

EDEN WEBSTER LIBRARY

Webster University

Eden Theological Seminary

Reference Service Policy

Mission: Reference service at Eden-Webster Library supports the research and study of faculty, students, and staff of Webster University and Eden Theological Seminary through bibliographic instruction, workshops, telephone reference and assistance in research projects. Reference librarians provide individualized and group-centered service to help faculty, students and staff access the materials needed to support their research and educational interests. Our primary responsibility is to the patrons, to help them find what they need efficiently and pleasantly in a timely manner.'

Information literacy plays a critical role in higher education. Eden-Webster Library's mission statement states, in part, that the "library is committed to acquiring, organizing and preserving information and to teaching users how to access and evaluate information in a variety of formats within the library and remotely." The practical applications of reference service have changed in the last ten years with the addition of electronic and online products and expansion of the Internet in general. In accordance with the library's mission statement, and in order to maximize limited time, staff and capital resources, reference service focuses on educating patrons in the use of resources, in addition to the corollary responsibilities of selecting reference materials and providing access to those materials.

EDUCATING PATRONS IN THE USE OF RESOURCES

In accordance with the educational mission of the library and the institutions which it serves, teaching patrons to effectively and efficiently utilize reference materials is our primary goal.

To achieve this, reference staff provide:

- Group instructional sessions on the use of print and electronic reference materials, including course related sessions after a consultation with the faculty member and workshops in the general use of the library and its resources, especially Passports;
- Individual instructional sessions to students which cover specific materials or information needs (e.g., suggesting a print or electronic source for the patron to scan for relevant information, suggesting search terms for use in specific databases);
- Individual assistance to faculty and students working on research projects by looking for various subject headings on topics they are researching for courses, dissertations, theses, and other projects;
- Individual assistance to faculty members to help the determine the best sources for research projects and to help them decipher information on the World Wide Web;

- Individual assistance to faculty and/or their administrative/research assistants to help them find and verify information and check information and check bibliographic sources;
- Assistance to faculty to verify individual problem bibliographic citations;
- Mediated searching of databases not available to patrons.*
[*It should be noted that the goal of mediated searching is to produce a list of viable materials based on an extensive reference interview with the patron. Evaluating the relevance of specific citations remains the responsibility of the patron.]
- Comprehensive reference desk service which includes answering telephone reference questions and helping patrons in looking for specific information.

LAISON ROLE

In addition to their reference and collection development responsibilities, liaisons are responsible for helping faculty integrate information technology in the classroom. To achieve this, the reference department provides:

Individual assistance to faculty to identify and evaluate WWW sources and relevant assignments.
Online training programs designed cooperatively by librarians and faculty. Demonstrations and workshops

"Tools that academic libraries use may change but the missions remain essentially the same. It is people who reconceptualize knowledge, interpret existing knowledge and preserve the knowledge."
(Sha Lizhang, "Embracing the New Technology and Keeping Harmony: In Search of a New Balance," *College and Research Libraries*, July 1998, 59 (4)301-303)

SELECTING REFERENCE MATERIALS

Reference materials, both print and electronic, are selected to support programs and courses taught at both institutions.

Due to budgetary constraints, materials which support a broad range of information are given priority.

Both print and electronic materials are selected for their ease-of-use to accommodate patrons with varying levels of technological experience.

PROVIDING ACCESS TO REFERENCE MATERIALS

The Internet has facilitated access to a wide variety of materials, both "free" and subscription. To utilize this technology to its fullest, the library provides access through Passports to many materials which were formerly only available in print.

For those materials which are not readily available, reference staff may complete mediated searches for patrons.

Information retrieval requires in-depth evaluation of sources. It is the patron's responsibility to determine whether a specific citation or full-text source meets his/her information needs.