

Reference

Overview

Traditional reference services have seen significant changes over the past 10 years. It was once enough for libraries to provide access to print collections, inviting patrons either in person, by phone or FAX to use the service. Technology continues to evolve at a rapid pace. In addition there is a tremendous amount of information being published over the Internet, also at a rapid pace. These two phenomena provide significant opportunities and challenges to librarianship, making collaboration more crucial than ever. To this end, System staff will play a key role in providing leadership in reference trends: developing/maintaining support mechanisms for its members, making training opportunities available which will ultimately empower members to provide service at the local level.

Administration and Service

The System will

- collaborate with the reference librarians' special interest group to provide reference training on an ongoing basis. This training includes, but is not limited to, basic reference interviewing techniques, basic reference sources, virtual reference, electronic reference, database training, and specialized subject areas.
- coordinate activities in order to:
 - Facilitate group purchases of databases or other products;
 - Develop and maintain a list of current member library reference staff with their areas of expertise in order to involve them in reference training;
 - Create and enhance partnerships with and among member libraries to enhance overall reference services;
 - Develop and maintain a list of collection specialties among the libraries.
- provide support to Virtual Reference service in the following areas:
 - Promote the service among those members not currently providing VR
 - Provide mentoring support to those members interested in providing VR
 - Provide staff who will act as overall administrator of the service
 - Provide training opportunities when appropriate so that members keep current on trends as well as basic skills.
 - Keep abreast of new technological advances
 - Keep abreast of changes within the state as they apply to VR
- facilitate effective reference communications using:
 - Electronic mail lists
 - Newsletter
 - Representation at Special Interest Groups
- keep and disseminate appropriate statistics. This includes, but is not limited to virtual reference service and other cooperative database projects. There will be a periodic review of such services by System reference staff in collaboration with member libraries to determine usefulness and the need for changes.

Staff and Resources

The System will

- provide a qualified consultant who is responsible for managing the system's reference plan and working with members to:
 - Coordinate the virtual reference service
 - Collect and disseminate statistics as needed
 - Assist in other collaborative efforts
 - Coordinate group purchases of electronic databases
 - Maintain a professional library science collection
 - Act as system representative in matters concerning reference
 - Attend appropriate SIG, state and national meetings
 - Arrange training for members on reference
 - Assist in marketing reference services.

Member Library Responsibility

- Member libraries are responsible for developing and maintaining collections which will fill their local needs. This includes reference collections, circulating collections, and access to online databases.
- In order to provide a minimum level of effective reference service, members need to provide a budget substantial enough to support the following:
 - Telecommunication costs
 - Hardware and software to support reference services
 - Collection management of both paper and electronic resources
 - Qualified staff and adequate ongoing training
- Assign at least one staff member to be reference contact. The local governing body should provide the time and resources for this person to attend reference special interest group meetings.
- Members are encouraged to work collaboratively to provide good reference service. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Actively participating in the virtual reference project, providing qualified staff to work the VR desk
 - Promoting virtual reference project to patrons
 - Submitting data on collection strengths
 - Participating in other collaborative projects as they arise.