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Refining the Reference Interview

While most of the library was preparing for the Christmas holidays some members of Information Services were busy wrapping up a Reference Interviewing class offered by Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) through the American Library Association (ALA).

Everyone from library assistants to librarians took part in the class which was designed to improve reference interviewing skills. The participants included Ellen Baskerville, Ruthie Brock, Carol Byrne, Angee Calvert, Barbara Howser, Ann Kelley, Burton King, Kathleen Marquez-Houston, Anne Mitchell, Elizabeth Swift, Donald Quarles, and C.D. Walter.

We were the second group to attend this class via WebCT. The instructor for the course was David Tyckoson, the Director of Public Services at the Henry Madden Library of California State University in

“You have to be a detective and sleuth your way to their real information needs.”

Fresno. He formerly was Head of Reference at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Albany. He has written many journal articles about reference service and has taught reference courses for graduate library science students at University of Illinois and SUNY-Albany.

The course began with our first chat session on November 15 and was completed with the final session on December 10. Class participants were able to attend class from their offices on their own computers or from home. The course consisted of four live chat sessions via WebCT which lasted two hours per session. In order to complete

the class the students had to attend at least three of the four live chat sessions. The homework for the course consisted of readings which had quizzes at the end. There was also a partner project for which we conducted a mock reference interviewing dialogue in the WebCT chat room with another member of the course. The partners assigned were class members from libraries other than our own. The points of emphasis for the course were as follows:

- How patrons rate the library (based on staff that they encounter)
- Methods for evaluating library services
- ALA’s Behavior Guidelines for reference librarians
- The importance of being approachable to patrons
- The physical environment of reference
- The reference interview process
- Following up on the interview

For most class participants this

Connections

Refining the Reference Interview (cont.)

was their first experience with an online class. Some reported that they enjoyed the flexibility of the online class setting, while others said that they prefer an actual classroom setting with face-to-face interaction. Students reported that they valued this opportunity because it gives them a greater understanding of what distance education students experience and a chance to get familiar with the WebCT courseware. Not only was this the first online class experience for some, it was also the first chat room experience for many as well. “I learned that you’ve got to get your two cents in fast, or the subject has moved on,” said one class member. For some class members this opportunity also shed a new light on what is done in reference. “It opened my eyes to some nuances of behavior that can make a big difference in how you’re perceived and how helpful patrons think you are,” reported one member of the class. “I also learned that patrons very

rarely tell you what they’re really looking for when they pose a question. You have to be a detective and sleuth your way to their real information needs.” Most class participants were pleased with this online learning experience and feel it will be most beneficial in their daily work. “While a lot of information verified what I have learned in process, there was definitely enough new information to help me more effectively perform my job,” said another. “It reinforced my understanding of standards for providing reference service.”

While most comments were very positive there seems to be room for improvement as far as some participants were concerned. Some had suggestions for improving this type of learning and interaction. “The course was very compressed, and not as flexible as I expected, because assignments were due before chat sessions, and there was so much to read

and take quizzes on,” stated one participant. Another suggested that there needed to be “more actual practice and feedback on handling reference interviews.” “The rest of the class was useful for me, but the practice itself was more useful.”

Though there may be room for improvement the majority of the participants reported being pleased with the course and its results. “My overall experience was a good one, and I am excited about future participation in online learning,” one pleased participant stated. Another added, “I gained an even greater respect for what we do in reference.”

—Elizabeth E. Swift
Information Services

February Birthdays

Names and dates of staff birthdays for December, January, and February are available online at <http://libraries.uta.edu/StaffAssociation/EC%20Members.htm>. Birthday celebrations are quarterly events where cake is served.



Consumer Health Information

The explosion of consumer health information that is presented to us every day through the media makes it difficult to know fact from fanciful advertising. We are all bombarded daily via television, print, and the Internet with advertisements for the latest, greatest drug for virtually any condition that ails us—from nail fungus to cancer. How does one make sense of all this? One way is to educate yourself with objective, current, and easy to understand information. Once you've educated yourself, you can then have an informed discussion with your health care professional who can help clarify and expand upon your particular circumstance.

There are a variety of good electronic resources to consult. You should keep in mind that the information found on these sites, while useful, can never substitute for a consultation with your healthcare professional.

Healthfinder (<http://www.healthfinder.gov/>)

A gateway to selected consumer health and human ser-

vices information resources provided by U.S. government agencies and other organizations serving the public interest. The central feature is a searchable topic index providing user-friendly searching on over 1,000 topics.

KidsHealth (<http://www.kidshealth.org/>)

KidsHealth has separate areas for kids, teens, and parents - each with its own design, age-appropriate content, and tone. The site is non-profit and has an impressive list of medical reviewers and editors.

NOAH - New York Online Access to Health (<http://www.noah-health.org/>)

NOAH provides access to high quality consumer health information in English and Spanish. The NOAH volunteer editors do not write this information. Instead, librarians and health professionals in New York and beyond find, select, and organize full-text consumer health information that is current, relevant, accurate and unbiased.

MayoClinic.com (<http://www.mayoclinic.com>)

As its name implies, content on this site is reviewed by health care professionals from the Mayo Clinic. This site provides prescription and over-the-counter drug information.

There are also sites dedicated to specific disease conditions such as:

National Cancer Institute (<http://www.cancer.gov>)

This site provides information on the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and support of pediatric and adult cancer as well as clinical trial information.

HIV InSite (<http://hivinsite.ucsf.edu/>)

A project of the UCSF Center for HIV Information whose mission is to be a source for comprehensive, in-depth HIV/AIDS information and knowledge.

—Suzanne Beckett

“We are all bombarded daily via television, print and the Internet with advertisements for the latest, greatest drug . . . “

The student has his Rome, his Florence, his whole glowing Italy, within the four walls of his library. He has in his books the ruins of an antique world and the glories of a modern one.

— Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)

Connections

Positively Shocking

“This indicated that Diane and I had gone to the right *Elektra* ... not the comic book action flick that happened to premier the same day.”

At Austin’s Bass Concert Hall on January 14, I felt relieved not to see a bunch of people in Boba Fett t-shirts or *Starship Enterprise* uniforms. This indicated that Diane and I had gone to the right *Elektra*... a performance of the 1909 opera by German composer Richard Strauss (1864-1949), not the comic book action flick that happened to premier the same day.

Life has been mighty kind to Texan Straussians like myself. The Fort Worth Opera offered up Strauss’ 1905 shocker *Salome* in November, so the January appearance of *Elektra* in Austin was quite a treat to bookend the long holiday season. Both operas also have much in common. Written by the same composer within a few years of each other, they have dysfunctional families and foreboding atmospheres... kind of like the aforementioned holiday season. However, compared to the decadent delights of *Salome*, *Elektra* sounds more dissonant, seems more claustrophobic, and has characters obsessed with blood sacrifice on a grand scale. Even the waltz melodies anachronistically sprinkled into ancient Mycenae sound top-heavy, ready to collapse into

the same madness as the characters. (As for Strauss himself, he always affected a cool, businesslike manner that provided an ironic contrast to his turgid compositions.)

Elektra marked the first collaboration between Strauss and the Austrian playwright Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874-1929). The latter had “freely adapted” Sophocles’ ancient play in 1903, supplanting many of its mythological trappings with a rather graphic text that (directly or indirectly) seems to reference Freud. Starting work on the opera in 1906, Strauss added music that superseded *Salome* in dissonance, ultimately ending up with an expressionistic horror show that became his second *succès de scandale*.

Richard Buckley, the new artistic director of the 20-year-old Austin Lyric Opera (ALO), led orchestra and singers in an “electrifying” performance of this opera (better overall than the Fort Worth Opera’s *Salome* in November). Despite the usual lamentable cuts done to preserve the vocal cords of the singer portraying *Elektra*, this interpretation demonstrates the ALO’s potential. It would be difficult to catch up

with the Houston Grand Opera’s impressive international reputation, but I can see the ALO doing more great things under Buckley’s direction. Reviews of this year’s performances of Puccini’s *Tosca*, as well as *Elektra*, indicate such promise. One can hope that Austin’s dynamic vibe will also rub off on its relatively young opera company.

Going back to Strauss and Hofmannsthal... they followed *Elektra* with *Der Rosenkavalier* (1911), a stark contrast to Strauss’ previous two operas. With nothing more shocking than a soprano playing an adolescent boy who has to disguise himself as a girl, this “most Viennese” of operas is best known for its luscious waltz melodies and the tear-jerking trio towards the end. It also signaled Strauss’ retreat from explicit horror show operas in favor of “lighter” themes. By the time of Strauss’ death in 1949, the world had seen unprecedented levels of real-life violence, committed or condoned by the same institutions that felt uncomfortable with the likes of *Salome* and *Elektra*.

(continued on page 5)

Librarians in the Movies

Librarians can be found in numerous movies despite the fact that they rarely play the lead. The following titles were suggested by UTA Libraries' staff this month in response to the challenge posted in the January newsletter:

- *Citizen Kane*. The movie includes a stern, bun-wearing archivist.
- *Day After Tomorrow*. A climatologist tries to figure out a way to save the world from abrupt global warming.
- *Desk Set*. Four capable, knowledgeable librarians defend their jobs when their company tries to replace them with a computer.
- *Foul Play*. The librarian heroine is pursued romantically by a detective.
- *Ghostbusters*. The first place visited by the ghosts is the public library. The movie includes two librarians, one a mousey neurotic and the other a classic old maid.
- *Gun in Betty Lou's Handbag*. A librarian, Betty Lou, finds a murder weapon and cannot get anyone, including her detective husband, to pay attention to her.
- *It's a Wonderful Life*. George Bailey's wife is a timid librarian in the view of life without him.
- *Mummy & Mummy II*. Cairo Egyptologist and librarian states that she is proud to be a librarian.
- *Music Man*. Marian the librarian does research and cheerfully stamps books.
- *Party Girl*. After her arrest a young woman takes a job in a library to repay a loan for bail money. She eventually decides to get an MLS.
- *Spy Who Came in from the Cold*. A counter-agent works as a clerk in a library.
- *Where the Heart Is*. A single mother is helped by a man who works in a library.

There are numerous websites with lists of movie titles with librarians in them. Recommended sites include:

Raish, Martin. 2004. *Librarians in the movies*. Available from <http://emp.byui.edu/RAISHM/films/introduction.html>.

Brown-Syed, Christopher. *Cool librarians*. Available from <http://valinor.ca/waycool.html>.

The winner of the January Connections contest is Faedra Wills in Information Retrieval!

Positively Shocking (cont.)

For a synopsis of *Elektra*, visit <http://www.austinlyricopera.org/season/elektra.html>

Recommended Listening

Strauss, Richard. *Elektra*. 1967. Birgit Nilsson (Elektra), Regina Resnik (Klytamnestra), Marie Collier (Chrysothemis). Vienna Philharmonic, conducted by Sir Georg Solti. Decca 417 345-2

tra recordings, this interpretation remains definitive. Solti's "take-no-prisoners" conducting and Nilsson's big voice seem just right for the opera's "heavy" atmosphere.

As one of the few uncut *Elek-*

— Jason Neal

Connections

Texas Winter Celebration—Scrapbook



Centerpiece with tumbleweed from New Mexico.



Carol Byrne, Michelle Buchanan, and Diane Casebier enjoying a conversation over lunch.

Noel Anderson, Mitch Stepanovich, and Karen Hopkins.



Krystal Schenk's white elephant gift



Sue Sappington's prize in the white elephant exchange . . .



which was soon claimed by Donna Kelley.

Texas Winter Celebration (cont.)

UTA Libraries' Texas Winter Celebration was observed in grand style with chow from Spring Creek Barbeque and a variety of interesting activities including a Chili Cook-off, drawings for prizes, and a white elephant gift exchange.

The Library Staff Entertainment Committee (LSEC) began planning for the winter event in November. Challenges to their ingenuity included decorating the table tops with interesting and low budget items that fit the western theme and finding appropriate items for the drawings. The brightly colored cards with Texas trivia on the tables were just one of the many items used to engage participants. Blanca Smith selected and mounted the pho-

tos used for the drawings while Lea Akins made the food arrangements. The LSEC would like to thank the many people who donated time and effort to the event with special thanks to Library Administration for the food from Spring Creek Barbeque.

Ginny Pinkerton's prize winning recipe is below.

Prize Winning Chili

1 lb. lean ground beef
 1 clove garlic, minced (about 1 tsp.)
 1 large onion, finely chopped (about 1 cup)
 1 medium bell pepper (red or green or both) finely chopped (about 2/3 cup)
 3 to 4 tbsp. chili powder (to taste) This is the low heartburn model. If you like it hot, add cayenne pepper till you get it there.

1 tbsp. cider vinegar
 1/4 tsp. allspice
 1/4 tsp. coriander
 1 tsp. cumin
 1/2 tsp. salt, or to taste
 1/2 cup water
 1 14 1/2 oz. can diced tomatoes
 1 14 1/2 oz. can red kidney beans, with liquid

Cook beef, garlic, onion, and bell pepper in a heavy skillet over medium-high heat, stirring frequently to break up meat. Cook until onion is soft and meat has lost its pink color. Add remaining ingredients. Bring to a boil. Cover and reduce heat. Simmer the chili for at least 45 minutes (longer won't hurt), stirring frequently. Stir in about 2 tbsp. masa (corn flour) during last 15 minutes to thicken if desired.

—Krystal Schenk &
 Lea Worcester

Valentine's Day

You hate it or you love it for a million different reasons, but whether you like it or not, it's coming on Monday, February 14. The officers of the Library Staff Association will be taking orders for chocolate roses and candy hearts beginning Monday, January 24.

- Roses will sell for \$2
- A box of candy hearts will sell for \$1

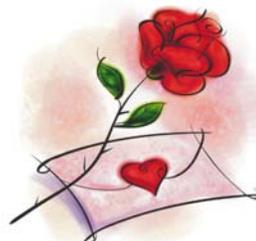
Bring your money to Sarah

Baker in Interlibrary Loan or Ashleigh Holmes in Room 203. When you pay for the order that you place, you can fill out a card for that special someone.

So whether it's for a fellow staff member, Mom, Dad, your spouse, your significant other, your kids, or that person you've been admiring from afar, say "Happy Valentine's

Day" with chocolate roses and candy hearts.

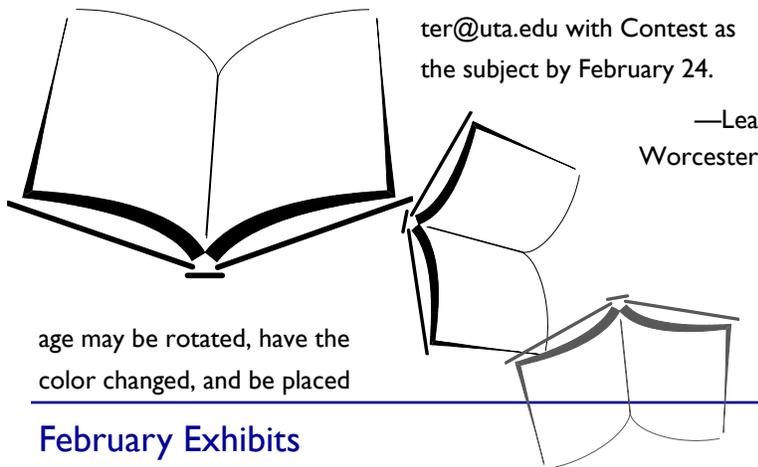
—Library Staff Association



Connections

Library Puzzle—Where’s the book

Tired of word puzzles and ready for a new type of brain-teaser? This month’s puzzle requires another type of skill! Your challenge is to find a copy of the book below in this month’s *Connections*. The im-



—Lea Worcester

age may be rotated, have the color changed, and be placed

in a photo, text, or illustration. Of course, the three used as examples below do not count.

Send the page number, article title, and if it is a photo or graphic image, the caption to Lea Worcester at lworcester@uta.edu with Contest as the subject by February 24.

The winners of this and other contests in Connections will be determined by putting all of the correct answers in a “hat” and randomly drawing the winner. Winners will be announced in the next publication and treated to a lunch at the end of the year where they qualify for entry in the grand prize drawing.—the Editor

February Exhibits



Auvers-sur-Oise by Cezanne

Architecture and Fine Arts Library

Inspired by the daring theft of Edvard Munch’s *The Scream* last summer, Angee Calvert at the Architecture and Fine Arts Library decided to learn more about the mysterious world of art theft. The result was an exhibit featuring some of the world’s most valuable missing art and the stories of their disappearance.

Her exhibit introduces us to thieves like Stephane Breitwieser, who stole pieces from over 170 museums in Europe. When authorities caught him, his mother destroyed the more than 60 paintings he’d stored at her

house and threw other priceless artifacts into a canal. This unfortunate event, resulting in an estimated \$1.5 billion loss, reinforces the fact that over 90% of stolen artwork is never recovered.

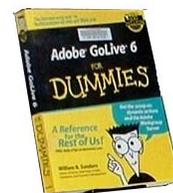
Many of the stories could be fodder for movie plots. Paul Cezanne’s *Auvers-sur-Oise* was taken from the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford while the rest of England was off celebrating Y2K. The thief used smoke canisters to fill the air and block the security cameras. This work of art now joins the 551 Picassos, 43 Van Goghs, 174 Rembrandts and 209 Renoirs that no longer grace museum walls.

Special thanks go to Nick Halupnik, an AFA student worker, who placed the images of the stolen art in their “frames” and to Donald Quarles, who loaned the art supplies that enhance the exhibit. These fascinating stories and images will remain on display for the next two months.

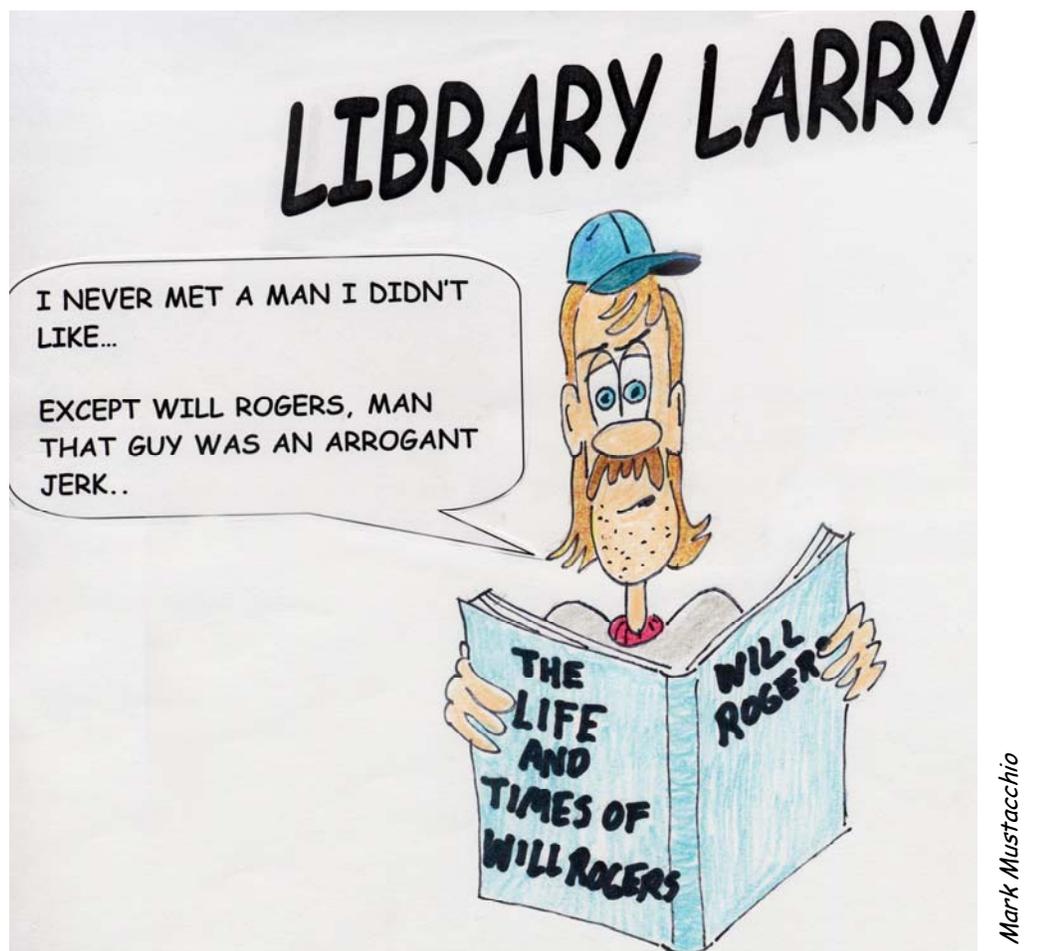
—Angee Calvert

Science and Engineering Library

The current exhibit at the Science and Engineering library is *For Dummies . . . NOT!* Future displays will focus on National Engineers Week and Einstein. SEL exhibits are available online at <http://libraries.uta.edu/sel/exhibits/>



Library Larry



Have Suggestions for an Article?

As a newsletter designed to offer “library news for library staff”, *Connections*’ mission is to publish items of interest. This is a complex task because UTA Libraries is a diverse community. Currently the newsletter routinely reports on awards, exhibits, Library Staff Associa-

tion events, and includes a library puzzle and Library Larry column. However, we need to know what else you would like in the newsletter. For instance: What types of articles interest you? Would you like to write an article or a column? Has your department

just finished a project and you would like to see it included in the newsletter? If so, please feel free to contact me via e-mail at lworcester@uta.edu or phone at 25747.

—Lea Worcester

Contributors to February’s Issue

- Suzanne Beckett
- Angee Calvert
- Library Staff Association
- Mark Mustacchio
- Jason Neal
- Ginny Pinkerton
- Krystal Schenk
- Elizabeth Swift
- Lea Worcester

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Libraries

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Connections is the library staff newsletter published the first week of each month. The newsletter introduces new staff members, highlights departments, reports on library staff events, and is a forum for items of interest.

Suggestions and contributions are welcome. Please contact:

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February 2005 — Black History Month

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat/Sun
	1	2 12:05-1:00 p.m. Focus on Faculty with Jeanne Gerlach—Parlor	3	4	5 6
7	8	9 Chinese New Year	10	11	12 Lincoln's Birthday 13
14 Valentine's Day	15	16	17	18	19 20
21	22	23 National Engineers Week	24 Flag Day	25	26 27
28					

Connections is archived online at:

<http://libraries.uta.edu/connections/index.htm>