THE CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING A NEW REFERENCE MODEL: A CASE STUDY

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ARLIS/NA Annual Conference
Washington, D.C.
May 3, 2014
CASE STUDY@RENSSELAER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
RPI: User Population

- @5,000 Undergraduates; @1,500 Graduates
- Lally School of Management & Technology
- School of Architecture
- School of Engineering
- School of Humanities, Arts, and the Social Sciences
- School of Science
Libraries

Architecture Library
(Greene Building – 3rd floor west)

Folsom Library
Impacts on Reference Services

- Redesign of Folsom Library’s main floor in 2005
- Reduction of subject librarians from 8 to 4 by 2008
- Reduction of desk hours over time
Reference & Instructional Services Team

- Science Librarian
- Management Librarian
- Media & Digital Assets Librarian
- Manager/Reference & Instructional Services
Statistics

- Information Desk/person to person
  - 2008 – 6094 interactions
  - 2010 – 4266 interactions
  - 2011 – 2599 (including 6 months after new model)
- 4 main email lists for “Ask-A-Librarian” between 500-600 emails year
- Consultations: 130-200 year
Time for Other Projects

- Digitization Projects
- Data Curation
- Discovery tool
- Online tutorials
- Web redesign
Service Points

- Information Desk & Circulation Desk (Folsom Library)
- Architecture Library-Circulation desk
- Help Desk (Voorhees Computing Center)
- Center for Communication Practices; i.e. Writing Center (Folsom Library lower level)
- Advising Center
- Others
Information Desk Models

Information desk models and alternative scenarios:

1. Maintaining desk services, but on a smaller scale and no longer relying on the support of other departmental staff:

   Staffing a service point:

   - Each of the four reference department members (CF, COH, JK, FS) is assigned coverage for one day of general reference service at the desk (11-3 or 11-2) for each day of the week; i.e., Monday through Thursday — this would present no increase in individual time spent on the desk as when the desk was staffed from 9-5. Reference would be solely "on call" on Fridays. This is for the academic semesters only, summer and breaks would still be handled as on call. (If any of these scenarios were implemented reference dept members would need a pager for contact when they are roving, on breaks, and during lunch hour).

   - Hire work study students for 11-5 (or more) desk coverage; increase training of reference and IT duties; departmental members can monitor students staffing the desk one day a week and provide training on reference and IT duties.

   Desk location:

   - Same area: smaller desk; one computer with no double facing screens; seating in front for consulting?
   - Locate in center of the floor closer to the hubs?
   - Locate in consultation area, in corner of main floor; against wall on eastern side: First floor?

   But, with reduced on-one-one service, should we add supplemental services? use more online technologies?

   - Add a virtual reference service (IM), text-e-librarian, QR codes for handouts and contact information?
   - Public relations material advertising reference and research services?
   - Enhance and promote the mobile services site?
   - Investigate Skype services for reference services?
   - Need for identification: badges?
   - iPad? Roving librarians?

2. Establishing a collaborative service point with other partners:

   - Investigate the establishment of a small Information Commons or Learning Commons with DotCIO IT support staff. Re: model at U (LM/Amherst).
   - Collaborate with the services provided by the Center for Communication Practices; or other potential partners: Academic Computing; Dissertation Boot Camp; Archer Center; Career Development; Advising & Learning Assistance Center;
   - Piggyback on the libraries' circulation service point and make it more collaborative and focused on quality customer service (i.e., "Integrated Service Point" employed by RIT & MIT);
   - Information/Learning Commons designed between Folsom and VCC with a collaboration of many partners.

3. No desk—Purely "on call" services
- Library Management Team
- Faculty/Library Liaisons
- ARLIS/WNY
- SUNY/Dept. of Information Studies
Collaboration with State University at Albany, Department of Information Studies

- Students’ input on reference models (summer 2011) Class: Human Information Behavior

- Development of marketing materials (intern Fall 2011)
Scenarios: New Models
New Models

- Maintaining desk services on a smaller scale; but, with little support from other departmental staff
- Purely “on call” tiered reference services
- Establishing a collaborative service point with other partners
Scenario 3

Establishing a collaborative service point with other partners:

Which partners?

- **Circulation desk** (“integrated service point”; located on main floor)
- **IT Help Desk** (located just across the plaza)
- **Center for Communication Practices** (formerly Writing Center; located on Folsom Library’s first floor)
- **Career Development Center** (across campus)
- **Archer Center for Student Leadership Development** (across campus)
- **Advising & Learning Assistance Center** (across campus)
Institute new model: Reference on-call, tiered model
On-call, tiered reference services

- **Tier “A”** – Full-time Service Desk staff
  - One full-time person at desk at all times
  - Reduced work-study presence at circulation desk
  - Administrative Assistant as back-up

- **Tier “B”** - 3 fulltime reference librarians (3 of the 4 Reference Team members)

- **Tier “C”** - 2 technical services staff and ILL specialist as back up
Actions

- Removed former Information Desk: Summer 2011
- Renamed Circulation Desk to “Service Desk”
- Train Service Desk staff
- Acquired iPads for Level B and C
- Investigated iPad applications
- Implemented open source “Library Stats” for tracking reference interactions
- Developed posters, bookmarks and QR Codes Ask-A-Librarian and Library Survival Guide (Intern)
- Tested communication: Telephone/then Two-way radios
- Web pages revised
Marketing

Need a Librarian? Here's how you can find us!

http://www.lib.rpi.edu/ask
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<th>ID</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Question Type</th>
<th>Question Format</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>152</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>Email</td>
<td>Archives</td>
<td>Q: I was curious if you all have any files on Gustave Kaufman in the archives? He was an engineering graduate from 1880, and a colleague of Ferris. A: We have precious little information about Gustave Kaufman. His bio file contains only one item, an article reprint titled &quot;The Cantilever Highway Bridge at Cincinnati.&quot; It’s from the American Society of Civil Engineers Transactions (Aug. 1892, pp. 173-220 plus several foldouts). He’s listed in the 1930 Register of All Students as the deceased former General Manager of Frawley, Kaufman Contracting Company, New York, NY. He received his civil engineering degree in 1880, having submitted a senior thesis titled &quot;A Review of Dam No. 1, Ohio River Improvement.&quot; The latter is available on microfilm in both the Folsom Library and the Institute Archives.</td>
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<td>151</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>Email</td>
<td>-Lib-support</td>
<td>Q: I need to read this article for some of my research. Author: He, C. Title: Recent development of the nanocomposites prepared by coaxial jet technology. Journal: fu he cai liao xue bao Volume: 22 Issue: 6 Year: 2005 Pages: 1-8 ISSN: 1000-3851 SIC: EI:Compex OpenURL: <a href="http://sfx-serv.lib.rpi.edu/9002/sfx_troy?skl=EI:Compex&amp;genre=article&amp;issn=1000-3851&amp;date=2005&amp;volume=22&amp;issue=6&amp;page=1&amp;title=88title=Fuhc_Caihao">http://sfx-serv.lib.rpi.edu/9002/sfx_troy?skl=EI:Compex&amp;genre=article&amp;issn=1000-3851&amp;date=2005&amp;volume=22&amp;issue=6&amp;page=1&amp;title=88title=Fuhc_Caihao</a> Xuebao/Acta Materiae Compositae Sinica&amp;title=Recent development of the nanocomposites prepared by coaxial jet technology&amp;last=He&amp;first=Chuanglong&amp;issn= A: Even though the title/abstract are in English, this article is in Chinese. Are you still interested in obtaining it?</td>
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New Ways to Provide Reference/Instructional Services

- Discovery Service
- “Concerto” — easy avenue to push new resources
- Outreach/reference services
  - Importance of collaboration
  - Change the culture
  - Review other academic examples: i.e., "ASK Cart"; "House Calls"; "LibraryDude"
- Technologies
  - Services delivered via mobile devices:
  - Our beta mobile catalog under development
  - QR (Quick Response) codes
  - Virtual/Chat reference; Text a Librarian
  - FB, Twitter, YouTube, etc.
  - Augmented Reality
- LibGuides
- StackMap software
Establishing a collaborative service point with other partners?

Which partners?

- IT Help Desk (located just across the plaza in the Computing Center)
- Center for Communication Practices (formerly Writing Center; located on Folsom Library’s first floor)
- Career Development Center (Darrin Communication Center--across campus)
- Archer Center for Student Leadership Development (across campus)
- Advising & Learning Assistance Center (across campus)
- Teaching faculty
Successes

- Planning process
- Sharing responsibility for reference transactions
- Maintaining meaningful statistics
- Using Apple Technology
- Conversing about collaborative service points on campus
- Collaborating with co-workers, graduate students/new professionals
- Freeing time for projects
- Reassessing use of space; emphasizing library as a place
Challenges

- Integrating with overall strategic planning
- Considering accreditation requirements
- Maintaining realistic statistics and meaningful assessments
- Providing ongoing training/oversight of staff
- Encouraging iPad usage
- Planning for other reference enhancements


Thank you!!

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