Instructor: Steve Black
seblack@albany.edu (best way to contact me)
(518) 458-5494
My office is in The College of Saint Rose library, at 392 Western Ave. I am normally in at least 9-4 Monday-Friday, plus some Sundays and evenings. You are welcome to visit! If you travel a long distance to Albany, check ahead to be sure I'll be available.

SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES
The overall objective of this course is to prepare students to understand and perform reference and information work in libraries. This course introduces students to a range of information sources and the history, philosophy, and practice of reference services. By the end of the semester, students should be able to:
- choose appropriate information sources to answer reference questions
- understand best practices of reference interviewing and developing effective search strategies
- describe methods and challenges of connecting library patrons to the most appropriate information sources
- explain the role of reference services in helping patrons become information literate
- describe methods and challenges of promoting reference services
- discuss current issues in reference services, including policy issues in various library settings.

READINGS
See “Assignments” below. There is no textbook to buy for this class. Please have the following documents with you in class to refer to as needed:


Framework for Information Literacy http://www.alala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework

ATTENDANCE POLICY
All students are expected to be to class on time, to stay the entire class period, to pay attention, and to actively participate in class. I will take attendance at the beginning and end of each class, each counts equally. Attendance and participation in class activities counts for 10% of course grade. If you have a laptop, please bring it to class.
**Grading Standards**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Percentage score</th>
<th>Performance indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>96-100</td>
<td>Complete, thorough, and accurate. Exemplary expression of both the spirit and letter of the assignment; clearly shows intellectual engagement with the material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-95</td>
<td>Complete and well written, with very few errors. Clearly expresses comprehension of the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>85-89</td>
<td>Mostly well done and competently written, but contains a few errors and/or does not express understanding of important aspects of the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80-84</td>
<td>Mostly complete and competently done, but has some errors and/or neglects to address important aspects of the topic.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>75-79</td>
<td>Substantially completed and displays understanding, but with multiple errors or omissions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>70-74</td>
<td>Partially completed and/or contains substantial errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>Incomplete and/or with numerous errors or omissions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>0-59</td>
<td>Very poorly done, displaying minimal effort</td>
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Grades on assignments turned in late will be reduced by 10 percent. Incompletes for the course will be given only under truly extraordinary circumstances.

**Policy on Students Working Together**

Librarianship is a collaborative, collegial profession. As such, I encourage you to discuss the readings as much as you would like with your peers, but of course the wording of your work must be your own. Naturally, the University's policy on academic honesty applies to this course. Part of that policy reads "Plagiarism includes . . . submission of another student's work as one's own." Working together on the “What’s the best source” assignment is allowed, but "together" is defined as being physically in the same time & place. Dividing the work, as in “you do the odd ones and I’ll do the even ones” is NOT allowed. If you work together with someone, write a note at the beginning of your assignment indicating who you worked with and what you did together.

**Assignments**

Please submit assignments on white paper, stapled in the upper left corner, with your name at the top of the first page.

**Reader Responses (35% of grade (5% each), Due dates listed below)**

Respond to each of the following assigned readings in approximately 500 words. Include 1) what you found most interesting, 2) what the most important points are for the practice of librarianship, 3) at least one question you'd ask the author if they visited our class. If there is anything you disagree with, include that and explain why. We will discuss these readings as an integral part of the class on the day each is due, so it’s essential to complete these reader responses on time.


**RESEARCH PROJECT AND CLASS PRESENTATION (35% of grade, presentation dates TBA, written guide due Dec. 7)**

The purpose of this assignment is for you to thoroughly research a topic or an information resource, present your findings to class, and create a written guide. Job interviews typically include making a presentation. One purpose of this assignment is to give you an experience of giving a professional quality presentation. The type of research, format of written report, and format of your presentation will depend on the topic. However, use peer-reviewed literature as much as is practical for your topic. E-mail me your first and second choice of topic by Sept. 21. Topic assignments will be finalized on Sept. 28.

Choose to present on a database OR a best practice:

1. Database searching: describe the purpose and history, demonstrate examples of searchable fields, and describe any special features. Choose from:
   a. ERIC
   b. JSTOR
   c. MEDLINE
   d. MLA International Bibliography
   e. PsycINFO
   f. Standard & Poors NetAdvantage and/or Mergent Online
   g. ScienceDirect
   h. Sociological Abstracts
   i. Web of Science
   j. Westlaw Campus
   k. Alexander Street Press databases

2. Best practices in reference services regarding
   a. Virtual reference
   b. One-on-one consultations by appointment
c. Marketing and promotion

d. Assessing effectiveness

e. Online tutorials

f. Reader’s Advisory

g. Citation management tools

h. Services for students with English as their second language

**WHAT’S THE BEST SOURCE? (20% of Grade, Due Dec. 10 [last day of class])**

This assignment is a combination of a "scavenger hunt" and a compare/contrast exercise. For each of the following mock reference questions, find the best answer you can using Google, Wikipedia, and library resources linked from [http://library.albany.edu/](http://library.albany.edu/), or the print reference collection (for a few of these using printed reference works is the easiest way to find a good answer). For each question, write the answer found in each of the three sources. If the answer is not straightforward, describe the ifs, ands, and buts. For the library resources, specify what you used. Then compare and contrast the quality of answers in you found in Google, Wikipedia, and library resources.

1. I need to do research on the financials of the business Reed Elsevier, especially their profit margin.
2. Which breeds of chickens make the best pets?
3. Who was Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley (born July 31, 1793)?
4. How did Lillian Virginia Mountweazel become famous?
5. What are Papua New Guinea's primary export products?
6. What is a lute?
7. My 10 year old nephew loves fishing. He reads a little below his grade level. Can you recommend a few books about fishing that might get him reading more?
8. What's the story behind the development of reclosable zipper plastic bags?
9. I want to read up on the diagnosis and treatment of insomnia.
10. How much cauliflower is grown for sale in New York?
11. What are the most important and prestigious academic journals for library and information science?
12. Which youth sports have the highest incidence of concussions?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class topics (We’ll also have some guest speakers TBA).</th>
<th>Assignment due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 31</td>
<td>Introduction; pros and cons of discovery services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 7</td>
<td>Labor Day, no class</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 14</td>
<td>Rosh Hashanah, no class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 21</td>
<td>History of reference; transitioning from print to online reference sources; library catalogs and WorldCat; making best use of searchable fields</td>
<td>Green, Samuel S. Personal Relations Between Librarians and Readers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 28</td>
<td>Authority control; business of publishing reference sources; browsing, searching, following citations</td>
<td>Rolla, “User Tags versus Subject Headings”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 5</td>
<td>Fundamentals of reference interviewing; ready reference sources; literature sources</td>
<td>Magi &amp; Mardeusz, Why Some Students Continue to Value…</td>
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<td>Oct. 12</td>
<td>RUSA professional competencies; government sources</td>
<td>Dewdney &amp; Michell, “Oranges and Peaches”</td>
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<td>Oct. 19</td>
<td>RUSA Behavioral Guidelines; Special guidelines for medical and legal information; medical sources; biography sources</td>
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<td>Oct. 26</td>
<td>LibGuides and instructional videos; presentations</td>
<td>Ross &amp; Dewdney, “Negative Closure”</td>
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<td>Nov. 2</td>
<td>Psychosocial aspects of reference; presentations</td>
<td>Trott &amp; Silver, &quot;Outreach Activities…”</td>
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<td>Nov. 9</td>
<td>Models of reference service; presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 16</td>
<td>Assessing the effectiveness of reference and collections; music and art sources; presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 23</td>
<td>Information Literacy Standards; modes of instruction; presentations</td>
<td>Tyckoson, D. A. Issues and Trends in the Management of Reference Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 30</td>
<td>Information Literacy Framework; presentations</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec. 7</td>
<td>Sharing and discussion of “What’s the Best Source?”</td>
<td>What’s the Best Source?</td>
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