

Sabbatical Leave Report

A. Applicant

Name: Molly M. Matheson

Department: Learning Resources and Education Technology - Library

Type of Leave: Independent Study

Leave Dates: Fall 2018

B. Purpose of Leave

I investigated reference services best practices in California college libraries. I examined existing literature on the evolving trends in reference services in academic libraries and investigated alternative models through visits to other colleges. The intent of this research was to identify and propose enhanced reference services offered by the SRJC libraries in support of scholarly research.

C. Leave Objectives

1. Reviewed academic literature on trends in reference service delivery and created an annotated bibliography of current research covering models of academic reference services.
2. Visited at least three California college libraries that have different reference services models than the SRJC.
3. Wrote a report of my findings with a proposed outline of recommendations and have scheduled a time to present it to the Library and Information Resources department for discussion and consideration.

D. Narrative

The way students explore, locate and interact with information continues to change as with the increasing complexity of the information ecosystem. While academic librarians continue to embrace an expanded role in supporting the student information discovery process, competing demands for increased and specialized reference and instruction assistance calls for innovative models of service to meet growing demand. SRJC librarians have a track record of responsive delivery of academic support services to students by maintaining an open and adaptive philosophy to service. The library program would benefit from an exploration of other library models to craft the most effective information support network for students. What haven't we considered? What might improve these interactions? What newer service models might we consider? How might we create a newer model of reference services?

Objective 1: I conducted a literature review of the appropriate scholarly journals articles and independent reports on the topic of reference services in college libraries. The annotated bibliography I produced is included in the appendix.

Objective 2: I traveled to a total of eight college libraries in California and conducted interviews with academic librarians in each. After completing the research in Objective 1 I determined that the UCLA and San Diego State libraries were not ideal candidates. I received permission from Sabbatical Committee co-chairs to change the libraries to two community colleges in Southern California, Glendale Community College and Pasadena Community College. Of the eight colleges I visited six were community colleges and there was one each from UC and CSU.

In addition to interviews I asked librarians to complete a survey about their reference services modeled after one of the articles found in my literature search and supplemented with additional questions that were of interest to librarians from my department. A summary of the survey is included in the appendix.

Objective 3: I have prepared an outline of recommendations for consideration by the Library and Information Resources department and it is included in the appendix. I have scheduled a time to present a report of the findings from my research to my department for discussion.

E. Evaluation Summary

1. How did this sabbatical leave enhance my work performance at the college?

As a faculty librarian I am involved in a variety of activities that directly support student learning, but at least 15 hours of every week is spent providing reference services. Studying the best practices inherent in newer reference services models has allowed me to consider ways to improve our existing model in order to increase student retention and success.

2. How did this sabbatical leave benefit students in my discipline?

Recent research performed by the Association of College and Research Libraries indicates that student retention and student success is directly affected by interactions with librarians, both early and often. Through my research, my survey and visits I have a better idea of how other libraries are approaching reference services and how we might improve our approach especially given the advent of Guided Pathways and the college's current rightsizing. Applying this knowledge along with next steps being a careful study of both our reference services values and reference practices will allow us to adjust our own approach so that we may reach more students and improve their retention and success.

3. How did this sabbatical leave benefit my department?

I gave a formal presentation to my department on the key findings of my sabbatical. I have learned of several techniques and models libraries are using in delivering reference services. Methods to determine the Library's core values when it comes to delivering reference services and then ways to potentially adjust our service model based on those values will be helpful to

both librarian faculty and students. SRJC Libraries are in the midst of adapting their spaces to a learning commons model. Studying the design of other similarly sized libraries' reference services has helped me to explore what changes to our current model of delivering reference services might benefit our students.

4. How did this sabbatical leave address the SRJC Strategic Plan and/or your department's educational plan?

Exploring how we can improve and potentially change or expand our outreach to students needing reference and research services meets Goal A, supporting student success: "expand and sustain access by eliminating barriers, expanding strategic outreach efforts and delivering services effectively through current technologies". In addition, Goal B, fostering learning and academic excellence, by "identify and implement responsive instructional practices that increase the learning and success of our diverse students" is addressed in this evaluation. Our department is in the process of changing to meet the evolving information needs of our students. The individualized instruction students experience in reference interactions develops their competencies as self-sufficient and informationally competent researchers and informed citizens.

F. Abstract for Board Report Summary

Molly Matheson investigated best practices for California college library reference services and reference desk models. She visited eight California college libraries where she learned how other similarly sized and configured libraries are meeting increased student demand for flexible and specialized reference and research support. She summarized her findings through an outline of recommendations for potential implementation at the SRJC libraries. These recommendations, along with an annotated bibliography of the literature on this topic will be presented to the Library and Information Resources department for discussion and consideration.

G. Approval

Applicant Name
Department/Program
Review and Signature

Department Review

Signature of Dean

Date

Sabbatical Leave Committee Review

Signature of Committee Chair

Date

Board of Trustees Review

Action Taken

Date