

# Research and Information Services (RIS)

## *Annual Report for July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021*

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With contributions from RIS librarians and staff

Research and Information Services (RIS) is, as its name indicates, the central gateway to the Library's research and information services, supporting all groups in their work as scholars. RIS is dedicated to increasing the research skills of faculty, staff, students, and community members, educating the campus regarding the many ways in which the Library supports research and teaching, and assuring that scholars are connected to the relevant subject/area liaisons and disciplinary libraries. We provide interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary research support services through administration of the Main Library's central in-person reference point and a virtual reference service; management of core online and print reference collections; instruction (including the Savvy Researcher workshops co-sponsored with the Scholarly Commons); professional development for reference staff; online guides and tools to support independent information discovery; and logistical support and leadership for the shared staffing of reference services in the Main/UGL Hub.

### I Unit Narrative

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*Major activities and accomplishments while working under COVID 19 constraints:*

- Maintained all Main/UGL Hub functions in remote mode, including troubleshooting difficulties arising from this mode for all staff contributing to the Hub as well as assisting other units in setting up and maintaining remote reference services (all RIS staff);
- Ensured documentation and broad communication of changes in Library and campus services to ensure accurate information was provided to patrons (all RIS staff);
- Maintained library guide on expanded access to online resources (Piper Martin);
- Based on feedback from ESL curriculum coordinators, revised and updated the LibWizard tutorial used for asynchronous online classes in Spring 2020 and designed assessments for each course to fit the asynchronous mode of delivery (Piper Martin and RIS GAs);
- Continued to refine RIS-led Savvy Researcher sessions for better fit to the synchronous, remote delivery model (Piper Martin and RIS GAs);
- Adapted training for first year RIS GAs to a virtual model (Piper Martin);
- Enhanced mechanisms and support for mentoring both within the team providing Main/UGL Hub services and to others contributing to the Ask a Librarian chat service (all RIS staff);
- Continued to review transcripts for all patron interactions completed via LibChat and deliver feedback to quickly correct any confusion over changes in services/policies and to

- monitor common patron questions for creation of FAQ's;
- Staffed a weekly shift (shared with Scholarly Commons) to assist with the Marshall Gallery locker delivery service (all RIS staff);
- With iSchool colleagues, coordinated the second virtual iteration of the Admitted Students Visit Day Career Fair (Piper Martin);
- Transitioned Main/UGL Hub functions back to on site mode in June 2021, including training and support for GAs and working with IT and Facilities to prepare the Main Library Information Desk equipment and environment (all RIS staff).

*Challenges:*

- Maintaining consistent mentorship environment for GA's while everyone is working remotely.
- Ensuring an appropriate level of service to patrons across a large desk staff with varying levels of knowledge and aptitude is always a challenge but it was particularly acute in the past year.
- Balancing coverage of Main/UGL Hub service hours with instruction and other projects while working within allocated GA and (outside) unit-defined contributions of staff hours.

*Contributions to Library-wide programs:*

Reference, Research Consultations and Other Information Services

- In FY21, RIS faculty, staff, and GAs continued to fill the majority of Main/UGL Hub shifts. Senior RIS staff and librarians also took on most of the mentoring duties that were added to provide additional support for GAs while all services were remote.
- Wendy Gregory and Carissa Phillips collaborated on the complex task of determining staffing levels needed for Main/UGL Hub services in each semester, with continued attention to adjustments that would enable all participants to increase their skills and ensure consistent, quality service for patrons.
- RIS faculty and staff continued to have either primary or sole responsibility for securing time commitments from Hub contributors, training workers for Hub services, managing service and technology issues, and assessing the functionality of Main/UGL Hub operations and services.
- RIS faculty, staff, and GAs were responsible for triaging all email from the Ask-a-Librarian email service and for answering many of the questions. Normally this responsibility is spread across all Main/UGL Hub personnel; however, coordination proved difficult in remote mode, so this change was made.
- In FY21, the Main/UGL Hub recorded 8,262 interactions at the Information and Virtual Reference Desks in Desk Tracker. As the Main Library was closed to patrons apart from limited by-appointment services, the normally large number of in-person and phone interactions did not occur in FY21.
- Sanga Sung is responsible for the [govinfo@library.illinois.edu](mailto:govinfo@library.illinois.edu) email as well as referred questions related to government information. She answered 102 of these in FY21.
- Carissa Phillips conducted 149 consultations related to business topics, which were recorded for RIS. The majority (107) of these interactions were online consultations conducted

through Zoom for student teams engaging in experiential learning projects.

- RIS GAs participated in #askalibrarian on Twitter.
- Sara Holder served as chair of the Reference Management Team.
- Piper Martin served on the CAPT Electronic Resources subcommittee.

#### Instructional Services

- In FY21, RIS librarians, staff, and GAs led a total of 52 group presentations (all delivered online). The total number of attendees was 339.
- In addition to leading instruction sessions for the graduate ESL program and the Savvy Researcher series, Piper Martin and RIS GAs assisted UGL colleagues with RHET 105 and COM 101 instruction and assisted BIS colleagues with asynchronous instruction for BUS 101.

#### Collection Management

- Sara Holder and RIS GA Kari Darby completed a comprehensive review of the Main Stacks reference collection, identifying items that could be moved into the Stacks circulating collection as well as other locations.
- Sanga Sung reviewed the Library's Federal Depository Library Program selection profile for titles in microfiche, DVD, CD, and print format by assessing usage statistics, availability in electronic format, and the general and research information needs of the university and the public. Amendments were made to the selection profile after the review.
- Sanga Sung reviewed government document donations made to the library and offered items we will not be adding to our collection to other depositories in the state per program guidelines.

#### Staff Training and Development

- In FY21, RIS continued its role in supporting both the GA Orientation and the Hub Training sessions. Sara Holder worked with Zoe Revell to organize and plan the Library-wide GA Training program. Piper Martin and Wendy Gregory taught and/or co-taught sessions for GA Training. Piper Martin also co-taught several workshops for the Hub Training program. In addition, RIS GAs supported the Hub Training program by assisting the instructors with preparation and attendance and ensuring that resources and handouts were available online after the session.
- Wendy Gregory continued to have sole responsibility for training all students, staff, and faculty who contribute to the Main/UGL Hub services to ensure that they understand the established service protocols for responding to questions, troubleshooting technical problems as well as responding to emergency situations should any arise.
- Sara Holder and Carissa Phillips served on Peer Review committees. Carissa Phillips also served as an editor for tenure documents.

#### Public Engagement

- Within RIS, public engagement is largely directed by Sarah Christensen, with support from RIS GAs. Some examples of projects from the FY21 year are:

- Small Press Fest, Edible Book Festival, and Human Library events (all reimagined to be engaging in a virtual environment);
  - Coordination of the Main Library's social media accounts.
- Sarah Christensen also served as co-chair for the Outreach and Engagement Committee and as a member of the Strategic Communications & Marketing Committee and of the Diversity committee.
- Sanga Sung launched a government information Virtual Exhibit page and redesigned the government information website.
- Sarah Christensen was chosen as one of the recipients of the Chancellor's Academic Professional Excellence award.

*Significant Changes:*

- Departures: RIS had no departures from its full-time faculty or staff. Five of our GAs graduated in May 2021.
- New hires: RIS welcomed Sanga Sung (Visiting Government Information Librarian), Karen Hogenboom (Reference Services & Instruction Librarian), and five new GAs.
- Continuing: Sarah Christensen (academic professional), Carissa Phillips (faculty), Piper Martin (faculty), Sara Holder (faculty), David Morris (faculty), and Wendy Gregory (Library Operations Associate).

*Progress made on Unit Annual Goals for FY21:*

- [Continued from FY20] In anticipation of operational changes related to the Library as Catalyst project, investigate opportunities to expand the existing collaboration between RIS and UGL across all service areas to meet evolving demands for reference, projects, and instruction. A corollary to this goal would be to consider how this expansion can contribute to the common pre-professional experiences we provide for our units' GAs [Strategic Framework 2019-23 – SD2.5 & SD4.5]. RIS and UGL GAs were trained together and collaborated on teaching for the RHET 105 and COM 101 courses. Additionally, GA supervisors Piper Martin and Alex Deeke brought their groups together for meetings throughout the year. The scope of this goal has changed with the plans for the special collections building going forward and the proposal for UGL and RIS to merge into one unit being accepted [see FY22 goals]. The work has begun anew with these forward movements.
- Build on the work that was initiated by RIS GAs and JJ Pionke to assess the accessibility of the first floor Information Desk environment and services and the utility of the room 109 accessible study space [Strategic Framework 2019-23 – SD2.4]. This work was interrupted due to the pandemic (Main Library was closed so no patrons could use the space). JJ Pionke, John Laskowski, and Sara Holder have re-started the investigation, which will run through the end of FY22.

*Unit Annual Goals for FY22:*

- [Continued and updated from FY21] With the coming realization of the first phase of the Library as Catalyst project and the decision to bring RIS and UGL into one unit, our combined

unit personnel will work to devise an operating structure and name for the new unit and an assessment strategy through which we can how best to adapt once we are providing services through that structure [Strategic Framework 2019-23 – SD2.5 & SD4.5].

- [Continued from FY21] Build on the work that was initiated by RIS GAs and JJ Pionke to assess the accessibility of the first floor Information Desk environment and services and the utility of the room 109 accessible study space [Strategic Framework 2019-23 – SD2.4].

*Number of GAs, FTE, and funding source:*

- RIS was approved for 3.59 GA FTEs in FY21 and employed 10 GAs.
- All of the RIS pre-professional graduate students are funded with State of Illinois funds.

*Major responsibilities assigned to the GAs in the unit, and an overview of the contributions made:*

Instructional Services (all activities done in collaboration with Piper Martin, RIS GA Supervisor):

- Team teaching of library sessions for graduate ESL courses, including curriculum development work such as: revising and updating the LibWizard tutorial for asynchronous online classes, designing assessment for online ESL classes, giving feedback on search strategy and source evaluation worksheets.
- Team teaching of Savvy Researcher workshops, including support work for the series such as: helping to plan Savvy-wide assessment, contributing to a LibGuide for remote Savvy instructors, revising and updating lesson plans for workshops planned to move back to face to face.
- Contributing to support and teaching in other Library instruction programs: in FY21, UGL's RHET 105 and COM 101, BIS's asynchronous BUS 101 assignment.
- Revised critical reflection documents for both 1st- and 2nd-year RIS GAs and researched teaching observation rubrics.
- Contributed to the assessment and creative commons section of the new Online Instruction LibGuide.

Reference, research consultations and other information services:

- Assist Library patrons in-person and via phone, email, and chat as part of the Main/UGL Hub and Ask-a-Librarian services.
- Update LibGuides for which RIS is responsible, with continued focus on the new catalog.
- Review and update all FAQ's that RIS maintains.
- Perform other online information-related maintenance as needed: in FY21, wrote code to identify broken links within the rich text/html of LibGuides; completely overhauled and reorganized the Online Reference Collection LibGuide.

Public Engagement:

- Assist in coordination and creation of content for the Library's social media accounts.
- Run the Main Library's Twitter account.
- Participate in #askalibrarian on Twitter.
- Help plan and run the Social Media Working Group meetings.

- Help in planning and leading Main Library tours (in FY21, planned a virtual tour).
- Design new tours for Explore CU website.
- Assist UGL with a gaming events.
- Assist the Government Information Librarian with virtual exhibits: in FY21, 1 exhibit for International Asteroid Day.
- Serve on the Library Billing Appeals Board.

Staff training and development:

- Provide support for Reference Hub Training sessions: in FY21, moderated Zoom sessions to troubleshoot any presentation and connection issues; collected materials for and attendance of; sent reminder emails to LibNews; uploaded instruction materials to Compass and added attendance data to Box folder (in collaboration with Sara Holder).
- Design and team teach library-wide training sessions: in FY21, lead sessions on the new LibChat dashboard; with staff and GAs from UGL and Grainger, conducted a survey of reference hub participants, evaluated several collaboration tools, created training for using MS Teams as a reference collaboration platform, and brainstormed informal GA meet and greet ideas.

Collection Management

- Support unit collection projects: in FY21, completed a comprehensive review of the Main Stacks reference collection with unit head; cataloged data titles analysis with Data Discovery Librarian.

## II Statistical Profile

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*Facilities*

- User seating counts: N/A
- Number of hours open to the public per week\*:
  - Summer II 2020: 47.5 (all on weekdays)
  - Summer Intersession 2020: 42.5 (all on weekdays)
  - Fall 2020: 76.5 (63.5 on weekdays, 13 on weekends)
  - Winter Break 2021: 42.5 (all on weekdays)
  - Spring 2021: total 76.5 (63.5 on weekdays, 13 on weekends)
  - Summer I 2021: total 40 (all on weekdays)

\* For all but the last two days of FY21, “hours open to the public” represent “hours during which remote services are available.”

*Personnel*

- Staff:

Name	Position	FTE
Wendy Gregory	Staff	1
Sarah Christensen	Academic Professional	1

Karen Hogenboom	Faculty (joined RIS January 2021)	1
Sara Holder	Faculty	1
Piper Martin	Faculty	1
David Morris	Faculty (half-time with Literature & Languages)	.5
Carissa Phillips	Faculty (half time with Scholarly Commons)	.5
Sanga Sung	Visiting Faculty (joined RIS July 2020)	1

- Graduate Assistants:

Name	FTE
Justin Aceves	.33
Sarah Appedu	.33
Anri Brod	.33
Kari Darby	.33
Eva Jeffers	.33
Derek Otis	.33
Miranda Phair	.33
Erin Sulla	.43
Libby Wheels	.43
Emily Zerrenner	.33

- FY21 Student Assistant wage budget and Student Assistant FTE:

RIS was allocated \$5,221 in FY21 for student assistant (SA) wages; however, since all RIS SA duties relate to on site work, no SAs were hired.

*User Services*

- Gate Count: N/A
- Reference interactions: 8,262
- Presentations:
  - Number of presentations to groups: 52
  - Number of participants in group presentations: 339