

**Syllabus: INF382D Introduction to Information Resources & Services
Spring 2013**

This syllabus is subject to change based on the needs and desires of both the instructor and the class as a whole. Any changes in deadlines will be discussed in class and posted on the class Blackboard site.

Meeting Time & Location: Wednesday, 6pm-9pm, UTA 1.502

Instructor: Trina Bolting

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Office Hours: By appointment

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The fastest way to get ahold of me is through gchat.

TA: Jin Gao

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Course Description/Overview:

From iSchool website

Major reference resources and strategies useful in providing information services in libraries and other information agencies.

My description

Through group and individual projects plus discussion in-class and online (using Blackboard), we will attempt to create a picture of what it is like to practice the art and science of reference. This class will be as practical as possible.

Course Objectives:

- Understand the role of the reference librarian in a contemporary setting in a variety of libraries and other information organizations
- Establish a baseline knowledge of reference sources so that continuing education in the reference field is a manageable task
- Apply your knowledge of reliable resources to reference interactions
- Identify positive interactions between reference librarians and users in the context of reference questions and the reference interview
- Learn to separate personal biases from interactions with users during the reference interview
- Experience the reference interview from both a librarian and user perspective so that you are in a better position to articulate the importance of the interview both to yourself and to colleagues in the future

Textbook & Readings:

There are two required textbooks for this class.

Cassell, K. A., & Hiremath, U. (2011). *Reference and information services in the 21st century: An introduction* (2nd, Rev. ed.). New York, NY: Neal-Shuman.
ISBN: 978-1555707408

Ross, C. S., Nelson, K., & Radford, M. L. (2009). *A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians:*

Conducting the reference interview (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Neal-Shuman.
ISBN: 978-1555706555

Expectations for Students:

This course is for students with a graduate level standing. It was my experience as a graduate student that many courses were only as rewarding as the effort I decided to invest in them; I do not expect that I have created the most challenging course you will take as a graduate student only because each of the assignments are what you make of them. Since you have decided to spend your time and money on a graduate degree, I have only the highest expectations of you and reserve the right to grade you accordingly. If you choose not to challenge yourself by an assignment, it is likely that your lack of effort will be apparent in its outcome, and my grading will likely be lower; you will also likely derive fewer benefits from assignments and learn less over all. I encourage you, therefore, to spend time thinking about how you can make each assignment and reading relevant to your personal goals as a librarian or information professional to increase their value.

Should you need my help with an assignment, you should ask for that help well in advance of the deadline. I will do what I can to accommodate questions up to the deadline, but be aware that I may not be able to answer fully your questions if you ask them within a day or two of a due date. I will endeavor to answer all emails from students within 24 hours, but I cannot guarantee it, especially on days that class meets.

Your attendance in class weekly is expected and will be part of your participation grade in this course. I encourage you to let me know if you will not be able to make it on a particular week. Please do not make regular absences a habit; your grade will suffer both directly by loss of participation points and indirectly since you will not have the ability to learn from lectures nor from your classmates.

Students with Disabilities:

Students may request appropriate accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities (512.471.6259); please visit their website for more information at ddce.utexas.edu/disability. I am more than happy to make accommodations for all students with documented disabilities.

Policy on Academic Dishonesty:

Don't cheat. It's obnoxious, and you learn nothing by doing so.

If, however, you choose to engage in academically dishonest behaviors, I reserve the right to give you a failing grade for this course. The University's policy on academic dishonesty will be followed as such: "Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and dismissal from The University. Since dishonesty harms the individual, fellow students, and the integrity of The University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced." For more information about Academic Dishonesty, Academic Integrity and other related matters, please visit the website of the Office of the Dean of Students at deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs.

Grading:

A = 1865 to 2000 points
A- = 1800 to 1864 points
B+ = 1730 to 1799 points
B = 1665 to 1729 points

B- = 1600 to 1664 points
 C+ = 1530 to 1599 points
 C = 1465 to 1529 points
 C- = 1400 to 1464 points
 D = 1200 to 1399 points
 F = under 1200 points

Participation	400
Ask Some Reference Questions	150
Ask Some Reference Questions Reflection	100
Answer Some Reference Questions	600
Answer Some Reference Questions Reflection	100
Librarian Interview	200
Resource Presentation	150
Resource Pathfinder & Bibliography	300
Total Points	2000

Submission Policies:

Papers or other deliverables should be handed in at the beginning of class on their due date. Late work will not be accepted unless prior arrangements have been arranged. Do not have any expectations of late work being accepted without extenuating circumstances.

Project Descriptions:

Please know that all projects will be discussed in detail in class, so please do not worry if you are unclear about my expectations. Always feel free to ask me questions because if you are unsure about something; someone else probably has the same question.

Participation

Your thoughts on class lectures, readings, and personal experiences are very valuable to your classmates and to myself as a practicing librarian. We all stand to benefit from getting a different person's perspective, so your willingness to openly share your insights is built into your grade. There may occasionally be discussion points that I ask you to prepare for class or for a Blackboard discussion, but merely speaking up in class on a regular basis will result in a passing Participation grade.

Ask Some Reference Questions

This project is adapted with permission from an assignment by Bonnie Brzozowski.

Too often as librarians and information professionals, we forget what it means to be a user. This assignment merely asks that you to step back into that role. **You will be seeking help for three reference questions:** 1) a face-to-face reference question in a library; 2) a virtual reference question in a library; and 3) a face-to-face or over-the-phone reference question at an establishment with readily available customer service representatives (such as a retail store, bank, post office, cable company, etc.).

The questions you ask will be of your own design, and I encourage you to ask ones that you would realistically ask if you were to visit the library or other establishment for a reason other than a school

project. There is a small amount of deception in this assignment in that I do not suggest you tell the person helping you that you will be writing about it for a reference course in which you are enrolled because such knowledge would probably make a big difference in how the interaction would proceed otherwise, but you need not disguise or deny the fact that you are a library student, and whatever you decide to ask will be a genuine query, not an awkward fabrication needing some elaborate back story.

Reflection Paper

You will then compose a reflective paper about your experiences. I have no strict length or formatting in mind for your reflection; write as much as it takes to flesh out your thoughts on this project, but know that you are not writing a research-heavy paper. Format as you are comfortable (but please nothing single-spaced), and for many people, three to five pages will probably suffice. Your paper should be well edited and without spelling and grammatical errors. Please share with me your overall feelings on the interactions including the question you asked, the answer you received, whether a reference interview occurred, and any other relevant information you would like to discuss. You may choose to talk about whether these experiences reflect how you would like to practice reference, how reference services compare to traditional customer service, and whether the experience was a positive one. You should include the questions you asked and the answers you received with your reflective paper when you turn it in.

Key Points to Remember

- It may take time to receive an answer to your question, especially for the virtual reference question, so do not wait until the day before the due date to ask your questions.
- **Please** keep the name of the organization and person helping you anonymous both in this paper and in any class discussion (either online or in person) we may have after the completion of this assignment.

Due Date

January 30th

Answer Some Reference Questions

This project is adapted with permission from assignments created by Bonnie Brzozowski and Loriene Roy.

It is my intention that you receive real-world reference experience by answering reference questions posed by real-world users. No amount of classroom preparation will be as useful in learning to be a Reference Librarian as actually helping people find the answers they need, so you will be answering **six questions** over the course of this semester. You will answer these questions through at least two media: ipl2 (formerly called the Internet Public Library) and any other online answer board sites you choose (such as Stack Exchange, Askville, Yahoo Answers, Wikipedia Reference Desk, and sure, Reddit is fine, too). Additionally, at least one of the questions to which you respond needs to have received a few other responses before yours. Three questions you answer should be on ipl2 and three should be for other answer board sites.

Key Points to Remember

- Start early!!! ipl2 requires that you complete several training modules & that you respond to test questions before responding to questions from users, so you will need to begin as soon as possible.
- The number of questions available for responses on ipl2 varies, so later in the semester there may be fewer questions available. So again, start early.

Deliverables

For each question, you will turn in the text of the question and your full response. Remember that you are responding to these questions as a professional librarian, so your answers should reflect an awareness of reference practices both in your demeanor and in your use of reputable sources. As in any reference interaction, you should communicate to the person asking the question how you found the answer you provided.

Reflection Paper

At the end of the semester, you will turn in a paper reflecting on your overall experience of this project. Some considerations you may choose to discuss include the difference between practicing reference in an environment where people asking questions know they will receive a response from a librarian versus one where anyone can answer regardless of credentials; what it's like to practice reference in an environment where you may be publicly evaluated for your service and how public evaluation would affect traditional reference were it the norm; whether online answer board sites pose a threat to traditional reference; how you would evaluate some of the responses that people receive to their questions when using online answer board sites; what you are able to bring to table as a librarian-in-training; etc. Please feel free to answer any/all/none of these questions, but write this paper in the context of a person who has spent a few months going from a person with little or no reference experience to one who has at least gotten his/her feet wet both in the classroom and in practice. Follow the length and formatting suggestions I have offered for the "Ask Some Reference Questions" paper. You do not need to discuss individually each reference question that you answered.

Due Dates

Questions:

1. February 6th
2. February 20th
3. March 6th
4. March 20th
5. April 3rd
6. April 17th

Reflection: May 1st

Librarian Interview

In order to overcome my personal biases as a reference librarian working in a small public library, I would like to expose the class to as many different perspectives as possible in the field. I have contacted several local librarians who have agreed to be interviewed by my students about their personal experiences as a Reference Librarian. Individually or in small groups, you will contact these librarians and get their perspectives and insights to share with the class.

Before the interviews, know what you will be asking. Prepare a list of questions, and know that we are trying to look at what it is like to practice reference in a variety of settings. We are also interested in how graduate school prepared these individuals for their current and past positions and in what ways they wish their studies would have prepared them more. You may also consider asking about ways in which they keep up with reference services now that they are no longer in graduate school. There may be more to these positions than you are able to cover with your questions, so be open to hearing about aspects of working as a librarian that you did not have the foresight to ask about.

Key Points to Remember

- These professionals are taking time out of their schedule to meet with you, so please try to be flexible. If they do not have time to meet in person or over the phone, it is fine to send them

questions over email. In that same vein, I have no length requirement for how long you should spend talking to them. Spend as much time as feels natural and that the librarian wants to spend – five or ten minutes may be perfectly fine, just as 15 or 30 could as well.

- If you choose to contact someone on your own (outside of the list of librarians I've already contacted), do not interview one of the librarians to whom you posed your questions for the “Ask Some Reference Questions” assignment.
- If several students choose to contact the same librarian, approach it as a group assignment. Work together to come up with your basic list of questions, and talk to the librarian together. If interviewing over email, make sure that all group members are cc'ed, and elect one person to be the main contact.

Deliverables

You will post to Blackboard a general outline of what you discussed in the interview. Give the class an idea of what the librarian said using lists and bullet points. There will be designated space on Blackboard for these outlines. Please do not post as an attachment.

Deadline

Your outline needs to be posted to Blackboard by April 24th. Note that we will not meet in person that week because of TLA. I am noting TLA because it is possible that many of these librarians will have plans to attend the conference, so don't wait until the last moment to contact them.

Resource Presentation

This project is adapted with permission from an assignment created Lorie Roy.

The purpose of the Resource Presentation is to allow groups of students to examine resources relevant to the contemporary reference librarian from the perspective of both the information professional and the user. Because this course is a basic reference course rather than a subject specific one, we will attempt to give as wide a breadth as possible in discussing what kinds of resources are at your disposal; keeping this goal in mind, please include paid sources through libraries such as UT's Library or Austin Public Library as well as free websites and apps. You are expected to think about all of the possible user groups that would be interested in using the resources you present. The specific topic options will be discussed and chosen in class.

Deliverables

- **The actual presentation** which may use slideshow software (such as Power Point or Prezi), but it is not a requirement; whatever format that will keep you and your group organized, well-rehearsed and comfortable is fine
- **A bibliography of resources** that includes everything you present plus other resources you did not have time to cover (should you find those additional resources relevant)
- **One user-centered pathfinder or guide** for one of the resources you discuss (it may be in paper format or web-based, depending on what would realistically be most appropriate for the type of resource and the user group you're targeting; if you choose a web-based pathfinder, I do not require that you build a website – be realistic and not too hard on yourself for this assignment)

Key Points to Remember

- You will be working with a group. Because you are in grad school, not a professional workplace, you may choose to take on a role with which you are less comfortable in order to gain experience in a safe environment. It is up to you and your group to decide.
- Not all resources are found online! You have many fantastic libraries nearby filled with books,

and when appropriate, we want to hear about them in your presentation.

- There is no requirement for how many resources you need to share with the class. I do not expect any collection of resources to be exhaustive, so don't kill yourself trying to find anything and everything that could be relevant to your topic. You will share a curated list of resources, and that list's length is at your discretion. Make it useful – not too long, not too short.

Deadline
Various