Criteria used for recommendation

High priority criteria:

1. The desk needs to be easy to find. Directions should be easy to give and the location easy to map.
2. The desk area should have adequate space for conducting side-by-side reference interactions and consultations, and should allow for quick access to nearby public computers.
3. The desk should be in reasonable proximity to support services such as circulation and reserves, scanning stations, and public printers.
4. The desk should be either co-located or in the proximity of other services we are building, such as the Scholarly Commons. Integration of services may be warranted in some cases.

Additional criteria:

A. The desk should be located in reasonable physical proximity to the virtual reference desk, facilitating collegial support.
B. Desk placement should consider the need for quiet space versus the kind of space that can tolerate the background noise that comes with the activity of a public working area.

Options

First floor options: 1) inside the Education and Social Sciences Library, 2) inside the Business and Economics Library, 3) in the Marshall Gallery, 4) in the old IRRC space ("hot dog stand").

- For various physical plant reasons, the Marshall Gallery and the old IRRC space were not considered to be viable options.
- The advantages of the ESSL and BEL spaces included their first floor location, ease of handling reference questions that might fit those locations, and access to available office space that could accommodate consultations, referrals, and perhaps the Scholarly Commons. (Meets, to some degree, criteria 1 and 2)
- The disadvantages of the ESSL and BEL spaces included the fact that these locations have active circulating print collections, that existing staff would continue to need office space, that there would be branding issues with the co-location of two distinct services, and that support services like circulation are located on another floor. (Fails to meet criteria 3 and 4, some concerns about 1 and 2).
- As plans for the first floor spaces develop, these issues will need to be revisited.
Second floor options: 1) Room 200, 2) current Information Desk area.

- Room 200 is currently viewed as quiet study space, so branding and user satisfaction may be issues (criteria B). Accommodations would need to be made to satisfy criteria 2 and 3.
- The current Information Desk area currently meets criteria 1, 2, 3, and B. Relatively minor, low-cost changes (e.g., more spaces between public workstations to facilitate consultation, utilizing the two built-in desks for consultation, etc.) could be made to improve those functions. Adjacent office space such as rooms 202 and 203 (currently used for other purposes) might be explored for allied services such as the Scholarly Commons and the virtual reference service (4 and A).

**Decision**

The Team determined that the second floor Information Desk area is the best option at this time. This location most closely meets the desired criteria, and, by being on the second floor, it allows the new reference operation to have a distinct “brand” separate from the Social and Applied Health Sciences services planned for the first floor locations.

We would like to emphasize that this recommendation should be revisited on a regular basis as services in the Library change and develop.

March 30, 2011