

# Teaching with scratch paper

By Carol Withers and Donnelyn Curtis

## *An example of minimalist library instruction*

**The problem.** Our patrons often do not write down sufficient or appropriate information from the indexes and our OPAC to actually retrieve an article. The situation has been exacerbated by the addition of a tape-loaded general index (that we called PAN) to our online system, at which time our subscription to InfoTrac was cancelled. InfoTrac had been popular and heavily used by patrons, due in part to its provision of holdings information. Unlike our CD-ROM workstations, most of our OPAC terminals don't have printers, and although the index has links to the library's holdings, the steps to the call number are not obvious.

**Steps toward a solution.** Increasingly, we have found ourselves providing patrons with handwritten lists of what they need to write down from indexes and the OPAC to help them learn the two-step process of finding an article: 1) using a print index or PAN; 2) using the OPAC or PAN's linking feature to see if or where we housed the item. In library instruction classes we present this information with an overhead transparency and discuss it at length. We have developed PAN and printed index worksheets for freshman English students to help reinforce the two-step concept.

Because not all library users attend instruction sessions, and even those who attend do not usually internalize the entire retrieval process, we first thought of adapting the instructional worksheets to something we could distribute at the reference desk that would instruct (or remind) users while at the same

time it would guide them through the steps, with blank lines for each element of the citation and for the journal's call number.

As we considered the worksheet format, we began to acknowledge the resistance to instruction we sometimes encounter at the desk, usually from graduate students and faculty, even when it is obvious that they also need to learn the retrieval process. We removed instructional wording and reduced the size of the two worksheets to a half page and then abbreviated.

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**PAN Periodical Article**

- From the PAN index
  - ◆ periodical title \_\_\_\_\_
  - ◆ date \_\_\_\_\_
  - ◆ volume number \_\_\_\_\_
  - ◆ page number \_\_\_\_\_
- Press the line number to see a summary of the article  
Press "h" to get the following information for the periodicals owned by NMSU
  - ◆ call number: \_\_\_\_\_
  - ◆ library:
    - Branson
    - New

Most issues of PAN periodicals are on the shelves in the Periodicals room under their call number. The call number for the periodical you need will be the same whether the issue you want is in microfiche, microfilm, or hard-bound upstairs. Please ask for assistance, if you do not find what you need.

Form 1.

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shapers of the association itself. Recent initiatives to improve leadership include establishment of a listserv for elected leaders, and formal training and planning sessions on Friday afternoons for elected leaders during ALA. These worthwhile efforts merit expansion, perhaps through a continuing education effort for a larger share of the membership. We must prepare ourselves to be leaders.

When it comes to running for vice-president/president-elect of ACRL, however, how does one prepare? My experience as chair of the Bibliographic Instruction Section and of the *Choice* Editorial Board, as president of the Michigan ACRL Chapter, and as a member of ACRL's Planning and Budget committees have exposed me to a significant percentage of ACRL's many facets, especially because they have inevitably

meant ex officio involvement in many other areas such as conference programming, publications, and Chapters Council. My work at small colleges and large universities has exposed me to most of the work environments in which our members move. If I merit this office, it is only because I have experienced ACRL under various conditions for the past twenty years, and understand something about how ACRL relates to the needs and experiences of the average member.

We are entering a new era in which competition for reduced resources in higher education will be intense and the basic nature of the profession will be altered. If elected, I will try my best to keep the organization vital and represent your needs during this crucial transitional age. ■

*(Scratch paper cont. from page 160)*

ated and further reduced them to a less cumbersome quarter-page size. They intentionally look like simple forms, and yet they are still designed to teach unobtrusively the step-by-step process. We print them on the blank side of used paper and place the PAN form alongside the scratch paper that is used for writing down call numbers of books, around the OPAC terminals, and at all public service desks. The index form is placed near indexes in place of scratch paper.

One possible drawback to the forms is that, because of their simplicity, the patron is not prompted to write down all of the information required for interlibrary loan. We have decided to go with simplicity over thoroughness for a number of reasons: it serves our purpose of teaching the process; a simpler form is more likely to be used; its small size makes it easy to distribute; and it is fairly easy for patrons to retrace their steps and get additional information if needed.

We maintain the flexible attitude that these forms can easily be changed when new or better ideas are developed. With their adoption, we've seen fewer incomplete citations. Patrons have accepted them

as useful tools and are beginning to ask us for them. We believe that the forms are instructional as well as convenient, and that they encourage users to be independent without pedantry on our part. ■

**Periodical Article**

**1 From the index**

- ▼ periodical title \_\_\_\_\_
- ▼ date \_\_\_\_\_
- ▼ volume number \_\_\_\_\_
- ▼ page number \_\_\_\_\_

**2 From OLE (1/title of periodical)**

- ▼ call number: \_\_\_\_\_
- ▼ library:
  - Branson       New
- ▼ format for issue (based on date):
  - still on shelf in Periodicals room  
first floor
  - in a bound volume  
floor : \_\_\_\_\_
  - on microfiche  
first floor
  - on microfilm  
first floor

**Form 2.**