SI 647 Information Resources and Services

University of Michigan School of Information Fall 2013

Class Meets: Monday 1-4 pm in NQ 2255
Class Email list: 647F201@ctools.umich.edu
Instructor: Soo Young Rieh (rieh@umich.edu), North Quad 4433
Office Hours: Monday 4-5 pm; Tuesday 9-10 am; By Appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW
This course introduces the principles and practice of reference and information services and provides practical guidelines for evaluating and using a variety of information sources. The course focuses on providing students with practical experience, but it also covers how research findings related to reference interaction can be translated into practical guidelines and implemented by information professionals in various work settings. The core theme of this course revolves around understanding reference services and sources from a user information needs and seeking perspective rather than from a bibliography- or source-centered viewpoint.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
Upon completion of this course, students will be able to: (1) Demonstrate the ability to conduct effective reference service interviews; (2) Identify and use appropriate reference sources to find answers to reference questions; (3) Apply criteria to be used in evaluating reference sources; (4) Demonstrate knowledge of users’ information needs, seeking, and use; (5) Possess familiarity with current problems, trends, and issues in the field of reference and information services

COURSE MATERIALS
Strongly Recommended:
Readings: Additional readings are available on the 647 CTools site. Students are expected to read all assigned readings in advance and to come to class prepared to discuss readings and assignments.

CTOOLS
CTools is a web-based system for coursework that will be used as a major communication tool for this course. Students are expected to check our SI 647 CTools site on a regular basis. Course readings, lecture notes, assignments-related documents, announcements, and other course-related resources will be made available through this venue.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION
• Assignment 1: Unobtrusive Observations: 20%
• Assignment 2: Research Guides Group Project: 30%
• Assignment 3: Innovative Service Paper: 30%
• Exercise 1: Reference interview: 5%
• Exercise 2: Database Handout: 5%
• In-Class and online discussion participation: 10%
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All written submissions must be your own, original work. You may incorporate selected excerpts from publications by other authors, but they must be clearly marked as quotations and must be attributed appropriately. If you build on the ideas of prior authors, you must cite their work. You may obtain copy-editing assistance and you may discuss your ideas with others, but all substantive writing and ideas must be your own or be explicitly attributed to another person. See the Rackham Statement on Graduate Academic and Professional Integrity (http://www.rackham.umich.edu/policies/academic_policies/section10/) for the definition of plagiarism and associated consequences.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course such as the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way we teach may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) (http://www.umich.edu/~sswd/) to help us determine appropriate accommodations. SSD (phone: 734-763-3000) typically recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. I will treat any information you provide as private and confidential.

Journals you may wish to scan from time to time:
• Reference and User Services Quarterly (formerly titled RQ)
• Reference Services Review
• The Reference Librarian
• College and Research Libraries
• Journal of Academic Librarianship
• portal: Libraries and the Academy
• Library Journal
• American Libraries

Guidelines
**SCHEDULE**

**Week 1 (Sept. 9): Course overview; Introduction to LIS**

**Week 2 (Sept. 16): Principles of information services; Information Seeking Process**

**Week 3 (Sept. 23): Conducting reference interviews**

***Exercise: Reference Interview Due***
- Bopp & Smith, Chapter 3: The reference interview

**Week 4 (Sept. 30): Virtual reference services; Ethical aspects of reference service; Convergence of multiple modes of reference services**
- Bopp & Smith, Chapter 2: Ethical aspects of reference service

**Week 5 (October 7): Evaluation of reference services; Discussion of unobtrusive observation**

*** Assignment: Unobtrusive Observations Due ***
- Guest Speaker: Karen Reiman-Sendi, Digital Information Services Librarian, University of Michigan Library
- Bopp & Smith, Chapter 10: Evaluation of reference services

**Week 6 (October 14): Fall Break. No Class.**

**Week 7 (October 21): Reference Sources Part 1; Indexes and Abstracts; Databases**

***Exercise: Database Handout Due ***
- Bopp & Smith, Chapter 13: Selection and evaluation of reference sources
- Bopp & Smith, Chapter 21: Indexes and abstracts

**Week 8 (October 28): Reference Collection Development; Online Search Strategies**
- Guest Speaker: Scott Dennis, Humanities Librarian, Coordinator of Core Electronic Resources, Hatcher Graduate Library, University of Michigan
- Guest Speaker: Karen Markey, Professor, School of Information
• Bopp & Smith, Chapter 4: Organization of information and search strategies
• Bopp & Smith, Chapter 5: Electronic resources for reference

Week 9 (November 4): Reference Sources Part 2
***Class meets at the U of M Graduate Library Gallery Lab (1st Floor)***
Bring your textbook to class
• Bopp & Smith, Chapters 14-20; Chapter 22.

Week 10 (November 11): Information Literacy; Library instruction
• Bopp & Smith, Chapter 8: Instruction

Week 11 (November 18): Pleasure reading; Readers’ Advisory
*** Exhibition: Research Guide Group Project Due ***

Week 12 (November 25): Institutional repositories; Libraries and E-Books

Week 13 (December 2): Perceptions of Libraries; The future of information services

Week 14 (Dec. 9): Discussion of Innovative Service Paper
*** Innovative Service Paper Due ***
Exercise 1: Reference Interview Reflective Report (5%)
Due: September 23

The purpose of this exercise is to give you an opportunity to reflect upon an experience as a reference librarian. Follow the procedure below:

1. Read course readings assigned to Sept. 23 class
2. Find a client who is a U of M faculty member, a graduate student, a staff member, or an undergraduate student, and include the short profile of your client in the report
3. Find out a client’s information needs by conducting reference interviews
4. You can choose any mode (email, telephone, or face-to-face) for your interviews
5. Describe the initial question your client had
6. Write down (based on your best memory) additional questions you asked
7. Describe how a client’s initial question had changed and/or what information needs emerged
8. What resources did you decide to use in order to meet this user’s information needs?
9. Write down “ah-ha” moments occurred as a result of reference interviews
10. Describe difficulties or problems you encountered during the interview process
11. Write down the total time taken for the entire interview session.

Assignment 1: Unobtrusive Observations (20%)
Due: October 7

The Willingness to Return studies differ from earlier unobtrusive observation studies of reference interactions in which researchers asked questions of librarians that they knew the answers to in an effort to determine accuracy rates. The purpose of this assignment is to identify factors associated with people’s willingness to return to a librarian at another time with another question. You will perform observations as a “secret shopper” within two different reference interaction contexts: (1) in-person reference service and (2) digital reference service. These observations should be conducted in an environment where you are not known to other people. Don’t inform the staff that you are doing a class assignment. Do not identify the specific location or a specific staff member in the paper you will write. Keep such information confidential. It is important that you choose a question for each observation that is related to an actual information need of your own or a problem that you need to solve. Do not ask a question that can be responded to with a simple fact-based answer.

The instruments you will be using were developed by Joan Durrance, with some questions and the checklist borrowed or adapted from Catherine Ross and her associates at the University of Western Ontario. Become familiar with the instruments before you conduct the observations. The two instruments – one for in-person reference and the other for digital reference – will be available on CTools. Please complete the instruments immediately after your interactions.

Based on your observations, write a paper (5 pages, single-spaced) without identifying the specific library or staff member you interacted with. You may want to provide some contextual information, if possible. Your paper is based on your analysis of the instruments you completed and should encompass a discussion of not only what happened during each observation but also the impacts (positive or negative) of each factor. Based on this experience, what would you emulate and/or do differently as a reference librarian? Relate your observation experiences to course readings and other relevant articles. Include both instruments and a list of any references you cited as appendices. Please also include
transcripts/emails from your e-reference observations (delete email addresses or any other identifying information) as an appendix.

Bring your paper to class on October 7. We will have discussions about your observations.

This assignment will be evaluated based on the following criteria:
- Descriptions of your observation settings (10 points)
- Detailed discussion of what happened during the observation (20 points)
- Identification of positive and negative factors (20 points)
- Discussion of lessons learned from this experience (20 points)
- Connecting your analysis of your observation experiences to relevant articles (20 points)
- Quality of writing (10 points)

Exercise 2: Database Handout (5%)
Sign up a database on CTools – September 30
Due: October 21

The purpose of this exercise is to give you an opportunity to get familiar with the names of databases used in academic libraries. Follow the procedure below:

1. Please sign up one database you would like to work on by writing your name next to the database after looking at the list of “42 databases you should know” on CTools Wiki
2. Spend sufficient time to get familiar with the database (or search tool) and learn how to use it effectively instead of simply reading the descriptions from the database or the textbook
3. Think about how you want to introduce this database to your users (about one page long)
4. Describe topical areas covered by the database, the related fields that are likely to be served, what types of documents are included, which years are covered, and any unique features
5. Then, describe who are the kinds of users who would be most likely to use this database
6. Feel free to add any other information that might be useful for potential users of the database or search tool
7. Post your “handout” on CTools-Forum
8. Print out your handout and bring a hard copy to the class on October 21 for our “database cocktail party.”

Assignment 2: Research Guides Group Project (30%)
Your group’s proposal for this project needs to be approved by me by October 7
Due: November 18

The purpose of the Research Guides Project is for you to develop your research guidance skills and evaluate resources in light of information needs of a particular user group. For this project, each group (approximately 3-4 students) will select a topic, then research, plan, and develop Research Guides targeted for a specific user group of a specific library. Research Guides serve as a bibliographic tool designed to guide information seekers through the preliminary stages of research by helping them to systematically locate information on a given topic using the various types of resources available. Research Guides are a lot more than an annotated bibliography. It provides a carefully selected list of various types of important information sources, as well as guidance as to how and why to use these different sources.
Research guides in this course can be developed in one of the two types. The first type is rooted in a “pathfinder” model focusing on specific topics (see the examples of projects from previous years). The second is to develop as subject-level research guides which cover a broader field than a pathfinder. Although most libraries in the real world tend to develop research guides for users ranging from undergraduates to faculty, I would like your project to focus on more specific user group.

I will announce the groups on September 23. Then each group needs to choose a topic and a target audience and post a short description of your project on CTools Wiki whenever you are ready. I strongly recommend that you get my approval no later than October 7.

First, identify a target audience and possibly a specific library – for example, Ann Arbor Public Library adult patrons preparing for book clubs; U of M undergraduate students who are taking a creative writing class; UMHS patients who are planning or expecting babies; U of M graduate students researching African art. Then, identify various types of resources (both print and electronic) including reference sources (covered in the textbook chapters 14-22) which would be useful and suitable for your target audience. Please make sure you include reference sources, books, non-print resources, periodicals, and Websites.

**Part A:** Create Web-based Research Guides for your intended users. Format the page so that the targeted patrons can easily follow it independently. Present the resources concisely, but also consider how to make the page as useful as possible for your particular audience. Be creative. Use graphics and/or color if possible. Start the Research Guides by describing its purpose and the scope of the topic it addresses. List relevant resources, and provide a brief description of each one.

**Part B:** Develop a narrative which explains your process for creating your Research Guides. First, state the title and URL of your Research Guides. Write an introduction explaining what your Research Guides are about. Then write a description of the patron group for whom the Research Guides are intended. Describe the process your group used in order to develop the Research Guides. How did you get started? What resources or tools did your group rely on the most? What worked and what did not? Also describe how group members worked together (i.e., how you divided up the responsibilities). This narrative should be about 2 pages long (single-spaced).

The Research Guides will be graded based on the following criteria:

- Significance of the topic (10 points)
- Quality of sources selected (20 points)
- Diversity of sources (10 points)
- Suitability of sources for user audience (20 points)
- Presentation and format of the Webpage (20 points)
- Description of the process (from Part B) (20 points)

**Assignment 5: Innovative Service Paper (30%)**

**Due: December 9**

The purpose of this assignment is for you to identify critical issues in information services and discuss your innovative service ideas. To decide on your topic, you may want to browse the table of contents of the professional journals (such as the ones listed on page 2 of this syllabus), monitor librarians’ blogs, or
follow tweeting, etc. In order to write this paper, students should find about 10 articles on the topic that have been published in professional journals on the topic and then try to incorporate discussions and research findings from the professional literature into your paper. First, provide a short background on your topic and an overview of a problem that seems to be significant or critical. Elaborate the problem(s) for about two pages or so. Then suggest possible innovative information services or future directions we might take in regard to that problem. In total, your paper should be about 5 pages long (single-spaced).

One of the goals of this assignment is to encourage you to spend time browsing the professional literature in order to develop some familiarity with the important issues that are currently being identified and discussed by practitioners. Therefore, the articles you may include in your paper are not necessarily limited to research-based and peer-reviewed ones; however, I would not recommend that all of your references be from blogs, news articles, and/or magazine articles.

We will have small group discussions (instead of presentations) on December 9.

Your paper will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Significance of the problem addressed (20 points)
- Clarity of your description of the problem (30 points)
- Identification of possible innovative services (20 points)
- Strength of your arguments supporting your assertions (10 points)
- Presentation and writing (10 points)
- Panel points (10 points)