

Appendix C: MARS SECTION GOALS

The RUSA Strategic Plan is available at <http://www.ala.org/ala/rusa/rusaourassoc/rusastrategic.htm> .

See also the MARS Section Review in the Handbook for the Report of the Task Force, August 26, 2002, which includes a section on setting goals.

MARS Goals 2005-2006

1. Work to find the most effective ways to communicate with MARS members and non-members.
 - A. Redesign the MARS web site to meet the needs of users and to fit the information MARS committee and task forces wish to make available. Develop goals and measurable objectives for use in an ongoing program of evaluation. Ensure that the web site is accessible to users with disabilities.
 - B. Review Messages from MARS in the current technology environment and identify ways to keep it fresh.
 - C. Review MARS-L and look at ways to use other, complementary, technologies such as RSS and blogging to keep members up-to-date.
 - D. Experiment with ALA's new communications software for meetings and sharing with members.
2. Continue to work to identify and articulate the unique role of MARS as an organization that supports and encourages innovation in reference and user services in libraries. Identify at least one committee project that can be marketed to members and non-members as a MARS accomplishment.
3. Continue to collaborate with the Reference Services Section and STARS to make RUSA a comprehensive resource for public services practitioners in libraries.
4. Encourage a broader and more active membership in the MARS Section
 - A. Seek ways to promote wider active participation in committees and discussion groups. Identify the MARS committees where virtual membership will be effective and develop a set of guidelines to assist chairs in working with virtual members. Ensure that virtual membership on committees is provided where possible. Look at the ALA guidelines for virtual membership. Stay informed about work being done in ACRL and PLA so as to develop a plan to include more members who cannot attend all conferences and volunteer to participate in any projects started by RUSA.

- B. Create an audit of current and possible MARS activities to attract new members and retain current members, even if they cannot attend conferences in person.
 - C. Explore use of technologies such as satellite and Web broadcasting and instruction/meeting software to expand MARS programming to reach more members and potential members.
5. Focus on current issues in technology and the provision of electronic reference through the work of MARS committees and ad hoc groups in the following areas:
 - A. Defining the skills needed by reference services personnel in the future and looking at ways of educating and preparing new and experienced reference personnel to fulfill future needs.
 - B. Exploring the impact of new technologies such as linking services and metasearch software on users, on library reference services, and on reference collections. Staying abreast of emerging standards for reference technologies and assisting RUSA in serving in a leadership role in the development of those standards. Advocating for the needs of users with disabilities or with limited access to technology.
 - C. Identifying trends and best practices in developing the library web site as a reference resource and in creating other library reference services to serve the autonomous user, keeping in mind the needs of users with disabilities or with limited access to technology.
 - D. Keeping informed of legislation that affects access to electronic products, including copyright and licensing, archiving and fair use issues.
 6. Begin work to develop a 3-5 year plan of continuing education and publication activities to help reference personnel keep up with emerging issues and changing technologies and to provide opportunities for members to gather information that can be used in their daily work lives. This plan will provide a mix of activities to benefit those who come to national conferences and those who are not able to attend.
 7. Continue to enhance the MARS Handbook and continue to update the MARS Bylaws to meet the changing needs of the organization.

2004-05

1. Explore the most effective ways to communicate with MARS members and non-members through Messages from MARS and the MARS Web site and establish procedures for utilizing and maintaining these communication tools to provide the most value for MARS and its constituents. [RUSA Obj. 3, 4 & 5]
2. Identify and articulate the unique role of MARS as an organization that supports and encourages those who are innovators and early adopters of new technologies that advance reference and user services in libraries. [RUSA Obj. 3 & 5]

3. Continue to collaborate with the Reference Services Section and STARS on structural and programmatic issues to ensure that RUSA serves as the best and most comprehensive resource for public service practitioners in libraries. [RUSA Obj. 1]
4. Encourage a broader and more active membership in the MARS Section. [RUSA Obj. 3 & 5]
 - A. Seek ways to promote more active participation by the membership in committees and discussion groups; ensure that virtual membership on committees is provided whenever possible.
 - B. Examine staffing patterns in libraries and identify underserved groups such as those in the field of access services whose needs could be fulfilled by MARS; target these groups for outreach.
5. Focus on current issues in technology and the provision of electronic reference such as:
 - A. Educating and preparing reference service personnel for the future. [RUSA Obj. 1]
 - B. Evaluating reference services, including virtual reference and networked electronic reference service. [RUSA Obj. 6]
 - C. Exploring the impact of commercial reference services and new technologies such as linking services on library reference services. [RUSA Obj. 6]
 - D. Examining the impact of legislation such as the USA Patriot Act and new technologies such as RFID on patron privacy. [RUSA Obj. 7 and 6]
 - E. Keeping informed of legislation that affects access to electronic products, including copyright and licensing, archiving and fair use issues. [RUSA Obj. 1]
 - F. Exploring the meaning of “equity of access,” 2004 ALA President’s initiative, for electronic resources and services, including aspects such as access for people with disabilities and access for those without technology skills and those who do not have access to networks, hardware and software. [RUSA Obj. 2]
6. Continue to enhance the MARS Handbook and continue to update the MARS Bylaws. [RUSA Obj. 3]
7. Explore future use of technologies such as satellite and Web broadcasting and instruction/meeting software to expand MARS programming to reach more members and potential members. [RUSA Obj. 1, 3 & 4]

2003-04

1. Address issues raised by the 2001-2002 MARS Section Review.
 - a. revisit focus of MERS w/ Planning & MERS
2. Explore possibilities for future RUSA MARS preconference and encourage committee-sponsored programs that promote the mission of MARS.
3. Encourage committees to explore publications -- both digital and print.

4. Explore feasibility of a fee-based reference resources "best" list akin to the MARS Best Free Reference Web Sites.
5. Address issues surrounding disappearance of information from the digital domain.
 - a. Commercial publishers (Elsevier, Time, Tasini)
 - b. Government content and services (PubScience, ERIC)
6. Nurture nascent MARS Mentoring program through Outreach.
7. Continue to enhance the MARS Website.
8. Continue to enhance the MARS Handbook and to update the MARS Bylaws.

2002-03

1. Complete the 2001-2002 MARS Section review, addressing any issues raised and implementing appropriate changes suggested by the results.
2. Explore possibilities for future RUSA/MARS pre-conferences and encourage committee-sponsored programs that promote the mission of RUSA/MARS.
3. Establish a discussion group dealing with digital reference issues.
4. Explore feasibility of a fee-based reference resources "best" list similar to the MARS Best Free Reference Web Sites.
5. Encourage a broader and more active membership in the MARS Section.
 - a. Look at membership roster and consider the need for targeted outreach.
 - b. Seek ways to promote more active participation by the membership in committees and discussion groups.
6. Focus on current issues in technology and the provision of electronic reference, such as:
 - a. Educating and preparing reference service personnel for the future, especially digital and live reference.
 - b. Discussing the role of direct-to-the-consumer electronic services such as Ask Jeeves or refdesk.com. How do we define ourselves with respect to these services? Do they supplant or do they supplement library reference services?
 - c. In light of recent heightened security concerns, ensuring that technological safeguards do not disenfranchise our users.
 - d. Keeping informed of legislation that affects access to electronic products, including copyright and licensing, archiving, and fair use issues.
 - e. Defining the needs of distance learners and using technology effectively to meet those needs.
7. Continue to enhance the MARS Web site.
8. Continue to enhance the MARS Handbook, and continue to update the MARS Bylaws.

2001-02

1. Conduct the MARS Section review scheduled for 2001-2002.
2. Focus on critical areas of change in machine-assisted reference, such as:

- a. Examining methods, standards, and effectiveness of the delivery of live reference over the Internet. *(Priority Area F)*
 - b. Helping to ensure that technology is implemented in a user-centered way, in such areas as the negotiation of licenses and the development of interfaces. *(Priority Areas C, A)*
 - c. Supporting the role of public services librarians as advocates for the user both within their organizations and in relations with vendors. *(Priority Areas G, C)*
 - d. Examining issues of the continuing access to and preservation of electronic materials as they affect users today and in the future. *(Priority Area A)*
 - e. Looking at the competencies, skills and knowledge needed by public-services librarians in the emerging library, and examining methods for helping librarians to attain these skills. *(Priority Area B)*
 - f. Exploring the relationship of services offered by libraries with those of the various commercial services increasingly perceived as alternatives to the library. *(Priority Area G)*
3. Improve communication between the Executive Committee and the committee chairs by establishing of a listserv for this purpose. *(Priority Area F)*
 4. Build on the work of the "MARSBest" Selection Task Force by:
 - a. Considering the establishment of a permanent committee to compile an annual list of the best free Web reference resources.
 - b. Investigating the creation of a comparable task force for fee-based Web reference resources.

Both groups will make extensive use of virtual members. *(Priority Area A)*

5. Continue to enhance the MARS Web site. *(Priority Area F)*
6. Continue to enhance the MARS Handbook, and continue to update the MARS Bylaws *(Priority Area F)*.

2000-01

1. With the establishment of the MARS Outreach Committee, focus on promoting and celebrating MARS membership and activities during this 25th birthday celebration year.
2. *(MARS Strategy A7)* Work with vendors and information providers in a proactive manner to encourage the availability, affordability, and standardization of quality information in electronic formats.
3. *(MARS Strategy C3)* Disseminate information on the needs of users and potential users of electronic products to libraries, electronic information producers, and providers.
4. Continue to enhance the MARS Website.
5. Continue to enhance the MARS Handbook on an ongoing basis.

1999-2000

1. Re-examine and identify the areas of emphasis that create a special and distinct niche for MARS activities within ALA.
2. Focus on the impact of technology on reference services, in areas such as:
 - A. Implementing new integrated systems.
 - B. Answering the "new" reference questions.
 - C. Evaluating systems and databases.
 - D. Involving reference expertise in license agreements to accommodate patrons' needs.
 - E. Guiding successful patron interactions in the shift from print to e-journals.
 - F. Empowering reference staff to form alliances at their institutions with all relevant areas (e.g., systems, serials, license negotiators) to assure patron-focused decision-making.
3. Continue to enhance the MARS Web site.
4. Continue to enhance the MARS Handbook on an ongoing basis.

1998-99

1. Expand MARS' repertoire for publishing and/or disseminating information about Section activities. Make good use of existing technologies; explore newer methods; evaluate which media are appropriate for what messages, and to reach whom.
2. Find additional / alternative models for active participation in MARS besides conference attendance.
3. Involve librarians from many different types and settings in the Section by:
 - a. Looking at the existing MARS Committee structures to see where there's likely to be common interest.
 - b. Targeted outreach.
 - c. Looking at where the current issues / controversies in those library worlds converge with MARS' goals.
 - d. Seeking out collaborative projects more aggressively.
4. Continue to evaluate electronic resources and on analyze user behavior. Communicate findings to the folks producing / publishing those resources.
5. Incorporate non-text information resources in MARS projects.
6. Issues for emphasis:
 - a. What kinds of information aren't readily available in electronic form? How does this skew the informational services that libraries can offer? What can MARS do to provide a more complete answer, a wider range of resources?
 - b. Who has access to electronic information, and who doesn't?
 - c. How do we balance open access to information with our responsibilities to provide good information? Where does guidance on evaluating resources veer into censorship?
 - d. What about access to document delivery - the information, ultimately - and not just to a bibliographic citation?

- e. How will some of these decisions be made for libraries by events in the "information marketplace"?

1997-98

1. Provide training information on electronic information sources.
2. Analyze and assess the role of electronic document delivery in an electronic reference service context.
3. Explore the user interface design process and identify ways to link the understanding of user behavior and the design process.
4. Develop program(s) on electronic service personnel issues.
5. Develop program(s) on information needs and information-seeking behavior of users and potential users of electronic resources and services.
6. Collect and disseminate information on user behavior, attitudes, knowledge and approaches to electronic information resources and services.
7. Develop program(s) on physical facilities and equipment for the provision of electronic resources and services.
8. Develop checklists and guidelines for electronic equipment and access for users of all abilities.
9. Increase membership in MARS and provide increased opportunities for participation.
10. Enhance the information provided to all MARS members and potential members through *Messages from MARS*, MARS-L and the Gopher for our members, including news of interest such as continuing education opportunities, conference programs, etc.
11. Develop and conduct surveys about emerging service patterns for the delivery of electronic information resources.
12. Develop and conduct program(s) on service patterns for the delivery of electronic information resources and services that are responsive to the needs of users and potential users.
13. Gather and disseminate information on management of electronic document delivery in reference services.

1996-97

1. Develop strategies for increased interlibrary and interinstitutional access to electronic resources.
2. Explore consortia arrangements for negotiating licenses, coordination of user interface design, and other opportunities for interlibrary cooperation relating to electronic resources.
3. Develop and publish lists of recommended electronic products or of bibliographies of articles critically evaluating electronic products.
4. Involve library educators in MARS initiatives related to teaching and training.
5. Provide the resources for information service personnel to acquire and improve skills in providing electronic reference services, particularly for staff who are geographically distributed.

6. Develop leadership within MARS.
7. Facilitate opportunities to participate in MARS committees outside of attending conferences.
8. Increase membership in MARS and provide increased opportunities for participation, especially by public, school, and special librarians.
9. Provide Section publications in appropriate formats while expanding the distribution channels.

1995-96

1. Provide training information on electronic information sources.
2. Promote an awareness of emerging electronic information sources such as WWW resources in the reference process.
3. Collect and synthesize information about existing models and modes of virtual reference services.
4. Collect and disseminate information on learning and teaching styles for "training the trainer" programs.
5. Develop, collect and disseminate information about how to evaluate and improve the electronic reference skills and competencies of personnel who provide electronic reference services.
6. Develop tools for educating users in how to identify and use electronic information sources and services.
7. Identify and increase awareness of locally-developed systems which respond effectively to users' needs.
8. Develop program(s) on physical facilities and equipment for the provision of electronic resources and services.
9. Develop programs or discussions to explore service patterns and issues surrounding the user-initiated electronically mediated document delivery.
10. Develop strategies for increased interlibrary and interinstitutional access to electronic resources.
11. Gather and disseminate information on management of electronic document delivery in reference services.
12. Gather and disseminate information on collection development policies for electronic information services and resources, e.g., electronic text archives and other forms of digital texts.
13. Provide MARS publications in appropriate formats while expanding the distribution channels.
14. Develop a plan to systematically monitor legislation and policy issues at the Federal and state levels that have an impact on electronic reference services and resources.
15. Increase effective communication within MARS through the development and maintenance of a strong MARS presence on the Internet, e.g., MARS-L, ALA Gopher, and a MARS WWW information server.