Reference Services New Service Model Team: Core Values and User Needs: Summary

Question 1: What do our patrons need or want in terms of reference?

Patrons want:

Help locating items, print and digital, whether at UIUC, I-share or through IRRC
In-depth help with using database and doing primary research
Answers from first person asked; if referral is necessary, then appropriate referral
Librarians and staff who are knowledgeable, friendly and provide follow-up, if need be;
Access through various means, such as email, in-person, phone, chat
Easy access to library
Good signage in libraries
Timely and accurate responses
Easy access to materials in print or digital form
As much material digitized as possible
Subject-specialists who are interpreters/mediators of the collection, who have a thorough knowledge of subject and research methodologies in their respective fields of inquiry, and understand the various formats of their field
Patrons need help selecting and using tools and interpreting the results.

Patrons need: all of the above plus:
Better assistance and instruction for finding the materials and doing research
Instruction in locating and using materials in their disciplines
Help navigating our large physical spaces and vast collections

Question 2: Core Values

Providing excellent reference service
Being service oriented
Providing instruction, particularly with regards to specific disciplines, that is make patrons life-long learners
Being able to determining what circumstances call for which type of assistance-- having the ability to know how to assist people in learning within the context of the particular environment
Being flexible, curious and willing to adapt, especially with regards to new technologies
Cooperation amongst librarians and unit libraries
Publicizing to staff and patrons our core values for reference/ instruction
Holding good reference interviews, especially with the aim of finding out what the patron really wants
Liaisons should know and remember individual patrons' research interests
From the comments the excellent reference librarian should be:
Knowledgeable in their subject area, both in terms of the content of their subjects but also in the research methodologies, publishing history, formats, languages, etc. of their subjects
Instructors, that is, capable of instructing patrons in using library resources and helping them to interpret search results
Able to determine what circumstances call for which type of assistance-- having the ability to know how to assist people in learning within the context of the particular environment for the
Friendly
Proactive in providing follow-up-- not afraid to follow up with patrons after the first encounter, either online or in person
Knowledgeable enough about the Library as a whole to make proper referrals
Physically near the materials in their area
Role models for staff
Flexible, curious and willing to adapt

Staff should be:
Conversant in the subject area(s) of their unit
Knowledgeable enough about the Library as a whole to make proper referrals
Friendly

Suggestions:
Look at available data, such as from user surveys and LibQUAL for patron wants and needs
Our patrons don’t know what reference means, they can’t even distinguish between ranks in staff. They just want help finding what they need when they need it.
We need to work more closely with PhD students

Other comments:
Good reference puts a brand on our services and patrons throughout the State recognize our expertise and have come to have high expectations of what we can provide for them—leads to future public engagement/ library advancement. Reference services are the front lines of interaction with our patrons and therefore a meaningful intersection between the public and the library. It is imperative to have knowledgeable and personable representatives of the Library at this juncture.