Summary

The Reference Services NSM Team was charged to examine the current state of reference services at the UIUC Library and, where needed, to recommend a revised model(s) (see Appendix 1 for charge). We carefully and thoughtfully considered all aspects of reference services and in our deliberations consulted with various stakeholders in the Library. We believe that we have arrived at a robust, viable and sustainable plan that will benefit both staff and users (see Appendix 2 for team’s process). The team makes five main recommendations.

- The first recommendation addresses the organizational structure of reference at the Library. The team recommends that four reference desks covering broad academic areas be established to handle basic and mid-level questions (defined below). Units currently providing circulation and high-level research services will continue to do so. The reference desks will be:
  1. Main Library Reference Desk for general, Art and Humanities, International and Area Studies and Social Sciences
  2. Grainger Library Reference Desk for Physical Sciences
  3. ACES Funk Family Library Reference Desk for Life Sciences
  4. Undergraduate Library Reference Desk for undergraduate-level and general questions
- Second, the team recommends that a coordinator of reference services be hired to oversee the reference desk in the Main Library and to work with librarians at the other reference desks.
- Third, the team suggests that a reference services committee made up of members from units throughout the Library be formed to address issues such as service standards, training, investigation and implementation of new technologies as well as emerging modes for reference (e.g. embedded reference), search systems (e.g. EZ Search, social networking), best practices for referrals, on-going reference professional development, and library-wide assessment practices.
- Fourth, the team recommends the creation of a Research Support Services unit that would bring together librarians involved in general research support and would be made up of current members of the Reference Research and Government Information Services, Scholarly Commons and faculty in Information Technology.
- Fifth, the team offers a list of expectations for subject specialists relating to reference consultations.
- Additionally, the team makes brief recommendations concerning assessment, training, and the follow-on work of the Implementation Team.

Background

Reference services at the Library are currently provided by units located throughout campus. The Information Desk, located on the second floor of the Main Library, is staffed by Reference, Research and Government Information Services (RRGIS) and answers basic and mid-level reference questions in all disciplines. Reference queries needing more expert knowledge and ongoing assistance are referred to subject specialists. The Undergraduate Library (UGL)
features a reference desk geared to undergraduate patrons. Both RRGIS and UGL reference desks are staffed by librarians, graduate assistants and trained staff who answer questions in-person, over the phone, via email, and through Chat/IM. Most of the Library’s many departmental libraries offer reference service and each handles it differently in terms of staff, hours and services. Larger units might have a research desk that is staffed by librarians and graduate students, while smaller units might have tiered service in which patrons are automatically referred to subject specialists for all questions beyond the directional level. A few librarians are providing on-site reference service during office hours in academic buildings.

The Library’s current system for reference has a number of disadvantages. Because each unit handles reference separately, there is great inconsistency in the type, quality and hours of service, in the materials that support reference transactions, such as web pages and guides, in the training of staff and graduate assistants, and in the assessment of services. Another disadvantage is that patrons often have difficulty finding help. This is particularly true for patrons who seek assistance in the Main Library where reference desks are located in hard-to-find places and good signage is lacking. The system is not librarian-friendly either, as it prevents librarians from easily collaborating, exchanging ideas, making contacts and working as a team. Nor is the system agile enough to deal with changes in patrons’ research needs. The system of departmental libraries will continue in the future, though with fewer units as the result of the New Service Model program, because of interest in preserving departmental libraries, especially around disciplines and the difficulties of collapsing them (for instance, lack of adequate space for a single library).

Reference service at the University Library has changed substantially in recent years, both in terms of the types of questions received and the manner of receiving them, a trend that is occurring at most US research libraries. In response to these trends, some academic libraries have eliminated their reference desks altogether and opted for a consultation-only model for service. The volume and nature of questions received at our Library, through in-person and electronic communications, makes this drastic response to the changing research patterns of our patrons inappropriate.

More and more patrons are seeking assistance virtually, such as through email and Chat/IM (Instant Messaging). As a result, the number of walk-in and phone-in reference questions has steadily declined. Since implementation in 2001, the Chat/IM service has grown by about 15 percent each year and in FY2010 totaled over 7000 interactions. From FY2001 to FY2007 Library-wide, reference interactions decreased by 17 percent. A noted trend is the drastic reduction of “ready reference” questions and the growing complexity and interdisciplinarity of research queries. Patrons are now better able to find basic information on their own but need more help with more difficult research problems. Effectively assisting patrons requires greater training across a broad range of subjects than before.

Another factor impelling the Library to seek new ways of providing reference services is the current budget crisis, but this is only compelling us to re-think a system that is out-of-date. Our current model is unlikely to be the way we would organize our services if we were starting from the ground up, free from our facilities and our Library’s history. *In order to meet patrons’ reference needs the University Library must rethink its current system.*

**Definition of Reference and Reference Desk**

The team adopted the definition of reference formulated at the 2009 Reference Retreat which states that reference “is the act of using knowledge to connect users to what they need including the creation and management of information resources in physical and digital format.”
This act might include aspects of instruction and use the same tools but is a distinct yet complementary activity. Building on this definition, the team distinguished between three tiers of reference (see Appendix 5 for examples): tier 1 are directional and basic known-item questions, such as “Do we own this book?” “Do we have this journal electronically?” “Where are my course reserves?” Tier 2 are mid-level questions that require basic to intermediate research assistance, for example “I need a few articles on X” “I’ve never been to this library before, how do I start my research here?” “What’s the best database for my area?” Tier 3 are high-level research queries that require off-desk consultations with subject specialists, for instance “I am starting my research for my dissertation. How do I know I am being comprehensive in my searching?” “I need primary sources related to Y.”

The team also distinguished between reference and service desks. A reference desk is a place where patrons can turn for help tier 1 and 2 reference questions and, if a subject specialist is present, tier 3; these desks can be virtual or physical. Service desks, on the other hand, handle patron interactions that fall outside of the scope of reference, such as circulating materials, issuing library cards, and connecting patrons with the reference desk for immediate assistance or with subject specialists for consultations; they may be physical or virtual (such as the phone center).

**Vision**

Reference is a critical part of the Library’s mission to support the teaching and research of the faculty and students of the University as well as the informational needs of the community. Through reference services librarians and staff answer queries, help patrons find the materials they need for scholarly work, use their expertise to facilitate the learning and teaching process, and promote the Library’s rich and diverse print and digital collections. Excellent reference service requires expert reference librarians and trained subject specialists working closely together; units performing reference services operating in tandem; ongoing training and cross-training for all personnel engaged in reference; vigorous and widespread marketing and publicizing; consistency in the type and level of services across units; and continual assessment. For a complete list of the team’s guiding principles see Appendix 3. The team’s recommendations take into account all of these factors to arrive at a robust plan for the future of reference at the Library.

**Recommendations**

1. **Recommendation for organization of reference at the Library**

   The team recommends that the Library adopt a system of interconnected reference and service desks, as defined above. Four reference desks (described below) will handle tier 1 and tier 2 reference questions in broad academic areas and refer tier 3 questions to appropriate subject specialists. If a subject specialist is present, then this individual can answer the query. For longer queries subject specialists might want to make appointments with patrons. These reference desks would be staffed with a combination of generalists and subject-specialist librarians, staff, and graduate students. Service on a centralized reference desk is currently not widespread in the Library and the team recognizes that mandatory reference hours may not be possible or acceptable for all librarians. However, it hopes that all
librarians will see the benefits of participating in a shared reference service and working closely with colleagues in similar disciplines for a short period of time each week (more benefits below). The staff and graduate assistants would be assigned to specific reference desks. The consolidated virtual reference service would be primarily done by first-year graduate assistants under the supervision of librarians. The four reference desks would be:

- A single reference desk in the Main Library that is located either on the first or second floor and answers general reference questions as well as those in the Arts and Humanities, International and Area Studies and Social Science. A robust virtual reference service, which might might be located separately, would work in tandem with the Main Library Reference Desk and could be staffed with graduate assistants under the supervision of librarians.

- A reference desk at the Undergraduate Library for questions from undergraduates and, during periods when all other units in the main Library are closed, all Library patrons. The UGL Reference Desk would work in conjunction with the Main Library Reference Desk and the Virtual Reference Service and be an extention of them. It could be staffed by second year graduate students who had been trained in their first year through the Virtual Reference Service and the Main Library Reference Desk.

- A reference desk at Grainger Library for Physical Sciences.

- A reference desk at the Aces Funk Family Library for the Life Sciences.

Under this model unit libraries would continue to have service desks for circulation functions. Subject specialists present in the units would handle all tiers of reference. However, if no subject specialist is available, then staff would refer the patron to the appropriate reference desk for immediate assistance and/or make an appointment for them with a subject specialist. The team recognizes that in some units non-faculty staff possess considerable subject expertise and are an important and valued resource for patrons. The proposed model need not diminish their role as subject specialists. Several libraries would exist outside of the consolidated reference services structure and continue to offer all levels of reference in their areas. They are Music and Performing Arts Library (MPAL), Architecture and Art Library (AAL), Rare Book and Manuscript Library (RBMSL), University Archives (UA) and the Sousa Archives and Center for American Music (SACAM). The types of questions received at these units are heavily dependent on physical resources located in them and are best answered in them. While all of these units tend to function independently in terms of reference services, they are still part of the library structure and would benefit from interactions with other units involved in reference services, for example they might send representatives to the RSC as a means to both inform the committee about reference trends in their areas and, in turn, learn new directions from the committee. Many art and music questions are currently handled by RRGIS, especially during the hours when the MPAL and AAL are closed, a situation that will most likely continue in the future. Thus it would be beneficial that MPAL and AAL provide cross-training to personnel at the Main Library Reference Desk. The Main Library Reference Desk will not handle questions about rare materials and will refer patrons to the appropriate unit(s) for assistance.
The team believes this model:

- Is the most straightforward path to assistance for patrons who are not already aware of the unit libraries and subject librarians affiliated with their areas of study. Those familiar with their unit libraries and librarians are still free to walk in to those units or make appointments for consultation as they do now.

- Allows for the greatest on-the-desk cross-training for all staff, which is important for the increasing interdisciplinary nature of patron questions and ensuring the broadest availability of staff able to answer level 2 questions.

- Allows for the sharing of staff between the Main Library Reference Desk and UGL Reference Desk and thus builds on affinities and overlap in subject expertise.

- Provides the longest hours of service for tier 1 and tier 2 questions arriving through all modes of communication, while still addressing reductions in personnel. Tier 3 questions will be primarily handled by referral, as they are now.

- Removes the increasingly busy IM service and email from the in-person service point to allow more concentrated attention for both in-person patrons and IM patrons. It is recommended that the telephone ring to both the Main Library Reference Desk and the Virtual Desk to allow the greatest flexibility in workflow.

- Will enable easier echange of best practices for new methods of delivering reference services among subject specialists.

- Through participation in a shared reference service subject specialists will be better able to observe trends and patterns in reference questions, expand knowledge of reference tools and build a team environment.

- Is the most sustainable given the dwindling number of personnel involved in reference and research assistance (generalists, liaisons, and graduate assistants).

2. Recommendation for administration of reference services

The team recommends that the position of the Coordinator of Reference Services (CRS) be established for the administration of reference services library-wide. This individual would hold the position 100% for three years at which point the position could move to a librarian within or outside of the Main Library. The person in this position might report to the AUL for Services or be housed in the Research Support Services unit (discussion in Recommendation 3).
The CRS’s duties would include:

1. Manage the operations of the Main Library Reference Desk and the Virtual Reference Desk. The duties would include determining staffing levels, assuring participation from all subject and functional specialists in the Main Library, and scheduling.
2. Coordinate the collection development and management of the electronic reference collection, print collection in room 200, and the retrospective reference collection in the Main Stacks in conjunction with subject specialists throughout the Library. This individual would also coordinate with librarians who collect reference materials for their units to establish and maintain cross-Library principles and practices for print and online reference tools.
3. Lead the Reference Services Committee (RSC). The RSC will be a library-wide group convened to address issues such as service standards, training, investigation and implementation of new technologies as well as emerging modes for reference (e.g. embedded reference), search systems (e.g. EZ Search, social networking), best practices for referrals, on-going reference professional development, and library-wide assessment practices. The committee will meet regularly to review the state of reference in the Library, exchange ideas about new services or resources, and discuss ways of promoting them across the Library and campus.
4. Collaborate with heads of other reference desks to disseminate ideas of RSC and adapt them to their user groups.
5. Coordinate a common training, assessment, and skills program for core reference skills that are shared across all reference desks. Training for reference in specific disciplines would also be handled by individual reference desks, for example for the physical sciences at Grainger.
6. Be in charge of hiring, training, and project management for graduate assistants.
7. Supervise 1 FTE staff person who will provide assistance with various functions relating to the Main Library Reference Desk and the room 200 reference collection.

3. Recommendation for Research Support Services Unit

The team recommends the creation of a Research Support Services (RSS) unit that would include current members of RRGIS, Scholarly Commons and faculty in the Office of Web Services. All of these individuals have as part of their primary job duties support of researchers across all fields. Thus it makes sense to place them in a single unit geared towards research support for all levels.

The team recommends the following configuration for the unit:

1. Head of RSS—50% time appointment for three years selected from members of the Research Support Services unit. Duties would include: providing leadership for a
creative environment, overseeing operations in the unit, preparing unit reports and documents, and mentoring junior faculty.

2. Membership of this unit will be determined by the Research Services report that is forthcoming. The Reference NSM Team believes that the high-level vision for a Research Support Services unit is innovative and therefore endorses it. The positions mentioned above are envisioned as part of the new unit, but there are others that might be included as full or partial appointments as the idea develops. These roles may be refined by the Reference NSM Implementation Team.

3. The Scholarly Commons would continue to be a set of services, a place, and a brand. The reconfiguration of librarians and staff would provide a broader base for support for all of the activities of the new unit and improved coordination and collaboration.

4. Activities of the unit would include:

- Providing liaison and instructional services, in person and online, to academic programs with a “campus-wide” scope that fall outside the lines of defined, subject-based liaison service relationships, such as to the Ethnography of the University or the Graduate College.
- Designing, delivering, and coordinating workshops for graduate- and faculty-level researchers emphasizing the research process (rather than research in a particular subject). Two examples are the popular workshops on managing information and current awareness tools. These workshops will take into consideration the fact that research processes are not necessarily consistent from one discipline to another.
- Assisting in data services and other specialized scholar support services.
- Educating the campus and the Library on scholarly communication issues and about Library support for archiving and distributing scholarly work and datasets.
- Being innovative in the delivery of reference and information services in the digital environment.
- Designing and maintaining the Library’s gateway and unified web presence.
- Assessing and collaborating on the design of next generation research tools, in consultations with groups like IT and Grainger that are working on Easy Search.
- Informing Library users about Library decision-making on the IT environment, public space, etc.
- Training of library staff at all levels on issues of reference and research services, customer service, and diversity

4. Recommendation for Tier 3 Consultations

Tier 3, as the team understands it, is an expansive and collaborative enterprise which requires librarians to work in non-traditional ways and venues. The team recommends a set of expectations for public service faculty and staff in the area of tier 3 reference. Many of the expectations deal explicitly with actual reference consultations, while others serve to promote, sustain, and influence these interactions. Most are already part of the professional life of public service faculty and staff in the Library. To help them meet these expectations the team recommends that the Library provide training and venues for discussing and sharing ideas about
these activities. The team is providing a list of expected activities but not guidelines on how they should be performed.

The work of public service faculty and staff might include:

- Support all tiers of reference services by accepting and collaborating on research questions originating from colleagues in other units. This collaboration will facilitate cross-training and foster a team environment.
- Continually seek opportunities for providing consultation services via new venues and technologies. In some cases, this might include office hours and embedded services. In others, it might include a presence in course management software or online reference services.
- Serve as brokers between faculty and graduate students and various individuals in the Library and across campus, for instance between faculty and the Scholarly Commons. This could mean contacting other librarians and setting up ad-hoc teams.
- Apply knowledge of traditional and emerging research methods for all disciplines served.
- Engage faculty in conversations about trends in scholarly publishing, including issues of open access, copyright and scholarly repositories on campus and elsewhere.
- Help faculty and graduate students with data management, for instance by offering workshops on RefWorks and other types of information management software.
- Develop subject-specific web-based reference tools and pathfinders.

Additional possible activities for librarians with designated liaison roles:

- Actively serve as liaisons to departments, centers, and institutes on campus and through these relationships promote Library services and garner feedback, which might be shared with the RSC and CRS.
- Work closely with faculty on departmental activities, such as designing curricula, crafting documents (such as mission statements and grants), sitting on committees, and planning conferences. By means of these activities subject specialists can share their expertise, gain insight into the needs of their constituents, and more directly participate in the educational and research mission of the University.
- Be present in classrooms and laboratories during formal and informal instruction and thus make the classroom and lab an extension of the Library.
- Accompany faculty and students on educational events outside of the classroom, such as fieldtrips and site visits, thus bringing the Library into the community and extending its public engagement role.

5. **Recommendation for Assessment Plan**

The team recommends that data and the methods of collecting it be developed in consultation with the Library Assessment Working Group during the Implementation Team phase. For a list of considerations, see Appendix 4.

6. **Recommendation for Training**
The team believes that excellent training and cross-training is a vital part of reference services and that its recommendation for the reference coordinator and reference committee along with a centralized model of reference will lead to better training for all individuals involved but particularly for graduate assistants and staff. The team recommends that ACRL’s information literacy standards and RUSA’s Behavioral Guidelines be used as a framework for reference training.

7. Recommendation for Implementation Team charge

a. Determine how to sustain service in units when librarians are serving a reference desk located outside of the unit.

b. Determine the optimum location of the reference desk in the Main Library. The Planning team has formulated several ideas for possible locations and will be passing that information along to the Implementation Team.

c. Consider whether the transition in Main Library from many to a single reference desk should be accomplished quickly or in stages.

d. In consultation with the Library Assessment Working Group, determine the data and methods for assessing the new reference service model.

e. Draft position descriptions for the Coordinator of Reference Services and the Head of the Research Support Services unit.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Charge:
Overview and Goals

In person reference transactions have been dropping steadily library-wide for years, while online reference has grown dramatically during the same time period. Although the overall volume is down, many librarians report that questions coming in are increasingly complex and difficult. The current model of staffing many separate physical reference service points, including two general reference desks (at the Main and Undergrad Libraries), is staff intensive and restricts the amount of time that librarians are able to spend investigating new models of reference service that situate library services staff and services within researchers' regular workflows, both online and in person. The primary goal of the team is to examine the current models of how reference services is delivered to users, recommend a revised model(s) for Library reference services, and develop a comprehensive assessment approach that results in the following:

- A consistent and improved level of reference services to the Library’s primary user populations;
• A flexible model that will inform and accommodate other current and future Library-wide reference services (e.g., chat reference) and define the relation of general reference services to subject-specialty reference services.
• A recognition that reference encompasses a broad range of activities that support the research process and extend the reach of reference services (e.g., website development, search tool development, services to mobile devices, embedded services, research support in the Scholarly Commons, etc.)
• Clearly defined leadership roles for all reference activities;
• A common methodology for library-wide reference service assessment;

The group will analyze and incorporate the recommendations of the 2009 Reference Retreat, including the definition of reference: “Reference is the act of using knowledge to connect users to what they need including the creation and management of information resources in physical and digital format. Reference service should not be dependent on time or place of the user.”

The team will deliver a final report and recommendations to the University Librarian and Library Executive Committee by April 30, 2010. (This date was subsequently extended)

Charge
The group will:
1. Define the relationship and workflow between general reference and subject specific reference;
Recommend workflows connecting the two, such as a robust referral model that connects users to appropriate specialists with subject, technology, or other relevant expertise throughout the Library;
2. Make recommendations for optimal placement, function, and staffing of physical and virtual service points;
3. Consult with library stakeholders likely to be affected by changes in physical or virtual services, such as Central Access Services, the Scholarly Commons, User Education, and the Services Advisory Committee, as appropriate;
4. Consult with users and review existing data (IM, chat, and email transcripts, Library-wide surveys, Desk Tracker data) to identify key user needs, and possible impacts of changes to reference services;
5. Define a model for leadership, coordination and professional development of reference services throughout the Library;
6. Outline a plan for assessing the success of the proposed models, making adjustments based on the results of that assessment;
7. Assess overlaps, gaps, and distinct reference services offered between RRGIS and UGL (and other libraries as appropriate); identify which of these need to be combined, enhanced, reduced, modified, or eliminated; As part of this work, a subgroup will:
   • Make recommendations on what current and future services currently offered by RRGIS and UGL should be offered as part of Library-wide reference services;
   • Identify and recommend areas of reference service where librarians in RRGIS and the Undergraduate Library can assume or continue a leadership role in designing, testing, innovating, and sharing knowledge of best practices for new methods of reference service;
   • Identify new services to be offered by RRGIS and the UGL that require more staff time than is currently allocated to them to be successful;
• Assess current faculty and staff skills and interests, and recommend training needed to achieve all of the above.

Membership
Team Leaders: Paula Carns, Modern Languages and Latin American Library Services (liaison to Literatures and Languages Team) and Kathleen Kern, Reference, Research and Government Information Services
Peggy Glatthaar, Central Access Services (staff member)
Karen Hogenboom, Numeric and Geospatial Data Librarian
Lura Joseph, Geology Librarian
Lynne Rudasill, Global Studies and Education & Social Science Library (liaison to International and Area Studies Team)
Sue Searing, Library and Information Science Librarian
Ellen Swain, Student Life and Culture Archives
David Ward, Undergraduate Library
Greg Youngen, Veterinary Medicine Library (liaison to Biology and Life Sciences Team)
Administrative Liaison: Scott Walter

Resource people with whom the Team may want to consult:
Mary Burkee, Central Access services
Lisa Hinchliffe, Susan Avery and Merinda Hensley, Information Literacy and Instruction
Lori Mestre, Undergraduate Library
Bill Mischo, Grainger Engineering Library (Easy Search)
Wendy Shelburne, Electronic Resources
Sarah Shreeves, Scholarly Commons
Becky Smith, Reference, Research and Government Information

Submitted to the Executive Committee for consideration: December 2010
Approved by the Executive Committee: February 8, 2010

Appendix 2

Team’s Process: The Team proceeded in the following manner:

1. **Radical ideas.** To get a sense of people’s ideas with regards to reference and to push people to think in new ways the team leaders asked the members to submit their most radical ideas.

2. **Patron Needs and Core Values.** The team leaders next asked the members to submit their ideas on what they believe patrons want and/or need in terms of reference services and their own core values with regards to reference services. The team leaders proposed this exercise in response to team members’ concerns that the team could not move forward without a baseline of assumptions. The team felt that exercise should be open to the entire Library and thus the team leaders sent an email to the entire Library faculty with the following questions: What do our patrons need or want in terms of reference? What are our core values? Thirteen people plus the team members responded. The team discussed the responses at its March 11, 2010 meeting.

3. **Subgroups.** The team next divided into two subgroups around two ideas: librarian-initiated services and patron-initiated services.
a. Librarian-initiated services

Subgroup members:
Paula Carns (leader)
Lisa Hinchliffe, Coordinator for Information Literacy, invited to join
Lura Joseph
Lynne Rudasill

This subgroup met twice (March 16 and March 30, 2010). The committee developed a list of librarian-initiated activities for consideration at the UIUC Library (many are already in practices in various units and some are listed in recommendation 5 for expectations for subject specialists) around the proposed categories of outreach: resource guides development, selective dissemination of information, referral, ongoing assessment, and training. Main activities would be: working closely with campus departments and units, providing on-site services, developing online guides and marketing library services. The subgroup felt that each activity adopted by the Library should have a best practices policy that could be crafted from existing internal or external documents. The subgroup acknowledged that many librarian-initiated activities and tools might be used in instruction or have instructional components. However, the subgroup felt that reference and instruction are two separate but intertwined activities.

Patron-initiated services

Subgroup members:

Mary Burkee
Peggy Glatthar
Karen Hogenboom
Kathleen Kern (co-chair)
Susan Searing
Becky Smith
Ellen Swain
David Ward (co-chair)

Models

The members of the team contributed models for delivery of patron-initiated reference service. These models were then discussed and condensed into three models that were presented to the focus group and then refined to two models that were presented at a NSM Stuff Session (see Stuff Session below for full description).

4. Focus Group. The team presented the three most viable organizational models to a focus group that consisted of heads of current NSM teams, librarians in the Arts and
Humanities, as well as anyone who wanted to attend. The latter were eager to participate in the focus group, as there are four Arts and Humanities libraries in the Main Library (Classics Library, English History, Newspaper and Philosophy Library, and Modern Languages and Linguistics Library) that will be affected by any plans for reference in this building. The team explained its vision of the three levels of reference and presented three models. Due to time constraints the team did not present its ideas on virtual reference.

The three models presented were:

**Model A.** This model calls for a single reference desk in the Main Library for Area Studies, Arts and Humanities (not including art and music, which would be handled by the Architecture and Art Library and the Music Library), and Social Sciences that would be located either on the first or second floor, be staffed by librarians in these disciplines, and charged to answer tier 1 and 2 reference queries and refer tier 3 questions to appropriate subject specialists. This unit would also offer a robust virtual reference services that might function separately but in tandem with the single reference desk. Additionally, in the Main Library, the University Archives and the Rare Book and Manuscript Libraries will offer tier 3 assistance for the unique materials in their collections. A reference desk at Grainger library will handle reference questions in the Physical and Life Sciences. In total this model calls for 5 reference desks.

**Model B.** This model calls for one desk in the Main Library for all units in this building for tiers 1 and 2; tier 3 will continue to be handled by the units. In addition, there will be reference desks in the Undergraduate Library, Grainger Library (for Physical Sciences) and Aces (Life Sciences). This model calls for 4 reference desks across 4 buildings, plus a virtual services desk.

**Model C.** This model locates reference services within departmental libraries and does not include a single desk in the Main Library.

5. **Stuff Session.** The team gave a summary of its activities and presented Models A and C at a NSM Stuff Session. There is was time for only a few questions and comments. Noteworthy was a comment on the viability of Model C given that next year the Library will have fewer librarians and staff and will units will be hard pressed to provide coverage.

**Appendix 3**

**Guiding Principles**

The Reference Services NSM Team believes that reference is one of the most important functions of the University Library. It is not alone; the many individuals who responded to the team’s call for core values as well as the many people with whom the team spoke in the process of its deliberations strongly agree. In making its decisions the team followed these principles, many of which were formerly presented at the Reference Retreat in summer 2009:
Reference is a critical component of the Library’s public services and all involved in public service should be service-oriented.

Though reference might include aspects of instruction and use the same tools, it is a distinct yet complementary activity.

Patrons seeking reference help at the Library should be able to easily identify and locate reference librarians and subject specialists.

Patrons seeking reference help at the Library should all receive the same level and quality of service.

Patrons should encounter a consistency of presentation and coverage in the Library’s many online reference guides.

The Library should actively advertise its reference services including its core values with regards to reference, its rich print and online reference collections, and its many online reference guides.

All library personnel involved in reference services should be well trained in the subjects they cover as well as in traditional and emerging modes of reference services.

Librarians involved in reference should be cross-trained in various disciplines in order to effectively answer the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of reference questions.

There should be greater cooperation and exchange between units and librarians performing reference services.

Plans for the future of reference services at the Library must take into account the changing nature of reference.

Plans for the future of reference services at the Library must take into account the University’s budget crisis and reality that there will be few personnel available to perform reference.

The Library should assess reference services on an on-going basis and use the data collected to inform future decisions about the services.

Appendix 4

Assessment Criteria

The team came up with the following questions to guide future discussions of assessment of reference. They are:
Is it easier for patrons to find assistance? This might be measured in terms of the number of directional questions asked, at least for in-person inquiries.

Are referrals more effective? Are they accurate and are patrons able to receive assistance in a timeframe that fits their needs?

Are subject liaisons able to spend more time on in-depth consultations and less on basic (tier 1) and mid-level (tier 2) questions when they are in their unit libraries?

Do staff working at the reference service points feel able to handle the variety of questions that they receive?

Are users pleased with the assistance that they receive from the reconfigured in-person desks and our virtual services?

Have we been able to offer the same level of service and hours of operation with a reduction in the number of staffing hours across all libraries? Specifically, have the combined Main Library desk and Virtual Services desk resulted in fewer people staffing than were staffed at the same time of day across all libraries in the Main and Undergrad buildings with reference service points. (Circulation/Consultation models are excluded from this as unit libraries will still handle these types of questions in situ.)

Appendix 5
Student Profiles to Illustrate Tiers of Service in the Education and Social Science Library

Ursula Undergraduate walks into ESSL initially with the following questions:

Tier 1 –

Where is Room 66?
the Applied Health Library?
Main Stacks?
The Men’s Restroom (we don’t ask why)?

Where do I find this book?

Do you have a copy of the APA Manual of Style?

How do I get a book that is marked “Storage” from this library?

How do I print from this computer?

Students asking these questions can be from any variety of subject areas and departments. They are simply overwhelmed by the library layout.

As a student doing an assignment for a specific class, Ursula might ask:

Tier 2 –
Can you show me where I would find historical textbooks? I am trying to compare how they treat the massacre at Wounded Knee as years have gone by.
Can you help me find this article? I don’t think it is available online. (It turns out to be a bad citation and we go back to the database it came from to see if it can be corrected.)
I have to find a journal about special education, can you help?
Can you help me get started finding some resources for this assignment about ethnic conflict and especially the Rwandan genocide? Are there other case studies and statistics for this topic?
How can I find a copy of the Fruit Distraction test?
Can you help me find some statistics on the number of women receiving phds in economics and what areas they are most interested in writing about?

Many of these questions require either just a bit more expertise in delivering reference services (asking the appropriate questions of the user to get to the crux of the matter) or some degree of knowledge about the subject area involved. Most of these can be answered at least initially by a non-subject specialist who has had some training in the area, who also realizes when it is appropriate to refer items to the subject specialist.

Gregory Grad comes to the ESSL library with the following questions:

Tier 3 –

I am writing a senior honors thesis. Can you help me get started?
Can I make an appointment with someone who knows about educational policy to find more resources for the paper I am writing?
I need some help with a literature search for my thesis/dissertation, can you help me?
I know I am not finding everything that has been written on this topic, can someone sit down with me and go over what I have found.

All of these questions would be best answered by a subject specialist, although the non-specialist might be tempted to work with the user up to a point. The advantage to immediately referring the user to the specialist is the opportunity to create an opportunity to work closely from the outset with the individual in matching skills and knowledge to their needs.