Linscheid Library
Staff Reference Service Policy

Although professional librarians are the primary providers of reference services at Linscheid Library, staff members may be allowed to provide service at the Reference Desk after receiving consent from the appropriate parties and participating in training.

Staff persons interested in working at the Reference Desk should first meet with their direct supervisor to ensure that the completion of primary job duties will not be compromised by the addition of reference training and Reference Desk duties. If the direct supervisor approves, s/he should then contact the Instructional Services Librarian about the staff member's interest in participating in reference training. The Instructional Services Librarian should then meet with the staff member to assess his or her suitability for reference duty. If the Instructional Services Librarian thinks that the staff person is well-suited to reference duty, the Instructional Services Librarian should seek approval from the Library Dean to begin training the staff person. Before commencing training, the Instructional Services Librarian should also discuss the matter with the Instructional Services Committee.

Staff reference training should be conducted primarily by the Instructional Services Librarian, but may also involve the Instructional Services Assistant and the other librarians. Reference training topics should include, but not necessarily be limited to:

- The Reference Interview and behavioral guidelines for assisting patrons
- Common Level I, II, and III questions
- Answering and troubleshooting common computer questions
- Searching the library catalog and understanding call numbers
- Selecting and searching periodical databases and other electronic resources
- Evaluating information

The Instructional Services Librarian will determine when the staff member is ready to begin working at the Reference Desk by themselves and announce this determination to everyone else who provides reference service.

Staff members should only be assigned a recurring shift on the reference schedule when all librarians are unable to cover the time slot. In these instances, the Instructional Services Assistant should be assigned to cover the majority of the shift(s) as available.

When a librarian or staff member cannot work their entire regularly-scheduled shift, the individual should first ask a librarian to cover the shift. If a librarian is not available to cover the shift, the individual should ask the Instructional Services Assistant to do so. If the Instructional Services Assistant is not available to cover the shift, the individual should contact any other staff member who has been trained in the provision of reference services to cover the shift. It is the staff member’s responsibility to confirm their availability with their direct supervisor before agreeing to cover a reference shift. Due to other duties and
deadlines a staff person may not be able to cover an entire shift. A shift may be divided among multiple individuals when necessary.

When a librarian or staff member needs someone to cover one hour or less of their regularly-scheduled shift, the Instructional Services Assistant may be asked to cover this part of the shift even if other librarians are available.