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Toward a New Service Model

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The Thomas G. Carpenter Library works with a model of Reference service that is fairly traditional in most senses. The Reference Desk is staffed with a combination of professional librarians and para-professionals a set number of hours per week. When the current library facility was planned, the emphasis was on making more and more computers available to library patrons and to place staff near the computers in order to facilitate service provision. That resulted in a large lab of 129 workstations with a student assistant desk nearby and a smaller lab of 40 workstations with the reference/documents service desk nearby. Subsequent shifts in OPS funding necessitated closing the student desk which in turn resulted in increased traffic at the reference/documents desk. Consequently, reference/documents staff frequently find themselves helping patrons with printing and computer issues instead of focusing on instruction and reference. A pilot project which ran from July through December 2010 examined offering a collaborative approach to service at the former student desk utilizing both reference staff and ITS staff. One of the offshoots of this project is the reexamination of the current reference model with an eye toward better serving the library’s clientele while making more efficient use of available staff. This report reviews the results of the pilot project, surveys available library literature related to service issues, and suggests alternatives that could improve service efficiency.

**Literature Survey**

Relevant library literature focuses on three major themes: integration of library and ITS services, examination and evaluation of various reference service models, and cost analysis of providing reference service.

A 2006 article by Stacey E. Kimmel-Smith reviews Lehigh University’s ten years experience with merging library and IT services and staffing an integrated computing and library help desk. Kimmel-Smith’s literature survey draws on a number of previously published studies of library/IT mergers and provides a good overview of experiences from other libraries.

Key benefits brought out in the literature are:

- Merging services can enable enhanced organizational flexibility, making it easier to shift staff where needed.
- Referrals from one unit to another are reduced.
- Clients no longer have to decide where to go for help. One desk offers a variety of solutions.
- Cross-training can be useful to both librarians and IT staff as librarians gain a better understanding of campus network services and IT staff gain a better understanding of the complexities of library databases.
- The service cultures of the library and IT are frequently different. Merged services provide opportunities for IT staff to adopt the generalist mindset of librarians and focus more closely on institutional needs.

Drawbacks of merged services cited in the literature include:

- Differences in service cultures among librarians and IT staff aren’t always easily resolved. IT staff have been observed to be less likely to instruct and more likely just to go for quick solutions, where library staff are more likely to offer instruction and spend more time with...
Question-handling procedures cited in one study worked upon the assumption that most library questions were short answer. Referrals tended not to be forthcoming as help desk staff attempted to move patrons through the system.

Lehigh’s decision to merge was based on a noted decline in reference questions, the changing needs of clients, a change in the nature of reference work occasioned by the emergence of more and better online databases, and the frequency with which librarians and IT staff found their roles in assisting patrons overlapping. The help desk model adopted by Lehigh was based on a two-tier service model. The help desk was staffed with a combination of professional and para-professionals from both the library and IT who could provide immediate assistance to patrons. Questions involving more complex issues and needing more extensive assistance were referred to the second tier, which consisted of subject specialists who could better assist patrons with research questions.

Overall, Kimmel-Smith finds that the integrated service model adopted by Lehigh has worked well. Key advice offered to others considering merging include:

- Hiring of appropriate staff is critical. Help desk staff need to be “renaissance people” whose service orientation is easily demonstrable.
- Keeping wait time to a minimum is essential. Referrals should be timely and if the process takes too long the help desk should include professional staff who can handle more involved questions on the spot so that fewer referrals are needed.
- It’s important to maintain library service traditions and best practices at the help desk. Staff should function as a team and the library focus of services offered should not be lost. Lehigh has found that having a librarian as the help desk team leader has worked very well.

Fitzpatrick, et al., published the results of a study of the University of Massachusetts Amherst’s Learning Commons operations in 2008. The Learning Commons pulls together library services and services of other academic support units into one physical location so that patrons are able to get assistance with research, writing, and technology. The Library, IT, the Writing Center, and Academic Advising and Career Services all have a presence in the Learning Commons. Development of the Commons was in response to the changed environment in the library driven by the changing nature and needs of the library’s clientele. Reference staff had experienced a decline in reference questions and an increase in requests for technology assistance. While the Library staffed the Reference Desk with both librarians and students, librarians frequently found themselves pulled into offering assistance with printing, file saving, and other computer operations that the students were intended to handle. Prior to development of the Learning Commons the reference desk was the only service point on the lower level of the library.

UM Amherst’s approach to redefining Reference Service was to clarify the role of reference librarians by making other services available in the same physical location. Instead of seeking printing and technology help from reference librarians, patrons were able in the Learning Commons to go directly to an IT help desk for assistance. The Learning Commons model utilized by UM is described as a “back to the future” model based on reference assistance being provided by librarians. By providing other services in close proximity, though, reference librarians find it easier to refer clientele to the appropriate service point for help. While they note a decrease in the number of transactions conducted at the reference desk, they also note an increase in the quality and duration of interactions with library patrons. With the redesign and repurposing of the library’s
lower level, the Learning Commons has become the campus “crossroads.”

In a 2008 article published in the *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, Susan M. Ryan examined the cost-effectiveness of staffing a traditional reference desk at Stetson University. Her literature survey examined not only studies of types of transactions conducted at the reference desk but also studies that analyzed whether or not a library should even maintain a reference desk. A couple of the studies cited suggested that the majority of questions fielded at the typical reference desk could easily be answered by other staff not holding advanced degrees. As many authors have noted, the number of “true” reference questions fielded by librarians has been on the decline, in many cases being replaced by simple directional, informational, or technology-oriented questions. One study cited found that directional questions accounted for fully 50% of the questions asked at the reference desk, while 40% were skill-based or ready reference questions, and only 10% were so-called strategy-based questions. Another cited study found that of 4400 questions fielded at the reference desk only 5.5% “involved extensive interaction and research.”

Ryan also cited discussions in which the authors actually advocated staffing the reference desk with para-professionals or regular staff or even eliminating the reference desk altogether. Other discussions have focused on the use of alternative service delivery methods that include the use of virtual tools along with face-to-face interactions to provide assistance to patrons. The importance of the reference desk as a clearly identifiable place comes up in one discussion, while another discussion advocates a “differentiated service” model that distributes patron requests among various service points than at one central point. Ryan’s study pursues further the idea that by studying types of patron requests an individual library can design services that best fit its clientele.

Ryan’s study resulted in her arriving at a number of conclusions:

- Only 11% of the questions handled at the Stetson reference desk were actual research questions.
- 89% of the questions fielded at the desk could have been handled by trained students and staff.
- 59% of the questions could have been answered relying just on the librarian’s knowledge and using no additional sources.
- Stetson librarians addressed an average of only 3.6 research questions per day.
- Based on the average salary during the study, each question, including those that involved no special training, cost an average of $7.09.
- Stetson spent $49,300 in librarian salaries during the 8 month study to answer only 784 research questions.

Ryan ultimately concludes that: “This may bolster the argument that librarians can leave answering most questions to others and can now concentrate on working on tasks that better utilize their training and experience, as well as learning new skills that benefit the library, the users, and the institution.”

Complementing Ryan’s study is a survey conducted by Julie Banks and Carl Pracht that identifies reference desk staffing trends. The survey results were reported in 2008 in *Reference & User Services Quarterly*. The survey was sent to a random sampling of 191 academic libraries. 101 surveys were returned.

Among the findings in the survey:
44% of libraries reported a decrease in the number of questions answered at the reference desk, 24% reported an increase, 26% reported little or no change, 5% did not respond.

66% of libraries reported no change in staffing at the reference desk, 22% reported an increase in staffing, 15% reported a decrease in staffing, 2% were not sure.

75% of libraries utilized non-degreed personnel anytime, 12% used them during meetings, 10% used them on weekends, and 3% on evenings.

More than 20 libraries staff the reference desk with non-degreed personnel 10-25% of the time; more than 15 libraries use them less than 10% of the time; 15 use them 25-75% of the time, fewer than 5 libraries use them more than 75% of the time.

20 libraries use non-degreed personnel on the reference desk 16-25 hours per week; 12 libraries use non-degreed personnel on the reference desk more than 25 hours per week.

Banks and Pracht observe as a result of their study that the use of non-degreed employees at the reference desk is very likely to continue at least in the very near future. They do point out that a Taiga Forum statement in 2006 projected that within 5 years “reference and catalog librarians as we know them today will no longer exist” and that “the majority of reference questions will be answered through Google Answer or something like it.” The statement goes on further to say that “there will no longer be reference desks or reference offices in the library.” Banks and Pracht, however, don’t see reference going away anytime soon.

A later study at Stetson University by Debbi Dinkins and Susan Ryan, published in the *Journal of Academic Librarianship* in 2010, examined the use of a paraprofessional at the reference desk. Stetson had long planned to hire an Electronic Technician and, when the opportunity arose, they decided to include as a part of that position’s responsibilities also staffing the reference desk. While the position was originally designated primarily to handle computer questions, the additional assignment broadened the scope of the position. Dinkins and Ryan concluded at the end of their study that “the reference desk could be staffed by a trained paraprofessional.” Because of the increase in computer software and hardware related questions, the addition of technical staff at the reference desk was a logical development. The paraprofessional was trained to recognize questions beyond the scope of that position and to refer those questions to professional librarians. After gauging the success of the initial one-year trial, Stetson has decided to continue using a paraprofessional at the desk.

General assumptions that can be reached as a result of surveying relevant library literature include:

- Reference work has changed because of the advance of technology, the ready availability of online research databases, the ease of finding information using the Internet, and the changing nature of academic clientele.
- Reference staff are increasingly expected to provide support services for printing, photocopying, and computer technology.
- Organizations that have merged IT and Library services have done so to better serve user needs. The more successful models either use a Learning Commons approach or a merged help desk that relies on referrals for more in-depth questions.
- Many questions currently fielded at the academic reference desk can be answered efficiently by properly trained nonprofessional staff and/or student assistants.
- The particular service model chosen by a library for the provision of services should be based on careful analysis of client needs and should be reevaluated periodically to keep
pace with changes in technology and changes in the clientele.

**Library/ITS Pilot Project**

Beginning July 12, 2010, the Library and ITS (Information Technology Services) launched a pilot program to provide integrated services at one of the service desks on the 2nd floor of the Thomas G. Carpenter Library. The goal was to provide library patrons with a one-stop solution to services routinely offered in the library which include research and database assistance and instruction, technical support with computers and printing, and basic assistance with software installed on library workstations. ITS supplied two computer workstations for the desk and the library installed a telephone at the desk. Staffing consisted of reference librarians and paraprofessionals and OPS staff from the ITS Help Desk. Service hours were set at Monday through Thursday, from 10 AM until noon, and from 1 PM until 4 PM, for a total of 20 hours per week. The pilot ran until the end of the Fall Semester 2010.

**Advertising/Promotion:**

The pilot project was promoted in house via LibTV, on the library’s website, on Facebook, on Twitter, in Student Update, and via the Library’s newsletter, *Au Courant*. Signs at the Library/ITS desk clearly identified available services.

**Transactions Overview:**

Both the Library and ITS kept track of transactions at the service desk. The Library used the same system utilized at the Reference Desk, while ITS used its ticketing system. Library staff do not require identification to provide service. The ITS ticketing system typically requires that the user supply an N number, but ITS created a generic account to handle transactions where an N number was not available or where it was not practical to ask for an N number.

Summary data from both units follow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library Transactions (July - December)</th>
<th>ITS Transactions (July - December)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direction</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td>68</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>73</td>
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<tr>
<td>Printing</td>
<td>129</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>51</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>757</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Combined Total</strong></td>
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Transactions Comparison – Reference Desk 2009 vs. Reference Desk & Help Desk 2010 (Help Desk data are limited to those questions answered by reference staff)
REFERENCE 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desk Services</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Direction</td>
<td>864</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>4482</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>1192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>731</td>
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<tr>
<td>Printing</td>
<td>1548</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equipment support</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>10880</strong></td>
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</table>

REFERENCE 2010

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<td>Direction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>628</td>
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<tr>
<td>Printing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equipment support</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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**Combined WEST LAB 2010 (Library & ITS)**

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<th>Desk Services</th>
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<td>Direction</td>
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<td>Information</td>
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<td>Instruction</td>
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<td>Reference</td>
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<td>Printing</td>
<td>416</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equipment support</td>
<td>93</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1180</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL REF & WEST LAB**

|                   | 9618   |

**ITS Statistics for Service Interruption and Quarantine were not included since Reference would refer those questions to the Help Desk. Account statistics were included in Information. Email, How To, and Software were included in Instruction. Hardware and Wireless were included in Equipment. Other was included in Direction.**

**Cost of Coverage:**

Reference Costs – Cost per transaction was computed by taking an average salary for library staff who served at the desk, computing an hourly rate, calculating the total number of hours the desk was occupied and calculating the overall cost for the 18 week period, and then dividing the number of transactions into the total cost of providing coverage. Both librarians and para-professionals put in time at the desk. The average salary for staff who could have provided coverage at the desk was computed as $38,337 or $18.43 per hour.* The highest salary was $60,672. The lowest salary was $21,809. The pilot project ran for 18 weeks at 20 hours per week for a total of 360 hours. At $18.43 per hour the entire project cost $6634.80. During this time period reference staff answered 757 inquiries thus making each transaction cost $8.76.

Using the same assumptions for coverage at the Reference Desk, the cost per transaction is nearly half. This assumes 73 hours per week coverage for 18 weeks at an average of $18.43 per hour. Double coverage (two reference staff) is provided at the desk about half of the time, so
to arrive at a more realistic cost for the same time period the total number of hours computer was increase by half to 110 hours per week. Reference staff handled 7500 queries during the same time period. This comes to a per transaction cost of $4.87.

Looking solely at the cost of providing library service at the two desks, it was clearly more expensive to provide coverage at the additional desk.

*This is an average of all Reference staff salaries, since a number of other staff were pulled into coverage when assigned staff were unavailable.

ITS Costs – Cost per transaction was computed by using the average hourly rate for ITS OPS staff ($14), applying that to 360 hours of coverage to arrive at a total cost for the pilot ($5040), and dividing the total by the number of transactions (569). The resulting cost per transaction is $8.86. ITS observes that printing transactions are not true IT transactions and that the service interruption experienced in September also inflated the number of transactions. If these transactions and the 35 non-IT items noted in the statistics are deducted from the overall count, IT staff actually answer only 106 IT questions, thus bringing the total cost per transaction of providing service to $47.55 per transaction.

General Observations:

Library patrons did avail themselves of services offered at the desk, but transactions tended not to be very time intensive. On the ITS side, the vast majority of the transactions had to do with printing and service issues, with printing transactions dominating most other requests. Add library staff assistance with equipment and printing to similar requests handled by ITS and fully half of the transactions handled at the combined services desk were technology related. Reference and instruction questions accounted for only 124 of the total library transactions, the remainder being simple informational, directional, and equipment related. The service interruption number reported by ITS was an anomaly. The campus had intermittent outages over the course of two days early in the fall semester thus accounting for nearly all of the service interruption tickets. With this in mind, the ITS transactions number would drop by 138. ITS also does not generally consider printing questions a true ITS transaction, much as the library does not consider printing a true reference function. Lacking other campus support for printing, however, both ITS and library staff have routinely handled printing issues in-house.

One of the intentions of offering combined services was to encourage patrons to seek help with projects and to offer a consistently higher level of technical and project support than is routinely offered at the Reference Desk. A number of the questions fielded at the desk were technology or software related, but the project assistance questions that we had anticipated never seemed to materialize. One possible reason for the lack of more involved questions is that students who use the computers adjacent to the combined services desk are accustomed to working independently, since that desk has not been staffed for a couple of years now. Even though signs clearly indicated that help was available, the questions failed to materialize. Another possible reason for the lack of transactions is the physical arrangement of the area. The open lab is not conducive to group work so groups working on projects end up working in the group study rooms or elsewhere where they are able to congregate and work cooperatively. ITS has found that their collaborative workstations in the Matthews Lab have gotten a considerable amount of use, thus supporting the idea that the space is wrong for what this pilot project was attempting to accomplish.

It is entirely possible that one of the underlying assumptions upon which this project was
based, that students would utilize services more if more of their needs could be met in one place, was faulty; however, other libraries’ experiences with merging services and incorporating IT support have suggested that such combined services were welcomed by library patrons. It could very possibly be that the longer a combined services desk is provided the more transactions will be handled at the desk. Generally speaking, students tend to share information fairly quickly if there are new services or enhanced services available. Perhaps if more involved questions and group instruction had been more prevalent at the desk, word would have spread and even more business would have materialized.

**Preliminary Recommendations:**

In the short term, based on the low rate of response to enhanced services offered at a combined desk, continuation of the pilot project doesn’t seem warranted. However, both the library and ITS are willing to continue into another semester to see if further need might develop as students discover that assistance is available. The Library/ITS Task Force has considered continuing with joint coverage as long as staffing can be identified. The Reference Desk typically has two staff members assigned to cover most hours, so one of those assigned could remain at reference while the other occupies the combined desk. ITS would be called upon again to supply OPS staff from its Help Desk operations to cover the combined desk hours.

At this point, no increase in the number of hours seems appropriate, so coverage would again be limited to 20 hours per week, 5 hours per day Monday through Thursday. Since staffing is being pulled from existing lines in the Library and ITS, members of the Task Force thought it appropriate that the Library Dean and the Director of ITS take this to the campus administration as an additional budget request for the upcoming fiscal year that begins July 1\textsuperscript{st}. If full funding for staff is not forthcoming, at the least the desk could be staffed with student workers trained by both the Library and ITS to handle the variety of questions that routinely arise at the desk.

If one of the assumptions set forth in this report is accurate, the location of the service is not the most conducive to attracting use. For one thing, groups are probably more likely to utilize project help since much of the focus on projects in classes at UNF is group-oriented. The current physical arrangement of the library open lab and the arrangement of the help desk itself are not conducive to accommodating groups. One possibility for making this a more productive venture might be to set up collaboration stations like those in the Matthews Lab located in another location in the library and provide assistance adjacent to those work areas.

**Long Range Recommendations:**

Based on the experiences gained from the pilot project and a survey of library literature covering combined services and alternative service models, a number of possibilities for improved, more efficient service present themselves. The following narrative goes well beyond the scope of the pilot project and looks for ways to improve both spaces and services and better serve library clientele. Design of the current library facility was based on assumptions made about library services and library clientele more than 8 years ago. Technological changes and changes in clientele and their needs suggest the need to rethink spaces and services and formulate long term plans to improve on what the library does.

**Information Commons**

Install a clearly visible Information Desk on the 1\textsuperscript{st} floor and redesign the public areas to accommodate conversion of the space into an Information Commons. This will involve moving collections off the 1\textsuperscript{st} floor and into other locations in the library. Access Services’ experience with providing an information desk during the first week to two weeks of the semester suggests that there is a clear need for first contact with library patrons as they walk in the doors. During the
eight days that the Information Desk was staffed in fall 2010, library staff answered 1372 questions. The Information Desk could serve as a direction/information/referral desk that helps patrons get service more efficiently than the current model. Reference and Instruction requests could be routed to Reference Staff. IT questions could be routed to IT staff. Etc.

Investigate moving the IT Help Desk into the library on the 1st floor. While the pilot project recognized the need for IT assistance in the library, because of having to pull staff from the Help Desk the recent experience did not produce the kind of activity that would justify doing the same thing on a larger scale. Relocating the entire operation to the library would bring together clientele who need library assistance and IT assistance into one location, thus making the overall operation more efficient. IT staff could then be handy for machine/software issues in the library while still offering campus support by phone and email. IT Help Desk operations could be moved to a redesigned desk area where Media is currently located. IT staff could also help provide service at the 1st floor Information Desk.

One of the problems that we have had in the current facility is containing and controlling noise on the upper floors of the library where library patrons customarily expect quiet. Libraries are social spots, like it or not, but most of the noise seems to come from people wanting to work in groups on computers. One way of controlling noise on the upper floors of the library is to shift most of the computers to the 1st floor. The 1st floor is already an active and not so quiet area, so moving the computers and setting up group work spaces there seems like an appropriate means for relocating potentially disturbing activity from quieter areas to an already dynamic less quiet area.

Another possibility for helping to minimize noise is to use movable architectural modules to help define group areas and make work spaces more flexible. The Georgia Tech model has worked well for that university and has potential for UNF’s library as well.

Relocating computers and service points to the 1st floor would open up the possibility for making the library a 24 hour facility. Service desks could continue closing as demand decreases, typically later in the evening and all floors could remain open as long as adequate student staffing is available. If determination can be made that the collections aren’t needed after a certain time at night, staffing could be reduced and the upper floors of the facility closed, leaving just the 1st floor accessible to users. Much of the activity in the library during later hours tends to be congregating and group work, anyway. If, for example, the library was able to close the upper floors at midnight, the facility could potentially be kept open with a single student employee and a security person. If services cease at midnight, the facility could remain open for use with only a security presence. A model for this is already in use at Appalachian State University. At midnight, the library remains open, but users without App State I.D.s must leave the facility. The security person monitors activity in the building for hours when library staff are not available.

While the cost of relocating collections and computers might seem prohibitive, the benefits of redesigning the 1st floor and creating a more user-centric space should outweigh the costs.

Following is a bulleted list of ideas for making the 1st floor Information Commons feasible.

- Move music scores to General Collection (4th floor).
- Move children’s literature to General Collection following the P call letters on the 4th floor. At some point, these materials could be recataloged into the PZ classification instead of using the local Y call numbers.
- If the library continues to collect curriculum, integrate these materials into the General Collection. As a temporary measure these materials could be moved with children’s literature to the 4th floor following the P call letters.
• Relocate videos, music discs, and other media to the third floor in the Periodicals Section. Relocate listening/viewing stations there and train Periodicals staff to assist patrons with the equipment. Alternatively, viewing/listening stations could remain on the 1st floor in the Computer Commons area and the media collections could be relocated to the 2nd floor in space freed by the relocation of the Computer Commons.

• Set up an information desk on the 1st floor that is clearly visible to patrons walking in the front doors of the library. This desk will serve as a triage station where patrons would be directed to the appropriate service units for help.

• Locate Computer Commons on 1st floor utilizing iMacs and PCs in areas freed up by relocation of scores, media, and children’s literature.

• Locate most printing services to the 1st floor where assistance would be more readily available. Provide training to student staff who might be called on to assist with printing and copying.

• Utilize the group studies on the 1st floor as part of the planned Student Project Center.

• Convert two of the Group Studies into presentation practice rooms.

• Convert two of the Group Studies into design/production studios and equip them with the technology and software necessary for producing high quality presentations and reports.

• Set up collaborative workstations just outside the Project Center rooms.

• Install flat panel monitors or projection equipment to accommodate presentation practice in group studies taken over for Project Center use.

• Assign a Reference Librarian management and scheduling of the Project Center and Computer Commons.

• All Reference and Access Services staff would participate in staffing the Information Desk.

• Investigate the feasibility of moving the ITS Help Desk to the 1st floor of the library adjacent to the Computer Commons.

• Investigate holding tutoring sessions provided by ACE in one of the group study rooms.

• Provide enhanced technology/software training for Reference and Access Services staff who would be serving at the Information Desk on the 1st floor. Reference instructional staff would assume responsibility for regular staff training.

• Train Access Services evening staff to troubleshoot basic technology issues that could arise after regular staff leave.

• Include Reference librarians in providing services on the 1st floor so that patrons needing more involved assistance would have it immediately available.

Reference

The current model for providing reference service could be more cost efficient. Librarians are frequently pulled in many directions trying to provide instruction, serving on campus and statewide committees, and designing instructional materials in support of library collections and databases. Eliminating a fully staffed Reference Desk would make it possible for librarians to spend more time on other assignments and to focus their energies on providing one-on-one assistance to patrons who need more in-depth help.

Staff at the Information Desk on the 1st floor could screen questions and determine if the patron’s needs exceed a simple question and answer session and whether it would be more advantageous to reference staff to schedule an appointment for in-depth training. Most directional questions could be handled on the 1st floor at the Information Desk. Librarians could be “on-call” to handle in-depth questions/training. Training/Interview areas could be configured on the 2nd floor where the Information Commons currently is located. These could consist of semi-private enclosures with computers that would allow librarians to work directly with patrons without creating a disturbance. Patrons could be encouraged to make appointments for questions that would require lengthier, hands-on training.
Basically, the 2nd floor would become more of a quiet zone and Reference staff would be able to focus more on helping patrons use the library’s resources instead of being distracted by calls to help with printing and copying and other non-research related operations.

The following bulleted list highlights primary needs for Reference if an Information Desk is set up on the first floor and the library moves toward providing service upon referral rather than a continuously staffed reference desk.

- Adopt a new service model for Reference that would involve a triage process to screen requests and call and/or schedule Reference Librarians to work with patrons.
- Librarians would be assigned desk hours to be on call but would not staff a Reference Desk.
- Set up consultation areas on the 2nd floor that would accommodate librarians working with individuals or groups.
- Train front line Information Desk staff to know when to call in librarians for more in-depth assistance to patrons. Involve Reference and Access Services in staffing the Information Desk.
- Begin offering library instruction sessions that go beyond the traditional professor-arranged one shot sessions to include instruction in Microsoft Office and Open Office, Photoshop, RefWorks, and other applications offered on the library’s public workstations.
- Begin recording instruction sessions so that patrons who cannot make scheduled sessions can view the sessions at a later date. Consider live streaming of sessions in progress.

**Infrastructure and Equipment**

This report does not investigate costs for relocating collections and reconfiguring service areas. Funding will need to be identified to support changes to physical areas and relocation of computer workstations and collections. This could take the form of formal budget requests from the Library and ITS or the solicitation of grant money. Another possibility is for the Director

Following is a list of anticipated funding needs.

- Relocation of media collections, including scores and curriculum.
- Relocation of computers to the 1st floor.
- Enhanced electrical support in the 1st floor Information Commons to accommodate the creation of a Computer Commons.
- Installation of network infrastructure to support an increased computer footprint on the 1st floor. This could be wired or wireless. Wireless networking would eliminate the need for ceiling drops.
- Purchase and installation of more appropriate computer desks that can accommodate both individual and group work.
- Purchase and installation of collaborative workstations for the 1st floor.
- Projection equipment for 1st floor Project Center presentation rooms.
- Purchase of additional study tables and chairs for the 2nd floor areas that formerly had computers.
- Purchase/construction of reference consultation areas on the 2nd floor.
- Reconfiguration/removal of service desks on the 2nd floor. The two current service desks could be converted to accommodate consultation or could be removed entirely.
- Reconfiguration of 2nd floor computer commons into a study area featuring some library supplied workstations and ample electrical to support patron supplied or library checked out notebooks.


