

Managing Reference and User Services

Julia Martin and Jo Phillips, col. eds.

Exploring Management of Reference and User Services

Julia Martin and Jo Phillips

We are excited to be able to discuss current and changing practices in the management of reference services. Julia has worked in reference services for three decades. She started her career as an adult and reference services librarian in public libraries in the branches of the New York Public Library and at the Chandler (Arizona) Public Library. She then shifted to academic libraries, working as both a generalist and business reference and instruction librarian at Murray State University and the University of Toledo. She is currently the director of reference and instruction at the University of Toledo. Jo has worked in public libraries in Northeast Ohio since 2011. She earned her doctorate in organizational leadership from the University of Dayton in 2023, where she focused on organizational change, leadership theory, and organizational effectiveness. Her dissertation studied staff engagement with and organizational support for readers' advisory services in public libraries. She is currently the senior main library manager for Stark Library in Canton, Ohio.

The column hopes to highlight opportunities and concerns that reference services face with a particular eye to the impact of library management and effective reference services. Libraries have increasingly experimented with service desk models and referral models. Many of the factors underlying these changes have been human-resources related: reduced budgets, remote work schedules, and changing staff composition. More formalized training and onboarding is increasingly important as libraries reduce or eliminate double staffing. As libraries increasingly need to justify our value, how usage statistics and assessment is being conducted and used to improve service becomes increasingly important. Technology has created great change in reference services with the addition of chat services and extensive library guides. We look forward to seeing how AI will change the library and reference services.

The administration of reference services had been in continual change this past decade, with more change on the horizon. We would love to hear about what is happening at your library—successes, failures, and necessary adjustments. Please email julia.martin@utoledo.edu or jphillips@starklibrary.org to submit or discuss ideas.