

Appendix E FULL TEXT OF INDIVIDUAL COMMITTEE RESPONSES TO THE SECTION REVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE [Spring 2007]

[Approximately 13 printed pages – included for archival purposes]

1. Are the charge and description found in the MARS Handbook a correct representation of the group's purpose, responsibilities and membership? Please comment.

Achievement Recognition: Yes

MARS Best Web Sites: The description is still accurate.

Our purpose is very straightforward; we find and publicize worthwhile reference web sites.

Our committee does this both through an online site and through publication in RUSQ

We are in the process of creating and revising our subject index.

Management of Electronic Resources and Services (MERS): Yes.

Local Systems and Services: There is some inconsistency between the Handbook and the charges as they appear on the MARS website. LSAS' purpose as defined in the Handbook mentions that local systems may include "non-bibliographic databases," while LSAS' charge as per the RUSA website mentions "locally mounted (third-party produced) databases." One suggestion is to update this language and include both terms in both places.

Planning: The Committee's specific duties are mostly administrative in nature, including working with the Executive Committee to develop the Chair's goals, by-laws, review the MARS Handbook and make updates as needed. One area we have not been as involved in is to monitor new technology and its applications and to recommend appropriate action for MARS. This is one area that could fall under the purview of another MARS Committee. Planning has been peripherally involved as the Chair's goals always have reference to some area of technology.

Products & Services: Yes. However, recent activities have focused more on the dissemination of information about products rather than coordinating the "concerns of individuals or organizations involved in selecting, acquiring, and evaluating electronic reference products and services."

Public Libraries: The charge in the MARS Handbook is correct. It is broad enough to allow creativity in programming and disseminating information on all aspects of electronic reference in public libraries.

Publication: The description and charge for the MARS Publication Committee are accurate representations of the committee and its responsibilities – as far as they go. However, given that much of the publication activity of MARS is now web-based, we believe the charge to the committee should be expanded to explicitly include reference to oversight of the MARS web pages, bringing the charge in line with requests in recent years from the MARS Executive committee to MARS Publications to carry out this function – perhaps using wording from the 2006 annual meeting minutes: "To provide oversight of the MARS web Site, including functionality, usability, deadlines for submission of content, and liaison with committees."

User Access to Services: Thus far the charge appears to be a correct representation of the group's purpose, responsibilities and membership as we understand it. The current committee is aware of its purpose, and reviews it as we plan new activities.

Virtual Reference: The charge and description are fine, but specific duties need to be added:

- To monitor virtual reference services and technology and recommend appropriate action for MARS and RSS
- To maintain communication with the MARS Virtual Reference Discussion Group and assist with the planning and operation of the discussion forums
- To maintain the RUSA Guidelines for Implementing and Maintaining Virtual Reference Services
- To develop and maintain the Index to Virtual Reference Services
- To develop timely programs and training in virtual reference services

- To maintain the Washington State Virtual Reference Tutorial, given over to ALA for maintenance

2. Has the committee established any subcommittees or similar working groups during 2002-2007? If so, do you see a potential need for any of these to become a formal committee?

Achievement Recognition: No.

MARS Best Web Sites: MARS Best Fee sites was established in 2004. Its mission is to “Develop a pilot proposal for implementation of a new area of recognition for fee-based web sites/databases, based on the research done by the MARS Best Fee-Based Websites Task Force; prepare criteria for selection; implement the pilot, publish the results, and report back to the Executive Committee with a plan for continuing the effort.” Because electronic resources are so numerous and frequently updated, having a reliable organization point out useful and trustworthy web sites could be very useful. While there may still be problems to work out MARS Best Fee sites has a great deal of potential.

Local Systems and Services: No, there have been no subcommittees or working groups from 2002-2007.

MERS: No.

Planning: no Sub-committees or working groups have come out of the Planning Committee during this period. The Executive Committee has developed a number of Task Forces (CE and Publications, Web Site) with which the Planning Committee has been involved. There was a suggestion that the MARS Handbook updates could be handled by a separate Committee or Sub-committee of Planning, though has there may not be sufficient work to keep the Committee/Sub-committee going.

Products & Services: No.

Public Libraries: No. Committee membership is too small to break into subcommittees.

Publication: The committee has formed subgroups to complete work on specific tasks or committee projects such as developing MARS web site guidelines, guidelines for committee chairs for updating MARS web pages, web site survey and analysis, and studying archiving options for the MARS web pages. Once completed, these tasks have been reviewed and implemented, as appropriate; consequently, we do not see a need for any of these to become formal committees outside of Publications.

User Access to Services: We have not formally established any subcommittees or working groups during this period and do not see a need for these at this time.

Virtual Reference: Index Subcommittee - Once the index structure get established and the wiki populated, should be able to decommission the subcommittee; Virtual Reference Tutorial Subcommittee - Working on strategies for maintaining the tutorial, there is a need for the subcommittee to continue work but probably not a need to become a formal committee

3. What other ALA, RUSA or MARS groups is your committee aware of that share similar concerns to yours? Are there developments that have affected the way your committee operates, or that offer opportunities for collaboration [e.g. establishment of RUSA/RSS in 2004]? Indicate any such opportunities your committee has taken advantage of, or might pursue in future. Is there any duplication of effort that could be addressed?

Achievement Recognition: Not applicable.

MARS Best Web Sites: MARS Best Fee will be doing something similar to our committee; however their focus will be on paid sites rather than publicly accessed sites. RUSA CODES Reference Sources compiles a list of print resources similar to MARS Best Free. Because CODES is publishing a list of print resources there seems to be little chance of collaboration between Codes and Free Web Sites.

It is possible that Best Fee could duplicate our efforts but considering the breadth of the material available through the Internet it seems unlikely.

Local Systems and Services: LSAS shares concerns with the RUSA MARS User Access to Services (UAS), RUSA MARS Products and Services.
LSAS and UAS

UAS' purpose mentions "database searching," and their charge includes "electronic reference services and their delivery systems include but are not limited to, mediated electronic searching, end-user searching, automated systems interfaces, networks and gateways."

For Midwinter 2005, LSAS hosted a discussion forum on meta-search products. This is a topic in an area we share with UAS. Federated search is a topic that concerns access to bibliographic databases, subscription-based electronic research tools, and how patrons make use of online tools.

It is difficult to separate discussion of systems implementations from librarian ethics, user issues and behavior. This may be cause to expand or more precisely define the committee's purpose.

LSAS and Products and Services

The purpose of LSAS is to "create, collect, analyze, and disseminate information and materials on the development, implementation, and evaluation of local and locally customized systems and services in any format," and Products and Services is concerned with "selecting, acquiring, and evaluating reference products and services." Because the concerns of LSAS are broad, oftentimes, this creates a gray area for us between "non-bibliographic databases" and third-party produced databases which the Products and Services committee is charged to investigate. There has not been much overlap in actual past events, although LSAS' discussion forum on meta-search products followed on the heels of the discussion on "One-Stop Searching," which Products and Services hosted for Midwinter 2003. As a committee, however, LSAS members felt this was a continuation of a helpful, relevant, and necessary discussion in libraries about federated search.

The Future

Local Systems and Services has in the past collaborated with other groups within RUSA, including the Publications committee, which took over responsibilities for management of the RUSA Blog. For an upcoming discussion forum at Midwinter 2008 tentatively titled "Who is using your computers?" LSAS has proposed to plan this event in collaboration with the MARS Public Libraries committee.

MERS: Almost anything MERS does is going to overlap with the mission or function of one or more other committees. To several MERS members, the bigger issue is, with the current trend to digital everything, what are the distinctions between MARS and other parts of ALA? Most of us especially see blurring between MARS and RSS.

These are probably the closest to us, and focus on VR or management:

- MARS/RSS Virtual Reference ("study issues relating to virtual reference services, and to evaluate and promote technological and service standards, guidelines, and "best practices")
- RSS Management of Reference Committee ("identify and study issues relating to the management of reference services and to disseminate information on reference management")
- MARS Virtual Reference Discussion Group – cosponsored / assisted with their discussion at Midwinter 2007 (Seattle)
- ACRL Heads of Public Services Discussion Group

These are next closest, focus on aspects of management:

- RSS Marketing and Public Relations for Reference Services Committee ("identify, study, and recommend methods for marketing reference and information services")
- RSS Evaluation of Reference and User Services (collect, analyze, and disseminate information . . . on qualitative evaluation and quantitative measurements of service . . . to assist in responsible managerial planning")
- RSS Education and Professional Development for Reference ("reference librarians and library support staff; to encourage and promote effective professional development and training")

- RSS Cooperative Reference Service Committee ("study, promote, and support cooperative reference service")
- LAMA Measurement, Assessment, and Evaluation Section especially our current project on evaluation of VR ("matters pertaining to needs for and uses of measurement of library resources, services, and facilities,")
- LAMA Human Resources Section, ("general personnel administration information, education, techniques, theories, practices, guidance materials, and research")
- LAMA Planning & Evaluation of Library Services Committee, which is in their Library Organization and Management Section ("both the theoretical and practical aspects of planning and evaluation of library services ")
- LAMA Systems and Services Section ("study and evaluate the application of new technology in services, and the management thereof, ")
- One would expect overlap with LITA but we don't see anything obvious.

Planning: This is an administrative group with no duplication with other ALA units.

Products & Services: We have collaborated in recent years with RUSA/MARS Hot Topics; this has resulted in better programming than we could have provided by ourselves. It also resulted in better attendance of discussion forums and overall visibility of the committee.

Public Libraries: MARS Education, Training & Support Committee and Management of Electronic Reference Services Committee. It seems that Public Libraries Committee duplicates or overlaps both of the MARS committees listed - public library audience being the exception.

Publication: Many ALA units have publications committees including RUSA as well as the various RUSA sections, all of which have similar interests. Because the chair or co-chair of MARS Publications also serves on the RUSA Publications committee, there is an opportunity for considerable collaboration. Currently, the representative from MARS Publications to RUSA publications (CL) is actively working on the subcommittee on the RUSA blog, which in the last year has become a primary focus of RUSA Pubs.

Within MARS, the Publications Committee works with everyone from the MARS Executive Committee members to the various MARS committees. The shift in the committee's focus to the MARS web site has increased the need for the committee to maintain regular ongoing contact with committee chairs to ensure currency, which it has endeavored to do through developing guidelines and by appointing liaisons to the MARS committees.

Appointments to the positions of MARS web coordinator and Messages from MARS/MARS-L Moderator are handled by the Committee; and the appointees serve as ex-officio members of the committee. One area of likely future collaboration is with the MARS CE and Publications Task Force, which is looking at ways for MARS to provide web-based training or tutorials to the membership

User Access to Services: The MARS UASC actively shares many of the concerns of RUSA's Reference Services Section (RSS). We recently co-sponsored a program with RSS's Catalog Use Committee, whose purpose is to focus on the use of catalogs in reference service and in co-sponsored a program with this committee.

Virtual Reference: Our committee is composed of half MARS and half RSS membership. This really has strengthened communication and programming.

4. How would you gauge the interest level and productivity of your committee in the last five years? Do you feel there are areas that should be addressed (e.g. overlap with another committee's work, too much/too little to accomplish, etc.)?

Achievement Recognition: Very high. Our work does not overlap.

MARS Best Web Sites: Our interest and enjoyment in our committee shows; our members consistently invest the time and energy to find useful and interesting web sites. Because our project requires a great deal of time and energy we rely on a steady influx of new members. A serious decline in our membership could increase the current members' work. Adding members after both the Annual and the Midwinter meeting might counteract yearly attrition. Because of the changes in publication scheduling we should consider beginning our work in summer or fall rather than early spring.

Local Systems and Services: Committee members who attend the meetings are engaged and enthusiastic, and our meetings frequently feature lively discussions and brainstorming about future activities.

Overlap with other committees' work is a concern, but in the past, we have touched base with UAS and Products and Services to make sure we do not plan similar events. There is a general satisfaction with the amount of work delegated to and created from within the committee, and members feel they have enough to accomplish.

MERS: We have been fairly productive with one major output per year. Our main focus has been on virtual reference, but since others also cover that, we could turn our attention to the management aspects of electronic resources. We have just reviewed the committee's charge, overlap with other committees, etc.

Planning: the Committee provides useful and appropriate support to MARS, particularly in assisting the Vice-Chair in developing his or her goals and responding to requests from the Executive Committee. The Committee has been very heavily involved in a major revision of the MARS Handbook and all members have been able to contribute to this project, and have, even though updates have been occurring very often throughout the past few years. We need to have good communication with Publications and the Web Coordinator. It helps to have a Publications Committee member liaison to MARS planning.

Products & Services: Level of interest has gone down in recent years; the committee could certainly be more productive. It suffers from a lack of members. We are currently down to three members, and one of them rolls off this year.

Public Libraries: A review of the committee's work over the last five years indicates that much was accomplished: programs, discussion forums, & bibliographies. Attendance at scheduled programs & forums tended to be medium to small numbers. The target audience tends to limit attendance as well as membership on this committee. This committee needs more members – we need a campaign to enlist public librarians.

Publication: Interest level and group productivity have been high. There is some difficulty in maintaining continuity in pursuing projects given normal changes in committee membership and leadership every 2 years.

User Access to Services: Interest level has been high in recent years. We regularly have 2-3 visitors at the Midwinter meeting who are interested in the work of the UASC. The only potential overlap detected is with RSS, as noted in #3 above.

Virtual Reference: The committee has been very productive, putting together three programs, helping with VRDG, etc. The workload is on the heavy side, which led us to create subcommittees. However, we need to reexamine the meeting times, perhaps letting the subcommittees meet at conferences an additional time.

5. Please give any examples you know about of how the work of the committee has contributed to the annual MARS objectives from 2001/02 to present.

Achievement Recognition: The committee has been formed for one purpose: to recognize the contribution of a member of the section. The committee has faithfully carried out that mission since its inception

MARS Best Web sites: Several MARS objectives involve assisting /serving users. The committee provides information that is valuable for any librarian or library patron. While our annual list is published in a library journal the information and web sites we provide can be useful to any library user. We are in the process of creating and revising our subject index. In addition to our yearly list of free web sites we have created separate indexes to assist our users. In 2005 the committee created an alphabetical listing of all the web sites.

Local Systems and Services: LSAS members have participated in discussions about the RUSA Blog and been invited to make recommendations to the RUSA Board and Publications Committee. The blog, as a new communication and community-building tool, contributes to the MARS 2004-2005 goal of exploring different means of communication and developing appropriate procedures. Our discussion forum on meta-search for Midwinter 2006 attracted a crowd of 75-100 ALA attendees. This fits with the 2005-2006 focus on current issues in technology and promotes MARS membership at the same time.

Committee members encourage MARS membership and participation among librarians in their own libraries and professional networks, which has been an ongoing goal of MARS. **MERS: Virtual Poster Session on the Evaluation of Reverence; Will add useful content to MARS website (05/06 goal 1.A. and 03/04 goal 7, etc.); Will use the RUSA blog (05/06 goal 1.C.) for discussion.**

We have one virtual member.

Guidelines for the Introduction of Electronic Information Resources to Users: Provides guidance / best practice (05/06 goal 5.C)

Sponsored discussion The Specialist Model for Reference Services in the Virtual Reference Environment, ALA Midwinter 2005 (Boston) (03/04 goal 2)

Sponsored program Management Tools and Issues in Digital Reference Program, ALA Annual 2004 (Orlando) (03/04 goal 2)

Planning: The Planning Committee has been involved directly with the MARS Goals and Objectives, working with the Vice Chair as he or she has developed them. We've kept the Handbook up to date and made Bylaws changes as needed. This is a direct correlation to the MARS Goals, including the 2001-2002 Goal #5 "Continue to enhance the MARS Handbook, and continue to update the MARS Bylaws". We have assisted the Vice-Chair in developing goals for his or her term as Chair, annually. The Planning Committee oversaw the review of the structure of Discussion Groups and the charge of every Committee and DG, as well as the revision of the MERS charge, and a review of concerns from the last strategic plan. The Committee developed a document on "How to deal with an unresponsive Committee member" at the behest of the MARS Executive Committee. As an outgrowth of the MARS Handbook revisions, Planning has incorporated the Martian to Martian transmissions which offered suggestions for those planning programs.

Products & Services: The committee's discussion forums have certainly contributed to Goal 5 in the strategic plans of 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 by highlighting current issues in technology.

Public Libraries: 2003 Program "The Fading Line Between Academic & Public Libraries? Are Electronic Reference Services Supporting Academic Communities?" - MARS objective of focusing on provision of electronic reference; 2005 Annual "Paper or Plastic? Which Sources Do Public Librarians go to for Information" Survey developed into a Discussion Forum - MARS objective of evaluating reference services; 2006 Midwinter "Encouraging Database Usage Among Reference Staff" Discussion Group - MARS objective of meeting the continuing education needs of members; 2007 Annual "Electronic Databases - Training That Works" program - MARS objective of meeting the continuing education needs of members.

Publication: The committee has contributed to goals 1, 2, and 4, in our regular operations, and looks forward to participating in goal 6 in the future.

Goal 1. The Committee has worked to find effective ways to communicate with MARS members and non-members through Regular updates of MARS activities through "Messages from MARS," MARS-L, and review of the Web site survey and analysis.

Goal 2. The Committee has worked to further the role of MARS in encouraging innovation in reference and user services in libraries by encouraging MARS committees and discussion groups to update their pages with substantive content reflecting programs and other committee initiatives on innovative issues in reference and user services: Such content includes the MARS Best lists of best free reference web sites, information on MERS' upcoming Virtual Poster Session on Evaluating Digital Reference Services, publications like the "Guidelines for the Introduction of Electronic Information Resources to Users," the Products and Services Committee's extensive information and links to related information on past programs on topics such as RSS feeds and blogs, newspapers in the digital age, Library Instruction in the Courseware Environment, and the many hot topics presentations on such topics as metasearch and Integrating Electronic Reference Resources into the Library.

Goal 4. The committee encourages a broader and more active membership in the MARS Section by currently including 3 virtual members on its roster.

Goal 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.

MARS Co-Chair, Carolyn Larson is a member the Continuing Education & Publications Task Force, which just completed a survey that it will be sending out to RUSA/MARS members about their continuing education needs and preferences, which may lead to additional involvement of MARS Publications with this activity in the next few years.

User Access to Services: MARS UASC's in-press article supports MARS 2005-2006 goal #2, which is to "identify at least one committee project that can be marketed to members and non-members as a MARS accomplishment." The article, "An Exploration of the Working Relationship Between Systems/IT and Reference/Information Services Staff in an Academic Library Setting," will appear in RUSA's flagship publication, Reference & User Services Quarterly, Vol.46 No. 4, Summer 2007.

MARS UASC's co-sponsorship of Catalog Transformed: From Traditional to Emerging Models with RSS supports goal # 3 "to continue to collaborate with the Reference Services Section and STARS to make RUSA a comprehensive resource for public service practitioners in libraries."

MARS UASC's inclusion of a virtual member in the production of our recent paper (described above) supports the overall mission of goal # 4 "to encourage a broader and more active membership in the MARS Section." Our virtual member established a private wiki where members could view the latest version of our paper during the revision process. The use of wikis is just one way that technology can allow for more involvement of members who cannot attend ALA in person.

Virtual Reference:

2005-06

We blogged the 2006 program
Index to Virtual Reference Services
Included virtual members
Programs on new trends

2004-05

We are composed of RSS and MARS members
Participate in VRDG, and in VRDG and programs talk about MARS, encourage people to join.
Our programs are designed to educate reference librarians.
Programs on this topic, maintain virtual reference tutorial.

6.Does the format of the annual and midwinter meetings lend itself to effective committee work for your group? Please comment on the recent reinstatement of an all-committee meeting at conferences.

Achievement Recognition: Yes. The all-committee meeting is of enormous benefit to the Members at Large who make up the committee. It is possible for them to visit all of their committees in one place and during the Midwinter or Annual meeting.

MARS Best Web Sites: Because all the committee's work is done online the format of the meetings does not affect us. The all committee meeting allows the MARS Best Co-chairs to meet informally with current committee members and people who would like to join the committee.

Local Systems and Services: Not all members have been able to attend meetings in the past. The reinstatement of an all-committee meeting may be more convenient for certain committee members, but it creates new schedule conflicts for others.

MERS: Most members think the all-committee meeting is an improvement in general for planning our time and could make cooperation across committees easier. However, it was much noisier and harder to concentrate.

Planning: Committee members had differing views on this question. Two members thought that the all Committee meeting facilitates communication because everyone is in one place, and allows members to participate and efficiently report on activities. Also, it is more flexible for people's ALA schedules especially Members-at-Large. One difficulty however, is that members of the Planning Committee are usually members who have been involved in the section for a long time and have many Committee responsibilities, sitting on multiple committees that are only meeting during the All-Committee meeting so they are unable to attend all of their Committee meetings. This Committee has been involved in establishing and planning for the All-Committee meeting.

Products & Services: The all-committee meeting is beneficial for learning what other committees are doing and collaborating across committees. However, one committee member expressed concerns about only one meeting per conference being insufficient to plan and execute business. This is my fault, as I didn't see a need for a second meeting. In the future I will schedule another meeting in addition to the all-committee meeting.

Public Libraries: The All - Committee Meeting format at conferences is very helpful to members who are involved in other sections or divisions. I think it would be more consistent to schedule Midwinter and Annual meetings on the same day of the week and at the same time.

Publication: The format of the annual and midwinter meetings lends itself to effective committee work for MARS Publications group except for those years when we need additional closed sessions for interviewing candidates for MARS web coordinator and MARS-L Moderator/Messages from Mars Editor. For members of the Publications Committee, the combined meeting is helpful in enabling committee members to easily touch base with other MARS committees about proposed publications, web page issues, etc. It is important, however, that the room be large enough (as it was at midwinter) to dampen the sound. The major problem that we have is with the Sunday 8:00-10:00 time slot at Annual this year (which is different from what was announced in the Executive Committee meeting at Midwinter) as the time slot conflicts with the RUSA Publications Committee meeting and directly competes with a major RUSA program, Notable Books.

User Access to Services: This format works reasonably well as long as the option to schedule a second meeting when needed is also available. While working on a recent article the committee needed a quiet place to spread out and work without interruption. This would not have been possible in the all-committee format.

Virtual Reference: It is tricky establishing a meeting time that doesn't conflict with MARS and RSS. We have decided to rotate meeting at MARS All committee at annual and RSS at midwinter. It is too hard to meet an additional time, as well as to find a time that doesn't conflict.

7. List the products, significant activities, and programs of the committee for the last 5 years in chronological order, most recent first, from Midwinter of 2002 through June 2007. [This is a list required by RUSA Organization for section reviews.] See Appendix B for compiled program list. These are the items submitted by committees:

Achievement Recognition: The awards were presented to:

2002- Denise Beaubien Bennett

2003 - Linda Friend

2004 - Bill McHugh

2005 - Elliot Kanter

2006 - Doris Ann Sweet

2007 - LeiLani Freund

MARS Best Web Sites: Annual list of best web sites. Preliminary subjects index is being finalized and should be completed by summer 2007.

Planning: As mentioned in #5, Handbook & Bylaws.

About the MARS Section [these were answered in the all-committee brainstorming session at the Annual Conference in 2007:

8. Thinking strategically:

a). How do you perceive that machine-assisted reference will develop over the next 5 years? What does your committee believe are the “next big things?” [For example, do you see online communities becoming important? What about libraries & librarians as publishers of digital materials?]

Achievement Recognition: Learning commons – helping our students and faculty not only find the data, but also manipulate the data to help create knowledge and helping them present data as well. This could well lead into helping them publish the data either through local institutional repositories, or regional or scholarly society type sites. VR may improve with voice over IP and video transmission. Central service points. Blending reference with other public services.

MARS Best Web Sites: Online communities for groups with specific interests, such as Facebook communities for librarians in particular fields, are becoming more important.

Local Systems and Services: The next big things

- 1) Improved analytics for Web sites and Web-based services
- 2) New physical configurations for service points and systems
- 3) Social software experimentation
- 4) Modularized content
- 5) Library-related mini-applications
- 6) Personalization and recommendation engines
- 7) Distance learning and webcasting
- 8) Video content

Virtual reference may grow slightly, as more libraries debut or change IM and chat services to meet their needs. Usage statistics for live online help services will plateau as the successful services come of age. Reporting and analytics for chat software will improve and allow librarians to fine-tune their marketing of online chat services.

Desk configurations will change to include more collaboration stations, and screen sizes will increase to accommodate desk consultations that require explanation of information-rich and complex graphical interfaces.

There will continue to be experimentation with social software tools in libraries, but online communities will be just as important a niche as they are now. Our understanding of how online communities fit into outreach strategy may improve.

Social sites such as Facebook and MySpace will incorporate more modularized content and widgets, as will our catalogs. Our catalogs and data will feed into library mini-applications created by Open Source developers.

Personalization, and instructing patrons to make use of personalization features, will continue to be an issue, as libraries work recommendation engines into their sites.

Distance learning and instruction will expand in the coming years and increase the number of reference librarians involved in online courses, lectures, and demonstrations. This will drive development of webcasting and distance education software such as Elluminate.

Video archive collections will grow in importance as video content, and particularly user-generated content, is consulted more frequently to provide visual accompaniments along with text and face-to-face answers to reference inquiries.

MERS:

With the speed of past developments, it's difficult to judge what could develop over the next five years.

Main trends are federated searching; Google Scholar; digital collections; shifting archives/holdings in database sets

More material will be published electronically, and quite possibly not in simultaneous print versions.

More databases (catalogues, article indexes, etc.) will provide better and "more human" access to their contents: will include input from users (e.g., "tagging"); will be able to offer suggestions based on previous searches or similar searches by other users (akin to Amazon's abilities); will offer suggestions when spelling/typing errors are encountered or when.

The general public will be less aware of what's not online, less aware of what they're missing, etc.

Planning: OPAC future in question (open WorldCat, WorldCat local); access and integration of electronic reference materials; virtual reference migrating from chat software to IM/Meebo-type applications; usability/web design; integrating local services, repositories, and unique materials through a library website portal; continued development of visualization tools for searching. More reference material online, less reference service tied to a particular place.

Products & Services: We think the reference tools will be increasingly end-user-focused, designed for personalization by our patrons, not librarians. Libraries may be designing these tools based on their particular user groups. We will also increasingly be publishers of digital materials.

Public Libraries: Machine-assisted reference will continue to develop over the next 5 years - more and more patrons will access the library online. This trend will demand that libraries develop online tutorials for their resources that guide the user remotely. Standards and best practices must be developed by managers and training must take place for staff.

Publication: Some areas we see as important in the next 5 years: electronic means of communication will continue to be important, but online publications (blogs, wikis, institutional repositories), print on demand, productivity software, next-generation catalog, including social tagging options like Penn-tags (<http://tags.library.upenn.edu/>); archiving of electronic reference tools will all be EXTREMELY important.

Virtual Reference: Online social networking is the big thing to watch now.

b). What might we do in MARS to support our library colleagues within this rapidly changing environment?

Achievement Recognition: Interactive training websites and webcasts. Poster sessions are a great idea. We need to be more proactive in our outreach efforts so people will find the resources.

MARS Best Web Sites: Perhaps MARS should have a presence on Facebook.

Local Systems and Services: Librarians will always need software and database product training to keep up with the marketplace. In response to the increased amount of data on our users, librarians will require both software training and assessment techniques. For librarians who are Web developers, they will need to expand their repertoire of Web programming skills. Developments in distance education will require training in public speaking, communications tools, and online course management. The potential growth of video content and changes to online database products will demand that librarians understand search technologies, the role of metadata, and research on interface design.

MARS can support library colleagues by offering preconferences, webinars, and sessions during conferences that give members the chance to learn about these new developments.

MERS: Evaluation of resources; updates on new search tools and strategies; Publicize activity like our VR virtual posters; Librarians, like the public, turn to just in time & personal help, e.g., listservs, as quickly as we do to websites or journal databases. Remind them/us of material that's already available instead of posting fairly basic questions (e.g., does

anyone out there have advice for a library considering chat reference? – which is still, in 2007, being asked on libref-l & such)

Planning: We could offer Hot Topics discussions, conference or preconference programs as webcasts and/or podcasts, or have virtual programs where all participants are involved remotely.

Products & Services: We need to continue to highlight dominant trends and keep our colleagues informed of them, while keeping our eyes open for new ones.

Public Libraries: Provide the tools that libraries and librarians need in this changing environment - templates and training in the new 2.0 world.

Publication: Training,- Make free or low-cost training sites available (possibly providing some training ourselves), blogging to identify new services/developing new online publications; Extend the conference experience by provide greater information online about past conference programs sponsored by MARS (links to presentations, summaries, reading lists); provide a Virtual Conference Option for a reduced registration fee with links to recordings of selected presentations available for during and after the conference to conference registrants.

Virtual Reference: Provide more content and opportunities for interaction outside of conferences through blogging, wikis, etc.

c). Do you feel the current MARS structure effectively supports the relevant topical aspects of technology and reference? Do you see organizational changes that would contribute to our effectiveness?

Achievement Recognition: Need to figure out how we relate to RSS.

MARS Best Web Sites: A shift toward more virtual committees would be positive step.

Local Systems and Services: No additional comments.

MERS: Yes, MARS is addressing many of the key issues. But most committee members see the idea of MARS, like the general idea of separating out “virtual,” “electronic,” or “machine assisted” as too narrow for the current and upcoming environment. These resources and services are fast becoming the standard resources that all (but a very few) librarians normally use. They can no longer be considered the responsibility of a few.

Planning: “One of our Committee charges is to monitor new technologies and applications and recommend actions. I think this could be a charge for a separate Committee. The Committee would identify services/products/trends and assist MARS Committees in developing follow up actions. Maybe this Committee wouldn’t offer programs but support the work of other MARS Committees. Or should Planning emphasize this more? I really think this an area where we could benefit MARS members in their workplace.”

“I also like the idea of a web design/usability Committee. I think it is a trend that reference librarians will have to have these skills in the future. We will be helping to design tools for accessing subscription as well as local content.

In order to enhance our search offerings, we need to understand how our patrons are using them. The Committee would offer preconferences, continuing education, programs and vet resources (e.g. Primo by the ACRL instruction section).”

Products & Services: Yes. No changes to suggest.

Public Libraries: We need to be more proactive – develop and offer tutorials, templates, webcasts to our members who don’t have time to do the research or the hands-on practice needed to implement new trends on their own.

Publication: No suggestions for change.

User Access to Services: Our profession will remain largely a service profession, serving individuals of all ages and walks of life in a technology-based environment. We will need library staff who are flexible, creative, and able to handle changing technology readily and confidently. To that end, MARS can help in two ways: 1) MARS, closely working with the other sections within RUSA must encourage ALA to model the aforementioned behavior for the profession (i.e., flexible, creative, and able to handle changing technology readily and confidently). Poorly performing, out-of-date web sites are not representative of the best we have to offer; 2) Leadership of MARS and RSS should work closely together to insist that

RUSA scheduling supports the potential for cooperative work between MARS and RSS, rather than mitigating against it. The artificial divide between these two sections need not hinder close, productive cooperation between them.

Virtual Reference: No observations here.

9. MARS has a Continuing Education and Publications Task Force currently investigating these areas (a-c):

a) What priority should MARS put on CE (continuing education) projects in the next five years?

b) Should MARS consider a publication plan as a subset of continuing education or should these two activities have different goals?

c) Should MARS plan to create either a CE project or a publication from each of its programs and discussion forum topics?

a). What priority should MARS put on CE (continuing education) projects in the next five years?

Achievement Recognition: High priority. Possibly if we have the volunteer staff to sustain this. Maybe we could sponsor regional institutes like LITA does and hire someone to travel and present. We would pay the instructor's fees with money from the registrations.

MARS Best Web Sites: Continuing education should be a high priority for MARS.

Local Systems and Services: This should be a high priority. MARS should investigate offering CE courses.

MERS: As an informal idea, just continuing to learn, this is still important as it is very difficult to keep current about electronic resources. But most librarians don't have a need for formal CEU credits. Is a program of certification and the need for CEUs beginning?

Planning: This could be a big part of MARS adding value for reference librarians since our focus is on technology & related services.

Another member complimented the work being done by the Continuing Education and Publications Task Force as being an important focus, as these two areas needs some concerted effort. RUSA has CE courses online, though these are being developed by individuals.

Products & Services: This is an area where we think there is a lot of overlap. It might serve us better to identify other groups that provide CE opportunities that meet the needs of the MARS members. Especially with the constantly changing technological advances.

Public Libraries: Continuing education should be a high priority – librarians need training on the 2.0 tools of the trade: blogs, flickr, online communities, etc.

Publication: MAJOR – especially in technology.

User Access to Services: Developing ongoing continuing education is generally not possible with a volunteer membership/leadership structure. However, webcasts on a variety of topics, taking advantage of the expertise already available from within the section, might be a fruitful angle to pursue.

b). Should MARS consider a publication plan as a subset of continuing education or should these two activities have different goals?

Achievement Recognition: Not print publications.

MARS Best Web Sites: Should have different goals.

Local Systems and Services: A publication plan should be regarded as a separate goal.

MERS: Depends on whether we mean formal CEU or not. As an electronic-based organization, some MERS members are be ready to have publications be on-line only. Others are waiting for an e-book type reader that works in the bathtub.

Planning: Not sure what is meant by publication plan. Is this a publication plan for MARS or is to help MARS members become published? If the former, I think it is its own activity (and should include blogs as well as journals). If the latter, then I think under CE is appropriate.

Products & Services: we think these activities should be separate and have different goals.

Public Libraries: I think that MARS should have a publication plan that is coordinated with continuing education classes – make use of 2.0 theme.

Publication: I believe this is an area where the MARS CE - Task Force (and/or whatever group might succeed it) and the Publications Committee will need to work together closely – with the Continuing Education group focusing on the subject matter/content of the training [eg “e-reference”] and the means of delivering the training [e.g. webcast, webliography, etc.] and the Publications Committee responsible for providing assistance, advice on “publishing” the resources created, just as we do for other committee products.

(c)

User Access to Services: These seem to me to have two separate goals, although continuing education might occasionally intersect with publication.

Virtual Reference: no comments on CE question.

c). Should MARS plan to create either a CE project or a publication from each of its programs and discussion forum topics? [Responses to c). collected by L. Keiter at the All Committee Meeting at Annual Conference 2007. Part c. of Question 9 was truncated and not answerable in the original survey form emailed to committee chairs.]

Achievement Recognition: If c is supported, have a volunteer staff. Sponsor regional institutes like LITA and hire someone to give them. We would pay the instructor’s fees with money from the registrations.

Planning: Four comments:

Each program/forum is not practical; Some programs lend themselves to a project or a publication; Timeliness is a factor; Maybe one group could oversee what the committees are doing and see what lends itself to this project (maybe the MARS representative to the RUSA Conference Program Coordinating Committee) who would have a list of all proposed programs

Products and Services: Two comments: Minimum requirements for programs and discussion forums should be to post materials presented: Powerpoints, handouts, transcripts, podcasts, etc.; CE—If something continues to appear in programs and/or discussion forums over multiple meetings there should be some consideration of the development of CE material.

Public Libraries: Four comments: Yes, MARS should have CE course: 2.0; Depends on the program topic and if it lends itself to a CE project, preconference, or publication; Our committee is small and it’s hard for members to attend both midwinter and annual; Possible blog discussion on topics.

Publications: Two comments: There should be a summary on the Web site of programs and discussions and publication of chair’s program and/or president’s program and we should publish Powerpoints on the Web; Should consider doing something on the RUSA blog.

User Access to Services: Four comments: Selectively offer CE, when appropriate; Some programs and discussion forums may not merit it; Need flexibility on it because members rotate off; If you need documentation and it can be done simply, OK, but don’t get complicated.

10. Do you have suggestions for using the MARS acronym letters but updating the meaning?

Achievement Recognition: Not really. Magnificently Automated Reference Services?

MARS Best Web Sites: Agree that Machine Assisted sounds rather dated, but no suggestions for improvements at present.

Local Systems and Services: [Medium-driven Advancement of Reference Section](#)

Medium Agnostic Reference Section

Medium Accessible Reference Section

Media and Application-driven Reference Section

Media and Application Reference Section

Multimodal Advancement of Reference Section

Multimodal Assistance and Reference Section

Multimodal Assistance and Research Section

Machine Assistance and Research Section

Machine Advancement of Reference Section

Millennial Advancement of Reference Section

Massively Applicable Reference Section**Modern Accessible Reference Section**

MERS: Managing Access to Reference Sources; Machine Accessed Reference Services
 Modern Access.; Modalities and Access for Reference Services; No: ditch the letters
 and let's move away from the archaic "machine-assisted" phrase.

Planning: 1. MARS : Meeting All Reference Services (in Electronic Format) 2. We could
 keep MARS but come up with a slogan/byline i.e. Keeping reference librarians current on
 technology

Products & Services: no suggestions.

Public Libraries: MARS 2.0 ? Not feeling very creative, but 2.0 is the in term and it would be
 easy to add it to our acronym.

Publication: Multiple Automation Reference Services; Mass Automation Resource Support

User Access to Services: Not at this time.

Virtual Reference: It would be good to find a substitute for the dated notion of "machine
 assisted" but unfortunately, we have no suggestions.

11. **Miscellaneous:** Please add any general comments, observations and suggestions that will
 help the Section Review Task Force complete our assignment. We really appreciate and
 need your input.

User Access to Services: Concerning virtual membership:

We have had a virtual member for two years. She was a very conscientious, pro-active,
 and technically savvy committee member who was exceptionally helpful in the UASC
 survey and article,

Whether a virtual member is successful in UASC is heavily dependent on the individual
 and the nature of the project(s) underway in the committee. Overall, though, we believe
 a virtual member can function well in UASC, and if it would make it possible to
 encourage greater public library involvement in UASC it would be very much worth
 considering.

- At this juncture we would not recommend having more than one virtual member at a time.
 However, as ALA's technical options develop (recording of programs,
 teleconferencing capabilities, etc.) this suggested configuration could be
 re-visited.