Librarians Without Borders: Serving Our Remote Users

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Serving Our Remote Users

- Remote users and their needs
- Challenges on both sides
- Resources and access points
- Remote services in action
- How users are managing
- How libraries are helping

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Traditional Information Services

- Onsite print collections
- Personal interactions with library staff
- Librarian as information provider
- Library as place

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Our 21st Century Workforce

Can be down the hall…or across the country

- Flexiplace workers

- Alternate workspace

- Employees on travel

- Field workers

- Emergency on-scene coordinators

- Office "nesters"

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Needs of Remote Users

- Access to same services and resources as onsite users
- Effective access points for services
- Awareness of services and how to use them
- Special needs for offsite workers
  - Standard technologies, hardware and software
  - Remote access method

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What are the Challenges?

For the users:
- Knowledge of what is available
- Ability to access resources and request services
- Understanding of how to use tools effectively

For the library staff:
- Effective and easy to use access points
- Ability to assist users with technical issues
- Marketing and training program
- Commitment to meeting time constraints

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What Resources are Available?

- Network of trained & responsive library staff
- Virtual information resources
  - EPA Desktop Library - Electronic resources, journals, search tools
  - NEPIS - Digital archive of EPA publications
  - OLS - Online catalog of EPA library collections
- EPA's Anytime, Anyplace Access Website

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Remote Services in Action

- Network libraries providing core library services to Regions
  - Lead service centers
- Multiple access points to meet user preferences
  - Web, Email, phone
- Electronic delivery of resources
- Library staff available via email or phone

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How Is It Working?

- Customer service surveys
  – Over 98% satisfied with the services
  – Over 97% satisfied with speed of service

- Will continue to track responses and gather feedback
  – Services will continually evolve

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How are Offsite Workers Managing?

- Use library services and resources
- Load specific information on laptops
  - Databases & emergency response information
- Rely on information online
  - NLM's TOXNET databases
- Use field assistance services
  - ATSDR's 24-hour service and EPA's Environmental Response Team (ERT)

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How Libraries Are Helping

- Understanding user's expectations
  - Visit the library less often for service
  - Expect to have same access to services
  - Not all are comfortable with technology
- Understanding user's need for information
  - What resources meet their specific needs
  - What level of mediation is required
  - What kind of support is required

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How Libraries Are Helping

- Providing responsive and competent staff
- Providing user-friendly access points
- Conveying same high quality customer service to offsite users
- Evaluating resources to ensure user needs are met
- Negotiating with vendors for remote access options

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Remote Trends

- Virtual collections growing
- Electronic resources available for offsite use
- Less focus on the library as place
- Moving to more user-centered services

Are users remote?

. . . Or are libraries remote from users?

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