Annual Report of Reference Services Committee (May 2003–April 2004) to Library Council, University of Toronto

Reference Services Committee is a Standing Committee of Library Council, with members appointed by the heads of libraries or units. The committee met 12 times this year. A list of current members is appended.

**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

1. To identify, consider and recommend initiatives to enhance reference services in the central library and, where appropriate, in the campus libraries.
2. To share information related to reference services.
3. To coordinate activities related to the provision of reference services.
4. To anticipate and respond in a coordinated manner to developments in the library system which may have an impact on reference services.
5. To recommend annually two of its members from the central library system to the Electronic Selection Subcommittee. One of the recommended members shall represent areas with science reference responsibilities, and one shall represent areas with social science and humanities reference responsibilities.
6. To communicate relevant information related to reference services to other areas of the library system, as appropriate.
7. To review, from time to time, existing reference services.
8. To meet regularly, at least eight times a year.
9. To report regularly to Library Council in May of each year.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

The committee met its goals this year, except for appointing members to EIRC. Sara McDowell and Warren Holder give regular reports to the Reference Services Committee concerning electronic titles up for consideration, titles purchased, and other news and issues related to the electronic collections, such as consortial arrangements, product reviews, problem resources, and usage statistics. There are other members of Reference Services who also sit on EIRC. Here are more highlights of the year's work.

1. **OPAC usability:** The committee saw 2 upgrades to SIRSI: version 2002 (July) and version 2003 (November). Discussions of display and usability issues were extensive over numerous meetings, with many changes and improvements being suggested.

   In order to make informed, well-thought out decisions, with input from areas other than reference, we struck an **OPAC Display subcommittee** (November 2003), which meets regularly. Its mandate is to consider user-friendly changes to the catalogue interface and their impact/effects on other modules; to try them out in a test environment if appropriate; and to make recommendations back to Reference Services. It is composed of reference services librarians from Robarts, Gerstein, and various college and campus libraries; representatives from serials and cataloguing; and Elizabeth Black and Sian Meikle. Chaired by Susanne Tabur, major work done included: input into the design of the new version of the catalogue; input into the *Search Tips* help section; dealing with the order of elements displayed in the bibliographic record; and reporting back to the Reference Services Committee. In addition, Sian Meikle reports on catalogue and other database issues at every meeting.

2. **The Web Advisory Group (WAG),** chaired by Patricia Bellamy, continued to work on improvements to the library website and access to electronic resources. They provided input into UTL website changes; created new user-focused sections "Find Articles by Subject" and "Start Your Research"; and increased subject
access to electronic collections; cross-linked useful resources e.g. links to Ulrich’s Periodical Directory from the e-journals section. WAG also created general principles to help decide which interface features available from the various online vendors would be useful to enable. So far, WAG has overseen administrative changes to the OCLC and Proquest interfaces. The WAG subcommittee which maintains the Internet for Researchers site, gathered input from the committee and revised this resource.

3. **Guests:** The committee welcomed a number of people who kept us updated on various initiatives and gave us demonstrations: Rea Devakos on T-Space; Jeff Newman on the Virtual Reference pilot project; Adrienne Broad and Alan Darnell on my.access; Marc Lalonde and Patricia Bellamy on changes to the U of T website.

4. **Sharing ideas:** J. Mendelsohn initiated a very valuable discussion on the purpose and value of reference to the university and research, out of which came a list that can be used in planning, priority-setting, and so on. We observed that kind of in-depth discussion is very useful, and complements the usual day-to-day matters that come before the committee. To this end, we have started having a discussion item-of-the-month at our meetings whenever possible. We have held discussions on email reference services, and fee-based services. We generated a list of all the email services available throughout the library system, which will be useful for staff when doing patron referrals. Members report on various conferences and workshops attended.

5. **Training opportunities:** Our meetings continue to provide a useful forum for publicizing training opportunities, both internal (Enhancing Your Reference Knowledge and Instructing Librarians) and external (publishers and vendors). This year, Jeannie An organized Factiva training, and Warren Holder organized Global Books in Print and Ulrich’s training for our committee.

6. **REFINFO:** we use this mailing list extensively as a way to share information relating to reference services and resources, including publicizing new resources; to communicate information between committees; and to request and provide input on numerous issues in general, and between meetings. Issues include: consultation on the use of specific electronic resources; calling for members to help with reviewing products and interfaces; or doing comparisons of resources for collection development purposes, improving usability of the catalogue and other electronic resources; and alerting each other to problems with resources. In reference to the last point, Sara McDowell reported on a coordinated way to deal with e-resource access problems. There is now a dedicated email set up by ITS, where problems can be reported and streamed to the most appropriate person. Lara Okihiro posts regular bulletins - "New to EIR".

7. **Problem patrons & safety:** We discussed the issue of guidelines for library staff when dealing with patrons viewing pornography or other objectionable material, and also raised it at Library Council. Bill Godoy gave a presentation to the committee on effective ways to deal with this situation. Through sharing information, we realized that there was long-standing campus-wide harassment of reference staff by a particular telephone patron. We took action to have the patron banned from service. Following from this, we agreed that we would use the REFINFO mailing list to share information about problem patrons amongst ourselves.

8. **Library orientations:** John Papadopoulos proposed an orientation to the Law Library for members of the committee. We welcomed this as an excellent way to keep each other informed about the resources and services provided throughout the library system, and to provide useful referrals to our patrons. We hope to hold more of these in the coming year.

9. Other issues discussed by the committee this year: authentication and UTORID implementation; serials display and holdings in the catalogue; keeping reference statistics; and VDX.

--- Respectfully submitted by Nalini Singh, Chair – May 21, 2004
Reference Services Committee – Current Membership

An, Jeannie - Rotman Business Information Centre
Bellamy, Patricia - Reference, Robarts Library
Bethke, Shawn - John M. Kelly Library, St. Mike's
Del Bianco, Elsie - Graham Library, Trinity College
Dorskind, Shauna - AVL Library
English, Margaret - Fine Art Library
Ferstman, Len - Innis Library
Fulford, Margaret - Dentistry Library
Geiger, Barbara - Regis Library
Holder, Warren - ITS
Kaszuba, Sophia - Laidlaw Library
Li, Sam-chin - Data, Map and Government Information Services
McDowell, Sara - EIRC/Robarts Library
McFerran, Noel - John M. Kelly Library, St. Mike's
Meikle, Sian - ITS
Meindl, Patricia - Chemistry Library
Mendelsohn, Jenny - Head of Reference, Robarts Library
Meyers Sawa, Suzanne - Music Library
Nichol, Gail - Noranda Earth Science Library
Papadopoulous, John - Bora Laskin Law Library
Press, Marian - OISE/UT Library
Puchalski, Irene - Shore + Moffat Architecture, Landscape & Design Library
Shier, Andrea - Criminology Library
Singh, Nalini - FIS Inforum
Skelton, Vicki - Industrial Relations Library
Stevens, Mary - Petro Jacyk Central & East European Resource Centre
Stevenson, Mary-jo - Collection Development, Robarts Library
Tabur, Susanne - Gerstein Science Information Centre
Tamura, Elaine - UTSC
Tjaden, Ted - Bora Laskin Law Lib
Toews, Jennifer - Fisher Rare Book Library
Wang, Jiabin - Engineering & Computer Science Library
Whyte, Ian - UTM
Zaldin, Gabbi - E. J. Pratt Library, Victoria
Zhou, Helen - Cheng Yu Tung East Asian Library