

## What? Where? And How? Inexpensive Library Instruction Aids

*Judith M. Pask*

As in any new situation, experienced library patrons, and especially novices, find a library strange and confusing, but are hesitant to show their lack of knowledge by asking specific questions. Having witnessed the confusion and frustration of students in this library, the librarians in the Krannert Library at Purdue University decided to increase their efforts to familiarize students and staff with the library's resources and services. Several methods were combined to yield a unique and still inexpensive package of aids which assist and promote individualized library instruction. These include a bookmark, a fifteen minute audio-tour of the library, and a series of detailed *How To. . .* information sheets.<sup>1</sup> Since they answer the reader's basic questions of "What does the library have or do?", "Where is. . .?", and "How do I use. . .?", similar materials could be used in any type of library. We have found that the availability of these handouts and the audio-tour has reduced the number of general information questions asked, freeing staff members to help others with more detailed questions.

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*Judith Pask received her masters degree in science and library service from Columbia University in New York. Prior to joining the Purdue staff she worked at Rochester Institute of Technology and the University of Illinois. She is an assistant librarian at the Krannert Library, Purdue University.*

### What Does The Library Have Or Do?

The library's resources and services are listed on one side of a printed bookmark. The opposite side provides general information (hours, loan policies, and telephone numbers) about the library which are frequently asked. The bookmarks are readily available at the two major service points in the library, the circulation desk and the reference desk.

### Where Is. . . ?

Parks have it  
 Museums have it.  
 The Krannert Library has it.

Take the Audio-Tour  
 (approx. 15 min.)

Cassette player and tape  
 available at Circulation Desk.

This sign in the Krannert Library has caused many a puzzled look, and a prompt question of "Is this for real?" Audio-tours are frequently available in museums and national parks, but are also becoming more common in libraries.<sup>2,3</sup> Such a tour can provide needed information in a uniform manner at any time the user wants it. It is designed to give the user an overview of the library, its services, and resources, and it is also an easy and effective way to introduce a new employee to the library.

An audio-tour sounds like a complicated project, but it need not be. Ours was completed in about two months by one librarian devoting only part time to the project. The equipment consists of a small cassette tape player with a shoulder strap<sup>4</sup> and a pair of headphones. The headphones are an inexpensive pair designed for use by children, and can be worn under the chin as well as over the top of the head (Acoustifone Corp.). The tape player did not have a long strap so we purchased a camera strap (\$5) which works fine.

The script was written by the librarian to assure technical accuracy. Pauses (filled by music in the final production) were planned and timed to allow moving from one area to another. A test tape was made and the timing carefully checked at a moderate walking pace. Library jargon used in the tour was standardized and defined. All directions for the walking tour were given on the tape, and reinforced with hanging signs, identifying each area, and with a marked map which is given to the user. Hughes suggests a professional voice would be best for the final tape version;<sup>4</sup> the Krannert Library's



Judith Pask demonstrates Krannert Library Audio-Tour

tape was recorded by the chief announcer of the Purdue radio station. Purdue's Audio Visual Center recorded the final tape, and mixed in the music, fading it in and out at the beginning, in the pauses, and at the end.

With the increased use of media materials, most libraries will have access to the equipment needed to produce a short audio-tour. Utilizing local talent and services can add professionalism at little or no cost.

As pointed out in the tour, more detailed and specific single information sheets on such topics as using the card catalog, using periodical indexes, finding reference sources, and checking out library materials are available at each point of use. Whenever possible these sheets were planned to utilize both sides of the paper in order to discourage their use as scratch paper. For example, the *How To. . . Use the Periodical Indexes* contains a list of the periodical indexes available and their location on the reverse side of the sheet. A copy of each *How To. . .* is displayed behind plastic near the resource or service described, and a plastic file pocket holds additional copies for users to take with them. These sheets are also available for distribution to classes or at general orientation sessions. Several faculty members now ask for copies to distribute before making a library assignment.

These materials have met the immediate need of assisting faculty and students in the effective use of the library, and have given the librarians a start towards the development of a structured program of user education. Publicity about the tour and handouts has made the faculty aware of the special services the library can

offer, and the assistance the librarians can give with class library assignments. This media program will hopefully lead to increased participation by the librarians in bibliographic instruction in the classroom.

### Notes

- 1 Available on loan from Project LOEX, Center of Educational Resources, Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197.
- 2 Hughes, J. Marshall II. "A Tour of the Library-by Audiotape." *Special Libraries*, 65 (7) :288-290. July, 1974.
- 3 Dash, Ursula. "The Self-Guided Library Tour." *Australian and Academic Research Libraries*, 8(1) :33-38. March, 1977.
- 4 Hughes. *Ibid.*, 289.