

# Roving Service: Langara College Library

By Heather Forbes.

## About

Roving assistance services began in the library at Langara College in September 2008. The service was developed by library technicians to enhance customer service by seeking out students who were not aware that assistance was available and who were too shy to ask for help.

Rather than just walking up to anyone wandering around, we tried to focus on students in the stacks. We initially asked everyone but found that many people were simply looking for available study space. One of the most common situations arose when someone had a call number and was having trouble finding the item. As we helped them find things we also tried to show them how call numbers worked so they could find things for themselves in the future.

## Reference Referral

In collaboration with librarians, reference referral guidelines were developed to assist with choosing when to refer patrons to the Reference Desk. Many people often felt embarrassed or apprehensive when they needed help, and approaching the reference desk was intimidating. We were watchful for this and went to the desk with them, chatting along the way and putting them at ease. Not everyone knew that we had reserve books, what a reference desk was, or

even what a call number was. We tried to let them know that this was okay and normal, and maybe even that the whole point of education was to learn.

## Experience and Stats

Besides the positive personal experiences of every staff member involved in this service, the primary way we knew that the service was working was through statistics. We had five categories for questions: directional/facilities, item search, reserve collection, technical trouble shooting, and reference referral. We grouped all the questions we answered and the assistance we provided during roving shifts into these categories. Not surprisingly, the category with the largest number of questions was item search. This referred to either finding call numbers by doing a catalogue search or helping find a call number that the patron already looked up. In the Spring term of 2009 we fielded 374 total inquiries, with 160 of those being item searches, 77 giving help with directions and facilities, 46 assisting with the reserve collection, 57 technical issues, and 34 referrals to the reference desk. Many students expressed their appreciation for this service and we hope to continue to provide it in the future.

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