

OLA

Thank you very much for choosing to attend our session. As mentioned in the OLA brochure and introduction, Carol, Adam and I will be discussing our experiences as technicians in a library which serves both university and college students, as well as technician's being the "Swiss Army Knives" in libraries. During our presentation today we will talk about our shared and very different responsibilities, challenges and opportunities within the dual college/university library. All three of us work full-time at the Humber College north campus library, Adam and Carol work as Humber College technicians and I work as a University of Guelph-Humber technician.

I am just going to give you a bit of background information to set things up for our session today. Humber College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning offers over 350 programs ranging from apprenticeship, certificates, diplomas, bachelor's degrees and postgraduate certificates. There are 19,000 full-time and 55,000 part-time students.

The University of Guelph-Humber offers their 2,852 full-time students a unique learning opportunity where students receive a university honours degree as well as a college diploma. The students in the University of Guelph-Humber's 9 combined degree/diploma programs benefit from the academic standards and traditions of the University of Guelph and the work experience foundations offered through Humber College. Now in our 7th year we are approaching full enrolment of 3,000 students for the upcoming academic year.

Humber College and University of Guelph-Humber's mission, values and vision are student focused; therefore one of our goals as a library is to provide our students with a collection and services that reflect what our users require to be successful in their academic pursuits.

The Humber College/ University of Guelph-Humber library is very unique. We have a 5 floor library situated in Humber College that houses collectively the Humber and GH print and video collection. There is also study space, reference services, wireless access and student computers. The library is highly used and for this past fall 2008 semester we had over 125,000 student and faculty visits. We also have a Learning Commons situated in the University of Guelph-Humber building that offers students access to GH wireless network, computers, study rooms, printing and library reference services. Both the Humber College library and the GH Learning commons are freely accessible to both Humber and GH students.

These past few months at GH have been exciting times for the library. After being without a manager for over a year and a very extensive search, the University of GH was successful in recruiting a new manager. Norma Palomino has brought forth in collaboration with the GH library team not only a new 5 year strategic plan, but also opportunities, goals and activities that the library team will implement in order to enhance, develop, and shape the direction of the Guelph-Humber library.

Just a few of the projects that we will implement include launching a new website, promoting and marketing GH library services to both students and faculty. This will consist of the development of an Information Literacy Plan that incorporates best practices and assessment tools for both students and faculty. We

also plan on creating user friendly subject guides using “Libguide’s” software. Also in the works lunch and learns where we will promote new books and DVD’s, plus several other projects. However, probably the most important outcome in the development of our GH library strategic plan came after discussions with our student focus group. We realized through these discussions, students were not necessarily using our resources, but rather using information found on the internet to write the majority of their papers. After recognizing this disjoint between students accessing our amazing collection of print and electronic resources and consciously choosing to use Internet to do their research, we knew that our vision for the library had to be very clear and distinct.

Now our GH library vision states that “*The University of Guelph-Humber Library and Learning Commons is the recognized information service provider of choice for the University of Guelph-Humber academic community*” As a library team we will incorporate our vision of ensuring that we are indeed the “*information service provider of choice*” in all of our information literacy, student and faculty outreach and library projects.

Now onto some of our other challenges. Through our many discussions this past fall, the GH library team found that one of our biggest obstacles that we face is often the first question a first year GH student will ask, “where is the library” A very obvious question since there is not a physical space in the GH building that houses our print and video collection. The librarians and technicians this past semester have worked very hard through information literacy classes to bring awareness to the students that the actual “library” is situated over the bridge, in

Humber, and they are able to borrow not only from the integrated Humber and Guelph-Humber collection, but GH students and faculty have access to over 4 million books in TRELIS library catalogue. The GH library is partners with TUG who is comprised of the University of Guelph, University of Waterloo and Wilfred Laurier. Slowly but surely, we are reaching out to our student population, and have definitely noticed an increase with our students accessing the wealth of materials outside our home institution.

Another challenge that not only GH students face, but the library staff as well, is we are constantly working within 2 OPAC's. Humber uses BibCat and Sirsi as their library software and GH use's TRELIS and Voyager as their software. As a GH technician, I have learned, and I might add, quite often trial by fire, how to adapt the very unique situations that can arise, and try to make it work between two software's that do not communicate to each other at all. A perfect example would be if one of our TUG partners requests one of our books be placed on reserve in their collection for a semester loan, naturally they would first check the circulation history of the book in Voyager. They would email me the request; let me know if the book is heavily used or not or perhaps inform me that no-one has ever taken out the book. Now keep in mind, our TUG partners only have access to Voyager. When I get a request like this, the first thing I do is check in Sirsi to see how many times the book has circulated through Humber. Often a book that has never circulated through Voyager has been heavily used in Sirsi, or vice versa.

Another interesting challenge that both Humber and GH library staff come across on a constant basis occurs during a reference interview. Like all of our

technicians I spent between 8-10 hours a week doing reference shifts. We must be clear right at the beginning of the interview whether the student is from either Humber or GH. While GH students have access to the entire print and electronic collection in both Humber and TRELIS, Humber students only have access to resources available in the Humber library. Sometimes this can be a bit tricky and frustrating for us as reference staff, because we can't offer Humber students access to GH extensive databases and access to TRELIS. We also want to ensure that GH students are provided with the proper tools in order to write a university level paper, utilizing our university resources.

We have two reference desks; one that is staffed by two people during most hours is located in the Humber College library. This particular desk is extremely busy, and generally has a line up. Questions range from how to reset passwords, to very in-depth research questions. Our other desk is located in the GH Learning Commons. Although the LC is an active, continually busy location, surprisingly we get very few questions at the reference desk. Of course that is besides the infamous, "where is the stapler?" question. This semester we are planning on changing things up a bit, and are going to relocate our regular spot. We are trying two new strategies, staffing half our shifts in a much quieter location, which happens to be "The Writing Centre" and for the other half of the shifts we are going to try the "Roving Librarian" approach. Whatever the outcome, it will be beneficial for us to try since we know our current location is not conducive for students asking questions.

One of my main roles as a GH technician is working with faculty as the face behind our print and electronic online course reserves. For those who are not familiar with e-reserves, it is basically a platform where a faculty can submit print materials; have them converted electronically, while copyright permissions are requested on their behalf. Not only this, but GH faculty can place material's on e-reserve such as websites, journal articles, PowerPoint presentations as well as video files. By using this platform, faculty is able to provide students with an easy-to-use, customizable interface to view required readings. Just this past month, along with our TUG partners we launched a new software called Ares. With plans of promoting our e-reserve services in the future, we are in the process of shifting from me doing all of the requests on behalf of the faculty, to training the faculty on how to use the software so they can make the requests themselves. I will still be in the background answer any questions they need answered.

When I started at GH 2 ½ years ago there was no clear fine collection enforcement or policy in place. I was asked to come up with a fine collection procedure from scratch. As you can imagine the task was daunting since we had thousands of dollars in fines outstanding, plus on top of that, working with 2 library software's that don't communicate with each other, keeping in mind GH students can borrow both from Humber who uses Sirsi and from our TUG partners who use Voyager. For years, library notifications had been sent out to our patrons provided they had borrowed items through TRELIS. However, we had nothing in place for items borrowed through Sirsi. I was asked to come up with the text for automatic"

overdue notices” blending the text from both Trellis’s message as well as what Humber was using at the time. After this I thought since it was nearing the end of the Fall 06 semester, I need to reach the masses and I needed to do this fast. What I decided to do was to send a general email on mass to all GH students asking them to check their library accounts. I laid out a few guidelines, like deadlines to pay fines; otherwise their marks could be withheld. As you can imagine, the mere suggestion of the slightest possibility that marks could be withheld, sent students to the library in masses to pay their fines. That December we collected thousands of dollars in fines, the majority of them by students coming in from that initial email sent. Of course for the stragglers, I give them another chance, and send them an individual email gently reminding them that the deadline has passed and they need to come and pay their fines. At this point the majority do settle up. But for those few, who have large fines, including lost books, I forward their fine amounts to the Registrar’s Office and they are posted to their accounts. So eventually bottom line, everyone pays. We do of course have sympathy and forgive fines for students in extreme situations, such as economic hardship. Plus we have a minimum fine amount preset before anyone is contacted individually or having their fine information sent to the registrar’s office. But all in all, it has been a huge success for the library.

I’d like to wrap up my portion of “What’s it’s like to be a library technician in an academic library that serves both college and university students” by saying that I enjoy coming to work, the challenging yet rewarding aspects to my job, the countless opportunities I have to try different things that help make our library

better. I also thrive on helping the diverse needs of our student population and finally being part of the exciting plans in store for the GH library.

Now Carol Campbell is going to talk to you about her experiences as a Humber library technician.