

BLIS semester II  
(paper – 5)  
Reference Sources & Services  
Topic – **Reference services**  
e-content

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## Reference services

Reference services are the services provided by the reference department in a library that helps the library patron to get access to the information that they needed. Reference department provide library user with direction to the library materials, give advice on library collections and services on various kind of information form variety of sources. Reference department basically helps user to answer the questions that the user have in mind as well as helping the user to locate the information that they need in the library. Bunge and Bopp (2001) categorized reference service into 3 broad groups:

- 1) Information services that involve either finding the required information on behalf of the users, or assisting users in finding information.
- 2) Instruction in the use of library resources and services (broadly defined as information literacy skills)

3) User guidance, in which users are guided in selecting the most appropriate information sources and services.

Reference department are responsible to monitor and perform this kind of services to the use. It is basically to help the user to fulfill and satisfy their information needs.

### **Reference Department**

Library is a place where thousands of information is stored from various forms such as books, newspapers, magazines, thesis, media and others. In an academic institution, normally students will go the library to get all the information that they need to fulfill the requirement needed in order to complete their assignment and thesis. However, not all the students know how to find the right, accurate and reliable information in the library. Some of the student assumes that they can find the right information directly through the internet. What they do not know is that, library is where they can get access to sources of information that are reliable, accurate and interesting. Library also stores information that is rare and cannot be found anywhere else.

Some of the users do not or shy to ask for helps from the librarians to find the books or any other materials that they want in the library. It is important for the students to refer to the reference department in the progress of completing their assignment. So, this is where the roles of reference librarians should be fully utilize. Reference librarians will help the student to locate the information that they need faster and in the right way. Some of the task and services provided by the librarian in the reference department are:

### **1) Teach patrons on how to use the library catalogue**

Reference librarian can teach the students and user on how to use the library catalogue or recommend the proper keywords or subject that are used in the library catalogue for the topic that the user wants.

### **2) Help patrons find books on shelves**

Librarians are able to help user to go directly to the shelves with books on a certain topic without using the catalogue. By this kind of method, patrons can save time in finding the information that they need.

### **3) Recommend books to patrons**

Reference librarian must truly familiar with the library collection. As so, the librarian can recommend books that might contain the answer to particular questions as the librarian already familiar with the contents of hundreds of reference books.

### **4) Teach user to use online database**

The librarian can teach the library user to use online databases such as magazine and newspaper articles, and recommend words and search strategies for the topic the user has in mind.

### **5) Advice on searching information.**

The librarian can recommend reliable web sites, give advice on searching the Internet for information, and evaluate the reliability of the information on web sites. As so, users can gain access to information that is reliable and accurate.

These are some of the services and activities done in the reference department. All of these services are very beneficial to the users especially to the students in completing their assignments. Some might say that coming to the library is such a waste of time. Some of them are very shy and afraid to approach the librarian at the library to ask questions and help. With the technology available that are growing widely from time to time, we are able to reach the library virtually without needing us to go to the library physically. Virtual reference services enable the user to reach the librarian through the internet and ask questions to get the information that they need. It saves time, cost and help the user especially the students to complete their assignment on time.

As a conclusion, reference department is one of the core departments in the library. It is the place where the user comes and asks for help in obtaining the information that they need as well as gaining skills in searching the accurate and reliable information. Students should first come to the reference department whenever they are facing some difficulties in finding the information that they need. It is not a waste for the students to come to the reference department in searching for information as they might get new skills in finding the information from a variety of sources. Reference department is like a map to the library.

### **Need of Reference Services in Library**

- It save the time.
- It gives relevant information to the enquirer.
- It is a valuable services for the research scholars.
- Answer the queries of the readers

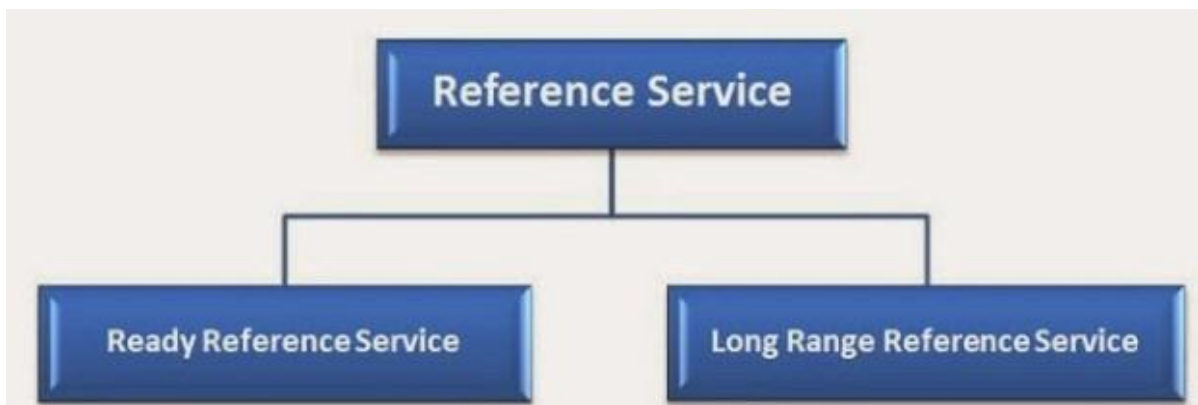
- Provide personal guidance how to consult the reference sources.
- Encourage the optimum use of the library collections.
- Cooperation between Readers and the Staffs.

## Types of Reference Service in Library

**Different types of reference service:** The goals of Library's reference service are to connect library users with the best available library and information resources for their research needs, and to achieve the connection between the library and users in most effective manner. According to its nature, reference service may be categorized as two different types,

- i. Ready reference service;
- ii. Long-range reference service.

### Types of reference service



1. **Ready Reference Service:** Ready reference service is reference service finished in a very short time- in a moment if possible. The concepts of ready reference service is based on duration of

time. Most ready reference questions are solved in a few minutes, while some take a longer time but seldom more than half-an hour. In case of ready reference service, the reference staff is able to answer the inquiry in a very short duration of time, may be at immediately. Different reference books are used in ready reference service, such as Encyclopaedia, Dictionaries, Yearbooks, Directories, Biographical dictionaries, Geographical dictionaries, etc.

2. **Long-range Reference Service:** Long-range reference service is not capable to be rendered immediately. Few long range reference questions take less than half an hour, while some take a whole day and even weeks. In long range reference service, the search of information starts with ready reference services of information and is continued into ordinary books, reports, periodicals, etc. In case, information is not located in the library, then search may be continued into resources of other libraries even carried out to libraries in other parts of the world.

### **Functions of reference service:**

In 1942, The American Library Association (ALA) stated the six functions of reference service:

1. The supervision function.
2. The information function.
3. The guidance function.
4. The instruction function.
5. The bibliographic function.
6. The appraisal function.

**1. Supervision function:** This function consist of,

- Proper organization of facilities;
- Selection of reference materials;
- Direction of personnel, and
- Study of the library clientele.

**2. The information function:** The reference librarian should be prepared to answer all types of questions and should be able to produce source that would answer the questions. Attempts have also been made to classify questions in various ways. Reference librarian should be prepared to give assistance to the enquirer as much as he requires.

**3. The guidance function:** The reference librarian should be able to give guidance to the readers in the choice of books and other reading materials and should guide them in the location of documents.

**4. The instruction function:** A reference Librarian should instruct the readers about how to work in the library, the use of catalogue and reference works, the location of materials, etc. For this an orientation programme should be arranged to familiarize the readers with the library practices and procedures.

**5. The bibliographic function:** The bibliographies in various subjects of interest to the readers, should be prepared by the reference staff, so that the readers are able to know the books and other reading materials in a particular subject.6. The appraisal function: The success in reference service largely depends upon two factors: Possession of right material. Knowledge of how to get the most out of it.