The Library is a very different organization than it was five years ago. As a result of the severe cuts in the Library’s operating budget, dramatic reductions in staffing levels, changes in management, and space reconfigurations that have been made because of seismic work in Doe, public service to our user community has been seriously eroded in Doe and Moffitt. Reference service has been reconfigured in Moffitt. Doe Reference Service has been dramatically altered during seismic upgrades occurring in the North Reading Room. The opening of the Gardner stacks has changed use patterns and traffic flows. Service points are being maintained with fewer staff, different levels of staff, and a staff that is stretched thin.

It is time to convene a Task Force, which will re-design the provision of reference services within Doe and Moffitt. Why now? First of all, public service must be improved. The new University Librarian places a very high priority on effective and high quality user service. A modest number of new librarian positions will be filled and Cabinet has tentatively held two positions open to support reference. User expectations are as high as ever and new demands arise because of expanding use of digital resources. The Phase 3 seismic work is now completed; decisions will need to be made regarding the provision of reference within Doe. Several of the Undergraduate Services Task Force recommendations adopted by Cabinet and supported by the Academic Senate Library Committee also address reference service within Moffitt. The Customer Services Task Force and the LAUC-B Public Services Task Force reports make recommendations regarding the provision of reference service to our users.

During the last several years, we have increasingly relied on library assistants and temporary staff to provide service at reference points, counted on the Teaching Library to handle large-group and much class-related library instruction, and made instructional materials available via the web. As useful as these strategies are, they cannot meet the demands we face. New ways must be found to meet the information needs of users. Fundamental assumptions about the nature and role of reference must be re-examined. The reconfiguration of the service points in Doe and Moffitt is one important component of this examination.

Any configuration for the provision of information and reference service within Doe and Moffitt should, at a minimum, meet the following user service goals:

- To serve our users well, through effective provision of information and reference assistance.
- To have staff at service points who are well trained and “customer-oriented”.
- To support and promote access to information either onsite or in external collections.
- To promote user self-sufficiency.

Various models can be envisioned for the provision of information and reference services within Doe and Moffitt. Four specific models are outlined below, for consideration by the Task Force. The Task Force may wish to explore or develop different models based on focus groups, discussions, and/or reading.

MODEL A

-- A Moffitt general reference service point (per the recommendations of the Undergraduate Services Task force)
-- A Doe general reference service point, created at the site of the current Information Center
-- A Doe specialized reference point on the second floor, initially located in the North Reading Room but moved out to the current Subject Catalog Room, when fundraising is completed to refurbish the Subject Catalog Room. This specialized reference point would incorporate the separate reference service point currently provided within GSSI.
MODEL B

--A Moffitt general reference service point (per the recommendations of the Undergraduate Services Task force)
--A Doe general reference service point, created at the site of the current Information Center
--A Doe specialized reference point on the second floor, initially located in the North Reading Room but moved out to the current Subject Catalog Room, when fundraising is completed to refurbish the Subject Catalog Room.
--A separate reference point within GSSI

MODEL C

--A Moffitt general reference service point (per the recommendations of the Undergraduate Services Task force)
--A Doe reference service point, created at the site of the current Information Center on the first floor, that would offer both general and specialized reference
--A separate reference point within GSSI

MODEL D

--A Moffitt general reference service point (per the recommendations of the Undergraduate Services Task force)
--A Doe reference service point located on the first floor, that would offer both general and specialized reference and would incorporate the separate reference service point currently provided within GSSI. This reference center could be located at the site of the current Information Center or it could be housed in the Doe Core or in the space currently occupied by ILL.

The Task Force on Information and Reference Services within Doe and Moffitt is charged with analyzing and answering the following questions:

1. What configuration of service points in Doe and Moffitt provides the best user-based system for enabling people to get the information they need, recognizing the Library’s budgetary/space constraints and patron usage behaviors/traffic patterns within Doe and Moffitt.

   --Where would the reference service points be located under this model?
   --Who would the primary audience be for each of these service points?
   --How would we staff this model, recognizing that we only have two additional FTE to allocate to this function? What types of staffing would be used?
   --What are the number of hours each service point would be open? How can we provide more hours of coverage for these service points than the number of hours provided by our current structure?
   --What minimum level of training would be expected for staff working at this model’s service points? What kinds of continuing training should take place to ensure quality of service?
   --What categories or types of reference would be handled at the various service points described by this model?
   --What print-based reference collections would be needed at these various service points?
   --How should we differentiate between the services provided at general information service points and the more detailed reference service points?

2. What programmatic changes to our physical plant would be required to make these alternative models work for best benefit to our users?

3. How should we coordinate the supervision and management of these reference service points?

4. How should we publicize and market these reference service points?
While the reference and information services provided by PNM, S/SEALS, Art History/Classics, Media Resources, ILL, Circulation, and the subject-specialty libraries are not a direct part of the charge to the Task Force on Information and Reference Services, the Task Force is encouraged to take into account the types of reference and information services provided by these units as the Task Force makes recommendations per its charge outlined above.

The University Librarian will issue a call for nominations (including self-nominations from interested library staff) and Cabinet will appoint the members of the Task Force. Membership for this Task Force will include, at a minimum, a mix of librarians and library assistants from the following:

- GSSI Government Information Division
- GSSI Social Sciences Division
- Humanities
- Area Studies
- Teaching Library
- Research and Information Services

In addition, the Task Force will include representatives from the following:

- Subject specialty libraries beyond Doe and Moffitt
- Academic Senate Library Committee
- Graduate students
- Undergraduate students

A faculty member from the Academic Senate Library Committee and a librarian will jointly chair the Task Force. The University Librarian will meet with the chairs of the Task Force on a regular basis and with the Task Force on an “as needed” basis.

As the Task Force performs its work, it is expected to consult widely with library staff, to talk with the Public Services Council, to consult with the members of the Academic Senate Library Committee, and to conduct focus groups of faculty and students, as necessary, in order to solicit their views. The Task Force is also encouraged to review past reports, findings and recommendations pertaining to the provision of information and reference services within Doe and Moffitt. The Task Force should incorporate the recommendations of the Undergraduate Services Task Force pertaining to reference service in Moffitt that have been adopted by Cabinet and supported by the Academic Senate Library Committee in its Task Force Report. The Task Force should also address the relevant issues and recommendations contained in the reports of the Customer Services Task Force and the LAUC-B Public Services Task Force. The Task Force should also review guidelines and best practices established by other premier research libraries across the country.

The Task Force’s final report should be completed and submitted to Cabinet for discussion and approval, via the AUL and Director, Doe/Moffitt, by March 1, 2000. The AUL and Director, Doe/Moffitt will have lead responsibility for overseeing the discussion, approval process, and implementation of the Task Force’s recommendations. The University Librarian would like any changes to the Library’s information and reference services within Doe and Moffitt to be implementable by Fall Semester, 2000.

grlowell
10/26/99