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Ms Liz Burke

University of Western Australia.

Contact details

Postal: University of Western Australia (M209)
35 Stirling Highway
Crawley WA 6009

Phone: 61 8 6488 2341

Biography

Liz Burke is currently Associate Librarian (Reader Services) at the University of Western Australia where she is responsible for the leadership and management of the Library's Reader Services Division comprising collection development, digital services and resources, information and reference services, information literacy, and lending services. The Reader Services Division encompasses nine subject libraries and 87 staff.

Research for this presentation was conducted during her previous position as Reference & Information Services Librarian at La Trobe University. At La Trobe University, Liz was responsible for leading and managing a dynamic team responsible for delivering reference and information services to the university community, including document delivery services, at the Bundoora and City campuses.

In a library career spanning 20 years, Liz has held a variety of other positions in Australian academic libraries including Victoria University of Technology, RMIT and Phillip Institute of Technology.

Where are we going and do I need luggage?: The future of reference services in Australian academic libraries

Abstract

Earlier this year the author conducted a research project which aimed to define “reference services” within the context of the academic library and determine if the delivery and model of reference services in Australian academic libraries has changed in recent decades.

The project used a survey, conducted under the auspices of the Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL), to gauge the model and delivery of reference services currently in place in Australian academic libraries.

Within the context of shrinking numbers of library staff and a shifting student population which now incorporates significant numbers of mature age, part-time, international and postgraduate students, the project explores questions such as:

- 1 What are the services which comprise “reference services” in today’s academic library in Australia?
- 2 Are Australian academic libraries continuing to deliver the same reference services but using new technologies e.g. email, chat, text services?
- 3 Are libraries developing new reference services using the new technologies available?
- 4 Has the focus on the delivery of reference services altered in recent decades i.e. from an emphasis on the Reference Desk to a greater involvement in information literacy and learning and teaching?
- 5 Is there a continuing place for the delivery of reference services in academic libraries of the 21st century?

The author will use results of the survey to indicate trends which will assist library managers in planning reference services of the future and to assist recruitment activities, highlighting the skills and knowledge required by reference librarians in the 21st century library.

Introduction

Reference services have become an integral part of any library's services. Since the development of what became known as reference services in American public libraries in the nineteenth century (Rothstein, 1953), library staff engaged in reference services have been concerned with assisting library users find the most appropriate sources and tools for the information they need, and help them in using these sources and tools effectively.

The project reported here aimed to define reference services within the context of the academic library and analyse how the delivery and model of reference services in Australian academic libraries has changed in recent decades. Australian academic libraries were surveyed to seek information on the current composition and structure of their reference service.

The context of the academic library today encompasses shrinking numbers of library staff and a shifting student population which incorporates significant numbers of mature age, part-time, international, and large numbers of postgraduate students. Within this context and at the dawn of a new century, it is timely to explore what services comprise 'reference services' in today's academic library in Australia and to make some assessment as to whether reference services will continue to comprise a part of academic library services in the twenty-first century and the likely future of reference services and the staff who deliver these services.

A Definition of Reference Services

It is appropriate to identify a working definition of reference work and reference services and a brief survey of the professional literature assists in developing this definition. The term 'reference work' first came into use in the early 1890s when Rothstein (1953) reports that the term 'reference work' began to replace the earlier, less specific terms 'aid to readers' and 'assistance to readers'. Rothstein also notes that the term 'reference work' appeared for the first time in the index to *Library Journal* in 1891.

A number of respected librarians who have worked in reference services and published extensively provide various definitions of reference work and reference services. Tyckoson (2001) identified four major functions for helping patrons: instructing them in how to use the library, answering patrons' queries, aiding the patron in selecting resources, and promoting the library within the community.

Rothstein (1961, p.12) defined reference work as 'the personal assistance given by the librarian to individual readers in pursuit of information [and] ... reference service ... the definite recognition on the part of the library of its responsibility for such work and a specific organization for that purpose. In short, we are willing to give help, and what is more, consider such help an important enough part of our obligations to justify training and assigning staff especially for this work'.

In her study of Australian academic libraries, MacKinnon (1982, p. 82) defined reference services as "direct assistance to users in finding data or

sources of information in books and other library materials. It also includes referral to other places or people where this is appropriate". She noted that 'another area defined as part of reference services is that of instruction in library use and the use of information sources'.

Chaudhry (1984 p.10) defined reference and information service to encompass all direct and personal assistance given to users in their search for information, including formal bibliographic instruction in organised groups. The SPEC Kit 268 *Reference Service Statistics & Assessment* (Novotny, 2002) defined a reference transaction as 'an information contact that involves the knowledge, use, recommendation, interpretation, or instruction in the use of one or more information sources by a member of the library staff. The transaction can take place at a reference desk, via online chat, individual consultation, mail, or telephone' (p.9).

As a result of this brief survey of the professional literature, the working definition of reference services adopted for this project is all activities which assist in providing relevant and appropriate information services to patrons. This includes all interactions with library patrons to assist them in their searches for information which may be face-to-face, via telephone, or via any medium using new forms of technology such as chat, SMS, or instant messaging. It also includes activities which assist library staff to remain informed of relevant developments, such as building and maintaining relationships with patrons.

Survey Methodology

A web-based survey form was developed to seek information from Australian academic libraries on the composition and structure of their reference service (See Appendix 3).

The survey aimed to gather a 'snapshot' of what comprises 'reference services' in today's academic library and how libraries are using new technologies to deliver services. Respondents were asked to identify when their library commenced a range of reference services grouped within five major areas:

- 1 Formats in which their library receives and responds to reference queries
- 2 Information literacy services
- 3 Subject specialisation services
- 4 Liaison services
- 5 Collection development services

The CAUL (Council of Australian University Librarians) email distribution list was used to distribute the survey to members, asking that they complete a consolidated survey response for their library. The survey was distributed in February 2006 and responses were accepted up to the end of March 2006. Data resulting from the questionnaires was input to the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 14.0 for analysis and manipulation.

Survey Results and Discussion

Thirty-six responses were received from the forty Australian university libraries. One library had sent a representative response from their library and was not included in the survey results as other libraries had provided a consolidated response. Including one library's

representative response would have skewed the final results. In total thirty-five responses were included in the data

analysis from the forty Australian university libraries, providing a response rate of 87.5%.

Institutions Which Submitted A Response	
Australian Catholic University	University of Queensland
ACT	University of Southern Queensland
University of Canberra	University of the Sunshine Coast
UNSW @ ADFA	South Australia
NSW	Flinders University
Charles Sturt University	University of Adelaide
Macquarie University	University of South Australia
University of New England	Tasmania
University of Newcastle	University of Tasmania
University of New South Wales	Victoria
University of Technology, Sydney	Deakin University
University of Western Sydney	La Trobe University
University of Wollongong	Monash University
Northern Territory	RMIT University
Charles Darwin University	Swinburne University of Technology
Queensland	University of Ballarat
Bond University	Victoria University of Technology
Central Queensland University	Western Australia
Griffith University	Curtin University of Technology
James Cook University	Edith Cowan University
Queensland University of Technology	Murdoch University
Southern Cross University	University of Western Australia

Table 1: Institutions which submitted a response

Questions for libraries with a separate reference department
Twenty-five respondents answered questions posed to libraries with a separate reference department. The name of this department varied

significantly, the most popular being *Information Services*.

See table 2.

Names of Reference Departments	Number of Respondents
Access and Enquiry Services	1
Access Services Department	1
Information & Research Support	1
Information Access	1
Information Access Services	1
Information and Research Services	1
Information Services	7
Information Literacy and Reference Services	1
Learning and Research Services	1
Learning Services	1
Reference & Information Services	1
Reference Department	1
Reference Services	2
Research Services Department	1

Table 2: Names of reference departments

Forty-four percent (11) of those libraries with a separate reference department had 1 - 5 EFT (equivalent full time) staff, twenty percent (5) had 6 - 10, and twenty four percent (6) had 11 - 15 staff. One respondent (four percent) had 15 - 20 EFT staff and two (eight percent) had more than 20 EFT staff.

Respondents were asked to indicate the classification level of staff in their

reference section. They were asked to indicate the equivalent full time staff, including contract and casual staff from HEW (Higher Education Worker) 4 to HEW 10. An assumption was made that staff at HEW 1, HEW 2 and HEW 3 would not be members of a reference department.

See table 3.

Higher Education Worker Level	Number of Staff at Each Classification (total numbers across respondents)	Number of Respondents with Staff at this Classification
Below HEW 4	3.5	3
HEW 4	29.9	11
HEW 5	119	21
HEW 6	160.2	25
HEW 7	105.1	17
HEW 8	42.5	15
HEW 9	21	7
HEW 10	1	1

Table 3: Classification levels of staff in reference departments

Table 3 outlines the classification levels and numbers of staff at each classification level for those twenty-five respondents with separate reference departments. For example eleven respondents have HEW 4 level staff within their reference department. For these respondents, the total number of equivalent full time staff at this level totals 29.9. A further twenty-one respondents have staff at HEW 5 level within their reference department and for these respondents, the total number of equivalent full time staff at this level totals 119. It can be seen that reference departments in Australian academic libraries have staff at a variety of classification levels but the most common classification level is HEW 6 where all respondents to this question have staff at this level. It is also noteworthy that the largest number of staff at a single HEW level is HEW 6.

It appears from these results that a majority of those academic libraries which have a separate reference section have a comparatively small number of staff making up this section. As data was not gathered on how many libraries have multiple sites, assumptions cannot be made that libraries with large numbers of staff in their reference section are spread across multiple sites.

Finally, those libraries with separate reference sections were asked how many hours per week staff from other sections within their libraries contribute to staffing their reference service point. Responses ranged from 2 hours per week to 80 hours per week. This initiative can be a positive experience in that it allows staff who may not generally have face-to-face interaction with library patrons, a regular opportunity to do so.

Results of questions answered by all respondents

The survey questionnaire asked all respondents about various aspects of their reference and information services.

Model of face-to-face reference service

Table 4 outlines models of face-to-face service and the number of responses for each model

Service options	Number of responses
A separate reference service point	38.2 % (13)
A single service point from which all library-related enquiries are answered	14.7% (5)
An integrated enquiry point which incorporates information enquiries and other queries	32.4% (11)
Other	14.7% (5)

Table 4: Models of library face-to-face service

'Other' responses includes one library's description of how they alter the service model, depending on the time of year and campus needs and the models used include a single service point, separate information desk, and a separate enquiry point. Some libraries noted that they had different service models operating in different branches, depending on the size of the branch and the type of facilities in the building, for example, one library shared a building with a large computer lab so their library had an integrated Reference and IT Help Desk.

The survey results demonstrate that although a significant number of Australian academic libraries have retained a separate reference service point, there is a trend in moving away from an emphasis on the traditional

reference desk in favour of more flexible service models. An integrated enquiry point which incorporates information queries with other queries is a popular alternative, but other models have also been implemented. In 1990 for example, very few libraries would have had an alternative to the traditional reference desk. Today in 2006 only 38.2% of respondents to this survey retained a separate reference service point. It would be interesting to survey these libraries again in five to ten years to monitor how many have moved to a different service model.

Reference services

Table 5 shows in which formats libraries receive and respond to reference queries and when these services were first offered.

Delivery Methods	% of Respondents	Commencement of service
Face-to-face at a service point	100% (35)	86.6% (31) prior to 1990 5.7% (2) 1990 – 1994 2.9% (1) 1995 – 1999 2.9% (1) 2000 – 2004
Telephone at a service point	100% (35)	91.4% (32) prior to 1990 2.9% (1) 1990 – 1994 2.9% (1) 1995 – 1999 2.9% (1) 2000 – 2004
Call centre-style telephone service	42.9% (15)	6.7% (1) prior to 1990 20% (3) 1995 – 1999 46.7% (7) 2000 – 2004 26.7% (4) 2005
Email to subject specialists	88.6% (31)	22.6% (7) prior to 1990 32.3% (10) 1990 – 1994 38.7% (12) 1995 – 1999 6.5% (2) 2000 2004
'Ask a Question' type email service	94.3% (33)	3% (1) 1990 – 1994 42.4% (14) 1995 – 1999 51.5% (17) 2000 – 2004 3% (1) 2005
Chat reference	31.4% (11)	90.9% (10) 2000 – 2004 9.1% (1) 2005
SMS reference	5.7% (2)	50% (1) 2000 – 2004 50% (1) 2005

Table 5: Delivery methods of reference services

It appears that call-centre style services are relatively new services within the academic library sector in Australia with 73.4% of these services being offered since 2000 and only 42.9% of respondents offering the service.

In terms of new technologies, only a few responding libraries offer a chat or SMS reference service. Of those with a chat service, 10 had established it between

2000 - 2004 and one had established it in 2005. Only two respondents offer reference services via SMS – one library introduced this between 2000 - 2004 and the other had established it during 2005. These results indicate that academic libraries in Australia have not rushed into implementing services using new technologies such as chat and SMS.

Overall, these results indicate that Australian academic libraries are prepared to adopt new tools and technologies to deliver reference services. The fact that telephone call centres and chat services have been adopted by 42.9% and 31.4% of libraries respectively, indicates that the adoption of these new technologies is cautious and pragmatic. This caution reflects the often voiced criticism of libraries that they are too slow to adopt

new technologies. However weighed against this is the fact that it also reflects the desire on the part of reference librarians to deliver quality services and information with a high degree of accuracy.

Information literacy

Table 6 indicates the information literacy services offered by respondents and when these services were first established.

Information Literacy	% of Respondents	Commencement of service
Lecture-style presentations to large groups	94.3% (33)	57.6% (19) prior to 1990 12.1% (4) 1990 - 1994 18.2 (6) 1995 - 1999 12.1% (4) 2000 - 2004
Subject-specific classes tailored to a specific group	100% (35)	65.7% (23) prior to 1990 17.1% (6) 1990 - 1994 8.6% (3) 1995 - 1999 8.6% (3) 2000 - 2004
Generic walking tours of the library	100% (35)	85.7% (30) prior to 1990 2.9%(1) 1990 - 1994 5.7% (2) 1995 - 1999 5.7% (2) 2000 - 2004
Generic catalogue training	97.1% (34)	76.5% (26) prior to 1990 8.8% (3) 1990 - 1994 8.8% (3) 1995 - 1999 5.9% (2) 2000 - 2004
'Other' generic training	65.7% (23)	8.7% (2) prior to 1990 17.4% (4) 1990 - 1994 56.5% (13) 1995 - 1999 17.4% (4) 2000 - 2004
Training in citation management software	97.1% (34)	38.2% (13) 1995 - 1999 55.9% (19) 2000 - 2004 5.9% (2) 2005

Table 6: Information literacy services

'Other' types of generic training programs include using the Internet, database principles and searching, using email, finding and managing

information, using portals, and finding journal literature. Most of these training programs were introduced between 1995 and 1999.

55.9% (19) of those libraries offering EndNote training commenced between 2000 -2004. This coincides with the national site licence for EndNote organised by the Australian Vice Chancellor's Committee. The fact that so many Australian academic libraries offer this training demonstrates that they see a need for such training.

These results clearly demonstrate the importance of information literacy within the suite of services offered by academic libraries. This survey did not explore the increasing demand for information literacy training experienced by many academic libraries. However the growing need for increasing levels of pedagogical skills required by reference librarians is noted elsewhere. In his Australian and United Kingdom surveys on the continuing professional

development and workplace training needs of library staff, Smith (2006) found many libraries reported on the growing role of reference staff in teaching information literacy skills and the consequential need to increase the pedagogical skills of librarians.

The range of 'other' types of generic training shows that many academic libraries have extended their traditional programs to incorporate training in IT-type skills such as email and the Internet. Many libraries commenced this type of training between 1995 and 1999, a period when relatively early use of the Internet was developing.

Subject specialisation

Table 7 shows the subject specialisation services offered by respondents and when these services were first offered.

Subject specialist Services	% of Respondents	Commencement of service
Printed subject bibliographies e.g. pathfinders	94.3% (33)	90.9% (30) prior to 1990 3% (1) 1990 – 1994 6.1% (2) 2000 – 2004
Subject-specific webpages of authoritative sources	94.3% (33)	6.1% (2) prior to 1990 9.1% (3) 1990 – 1994 69.7% (23) 1995 – 1999 12.1% (4) 2000 – 2004 3% (1) 2005
Individual research consultations	100% (35)	51.4% (18) prior to 1990 28.6% (10) 1990 – 1994 11.4% (4) 1995 – 1999 8.6% (3) 2000 – 2004
'Other' subject specialist services	20% (7)	14.3% (1) prior to 1990 57.1% (4) 1995 – 1999 14.3% (1) 2000 – 2004 14.3% (1) 2005

Table 7: Subject specialisation services

All responding libraries offer individual research consultations to postgraduate students. In the context of increasing enrolments of higher degree students, the fact that all respondents offer this service suggests a steadily increasing workload.

The 'other' subject specialisation services offered include: assignment-

specific literature searching, customised workshops for staff and postgraduate student researchers, and virtual tutorials.

Liaison services

Table 8 indicates the liaison services provided by respondents and when these services were first offered.

Liaison Services	% of Respondents	Commencement of service
Represent the library on Faculty committees	100% (35)	54.3% (19) prior to 1990 20% (7) 1990 – 1994 14.3% (5) 1995 – 1999 5.7% (2) 2000 – 2004 5.7% (2) 2005
Market and promote new resources	100% (35)	51.4% (18) prior to 1990 17.1% (6) 1990 – 1994 20% (7) 1995 – 1999 11.4% (4) 2000 – 2004
Build and maintain relationships with academic staff	100% (35)	74.3% (26) prior to 1990 11.4% (4) 1990 – 1994 11.4% (4) 1995 – 1999 2.9% (1) 2000 – 2004
Formal academic outreach program	71.4% (25)	36% (9) prior to 1990 4% (1) 1990 – 1994 16% (4) 1995 – 1999 36% (9) 2000 – 2004 8% (2) 2005
'Other' liaison services	17.1% (6)	33.3% (2) 1990 – 1994 50% (3) 2000 – 2004 16.7% (1) 2005

Table 8: Liaison Services

All respondents represent their library on faculty, school or department committees, market and promote new resources to their university community,

and build and maintain relationships with academic staff.

Only 6 institutions (17.1%) offered 'other' liaison services and these include: participation in Faculty planning days, contribution to course accreditation and review, and involvement with University induction and training of academic staff. One respondent noted that each of their liaison librarians worked to a Liaison Plan and another noted their university

had a compulsory library induction for new staff. All respondents indicated a commitment to and a desire to liaise effectively with academic staff.

Collection development

Table 9 indicates the collection development services offered by respondents and when these services were first established.

Collection Development Services	% of Respondents	Commencement of Service
Selection of monographs	97.1% (34)	76.5% (26) prior to 1990 8.8% (3) 1990 - 1994 5.9% (2) 1995 - 1999 5.9% (2) 2000 - 2004 2.9% (1) 2005
Selection of serials	77.1% (27)	85.2% (23) prior to 1990 3.7% (1) 1990 -1994 3.7% (1) 1995 – 1999 3.7% (1) 2000 – 2004 3.7% (1) 2005
Selection of AV material	94.3% (33)	72.7% (24) prior to 1990 12.1% (4) 1990 – 1994 6.1% (2) 1995 – 1999 6.1% (2) 2000 – 2004 3% (1) 2005
Selection of electronic material	94.3% (33)	33.3% (11) prior to 1990 36.4% (12) 1990 – 1994 18.2% (6) 1995 – 1999 9.1% (3) 2000 – 2004 3% (1) 2005
Subject profiles with publishers	85.7% (30)	43.3% (13) prior to 1990 16.7% (5) 1990 – 1994 16.7% (5) 1995 – 1999 10% (3) 2000 – 2004 13.3% (4) 2005

Conduct formal evaluations of the library collection	88.6% (31)	51.6% (16) prior to 1990 29% (9) 1990 – 1994 12.9% (4) 1995 – 1999 6.5% (2) 2000 – 2004
Assess donations to the library collection	85.7% (30)	80% (24) prior to 1990 6.7% (2) 1990 – 1994 6.7% (2) 1995 – 1999 6.7% (2) 2000 – 2004
Assess the library collection to support new courses or subjects	97.1% (34)	52.9% (18) prior to 1990 17.6% (6) 1990 – 1994 11.8% (4) 1995 - 1999 17.6% (6) 2000 – 2004

Table 9: Collection Development Services

Four respondents indicated their library offered 'other' collection development services. These include: blanket orders in some subject areas, responding to suggestions for purchase, retention and discard projects, and the selection of reference materials.

These results demonstrate that most respondents play a very active role in the development of their library collection. There appears to be variations in the level of involvement in selecting various formats, especially serial selection where only 77.1% of respondents indicate participation in the selection of serials. For most other formats, between 94.3% and 97.1% indicate they participate in selection. The lower number of respondents involved in serial selection may have been influenced by variations in understanding the survey question. 'Involvement' in serial selection may have been interpreted as any involvement in the process including ordering, accessing etc. Other respondents may have interpreted their

involvement more strictly in a collection development context.

Printed reference collection

Respondents were asked to indicate the size of their current printed open access reference collection. Thirty-one respondents answered this question and the size of collections varied with the smallest at 300 volumes and the largest at 48,375 volumes. The median was 8,449 volumes.

Respondents were asked to indicate how the size of their printed reference collection had changed since 2000. Interestingly, the majority of respondents (85.7% or 30) indicated their printed reference collection had reduced in size. Only five respondents (14.4%) indicated their printed reference collection had increased in size. Most of these responses came from newer libraries that are probably still developing their printed reference collections.

Fifteen libraries responded to the question concerning the level of increase or decrease to their printed reference collection. Those libraries who indicated their printed reference collection had increased in size, provided responses ranging from an increase by 50 volumes, to an increase

by 2,272 volumes. Fluctuations due to decreasing collection size were more significant with decreases ranging from 1,000 volumes to 20,500 volumes. Reasons for the decrease in the printed reference collection are outlined in Table 10.

Reason for Decrease	Number of Respondents
Move to electronic availability	25
Rationalisation of space	5
Lack of usage	3

Table 10: Reasons for the decrease in printed reference collections

It is clear that the availability of reference material in electronic form has affected printed reference collections quite considerably. Reasons for preferring electronic rather than printed subscriptions for reference material include: preferences on the part of users, easier to maintain currency, more accessibility across multiple campuses, and better access for students in a 24/7 world.

Twenty-six respondents answered the question regarding the number of online reference resources held, excluding abstracting and indexing services. This ranged from five to five hundred.

Support for remote and distance students

48.6% (17) respondents indicated their library has a librarian dedicated to supporting students studying in remote or distance modes. This demonstrates the importance many libraries place on serving and supporting students studying in flexible modes.

Interlibrary loans and document delivery

17.1% (6) respondents indicated their library's interlibrary loan and document delivery function forms part of their library's reference suite of services.

Mission or statement of purpose

14.2% (5) of respondents indicated their reference services department has a mission statement or statement of purpose. See Appendix 3 for a description of these statements.

Other comments

Eighteen respondents provided additional comments and these are included as Appendix 4.

The Future of Reference Services

Much has been written on the future of reference services and the reference librarian. Many authors have tried their hand at forecasting the future of reference, so much so, the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) organised a special forum at the 2002

Annual Conference of the American Library Association (Tobin, 2003). She describes the program where a number of leaders in the field gave their opinion on 'The future of reference service' (Janes, 2002; Lipow, 2002; Rettig, 2002; and Tyckoson, 2002).

Janes (2002) recommends making reference services of the future "attractive, effectively evaluated, marketed, integrated, professional, institutionalized, value-based, and appropriate" (p. 24). Lipow (2002) advocates the demise of the reference desk and the provision of reference services at 'point-of-need' which could be in person or virtually provided. Rettig (2002) notes that reference service will remain "place-based" but he predicts it will no longer be "place-bound", that librarians will work either face-to-face or screen-to-screen with patrons. He also observes that younger students have new values: immediacy, interactivity, personalization, and mobility, and that reference librarians must remain user-centred as well as becoming high-tech and "high touch". Tyckoson (2002) maintains that the role of the librarian has remained the same for over 100 years. Librarians still teach patrons how to use the library, still answer patrons' questions, still guide patrons to appropriate sources of information, and still promote the library within the community. The main difference today is the tools that we use, especially the Internet.

All the authors predict that the demand for ready reference assistance would continue to diminish as patrons are able to find the answers themselves using the Internet, but that the skills of the reference librarian would be needed to

assist with more complex information needs. They will be asked for the more personal assistance needed by patrons either in person or virtually, and they will use their skills to generate information and design information systems (Tobin, 2003).

In her scenario for the future of libraries, Kruger (2005, p. 126) notes that users of the future are more likely to be more comfortable with the virtual world, than with the inside of a bricks and mortar library building. Results of this survey shows that Australian academic libraries are tackling this issue. While a high proportion of respondents still have a separate reference service point, many libraries have implemented other forms of service delivery. Integrated service points can free up the time of reference staff to deliver services which more appropriately meet the needs of those users more comfortable with the virtual world. The survey results also demonstrate that an increasing number of libraries are delivering reference services using newer technologies such as chat and SMS. Such services are also aimed at those users more comfortable with the virtual world than the inside of the physical library.

Zabel (2005) identifies some trends which will impact the development of reference services: people want to be self-sufficient; lines between home and work are blurring and there are no longer separate spheres of information; there is a movement to bring order to digital content; there is support for the development of open source software; new notions of intellectual property will emerge; e-learning will explode; and libraries will assume new roles in scholarly publishing.

A number of authors have observed the tendency on the part of reference librarians to develop and provide new services without relinquishing existing services (Cardina and Wicks, 2004; Tyckoson, 1999). The management guru, Peter Drucker (2001), advised that if a business doesn't plan to abandon some services, there is no energy to initiate new services. Libraries and reference services can learn from this advice. Rather than constantly adding new services and projects, we need to assess the current suite of services offered by our libraries, and before implementing new ones, existing services need to be examined and either abandoned or given a new priority to create the time, energy and resources needed to adequately support new services.

6. Conclusion

Data resulting from the survey shows that a slight majority of respondents have retained a separate reference service point, but a significant proportion of respondents have implemented integrated enquiry points which incorporate information enquiries with other enquiries. This trend indicates a move away from the traditional reference desk model to a more integrated service model.

Respondents demonstrate their willingness to adopt new tools and technologies in delivering reference services in their willingness to implement call-centre style telephone services and chat reference services, some going as far as implementing SMS services. Results also clearly demonstrate the importance of information literacy within the suite of reference services and also the

increasing level of pedagogical skills required by reference librarians.

Is there a place for reference services in the twenty-first century academic library in Australia? This research shows there has been no diminution in the importance of reference services or the need for the professional skills provided by reference librarians. Indeed, the greater availability of information via developments in technology suggests the need for reference services is even greater than ever before. I would suggest this trend will only increase. While the new generation of university student may be very comfortable with the Internet, iPods, mobile phones, instant messaging and multitasking, research demonstrates they are not knowledgeable about using library databases and find them difficult to search (Zabel, 2005). There is clearly a continuing role for reference librarians in the development and delivery of appropriate information literacy training.

Staff recruited to work in reference services in the future will need in addition to the basic skills of reference work, a strong foundation in pedagogical skills which will be further developed throughout their careers. They will need to be lifelong learners themselves, willing to develop new skills and abilities as needed. They will need to possess communication and interpersonal skills of the highest order including verbal, written, listening and non-verbal skills. They will need to be flexible and comfortable with rapid change and able to let go of existing services in order to respond to new technological capabilities and client demands. Finally, they will need to have the skill and curiosity to seek feedback

from their user population to help develop client-focussed services and resources.

Service to clients is the ultimate goal of any library. All library operations are

geared towards delivering the most effective, efficient, and quality service possible. Reference librarians have played and will continue to play a key role in delivering such services.

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