Cheryl LaGuardia, Harvard University Libraries

• Character
  o A reference librarian needs to be both a specialist and a generalist, a system designer, HTML jockey, information manager ...must speak 5-6 languages ...a teacher, etc. Can one possibly do it all? No and yes!
  o No one individual can. However, one should aim to fulfill as much as possible.
  o The real solution to the challenges placed upon the reference librarian is to conceptualize the demands and expectations of reference service from the perspective of the team. That is to say, “An intelligently assembled reference team” ...a mix of individuals with various talents and skills... “A better team is the one with a deeper bench.”

• Attitude
  o It is essential for any successful reference librarian to have the right attitude: to be a team player.
  o This attitude must be expressed at work and with patrons and colleagues.
  o Good reference librarians are interdependent and interdisciplinary; they are collaborators.
  o Reference librarians must also be open and welcoming, and they must project themselves as secure and confident.
  o This can be demonstrated in a range of strategies (at the reference desk) including: re-couching the reader’s question or the “where have you looked already for the information?”—stall.

• Natural Selection
  o Reference librarians must adhere to the rule of the survival of the most political astute... given all of the political and financial pressures.
  o They really do have to keep up with the Borgias in the neighborhood.
  o The lesson here is that reference librarians must be vocal and active marketers of their assets as service providers.
  o The consensus of most reference departments is that they are doing more consultations, more in-depth reference, more classes.
  o It is essential that we market our services to users and also to library administrators.
  o Librarians cannot afford to be silent.

Jean Laponce, Columbia University Libraries

• By way of introduction, Laponce began by identifying himself as a relative newcomer to the field of reference librarianship, having just completed his first six months on the job. He expressed appreciation for the training he had received from his colleagues, and commented that he was pleased to discover that reference librarianship provided many of the same professional satisfactions he had previously enjoyed as a university lecturer.
• Laponce then turned to the main question: Is it important for reference librarians to be viewed as educators or scholars?
  o He began by challenging what he described as a spurious distinction that was too often made between academic librarians and scholars. In his opinion, university reference librarians are scholars! He cited Eileen McIlvaine, about
to retire as head of reference services at Butler Library, as an outstanding example of a librarian whose scholarly achievements include publishing and teaching, as well as years of dedicated reference work in support of students, faculty, and visiting researchers.

- Laponce recognized, however, that there exists a debate about whether or not reference librarians should research and publish more actively, in order to raise their scholarly profile. Without discounting the importance of research and publishing, he argued that a growing need at colleges and universities for information literacy courses provides reference librarians with a unique opportunity to assume a greater academic role.

- Should there be a required course in information literacy at colleges or universities? Addressing this issue and need is perfectly consistent with the traditions of reference librarianship. Indeed, an opportunity seems to be emerging for many reference librarians to extend their traditional roles in bibliographic instruction into active teaching. At many institutions, this is happening only on a volunteer basis and is inadequately supported. A greater financial and administrative commitment from university administrators is clearly needed. But, given the widespread attention to questions of information literacy in the media and in academic circles today, the time seems ideal to lobby for such support.

- Laponce agrees with Anne Marie Johnson that librarians are especially equipped to address the question of “information literacy.” “Literacy” in this case is defined as not only an ability to access information effectively, but also an awareness of the complex factors involved in assessing the quality of information and the means by which it is distributed.

- Laponce suggested that there are real opportunities for librarians in a changing academic landscape. He cited two examples of changes within academic departments:
  1. The traditional departmental structure is fast becoming less of an institutional barrier to librarian-educators than it was in the past since academic teaching jobs are increasingly being filled by part-timers
  2. There is a significant rise in the number of research institutions with interdisciplinary focus. Librarians as educators will find this diverse environment more welcoming.

- Libraries are also becoming a center of academic life on many university campuses both physically and culturally. Librarians can take advantage of this more central role, and can potentially contribute a great deal to the most productive uses of the new digital scholarship as well.

- Laponce concluded by drawing on the insights of a 1990 publication by Ernest Boyer, sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and recently recommended by the American Historical Association.
  - Boyer's report points to a growing shift in recognition for scholars as teachers as opposed to scholars who focus on publishing.
  - This trend seems to be continuing, according to Laponce. Librarians should see seize upon the opportunity in order to take part in shaping education in our society.
  - Librarians need to assert vigorously their potential as educators in order to reform an academic culture that still insufficiently appreciates the scholarly contributions librarians make. In particular, reference librarians must seize the opportunity to teach information literacy at universities and colleges in the near future. If they do not, that role will be assumed by others likely to have little or no regard for the traditional principles and methodological rigor of academic librarianship.
Mark Winston, Rutgers University, School of Library & Information Science

- Winston briefly discussed the role and responsibility of reference librarians as scholars by summarizing the results of his own research on the current capacity and vitality of American academic librarians as scholars.
- He outlined 3 main criteria of measuring the level of scholarship among academic librarians:
  - The use of library science literature
  - The contribution to the literature
  - A demonstrated understanding of the value and importance of the literature or the knowledge base. The knowledge base can be distinguished into several categories
    - Books and conference proceedings
    - Individual conference presentations
    - Journal literature.
- The use of library science literature appears to be most relevant to discussions of theory and most often to support management decisions in academic libraries.
- The critical issue is to what extent there is or is not a diffusion of theory among the larger library community. What Winston and other researchers have found through surveys is that librarians generally read literature journals but they tend to avoid or are not active consumers of the research-based articles.
- Winston argues that this is either because librarians do not consider these articles relevant or practical or because they feel apprehensive about digging in too deeply.
- Winston argued that most of the research literature is being generated from elite academic libraries, especially by those employed by Ph.D. granting institutions.
- Still, more than 80% of the actual research conducted by librarians is not being published at all due to limited levels of support.
- In addition, the evidence from the field suggests that those who study and earn M.L.S. degrees are well prepared to be consumers of the literature, but they do not seem to do most of the research.
- Winston illustrated his arguments by pointing to his own survey results on the authors of library research:
  - 31.1% of all library research articles were written by L.I.S. faculty
  - 31.9% were by academic librarians
  - 16% were by academic library administrators
- Winston’s overall conclusions are the following:
  - Practitioners seem to have undecided concerns about the relevance of the published literature
  - It needs to be recognized that the literature documents and informs practice
  - Reference librarians should see themselves as both contributors to the knowledge base and users of the knowledge base
  - They should support informed decision-making in organizations
  - They should support the continual reshaping of the direction of the field and the need for M.I.L.S. programs to better prepare their graduates to do so.

Notes by Joseph Caruso, African Studies Librarian Columbia University Libraries