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The TCL Letter

The Newsletter of the Touro College Libraries

Volume 9, Issue 1

Spring 2009

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Caitlin Q. Bernstein, MLS, is a Librarian at Touro College's Midwood Campus.

Mini-Workshops: A Different Approach to Information Literacy Instruction

By Caitlin Q. Bernstein

College libraries around the country are exploring various ways to teach information literacy skills. At Touro College, students, faculty members, and librarians alike have expressed concern that our traditional Library Instruction Sessions (Library Orientations) are too long and cover too many topics to be of utmost benefit. The concept of a shorter (15-20 minute) Mini-Workshop is that the instruction itself is concise and covers a single topic at a time, for example: "Citing Your Sources with Noodle-Tools," "Using the Library Catalog," "Finding Articles," or "Evaluating Websites." Mini-Workshops are offered throughout the semester *in addition to* an initial Library Orientation for class groups. There are many benefits of Mini-Workshops.

Whereas a Library Orientation might introduce the availability and scope of library resources and research materials, Mini-Workshops delve deeper into specific methods, search strategies and/or research tips—depending on the topic of the Workshop. Think of them as mini poster sessions for library users.

Whereas Library Orientations generally take place at the beginning of the new semester, Mini-Workshops would be offered several times throughout the semester, after college course concepts and assignments are more ably recognized.

For busy students, a fifteen-minute workshop on something quite practical has particular appeal. Mini-Workshop attendance would be voluntary (which is also appealing).

Ideally, Mini-Workshops would consist of small groups, allowing for more interactivity and hands-on time during sessions.

The Midwood (Flatbush) Library of Touro College will pioneer experimenting with Mini-Workshops starting in April, 2009. Undoubtedly the topics that can be covered in such a brief time maybe limited (we can't squeeze our 60-75 minute Library Orientations into this time frame), but the Mini-Workshops are probably best viewed as a complement to our other instructional offerings, rather than a replacement for them. With the specific information needs, learning styles, and educational levels of the student population in mind, the concept of mini-workshops is sure to be improved and expanded upon.

New Online Resources Available to the Touro Community

LearningExpressLibrary provides interactive training for Microsoft products, including Access, Excel, PowerPoint, & Word. It also covers Adobe Acrobat, standardized tests, Civil Service exams and professional licensing exams, and skill improvement courses in math, reading, spelling, writing, etc.

Bar Ilan University Responsa - Now available to **Alumni** of Touro College-NY now have online access to over 68,000 Hebrew works from responsa Literature; the Bible, Talmud & principal commentaries; works about Jew-

ish law & customs; midrashim and Zohar. This is the sixth database to become available on the **Touro College-NY Alumni Portal** (<http://www.touro.edu/library/sites/AlumniPortal.asp>) since its debut earlier this year.

Education Index Retro - Search citations from 1928-1983 covering curriculum, distance learning, government funding, juvenile delinquency, library science, literacy, religious education, and much more.

Oxford Journals - Search over 200 journals published by Oxford University Press - with no em-

bargo period, meaning they are immediately available upon publication, with no waiting period - covering humanities, law, life sciences, mathematics & physical sciences, medicine, and social sciences.

Global Road Warrior - Covers 175 countries and territories and includes information on demographics, economy, holidays, currencies, visas, climate, passports, immunization, entry and departure, emergencies, travel information, country and regional maps, airports, international dialing guides, and more.

These proprietary databases and others may be accessed at <http://www.touro.edu/library/sites/FindArticles.asp> and are restricted to the Touro community. To access them remotely, you may request a login and password online, at any of our libraries or by calling 212.463.0400 x5321.

Personnel Update

Congratulations!!

- **Leiba Rimler** of Technical & Electronic Services has been promoted to Judaica Cataloger. Leiba's first children's book, *The Negel Vasser Miracle* was published last December, followed by *The Forgotten Bracha* this spring.

Meetings, Conferences and Workshops

- 10-31-08 - Information Literacy Librarian **Sara Tabaei** attended "Knowledgebases in Support of Reference Services."
- 10-31-08 - Technical & Electronic Services Assistant **Emily Nurkin** attended "Greening Libraries > Greener Communities."
- 12-2-08 - Women's Building Librarian **Dr. David B. Levy** attended the AJL-NYMA library conference "Celebrating Jewish Books- And Those Who Love Them."
- 1-12,13-09 – Judaica Librarian **Amram Rister** attended the annual conference of the Israeli Association of Libraries and Information Centers, in Haifa, Israel.
- 2-12-09 - Women's Building Librarian **Dr. David B. Levy** and Judaica Librarian **Amram Rister** attended the 2009 Reference Workshop of AJL-NYMA at the Mendelson Convocation Center of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary.
- 2-26-09 - Chief Midwood Librarian **Edlira Agalliu** and Information Literacy Librarian **Sara Tabaei** attended the Bibliographic Instruction Special Interest Group (SIG) workshop at the Metropolitan New York Library Council.
- 3-18-09 - Systems Manager **Yitzchak Schaffer** and Systems Assistant **Liping Ren** attended CommunityOne, a free conference sponsored by Sun Microsystems for software developers. Featured were talks about various tools and techniques for programming and implementing software.

From the Director..

Bashe Simon



Bashe Simon, MLS,
is the Director of
Libraries at
Touro College.

Welcome to the spring 2009 issue of the TCL Letter. The Touro College libraries play many important roles in the college community and my job as the Library Director is to ensure that that our patrons receive the very best library services. The library provides student and faculty orientations and workshops to help patrons recognize the need to find and evaluate information and how to use the information effectively in this Information Age.

The libraries provide a quiet place for study and research. Yet the libraries' accessibility is not confined to their four walls. The extensive research databases and resources are available during all hours of the day and night. The professional library staff welcomes the Touro College community and provides helpful and resourceful assistance.

The library staff is constantly on the outlook for new and exciting research tools. One of the newest resources purchased by the Touro College library is LearningExpressLibrary. LearningExpressLibrary is a resource that offers practice tests, exercises, and skill-building courses. It provides online interactive training and preparation in Microsoft products, standardized tests including CLEP, GMAT, GRE, LSAT, MCAT, TOEFL and professional licensing exams including EMS, nursing & allied health, teaching and real estate. There are skill building courses in math, reading, spelling, writing, etc. We are very excited about this product and we are anxiously awaiting your feedback about LearningExpressLibrary.

ProQuest Central, a huge aggregated database that covers approximately 11,250 titles with about 75% full text

is another new feature. Over 160 subject areas from scholarly journals, dissertations, popular magazines, and daily newspapers are found within this database. Student feedback about ProQuest Central has been very positive. Students and staff find it to be easy to navigate and an excellent source for research.

I want to personally thank the nearly 300 participants in the winter "User Satisfaction Survey." We appreciate your input and look forward to implementing some of your suggestions. Make sure to take a look at a more detailed discussion of the survey, which can be found on page three. I hope that you enjoy the other great articles and columns in this issue. We look forward to seeing you at our libraries.

Library User Satisfaction Survey Winter 2008: Summary of Results

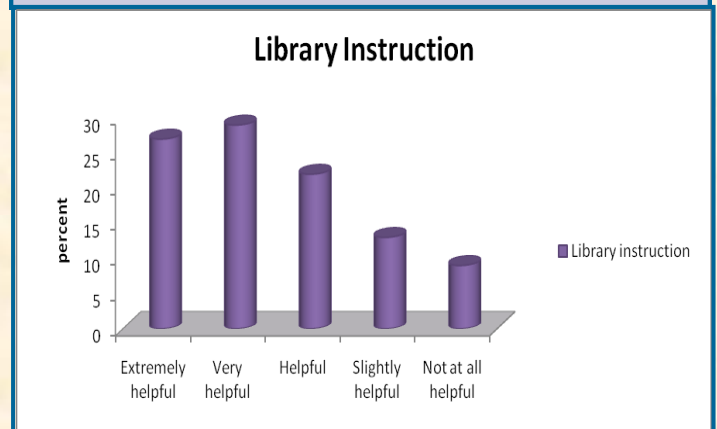
By Sara Tabaei, MLIS

A survey to assess the satisfaction of faculty members and students at Touro College Libraries was conducted for one month, from December 2008 to January 2009. The survey was conducted using a web-based instrument accessed from the Library's homepage. In total, the library received 237 usable responses. The charts presented are a brief summary of the major findings of this survey, which are being used to evaluate and improve our services and resources.

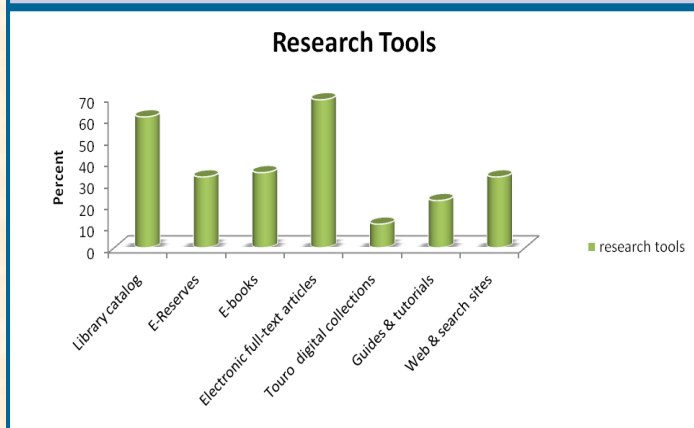
Overall, indicators of satisfaction with library services, resources and staff are high. Please contact Sara Tabaei with your comments or questions regarding the survey.

sara.tabaei@touro.edu

"To what extent did the library instruction session or faculty workshop help you conduct research more effectively?"

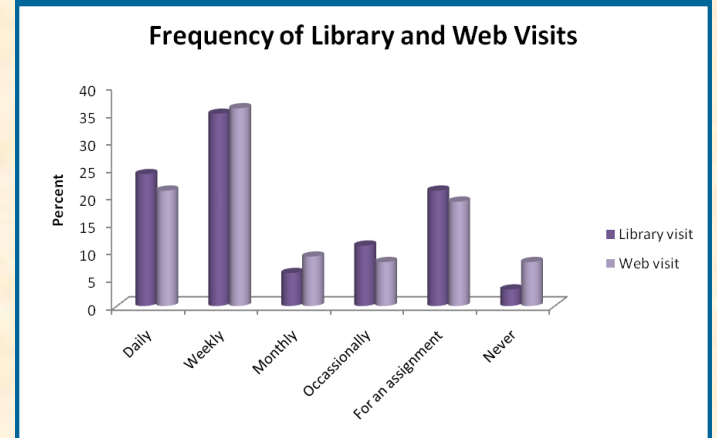


"Which resources do you use on the Touro Library web site?"

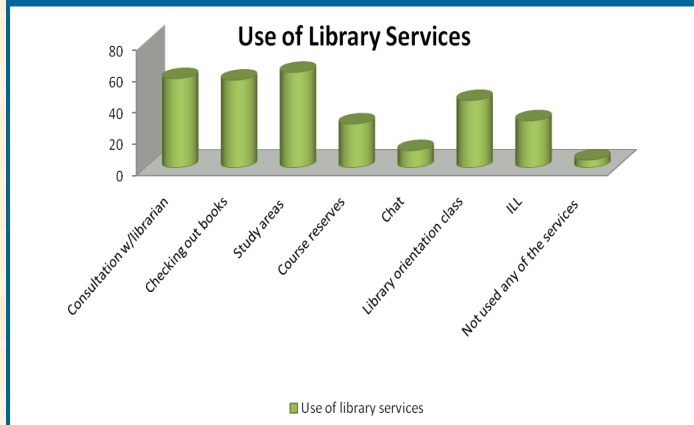


"How often do you visit the library?"

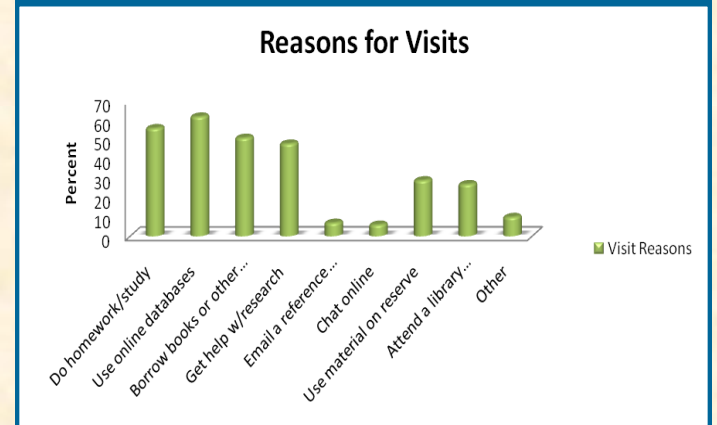
"How often do you visit the library's web site?"



"Which library services have you used in the last 12 months?"



"What are the main reasons for you to use the library?"



A Knowledge-Base for the Library

By Sara Tabaei

For quite some time reference librarians have considered the knowledge base as a supporting tool to complement virtual reference. Various libraries have approached the idea of creating and maintaining a knowledge base differently. Some have created an FAQ of reference questions they have been repeatedly asked. For example, New York University's Bobst Library has created a subject specific business FAQ (<http://library.nyu.edu/vbl/>). They describe it as a "finding tool" rather than a "database" or a "card catalog." Students can find answers to many of their business questions on that page without feeling the need to ask the librarians for help. This both saves the time of the librarian and causes a simpler interaction between the student and librarian. On a larger scale, Cornell University has created a blog called: "See what others are asking" (<http://blogs.cornell.edu/askalib/>) as their knowledge base tool. In the blog students and staff can read the questions and answers that have been collected from their email and chat services.

On a much broader scale, Question-Point, a service that provides email ("Ask a Librarian") and chat ("CHAT Online") tools, and is used in more than 1000 libraries in 20 countries, has created a searchable, Global Knowledge Base that has grown to more than 7000 active question-and-answer pairs. The questions that come from "Ask a Librarian" are edited for grammar and spelling errors, and are then moved to their knowledge base. Library staff can

search for questions whose answers they may not know or just to see the kind of questions that exist in this repository, called "Global KB."

A knowledge base can be defined as an organized and centralized repository of knowledge consisting of concepts, data, objectives, requirements, rules, and specifications about a particular subject. An integral component of knowl-

"Rather than trying to find the same answer for the same question each time a patron asks, the answer can be pulled up from the library's knowledge base whenever it is needed."

edge management systems, a knowledge base is used to optimize information collection, organization, and retrieval by the employees of an organization or its customers. Consequently, the knowledge base can become a repository tool where human knowledge or individual talent can be turned into a shared institution-wide asset.

A knowledge base reference can be extremely useful for supporting library staff at libraries that are dispersed. In such cases, reference questions are usually not shared or discussed with staff from other campuses. It can also be considered a time-saving tool. Rather than trying to find the same answer for the same question each time a patron asks, the answer can be pulled up from the library's knowledge base whenever it is needed. This is especially true for more complex reference questions where it requires several steps before reaching the final answer, such as finding historical statistics or sales data.

If a knowledge base is divided into work-related questions and reference questions, the "Operations Manual" section of the Touro Library Wiki can be considered a small work-related knowledge base which covers procedures and instructions, policies, and forms related to the daily responsibilities we carry out in the library. In the future, we may also have a reference knowledge base in our Library Wiki. By collecting active questions and answers, it will enable both staff and library users to access frequently asked reference questions or complicated inquiries along with their answers via our homegrown knowledge base.

Much information and knowledge (used interchangeably here) is created daily by interactions between the librarian and the user. It seems a waste of time and energy not to retain such knowledge for future reference interactions to be used by staff and patrons alike. Because this will become more of a concern with the impending retirement of many librarians belonging to the baby boom generation, we can expect to see more knowledge bases in the future.



Sara Tabaei, MLIS, is the Information Literacy Librarian at Touro College.

The Touro College Libraries aspire to be the primary resource for intellectual content college-wide.

To fulfill the mission of the college, the libraries foster intellectual discovery and advance information literacy.

www.touro.edu/library

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