

**MAC/MLA 2005 ANNUAL MEETING
ROUND TABLES
DISCUSSION SUMMARIES**

The 2005 Mid-Atlantic Chapter Round Table Discussions were held during lunch on October 6, 2005. The participants covered eleven timely topics: AHIP; Best Practices for Electronic Reference; Collaboration/Consortia/Partnerships; Consumer Health; Go-Local Endeavors; Health Literacy; Informationist; Is Paper Passé?; Mobile Technology; Recruitment Issues; and Turf to Worth. Because of high interest, there were two tables each for Turf to Worth and Is Paper Passé? Below are summaries to some of the discussions.

Turf to Worth: the Library Must Go to the Patron

(Table 1)

Russet Hambrick, Facilitator

Participants: Teresa Knott, Jean Seibert

Our Turf to Worth Discussion centered a round the topic of the changing environment in medical libraries. The environment is transitioning from one where services are delivered in a physical setting and directly face-to-face with the user, to one where services are delivered via various digital and electronic means. This creates a dynamic where librarians need to make a significant shift in their paradigm from linking their worth to the “turf” they inhabit to linking their “worth” to other indicators.

Why have many medical librarians struggled with making this paradigm shift? Our group felt that fear is the root cause that keeps many from making this shift. Fear of change. Fear of failure. Fear of not being perceived as smart enough. Fear of the burden going out places on the individual. Fear that if we moved from physical space to digital space, jobs will be eliminated.

Another barrier to making the paradigm shift is the restricted point of view we sometimes hold regarding the types of information we manage and make available to our users. We have a difficult time seeing information as more than a physical thing contained within physical resources. We also tend to limit our thinking to the traditional sources (even when electronic) such as “published” sources whether databases, electronic journals, electronic textbooks, electronic selective dissemination of information activities. We don’t often see that we have a role in managing and disseminating other sources of information such as corporate information and patient information.

There are emotional and interpersonal challenges involved in making this paradigm shift. It is difficult to make such a shift if the individual librarian is not acutely familiar with his or her own personal strengths and weaknesses. Without this awareness it is difficult to assess the most effective way to present ourselves to our users in this new environment. It is also difficult without this awareness, to be creative in using our strengths in this new environment to establish our worth to our users.

Being successful in this new and ever changing environment hinges upon the librarian’s ability to build relationships with users. Librarians are really in the client / customer relations management business regardless of the resources that are made available to the user. We need to be assertive in building relationships with the users and really listening to what they want and need. Note the interests of a user and surprise him or her with an email a few days later with additional useful information on his or her question. Get to know your administrators and the issues that are important to them. Find out what

measurements for your library are valuable to your administration and then provide it. If they want to know the return on an investment in your resources, look at how you can provide that information to them. Build and then manage your relationship with your administrators.

Finally, research shows in any environment of change that fifteen percent of the individuals are the early adopters of change. About ten percent will never accept the change. The middle 75% will come along with time. Often managers and leaders make the mistake of focusing their time and energy on the ten percent that just will not change. Our group felt that leadership and management should take more time to develop and encourage those in the 75% to make the paradigm shift necessary to establish “worth” in this new and ever-changing environment.

Turf to Worth: the Library Must Go to the Patron

(Table 2)

Julia Shaw-Kokot, Facilitator

Key issues facing librarians:

- “Turf” emphasis changing from physical space and resources to “cyberspace”
 - 24/7 access at point of need
- Move from print-based collections to online services and digitized collections
 - Cost of resources require allocating more funds to electronic and less to hard copy
 - Most desired resources may have no print version
- Users are technologically savvy and working collaboratively
 - Many of our users have never known life without a computer
 - Cell phones, PDAs, and other devices are ubiquitous
 - Email, Instant Messaging, Text Messaging, etc. are preferred ways of communications
 - The world is now flat thanks to globalization
- Changing roles of librarians to meet these need
 - If everything is online, why have a library or librarian(s)?

Questions:

- What opportunities does this changing environment offer librarians?
 - Develop more electronic tools to assist users
 - Promote electronic and physical information commons
 - Focus on education and the exchange of knowledge
 - Provide chat services
- How can we be seen as proactive in accepting this change?
 - Offer technological conveniences such as wireless points
 - Encourage patients and families to use services
 - Serve as a collaboration center for special projects
 - Look at ways to maximize space by acquiring electronic resources
 - Create a relaxing area for users
 - Develop “elevator talk” or “talking points” that can be used to promote services
 - Get involved in being institutional repositories of information
 - Allow food and drink, make the settings comfortable
 - Become a center for institutional activities like signing up for benefits
- What are the challenges, and how do we address them?
 - “In our heads” we have to get past the “this is the way it’s always been”
 - Some libraries are losing space, resources and staff but we can’t operate from fear. We need to help develop skills in staff that they can use in the “new library world.”
 - Fewer people are doing research in the library, develop new ways to interact with them
 - Acknowledge that the fear of “what will happen to us” is real and face the challenges
- How do we balance the new with the old? For example, how do we weight web hits vs traditional circulation statistics?
 - Have both presences if possible
 - Count hits and other related statistics

- How do we promote the worth of librarians and libraries in cyberspace turf?
 - Have a web presence
 - Be available via email, chat, etc.
 - Provide electronic resources and links to resources that are needed
 - Ask our users

A few references:

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