Reference Orientation
Reference Guidelines and General Reference Practices

Generally held beliefs:

1. Reference is an extension of instruction. Teaching the student how to find the answer is as equally important as successfully locating resources.
2. Answers are not generally given, unless the question is very specific, i.e. an address, a phone number, an isbn.

Help Desk vs. Consultation Desk Activities vs. Subject Specialists
The Help Desk is staffed by staff and students from the hours of 8 am to midnight. Its purpose is to answer short reference and directional questions and then to refer longer and more complicated questions to the Consultation Desk. Generally questions about printing problems and frozen computers can be directed to the Help Desk. (Although Consultation librarians are expected to do troubleshooting as needed and should know the basics.)

Very complicated questions may need the assistance of subject specialist librarians. Consultation Librarians are encouraged to refer students to the subject specialist, when they feel it is necessary. See the list of subject specialists and methods of contact: http://www.lib.MUOhio.Edu/libinfo/directory/contact/.

Librarians have different styles of reference. However, it’s expected that, occasionally during your shift, you will walk around, reset computers, and politely inquire if anyone needs help. Common and unobtrusive questions to ask include: Are you finding what you need? Can I be of any assistance? If you need help let me know (and point out your location).

Reference Points: The library system has 5 libraries, each with their own reference service. In addition the libraries have local email and chat reference as well as provide chat reference service through OhioLINK. For other library hours and contact points see: http://www.lib.MUOhio.Edu/libinfo/hours/
For connections to the local chat and email services see: http://www.lib.MUOhio.Edu/libinfo/ask_new.html

For connections to the OhioLINK service, see the askus button linked in the databases provided by OhioLINK. As a new addition to the professional staff, you can participate in answering these queries. In some cases you will need software on your computer. In all cases you will need to be given a password/access code. Talk to Belinda Barr about participation.
Commonly Asked Questions: Questions that occur frequently and require a significant amount of work, are rather difficult, or might involve more than one library are posted (with answers) on Forum. See: http://www.lib.muohio.edu/mstaff/forum/. (Located on the staff page, towards the bottom, select Public Services, then “Consultation Question Forum”)

Schedule: Librarians work from 4-12 hours per week when school is in session. Hours the Consultation Desk is staffed are from 8am to 10pm. From 8 am to 10 am, consultation is on call. Librarians have the pager and can be paged by the help desk. All other hours require the librarians to sit at the consultation desk. Hours are set for the semester. Most shifts are 2 hours in length, except for evenings which are 3 1/2 hour sifts. In addition, librarians share weekend hours, staffing the desk from 1-5 on Saturday and 1-10 on Sunday, with time off for dinner. The average for many librarians is 3 Saturdays and 3 Sundays per semester. In the summer, hours vary depending on vacations. Evening hours are 6 pm - 9 pm and librarians sit at the Help Desk. Summer weekend hours are Saturday and Sunday 1-5.

What is in the Consultation Area:
- Manuals for Reference CD Rom and other databases
- New books
- Pagers (in top left metal file drawer)
- Supplies in wood rolling cabinet
- Maps in wood rolling cabinet
- Folders, above desk (Passwords folder, statistics sheets, Government Documents circulation, misc. info.)
- Ready Reference
- Duplicate handouts (metal file drawer)

Reference Policies and Procedures

Keeping Statistics: On a clipboard in the Consultation Area are statistics sheets to record questions received during your desk shift. If you are the first person on the desk for the day, you will need to change the statistics sheet. There are three basic categories of statistics:
- Directional: Where is something, i.e.: a call number, a room, etc.
- Reference: Basic questions – facts, how to begin a research paper, industry and company information.
- Search: In-depth questions that take more than 10 minutes to answer or require a special level of skill or knowledge
- Chat: Questions that come in on the chat reference service
Circulation of Materials: Generally reference materials DO NOT circulate, to anyone. Exceptions include needing to take an item to audio visual for certain production techniques not available in the Center for Information Management in the libraries, a faculty member needing to show a title to their class. Loans are usually given in terms of hours and generally not greater than one day. Certain materials are used heavily and should not be checked out AT ALL, unless the selector in that area has given permission. Journals (circulate to faculty and graduate students only) and Corporate Reports can be checked out at the Circulation Desk. Items from the travel file can be checked out either at the Consultation Desk or the Help Desk, for a period of one week. To check out an item, use a Special Loan pass, located in the drawers under the consultation desk.

Missing Books and Pages:
Missing Books: Occasionally, patrons will be unable to find a book. Look at the call number to make sure it doesn’t fall into the call number range of another library. Ask if the location was King Library or King Reference. If they answer King Library, make sure they were looking on the second or third floors (and not King Reference) for the title.

If after these questions, the book still appears missing, then, go into the TELNET version of the online catalog and look up the missing title by CALL NUMBER. Rarely, but still, books may be checked out on the fly and call numbers and bib records will not be connected. Hit the shift and * keys and look at the item record to find out the last time this book was checked in. Many times the book is in the reshelving area. The reshelving area is on the second floor. Also check the call number and location to make sure the book is not a folio or in storage, in the IMC or Special Collections, etc.

If all of these activities, fail to produce the item, have the patron fill out a missing book form at the Help Desk. Once the item is declared on search in the catalog, the patron can order it through OhioLINK.

Missing and Torn out Pages: Insert a piece of scrap paper in the spot where the pages are missing. Take journals and circulating books to the Stacks Maintenance Office and reference materials to the Information Services Office. The patron can ask for a copy through ILL. Mark pages missing on the ILL form.

Emergency Procedures: Generally, the emergency procedures are simple. If the building is evacuated, you go! Circulation takes care of everything, announcements, etc. The designated staff meeting point is outside of Bishop
Hall; look for the group. In case of other emergencies, follow the direction of the Circulation staff.

For criminal and medical activities, if it is a non-emergency, send the patron to Circulation, who will then call the Campus Police. In rare occasions if you think you need to contact the Police directly, dial 911. Generally, this would for medical emergencies where time is a factor. It is always good to alert Circulation so that they can direct emergency personnel when they arrive.

On weekends and nights, if you feel you must contact a supervisor, call Scott Van Dam or Richard Pettit.

**Contacting OhioLINK and Miami U. Systems:** Directions for contacting both Miami U. Libraries Systems Staff and OhioLINK can be found at: [http://www.lib.muohio.edu/mstaff/logins.html](http://www.lib.muohio.edu/mstaff/logins.html), towards the middle of the page. For Miami, if you need assistance during office hours on a week day, its best to first try to call the Systems Department directly (Stan 9-2351. Andy 9-2884). Systems is always willing to help, don’t hesitate to call for anything at anytime, even weekends and off hours.

**Purchasing:** Any selector can pay for and designate a book to go into King Reference. If you want to use the funds designated for King Reference, send the purchasing information, and if its very expensive (in the thousands) some rationale of use to the Fund 50 group. The fund 50 group currently consists of 4 members of the department with broad based subject responsibilities.