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An Organizational Analysis of the Reference Department, Thomas Cooper Library, University of South Carolina

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**An Organizational Analysis of the
Reference Department**

**Thomas Cooper Library
University of South Carolina**

**By
Travis Ferrell
Rae Kammerer
Asima Mahdi**

2007

**School of Library and Information Science
University of South Carolina**

CONTENTS

SECTION	PAGE
CONTENTS	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS	5
2.0 FACTUAL	7
2.01 Purpose of Study	
2.02 Methodology	
2.1 Thomas Cooper Library	8
2.11 Recent history	
2.12 Organization	
2.13 Leadership	
2.2 National Trends in Reference Services	15
2.3 Thomas Cooper Library Reference Department	16
2.31 Recent history	
2.4 SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)	19
3.0 FINDINGS	21
3.1 Literature Review	21
3.2 Interviews and Survey	24
3.3 Statistics	26
4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE AND JUSTIFICATIONS	28
4.1 Goals and Objectives	28
4.2 Organization	29
4.3 Training and Professional Development	31
4.4 Marketing	33

4.5	Evaluation of Services	35
4.6	Physical Space	36
4.7	Conclusion	38
5.0	APPENDICES	39
A:	Excerpts from the University of South Carolina, University Libraries, Strategic Plan 2004- 2009, April 30, 2004	40
B:	University Libraries Blueprint for Service Excellence 2006	44
C:	Interview Questions	50
6.0	RESOURCES	51

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1.0 Executive Summary of Recommendations

This report is the product of a semester-long study for course 768, Problems in Library and Information Agency Administration at the University of South Carolina's School of Library and Information Science.

The purpose of this study was to do an in-depth analysis of the Reference Department at the University of South Carolina's Thomas Cooper Library. A number of methods of fact-gathering were employed in the performance of this analysis, including:

- a literature review of the trends, changes and methods of evaluation for reference services nationwide;
- an investigation of the recent history, organization and leadership of Thomas Cooper Library and the Reference Department from documentation available publicly or provided by the administration at Thomas Cooper Library;
- interviews with Thomas Cooper Library administrators
- a survey of all reference department staff conducted electronically using the Flashlight survey module.

The Reference Department at Thomas Cooper Library is a department that is perpetually in flux. The dedicated and flexible staff is one of its great strengths, but the organizational structure has been largely crafted around the abilities of specific individuals, rather than being guided by an organizational philosophy. Constraints on both time and funding have posed additional challenges. With a physical reorganization of this department on the horizon, as well as an upcoming remodel of Thomas Cooper itself, and an increased emphasis on information literacy instruction and technological changes to reference service nationwide, this is an opportune time to make sure all aspects of reference services are coalescing as well as possible.

We respectfully propose a number of achievable modifications to the organization, resource allocation and physical space of the Reference Department. Recommendations include the following:

- Production of a Goals and Objectives statement for the Reference Department;
- Perform job audits and update job descriptions according to what each person is actually doing;
- Cross train staff, so that duties can be equitably dispersed, and support continuing education and professional development efforts;
- Actively market library services to students and faculty within their dorms or departments and maintain a reference department presence electronically on all floors of the library;
- Develop a method of evaluation for reference service satisfaction, and use the existing data that has been collected on this;
- Do a study of space allocation, to ensure that all available space is being used adequately, and rearrange as necessary for optimal usage and staff collaboration.

The recommendations are further explained and justified in section 4.0 of this report. Earlier sections are devoted to background information and methodology.

2.0 Factual

2.01 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to do an in-depth analysis of the Reference Department at the University of South Carolina's Thomas Cooper Library. The study was conducted in order to examine the organizational structure and the services provided by of the Reference Department and make recommendations accordingly.

2.02 Methodology

In order to do the research necessary to complete this project, we investigated the recent history, organization, leadership, and resources of Thomas Cooper Library as a whole and the Reference Department specifically. We also conducted interviews with Virginia Weathers, the Head of Reference; Tom McNally, Thomas Cooper Library Director; and Paul Willis, the Dean of Libraries. In addition, we performed a literature review of trends in reference services, reference evaluation and management. Further, we created and conducted an anonymous electronic survey of reference librarians at Thomas Cooper Library, the Music Library and the Business Library. More specific information about the methodology employed in this study can be found in Section 3, Findings, beginning on page 21.

2.1 Thomas Cooper Library

The University Libraries at the University of South Carolina, of which Thomas Cooper Library is the major organization, has a diverse clientele, including students, faculty, university staff, alumni and members of the public community in Columbia, South Carolina. According to the 2004-2005 Annual Report, University Libraries ranked 42nd in size of holdings among public research libraries in the United States, owning about one-half million books and serial volumes. It also owned nearly 1 million government documents and more than 320,000 maps. It employed 176 librarians and other library staffers, received more than 1 million visitors in the building and had more than 4 million visitors to its Web pages. It circulated more than 1 million items, reshelved more than 300,000 books, provided about 200 Web-based databases on which users conducted more than one-half million searches, and responded to more than 160,000 information requests. (Annual Report, 18) As the major research library in the state of South Carolina, Thomas Cooper has an impact on the information access available far greater than the Columbia area.

2.11 Recent history 2002-2007

Ladwig, et. al and university publications describe Thomas Cooper Library as follows: “The Association of Research Libraries ranks Thomas Cooper Library, located on the campus of the University of South Carolina in Columbia, the 38th largest university library in the United States in terms of collections. As a shared Regional Federal Depository Library, Thomas Cooper Library is required to be accessible to and serve the public.” (Ladwig, 6)

“The library collection includes more than three million volumes of books, serials, and other materials. Access to more than 27,000 online journals is available from on or

off campus. In addition, there are about four million titles on microform in the collection. The library provides hundreds of research databases that are available via the Web to the University community from on or off -campus. Librarians provide assistance with these resources in person as well as via phone, e-mail and online.” (Ladwig, 6)

The Main Level and Level Five in Thomas Cooper Library are open 24 hours Sunday-Thursday in response to patron requests, in addition to its normal weekend schedule. In addition, “reference service areas are fully staffed 83 hours each week. Almost the entire collection is located in open stacks. Individual seating for over 2,000 patrons is available throughout the building. The library has recently added more than 6,000 square feet of student study space on the Main Level in response to requests from the student body. Approximately 900 private, locked study rooms are available for assignment to graduate students and faculty involved in research projects and 40 student study rooms seating four persons in each room. The library has three classrooms for use by librarians and other faculty on a limited basis. Two of the rooms are modern multimedia classrooms funded by the University 101 program and used primarily for the library instruction module of U101. A more traditional classroom is also available for library related instruction and individual class sessions as requested.” (Ladwig, 6)

In addition, the physical space of the Main Level has been rearranged in the past year to include increased study space for students, and Cooper’s Corner coffee shop has been relocated to the rear of the library near this study space. Additionally, the current newspapers have been relocated to this area from their previous location in the Government Documents department, making them more accessible. Further, the collection that was on the Mezzanine has been relocated to Level Four to make room for the new Student Success Center, and a satellite Writing

Center has been added in recent years. There is also an expansion project involving an additional wing housing part of the library's collection slated for the near future.

2.12 Organization

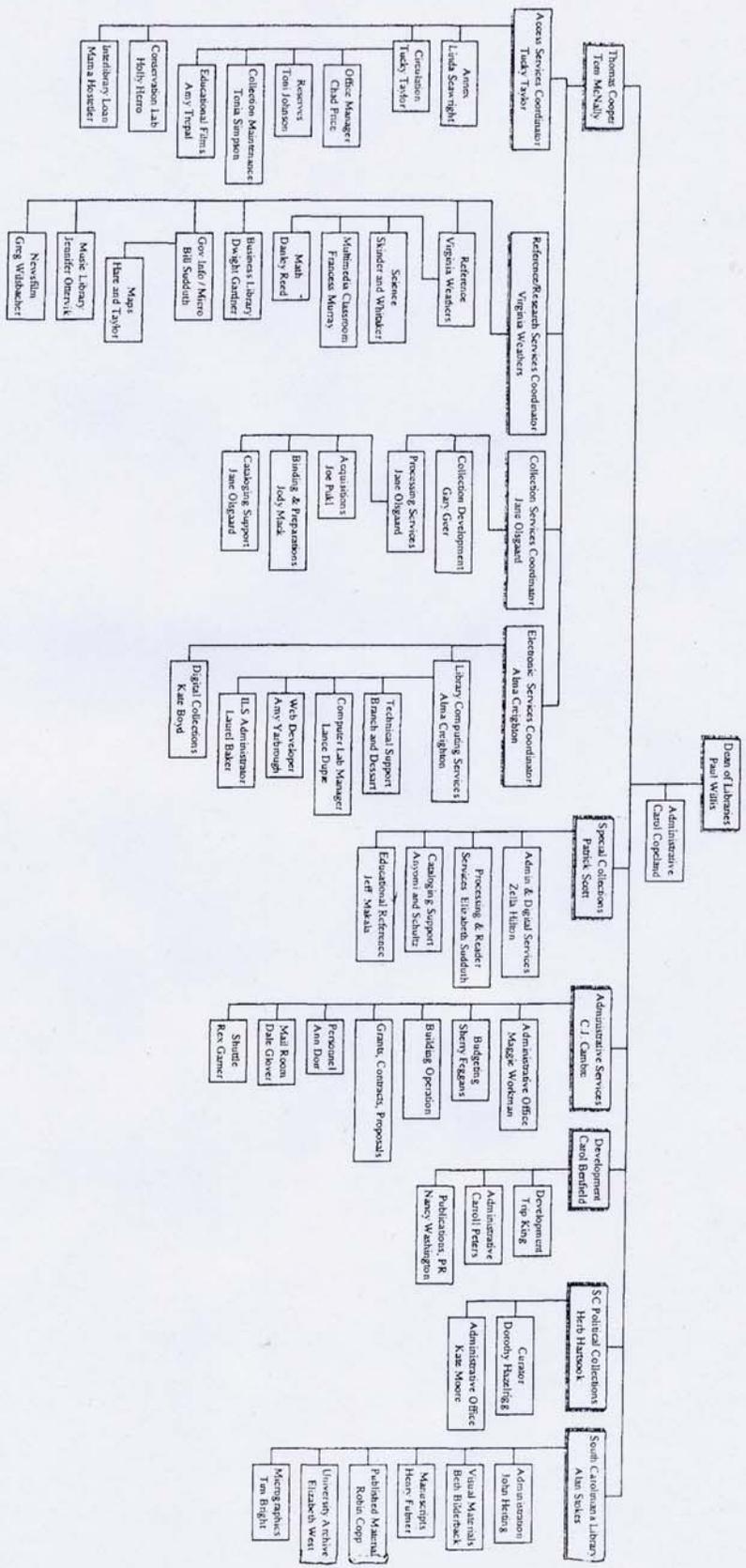
Paul Willis was named Dean of Libraries in 2002 and he named Mr. McNally Director of Thomas Cooper in 2003. "Dean Willis brought together a University Library Organizational Review Taskforce and conducted a reorganization of the library based on the findings of the Taskforce. One of the results was the concept of coordinators, implemented in order to assist Mr. McNally in operating the Thomas Cooper Library. The coordinators were elected through peer nominations." (Ladwig, et.al. 7)

The coordinators are responsible for coordinating activities of their assigned department and disseminating information; however, they may or may not supervise the individuals in these departments. For example, Virginia Weathers coordinates activities and provides information to the Music Library, but the music librarians are not subordinate to her. The coordinators for Processing, Reference Services, Access Services and Systems, the Annex, Business Library, and Music Library report directly to Mr. McNally.

The current organizational chart of the Thomas Cooper Library is located on the following page. Below is a list of the Library administration and upper management.

- Paul Willis: Dean of Libraries
- Tom McNally: Director of Thomas Cooper Library
- C. J. Cambre: Director of Administrative Services
- Carol Benfield: Director of Library Development
- Patrick Scott: Director of Special Collections
- Jane Olsgaard: Coordinator of Processing Services

- Virginia Weathers: Head of Reference and Coordinator of Public Services
- Alma Creighton: Coordinator of Systems
- Caroline Taylor: Access Services Coordinator



2.13 Leadership

The following is pertinent biographical information for the Library's administration.

Paul A. Willis

Dean of Libraries

Paul Willis received his Bachelor's degree from the University of Kentucky in 1963 and his Doctor of Jurisprudence from the same institution in 1969. Dean Willis earned his Master's degree in Library Science from the University of Maryland in 1966. He is a member of the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries and served on the Board of Directors in 2002. He also served on the board of directors for the Association of Research Libraries in 2002. Dean Willis was Director of Libraries at the University of Kentucky from 1973 until 2002, when he became the Dean of Libraries at the University of South Carolina in Columbia.

Thomas F. McNally

Director of Thomas Cooper Library

Tom McNally earned a Bachelor's degree in Education in 1973 from Kent State University. He received his Master's degree in Library Science from the University of Washington in 1978. Mr. McNally is actively involved in the American Library Association, having served on numerous committees. His publications and presentations cover topics such as time management, bibliographic instruction and security in the workplace. Before becoming the Director of Thomas Cooper Library in 2003, Mr. McNally was the head of Public Services at USC. He has also held positions in Public

Services at Loyola University of Chicago Libraries, Ohio State University Libraries, and the University of Michigan Libraries.

C.J. Cambre, Jr.

Director of Administrative Services

C.J. Cambre received his Bachelor of Arts degree in History from the University of New Orleans in 1966 and his Master's degree in Library Science in 1968 from Louisiana State University. He has worked at the University of South Carolina Thomas Cooper Library in a variety of capacities since 1972; he has been Director of Administrative Services since 2001. He has been an active consultant for libraries around the state and throughout the eastern United States. His professional service also includes assisting the American Library Association and the South Carolina State Library by serving on various committees. Though Mr. Cambre officially retired in 2006, he remains at his station through the TERI program.

Virginia W. Weathers

Head of Reference and Coordinator of Public Services

Virginia W. Weathers earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Education from Winthrop College in 1973. She received her Master's Degree in Library and Information Science from the University of Tennessee in 1985. From 1975 to 1984, Ms. Weathers worked in staff positions for the libraries of Texas A&I University at Corpus Christi, Bowdoin College, Pensacola Junior College and Tusculum College. She worked in the graduate library reference department at the University of Tennessee as a student. She joined the Thomas Cooper Library in 1985 in her first professional position as a reference librarian. She was promoted to Head of Reference in 1993 and to Coordinator of Reference and Research Services in 2003.

2.2 National Trends in Reference Services

Trends in reference service tend toward greater remote access to reference, via email and online chat reference, and in inventing ways of bringing the library to the customer. For example, librarians are bringing library services to their patrons by going to where students and faculty are located on campus, whether it is a study center in a dormitory or a branch library within an academic department. There is also increased emphasis on information literacy instruction as a facet of more traditional bibliographic instruction, and also as a stand-alone set of courses taught by library faculty. Some are integrated into a University 101 or First Year Experience program required of all freshman. Reference departments continue to have a rather flat managerial structure, with a number of reference librarians having responsibilities for varying subjects' areas reporting to a single head of reference.

As stated above, reference departments are responsible for conducting a number of activities. The demand for both electronic and print resources and convenient access to library services is growing rapidly, while funding tends to remain the same, or be shrinking. The trends above indicate efforts by reference departments to meet these needs.

2.3 Thomas Cooper Library Reference Department

The Reference Department of Thomas Cooper Library serves as the main point of access to information for the library clientele. Located on the Main Level of the library, it is easily accessible to all. With a growing off-campus presence through electronic services and an increased emphasis on remote access, the reference department faces many opportunities to serve a wider array of clients in the future.

2.31 Recent History

Virginia Weathers has been the Coordinator of Reference and Research Services since 2003. Prior to this time, she was Head of Reference, and had been since 1993. Tom McNally was the Head of Public Services and directly oversaw the reference department as part of his duties. In 2003, he was named Director of Thomas Cooper Library.

The Reference Department is the primary information center for the Thomas Cooper Library. It is located on the main floor, across from the Circulation desk. The librarians at this service desk specialize in humanities and social sciences reference. The staff of the Reference Department includes eleven full-time reference librarians (though one spot is currently vacant), five part-time reference librarians, two full-time technical assistants, and a number of graduate assistants and undergraduate shelvers. Librarians from other departments also assist with science reference desk duties.

The Science Reference desk on level four of the Thomas Cooper Library serves as the point of contact for specialized science reference questions. It is staffed by two full-time science reference librarians, graduate assistants and volunteer librarians from other departments.

(University Libraries, 1) Reference questions involving music, business or mathematics are mostly handled at the branch library specializing in each area. The Medical Library and Law

library are separate entities from the University Libraries, and have their own reference departments and procedures.

According to Virginia Weathers, head of reference for Thomas Cooper Library, staffing in this department has changed as follows over the past five years:

2007 10 reference librarians (one vacancy), 3 staff, 5 temp librarians, 4 students

2006 11 full time reference librarians, 4 temporary librarians, 4 staff, & 3 student assistants

September 1, 2005 - Science Library Staff & Math Library staff came under my management adding 2 librarians and 2 staff members to my area.

2005 9 full time reference librarians, 4 temporary librarians, 2 staff, 5 student workers

2004 records incomplete * probably the same as 2005

2003 9 librarians, 5 part-time librarians, 1 temporary staff member, 4 graduate assistants, 1 staff, and 1 undergraduate shelver

2002 8 librarians, 3 temporary librarians, graduate assistants, office manager, and an undergraduate shelver.

This reflects an overall increase in staffing, though it is in part due to a reorganization in the library. Since the Math Library is a branch library in a separate location on campus, its staff does not work in Thomas Cooper Library. Temporary staff members work primarily on evenings and weekends.

According to the FY 04-05 Annual Report:

The TCL Reference Department launched a new Chat Reference Service using Tutor.com reference software. The department also established a relationship with USC's Writing Center through a satellite office located in TCL. Reference librarians are available to help students locate books, journal articles, and other resources needed to complete their writing assignments. The department works with University 101 to schedule and coordinate the library instruction portion of that program. Staff members develop the library instruction module and train University 101 instructors in its use. (10)

Recently, the department switched to Velaro for online chat reference, as the service agreement for Tutor.com had changed and made the co-browsing option more expensive, and more difficult to use. In addition, the Reference Department has recently instituted Gamecock PowerSearch, a federated search engine that allows simultaneous searching of nearly all electronic resources available at the University Libraries, including the online catalog. Also, a small traveling laptop computer stand has been added for reference librarians to use in assisting patrons in the reference computer area.

Information literacy and instruction has become an increasingly important part of the duties of the Reference Department. “As part of its Library Literacy and Instruction Program, Thomas Cooper Library’s Reference Department conducted 351 bibliographic instruction classes for 4,933 students. Included in this total are 57 University 101 sessions for 678 students. Science library staff members conducted 28 bibliographic instruction sessions for 573 students.” (Annual Report, 18)

The annual report also notes a shift during recent years from purchasing print resources to purchasing more electronic resources. During 2004–2005, the library expended a total of \$5,056,058. Of this amount, about 45 percent was spent for print resources and 55 percent for electronic resources. A reflection of the changing nature of library materials can be seen by comparing the statistics for 2000–2001 when print resources accounted for 92 percent of expenditures while electronic resources accounted for only 8 percent. (Annual Report, 18) This affects the reference department by expanding the focus of library instruction and in-person reference service, and requiring that the librarians be increasingly technologically adept.

2.4 SWOT

In accordance with standard business practices, we have prepared a SWOT analysis of the Reference Department at Thomas Cooper Library. This serves to clarify the current situation in this department.

Strengths and opportunities include:

- a commitment to providing excellent customer service;
- knowledgeable and friendly staff;
- reference department's willingness to work together and take on different responsibilities as needed;
- positive relationship between administration and Head of Reference and Research Services;
- cross training between Thomas Cooper Library's reference staff and branch libraries (e.g.. reference librarians at Thomas Cooper Library come to the Business Library to learn about business sources and vice versa);
- graduate assistants, who are an asset to the staff by providing desk coverage during peak times, and also benefit from on the job training in reference librarianship;
- an emphasis on library instruction;
- a growing electronic resources collection;
- Gamecock PowerSearch, a new federated search engine that has been added to provide the ability to simultaneously search most of the electronic resources available as well as the library's online catalog;
- the merger of science reference into main reference, which offers one service point and more staff on one floor;

- involvement in the South Carolina Library Association on College and University Libraries roundtable by Thomas Cooper Library reference staff members, which increases visibility;
- taking advantage of opportunities to work together with State Library, SLIS and other outside agencies/organizations.

Weaknesses and threats include:

- electronic resources, the web, and other libraries (public, etc) becoming more convenient for faculty and students to use, consequently decreasing the number of clients that actually go to Thomas Cooper Library in person;
- competition for funding from other university departments and state agencies, which is an issue that affects how much money is allocated for the library and in turn, the reference department;
- ambiguity in job responsibilities and the organizational chart, resulting in some confusion in who is responsible for what;
- the reference staff feeling overwhelmed by desk responsibilities, library instruction, and faculty outreach due to lack of time and a perception of inadequate staffing;
- lack of outreach to faculty and contact with them in person;
- limited marketing outside of the library, which means that faculty and students do not take advantage of library resources/instruction because they are unaware of what is available.

3.0 Findings

3.1 Literature Review

There are a number of topics of interest that are generated when undertaking a study of this nature, including:

- Management techniques, specifically for libraries
- Evaluation methods for libraries, and public services in general
- National trends and best practices for reference services in academic libraries

The literature regarding management in libraries relevant to this study covers organizational structure and design, and what work values are most important to librarians. The concept of organizational design and structure has been borrowed from the business world and has been adapted to fit libraries. As in the business world, not all libraries subscribe to a single type of organizational structure.

In their article, “Organizational Cultures of Libraries as a Strategic Resource”, Kaarst-Bown, et al (2004) the authors propose that knowing what type of organizational culture a library has can help when selecting employees whose values match those of the library. They describe in great detail the four cultures comprised in the competing values framework: clan-oriented, adhocracy-oriented, market-oriented and hierarchy-oriented, although these cultures can be successfully mixed. However, they think academic libraries need to move away from a strictly hierarchical structure and would function better in a clan-oriented or adhocracy-dominated organizational culture because of its emphasis on team-work, risk-taking and flexibility.

In Barbara Burd’s paper from the ACRL 11th National Conference, “Work Values of Academic Librarians: Exploring the Relationship between Values, Job Satisfaction, Commitment and Intent to Leave” (2003), she studies how well academic librarians’ work values match the

academic libraries' values where they work and how that affects job satisfaction. The study revealed that the librarians with the highest level of satisfaction and commitment were the ones who worked in libraries that were relational and emphasized team-work, fairness and good communication. Librarians who work in hierarchical structured academic libraries had the lowest percentage of job satisfaction and were most likely to leave in the near future.

In the area of evaluation methods, there seems to have been a big push to study this in the mid-1980's, but only a few things have been written since. This may be because some of the difficulties in measuring outcomes in the public service areas of a library have not changed. It is still difficult to quantify the success with which reference questions are answered. However, as new technologies emerge to deliver information to clients, there should be an equivalent evolution in methods of surveying and determining the usefulness of the services the library offers. There is a dearth of written research proposing and evaluating new methods of service evaluation. Librarians may well be making great progress in tailoring their services to the specific needs of their clientele, using a diverse array of methods. Very few are writing anything about it.

Mary Cronin's 1985 paper *Performance Measurements for Public Services in Academic and Research Libraries* explores ways of measuring performance, though she looks more to measurement of organizational function and performance than a specific look at the quality of service provided. She does mention the importance, however, of tying performance measurement to precise standard, or a measurable range of acceptable output (Cronin, 19). Her criteria model can be applied to reference; one must consider user expectation of service, staff definition of excellent performance, the current level of library performance, and how that compares with performance in other libraries. Similarly, F.W. Lancaster, Cheryl Elzy, and Alan

Nourie's article, "Diagnostic Evaluation of Reference Services in an Academic Library," discuss the challenges of conducting an unobtrusive study of reference services and how such a study is received by the reference librarians who are being observed.

National trends and best practices in reference departments in academic libraries are evolving rapidly. The literature addresses the responsibilities and challenges reference librarians face as they being asked to do more in the same or lesser amount of time. Additionally, the literature also deals with best practices that can assist librarians.

In his article, "On-Site Reference Services and Outreach: Setting Up Shop Where Our Patrons Live", A. Ben Wagner discusses how various libraries have increased their efforts for outreach with faculty and students by having librarians go to academic departments and set up office hours where both faculty and students can receive in person reference service without having to go to the library. This approach is quite successful.

In their article, "Expectations, Realities, and Perceptions of Subject Specialist Librarians' Duties in Medium-Sized Academic Libraries" Sonja L. McAbee and John-Bauer Graham (2005) conducted a study to determine whether administrators and librarians were on the same page in regards to whether the time and value placed on various tasks was in line with each other's expectations and job descriptions. It was discovered that the administrators' expectations were not unlike most others at other similar academic libraries. There is a greater emphasis on reference service and library instruction as opposed to participating on committees and professional development.

3.2 Interviews and survey

In order to gain an understanding of the history and organizational structure of this department, interviews of the members of the administration of Thomas Cooper Library were conducted by the students in SLIS 768. Administration interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes each, and were audio-taped. Researchers spent approximately 2 hours reviewing these tapes. Upon completion of this project, all tapes were destroyed. Members of the administration uniformly noted the following:

- Appreciation for the team of staff and their skills and dedication
- A desire to reconfigure the physical space in the reference department
- The possible consolidation of the Science Library into Main Reference
- Challenges with technology, particularly where virtual reference is concerned

Remaining reference staff both at Thomas Cooper Library and in other divisions of University Libraries (Music Library, Business Library, Math Library) were asked to complete a survey conducted via Flashlight (see Appendix B for questions asked). The survey was sent to a total of 13 people; 7 responded. All surveys were anonymous; upon completion of this project, all survey responses were deleted. The following trends were noted:

- Strong appreciation for the people in the department and their flexibility and skill level.
- Strong appreciation for the head of reference specifically.
- Concern over the distribution of duties within the department, particularly as it applies to hours on the desk and non-reference-related special projects.
- A desire to have a larger staff.

- Lack of focus within individual jobs, and unclear expectations about what each individual is expected to do.
- Lack of opportunity to perform needed functions outside of the library, such as maintaining a close relationship with academic departments.
- Limited support for professional development due to time and budgetary constraints.
- No time for informal collegial discussion and collaboration.

3.3 Statistics

In collecting reference desk statistics, the Thomas Cooper Library Reference Department utilizes a method of sampling that is laid out in depth in Lochstet and Lehman’s 1999 article “A Correlation Method for Collecting Reference Statistics”. In short, the number of reference questions asked is collected for three predetermined weeks per year in each department of University Libraries, and an estimate is extrapolated from this for the entire calendar year, using a formula that takes into account high-, low-, and medium-use weeks. We have created a table of the estimates for each period from data provided by the Reference Department below:

Public Service Reference Desk Statistics
based on a sampling formula created by Donna Lehman and Gwenn Lochstet

Year	June	October	November	Est. for Year
2002	29,355	42,302	77,700	149,357
2003	27,987	43,381	71,340	142,708
2004	34,827	38,584	67,320	140,731
2005	31,027	45,214	60,700	136,941
2006	34,409	43,212	61,360	138,981

This shows an overall trend toward a drop in the estimated number of reference questions asked throughout the University Libraries system throughout this five-year period.

However, it is worth noting that not all numbers are going down. Below is a table we created based on the number of questions asked via electronic methods for 2004-2005, and 2005-2006, as provided by the Reference Department:

Chat Reference - (Tutor.com)	Email Reference	IM*
7/2004-6/2005 627	7/2004-6/2005 677	N/A
7/2005-6/2006 801	7/2005-6/2006 919	8/2006-12/2006 133
% increase 21.7	% increase 26.3	*This service was launched in August of 2006.

As you can see, for these two years, the number of questions asked using these methods has increased significantly. Though this is too small a sampling of years to actually call this a trend yet, it is

something worth watching. As more people become aware of this service, and as distance education continues to increase at the University of South Carolina, electronic reference service could also increase, making appropriate changes to the department necessary.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE AND JUSTIFICATIONS

4.1 Recommendation: Goals and Objectives

Good business practices dictate that overall goals and attainable objectives be laid out clearly. The Head of Reference, in consultation with the Director of Thomas Cooper Library should produce a “Goals and Objectives” statement for the reference department, and make it available to all reference staff members as soon as possible. This is essential for all members of the reference team to feel that they know where the library is going, and envision how their efforts will contribute to the overall plan. A strategic plan for the library as a whole is good, but more specific goals and objectives for this department are necessary.

4.2 Recommendation: Organization

Research indicates that a clear and precise organizational structure, in which each staff member is explicitly assigned specific job responsibilities, is the most efficient manner in which to organize. This extends to leadership positions as well. Staff members need to understand for what and to whom they are responsible.

The organization is currently built around the talents of the people involved, rather than a guiding organizational philosophy. This leaves the department vulnerable whenever a staff member and his or her particular set of talents is lost. Though it is agreed that it is a strength of the department that all staff members are willing and able to take on additional responsibility and use their individual talents to contribute to the organization, it is also necessary to codify job duties, so that all staff members know who holds primary responsibility for any given area. For example, the respective roles and responsibilities of coordinators and supervisors need to be explicitly clarified so that there is no ambiguity as to who is responsible for what, and some survey respondents reported that there was no one in charge of library instruction. In their 2002 article, Fountain and Johnson discuss how a formalized framework for the programs within the department can better define the scope of the program, make clear who is responsible for activities involved with a particular program, and provide guidance as to the expectation of service to the university as a whole that such a program is meant to make. (Johnson, 285) Though they were discussing instructional service specifically, this rule can apply to all activities within the Reference Department.

A regular review and update of job descriptions to be certain they match what each person is doing would be helpful to staff and administrators alike in their quest to understand how the positions fit together, and how to recognize and fill any holes in the organization. In her

2002 article, Pat McAbee says, “Employees should know exactly what is expected of them, not only in terms of a specific library job description, but also with regard to school and system-wide policies and procedures.” (McAbee, 39) One way to facilitate this may be to perform job audits where each person keeps a log of what they actually do each day, and create an organizational chart dictated by job function, rather than by individual talents. As a result of this, realignment of job duties may be necessary, in addition to a clarification of scheduling practices, or an increase in personnel, as suggested by several members of the current staff. Having job function clearly charted will assist in justification of any needed changes in funding for staff.

4.3 Recommendation: Training and professional development

Surveys indicated that burnout by staff that more frequently staff the reference desk is currently a cause for concern. A more equal dispersion of this responsibility among reference staff members is strongly recommended. Also, a flexible organization is one in which staff members are able to fill in for each other in times of need. Making it mandatory that staff members shift duties occasionally will ensure that they are sufficiently experienced in all areas, can expand their efforts in each area of the department, and can explore new areas of expertise, as well as avoid burn-out. An example of this could be assigning more reference desk hours during the summer to a person who had more responsibility for instruction during the school year, and releasing those who had been responsible for the bulk of reference desk hours to work on research, or develop their own skills in library instruction.

The necessity to continually engage in continuing educational opportunities was strongly emphasized in the research team's interviews and surveys. Professional development is essential to the job performance and morale of the staff, and there are a number of ways the administration of Thomas Cooper Library could facilitate this further.

- Host multi-day training in-services in the library during times when the library is less busy, such as summer break. Librarians can rotate in and out of sessions as needed to get essential training while still ensuring that there are a sufficient number of staff members available to assist library clients (FLESH OUT).
- Host monthly lunch and learn sessions for library staff in targeted skills, e.g. usage of new databases, catalog features, etc.
- Arrange cooperative learning with the South Carolina State Library and the USC School of Library and Information Science. Using these two conveniently-located

organizations to the library's advantage makes sense, and multi-organization cooperation could mitigate the funding burden for such training.

4.4 Recommendation: Marketing

A number of staff interviewed and surveyed emphasized that marketing to students and faculty is essential to the department. If students and faculty do not know what services are being provided, those services are not going to be utilized. Thus, it is essential to maintain a library presence in multiple areas on campus.

Within the library, this could be accomplished by providing an electronic connection to the reference desk on all floors, so that customers are not required to relocate to the main floor to ask questions. This could be done fairly easily by adding a “chat reference” link icon to the existing OPAC computers that are placed on each floor. This idea could also translate to dormitories and departmental computer labs, and possibly to faculty office computers, so that the library is brought to every place on campus that clients may be working.

Posters in computer labs and dormitories and fliers in public places advertising this and other services will increase public awareness.

Another facet of marketing is to allow time for librarians to actually visit the departments to which they are liaisons, so they can forge strong relationships with professors, keeping them up to date on library services and creating an educational partnership, in accordance with Goal 3 of the *University Libraries Strategic Plan*. At this time, this does not seem to be happening, though librarians are attempting to maintain contact via electronic means. Faculty member attitudes toward the library are a large indicator of student usage; those who are familiar with it and favor it will send their students to it, and will make use of it in their own research. Hosting training sessions for professors could prove helpful, and could also provide a means for gaining feedback to ensure that library services are indeed meeting the needs of the researchers and

students on this campus. It is imperative that professors make person to person contact with their liaisons however it is arranged, though.

4.5 Recommendation: Evaluation of services

The review team's literature review emphasized the need to efficiently and effectively evaluate the service given to clients. Having a high-quality means of quantitative evaluation is the cornerstone of insuring that quality service is provided clients. In a reference transaction, it is of particular difficulty to determine the quality of service given, as opposed to the merely the quantity, e.g. How many questions did we answer this week vs. how well did we answer the questions we answered this week. One way of doing this could be to institute a satisfaction survey with particular questions about the library as a whole, about the reference department personnel, and about database transactions, as well as an area for comments. This may be administered either in paper or via electronic means. Further, it is important to make use of metrics that are currently being collected, such as the virtual reference satisfaction surveys and transcripts. One person should be appointed to compile this gathered data and report on it to the head of reference on a regular schedule, so that it can be used effectively in determining methods to improve service and further target the needs of the clients of Thomas Cooper Library. Furthermore, a review of current evaluation methods is in order to determine if a change in systems to one that is easier to use is warranted.

4.6 Recommendation: Physical space

During a number of the interviews and surveys, it was mentioned that a more effective use of physical space would greatly improve the ability of the department to meet students' needs because they would be better able to interact. In order to ensure that all available space is being used adequately, do a study of space allocation. One example of an area that may be used to better advantage is the former location of Cooper's Corner in the front of the library. Other specific recommendations that evolved from our interviews and surveys that relate to physical space are as follows:

- Remove the staff offices from the center of the reference area, which will open up the entire first floor and allow librarians to see clients in need of help on all sides.
- Group staff offices together in another area of the library, which will provide a quiet work area while encouraging collaboration and informal discussion and idea sharing.
- Maintain reference "outposts" throughout the first floor, utilizing roaming librarians with laptops in the back study area. This will allow maximum coverage of the reference area, and make reference more user-friendly.
- Weed and update the print reference collection with an eye to maximizing space and moving to electronic resources where appropriate.
- Maintain the separation of collections that are sufficiently different enough from the main reference section to warrant segregation, including the music library, the business library, and potentially the science library.
- Institute an Information Desk at the main entry to Thomas Cooper Library. Staff members that are currently keeping gate counts and providing security could also be trained in answering basic informational questions (e.g. "Which way to the computer lab?") and

referring more academic questions to the reference department. This could take some of the pressure off the reference desk, and streamline the client's information-seeking process.

4.7 Conclusion:

Thomas Cooper Library's Reference Department is a flexible organization that prides itself on the excellent service it offers to the educational community at the University of South Carolina. In a field that is continually changing and morphing in unexpected ways, the members of the staff in this department—people who are willing to take on any challenge--are one of its greatest strengths. Each recommendation is made with an eye to enhancing the ability of the staff to give excellent service, to make the best use of each individual's time and efforts, and to meet the goals outlined in the University Libraries Blueprint for Service Excellence, as well as those goals that are of a more individualized nature. The importance of the library to the university community cannot be underestimated; making the library a stronger organization that is ever-poised to adapt to change is an ongoing imperative.

5.0 Appendices

Appendix A

**Excerpts from the
University of South Carolina
University Libraries
Strategic Plan
2004-2009
April 30, 2004**

SECTION A Executive Summary

This document represents the outcome of the strategic planning process undertaken by the administration and staff of the University Libraries. The purpose of the process has been to identify progress made by the libraries during the past year, to develop strategic goals for the library over the next five years, to create strategies for accomplishing these goals and to devise an assessment plan to measure the effectiveness of the University Libraries in accomplishing its goals. The process included the formation of a Strategic Planning Committee comprised of Library Coordinators covering all areas of Library operations and representatives from the Library administration. Committee members met with department heads and department heads met with members of their staff to solicit input from both library faculty and library support staff. As drafts were compiled, they were distributed to all library personnel for additional input. The results of the LibQual user's surveys, a user satisfaction survey produced by the Association of Research Libraries, were also taken into consideration.

As the major research library in South Carolina, the mission of the University Libraries is to provide students, faculty and staff with comprehensive access to information essential to teaching, research and outreach activities of the University of South Carolina. The libraries collect, organize, conserve and manage print and digital resources in order to provide library and information services to the University community which includes the other USC campuses. The University Libraries also serves as a major educational resource for the citizens of South Carolina through interlibrary loan, document delivery and in-house use.

Despite permanent budget reductions in the past three years totaling \$1,290,307 (FY02, \$539,051; FY03, \$533,499; FY04, \$217,757) the University Libraries still made progress in fulfilling its strategic goals. Utilizing vacancy lag money, private endowment funds, and a Board of Trustees approved serials inflation allocation, the Library was able to maintain its materials budget and did not cut serials, monographs or electronic resources purchases. Web based subscriptions were increased by 18%. Thomas Cooper upgraded and increased the speed and reliability of its network infrastructure. Wireless access was extended at Thomas Cooper and is now available throughout the library for student and faculty research. The Library began a number of digital initiatives, most notably the digitization of the Sanborn maps. Plans are underway to increase student seating on the main floor of the Thomas Cooper Library by 250, providing more wireless workstation areas, smart card printing facilities, and easy access to reference staff to assist in utilizing information resources. Loan periods for graduate students have been extended to semester loans. Three state-of-the-art microform scanners/readers have been acquired to provide expanded access to the Library's extensive microform collection. The Library's development efforts were very successful. Endowments increased during the year by over \$611,000. The South Financial Group made a contribution of \$50,000 for the handling and processing of the papers of former Governor Carroll Campbell. The 2nd annual dinner to honor Lou and Beth Holtz raised over \$40,000 for the Holtz Endowment for Undergraduate Resources. The Music Library received a \$150,000 contribution to construct quarters and maintain a major music collection. The Arthur E.

Holman Jr. Conservation Lab was officially named and recognized through a \$100,000 contribution.

In order to achieve its mission, the University Libraries has established the following goals for the period 2004-2009. The goals were reached through a process of open communication and staff participation.

- Goal 1 Evaluate, select, acquire, organize and preserve a collection of materials in a variety of formats (print, electronic, multi-media, etc.) as well as the equipment necessary for its use. These resources support the curricula of the University, provide the basis for a well-rounded liberal education, reflect the diverse composition of a multi-cultured community, and to the extent possible, meet the research needs of the University community which include the other USC campuses.
- Goal 2 Provide exceptional services that support, enhance and promote the academic programs of the University.
- Goal 3 Assist users in understanding the organization of Library resources, in identifying, locating and using recorded information, in utilizing library services and in developing critical thinking skills while serving as a partner in developing information literacy for lifelong learning.
- Goal 4 Maintain a strategy and associated instruments to assess the University community regarding the importance and effectiveness of Library resources, services and staff in fulfilling the Library's mission and goals to provide a realistic measure of Customer Service/Client Satisfaction.
- Goal 5 Develop and expand the library development efforts in order to establish a stable foundation of multiple and diverse funding that supports the endeavors of the University Libraries.
- Goal 6 Continue to be recognized in the top fifty public research libraries in the nation.
- Goal 7 House library collections and service activities in space that meets staff and user requirements, assures the security of the collections, and enhances the operating performance and productivity of the University Libraries' staff.
- Goal 8 Maintain a leadership role in university, regional, statewide and national cooperative efforts in order to achieve more effective and efficient services for our customers.
- Goal 9 Recruit, train, and develop personnel possessing the wide range of knowledge, skills and experiences necessary to meet the diverse library service requirements of the University community.

Although its goals are long term by nature, University Libraries will place a major focus on the following objectives during academic year 2004-2005:

Obj: Build collections, both print and digital, to support the educational mission of the University, provide innovative information and communication technology and remain at the cutting edge of the expanding information delivery systems.

Obj: Expand the infrastructure and scope of the digitization activities in the libraries

Obj: Maintain exemplary service to students, faculty, and staff.

Obj: Continue to expand access to web-based online resources for use by students, faculty, and staff.

Obj: Seek increased financial support by increasing the number of grant proposals and increasing private fund raising with special focus on the new Rare Books wings.

Obj: Provide training and education for members of the library staff to ensure they stay abreast of technology changes and provide support for scholarly activities by library faculty.

The University Libraries will utilize a number of different methods to assess its performance in accomplishing these objectives. A primary assessment tool will be the LibQUAL+™ survey, designed by the Association of Research Libraries, which is used to define and measure library service quality across institutions and to create useful quality assessment tools for local planning. The Library will compare itself to the University's peer institutions that participate in this survey. Other measures used to assess performance will be the number of grants submitted and awarded, the amount of private funding received, the percentage of the materials budget spent for electronic resources, and the number of library guides published. An additional assessment method, the Value Centered Management Service Units – Accountability Standards, will compare the libraries with the University's peer institution libraries.

SECTION B Mission Statement

As the major research library in South Carolina, the mission of the University Libraries is to provide students, faculty, and staff with comprehensive access to information essential to the teaching, research, and outreach activities of the University of South Carolina. The libraries collect, organize, conserve, and manage print and digital resources in order to provide library and information services to the University community. As campus needs for information are met services are extended, in cooperation with other libraries, throughout the state.

The University Libraries is an integral part of the educational process. It is essential to the quality of the intellectual and cultural life of the University of South Carolina. The University Libraries mission supports the University's mission by providing support for the University's programs of teaching, research, and outreach activities. The University Libraries also serves as a major educational resource for the citizens of South Carolina and, when appropriate, for other libraries on a regional, national, and international level. The University Libraries offer a wide array of traditional and electronic services to the University academic community and guests of the University. The Libraries provide services within the Thomas Cooper Library, South Caroliniana Library, Business Library, Mathematics Library and Music Library and cooperates fully with the Medical and Law Libraries. The University of South Carolina libraries currently rank 44th nationally among public institutions of higher education.

Appendix B

University Libraries Blueprint for Service Excellence 2006

I Vision, Mission and Goals

A. Executive Summary

Vision

As the major research library in South Carolina, the University Libraries will provide comprehensive access to information, both physical and virtual, to the University community and in partnership with other South Carolina libraries to the state at large.

The University Libraries have moved effectively into the realm of electronic resources and digital initiatives. The physical environment of the libraries will be enhanced with renovations following the completion of the Thomas Cooper Library wings in 2008.

Mission

The University Libraries provide the means and environment to access, understand and utilize the information resources essential to the teaching, research and learning taking place at the University.

The University Libraries envision the Library as a destination, both physical and virtual. The Mission of the Library is to provide access and instruction to utilize the library's resources and facilities.

- Goal 1:** The University Libraries will develop, collect, describe, preserve and create access to information resources for the campus, the state and worldwide communities.
- Goal 2:** The University Libraries will enhance its services and collections through collaboration with campus, state and regional partners.
- Goal 3:** The University Libraries will develop programs and services that promote innovation, collaboration, communication, learning and research within the University community.

Goal 4: The University Libraries will create physical environments that promote and facilitate learning, research and collaboration.

B. Goals, Initiatives and Action Plans

Goal 1: The University Libraries will develop, collect, describe, preserve and create access to information resources for the campus, the state and worldwide communities.

The attainment of the Vision and Mission of the Library depends, in large part, on the quality of the collections that are supported.

Initiative 1: The University Libraries, in collaboration with academic representatives, will acquire, describe, physically process and preserve paper and electronic resources to meet the learning and research needs of the campus community.

The Library must work in collaboration with academic units and will continue to support both paper and electronic resources.

Action Plans: 1) The University Libraries will increase its holdings to support academic unit programs.

Indicator: The University Libraries add an average of 50,000 volumes, 20 databases, and 100 electronic publications on an annual basis. The Libraries conserve an average of 1,000 items on an annual basis.

Initiative 2: The University Libraries will create digital collections and provide global access to those collections.

The Libraries Digital Initiatives fulfill two important functions. By digitizing valuable resources, the Library preserves the content. Digitized collections achieves the means to share that content on a global basis.

Action Plan: The University Libraries have scanned, described and loaded collections into the ContentDM software.

Indicator: Nine collections have been digitized and loaded into the ContentDM software to provide enhanced access to library holdings.

Initiative 3: The University Libraries will acquire a Federated Search Engine capable of scanning all electronic resources through a single search.

As libraries have acquired various electronic resources, incredible resources have become available to the University community. These resources are so varied that most scholars cannot keep up with the array of possibilities. Federated searching allows users to use a single search to scan all of the databases of a given subject area. This not only facilitates the work of the scholar, but increases the usage of the resources.

Action Plan: The Library has surveyed the vendor community and has identified a “state of the art” federated search engine that will meet the research needs of the campus community.

Indicator: A federated search engine has been selected and the acquisition process has started.

Goal 2: The University Libraries will enhance its services and collections through collaboration with campus, state and regional partners.

The Library can achieve many aspects of both its Vision and Mission through collaboration. Campus partners can enhance the learning and research experience of those who use the library and can draw others to the building who are not regular users. State and regional partners give the library needed access to borrow resources and can provide great discounts through shared purchasing.

Initiative 1: The University Libraries will seek campus partners with missions that are closely aligned with the University Library to relocate their services to the Thomas Cooper Library.

Action Plan: The University Libraries will provide space in the Thomas Cooper Library for campus partners whose mission compliments that of the Library.

Indicator: The Writing Center, the Center for Teaching Excellence and the Student Success Initiative have been relocated in the Thomas Cooper Library.

Initiative 2: The University Libraries will take a leadership role in the activities of the Partnership Among South Carolina Academic Libraries (PASCAL).

Action Plan: The University Libraries will provide representation to the PASCAL Board, Consortial Purchasing, Digital Activities and Document Delivery Committees.

Indicator: A University Libraries staff member will be represented on each PASCAL committee.

Initiative 3: The University Libraries will participate nationally in the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and regionally in the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL).

Action Plan: The University Libraries will participate in the Document Delivery programs of ASERL and the survey activities of ARL.

Indicator: University Libraries will fully participate in ARL and ASERL initiatives and be recognized for their participation.

Goal 3: The University Libraries will develop programs and services that promote innovation, collaboration, communication, learning and research within the University community.

The information acquisition patterns of the 21st century student, scholar and researcher have changed dramatically. There is much that the Library can do to respond to those changes. The ability to purchase, scan and deliver research materials electronically to the desktop opens the door to a realignment of library services.

Initiative 1: The University Libraries will develop physical and digital delivery systems that are responsive to user expectations.

Action Plans: The University Libraries will test the viability of digital document delivery systems and the methods by which materials can be accessed by users.

Indicator: If economically feasible, Pay Per View access to journal articles through Ingenta and document delivery of scanned articles will be available to University faculty via desktop. Physical delivery of monographs to campus addresses will be available.

Initiative 2: The University libraries will offer a one credit information literacy course.

Action Plan: Librarians in the Reference Department will offer one or more sections of a one hour information literacy class.

Indicator: A one hour credit information literacy course has been taught by University Libraries faculty each semester.

Goal 4: The University Libraries will create physical environments that promote and facilitate learning, research and collaboration.

The Thomas Cooper Library is a flexible building. Renovation will provide the opportunity to redevelop the building to meet the needs of current and future students, scholars and researchers.

Initiative 1: The University Libraries will offer 24 hour access to the Thomas Cooper Library during key periods of the semester.

Action Plan: The Thomas Cooper Library is open on a 24 hours basis during the two weeks before exams and exam week. The University Libraries would like to keep the Cooper Library open on a 24 hour basis throughout the Fall and Spring Semesters.

Indicator: If funds are available, the Thomas Cooper Library remains open 24/7 for the Fall and Spring Semester.

Initiative 2: The University Libraries will refurbish high use areas of the Thomas Cooper Library.

Action Plan: The University Libraries will add seating to the Mezzanine Level of the Thomas Cooper Library.

Indicator: Additional seating will have been placed throughout the Mezzanine level to provide additional study space for students.

Initiative 3: The University Libraries will contract for an architectural feasibility study in preparation for the renovation of the Thomas Cooper Library.

Action Plan: The University Libraries will request funding for an architectural feasibility study related to the renovation of the Thomas Cooper Library.

Indicator: The procurement process for an architectural feasibility study of the Thomas Cooper Library has been started.

II Resource Requirements

- | | | |
|------------|--|-----------|
| Priority 1 | Materials Inflation Costs (Goal 1, Initiative 1) | \$300,000 |
| | Source: State funds or combination of state and operating funds. Journal, monograph and electronic resources inflation has been averaging 10%-12% each year. These funds are required to maintain the collection. | |
| Priority 2 | 24 hour library access (Goal 4, Initiative 1) | \$50,000 |
| | Source: State funds.
The library is open on a 24 hour basis during the exam period. To keep the library open on a 24 hour basis during the Spring and Fall semesters would cost approximately 50,000 for additional security personnel. | |
| Priority 3 | Feasibility Study – Renovation Cooper Library (Goal 4, Initiative 3) | \$150,000 |
| | Source: State funds.
The Thomas Cooper Library is in need of renovation. The first step in that process would be an architectural feasibility study. | |

Appendix C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What works well within or is a strength of the current organizational structure of the Reference Department?
2. How would your ideal reference department be organized? How would it function as part of the library as a whole?
3. What current drawbacks or hindrances do you see in the department? What positive highlights come to mind when you consider the reference department?
4. What would you like to cut from or delete from Reference Services? What would you like to add to the department?
5. What methods do you find work best for keeping current in your field? In your perfect library, how would that effort be supported by the administration?
6. What should the reference department be accomplishing on a yearly basis? What jobs should they be responsible for accomplishing?
7. What activities would make Reference Services more visible and/or respected within the library and greater university community?
8. How do you maintain your relationships as a faculty liaison? What would help you in reaching out to faculty?
9. How do you feel that library instruction is working currently? What, if anything, would you like to change?
10. If there is one thing you would change in the reference department (or that would affect Reference Services), what would it be and why?

* These questions were modified from Ladwig, et. al 2006.

6.0 Resources

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