There’s nothing like the comfort of home-sweet-home to give a liaison librarian that home turf advantage.

When you are comfortable in a place you gain a certain freedom to create a space for yourself, to be involved in what’s going on and to work with situations as they arise.
It is easier to work as a liaison when folks know who you are. And, because the A&D School is my home, my presence is ubiquitous –

My office, my mailbox, my homepage in A&D space (listed under facilities, people, etc.), the library drop box, my door, etc.

Students see me around their “home” and feel like it’s easy to come to me for help when they need it.

Here I am in the ceramics studio where once a student emailed me a reference question while in class and told me to meet her there . . .
I’m at home and comfortable with the staff too. I can draw on their experience and I can help them in many ways too.

This is Andre, a member of the School’s IT staff. He helped create an online form that helped make it easier to put our student theses into our institutional repository, Deep Blue.

I help the staff by taking our new student recruits on a short campus tour including a tour of the Library.

Of course, as staff, we also have fun, like this wonderful staff retreat where we made raku pots.
There’s nothing like the zany art faculty to help you feel at home.

Because they run into me as they are heading to the photocopier or on their way to class, faculty are more likely to let me know how their students are doing with their class projects. They often ask my advice about how to get their students away from Google and into using more library resources.

So feeling like I am at home in terms of my physical space, as well as at home with the people I work with, facilitates my work as a liaison.
Now sports teams have the home turf advantage because they don’t have to travel. For me, the issue of travel is a bit different.

Being a field librarian has helped me to do more traveling which in turn has served to enhance the Library collections and my subject expertise and professional connections.
The School of A&D highly encourages faculty, students, and staff to travel abroad. This giant map at the end of the hallway by my office helps students connect with people who have traveled frequently to particular countries. It also identifies our exchange student partners. Because my husband is from India, I have been to India several times and am listed as a resource on this map.

There is also a newly created program in which A&D staff can take a group of 10-15 students abroad for an international experience working with the community or on a creative endeavor. I am currently talking with the Fiber studio coordinator about taking a group of students to India.
Early on in my career as a field librarian at the School, I got the opportunity to travel to Chicago to see the Joan Flasch Artists’ Book Collection. This came about because I had mentioned to one of the professors that I was interested in starting a collection of artists’ books for the Library. This professor insisted that I talk to the Dean about traveling to see this library because he knew the collection there well and thought I should see what the possibilities of such a collection might be. Even though I am considered a Library employee, this was something that would benefit the people in the School and the Dean of the School happily paid for my trip.
A few years ago the School of Art & Design hired a new faculty member – the rather famous graphic novelist, Phoebe Gloeckner. At the time we had very little in our collection to support her work and teaching, so at a new faculty orientation that I was invited to, I asked her what she might need. Little did I realize that this would be the beginning, not only of a new collection in our library, but a great friendship. In the process of developing the graphic novel collection for our library, I was fortunate to travel with Phoebe to Angouleme, France for their annual comic festival. There I acquired many interesting titles for our collection and got to meet some interesting people. Including R. Crumb.

A couple year later, Professor Gloeckner and I travelled to Barcelona, Spain for their comic convention. This time I was able to travel as Phoebe’s guest – all expenses paid. I met her Spanish publisher and got to visit the sidewalk book fair . . .

So even though being a field librarian has meant more travel for me, it has given me some great opportunities.
As you can see, my unique situation of having my office situated right there with the people I serve has been a tremendous advantage in many ways.

Just to recap, those three big advantage of being on the home turf include:

1. Being surrounded by cheering fans
2. Working in the comfort of a familiar place and with people who know me.
3. And travel – well let’s just say that I’m not at a disadvantage because of travel.

Sometimes being a field librarian is like trying to keep a ball in the air while sticking out my tongue – difficult to the average observer, but a heck of a lot of fun.
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