

# **Reference and Information Services Department**

## **Annual Report FY 2007-2008**

**September 2008**

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### **Reference and Information Services Department Mission Statement**

**The mission of the Reference Department is to provide an organized collection of print and online resources and teach Information Literacy skills regarding the access and usage of both on and off campus information services to the Prairie View community to enable them to become information literate, independent researchers.**

### **Reference and Information Services Department Vision Statement**

**The Reference Department seeks to become a comfortable ‘place,’ both in the Library as well as online; the optimal source for information for all users, regardless of location, as we equip the Prairie View student to evaluate, access and use information in a critical manner, carrying this ability to all aspects of their lives.**

## **Executive Summary**

As in the last few reports, we continue to be in a period of steady transition. There were changes in personnel, and for the first time in a long period we are operating at full capacity.

The Reference and Information Services Department continues serves as the primary point of contact for patrons seeking assistance with library research. The number of inquiries received in a variety of forms (electronic, onsite, telephone) dropped slightly as well as the number of face-to-face requests; the number of electronic resources accessible from outside the library grew.

This data supports a paradigm shift for the reference department; we are beginning to see a move away from frontline reference desk service (all statistics dropped) to ‘behind the scenes’ work; more Instruction classes and scheduled (faculty) research requests (both increased).

The staff assisted patrons in the use of the Library's resources and services; helped patrons to use the print Information Services collection, including the Internet, government documents, print serials, the online library catalog, and online databases; and instructed patrons in how to locate and use resources. Librarians rotated time at the Reference Desk, which was professionally staffed 95 hours per week (during peak times in the semester, assuming 7 AM opening), with additional hours covered by student workers and part-time staff.

The Reference and Information Services Department offers a number of special services that support research and instruction, such as online database instruction, library use instruction, and orientation tours. The Information Services staff is responsible for:

- Answering Information Services questions
- Conducting in-depth research upon request
- Maintaining the Information Services collection
- Staffing the Reference Desk
- Maintaining the Vertical File of ephemera
- Conducting library use instruction classes
- Conducting library tours
- Maintaining statistical records of departmental usage
- Creating and maintaining print and web-based instructional guides
- Assisting patrons with traditional and online library resources
- Committee assignments as assigned
- Serving as a collection development liaison to specific colleges/departments
- Supervising and monitoring student workers
- Participating in collection development duties

## **Staff**

In FY 2007-2008 Chieko Sato joined the Reference staff as a Reference and Instruction Librarian. We no longer need to rely on other departments to provide basic desk coverage. The Reference Librarians are working cooperatively together, with the mission of the department firmly in mind.

Desk coverage, due to a full staff, was more cohesive and established than it has been in previous years. Illness, vacations, and professional commitments occasionally required a librarian to pull a longer-than-expected stint at the Reference Desk, but there was little impact overall on other potential duties (i.e., library instruction). A formal desk schedule remained in place throughout the year, but in practice it often needed to be ignored and changed without warning. All staff members involved were very accommodating.

Each librarian continued to have individual responsibilities beyond maintaining the Reference Desk. These responsibilities include committee work (heavy at times), collection development for the department and liaison areas, and library instruction.

Librarians continued to work closely with individual campus units and campus/regional/state committees.

### **Services and Collections**

Answering patron questions remained the top priority of the department. The scope of these questions was very broad, and time per question ranged from a few seconds to days. Patron traffic at the Reference Desk continued to be heavy at times, although no clear pattern emerged of high and low periods.

The librarians recognize the importance of a mandatory, campus-wide library instruction program. A substantial push has been made in this direction, with the drafting of a formal proposal to the Library Administration and participation in national initiatives. It is assumed a more cohesive plan (complete with mission and goals) will emerge in the upcoming FY. We will then be able to begin the implementation in concordance with the University; perhaps as part of the QEP. The fact that we have made such a positive impact with the Instruction classes, combined with awareness on the part of the faculty of the need for more instruction in the use of library resources is encouraging.

Statistics continued to be kept regarding hourly headcounts in the department. This consistently showed peak times during mid-morning through mid-afternoon, but the evening and even late night hours did not drop off as dramatically as expected. The 7 am start was popular, but the changing and unpredictable hours of operation for the computer lab in 210 were problematic. This is most problematic during the summer, where the lab opens at 10, and we open at 8. Students need to type their papers and have a hard time understanding why they are unable to do so.

Monthly statistics show an interesting trend; based on the same time frame last FY, we saw a 28.82% increase in printouts, a 48% increase in the number of RI sessions. This is a change in direction from the previous year. We also saw an 18% decrease in hands-on instruction sessions at the reference desk. This is consistent with last year's direction. There has been a 13% decrease in the use of the reference material, and a 49% decrease in ready reference usage. (AS OF AUGUST 1, 2008) These are both in the opposite direction of last year's trend, but the scale of change has led us to move most of the ready reference material to the regular reference shelves, and to more aggressively evaluate the currency of the reference material itself.

Use of the vertical file remained non-existent, due primarily to increased use of the Internet for most assignments. Consequently, little attention was paid to maintaining a large vertical file, and print resources purchases were primarily in those areas of heaviest student use, new programs, and updates. The Electronic Services Librarian and the Head of Reference and Information Services began the arduous process of manually scanning the contents and organizing them online. This task was eventually passed over to the students workers, supervised by the Electronic Services Librarian.

Traffic for the Ready Reference collection has dropped to the point that we have pared it down to a few core titles; mostly those we want to protect from loss or damage. All other Ready Reference titles have been incorporated into the general reference collection. The general reference collection has enjoyed slightly increased traffic. New campus programs have required the purchase of additional databases and development of certain collection areas (e.g., criminal justice and architecture). The reference librarians made suggestions regarding which reference titles should be considered for standing orders, and this has been passed to the Library Administration. All reference librarians have contributed to the reference collection through collection development, and the collection is healthier than it has been in years.

A shelf-shifting project was completed to accommodate a large influx of legal materials which had been housed on a separate shelf by the Periodicals corner. The remainder of the reference collection is being shelf-read piecemeal, but a more substantial shelf-shifting has stalled, despite a drastic need for it to continue. Student workers were assigned various areas in the last year, but a more systematic approach is needed. Reference librarians are taking this burden on, but it is a long process.

In the fall the two printers were moved from behind the reference desk and out into the public area. The effects were immediate- every librarian noticed a lessening in traffic at the desk, but those that still approached the desk asked substantive reference queries. This confirms what we had assumed- that if we were freed from sorting printouts, our reference interviews would become more meaningful. We continued to have issues with printer jams, paper quality issues and other expected printer issues, but on the whole the amount of time spent dealing with printers dropped dramatically.

One major difficult with library instruction throughout the year was the availability of instruction space. All instruction classes are either in the New Science Building, in the individual classrooms or other computer labs across the campus we have managed to locate. In crisis, the staff has relied on the NOMAD workstation and R108 for non-hands-on sessions, but this is sub-optimal. This situation is quickly becoming more and more problematic.

"Ask a Librarian!" has stayed an important factor in our reference services, despite a 12% decrease in actual usage. The librarians continue to make an effort throughout the year to answer the questions in a 24-hour turnaround period. In an attempt to reach more students, the department has decided to investigate to possibility of Instant Messaging chat reference. This might be feasible as Docutek (Eres) provides this service; it should simply be a matter of money to turn this feature on.

Our online presence is becoming more coherent. Our Subject Guides are longer and more extensive, and our Electronic Resources by Subject pages are also becoming streamlined with more relevant information in a tight easy to use format. Each reference librarian has ownership of some of these pages, and has contributed to their upkeep. Online tutorials using Camtasia are next, and beta versions of some of these already exist.

The department created and tabulated a User Satisfaction Survey. There were a solid distribution concerning race, age, rank in school, college affiliation. Our satisfaction rate was high, and there was the usual plea for longer hours (nights and weekends). One disturbing factor at least for this department was the reliance on the Internet (23%) when doing research, as opposed to using the OPAC, which replaced last year's second place choice, reference librarians: 23% and 19% respectively. There is still work to be done.

## **Reference Department Needs**

The department is still noticeably struggling from the lack of a stable instruction space. This continues to hamper, if not outright impede, the success of offering classes. The previous year has seen us once more have to cancel classes simply due to the absence of a classroom. It is, again, hoped that this next year will see a permanent location where we will not have to contend with other University functions for teaching space. Our instruction program owes its continued existence, let alone success, to the ingenuity and flexibility of the librarians and the outstanding cooperation from many departments across campus, not the least of which is the Office of Distance Learning in the New Science Building.

## **SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS FY GOALS AND SUCCESS**

### **Goals for FY 07**

- (1) At least 10% of our instruction sessions offered this upcoming FY will be multiple classes to the same section. We will meet with students early in the semester, and then again towards the end. A further 10% will be team taught; these might easily overlap. At least 70% of the users will report satisfaction with library instruction.
- (2) 75% of the Subject Guide and Database Subject pages will be up to date and current by the end of fall 2007. They will continue to be evaluated annually or as needed.
- (3) The Reference Collection will be shelf-read and evaluated by the start of summer 2008.

## Objectives / Method of Assessment

### Goal 1

(1) At least 10% of our instruction sessions offered this upcoming FY will be multiple classes to the same section. We will meet with students early in the semester, and then again towards the end. A further 10% will be team taught; these might easily overlap. At least 70% of the users will report satisfaction with library instruction.

**Method:**

[A] Reference librarians will track the number of sessions taught, and indicate how many were team-taught. The number should be 10% of the total.

[B] Reference Librarians will track the number of times unique course sections are taught more than once. The number should be 10% of the total.

[C] User surveys and interviews will be used to measure “user-satisfaction” with library instruction classes conducted by the Reference Librarians. Evaluation forms will be provided for all students attending the library instruction program.

### Goal 2

(2) 75% of the Subject Guide and Database Subject pages will be up to date and current by the end of fall 2007. They will continue to be evaluated annually or as needed.

**Method:**

[A] Each librarian will meet with both the Head of Reference and the Electronic Services Librarian each semester to discuss areas of responsibility for these pages. A checklist will be completed and filed for each page every semester; the target is 75% compliance.

### Goal 3

(3) The Reference Collection will be shelf-read and evaluated by the start of summer 2008.

**Method:**

[A] Reference librarians will submit a written statement (short) to the Department Head in spring indicating their personal progress in this area. The goal is 75% compliance.

## EXECUTIVE ASSESSMENT OF ACTIVITY

1. A As things stand in May, we have attained 14% compliance here. No further action is required.
1. B Very low impact, such that we failed to meet this goal; this is an area where Librarians need to be more aggressive marketing this to faculty.
1. C 95% of those surveyed rated the instructor as either 'Excellent' or 'Good.'
  
2. A This was primarily accomplished, however the methodology evolved naturally. Rather than a semester checklist, each change was indicated on a 'Webpage Modification' sheet and handed to the Electronic Services Librarian.
  
3. A This project has had mixed results. At times, there was a concerted effort made to read the collection, but inertia drove the project to a slow halt. There is the assumption that this was accomplished, but the written documentation is lacking.

## ***Goals and Objectives FY 2008-2009***

### **Goals for FY 2008**

- (1) At least 20% of our instruction sessions offered this upcoming FY will be either multiple classes to the same section or team taught. At least 80% of the users will report satisfaction with library instruction.
- (2) Each reference librarian will have no less than 1 online tutorial, tour or instruction module complete with an assessment component on the library website by the start of spring 2009 semester.
- (3) At least 25% of all Research Instruction courses will be explicitly tied (in writing) to specific learning outcomes as defined by ACRL's Information Literacy standards.

### **Objectives / Method of Assessment**

#### **Goal 1**

- (1) At least 20% of our instruction sessions offered this upcoming FY will be either multiple classes to the same section or team taught. At least 80% of the users will report satisfaction with library instruction.

#### **Methods:**

[a] Reference librarians will track the number of times unique course sections are taught more than once, and also how many were team-taught. The number should be 20% of the total.

[b] User surveys and interviews will be used to measure "user-satisfaction" with library instruction classes conducted by the Reference Librarians. Evaluation forms will be provided for all students attending the library instruction program.

## Goal 2

(2) Each reference librarian will have no less than 1 online tutorial, tour or instruction module complete with an assessment component on the library website by the start of spring 2009 semester.

**Methods:**

[a] Each librarian will meet with both the Head of Reference and the Electronic Services Librarian each semester to discuss progress and content for these tutorials.

[b] Statistics will be gathered and tabulated using Survey Monkey (or other comparable software) and will be presented in the next FY Annual Report.

## Goal 3

(3) At least 25% of all Research Instruction courses will be explicitly tied (in writing) to specific learning outcomes as defined by ACRL's Information Literacy standards.

**Methods:**

[a] Reference librarians will consult with the Head of Reference to determine what components are applicable for specific courses; mostly *ad hoc*. The goal is 25% compliance.

[b] An appropriate assessment instrument and implementation strategy will be decided upon, and the instrument will be distributed to 100% of the attendees to that class.

[c] Results will be collected and aggregated.

## Departmental Research, Creative, and Scholarly Activities

### GAY

#### Memberships:

#### ALA

##### ACRL

Spectrum Scholar Initiative Program

Black Caucus

RUSA (Reference and User Services Association)

Business Reference Services Section

#### TLA

College and Universities Division

Black Caucus

Library Instruction, Genealogy, Reference and Administration Round Tables

TLA Districts 5, 7 and 8

#### OTHER

American Association of University Women

Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society

AAHGS- H-Town

#### Committee Assignments:

##### *State:*

Genealogy Round Table, Chair-Elect 2007-2008, Chair 2008-2009

Black Caucus, Councilor Alternate 2007-2010

TexShare Education Services Working Group 2007-2010 (Texas State Library and Archives Commission)

##### *University:*

Learning Effectiveness Team

Women's History Month Committee

##### *Library:*

Handbook and Publications Committee (Chair)

Special Events Committee (Chair)

Black History Month Committee (Vice Chair)

Boards, Signage and Displays Committee

Collection Development and Government Documents Committee

Community Affairs, Publicity and Marketing Committee

Electronic Services and Web-Design Committee  
 Information Literacy Planning Committee  
 Search Committee  
 Social Committee

**Publications and Presentations:**

“From School Libraries to Academic Libraries: Your High School Senior is my College Freshman. (Train the Trainers),” TLA District 8 Conference at Aldine High School April 2008

“African Americans in East Texas,” East Texas Historical Association, Beaumont, Texas February 2007

“Collection Development Resources for Patrons of Color,” TLA, Dallas TX April 2008

“Got College Research Skills From School Libraries to Academic Libraries: Your High School Senior is my College Freshman,” Tomball High School, November 2007

“Got College Research Skills From School Libraries to Academic Libraries: Your High School Senior is my College Freshman,” Thurgood Marshall High School, November 2007

“Got College Research Skills From School Libraries to Academic Libraries: Your High School Senior is my College Freshman,” George Bush High School, February 2008

“Minority Genealogical Research: Keeping the Cultures through Engagement, Enlightenment and Empowerment,” University of Houston’s African American Studies Department, April 2008

Included in *Cambridge Who’s Who Among Executives and Professionals* (2007-2008) and *Who’s Who Among African American Librarians* (2008).

**Conferences and Workshops:**

HBCU Information Literacy Leadership Institute February, 2008, Charlotte, NC  
 TLA Dallas Texas April 2008 (Volunteered at the Black Caucus and Registration Booths)

## **GRUNDY**

### **Memberships:**

State Bar of Texas (Inactive)  
 American Association of Law Librarians (AALL)  
     Legal Information Services to the Public Special Interest Section (SIS)  
     Research Instruction and Patron Services Special Interest Section (SIS)  
 American Bar Association (ABA)  
 Houston Area Law Librarians (HALL)  
 Special Libraries Association (SLA)  
     Legal Division

### **Committee Assignments:**

Collection Development & Government Documents (Chair)

Distance Library Services Task Force (Vice Chair)  
 Information Literacy Planning Committee (Vice Chair)

Building & Facilities Task Force  
 Electronic Services & Web-Design  
 Library Assessment Task Force  
 Social Committee  
 Special Events Task Force (Local & National)  
 Technology & Systems Task Force

### **Publications and Presentations:**

Compiled, updated and converted to PDF format multiple handouts for the Research Instruction classes. These included many course specific handouts as well as basic reference resources such as style guides.

Taught a 6-hour introductory legal research class for the Pre-Law Institute for Mentoring Students (Pre-LIMS) Summer Program

### **Graduate School Support**

Provided multiple Research Instruction sessions for Graduate students

Assisted multiple masters' and doctoral candidates in finalizing theses research; locating missing references, ensuring these conform to and follow the American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines.

**LI****Memberships:****ALA**

## ACRL

- Asian, African and Middle Eastern Section (AAMES)
- Instruction Section

## LIRT (Library Instruction Round Table)

- Research Committee

**TLA**

- Division 1, Roundtable U, District 8

College and University Libraries

Library Instruction

**Committee Assignments;**

Collection Development & Government Docs

Distance Library Services Task Force

Electronic Services & Web-Design

Information Literacy Planning Committee

Special Events Task Force

Technology & Systems Task Force

**Presentations:**

“Information Resources Evaluation” at TXLA District 8 fall meeting, 2007.

**Conferences and Workshops:**

ALA Midwinter Conference, Philadelphia PA, January 2008

TXLA Annual Conference, Dallas, TX, 2008

**SATO****Memberships:****ALA**

ACRL

Asian / Pacific American Librarians Association

**OTHER**

Kansas Library Association

Association of Architecture School Librarians (pending)

**Committee Assignments:**

Collection Development and Government Documents Committee

Fine Arts Appreciation Committee

Information Literacy Planning Committee

Preservation Planning and Disaster Recovery Committee

**SHAW****Memberships:****ALA**

ACRL

- College Libraries Section

- University Libraries Section

- Instruction Section

LIRT (Library Instruction Round Table)

LAMA (Library Administration and Management Association)

- Library Organization and Management Section

- Measurement Assessment and Evaluation Section

**TLA**

College and Universities Section

Reference Round Table

**Beta Phi Mu****Committee Assignments:*****National:***

ACRL / CLS Best Practices Committee

LAMA BES Safety &amp; Security of Library Buildings Committee

NMRT Resume Review Service

***State:***

Subject editor for Philosophy for the online version of Texas Reference Sources for TLA Reference Round Table (<http://www.txla.org/pubs/trs/TBB.html>)

***University:***

University Academic Council  
 Dissertation/Thesis Editorial Committee  
 University Institutional Effectiveness Committee  
 Faculty Advisory Council  
 Graduate Council

***Library:***

Library Assessment Task Force (Chair)  
 Information Literacy Planning Committee (Chair)

Search Committee (Vice Chair)

Publications Committee  
 Electronic Services and Web Design  
 Distance Library Services Task Force  
 Acquisitions and Materials Budget Committee  
 Boards, Signage and Displays Committee  
 Building and Facilities Task Force  
 Collection Development and Government Documents Committee  
 Technology and Systems Task Force

**Publications and Presentations:**

“Using Library E-Resources to Enhance Student Learning” as part of a panel at the *Teaching with Technology Conference* at Texas A&M University, February 2008.

Multiple book reviews for Choice, ARBA, and the Journal of Web Librarianship

**Conferences and Workshops:**

SACS Annual Conference, New Orleans LA, December, 2007  
 Teaching with Technology Conference, TAMU, February 2008  
 ALA Annual Conference, Anaheim CA, June 2008

**Other:**

Adjunct Professor of Philosophy at Cypress-Fairbanks Community College