



## **Reference Librarians at IPFW's Helmke Library Have Computers, Will Travel**

During Fall Semester 2006, the Indiana University – Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW) Walter E. Helmke Library reference librarians piloted a new *mobile reference* service. The goals of the project were to provide reference services at the point of need and to increase the visibility and presence of the liaison librarians within their departments/schools and on campus.

During the pilot project, three librarians, liaisons to education, engineering, and nursing, identified likely places to provide their mobile reference service. In most cases, they selected a department computer cluster where students would be likely to gather. They contacted faculty to determine optimal times to provide the service, and they created advertisements for the service. They established a second area of outreach in a busy general commons area.

With only one laptop to share, the librarians quickly learned that scheduling was the biggest obstacle. Getting the message out was a second problem to overcome, especially in the commons area where faculty referral was not provided.

For both students and librarians the project was a very positive experience, and faculty endorsed it enthusiastically as well. Nearly all of the students who asked questions had never asked a librarian a question before, and several had never yet been to the library.

The mobile reference program continues this semester with an additional laptop and at least one more librarian participating. One of the newly targeted locations will be the campus writing center, where the staff there are especially excited about this new library service.

[Submitted by Judith L. Violette, Director of Library Services at Indiana University – Purdue University Fort Wayne, 01-31-2007. Contact Tiff Adkins, [AdkinsT@ipfw.edu](mailto:AdkinsT@ipfw.edu) for more information.]