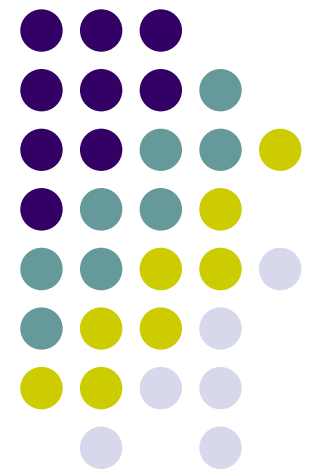
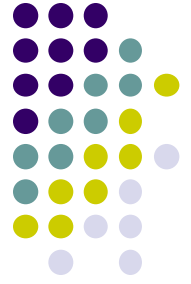


Meeting Users' Needs Through New Reference Service Models

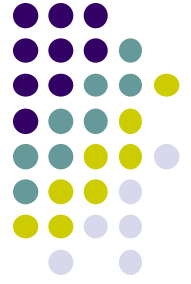
Kay Ann Cassell, PhD
Assistant Professor, SC&I
Rutgers University





Our History

- Since the advent of reference service established at the Worcester Free Public Library in 1876, libraries have had reference desks
- Barbara Ford, in a 1988 article, called for reexamination of the reference desk model



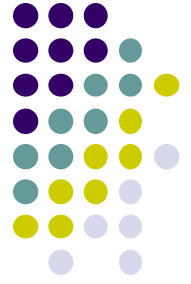
New Models of Reference

- Tiered reference
- Roving reference
- Reconfiguring reference desks or no reference desk
- Consolidating service points
- Team staffing
- Outreach
- Virtual reference and reference 2.0
- Use of technology in reference
- Use of social software



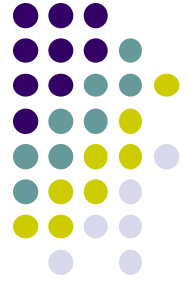
Tiered Reference

- Tiered reference established in the 1990s allows for two or three levels of service
- At Brandeis University, paraprofessionals staffed the first level and librarians staffed the second level, a consultation service
- The County of Los Angeles Public Library developed a tier 1 service for frequently asked questions and a tier 2 service for email, chat and more difficult or research questions



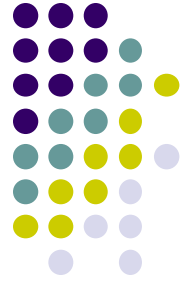
Tiered Reference - 2

- In a three level model there is also an information desk at the front door
- Tiered reference model allows for a great deal of flexibility in staffing, but it is also dependent on the staff knowing when to refer questions to the next level
- Many libraries now offer consultation services
 - [Skokie Public Library](#)
 - [Kent State University](#)



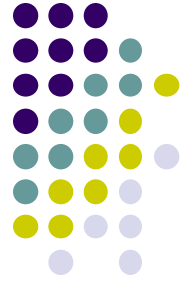
Roving Reference

- Roving reference enables the librarian to talk with users who do not approach the reference desk
- Not all users are comfortable approaching the reference desk
- Roving librarians can reach out to users at their “point of puzzlement”



Roving Reference - 2

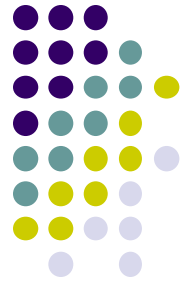
- Case study – George Washington University
 - Recommendations include
 - Follow up with users
 - Think in terms of welcoming behaviors
 - Address the user before addressing the screen
 - Create an atmosphere of active learning
 - Refer questions from the reference desk to the rover
 - Keep statistics



Roving Reference - 3

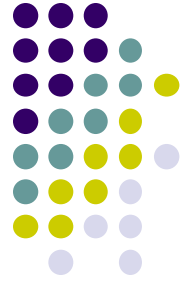
- Case study – King County (WA) Library System's use of roving reference
 - Development of scheduling models
 - Development of possible tasks while on the floor
 - Development of standardized form to generate statistics

Reconfiguring Reference Desks

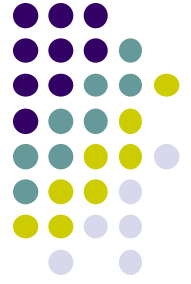


- Smaller desks encourage the librarian to move around and are less intimidating
- Newer desk designs can allow the users and librarians to sit down together and look at the screen with dual monitors
- Two desk heights can accommodate a wider variety of users

Reconfiguring Reference Desks - 2



- Case study - Indiana State University
 - Neon sign with “ASK?” above the reference desk which is in the front of the library



No Reference Desk

- Case study – University of California at Merced which offers just in time reference
- Library Service Desk for both reference and circulation
- Work with students, faculty and staff in person and by email, chat and text messaging
- Librarians are always electronically connected to their users

Consolidating Service Points

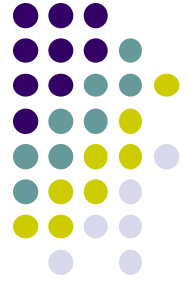


- Case study – University of Arizona Science-Engineering Library
- Consolidation of circulation desk, photocopy desk and reference desk into one desk
- Extensive training of paraprofessionals who staff the central desk
- Librarians are on call

Consolidating Service Points-2

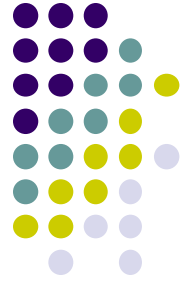


- Case study – Information Commons – University of Massachusetts - library combines reference service with learning commons
- Both public libraries and academic libraries have combined reference and circulation desks – especially effective in smaller libraries



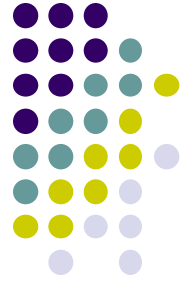
Team Staffing

- Librarian and paraprofessional work together on the reference desk
- Librarian can handle more complicated questions



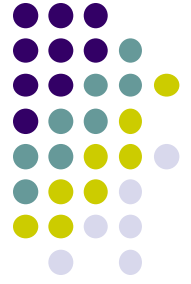
Outreach Reference

- We need to be where the users are if we want them to know about reference service
- In an academic library librarians can set up office hours in academic department or set up reference service where the students are
- In a public library librarians can visit local government offices, Chamber of Commerce, local organizations and institutions



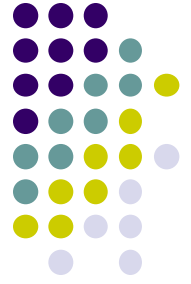
Outreach Reference - 2

- Case study – University of Montana
 - Targeting departmental offices and academic hangouts produced best results
 - Consistency of location and schedule important
 - Focus of PR rather than research assistance
- Case study – Rutgers University
 - Provided reference service in the student center
- Case study – University of Michigan
 - Librarian with a latte



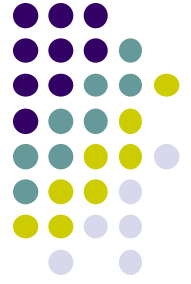
Virtual Reference

- Email, chat, IM and SMS are [new models](#) for reaching users who may not visit the library
- They can accommodate users who need assistance outside of library hours
- All require continual marketing to be successful



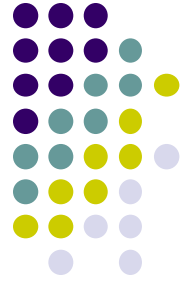
Virtual Reference - 2

- Case study – Email reference
 - Asynchronous
 - Depends on a well-designed electronic form
 - Important to collect enough information since it is hard to go back
 - Allows librarian to take time to research the question and provide a more thorough response



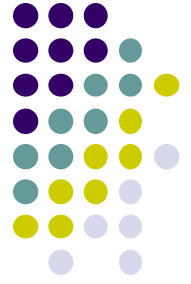
Virtual Reference - 3

- Case study – Chat reference
 - Synchronous
 - Allows librarian to use reference interview techniques
 - Can co-browse or provide a URL
 - Provides a transcript of the session
 - Library can use Questionpoint, Meebo, libraryh31p or some other software



Virtual Reference - 4

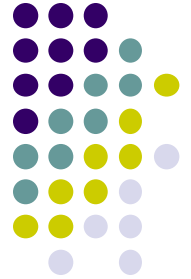
- Case study – IM reference
 - Synchronous
 - Allows for short messages only
 - Can provide the beginnings of a reference session that can be followed by email, fax or perhaps by a visit to the library



Virtual Reference 5

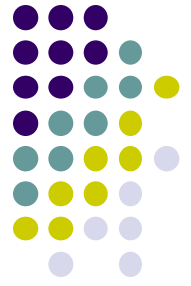
- Case study – SMS (text messaging) reference
 - Synchronous
 - Use software such as AIM, Altamara or Mosio's "Text a Librarian"

Virtual Reference - 6



- Case study – Skype
 - [Southeastern Oklahoma State University](#)

Use of Technology in Reference

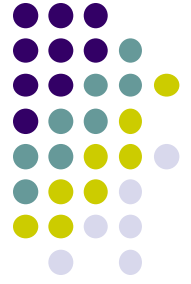


- Use of tablet PCs with or without wireless headphones
- Case study – Seattle Public Library
 - Used Vocera – a wireless voice technology
 - Staff communicate to minimize time needed by user to find their information



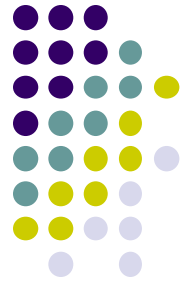
Use of Reference 2.0

- Library web sites – wikis and blogs such as [Ohio University Libraries Biz Wiki](#)
- Libraries using Facebook, MySpace, Twitter
 - [Hennepin County](#) and Univ. of Massachusetts are on Facebook
 - Brooklyn College and Denver Public Library are on MySpace
- Libraries using Second Life
- Widgets – [University of Texas](#)



Mobile Reference

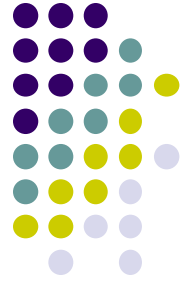
- Web page designed for mobile users
 - New York Public Library
- Databases designed for mobile users
 - Ebsco
- Mobile chat
 - Cornell University Library



The Future

- Libraries need to keep up with user needs
- The best news is that librarians are trying many new models of reference service
- The models that work best may be tailored to the individual library and its clientele
- But what is certain is that librarians must be more visible and that marketing is essential

The Future - 2



- Some guidelines
 - Need to follow interests of community
 - Need to decide whether to implement a new service immediately or carefully test it
 - How it impacts on existing library services
 - How it can link to other technology