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People Profile: Barbara Williams

Editor

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cess Authentication, Co-Branding of Products, Copyright Issues, Cover-to-Cover Digitization, Digital Quality, Interlibrary Loan/Electronic Reserves, Linking to Content, Perpetual Access, Purchase Models, Retractions and Corrections (Errata and Corrigenda) and Statistics. Although **ELD** did not formally endorse this list until May of 2005, the document was in circulation prior to being formally adopted. With its listing of best practices for each issue it also serves as a vehicle to begin scholarly dialogue discussions.

In 2004 I arranged to have the evaluation of **ENGnetBASE** formally incorporated into those engineering courses that have information literacy objectives. The purpose was to gather student input and feed that information into the decision-making process to determine if the library's subscription to the database should be renewed.

To evaluate the database, each class was divided into two groups. Each student received the same seven questions, all related to a class project/assignment. The questions were designed to identify specific facts, figures, graphs and charts. One group sat at a table with seven print reference handbooks in front of them, and the other group sat in front of computers linked to **ENGnetBASE**. Each group was given twenty minutes to use the resource(s) in front of them to individually answer the questions. The group that used the print handbooks completed their task before the time was up. The group using **ENGnetBASE** did not find their answers as quickly. The groups then traded places and the results were the same even when the first group knew the names of the books the answers were in. The majority of the students that used **ENGnetBASE** answered fewer than five questions in the same time it took students using the print handbooks to answer all seven. This experiment was duplicated with twelve librarians and the results were similar.

The biggest complaint about the database was its failure to mimic its print equivalent; users indicated it was much easier to find the information in a physical book. The second biggest complaint was the huge number of hits a search retrieved and the subsequent frustration in having to comb through the information to find answers. The reason was that the search box on the main page searched the entire Website. To search within specific books required an additional click to get to the advanced search feature. Spending a few minutes reading the instructions on the main page would have minimized this problem. However, my students like many have a **Google**-like mentality about everything. "If we have to be instructed on how to use a resource isn't that an inherent flaw in the design?" voiced one student, yet echoed by many. Students resented having to stop and read the online help feature to figure out the most effective way to search. Several students referred to the user interface as non-intuitive which speaks to the importance of user-centered designs.

Lastly, the inability to use the browser's

against the grain people profile

Associate Engineering Librarian
The University of Arizona Library
744 N. Highland Avenue, P.O. Box 20054
Tucson, AZ 85721-0054
Phone: (520) 307-0840 Fax: (520) 6213655
<williamsb@u.library.arizona.edu>

Barbara A. Williams

BORN & LIVED: I was born and raised in Detroit Michigan until I was 11 when my family moved to the township of Ypsilanti, MI.

EDUCATION: I received my undergraduate degree from **Michigan State University**, and my masters from **Wayne State University**.

FIRST JOB: My first professional librarian position was as a Public Service Librarian in Flint, MI at **GMI Engineering and Management Institute**, which later was renamed **Kettering University**.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: When I left **Kettering** I came to the **University of Arizona** as a Science-Engineering Librarian. I am active in the Engineering Libraries Division of the **American Society for Engineering Education**. In 2005 my colleague and I sponsored a drumming activity for women enrolled/teaching in science and engineering programs. The following year we organized a pre-conference drumming/leadership workshop for the **Living the Future** conference in 2006.

FAVORITE BOOKS: Anything written by **J. California Cooper** and **Bebe Moore Campbell**.

PHILOSOPHY: Life is short so be your authentic self.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE OUR INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS:

I think our profession will play more of an official consultant role with faculty/researchers and students. Entry level librarian positions will require more advanced computer skills. We will continue to facilitate access to information but I believe we will become much more involved in identifying and or aggregating content and then participating in the development of platforms to access those materials. 🍌



back button to return to the previous page where the search was initiated was considered "a rookie mistake." Not being able to use the browser's back button meant one could not modify a previously executed search. This problem was immediately fixed in the succeeding iteration of the software. Generally speaking, most of the problems, to one degree or another, have been resolved in subsequent iterations of the database, as one would expect.

However, after our in-class information literacy-focused discussions regarding **ENGnetBASE** as related to some of the issues from **ELD's Best Practices for Electronic Resources**, the students were able to provide more relevant feedback. For example, a number of students did not understand the fairness of a subscription-pricing model whereby the library would not own access to any materials once the subscription ended. In their minds the types of activities they would use **ENGnetBASE** for would be primarily to gather facts, figures, graphs, etc. This is information that does not need updating on an annual basis. I learned that a number of students received handbooks

as high school graduation gifts; these were passed on to them as heirlooms. Handbooks were once considered the definitive resource in their field. Also, many of the department laboratories have old copies of various engineering handbooks on hand for anyone's use, or they can be found on a number of instructors' office shelves, which students can borrow.

Our conversation evolved into a debate on the types of resources that added academic value to the learning experience, and those that added convenience. This dialogue introduced me to a genre of information resources that was not on my radar, such as software products that blend technology and information content, such as the line of **AspenTech** products. **AspenTech** produces software that allows students to simulate theoretical concepts; some of their software provides access to content previously owned by other entities. These products are widely used in corporate settings, and one's ability to use these types of products gives one a competitive advantage against other candidates when competing for jobs. Not surprisingly, this discussion became

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