contexts. The librarian then takes their clearly articulated strategies for buying a stereo, for example, and translates them to the context of library resources. In this way, the librarian helps the patron identify and develop transferrable knowledge (Ellis 2004). This method of instruction is quite different than those that learners encounter in the classroom; it has the potential to be more inclusive, more personalized, and – by extension – more empowering for the learner.

This non-traditional mode of teaching is not without challenges, however. Some suggest that this expectation for instruction conflicts with the librarian’s role as information provider or intermediary (Blazek 1982). When the patron’s question can be answered quickly, for example, it can be hard to justify an in-depth teaching process. This conflict is especially pronounced in virtual reference transactions, where the librarian’s sense of immediacy often results in the provision of a quick answer, rather than an answer that will help the patron develop their information-seeking skills. This is also the case in “ready reference” transactions that occur at the desk (Ellis 2004). Others argue that dedicating staff time to instruction – a service whose outcomes can be difficult to measure – may be onerous for already understaffed institutions (Osborne 1989).

**Instruction in the LIS Curriculum**

The continuing need for teaching in the process of providing reference services, and the changing landscape of face-to-face to computer mediated communication and
technology assistances, raises the question of how librarians are being prepared for such responsibilities. How are librarians prepared for these ever-growing teaching expectations? Where are they learning the techniques necessary to effectively provide instruction across different media? What is the pedagogical grounding for the techniques in use?

Among library professionals, there is a growing concern about the lack of standardization and the shift in focus from library service to information science in the library school curriculum. This concern has been most vocally expressed by former ALA president Michael Gorman, and is echoed by many others in the library community (Auld 1990; Irwin 2002; Audunson, Nordlie & Spangen 2003; Berry 2004; Gorman 2004). Gorman argued for a core curriculum that reflects the actual activities and responsibilities of librarianship, such as reference and library instruction (Gorman 2004). Others have described the tensions that exist between the professional and academic aspects of library education, placing more value on the practical education of the seven out of eight library school graduates who will go on to seek employment in libraries (Auld 1990; Lynch 2008).

A number of studies have reviewed the LIS curriculum in order to measure the prevalence and importance of instruction or instruction-related coursework. In 1981, Pastine reported that only eleven library schools offered courses specifically focusing on bibliographic instruction (1982). Between 1984 and 1986, Larson and Meltzer (1987) marked a decline from 91% to 79% in the incidence of instruction-related courses in library schools in the United States. In 1997, Estrin (1998) found that 62% of 39 library schools in the United States and Canada offered instruction-focused courses. In 2002, Markey (2004) conducted a similar review, but made no mention of instruction courses. In 2004, Julien...
(2005) reviewed the publicly available curricular materials of 93 library schools and found that a small majority (51.6%) offered no courses focusing on instruction. Finally, in 2007, Sproles et al (2008) reviewed online course catalogs and found that 85.2% of ALA-accredited library schools offer instruction courses, which include those focused on school media certification. The disparity in this data makes it difficult to gain a true picture of either the perceived need for instruction in the LIS curriculum, or the actual provision of such courses.

These confusing numbers may arise from different standards of what constitutes teaching about instruction in LIS, and may also indicate the difficulty of counting a single course as dealing with such instruction. Instructional techniques are frequently embedded in the subject matter being taught – whether it is cataloging or reference. In a series of opinion pieces published in 1976, deans and directors of various library schools indicated that while there is a need for training in instruction, students are best served by encountering instructional methods within the context of other parts of the curriculum (Bidlack & Kirkendall 1976; Bunge & Kirkendall 1976; Gleaves & Kirkendall 1976; Stueart & Kirkendall 1976). This approach is recommended for the sake of expediency, as at the time a degree in library science was often completed in one year. Despite this, Powell and Raber (1994) conducted a qualitative and quantitative review of reference coursework at 59 ALA-accredited library schools, and found that while there was a heavy emphasis on the reference interview and search strategies, instruction or instruction-related tasks were not emphasized.

A number of reports suggest that LIS educators have recognized that there should be more emphasis on teaching about instruction. Toy (1978), for example, stressed the
importance but relative absence of formal instruction in teaching methods for academic librarians. Sherratt (1987) argued that library school students need training in instruction grounded in LIS principles – a philosophical orientation that will not be available if instruction courses must be taken in other academic departments. More recently, Estrin (1998) emphasized the importance of “instructional communication” in the library school curriculum. He went on to state that “instructional skills should not be thought of simply as resources needed to teach students within the confines of the classroom. Rather, every service point should be seen as an instruction point” (Estrin 1998, p. 2). In this interpretation of instruction, instructional skills are among the most important and transferable in a librarian’s toolkit.

After completing his or her degree in LIS, a librarian’s continuing education happens primarily in the context of workshops and professional meetings, complemented by self-directed study (Mandernack 1990). Depending on the library, training for new librarians can be extensive and rigorous (Wood 1994; Bracke, Chinnaswamy & Kline 2008), catering to a variety of learning styles through diversified training methods (Block & Kelly 2001). Ongoing professional development often takes the form of peer coaching or mentoring, especially for new librarians who are still learning about the behavioral aspects of reference work (Arthur 1990; Moysa 2004). Librarians are encouraged to expand their knowledge of reference works and to develop subject expertise (Frantz 1991); however, little mention in any of the training literature related to reference is given to expanding knowledge of pedagogy or of the librarian’s instructional role(s). If these subjects are emphasized, it is primarily with regards to the training of student workers and paraprofessionals who will work on the reference desk, though even then the instruction is
cursory at best (Borin 2001; Courtney 2001).

**Instruction in Academia**

In the introduction to this paper, comparisons were drawn to the pre-service experience and education of university teaching faculty and others teaching in post-secondary institutions. While a graduate education in the United States usually prepares a new faculty member for the research expectations of his or her first position, the literature is replete with articles bemoaning new faculty members’ lack of teaching skills (Bess 1990; Ehrlich 1998; Ellington 1999; Gaff & Lambert 1996). Writing about university-level instructors, Ellington notes, “Only a minority will have received any systematic instruction in the theory and practice of tertiary education, however, and even fewer will have obtained a formal postgraduate qualification in this area” (1999, p. 28). For many, graduate school serves as an opportunity to be “socialized into the profession”, where students learn from the examples of their faculty mentors to value research over teaching, resulting in the career-long privileging of the former over the latter (Bess 1990). Ronkowski argues, “because teaching has not been recognized as a form of scholarship…faculty have traditionally practiced their teaching profession as bricoleurs and inadvertently transmitted this approach to their graduate students” (1993, p. 81).

Many instructors do obtain teaching experience by serving as a teaching assistant or teaching sections of courses while in graduate school; this teaching experience, however, is contextually bound, and may not adequately prepare future instructors for the challenges and expectations of teaching outside the institution where they completed their graduate education (Hay & Deutsch 2005). The preparation for this teaching experience is often largely based on observation, though some programs offer courses or seminars to prepare
new teaching assistants for their teaching responsibilities (Wimer 2006; Janke & Colbeck 2008). This reliance on observation is problematic, as this approach to teacher preparation privileges the teaching strategies observed in the graduate classroom, strategies that may not be either pedagogically sound or appropriate in other contexts (Hay & Deutsch 2005). Some institutions are more forward thinking with regards to teacher preparation, offering mentoring and instruction through programs like the grant-funded Preparing Future Faculty project, in which graduate students experience first hand the teaching expectations they will encounter once out of graduate school (Gaff & Lambert 1996; Ehrlich 1998; Wimer 2006). However, the assumption inherent in this system of graduate education appears to be that by achieving expertise in a subject area, an individual is qualified to teach about it (Gaff & Lambert 1996). Subject knowledge and teaching ability are very different, although they are conflated in this assumption.

Research on the pre-service teaching preparation of academic librarians and university instructors indicates many similarities. Instruction is rarely perceived as a necessary component of graduate curricula; much greater emphasis is given to the research or practical applications of coursework, depending on the context. While some institutions do a better job of preparing their students through programs like Preparing Future Faculty or directed professional internships, they seem to be an exception rather than the rule. The lack of preparation amongst university instructors for their teaching responsibilities has been acknowledged as problematic; however, the same problems have not been clearly articulated for librarians entering into academic libraries, where they will be expected to teach in a variety of contexts. This problem is the central focus of this study.


Method

This study examines the instructional practices of academic librarians in the context of reference work, and was specifically designed to identify the education and training that academic librarians receive while preparing for this instructional work. This research was motivated by the researcher’s personal experience as a new librarian encountering significant implicit teaching expectations with very little preparation or support. This study addressed the following questions: what is the perceived relationship between reference work and instruction among academic librarians? What aspects of pre-service work or education prepare academic librarians for the instructional aspects of reference work? Are instruction-related courses required in the LIS curriculum? How are pre-service work or educational experiences supplemented by on-the-job training in order to prepare academic librarians for the instructional aspects of reference work?

To address these questions, data were collected from three sources: semi-structured interviews conducted with reference librarians at one major research university, the training curriculum provided by that university for its new librarians and staff members, and curricular documents found on the websites of ALA-accredited degree granting institutions. Collecting complementary data is consistent with Denzin’s data collection principle of triangulation, in which multiple methods of data collection are used to give context and reduce the likelihood of limitations (Maxwell 1996).

Documentary sources

For the first part of this study, a review of the online curricular materials of ALA-accredited degree granting institutions was conducted. This review was completed in July 2008 and focused on the existence and centrality of instruction-oriented courses in the
respective schools’ curricula. At the time of this review, there were 56 ALA-accredited
degree-granting institutions. Of those 56 schools, 53 provided information about their
courses and curricular requirements through a departmental website. The remaining three
schools either had no information available through their websites, or the provided
information was in a language other than English. The goal for this review was to address
the second research question: What aspects of pre-service work or education prepare
academic librarians for the instructional aspects of reference work? The methodology for
this review is consistent with the methodologies used by Estrin (1998) and Julien (2005) in
similar studies.

Sites were analyzed in order to identify the following about each school’s
curriculum: number of courses with an instructional focus offered, course titles, and
whether or not the course was required for degree completion. The researcher utilized her
knowledge of LIS terminology and coursework from working in an instructional support
role at an ALA-accredited degree granting institution in order to identify courses related to
instruction. The researcher reviewed course listings and descriptions, using keywords to
identify the nature and focus of the courses. Sample keywords used to identify these
courses included ‘learning’, ‘education’, ‘instructional design’, ‘information literacy’,
‘bibliographic instruction’, ‘curriculum’, and ‘school media’. The number of courses
offered and the course title(s) were logged in a spreadsheet. As many institutions cross-list
courses with other departments, review was limited to only those courses offered directly
by the ALA-accredited degree granting program or department unless cross-listed courses
from other departments were specifically required or recommended.

Identifying the relationship between the course and the core curriculum required a
close review of both the course listings and the descriptions of individual programs. Some institutions indicated in the course descriptions that the courses were required for graduation or for the completion of a specific curriculum track. Others indicated the core curriculum requirements in a separate document or portion of the website, specifying first the required courses, then the recommended courses for individual curriculum tracks. At some institutions, all students are required to complete specific courses, while at others, students are required to complete a number of courses or credit hours in specific areas. If instruction-related courses fell into either category – specifically required or included in a group of electives from which students are required to select – they were marked as required or core. If instruction-related courses did not fall into either of the two categories, they were marked as not required. If instruction-related courses were required for a specific curriculum track, this information was noted, but was not considered part of the core curriculum when the data were reviewed in aggregate.

This documentary review also addressed the third research question: Are instruction related courses required in the LIS curriculum? Of the 53 institutions reviewed, only two (3.7%) included instruction-related courses in the core curriculum. At one institution, an instruction course was specifically required in the curriculum; at the other, an instruction course was included in a list of nine courses out of which the students are required to complete three. Other institutions required instruction courses for students seeking school media certification; specific data about school media certification was not gathered, as this certification is not required for academic librarians. In all, 96% of reviewed institutions offered at least one instruction-related course (mean 2.28, median 2), somewhat higher than the 82% reported in Sproles et al’s 2007 review (Sproles et al 2008).
Semi-structured interviews

Results from the examination of the curricular materials revealed that while the majority of ALA-accredited degree granting institutions offer coursework related to instruction, only two institutions currently require this coursework for students seeking a Masters in Library Science (or equivalent). This leaves the question of where and from whom librarians gain knowledge about instruction. A series of semi-structured interviews with practicing academic librarians was undertaken to explore this question.

The interviews were conducted to develop an understanding of the practice of instruction in the course of reference work as experienced by practitioners in an academic library. These interviews also examined the ways librarians perceived their preparation for this work, whether through pre-service education, on-the-job training, or previous work experience. The interviews addressed research questions one, two, and four.

The interview question formation, and the conduct of interviews followed principles of interviewing as outlined by Maxwell (1996) and Creswell (1998). According to Maxwell (1996), interview questions, whether structured or unstructured, serve a separate purpose from the research questions. Research questions, as with those identified above, outline what the researcher wants to learn about, while interview questions help the researcher develop this understanding. Maxwell stresses the importance of asking “real” questions – questions that the researcher is genuinely curious about – rather than leading questions that target a specific answer.

Using as background the information obtained from the institutional websites and the researcher’s experience, a series of questions were designed to address librarians’ current and previous work experience, formal education and on-the-job training, and
perceptions of the relationship between instruction and reference. These questions were supplemented by demographic questions about participants’ age and education. The interview questions were:

1. Please describe your primary job responsibilities at the library, including your job title.
2. In your experience, how has your reference work (working at the reference desk, conducting research appointments, etc.) included teaching?
3. Please describe any teaching techniques that you employ in your reference work.
4. While you were earning your degree in library (or information) science, did you take any courses that specifically focused on library instruction?
5. Did you have any teaching experience prior to becoming a librarian?
6. When you started your first position as a librarian, did you receive any training in the instructional aspects of reference work?
7. Please share with me any other thoughts or comments about the instructional aspects of reference work.

As appropriate, each interview followed up on the basic questions by probing further into each participant’s experiences.

Site and Sample

The interviews were conducted with librarians employed by a medium-sized academic library system (henceforth ALS) in a private urban university with a heavily undergraduate population. The decision was made to address one university librarian population because of the ease of reaching this co-located population, and because sampling within this group of librarians provided a diversity of library experiences and subject specialties.

Participants were recruited by an email sent to a staff listserv comprised of individuals with reference responsibilities in different parts of the university library system. Of the target population of twenty-one, fifteen librarians agreed to participate in interviews. This represents 71% of individuals staffing the primary reference desk at the library, or the single reference desk at one of the library branches. Interviews were conducted with twelve
of the fifteen respondents. Two respondents were excluded from interviews because their primary work responsibilities were unrelated to reference services. The final respondent was excluded due to difficulties in scheduling the interview.

Demographics

The individuals interviewed included seven women and five men. According to data collected in 2000 by ALA’s Office of Research and statistics, men typically make up 30% of the credentialed academic library workforce (Davis & Hall 2007), so the perspectives of male librarians are somewhat over-represented in this study. Interviewees were asked to place their age in the following ranges: 25 or younger, 26-34, 35-44, 45-54, or 55 and over. Five were aged 26-34, three participants were aged 35-44, one 45-54, and three 55 or older. This sample also over-represents the perspectives of younger librarians – those under 35 typically comprise 12% of the credentialed academic library workforce (Davis & Hall 2007), whereas this group represents 41% of participants in this study.

The individuals interviewed represented a broad range of experiences and education, with degrees from nine different ALA-accredited library schools located in the United States. Six librarians completed their graduate degree in library science in the 2000s, four in the 1990s, and one each in the 1980s and 1970s. Eight completed additional graduate degrees in separate fields; two are currently enrolled in graduate programs at the institution where they are employed. For three individuals, their current position was their first professional job in an academic library, while others had worked at up to three academic libraries previously. One individual had more than ten years’ experience as a high school librarian, and two previously worked or volunteered in art libraries. Three individuals had previous library positions that heavily focused on technology or media; one
individual had worked for the library of a government agency. Five individuals worked in libraries prior to completing their library science degree as student workers or paraprofessionals. One individual had been employed at ALS for just over a year, while two others had worked at ALS since the early 1980s. Ten individuals work full-time at the library; the remaining two work part-time but have been employed by ALS for at least ten years.

**Conduct of Interviews**

Institutional Review Board permission was granted for this study in October 2008, and interviews were conducted in November 2008. All participants opted to be interviewed during the business day and in a private meeting room at ALS, with the exception of one participant who chose to be interviewed at a nearby coffee shop. In advance of the interview, participants were provided with a brief description of the study and a consent form for their review. Each interview began with a summary of the study and the interview process. Following this summary, participants were given a copy of the consent form to sign if they had not previously done so. Participants were not given interview questions or any other leading information in advance of the interviews; they were only told that they would be participating in a study about academic librarians’ experience with teaching in the context of reference work. Before the interview began, participants were given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, the interview process, and the consent form. Interviews followed a semi-structured protocol comprised of the broad questions listed above related to the participants’ experience teaching in the context of reference work, their pre-service education and teaching experience, and their perceptions of the way this education coupled with on-the-job training prepared them for
their current work. Interviews were digitally recorded, and lasted between ten and forty minutes, depending on the participants’ interest in the topic and willingness to share about their personal experiences. Most interviews lasted between fifteen and twenty-five minutes.

All interviews were transcribed and coded using broad initial categories based on the questions asked. “Coding generally is used to break up and segment the data into simpler, general categories and is used to expand and tease out the data, in order to formulate new questions and levels of interpretation” (Coffey & Atkinson 1996, p. 30). The initial categories included ‘classroom instruction’, used to differentiate between instruction in formal and informal settings, ‘previous experience’, used to identify work experience in libraries but not at ALS, and ‘education’, used to refer to the circumstances that occurred while earning the graduate degree in library science. While inductively reading and analyzing the transcripts, the researcher noted the repetition of specific phrases or concepts; these were used as “open codes”. This approach to coding is consistent with the grounded theory methodology developed by Strauss and Glaser (Maxwell 1996; Creswell 1998; Crotty 2006). Crotty describes this process as “seek[ing] to ensure that the theory emerging arises from the data and not from another source. It is a process of inductive theory building based squarely on observation of the data themselves.” (Crotty 2006, p. 78) Open codes included ‘value statement’, which indicated the expression of an opinion about teaching in the context of reference, or ‘awareness’, which referred to an individual’s perception of the importance of teaching in the context of reference.

Training Materials

In the final phase of this study, the training materials provided by the library were
coded using categories identified from the interview transcripts. The goal for this review was determining how the training materials addressed instruction at the reference desk. This review addressed the final research question: How are pre-service work or educational experiences supplemented by on-the-job training in order to prepare academic librarians for the instructional aspects of reference work?

Within the last five years, ALS librarians created a training curriculum comprised of modules that addressed core library units, services, and resources. Newly hired librarians, staff, and student workers are expected to complete these modules within the first month of their employment at ALS. The training modules are administered by librarians and other experienced staff, and the contents range in format from simple checklists to narratives for role-playing. Training materials are stored on a shared file system at ALS, which ensures that all individuals in the appropriate departments have ongoing access to them.

To analyze these materials, the researcher downloaded a copy of the folder containing all of the training modules. In addition to training modules, this folder also contained planning documents, draft modules, and evaluation forms completed by recently trained librarians. These items were reviewed, but were not coded. Using her knowledge of ALS resources and services and keeping in mind trends identified from the interview transcripts, the researcher read all of the training modules and wrote a brief summary of each. Each module was then categorized as “orientation or tour”, “technique”, or “how to” based on the language used by interview participants to describe these types of activities.

Of the thirteen modules, only one focused on instructional techniques. Eight modules were best described as “orientation or tour”, as they provided a broad overview of
the library’s physical space, resources, and services. Three modules provided “how to” instructions on the use of specific interfaces, technologies, or practices. One module contained both orientation and “how to” content; this was the only module that seemed to serve two purposes.

Results

Interview data focused on four primary topics. First, librarians spoke at great length about their experience teaching at the reference desk. They identified teaching techniques utilized in the course of reference work, and made value statements about the relative merits of teaching in this context. Librarians then reflected on their education and teaching experience prior to becoming a librarian. They discussed the relative weight given to instruction in the context of their graduate programs; their comments were supported by the lack of emphasis given to instruction discovered in the curriculum review phase of this study. Those librarians who had previous teaching experience discussed this experience as it intersected with their graduate education, perspectives on teaching, and current teaching practice in the context of reference work. Finally, librarians reflected on the training they received in their first librarian position, and then when first hired at ALS. Their comments about training were compared with the training materials consulted to form a larger understanding of the state of training at ALS.

Teaching at the Reference Desk

“Interacting with students in their learning process is…the most important part of the librarian’s pedagogical role” (Rafste & Saetre 2004, p. 116). In their review of the promise that pedagogical study holds for librarians, Rafste and Saetre (2004) set forth three
ways librarians can support students through their learning process. While these methods were described in the context of the work of school librarians, they are particularly applicable to the teaching that goes on at the reference desk at ALS. Although few librarians (3 of 12) interviewed had formal experience teaching, all identified specific techniques used in the course of instruction at the reference desk. Many of these teaching techniques were grounded in core reference practices while also mirroring Rafste and Saetre’s recommendations.

Rafste and Saetre (2004) first recommend that librarians teach by guiding “through the zone of proximal development” (p.116). While none of the librarians referred to the zone of proximal development in discussing their teaching strategies, several described techniques that are consistent with Vygotsky’s concept. Librarians discussed the importance of using the patrons’ existing knowledge as an entrance point into the teaching process. By situating new information – for example, Library of Congress subject headings – within the context of existing knowledge – tagging on Facebook – librarians can help guide students to a more complete understanding of unfamiliar resources and processes. In addition to drawing parallels between existing knowledge and new concepts, librarians described the importance of helping the patron understand why he or she may be having difficulty retrieving information. Several mentioned asking the patron to demonstrate what he or she had previously tried, and then using those same steps in a different context. This might include splitting a phrase into individual search terms, entering the same search terms in a different database, or using various limiting options instead of searching. In this way, the librarian is scaffolding existing knowledge by introducing it in a new context.
Much of the teaching at the desk takes place in the form of demonstration – either through the librarian talking about his or her process, or through the librarian showing the patron how to operate a database or evaluate a resource. This action is consistent with Rafste and Saetre’s second method, which involves “guiding and instructing through modeling” (2004, p. 116). It is important, though, to keep the patron engaged throughout this process by soliciting their feedback about resources or search terms. By explaining the steps while remaining open to suggestions, librarians indicated that they hoped to show the patron that critical thinking is required at every step of the research process, and that there are multiple pathways to information. Involving the patrons in this process also decreases the likelihood that the librarian will drive the search in the direction of his or her interest, rather than in the direction of the patron’s needs or interests.

Rafste and Saetre’s final method involves “guiding and instructing in metacognition” (2004, p.116), which takes place at the ALS reference desk as librarians vocalize their thought processes while working with patrons. As with demonstration, this technique allows patrons to observe a sequence of events or strategies, test them against their existing knowledge, and adopt those that make sense within their own context. Before the process can be demonstrated and vocalized, however, the librarians stated that it is important to listen, then ask the patron questions in return – as many as possible. These probing questions are intended to help the librarian identify what the patron is really looking for – but they serve a dual purpose of helping the patron examine their interests and central research questions. One librarian said that she had been trained to throw out the patron’s first question altogether, preferring to respond with “what is it that you’re hoping to find?” In this way, the librarian helps the patron move from confusion to clarity.
by challenging the patron’s conception of their needs and asking them to articulate what might best meet those needs.

All three of the methods suggested by Rafste and Saetre are most effective when utilized in dialogue with the learner. Each of the previously discussed techniques involves an element of dialogue, whether it is asking questions of the patron, encouraging their feedback, or letting the patron set the tone by first demonstrating their own processes. The librarians complement these teaching techniques with other behaviors that help the patron to feel comfortable and at ease in this informal learning environment. Librarians try to pay attention to cues from the patron indicating that he is in a hurry, or that he may be interested in learning about the research process, and will tailor their instruction accordingly. These are affordances not available in the formal classroom, where instruction generally has to move at a predetermined pace in order to complete course objectives. At the reference desk, the librarian has the opportunity to either be quick and efficient, or slow and detail-oriented, depending on the patron’s level of interest and engagement. Librarians also emphasized the importance of having the patron be physically situated at the computer, allowing her to “drive” the search, as she will be more likely to be able to duplicate the process at home if she has experienced it first hand. Once resources have been identified, several librarians like to reinforce the teaching by summarizing what they have just done and following up with the patron to make sure that the resources found meet the patron’s needs. These actions effectively end the dialogue, but provide a final opportunity for the patron to ask more questions, and create an open invitation for future assistance.

While explaining these techniques, librarians frequently made value statements
about teaching from the desk. Rather than sending the patron away from the reference desk with “just an answer,” librarians mentioned using the reference “teaching moment” to help the patron develop information self-sufficiency and critical subjectivity. These comments indicate that librarians are making a conscious decision to support the patron’s learning process, rather than creating a cycle of dependency, as described by Elmborg (2002). They emphasized the importance of helping the patrons learn how to find resources, rather than just providing an answer. Teaching at the reference desk was described as ideal because it is a service offered at the point of need. Librarians repeatedly emphasized the ties between reference and instruction, remarking that the distinctions made between the two were mainly administrative. This is consistent with Budd’s observation that libraries often make artificial distinctions between the two (1982).

Several librarians indicated that teaching at the reference desk is consistent with the pedagogical mission of the university, despite the increased emphasis on customer service that seems to grow out of a consumer-oriented model of services. Those librarians who had experience in other types of libraries said that the teaching expectations for academic librarians are much higher than for librarians in other types of libraries. The librarian who had worked in a government agency library indicated that while some instruction took place with researchers or staff members from the agency, it was not an area of emphasis for reference librarians. In fact, her first exposure to the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) information literacy standards came when she prepared for her job interview at ALS. A second librarian characterized her work in an art library as primarily service oriented. She contrasted the educational focus of academic libraries’ reference desk with her experience at the art library, where she was once told “If a curator asks you to sew
a button on his jacket, you sew a button on his jacket!” While not all perceived the services offered at the reference desk as grounded in pedagogy, most indicated their value in patron education and with relationship to classroom instruction.

**Pre-Service Education**

Having established the centrality of teaching at the reference desk to the practice of reference in an academic setting, interview participants were asked about their pre-service education or training related to instruction. Sproles et al (2008) found that 66% of recent library school graduates should have been exposed to library instruction concepts and skills. Within the interviewed ALS population, however, only one participant completed any coursework in library school that specifically focused on instruction. The librarian who did have this experience did additional coursework to complete school library certification, and the instructional courses were taken in the context of this certification. All librarians interviewed had completed reference coursework, and many indicated that instruction was addressed. One librarian, when asked about his reference coursework, indicated that his instructor relied heavily on Bopp and Smith’s 2001 text, further stating that his only exposure to the instructional aspects of reference in this course was the chapter dedicated to this topic in his textbook.

The majority of librarians interviewed indicated that either instruction-related coursework was not available in their graduate program, or it was only emphasized for those seeking school media certification. Where courses were available, they were perceived as undesirable based on either the librarians’ previous teaching experience or the reputation of the instructor. In a graduate program where courses were not available, however, one librarian recalled classmates’ frustration at the lack of formal opportunities to
learn about library instruction. The students compensated by creating informal reading
groups or, according to another librarian, completing instruction-oriented internships.

To some extent, ALS librarians’ disinterest in instruction-related coursework can be
explained by their collective teaching experience. The majority of interviewed librarians
had experience in instructional settings ranging from assisting with technology workshops
to teaching for-credit university courses. The individual with the most extensive teaching
experience had taught for nearly twenty years in a variety of contexts. She taught creative
writing, fiction writing, poetry writing, and literature at three different universities over the
course of six years. In addition, she taught English as a foreign language in Chile for two
years, first to business people, then to students at a British preparatory school.

Learning to Teach

In an article discussing the scholarship of teaching, Ronkowski (1993) outlines four
stages in the development of the “teacher-scholar.” These four stages describe the
development of the reflective educator as moving from a state of panic – “trial by fire”, in
the words of one interviewee – to a practice focused on reciprocal teaching and learning.
These stages mirrored the experience of those interviewees who had taught in a formal
classroom setting prior to becoming a librarian. The first stage in the development of the
teacher-scholar is characterized as “survival via the development of basic classroom
routines” (Ronkowski 1993). While their colleagues who worked as teaching assistants
frequently benefited from mentoring relationships with cooperating instructors, those asked
to teach independently characterized their teaching preparation as “sink or swim” or a “trial
by fire.” Lacking formal instruction in techniques, these individuals frequently mimicked
the teaching that they observed as students. The second stage is described as “mastery of
teaching skills and techniques” (Ronkowski 1993). Those librarians who worked as teaching assistants were generally spared the “sink or swim” experience by virtue of their faculty partnerships. Through these relationships, the faculty member transmitted to the teaching assistant best practices based on his or her teaching experience. Receiving feedback from a faculty partner helped shape the teaching assistant’s understanding of classroom practice. Despite the learning opportunities inherent in these relationships, these individuals also modeled their classroom teaching after the teaching of their faculty partner.

“Most people who teach in universities are never taught to teach”, said one librarian, who followed up by saying that “composition is an exception.” Those librarians who taught composition and creative writing had formal exposure to pedagogical theory; they were a distinct minority even amongst those with teaching experience. This exposure occurred in the context of other graduate programs, and while it provided a theoretical framework for those librarians’ classroom instruction – and, by extension, their practice of librarianship – it did not prepare them for the procedural aspects of classroom management. These librarians furthered their education in pedagogy through self-directed reading; other librarians described taking similar steps to prepare for their teaching responsibilities. This experience is consistent with findings that among academic librarians in one research institution, “the most frequently reported method of preparation or training for [bibliographic instruction] was through self-study” (Mandernack 1990, p. 197).

**On-the-Job Training**

So if the primary sources for this pre-service instructional training were reference coursework, self-directed learning opportunities, or ill-prepared teaching experience, how
were these librarians prepared for their reference teaching expectations? The responsibility for this training would seem to fall on the libraries that hired these librarians. Interview participants were asked about the emphasis that instruction in the course of reference received in their initial on-the-job training. For at least one librarian, the importance of teaching in the context of reference was never made explicit in her training; however others mentioned this expectation being articulated very early on. Still others explained that because the relationship between reference and instruction was deeply ingrained in them by the time they started working as a librarian, further emphasis through training was unnecessary.

While a certain amount of procedural knowledge must be shared with every new employee, it seems that these aspects of training were more heavily emphasized for ALS librarians. Most individuals characterized the training received at ALS as relating to the physical building and the location of electronic and print resources. Checklists of resources and competencies provided structure and were faithfully followed by trainers, who seem to have made little assessment of the individual’s particular needs or previous experiences. One individual completed a practicum at the library before her professional employment there, and described receiving an in depth introduction to every volume in the print reference collection. The review of the ALS training curriculum supports these comments, as the heaviest emphasis is given to introductions and orientations to the library’s website, the websites of other university services, and the library as a physical space.

Although not specifically mentioned in the training curriculum, an important part of the training process at ALS focuses on introducing new librarians to the myriad electronic and print resources owned or licensed by the library. These training sessions often last an
hour or more, and are conducted by collection development librarians. With no specific structure dictated for this training, the quality of instruction ranged widely. Librarians mentioned that when resources were presented in the context of real research questions or scenarios, as in the training done by the business librarian, the information was useful and was more easily retained. Although not explicitly mentioned, the inverse is also true – when resources were decontextualized, the information was harder to retain and later convey to patrons. As a whole, training on the library’s resources was considered most useful when it had immediate practical application. Librarians valued this teaching experience, though some noted that because it was conducted peer-to-peer, it would be inappropriate to use the same instructional models with students.

Once librarians completed the initial round of training and orientation, they started working in their functional areas of responsibility, which included reference, classroom instruction, and collection development. Any subsequent training was characterized as “informal” and “on the job”. As new resources or services were introduced, training was provided through interactive workshops, product demonstrations, and discussions. Many librarians described spending time shadowing at the reference desk before beginning their individual reference shifts. Training in this instance was through the observation of the modeled behavior of peers.

The ALS training curriculum is comprised of a variety of checklists, self-paced modules, and policy manuals. While these documents are replete with useful information about the library and its services, they provide little pedagogical grounding for teaching at the reference desk – much less instruction using the documents themselves. Only one module directly relates to the substance of reference work – the first module, which focuses
on the reference interview. This four-part module addresses a variety of learning styles by providing instruction through discussion, role-playing, and optional self-directed readings. A new librarian completing this training module would be exposed to many of the teaching techniques identified by ALS librarians as effective, including asking open-ended questions, paying attention to non-verbal cues, and explaining thought processes. Interestingly, while a majority of librarians indicated that while instruction was recognized to be important, they also mentioned receiving no training on providing instruction from the reference desk. Of all the librarians interviewed, only one indicated that she received on-the-job training in the instructional aspects of reference. This training was received in a previous position where her functional responsibilities included extensive teaching in information literacy.

With the exception of the reference interview module, the instructional aspects of reference are not emphasized in the training curriculum currently in place at ALS. The rest of the modules focus on the library as context – a physical space, a suite of electronic and print resources, a myriad set of drawers and floors to be explored. This lack of emphasis suggests that there is an expectation of competency in instruction based on subject expertise, philosophical orientation, or professional education. The first expectation is similar to those experienced by faculty members, qualified to teach by dint of their advanced degrees, and is not supported by either the literature review or the personal experience of the interviewees. The second expectation is supported by the obvious value placed on instruction in the context of the reference interview; however, philosophical orientation does not necessarily translate into teaching expertise any more than subject expertise does. The third expectation is not supported by the review of the curriculum or
by the educational experience of the interviewees, many of whom spoke in disparaging terms about the instruction classes when they were available.

A consistent complaint from librarians addressed the appropriateness of their training to their previous work experience. While there was some variance in the amount of time spent in training prior to assuming functional work responsibilities, all librarians were expected to complete training related to the procedural or ‘tour’ content. While useful for some, this training was onerous for others who came to the library with previous academic experience. Contradicting this statement, however, were comments from other librarians indicating that they did not receive specific training because of their previous work experience. In some cases, this was appropriate, but in others, additional training or mentoring could have been useful, especially in the area of teaching at the reference desk. One librarian stated, “If someone was straight out of library school, maybe there would be more orientation or emphasis on [the instructional] aspects.” These conflicting remarks indicate that a more complete needs assessment should be conducted with new librarians prior to their training.

As a group, the librarians indicated that the training had been sufficient for their needs, but expressed a variety of concerns about its appropriateness in general. One librarian mentioned having to infer a lot of things about the job and its expectations, saying that it was not the ideal way to learn. Another said that the training she received was “fairly poor”, but that training has improved substantially since then. In describing an exit interview conducted with a former colleague, a third librarian indicated that more substantial leadership and mentoring would have been extremely beneficial for that individual’s professional development. Librarians indicated that while the training they
received prepared them to work at the reference desk, they did not feel like the training adequately prepared them to anticipate or understand the needs of the various patron groups they encountered.

**Discussion and Recommendations**

Interview data show that librarians receive minimal preparation for the teaching aspects of reference work either through pre-service education or on-the-job training. While a small amount of training occurred in the classroom during their graduate education, the majority of teaching preparation occurred on the job. Those librarians with a teaching background often emulated the teaching methods they witnessed as students, supplementing the mentoring they received from faculty partners or peers with self-directed reading on pedagogical theory. In the classroom, their teaching methods were cemented through trial and error. At the reference desk, they drew on their experience to translate those techniques that were effective in the classroom to a one-on-one instructional interaction. Those librarians without a teaching background arrived at the reference desk with a philosophical orientation regarding the instructional purpose of reference, but with no training in pedagogy or teaching methods. The only training for instruction that they received was in the form of the modeled behavior of their colleagues, most of whom had no formal training for instruction.

For both these groups, the training received on the job was little better. The library where they are all currently employed created a training curriculum; however this curriculum has barely moved beyond the checklist stage. Training modules include a lot of information that all new employees should learn about their new job and employer.
Unfortunately the instructional potential of the modules is undercut by their administration, which is conducted by librarians and library staff, many of whom have no formal training in teaching. These modules represent a step in the right direction, but will need to be expanded in order to meet the training needs of current and future staff. The module addressing the reference interview is the most fully formed of the curriculum, providing learning outcomes and multiple means of instruction depending on the librarian’s needs and experience. Other modules, including the one addressing the library’s instant messaging service, could function as self-paced units if made more engaging. A challenge with this curriculum is that it is never made clear whether these modules are to be taught or completed independently, or their relationship to the remainder of training received in the library system.

A number of librarians contrasted the training they received as a new librarian with the training given to staff members or paraprofessionals, indicating that the training for staff members was more extensive, particularly with relation to the instructional aspects of reference. This is the case even though the training for new staff members and paraprofessionals is conducted using the same training curriculum as is used for new librarians. One librarian mentioned that his student or paraprofessional positions “offered really more training than when I actually started working as a librarian.” It is not surprising that students or paraprofessionals are given more training than librarians; after all, they lack the graduate degree in library science that serves as the basic qualification for librarians. It is to be expected that these individuals would require more training in library services and systems, and that they may lack the philosophical orientation that seems to provide the groundwork for instruction in librarians. At the same time, both the curriculum review and
interviews suggest that librarians are no more likely to have the experience in teaching than paraprofessionals, and so should be given access to the same type and extent of training.

While trends in the LIS curriculum seem to indicate a growing emphasis on library instruction, current conditions suggest that libraries will still need to shoulder the burden of training newly hired librarians on a variety of topics, including the instructional aspects and expectations of reference work. Weingand (1994) observed that the MLS has a “shelf life” of less than five years unless the librarian seeks out professional development opportunities. Contemporary changes in information technology continue to make this observation relevant, e.g., in trends to digital reference. Recognizing this fact, ALS would be well served by learning from the examples of peer institutions with regards to professional development and on-the-job training. Roberts (1982) argues that libraries do their new librarians a disservice by focusing on orientation-type materials; instead, a broad and standardized program of on-the-job training is necessary to help new librarians close the gap between pre-service education and real world practice. The results of this study support these recommendations, and indicate that ALS could improve their training curriculum in several areas in order to better support new librarians in their instruction primarily, but also in their integration into their new workplace.

The following provides specific recommendations for the ALS context. While these recommendations may also apply to other institutions, since data were collected from ALS librarians, and ALS practices, wider interpretation should be grounded in needs assessments based on the experience and education of an institution’s own staff. Based on this study’s findings, ALS should:

• Implement a consistent structure for all training materials, including those
not currently in the curriculum.

• Introduce new resources and services in context.

• Focus on the introduction of pedagogy through effective instructional practices in training.

First, at ALS, the training curriculum could be improved by implementing a consistent structure for each training module. Currently some modules could be used for self-paced learning, but most are loosely structured checklists that provide little direction for their use. The training modules should be expanded to include learning outcomes for the trainee and teaching instructions for the trainer. These outcomes and instructions will help the trainer structure his or her use of the modules; by understanding what the modules are intended to accomplish, the trainer can also work with the trainee to determine which are necessary based on the trainee’s experience.

The training curriculum should also be expanded to include the full suite of training sessions that new staff are required to complete. In addition, every effort should be made to present this new information, whether it pertains to resources or policies, in the context of practical application. Several librarians mentioned receiving an orientation to the library’s licensed databases and other technologies for accessing resources. When these resources were presented in context, librarians were better able to retain this new information.

One strategy for placing training in context would be using real reference questions to introduce licensed resources or strategies for negotiating the patron’s real need. Having the trainee contribute to answering email reference questions or preparations for a research assistance appointment could further reinforce this learning. Whisner (2002) presents an
effective multi-modal plan for training student workers on the reference interview; these techniques could be adapted based on the trainees’ needs or experiences. Jennerich and Jennerich (1976), writing about instruction within graduate coursework, outline effective techniques for teaching the reference interview; these techniques could easily be adapted for a training curriculum. Berwind (1991) encourages trainers to introduce services and procedures in the context of their purpose or philosophical orientation – for example, are librarians expected to answer questions at the reference desk, teach patrons to find the answer themselves, or both.

The final and perhaps most significant improvement relates directly to preparing new staff for the instructional aspect of reference. Once the content and outcomes of training modules have been determined and context is provided for the content of the training modules, trainers will be able to dedicate more time to the teaching of these modules. Piette (1995) presents a variety of instructional and pedagogical theories that apply to library instruction; these same principles should be used to understand and structure the training provided to librarians and other library staff. This study has demonstrated, for example, that librarians are used to learning through observing the behaviors of others. If sound pedagogy is integrated into the structure of the training modules, trainers will be able to model effective teaching methods while providing training. The same principles that motivate teaching at the reference desk – engaging learners at the point of need, bringing the learner through the zone of proximal development, helping learners engage critically with the world around them – can and should be used to enrich the training of new librarians.
Limitations

The generalizability of this study to other academic library settings is limited by the emphasis on the ALS setting and the small sample size. It is possible that the education and experience of librarians at ALS is not representative of academic libraries as a whole; this begs further investigation, and could be the subject of future research. It is also possible that the education and experience of ALS librarians is not representative of librarians as a whole, so the applicability of these findings to the general population of academic libraries may be problematic. While all librarians were asked about the training they received when hired at ALS, they also discussed the training received in previous jobs. It is possible that librarians conflated the training they received over the course of their careers, so the criticism of ALS training may not accurately represent the quality of the training itself.

The documentary analysis portion of this study was limited to materials available on ALA-accredited degree granting institutions’ websites. While the researcher reviewed these sites extensively, course titles can be misleading, and with minimal documentation or description available, courses related to instruction may have been overlooked. It is also possible that if courses related to instruction are not available, subject matter related to instruction is taught in other classes. This information was not captured using the methods employed in this study. In future studies, the researcher would recommend reviewing the syllabi for both instruction and reference courses to determine if future reference librarians are being taught about instruction in the context of their reference coursework.
Conclusion

The third edition of Bopp and Smith (2001)’s *Reference and Information Services* dedicates an entire chapter to the subject of instruction; however only two pages of this seminal reference text focus on the relationship between reference and instruction. The authors of the chapter state that “some suggest that reference service is the most intimate form of instruction”, yet dedicate only a few paragraphs to this form of instruction, moving on quickly to explore the design and implementation of instructional programs (Janicke Hinchliffe & Woodard 2001, p. 182). It is alarming that this heavily used text gives comparatively little treatment to such an important and central aspect of reference services.

Elmborg reinforces the relationship between reference and instruction by stating “While it is relatively clear how librarians might develop instructional programs that emphasize teaching and learning for traditional classrooms, it is not so clear where this transition toward teaching leaves reference service” (Elmborg 2002, p. 455). In his 1991 opinion piece on the relationship between bibliographic instruction and the LIS curriculum, White wrote “What is still lacking, without a glimmer of solution, is any discussion of the relative role of education and training, and of the responsibility of the school and of the employer, or indeed of the professional” (White 1991, p. 197). Estrin concluded, “Simply utilizing instructional methods cannot be successful until library instructors commit to learning how to be good teachers and communicators” (Estrin 1998, p. 4). These statements, taken with the lack of emphasis in Bopp and Smith (2001), give an accurate picture of the perception of instruction in the context of reference services and the LIS curriculum. Estrin’s conclusion goes a step further, emphasizing the difficulty of quality teaching when there is no context in which it can be taught or learned.
Further research is necessary to determine the centrality of teaching in the context of reference in other types of libraries; additionally, further research should place the experiences of ALS librarians in a larger context by studying the experiences of librarians in other academic settings. It is clear from the experience of ALS librarians, however, that the current state of professional education and on-the-job training inadequately prepares academic librarians for the teaching aspects of reference work. If instruction considered broadly continues to be a peripheral part of the LIS curriculum, libraries need to be prepared to assume greater responsibility for the practical education of their new librarians. The training curriculum in place at ALS marks a step in the right direction; however greater and more consistent emphasis must be given to the instructional aspects of reference work for both librarians and paraprofessional staff if they are to be expected to provide quality education in the future.
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