

SYLLABUS--IIST 605
INFORMATION SOURCES AND SERVICES
Spring 2009
Tuesdays 7:15-10:05, Draper 313B

Instructor: Steve Black

blacks@strose.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 and other information arenas. The objectives of this course encompass basic reference sources in both print and electronic formats, and the history, philosophy, and practice of reference services. By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- ❑ identify and evaluate information sources
- ❑ choose appropriate sources to answer reference questions
- ❑ understand the process of reference, including reference interviewing and search strategies
- ❑ describe methods and challenges of connecting online resources to patrons
- ❑ discuss current issues in reference services, including policy issues in various library settings
- ❑ explain ALA standards for high quality reference service.

READINGS

See "Assignments" below. There is no textbook to buy for this class.

EXPECTATIONS

Intellectual engagement

You are expected to learn about information sources and services by doing all of the following:

- Attend class, pay close attention, and actively participate,
- Read all assigned readings,
- Become familiar with the sources presented in class and used to complete assignments,
- Complete the assignments on time.

Attendance (physical and mental)

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. One half point will be deducted from your final grade for each instance of being more than 10 minutes late to class or leaving class early. Points will be subtracted from your final average for absences as follows:

First absence: no points off

Second absence -2 points

Third absence -4 points (total 6 points off)

Fourth absence -8 points (total 14 points off)

GRADING STANDARDS

Letter	Percentage score	Performance indicators
A	96-100	Complete, thorough, and accurate. Exemplary expression of both the spirit and letter of the assignment; clearly shows familiarity with sources and grasp of concepts.
A-	90-95	Complete and well written, with very few errors. Clearly expresses comprehension of the content.
B+	85-89	Mostly well done and competently written, but contains a few errors and/or does not express understanding of an important concept.
B	80-84	Mostly complete and competently done, but has some errors and/or does not express a few important concepts.
B-	75-79	Substantially completed and displays understanding, but with multiple errors
C+	70-74	Partially completed and/or contains substantial errors
C	60-69	Incomplete and/or with numerous errors
E	0-59	Very poorly done, displaying minimal effort

Grades on assignments turned in late will be reduced by 10 points.

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 strongly encourage you to discuss the content of this course with your peers.

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 assignments is allowed. "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.

It is also all right to discuss reference sources in terms of their strengths, weaknesses, and the types of information that may be found in them. But giving or receiving an answer from a classmate is forbidden. 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.

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 (10% OF GRADE (2% EACH, DUE DATES LISTED BELOW)

Respond to each of the following assigned readings in no more than one page (maximum 500 words). Highlight what you personally found to be most important and/or interesting, and summarize any questions or concerns you're left with (if the author visited class, what would you want to ask them?).

- Green, Samuel S. Personal Relations Between Librarians and Readers, *American Library Journal*, no. 1, Nov. 1876, 74-81. Online at <http://polaris.gseis.ucla.edu/jrichardson/DIS220/personal.htm>. DUE FEB. 10
- Radford, Marie L. "A Personal Choice: Reference Service Excellence," *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, v.48, no. 2, 2008, 108-115. DUE MARCH 3
- Tykoson, David. "Why is Germany in Europe?" *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, v. 47, no. 3, 207-209. DUE MARCH 17
- Kieft, Robert. "The Return of the Guide to Reference (Books)," *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, v.48, no. 1, 2008, 4-10. DUE APRIL 7
- Ross, Catherine S. and Patricia Dewdney. Negative Closure: Strategies and Counter-strategies in the Reference Transaction, *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, v. 38, no. 2, 1998, 151-163. DUE APRIL 21

BIBLIOGRAPHY—OLD TOOLS, NEW TOOLS (20% OF GRADE, DUE FEB. 24)

1. Choose one bibliography in book format published before 1980 on a person or specific topic. Select one you can check out of the library. If you have difficulty finding a book-length annotated bibliography, select a monograph that includes extensive bibliographic citations. For this assignment, avoid guides to archives and special collections. Cite the book in MLA format.
2. Make a list headed "Books" and cite in MLA format any 10 books listed in the bibliography. Look each one up in WorldCat and record how many libraries have the work. If the title is not in WorldCat, indicate "not in WorldCat".
3. Make a list headed "Periodicals" and cite any 5 journal, magazine, or newspaper articles from the bibliography, then use WorldCat to indicate how many libraries have the periodical for the cited year.
4. For each of the 5 articles listed for question 3, indicate an index or database (e.g. *Reader's Guide*, *Social Sciences Index*, *JSTOR*) that cites the article. If you can't find an index or database that cites it, write "none." Be thorough! This part counts heavily in the grade on this assignment.
5. Summarize the value of your chosen bibliography as a research tool, including whether online resources make the bibliography obsolete.

WHICH DATABASE SHOULD I USE? (20% OF GRADE, DUE MARCH 31)

For each of the following mock queries, recommend 1-3 of the best database(s) for finding the answer, using those available from <http://library.albany.edu> (<http://library.albany.edu/databases/search.asp>, the Minerva catalog, "reference collection"). For each query, describe to the patron in a few sentences why the database(s) is/are good choices. A database may be appropriate for more than one query, but since this assignment is designed to have you identify 15 different databases, do not respond with only a general database like Academic Search or InfoTrac.

1. How many versions of *The Night Before Christmas* have been published?
2. Does U Albany have this? Can I get it online? Lankes, R David (1998) "The Virtual Reference Desk: building human expertise into information systems," *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the American Society for Information Science*, v.35, p. 81- .
3. I'm building a comprehensive bibliography of scholarly articles on the history of the Erie Canal.
4. I want to browse issues of the journal *Meat Science*.

5. Where can I find research articles on dreaming and nightmares?
6. I need information about Fanny Wright for a 5-page paper.
7. Where can I find scholarly articles about how to effectively train employees in the food services industry?
8. Does drinking milk actually improve bone density? I mean, have clinical studies proven that?
9. Can I get full text articles from the *Albany Times Union*?
10. I need research articles on best ways to teach children with autism spectrum disorder how to read.
11. Where should I look for current research on atomic and molecular collisions and interactions?
12. I need current information on Congressional action in the last few years regarding our troops in Afghanistan. I've searched newspapers, but need something with more depth, like committee hearings.
13. Where can I find literary critiques of William Kennedy's fiction?
14. I need info on the textiles of the Indian subcontinent for my art class.
15. I'm looking for current data on Spain's economy.

WHAT'S THE BEST SOURCE? (20% OF GRADE, DUE APRIL 14)

Part 1

1. Compare & contrast the entries on a topic of your choice in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, *World Book Encyclopedia*, and wikipedia.org. Which would you recommend for whom, and why?
2. Compare & contrast the entries for "Morris, Robert [signer of the Declaration of Independence]" in *American National Biography*, biography.com, and wikipedia.org. Which would you recommend for whom, and why?

Part 2

For each of the following, find and cite THREE sources that would be useful to the patron asking the question: **one reference resource** (print or online, but no Wikipedia), **one book** (circulating or reference), and **one article** from a periodical. Cite in MLA or Chicago style. For each of the 3 cited sources, state which database(s) or other resources you used to find them, and briefly explain to the patron why it appears to be a useful resource.

3. I'm working on a paper comparing the temperance movement in the early 1800's with MADD and other similar efforts.
4. Where can I get primary sources from soldiers in the Korean War? You know, letters home, photographs, that sort of thing.
5. I'm writing a paper about prisons for my English 101. I have to present opposing viewpoints.
6. I have to write a short paper for my physics class about what causes rainbows.
7. What are the current job prospects for newly graduated holders of an M.S.I.S.?

ONLINE REFERENCE RESOURCE PRESENTATION (10% of grade, presentation dates TBA)

Create a one-page handout and make a brief presentation to class OF LESS THAN 5 MINUTES on any electronic reference resource listed at <http://library.albany.edu/databases/search.asp>, OR of a free web resource that is useful at reference. Specify your chosen target audience. The handout should succinctly describe the resources' purpose and highlight its noteworthy and/or unique features. Part of the assignment is choosing what's most important to highlight within the 1-page and 5-minute restriction. Make

enough copies of the handout to distribute to your classmates. Include in your presentation at least one sample search that shows how the resource works. Grade is based on clarity of presentation, helpfulness of the sample search, and usefulness of the handout to your target audience.

RESEARCH ESSAY (20% of grade, due May 5)

Topic: What must reference librarians do to remain relevant and valuable to patrons in the 21st Century?

Write an essay of 2000-3000 words (approximately 5-8 pages, double-spaced, size 12 font) that answers the question above by analyzing, synthesizing and integrating the standards listed below with 7-12 additional books or journal articles of your choice. Cite sources in either Chicago or MLA style. Definitely express your own opinion, but also show that your opinion is informed by the standards, cited readings, and class lectures and discussions. Periodicals worth a look include *Reference and User Services Quarterly*, *Library Journal*, *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, and *College & Research Libraries*. Feel free to include sources from other fields such as education, psychology or business.

RUSA Professional Competencies for Reference and User Services Librarians, Online at <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/rusa/resources/guidelines/professional.cfm>.

RUSA Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Service Providers, *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, v.44, no. 1, Fall 2004, 14-17. (This document is also available at the ALA web site).

Association of College & Research Libraries, Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education, 2000. Online at <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/informationliteracycompetency.cfm>.