Reference Services NSM Team Report
Draft submitted to the Library Executive Committee
University of Illinois at Urbana Library

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OVERVIEW

Summary
To meet our charge (Appendix 1: Charge), we carefully and thoughtfully considered all aspects of reference services in the U of I Library and in our deliberations consulted with various stakeholders (Appendix 2: Team Process). We believe that we have arrived at a robust, viable, and sustainable plan that will benefit both staff and users. The team recommends the following:

1) **Structure of reference service desks**
   Establish four physical reference desks and one virtual reference desk covering broad academic areas to handle basic (tier 1) and mid-level (tier 2) questions (defined below). Units currently providing circulation and upper-level (tier 3) research services will continue to do so. The reference desks will be:
   a) Multi-subject desks administered by a member of the Research Support Services Team:
      i) Main Library Reference Desk for general, Humanities, International and Area Studies, and Social Sciences with basic assistance in the Sciences and Arts.
      ii) Undergraduate Library Reference Desk for undergraduate-level and general questions across a wide variety of disciplines
      iii) A dedicated Virtual Reference Desk to answer IM and text-messaging questions during the times when reference service is busiest, to remove this traffic from the in-person desk in order to provide better service for all patrons and reduce stress. This desk will also provide back-up for telephone inquiries.
   b) Physical Sciences and Engineering Reference Desk at Grainger Library
   c) Life Sciences Reference Desk at ACES Funk Family Library

2) **Coordination of reference practice**
   Create a Reference Services Committee made up of members from units throughout the Library 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.

3) **Research support services**
   Form a Research Support Services unit comprised of librarians, staff, and GAs involved in general research support and made up of the members of the current Reference Research and Government Information Services, Scholarly Commons, and Web Technologies and Content Creation units.

4) **Roles of subject specialists**
   Establish a consistent practice for reference consultations and reference work that occurs away from a reference desk. To acknowledge and value these activities, the team presents a list of expectations for subject specialists to articulate the nature and value of many types of reference work performed in our Library.
5) Support of successful implementation

Lastly, the team makes brief recommendations concerning assessment, training, and the follow-on work of the Implementation Team. (Recommendations 5-7)

Background

Reference services at the Library are currently provided by units located throughout campus. Most offer reference service and each unit handles it differently in terms of service, staffing, and hours. Some larger units might have reference desks that are 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. In addition, the Information Desk located on the second floor of the Main Library and staffed by Reference, Research and Government Information Services (RRGIS), 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 that is 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.

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 guide; in the training of staff and graduate assistants; and in the assessment of services. Patrons often have difficulty finding the right level of 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 dispersed environment makes it difficult for library staff at all levels to be aware of details about the services of other units and to make appropriate referrals. The current configuration does not support team-work, as the administrative overhead and staffing demands of existing desks hinders librarians from easily collaborating, exchanging ideas, making contacts, providing ongoing cross-training, and working as a team to support the reference needs of our students and scholars. The system is not agile enough to deal with changes in patrons’ research needs as staffing is kept siloed and lacks the fluidity to respond to changes in patron’s research behaviors.

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. Increasingly, patrons are conducting their library research remotely. Some seek assistance virtually, such as through email and Chat/IM (Instant Messaging). At the same time, 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 (by 26 percent in fall 2010) and in FY2010 totaled over 7000 interactions. From FY2001 to FY2007 reference interactions in all services (IM, email, in-person, telephone) decreased by 17 percent across the entire Library. However, noted trends in academic libraries
are the drastic reduction of “ready reference” questions and the growing complexity and interdisciplinarity of research queries. Effectively assisting patrons requires greater training across a broad range of subjects than before.

In response to these trends, some academic libraries have eliminated their reference desks altogether and have 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 such a model inappropriate.

Another factor impelling the Library to seek new ways of providing reference services is the current budget crisis, but this is only forcing us to re-think a system that is out-of-date. Our current model is unlikely to be how 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.*

**Definitions of Reference, Reference Tiers, Reference Desk, Service Desk, and Embedded Services**

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 and use the same tools as library instruction and but is a distinct yet complementary activity.

Building on this definition of reference, 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.”

For the purposes of this report, the team defines *reference desks* and *service desks* in very specific ways, which may or may not match current practices in the Library. For the team a reference desk can be either a physical or virtual space and is a place where patrons can get help with tier 1 and 2 reference questions and, if the right subject specialist is present, tier 3. 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). Some libraries, such as the ACES and Grainger Libraries have a combined reference and circulation desk. These are still considered to be reference desks as they have a clearly designated reference person available for extensive hours and are staffed with personnel able to handle questions at levels above what is answered at a service desk.
Embedded services are offered outside the library, either in physical locations such as offices in academic departments or in department-based virtual spaces such as course management systems. Reference is the most visible and measurable component of embedded services, but other aspects of liaison work also take place. Embedded services are typically, but not solely, offered by subject specialists. All tiers of reference can occur within embedded services.

**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; planning operations in tandem; ongoing training and cross-training for all personnel engaged in reference; vigorous and widespread marketing and publicity; 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.
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 physical and one virtual reference desks (described below) will handle tier 1 and tier 2 reference questions in a broad array of academic areas and for tier 3 questions will refer patrons to appropriate subject specialists and will make appointments for the patron with subject specialists when it suits the nature of the inquiry. A combination of cross-trained generalists and subject-specialist librarians, staff, and graduate student would staff these desks. Subject specialists across the Library would help to train these individuals.

A. Multi-subject research service points, administered by a member of the Research Support Services Unit (Recommendation three) and comprised of the following three areas:

1. A single reference desk in the Main Library that is located either on the first or second floor to answer general reference questions in tiers 1 and 2 and, if the right subject specialist is present, tier 3, as well as questions the Humanities, International and Area Studies, and Social Sciences.
2. 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 questions.
3. A virtual reference desk to work in tandem with the Main Library and Undergraduate reference desks to handle questions tiers 1 and 2 and, if the right subject specialist is present, tier 3. It would be staffed during the peak times of in-person and IM reference volume and be located at a desk away from in-person traffic. Subject specialists would be encouraged to continue to offer IM service from their offices as a “virtual office hours” to complement the services of this desk.

B. A Physical Sciences and Engineering reference desk at Grainger Library to handle tiers 1 and 2 questions and, if a subject specialist is present, tier 3 questions.

C. A Life Sciences reference desk at the Aces Funk Family Library to handle tiers 1 and 2 questions and, if a subject specialist is present, tier 3 questions.

D. Specialty reference services, as defined below in section Specialty Reference Services.

E. Service desks in other units that are part of the Multi-subject service points, which no longer maintain reference desks staffed by subject specialist for the duration of opening hours, but would have consultation services available for the times when a subject specialist is available or by appointment.
Organization and Support for Reference Desk Services

Support from librarians is defined as:

• Regular hours at a designated reference desk or desks: (Main/UGL/Virtual multi-subject desks; Grainger; ACES), the exact number of hours is an implementation team decision and might change over time based on trends in patron questions and the number of available librarians, staff, and GAs; and one or more of the following:

• Cross-training of personnel who provide in-person or virtual desk hours for this service; or
• Providing advisory services to the administration of this service, including participation on research services advisory discussions, participation in assessment efforts, and overall evaluation and improvement of services provided through Interdisciplinary Research Services; or
• Design and maintenance of online access and delivery systems to support reference, such as IM Collaborator, Desk Tracker, Easy Search, etc.

Support on the Reference Desks and with the above services will also be provided by appropriate staff and all graduate assistants with public service appointments.

Multi-subject Research Services (Main, UGL, and Virtual desks)

• Applied Health Sciences Library
• Business and Economics Library
• Classics library
• Communications Library
• Education and Social Sciences Library
• Global Studies Virtual Library
• History, Philosophy, and Newspaper Library
• International and Area Studies Library
• Labor and Industrial Relations Virtual Library
• Languages and Literatures Library
• Library and Information Sciences Virtual Library
• Research Support Services
• Undergraduate Library

Physical Sciences and Engineering Research Services

• Chemistry Library
• Grainger Library, including Physics and Geology
• Mathematics Library

Life Sciences Research Services

• ACES Library
• Biology Library
• Biotechnology Virtual Library
• Veterinary Medicine Library

(February 1, 2011 amendment: Following EC's discussion of this report, the Natural History Survey Library was removed from the list of units supporting the Life Sciences desk. The Institute of Natural Resource Sustainability librarians are not University Library employees and will not be expected to work regular shifts at the Funk Library reference point, but are nonetheless interested in exploring opportunities for collaboration.)
Specialty Reference Services

Several libraries would exist outside of the consolidated reference services structure and continue to offer all levels of reference in their areas at assigned reference desks. The types of questions received at these units are defined by a heavy dependence on physical resources located in them (to a far greater extent than is true for most units). They are:

- Architecture and Art Library
- Map and Geography Library
- Music and Performing Arts Library
- Rare Book and Manuscript Library
- Sousa Archives and Center for American Music
- University Archives

These specialty libraries will contribute to library-wide research planning and assessment through the reference services advisory group, provide cross-training to the multi-subject and other service desks as appropriate, and provide input into library-wide referral models.

Justification

This model provides:

1. 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;
2. Subject specialists who are better able to observe trends and patterns in reference questions, have an expanded knowledge of reference tools and create a team environment within the Library through participation in a shared reference service;
3. The greatest on-the-desk cross-training for all staff, which is important for the increasing interdisciplinary nature of patron questions;
4. The broadest availability of staff able to answer tier 2 questions;
5. Flexible staffing between the reference service desks at Main and Undergrad as well as the Virtual reference desk, in support of broad hours of service and cross-training;
6. 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;
7. More concentrated attention for both in-person patrons and IM patrons by removing the increasingly busy IM service and email from the in-person service point. 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;
8. Easier exchange of best practices for new methods of delivering reference services amongst subject specialists;
9. The most sustainable configuration given the dwindling number of personnel involved in reference and research assistance (generalists, liaisons, and graduate assistants).
2. Recommendation for the administration of reference services

The proposed model requires a new administrative structure. Coordination of the new services is divided into three areas, each with different leadership.

A. A member of the Research Support Services unit will:
   1. Manage the operations of the Main Library Reference Desk, UGL Research Desk, and the Virtual Reference Desk. The duties would include determining staffing levels, assuring participation from all subject and functional specialists serving these desks, and scheduling;
   2. Perform evaluation and measurement of the activities of the aforementioned reference desks and ensure that these assessments are used to inform staffing and training;
   3. Work with other librarians to coordinate the hiring, training, and project management for graduate assistants who would work at the Main Library, UGL, and Virtual Reference desks. These graduate assistants would likely have dual appointments in a departmental library, as many do now;
   4. Conduct assessment of the outcomes of the new service model and on-going assessment of trends in patrons’ reference needs;
   5. Provide service on the Main Library Reference Desk and Virtual Reference Desk.

B. Reference Coordinating Committee will:
   1. Be a library-wide group the addresses 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;
   2. Collaborate with heads of other reference desks to disseminate ideas of RSC and adapt them to their user groups;
   3. 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. The RSC would work with the Staff Development and Training Coordinator and the Library Assessment Working Group in these areas;

C. Reference responsibilities for the Head, Research Support Services will be:
   1. Coordination of 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;
2. Supervision of staff person(s) who will provide assistance with various functions relating to the Main Library and Virtual reference desks and the room 200 reference collection.

3. **Recommendation for Research Support Services Unit**

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 Technologies & Content Coordination brings together a logical set of individuals with a shared ethos. All of these individuals have as part of their primary job duties support to researchers across all fields rather than in a subject-liaison relationship and all are focused on services that are directly available to researchers. The job responsibilities of individuals will not change because of the merger, but the new unit will provide enhanced opportunities for the growth of individuals and evolution of their jobs. Creating a **single** unit will result in opportunities for increased administrative support, sharing of ideas, and collaboration.

This is a new model for a unit, and it would more closely resemble the current structure of the Scholarly Commons than it would the current structure of RRGIS or other public service units like ESSL or Modern Languages as the librarians will not be physically co-located. Another difference between RSS and a unit like RRGIS is that RSS would be transparent to library users: it would not have a location in the list of libraries, for example, but would exist to support the services offered by individuals and groups within the unit. RRGIS and Web Technologies and Content Coordination would cease to exist, and the Scholarly Commons would be a service supported by RSS in the same way that the Main Library and UGL reference desks and the Virtual reference desk would be supported by RSS.

The following configurations will support the work of the new unit:

1. **Head of RSS**—100% time appointment for three years. Duties include: providing leadership for a creative environment, overseeing operations in the unit, preparing unit reports and documents, and mentoring junior faculty. This position will also supervise staff members in the department and coordinate the reference collection as detailed in the above section. This position is increased to 100% and may be an internal appointment or external search.

2. **Appendix 6** contains the Research Services Report as proposed by RRGIS and vetted by the Scholarly Commons Coordinator and librarians in Web Development and Content Creation. The Reference NSM Team believes that the high-level vision for a Research Support Services unit allows the library to support reference services in a robust, flexible manner 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 will 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 new unit will be to:

   a. Coordinate the Main, UGL, and Virtual Reference Desks as described above in section 2A;
   b. Design, deliver, and coordinate workshops for graduate- and faculty-level researchers that cover general and broad-cutting topics such as information management, GIS, preparing posters, tracking difficult citations, and journal impact factors. These workshops may involve librarians, GAs, and staff from outside of RSS as teachers and workshop designers.
   c. Coordinate the services and space of the Scholarly Commons;
   d. Assist users in data services and other specialized scholar support services;
   e. Design and maintain the Library’s gateway and unified web presence;
   f. Provide collection development and maintenance for the general reference collection in room 200, Main Stacks Reference, and the Online Reference Collection;
   g. Assess and collaborate on the design of next generation research tools (such as Easy Search and VuFind), in consultations with groups like IT and Grainger;
   h. Provide liaison and instructional services, in person and online, to academic programs that fall outside the lines of defined liaison-service relationships, such as the Graduate College;
   i. Inform Library users about Library decision-making on the IT environment, public space, etc.;
   j. Train library staff at all levels on issues of reference and research services, customer service, and diversity;
   k. Provide research and reference service at appropriate service desks such as the Scholarly Commons and Main Library reference desk.

4. Recommendation for Tier 3 Consultations

Contemporary support for Tier 3 questions is an expansive and collaborative enterprise which requires librarians to work in non-traditional ways and venues. The Library should create a set of expectations for public service faculty and staff in the area of tier 3 reference, to ensure consistency of support for our patrons and to acknowledge the range of services that our librarians offer in this area. The team is providing a list of expected activities but not guidelines on how they should be performed. Many of the listed activities 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. In order for librarians and staff to meet these expectations, it is important that the Library administration endorse expectations and provide training and venues for discussing and sharing ideas about these activities.

The work of public service faculty and staff includes:

   a. Support for 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 seeking opportunities for 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;

Acting 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;

Applying knowledge of traditional and emerging research methods for all disciplines served;

Engaging faculty in conversations about trends in scholarly publishing, including issues of open access, copyright and scholarly repositories on campus and elsewhere;

Design, deliver, and coordinate workshops for graduate- and faculty-level researchers emphasizing the research process as it applies to their respective subject areas.

Developing subject-specific web-based reference tools and pathfinders.

Additional possible activities for librarians with designated liaison roles:

Actively serving 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 Reference Services Committee;

Working 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;

Being present in classrooms and laboratories during formal and informal instruction and thus make the classroom and lab an extension of the Library;

Accompanying 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

Assessment of the outcomes of the Reference NSM report should 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

Excellent training and cross-training is a vital part of reference services. The creation of the Reference Services Committee and the 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. Training requires involvement from many people, but will be lead by the Staff Development and Training Coordinator.
7. **Recommendation for Implementation Team charge**

a. Determine how to sustain circulation and tier 1 service in units when librarians are serving a reference desk located outside of the unit.
b. Determine the optimum location of the physical 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, and if a staged model is chosen how that will be accomplished with the end goal of a single desk.
d. In consultation with the Library Assessment Working Group, determine the data and methods for assessing the new reference service model.
e. Draft a position description for the Head of the Research Support Services unit.
f. Draft the charge for the Reference Services Committee.
Appendices

APPENDIX 1: REFERENCE NEW SERVICE MODELS TEAM

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 when change was expanded by EC to include reorganization of RRGIS, increased content related to tier 3 questions, and coordination between the Undergraduate Reference Desk and the Main Reference Desk.)

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, Librarywide 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 Librarywide 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
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APPENDIX 2: PROCESS
The Reference New Service Models 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 :**

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

   Outcomes  
   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 practice 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 subgroups 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.

   b. **Patron-initiated services**

   David Ward (co-leader)  Mary Burkee  Karen Hogenboom  Becky Smith  
   Kathleen Kern (co-leader)  Peggy Glatthaar  Sue Searing  Ellen Swain
Outcomes
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 model would also offer a robust virtual reference services that might function separately from 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 across 4 buildings plus a virtual desk.

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 subject specialists in their units. In addition, there will be reference desks in the Undergraduate Library, Grainger Library (for Physical Sciences) and ACES (Life Sciences). As with Model A, Art and Architecture; Music; Archives; and Rare Book and Manuscript would answer all questions in their areas. 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 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?

Does 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
(Examples from the Education and Social Sciences Library)
For further illustration, we encourage viewing of the video linked on the Reference NSM website

Tier 1 –
Ursula Undergraduate walks into the Library initially with the following questions:

- 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.

Tier 2 –
As a student doing an assignment for a specific class, Ursula might ask:

- 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.

Tier 3 –
Gregory Grad comes to the Library with the following questions:
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.
APPENDIX 6: RESEARCH SUPPORT SERVICES: A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The Current Situation
Reference, Research, and Government Information Services (RRGIS) supports researchers holistically, providing interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary research assistance through administration of a main reference point and a ubiquitous virtual reference service, management of a core online and print reference collection, open workshops addressing a variety of information management topics, library-wide staff professional development, research using government information, and innovative technology development.

The common thread of RRGIS is support of the University of Illinois Library’s patrons as scholars. While other libraries focus on the broader student life of the undergraduate, or the disciplinary position of scholars, RRGIS supports all groups in their position as scholars. Acknowledging that scholars in different disciplines approach their work differently, there are common needs among the undergraduate researching for a 10 page paper, a psychologist, an engineer, and a participant in the Osher Lifelong Learning program. RRGIS is not just a safety net for catching users who might fall through the cracks elsewhere but a unit dedicated to increasing the research skills of faculty, staff and students and educating the campus regarding the many ways in which the library supports research and teaching, while assuring that scholars are connected to their subject liaison and disciplinary libraries.

The Future
RRGIS librarians are connected by their commitment to serve the entire academic community through providing foundational research support throughout the library. Through our contact with scholars at all levels, we are positioned to communicate the experience of a “common user,” to improve the library research experience online and in our physical spaces.

The support of like-minded librarians with a focus on the broad view of our users has been fundamental to the successes of the entire library. RRGIS is currently a vital but narrowly constructed department. The current organization does not account for roles in the library which have a similar mission to serve all scholars. We advocate an approach that brings more of these activities together within one new unit for Research Support. This new unit would bring together positions that support web services, instruction and support for scholars such as Data Services and the Savvy Researcher, electronic research services, library-wide reference collections, diversity services, and leadership for reference services. Bringing these services under the umbrella of a single unit will leverage the unique view of the “common user” and thus increase efficiency and collaboration, bridge cross-library and cross-campus services, and allow for the development of more responsive user-centered service programs.

Research Support is more than reference service; it is the foundation for the following library-wide activities:

- Liaison and instructional services, in person and online, to academic programs with a “campus-wide” scope or that otherwise fall outside the lines of defined, subject-based liaison service relationships
• Design, delivery, and coordination of workshops for graduate- and faculty-level researchers emphasizing the research process (rather than the subject content). Two examples are the popular workshops on managing information and current awareness tools.

• Development and management of a central reference collection, in print and online, and provision of leadership for coordination of reference collection issues across the Library, e.g., duplication of print resources, identification/evaluation of digital resources.

• Leadership of a consolidated reference service.

• Assistance in data services and the coordination of other specialized scholar support services, such as scholarly communications support, through the Scholarly Commons.

• Innovation in new approaches to delivery and assessment of reference and information services in the digital environment.

• Design and support of the Library’s gateway and unified web presence.

• Communication of a uniquely broad view of Library users from the front-line to inform Library decision-making on IT environment, public space, etc.

• Training of library staff at all levels on issues of reference and research services, customer service, and diversity.

While all of the above points define the work of a Research Services department, the nature of the inclusion of these services will depend on the specific position. Some, for example Staff Development, have jobs that encompass more than Research Services. The Research Services unit and the position may mutually benefit from a part-time assignment to or a formal affiliation with the Research Services unit. These relationships need to be formed in discussion with the people in the positions that provide these services. There may be services and positions that are coherent with the vision of the Research Services unit, but which are not mentioned above. This document is presented as an idea to be discussed and refined. This idea has been presented to and well-received by Sarah Shreeves, Robert Slater, and Camilla Fulton. It also had a positive reception from the Reference NSM team and is included as part of that report.

The exact shape of the unit will also be influenced by the outcomes of the Reference New Service Model, but the core of Research Services as described is flexible enough to accommodate future changes in the Library’s provision of services and organizational structure.
Research Support Services Org Chart

Names in italics indicate person currently holding that position. Changes are possible. Graduate Assistants indicate current reporting lines. Changes are possible. Orange boxes are service points and indicate an administrative role rather than supervision of the staff working at those service points.
Staffing for Multi-Subject Reference Desks

Subject Librarians, staff, GAs in Main + UGL Librarians and GAs + RSS Librarians, Staff, and GAs = Staffing for Main, UGL, Virtual Desks