Reference Services Committee Meeting Minutes
February 10 2016, 9:30—11:00am
Alice Moulton Room–Gerstein Science Information Centre

Present: Agatha Barc (Victoria); Kathryn Barrett (Scholars Portal); Allison Bell (Gerstein); John Bolan (Bora Laskin); Juliya Borie (Cataloguing / CAUG); Heather Buchansky (Student Engagement); Richard Carter (St. Mike’s – Minute Taker); Heather Cunningham (Gerstein); Lucy Gan (East Asian); Helen He (Dentistry); Holly Inglis (Rotman); Marc Lalonde (ITS); Greg Luciani (St. Augustine’s Seminary); Courtney Lundrigan (Trinity); Patricia Serafini (OISE); Vicki Skelton (CIRHR); Carey Toane (Gerstein – Chair); Meaghan Valant (UTM); Alexia Loumankis (Bora Laskin); Helen Tang (Canada-Hong Kong); Navroop Gill (OISE); Kelli Babcock (ITS); Karen Suurtamm (UTARMS); Laure Perrier (Research and Data Management); Jeff Newman (New College); Rita Vine (Faculty Engagement – via Skype).

Regrets: Debbie Green (Robarts), Nalini Singh (Inforum).

1. Selection of a minutes-taker
   Richard Carter accepted.

2. Minutes of the December meeting
   One error was corrected: Judith Logan had been the committee chair for 2 years, not 3.

3. Business arising from the minutes
   Carey suggested that from this meeting forward, presenters to give minute-takers their notes and slides to help compile the minutes.

4. Report from ITS (M. Lalonde)
   Following a few minor tweaks, shelf-browse in the catalogue will be returning soon.

   A problem with finding known titles in the catalogue is being fixed: right now patrons aren’t getting hints when they type words into the search box, and often the correct titles are hidden further down the list instead of rising to the top.

   The course reserve system (Locker) is also benefiting from ITS scrutiny. DVDs in the system have been incorrectly labelled as “streaming media” but ITS aims to correct the error.

   The new Dentistry website is now live; Fisher and UTM are the next libraries to get revamped websites.

5. Library Council update (C. Toane)
   The future of Library Council, which hasn’t met in three years, remains unclear.

   A committee of committee chairs—including Carey from Reference Services—met last month to discuss the matter. The Council had the advantage of enabling staff from different committees to share ideas; at the same time, new communication opportunities potentially render Council obsolete. These include town halls, where staff from different committees can gather in person, and Confluence, where staff can explore one
another’s committees online. The chairs’ committee differs from Library Council in that only chairs of standing committees are welcome.

For now, the committee has proposed letting Council lie dormant while they meet themselves four times a year as a new committee. They would, however, welcome feedback on this suggestion. Carey asked members of this committee to send her any comments on the proposal before the following Tuesday, February 10th. The next meeting is February 25th.

In response to a request, Carey said she would send out a reminder email to the group. One of this new committee’s tasks is to develop a series of templates for incoming chairs on such topics as how to run an effective meeting.

6. Reference check-ins: How We Do Reference at Bora Laskin Law Library (J. Bolan and A. Loumankis)

Agatha said she always found these check-ins useful, especially for promoting libraries’ special collections. Carey asked how many members reported at their libraries what they had heard at Reference Services—but the response from the group was difficult to gauge.

John and Alexia said the law library was moving back to its newly-renovated space at the corner of Queen’s Park and Hoskin. With 6 librarians taking on 2-hour shifts, the library runs a reference desk from 10-4, Monday to Friday. They have discussed the possibility of allowing students with law degrees to help at the desk but, for now, only librarians work there.

Returning to bright new spaces from smaller temporary ones is always welcome. But John said their temporary location on Charles Street allowed the librarians to unexpectedly offer reference help from their offices. While reference transactions at their temporary desk in the basement dropped, the number of office visits from students needing research help rose significantly, and email queries rose too. One reason for this surge was location. The librarians’ temporary offices were right across the hallway from the student lounge. Sometimes, John said, a librarian would hold an impromptu research workshop in an office for a group of 3 or 4 students. Alexia added that office-reference tended to be ad hoc, informal, and prompted by a specific assignment. Courtney asked if BL librarians planned to continue this reference trend once they had moved into their new offices. John said that type of reference service would depend on whether students would feel comfortable going up to the circulation desk and asking for librarians.

Documentation queries are common. Legal citations are often complex, especially for students new to the profession. In response, the Bora Laskin librarians have developed a Google Doc with answers to common legal citation queries, as well as idiosyncratic ones. In addition, they co-teach with faculty a 1st year legal research course. Offering 24-hour reference assistance just before an assignment is due received some uptake in December, prompting the librarians to try the service again in April before assessing its effectiveness. Commenting on the BL citation guide—which is linked from the BL website—John said it chiefly includes examples not covered by the McGill legal citation guide.

Law library patrons are a diverse group, including lawyers-in-training, students helping faculty with research, lawyers and paralegals from outside UofT, and members of the public. While some patrons know what they want, others need basic guidance, some need in-depth help, some need directions, and others still hope for legal advice librarians cannot provide.

Vicky asked whether BL librarians maintain their loose-leaf services. John said they had been cancelling many that were online. For students, who can access these online versions, these cancellations may be no problem;
but for members of the public, who lack access to e-resources, these loose-leaf services will become out of reach if we scrap the print versions. Discussion followed. Tim asked whether BL has workstations allowing the public to login without a UTORID. For now, BL does not.

7. **Discover Archives/ATOM (K. Babcock and K. Suurtamm)**

Archivists across UofT are developing a new shared portal called *Discover Archives* ([https://discoverarchives.library.utoronto.ca/](https://discoverarchives.library.utoronto.ca/)).

Until recently, UofT archival descriptions have been collected using a variety of decentralized archival databases. Now, collections can start to be accessed on the *Discover Archives* portal using ATOM, a tool already used for archival material at York and Ryerson.

The main idea is to centralize descriptions and allow patrons to browse collections easily from one place. UofT Archival staff were trained on the system last year and hope to use 2016 as a testing period. Not all records are listed in ATOM yet, but more than 13,000 from these partners have been added: UofT Archives; Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library; University of St. Michael’s College Archives; St. Michael’s John M. Kelly Library; Media Commons; and UTSC Library.

Using *Discover Archives* you can browse by repository, type of material, and description, and you can pinpoint holdings and narrow your results on the left-hand side. Other libraries are welcome to join in and add their records. Kelly and Karen said a link to the database would be sent out soon so committee members, among others, could explore it.

8. **Other Business**

There was none.

Next meeting: March 9, 9:30-11 am, Alice Moulton Room, Gerstein Library