Reference Services Committee  
December 15, 2003  
Summary

Present: Bailey, Jones, Cantrell, Gupta, Johnson, McKee, Moreno, Santos

Alberta Bailey opened the meeting by outlining her vision for the committee. Dean Allen and she have spoken frequently about their desire to improve the quality and consistency of reference service across all service points in the University Libraries. Bailey gave the group five specific charges. In the first charge, she wants the group to determine the scope of reference service. What is reference service? Does it vary by service point? Does it differ by clientele (e.g., do faculty get better service)? What are the limits of reference service? The group should address the charge broadly and not emphasize exceptional circumstances.

In the second charge, the group should examine specific skills and knowledges required for reference service. Skills are general; knowledges are specific to subjects. The group should define these for each area of service but only as they pertain to reference service; it should also investigate the limits of reference service provided by the non-reference desks. The third charge, customer service standards, should encompass appropriate behaviors of personnel as they deliver service. This charge will include handling referrals and may address training recommendations. Bailey expressed particular concern for patrons who have been misdirected.

Bailey and the group discussed the parameters of the fourth charge, measuring service standards. Several members felt that the group should explore assessment for both the third (customer service) and second (knowledges and skills) areas. At a minimum this charge will cover assessment of service standards and may include skills and knowledges necessary for the job.

Bailey recommended that the group interact regularly with public services personnel not serving on the committee to flesh out ideas, which represents the fifth charge. She will provide regular time at meetings of the Public Services Group to explore these matters but hopes that members of the committee use other channels. One member asked for an estimated ideal length for this project; Bailey said that was impossible to give. She believes that at least one paragraph per service point will be required to address matters that are unique to individual service points. She did remind everyone of other obligations and although she wants the group to work hard to produce a usable document, she is not looking for a treatise.

Before Bailey departed the meeting, the group discussed the role of competencies in the project and the importance of examining reference as a process. Bailey remarked that presentations on a discipline do not constitute competencies without the group outlining the competencies and accepting them as such. She agreed that additional competencies might be added to the document after the deadline.
The group plans to meet at 10:30 after Public Service Meetings beginning January 15, tentatively every two weeks. Jones recommended that the group explore the charges in the following order: One, Three, Two, Four, and Five; he also suggested that members do broad background reading before the next meeting and share their findings informally among one another in order to stimulate thinking before the next meeting.