Reference Services Committee
Minutes of the meeting of December 14, 2005, Alice Moulton Room, Gerstein Science Information Centre, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

Present: Laura Anderson (Rotman), Patricia Bellamy (Robarts Ref), Alastair Boyd (Robarts/CAUG), Heather Cunningham (Gerstein), Rea Devakos (ITS), Barbara Geiger (Regis), Jack Howard (ROM), Sandra Langlands (Gerstein), Sam-Chin Lee (DMGIS), Noel S. McFerran (St. Michael’s), Sian Meikle (ITS), Jenny Mendelsohn (Robarts Ref), Suzanne Meyers Sawa (Music), Gail Nichol (Engineering), Marian Press (OISE/UT), Elena Prigoda (Gerstein), Mary-jo Stevenson (Robarts CDD), Susanne Tabur (Gerstein)

Regrets: Richard Carter, Elsie Del Bianco, Shauna Dorskind, Margaret Fulford, Warren Holder, Sophia Kaszuba, Sara McDowell, Patricia Meindl, Jennifer Toews, Gabbi Zaldin

1. Minutes of previous meeting
The minutes of November 9th were approved.

2. Business arising
   a) Sian Meikle (ITS) confirmed that it is possible for the “online” button in the web catalogue to display instead text from the subfield |3 in the bib record URL field (856) so that users can see they are connecting to (e.g.) “Table of contents”. So this change is in the works. If there is no subfield |3 then the display will remain as “Online”. Alastair Boyd (Robarts) confirmed that all LC records with Table of contents 856 fields will have the subfield |3.

   b) Sian hasn’t yet had time to look into the Google Scholar ISBN search problem reported by Marian Press.

   c) The Library catalogue brochure is now finished. Patricia Bellamy (Robarts) said it was currently being proofread in the Reference Department; once approved it should be out in January.

   d) Re subject groupings for Scholar’s Portal: Patricia, Gail Nichol (Engineering) and Heather Cunningham (Gerstein) have made a list, which was passed round for comments, additions, etc. Sage full-text titles and ProQuest have not yet been considered. When complete, the list will be passed to Marc Lalonde in ITS.

3. Reports
   a) Sara McDowell was absent, so her report was deferred until January

   b) Sian Meikle
   The UTL website design team has been examining the results of the latest usability studies, and will implement the consequent changes in the Library homepage over the Christmas break. A remaining problem area is the ability to find journal articles. Of the 57 subjects who took part in the three studies, and who were given the task of finding articles about “panic attacks”: 20 did not select the Article Centre and/or a journal index at all; 19 did start in the right place, but eight of those stopped before completing a search; 10 subjects did get successful results. Overall, 16 of the 57 had a favourite database and used that. (These subjects were all students, but ranged from novices with no experience of the catalogue, to grad students).
It is obvious that a significant number of users look for a search box for articles right away. Over the holiday an open Scholar’s Portal search box will go right on the home page. (At the recent Scholar’s Portal Summit, a report on users’ behaviour said that doing open searches against all databases produced results for many users that they would not otherwise have found). Sian presented a diagram for discussion showing how topic selection and searching will be made clearer in the revised interface. The “multi-search” option will be enabled in the New Year, enabling us to build our own links to local and external databases.

Noel. McFerran (St. Michael’s) asked about the prognosis for the broken cross-references in the web catalogue. This is a known bug in Sirsi. In cases where a user follows a see reference from an unused form of a name to a used form ending with a hyphen (i.e. with an open date), then the result is an error message—“Sorry, no cross references were found”—rather than the correct heading. For instance, if you do an author browse search on “Ratzinger Joseph” you get the error message, rather than the updated heading “Benedict XVI, Pope, 1927-”.

According to Alastair, Elizabeth Black (Campus Database Co-ordinator) has discussed this with Sirsi. There is a patch to fix this, but it is for a later version of Sirsi Unicorn than we are currently using. We elected not to do the upgrade from 2003 1.3 to the subrelease 1.4 in December 2004 because there were no new features of substance—and this bug had not surfaced at that point. Now, because of hardware problems, the planned Oracle update over Christmas has been delayed, so it is unclear when the next Sirsi upgrade will actually be installed on the production server; it could be many months away, and therefore so could the solution to this problem. Another option would be to ask Sirsi for a fix written specifically for Unicorn 2003 1.3. Alastair said he would raise this at the following day’s CDC Advisory Group meeting. It was asked whether altering the authority records for the affected headings would fix the problem. Alastair said yes, removing the hyphens in the authority records would do the trick, but at the cost of creating a discrepancy between the headings in bib records and authority records which would break the validation process. We will wait to hear Sirsi’s answer before deciding on the next step.

Following up this question, Noel pointed out that cross-references are only supplied when doing browse searches, but most users prefer keyword searches. Could we configure the OPAC so as to produce cross-references from keyword searches? Sian said this was not currently possible. She reminded the group that we had previously agreed to disable a feature something like this (one that provided a list of related subject headings based on keyword searches) because there were too many blind references in the resulting “Try these too” list of suggestions. Alastair thought that an option to send name-title keyword searches (at least) through the authority file would be a very desirable feature to request from Sirsi, and will also raise this at the CDC Advisory Group meeting.

c) Warren Holder was absent, so his report was deferred until January.

d) Web Advisory Group

Heather Cunningham (Gerstein) reported that WAG has been with working Sian on the UTL redesign, and there was nothing to add to what Sian had already announced on this subject.

e) Sandra Langlands (Gerstein) reported on the recent Scholars Portal Search summit attended by all OCUL members. Many topics were covered, including integrating searches, and new features like multi-search. The Scholars Portal Working Group reported on “Progress to date.” Use is very high (Windsor is currently at the top of the list), even though many universities have not put an SP search on their library home page yet. The OCUL servers for CSA content are being overworked, so they will be upgraded to improve
performance. The Working Group had made some recommendations, e.g. having subject groupings on the search page. There were also suggestions for improving communications between OCUL members: perhaps a listserv to inform members when Scholars Portal is down. A majority at the summit approved the idea of a forum for librarians to provide input into Scholars Portal Search and how it should operate, although OCUL directors expressed some concern about spawning yet another committee. The Working Group had sent round a survey to those attending and got 39 responses. The results are being compiled.

Sandra asked Reference Services if there should there be a sub-group to work with ITS concerning local customizations, etc.? This sounds like a good idea, and Jenny Mendelsohn, Marian Press, Patricia Bellamy, Heather Cunningham, Elena Prigoda and Sandra volunteered on the spot. Sandra will get things rolling, and Gail will send a message to refinfo in case others would like to join in.

4. **T-space continued**

Rea Devakos gave a Powerpoint presentation on the history and current progress of T-space, and handed out a print version of the Powerpoint slides, a summary of consultation results, and a questionnaire for Ref Services members to complete.

On the issue of “governance”, it seems desirable to involve T-space contributors in the process, but is proving difficult to get them interested. *Question:* is anyone reading T-space material? Yes: Rea cited 229 visits for one title, over 500 for another; ca. 18% of users come from Google. There was some discussion concerning the “marketing” of T-space to potential contributors, and how faculty might be persuaded to join in. It was suggested that adding some download statistics on the T-space home page would provide encouragement, in conjunction with the “featured author” link. *Question:* are copyright concerns a problem? *Answer:* we train donors on how to research this. Open Access publishers are obviously not a problem, and we offer advice for contentious instances. The copyright clearance form requires donors to declare they are either the copyright owners or have obtained permission to deposit material. Overall there are several obstacles to wider participation. Fear of copyright problems; the sheer newness of T-space and its as yet low visibility; also, the effort required to post material seems to discourage some faculty.

5. **Discussion on reporting of database access problems**

and

6. **Guidelines for crediting instructional and reference works**

were both deferred due to Sara McDowell’s absence.

7. **OCULA spring workshop**

Gail announced we would be hosting this in late March or April. She would like some volunteers to help line up speakers and topics. The overall theme is to be New Trends in Reference (e.g. new ways of delivering services, etc.). She will send a message to refinfo canvassing suggestions and volunteers.

Meeting adjourned at 11:40.