

# Minimum Standards for Reference Service In Social Sciences Division Libraries

Approved: 2/2/94; Revised April 14, 2006

Service values lie at the core of actual service provision. In accordance with the Library Service Values

statement [http://www.library.illinois.edu/administration/services/policies/service\\_values.html](http://www.library.illinois.edu/administration/services/policies/service_values.html) >, we will treat all users with courtesy; respond to service requests as accurately and quickly as possible; project a sense of engagement, professionalism and competence in delivering services to users; refer users to other service points only when we are sure that relevant help will be found there; provide users with quick, accurate access to the collection; enable users to be self-reliant; endeavor to provide a pleasant physical environment for our users; continuously seek to improve our service in any way we can; and treat our own staff with courtesy, responsiveness, and care.

## I. Staffing and Information Skills

A. Library Personnel will be conscious of their role as a representative of the unit, the University Library, and the University of Illinois.

B. Professional staff (librarian, graduate assistant, or academic professional) typically are available 9am-5pm, 6-9pm Monday - Friday; 1-5pm Saturday; and 1-5pm, 6-9pm Sunday in larger units. Smaller units should have professional staff available at least four hours daily Monday - Friday.

C. Classified staff typically is available from 8:30am - 12noon, 1 - 5pm Monday - Friday.

Library hours vary among the Social Sciences Division. Library locations and telephone numbers are available on printed schedules in each library, or on the following Web site: <http://www.library.illinois.edu/services>.

D. All Library personnel should draw on their user interactions as an opportunity to enhance their knowledge of resources available, particularly in their own library. Exploration of library resources is encouraged. Student assistants, staff, and graduate assistants must be trained to refer patrons to the librarian when necessary.

E. Librarians should know the online databases in their respective disciplines and be able to direct users to available search services.

F. Student assistants in all units should offer to be helpful within the limits of what they know. All other Library personnel should be able to meet these minimum

guidelines as well as have knowledge needed for their specific job assignments. Specifically, student assistants should be trained in the following areas:

1. Telephone requests - Students need to be trained to make referrals to the Telephone Center and to provide information as to the location and hours of the UIUC libraries. Students working in smaller units should be knowledgeable of the University Library Gateway in providing access to the online catalog, article databases, full-text journals and electronic reference resources. In addition students should be able to make referrals to the Central Information Desk and other UIUC libraries.
2. Messages - Students should be capable of forwarding clear and concise messages so that librarian or staff can respond to patron's request.
3. Location - Students should be able to provide accurate, simple directions to libraries within the Main Library and to libraries in other buildings. A campus map should be available as an aid. In smaller units, students should also be aware of special locations within their library, i.e., reference section, thesis collection, new books, special collections, periodicals, etc.
4. Students working in small units should be able to verify whether UIUC has a particular item through the circulation terminal, through the University Library Gateway online catalog, and can search for items through electronic reserves.
5. Serials - Students working in small units should be able to interpret their library's serial check-in file.

## II. Approachability

### A. Professional and classified staff and student assistants

1. Provide a friendly and welcoming environment. Greet users with a pleasant expression, speak with respect and courtesy. Willing to help users and provide prompt service. Maintain a professional presence and a clean, neat and well-organized service area.
2. Treat users with respect during interactions, regardless of culture, religious beliefs, gender, race, physical/mental abilities, age, economic status, political views, etc.
3. Listen attentively to patron's request. Maintain a positive tone of voice and courteous manner. Determine what the patron already has done to seek the needed information. Inquiries are answered in a timely manner. Student assistants should refer unanswered queries as soon as possible to professional staff and notify the patron of the referral.

4. Knowledgeable in common procedures and policies of the Library; provide users with clear, easy to understand and accurate information.

### III. Reference requests

#### A. In-person requests

1. Library staff should answer ready reference questions when appropriate tools are available, including print or electronic reference resources, or should be able to refer users to more appropriate library, librarian, or other source of information.
2. Users whose information needs require research should be assisted by means of instruction; i.e., librarians in departmental libraries are available for one-on-one assistance in the use of various research resources relevant to the student's needs. These resources include the University Library Gateway which provides access to a wide variety of electronic resources, including the online catalog, article databases, full-text journals and other reference sources. As part of the reference interaction, Library personnel should incorporate instruction enabling Library users to become more independent.

#### B. Off-site requests

Telephone, e-mail, fax and other electronic requests

- Users making telephone requests at a time when staff is busy will be asked to leave their names and telephone numbers so that staff may handle their requests when time allows.
- Users with research needs may be asked to come to the library for assistance. Accommodations may need to be made for students in distance education programs.
- E-mail requests from UIUC faculty, students, and other academic units are given priority. Other users are answered in a timely manner. Requests from unaffiliated users, whether by phone, e-mail, fax, or letter, will be answered as time allows. Typically Library personnel answer questions concerning resources unique to the University of Illinois Libraries.

### IV. Environment

Ensure that physical environment will be conducive to learning and will be clean, comfortable and safe.

## Appendix: Suggestions for Implementing the Minimum

# Standards for Service in Social Sciences Division Libraries

*The following suggestions may be affected by negotiated agreements with designated staff groups in the library.*

To implement the Minimum Standards, orientation and training programs may need to address the following points:

FOR ALL PERSONNEL IN THE UNIT (WITH EMPHASIS ON STUDENT ASSISTANTS WHERE NOTED):

- Being aware of their role as a representative of the unit, the University Library, and the University of Illinois. [I.A.]
- Effectively using interactions with users and down times at the desk to become familiar with resources and services in the unit and in other division units, as well as any other resource that may enhance service in the unit. [I.D.]
- Displaying a pleasant, respectful, and courteous attitude in expression and tone of voice. [II.A.1. and II.A.3.]
- Making a conscious effort to be visible to users, ready to provide prompt service when approached. [II.A.1.]
- Giving the user full attention when approached for assistance and listening attentively to the user's request. [II.A.3.]
- Keeping all services areas clean, neat and well-organized to ensure that the physical environment will be conducive to learning. [II.A.1. and IV.]
- Dressing according to standards established within the unit, if any. [II.A.1.]
- Treating users with courtesy and respect during interactions, regardless of culture, religious beliefs, gender, race, physical/mental abilities, age, economic status, political views, or sexual orientation. [II.A.2.]
- Determining what the user has already done to seek the needed information. [II.A.3.]
- Responding to user inquiries in a "timely" manner, based on standards established within the unit, if any. [II.A.3. and III.B.1.c.]
- Notifying the user of any referral to another individual, within the unit or in another unit. [II.A.3.]

- Answering most questions or making appropriate referrals concerning the Libraries' policies and procedures, including policies regarding confidentiality, copyright, licensing and privacy rights. [II.A.4.]
- Recognizing ready reference questions and answering them with print or electronic resources, based on familiarity and experience with such resources. [III.A.1.]
- Distinguishing questions which may be appropriately addressed through UIUC Library resources from questions which may be more appropriately addressed by another library entity or information source, and making appropriate referrals for the latter. [III.B.1.c.]
- Reading and being prepared to communicate the resources and services outlined in the "Services for Users with Disabilities" webpage: [http://www.library.illinois.edu/learn/users\\_disabilities.html](http://www.library.illinois.edu/learn/users_disabilities.html)
- Particularly for student assistants:
  - Finding and communicating hour and location information for UIUC libraries. [I.F.1.]
  - Recognizing questions and situations which should be referred to the Telephone Center, the Central Information Desk, other UIUC library units, or other sources of information. [I.F.1. and III.A.1.]
  - Taking messages according to standards established within the unit, if any. [I.F.2.; III.B.1.a., b., and c.]
  - Using a campus map as an aid if needed when providing directions to UIUC library units. [I.F.3.]
- Particularly for student assistants in smaller units:
  - Being aware of the unit's physical space and the organization of the unit's resources. [I.F.3.]
  - Using circulation terminals and the University Library Gateway to locate resources and determine availability. [I.F.1. and I.F.4.]
  - Interpreting the unit's serial check-in file. [I.F.5.]

**FOR CLASSIFIED STAFF, GRADUATE ASSISTANTS, AND STUDENT ASSISTANTS:**

- Recognizing questions and situations which should be referred to a librarian within the unit. [I.D., II.A.3., and III.A.1.]

### FOR LIBRARIANS, GRADUATE ASSISTANTS, AND DESIGNATED STAFF:

- Proficiently using the University Library Gateway as well as other fundamental online resources (both ready-reference and research) for the disciplines covered by the unit; being familiar with the comparable resources in other disciplines within the division. [I.E. and III.A.2.]
- Assisting users one-on-one in the use of various resources relevant to each user's research needs. [III.A.2.]
- Incorporating instruction in reference interactions to enable users to become more independent and self-sufficient in their research. [III.A.2.]

In addition to the service areas noted above, orientation and training programs should include the following established Library procedures:

- Fire Alarm Evacuation Procedures:

[http://www.library.illinois.edu/administration/services/policies/fire\\_alarm.html](http://www.library.illinois.edu/administration/services/policies/fire_alarm.html)

- Medical Emergency Procedures:

[http://www.library.illinois.edu/administration/services/policies/med\\_emergency.html](http://www.library.illinois.edu/administration/services/policies/med_emergency.html)

- Tornado Evacuation Procedures:

<http://www.library.illinois.edu/administration/services/policies/tornadoevacuate.html>

- Response to Violations of University Library Policies:

[http://www.library.illinois.edu/administration/services/policies/staff\\_guide.html](http://www.library.illinois.edu/administration/services/policies/staff_guide.html)

- Based on the related document: Patron Conduct Within the Library System: [http://www.library.illinois.edu/administration/services/policies/patron\\_conduct.html](http://www.library.illinois.edu/administration/services/policies/patron_conduct.html)

Policies established within individual units may provide additional guidance and support beyond the orientation and training programs. For example, units could elect to establish policies for:

- Scheduling and coverage, to ensure that professional staff (librarians, academic professionals, or graduate assistants) and classified staff are available during the hours outlined in the Minimum Standards for Service. [I.B. and I.C.]
- Taking messages via telephone, via email, via FAX, or in person, including for example the greeting to be used, the information to be collected, and the location where the intended recipient should collect the message. [I.F.2.; III.B.1.a., b., and c.]
- Dressing to present a professional image, as deemed appropriate at each staff level. [II.A.1.]
- Responding to user inquiries in a timely manner, specifically the definition of "timely" based on the type of inquiry, the affiliation of the user (i.e., UIUC or non-UIUC), and the research effort anticipated for the response. [II.A.3. and III.B.1.c.]