ALA Reference and User Services Association
Machine Assisted Reference Section (MARS)

SECTION REVIEW
July 2002- DECEMBER 2007

Contents

MARS Section Review, 2002-2007

I. Introduction

MARS has continued to be an agile organization. The Section has played a leadership role in the profession and embraced active participation in the constantly evolving reference/information services environment. Environmental factors continue to challenge librarians to keep up with the increasingly fast pace of change, fueled by technological developments and enhanced service expectations. Our Section Review is organized to highlight both our continuing progress and our aspirations for the future. Particularly noteworthy elements have been our record of successful conference programs and preconferences, special publications, leadership in the area of virtual reference, and strategic planning activities, including planning for future continuing education and publication possibilities.

As was the case in the last section review in 2002, identifying the role of MARS in a reference environment that is increasingly digital and "personal" remains both a challenge and an opportunity. In the last five years MARS has established a strong relationship with the new Reference Services Section; continuing to nurture such relationships and exploring collaboration possibilities with other ALA units will certainly remain areas of focus for MARS. Building on our many years of accomplishments and creating the unique role, objectives and tasks of MARS within RUSA and ALA will also be an important focus for the next five years.

II. THE PAST: PROGRESS SINCE 2002

RUSA'S QUESTION: In what ways have section activities of the past five years fulfilled the section's stated goals and objectives?

A summary examination of MARS' yearly goals for 2002-2007 offers some illuminating insights into the important themes of the early post-millennial period, when technology and user-centered reference initiatives came of age. These include the development of creative - and frequently technology driven - ways of meeting users' reference and information needs and expectations. Thinking out of the box became even more critical for staying relevant to practicing librarians. Several areas of importance emerge where MARS committees and the executive leadership have been successful at identifying and meeting the evolving needs of our membership.

Review of areas of further study recommended in the _2002_ Section Review, some modest and some with significant organizational impact:

1). As the RUSA Priority Areas changed format in the late '90's to a Strategic Plan and Objectives, the MARS Priority Areas no longer parallel those of RUSA. The format of the Annual MARS Goals is still based on those early '90's Priority Areas. MARS needs to examine whether a new format for the Annual Goals should be used.
Result: The annual goals in recent years have been keyed to the current RUSA Strategic Plan and Objectives. Consideration has been given to the development of a MARS Strategic Plan, and the SWOT analysis at the 2008 Philadelphia Midwinter is an important step toward planning for the next several years. Any new MARS Strategic Plan will key its goals to complement the development of a new RUSA strategic plan.

2). The list of consultants formerly maintained by the Public Libraries Committee has not been updated for some time. There is an equivalent list now kept by RUSA, so MARS is eliminating this item from the Public Libraries Committee's charge.
Result: This item was removed from the committee's charge at the 2002 Atlanta Annual Conference.

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3). The overlap among topical committees needs to be examined and corrected as appropriate. For example, Management of Electronic Reference Services and Education, Training, and Support are co-sponsoring more and more; it was observed that it would be easier for them to work together as one committee, both in terms of meeting times and in having a larger number of people to attend to tasks.

Result: Further discussion with the Management of Electronic Reference Services Committee suggested that that committee's function needed clarification, and a redefinition of that committee's role was the most appropriate solution to this problem. The committee was reconstituted as the Management of Electronic Resources and Services Committee at the San Antonio midwinter meeting in 2006, and a revised description was approved at the New Orleans Annual Conference that same year.

4). In the next few years, as technology continues to develop and both drive and support the work of public services librarians, MARS will expand its role in monitoring the evolution of virtual reference in all its forms, and participate in its development as a service mode for traditional and distant/remote users. MARS members are well poised to lead the initiative within RUSA, as evidenced by the planning for a new Discussion Forum on Virtual Reference and for a Preconference on Digital Reference.

Result: The MARS Discussion Group on Virtual Reference was established at the 2002 New Orleans Midwinter Meeting, and has continued to be a vital presence within the section. The Virtual Reference Committee was established as a joint committee with RSS at the 2004 Orlando Annual Conference, and now has established two active subcommittees. The Guidelines for Implementing and Maintaining Virtual Reference Services were produced by the section and formally approved at the 2004 Orlando Annual Conference. Very successful preconferences on various aspects of virtual reference were held through 2006, when the section's attention changed to newer topics. Over the last five years MARS has clearly provided creative leadership in this active and popular area of reference practice.

5). MARS needs to be at the forefront of assisting RUSA in the exploration of satellite/web and other means of delivering programs and discussion forums to people who cannot attend conferences.

Result: MARS has begun work in this area in several important ways. The MARS Continuing Education and Publications Task Force was appointed in the spring of 2005 and as a part of its charge is identifying the ways that MARS and prospective members would like to learn. A survey in the summer and fall of 2007 provided good information to use in planning MARS activities.

The MARS Reinventing Reference III Preconference in Summer 2007 experimented with providing alternative delivery methods. Most of the sessions of the preconference were recorded and are available by podcast. In addition, a member of the committee, Jami Haskell, blogged the entire conference, http://librarianlikeme.wordpress.com/2007/06/22/reinvented-reference-iii-emerging-technologies-for-reference-services/ On the strength of this experience, the representatives from MARS (Mary Mintz and Mary Popp) who served on the 2006-07 RUSA Planning and Finance Committee were successful in adding a line to the proposed RUSA budget to give RUSA the opportunity to investigate technological solutions for presenting programs more widely.

Several committees used wikis for their committee work in 2007/08, building on the success of the joint MARS/RSS 2007 Preconference Committee. MARS groups including the 2008 Preconference Committee, the Continuing Education Education and Publications Task Force all have used internet conferencing, chat, and PBwiki to communicate and share drafts and information.

6). MARS sees a need to continue outreach to as many interested librarians as possible, including public and school librarians, while at the same time maintaining the Section's main focus on delivering to users the highest quality service using electronic reference tools. **Result: We have recruited many new librarians and have tried to put them on a fast track to leadership positions. The Outreach Committee has continued to be active in promoting the Section. The MARS Happy Hour is an established tradition that attracts both new librarians who are interested in MARS and veterans of the section. A proposal now under discussion, to divide the work of the current Outreach Committee into two groups to address membership, recruitment and retention, as well as enhance and support marketing efforts, will help. Vice-Chairs have had little difficulty in assembling a full complement of members for all committees, except for the Public Libraries Committee on occasion. Public librarians serve as officers and chairs of committees outside of the MARS Public Libraries Committee and there is an opportunity here to do some further investigation and data analysis to get more information to guide us.**

III. THE PRESENT AND FUTURE

RUSA'S QUESTION: What changes should take place in the section's organization, activities, or goals?

One important outcome of a thoughtful RUSA Section Review process is the ability to identify what's *really* important out of all the things we *might* do. Taking advantage of current data and opinion surveys, as well as environmental scans of library issues, the Section Review requires us to look at the organization broadly and critically and decide what to concentrate on, what significant areas of opportunity are opening in the next five years, and consequently what is important to initiate during the next planning cycle.

The following themes are identified as very important for MARS in our next planning cycle, and the Planning and Executive Committees will need to determine what to concentrate on, and how much can reasonably be accomplished from this ambitious list. Many of the bullet points were developed from ideas in the "Thinking Strategically" section of the questionnaire that committee chairs completed in Spring 2007, and they were also discussed at the 2008 Midwinter meetings in Philadelphia. Along with the Section Review committee responses as an information resource on progress, the MARS Executive Committee used the SWOT [Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats] analysis technique at Midwinter 2008 to look at areas for reconsideration or transformation. Among the items identified below are some of the most critical issues within the profession of reference librarianship, currently being discussed in many venues.

- As with all organizations, continuing assessment of the roles and value of MARS is needed. MARS has worked closely and successfully with the Reference Services Section of RUSA since its inception, with each group retaining and enhancing its own unique identity. MARS will want to continue monitoring potential areas of common interests and suggest appropriate organizational adjustments, for example because of the increasing commonality in their missions or activities (e.g., the already-combined RSS/MARS Virtual Reference Service Committee.) The SWOT analysis supported this consensus, pointing out a real threat if MARS cannot maintain its flexibility as a nimble organization.

- Areas that were new five years ago are beginning to mature as libraries continue to look for creative ways to reach users and answer their information needs. For example, libraries of all types, and reference librarians themselves, are seeing a growing role for

themselves in making previously inaccessible information visible through digitization of existing collections and original web and "born digital" content creation.

- What should be the image of MARS and its focus for the next five years? Several committees noted that MARS was becoming more and more like RSS because of the changes in the nature of reference in the twenty-first century. The MARS logo is very distinctive, but it is tied to an archaic name, Machine-Assisted Reference. It is time for MARS to determine whether the old MARS logo is important enough to keep when it impedes name recognition and what an appropriate new name for MARS should be. When this question was asked of committees, there was some agreement that this should be developed further. Identity issues surfaced as weaknesses in the SWOT review as well.

- MARS now has an incredible opportunity to reinvent itself once again in new and unique ways. The current climate in information use is very well-described by the concept of a "mashup," using data in new ways to create an entirely new product. If RSS is moving forward on new ways to present traditional reference services, then MARS should re-invigorate its traditional focus on cutting edge services. Some questions to answer include: Should MARS move away from virtual reference as it is now defined and leave that work to RSS, looking instead at new technologies for delivering reference services and information? Should MARS broaden its focus to user services issues that go beyond the reference interaction, and into other sorts of user services, such as the library's web presence, the usability and development of digital library collections useful for reference and instruction, etc.? To stay vital, MARS needs to support continuing, active discussion and develop a mechanism for persistent dialog, including methods for gathering member input. Included in the discussions should be the identification of ways for MARS to partner with other units in RUSA as they develop their own agendas. The SWOT analysis identified this emphasis on continuing to be an agile organization open to growth and change as a significant opportunity for MARS.

- There is a hunger for continuing education about technology as it relates to reference and user services issues and the ability for members to learn in new ways. A recent MARS survey garnered more than 300 responses. It is time for MARS to rethink the concept of "publication" and to work with RUSA to think of new ways to create income in addition to or instead of the traditional book publications and preconferences.

- One specific suggestion from MARS Planning was to look at the Outreach Committee and consider separating their work into two committees, One would focus on *Membership* activities (promoting membership in the section; providing a liaison to LITA; active mentoring, assisting with programs, planning the Happy Hours with Outreach; MARS brochure maintenance and updating), and an *Outreach* group (program publicity; conference flyers; the RUSA volunteer form; NMRT liaison; Happy Hour shared; MARS-L; contest for new name for MARS acronym.)

- For the "MARS message" to be easily accessible and for committees to be effective in their assignments, we need to enhance the MARS Web site and find ways for members to locate useful factual information -- as well as provide a place for committee chairs who do the business of the organization to contribute information easily. There are ambitious plans from the Publications Committee; we have knowledgeable web personnel, and yet MARS may still need to consider putting additional resources here. One possibility is to consider a subcommittee of the Publications Committee that can help committee chairs. Would we have an audience and content for a wiki, linked from the ALA web site? We also need to be more aggressive in finding the means to use technology seamlessly, as other organizations are doing, to provide offsite access to key information

sessions. One goal from 2002 already mentioned was "*MARS needs to be at the forefront of assisting RUSA in the exploration of satellite/web and other means of delivering programs and discussion forums to people who cannot attend conferences.*" Unfortunately this dream is still at the beginning stages in spite of significant advances in both technology and conference site capabilities. Initial attempts were made at the Annual Conference 2007, both for a committee program and the Preconference, and should not only be encouraged as "a good thing" but be given the resources and backing of ALA to accomplish it. The SWOT discussions identified ALA web site problems and the lack of appropriate technology support as significant weaknesses for MARS and for RUSA.

- MARS should also explore whether additional sources of useful member data are available from ALA for clues to recruitment, and possibly look at the possibility of collaborating with complementary professional organizations as a member recruitment tool for ourselves, as the Society for Scholarly Publishing is increasingly doing with librarians.

- Technology is bringing many new issues and opportunities to the fore and RUSA leadership needs to continue thinking about how the Division can best serve its members in this new environment. Most importantly for MARS, the Section should consider where the following topic areas fit into its mission:
    o Committee reports described significant changes in user behavior and expectations; need for integration of services into a transparent system for the user; emphasis on one stop shopping, immediate gratification, 24/7 services, new models for virtual reference, including guided searching, etc. In addition, there is a great need for better usability and user-centered design in the creation of web-based services.

    o Nearly every committee in MARS mentioned Web 2.0, social networking and their interactive possibilities for libraries as major communication theme, including FaceBook, MySpace, Second Life, and others. The recent MARS continuing education and publication survey showed respondent interest in gaming as well. Should we spend time investigating how gaming can be effectively used in reference services?

    o Continuing major advances in technology; increasing importance of mobile devices and computing, growing importance of the phone for communication (text messaging, podcasting;) increased use of video in all forms will all impact the public services provided by libraries.

    o Library presence and content integration are themes that show up in the literature and in MARS discussions. In academic libraries, this includes integration into course management systems. In all libraries, there is a push for learning via web- and podcasting. Now that OCLC has begun to integrate library resources into major search engines and recent studies show that users focus on Google much more than library resources, in what form should integration of traditional library resources take? As more and more libraries digitize all or parts of their collections, what is needed to make them easy for users to access, search, and use to create new information?

    o With libraries increasingly involved nationally and internationally in digital content creation and publication, this development is moving the profession beyond the more traditional roles associated with user information seeking services. Librarians are now seeing an expanding opportunistic role as content creators, moving beyond digitization primarily for preservation and into the realm of

producing and consolidating content in meaningful ways for reference and curriculum support. Should MARS consider extending its committee structure to include more investigation and support of this growing area? Does MARS need to create a temporary task force to explore this possibility that is "cutting edge" yet resides at the intersection of reference and instruction, technology, and collections, and includes multiple formats such as audio, video, ebooks, topical web sites with extensive content, etc.?

o Recent developments in library catalogs are moving these formerly staid mainstays to a new level. Catalogs are perceived as parts of a bigger information whole, with new thinking about interfaces, integration of a variety of materials (owned, subscriptions, free) into one resource, the creation of visual interfaces and faceted search limiters, and pushing information out of the catalog and into new venues. Catalogs are being developed in open source environments and as add-ons by vendors that are no longer tied to a particular integrated library system. The LITA Next Generation Catalog Interest Group is looking at how these can be developed, but who is looking at the user and how he or she will interact with the catalog? Is it time for MARS to ask for the Catalog Use Committee or to develop a complementary group?

o Data mining (ability to explore for data resources in depth) is an area for investigation.

o Modularized content, highly developed topical sites are being built by librarians and MARS could offer guidelines or other support.

o Numeric and other data sources are increasingly requested by researchers who want not only to find the data but to be able to manipulate it. Sources continue to be more "fugitive" than other forms of information and are continuing to be affected by the trend in government and other agencies to limit their print products and turn to online publication. Is this an enhanced role for MARS' Local Databases and systems Committee, or one of the others? This is certainly an area of potential common interest with other ALA units, such as RUSA/RSS, RUSA/BRASS, and GODORT.

o Where does user education fit in? How can we prepare all types of users to survive in the 21st century information environment?

IV. RESPONSES TO GENERAL SECTION REVIEW QUESTIONS FROM RUSA COVERING THE PERIOD 2002-2007

1. Describe the section's procedure of creating and updating written goals.

Planning is a broadly based, inclusive activity in MARS, with input during the process by all the committees and other units within the Section. Since the last significant reorganization of the Section in 1990, the Planning Committee formally consults with the Vice Chair/Chair Elect, who is responsible for drawing up a draft of proposed goals for his or her year as Chair. The goals are reviewed against the current ALA goals (and RUSA goals, when available*,) for harmony, then put into final form as a collaborative effort within Planning (of which the Vice Chair is a member.) In addition, we use input such as the results of the May 2005 RUSA Values Survey to direct our efforts. The MARS Executive Committee discusses and takes a formal vote when the annual goals are presented to them by the Planning Committee as a New Business item. For example, the current ALA Campaign for America's

Libraries and its internal objectives were discussed in relation to the MARS goals this past year.

As additional preparation and content gathering for this review, the MARS officers and the Section Review Task Force hosted discussion tables and a planning exercise at a MARS Executive Committee meeting at Annual 2007 to 1). Define the top 3 trends in e-resources and services that will affect MARS and 2). Describe what makes MARS unique. (See Appendix A.)

During the Orientation Meeting for Incoming Chairs at each Annual Meeting, the goals are distributed and discussed. Each Committee plans its yearly activities with the goals in mind, and reports back on progress to the Executive Committee.   [See Appendix C for 2006-07 Goals and a link to the Archive.]
* Note: the RUSA goals were updated several times during the period under review. We are using the *RUSA Strategic Plan, 2006-2009*, as an element of current planning.
http://www.ala.org/ala/rusa/rusaourassoc/RUSAStrategicPlan06.pdf

2. In what ways has the work of the section contributed to the priority areas of RUSA?

To answer this question, we highlight some relevant examples using the five objectives from the current RUSA Strategic Plan:

RUSA Objective 1: Provide leadership in professional development for reference and user services librarians and library staff.

- Continuing education member survey created in 2007 is providing information from members about directions for future activities.
- Successful preconferences on digital reference have been held five times.
- In serving the information needs of ALA and RUSA members, MARS has had consistently successful annual programs during the five years under review, generally for standing-room-only participants.
- MARS has also been active in looking for ways to serve and bring in non-conference attendees. For example, at the 2007 annual conference, MERS announced the winners of their first Virtual Poster Session, directed, appropriately enough, on the Evaluation of Virtual Reference Services, including how the presenters use that evaluation to improve Virtual Reference service. Hot Topics also had a technology "first" when the co-chair became a live virtual participant who joined the discussion through Skype and was both audible and visible on the screen as part of the program.

RUSA Objective 2: Work toward equity of access.

- MARS provides an accessible web site as well as the MARS-L listserv.
- Users with disabilities depend on the services that a library presents from its web site. MARS has concentrated a significant amount of its time and energy on making web-based services and resources more effective and on assisting librarians as they develop various kinds of virtual reference services as well as other services that extend to all users the ability to participate in the information seeking process.

RUSA Objective 3: Seek ways to improve participation in RUSA by reference and user services librarians and library staff.

- MARS Best Web sites began as, and has remained, a virtual committee, allowing numerous non-conference attendees to contribute to RUSA's publication program.
- The advantages of RUSA and MARS membership are mentioned at each preconference and program.

- During the period under review, MARS created an Outreach Committee in order to expand its member service activities.
- A member survey conducted in 2007 seeks input from members on continuing education interests and needs. [http://www.indiana.edu/~librcsd/mars/marsce.html]
- There is a MARS Happy Hour open to everyone, not just MARS members, on the Friday of each midwinter and annual conference.
- As already indicated, in addition to our long-available listservs and web presence, MARS is actively investigating ways to provide (and archive) programming via webcasts, blogs, and other 'real-time" means.

RUSA Objective 4: Ensure the effectiveness of RUSA in meeting its and ALA's mission.

MARS has continued to evolve organizationally as Association mission and goals statements develop and change. Our operational changes have resulted in making MARS more efficient and making it easier for members and prospective information to locate information about us, and we have also contributed to the accomplishment of RUSA objectives by creating and holding financially successful preconferences on virtual reference and reference technology.

Regular web page review and enhancements.
Revision of MARS Handbook and Bylaws.
Active cooperation with the new Reference Services Section.
Renaming and refocusing direction of MERS Committee.
Continuing active liaison with other appropriate ALA committees.

Through our programs and preconferences, we are passing on current, practical and visionary information about cutting edge technological solutions that will lead to effective change in all types of libraries.

RUSA Objective 5: Increase the visibility of RUSA in the profession and society at large.

The MARS Best Free Reference Web Sites is now in its ninth year in 2007. This was one of the first active all-virtual committees in ALA and produces a list of outstanding free sites according to a detailed list of criteria. Since complementary information is only available through subscription databases, MARS created a Task Force on Fee-Based Databases, which developed a web survey to collect data on whether a complementary project providing an award for this type of database would be welcome and useful.
[http://www.indiana.edu/~librcsd/mars/survey2005.html]

3. What is the interest level in the section as evidenced by attendance and participation by members and observers?

All the MARS committees and discussion groups have creative, contributing members, and many stay with their committees for the full 4 years. Formal programs, forums and discussion groups at meetings have relevant, timely topics and are very well attended, often for standing-room-only audiences.
We have begun to consider ways to use the workspace of the ALA Online
Communities provided through RUSA to extend the MARS network.

V. SUMMARY COMMENTS

It is clear that MARS is a vital organization, retaining what is relevant from the past and continually scanning the future. The January 2008 SWOT exercise at the MARS Midwinter meeting brought confirmation to many of the issues raised in this report.

Strengths: Strengths centered around three areas: members, technology focus, and programming/products. Members were seen as involved, enthusiastic, creative, innovative, welcoming, collaborative, fun, knowledgeable, and with a breadth of experience and vision. As an organization we have a strong infrastructure, a commitment to the user, and a history of contributions to RUSA and to ALA. The technology focus MARS has long maintained has kept us at the cutting edge, with a mission at the intersection of service and technology and relevant to librarians, including new librarians. Programming has always been a MARS strength, with exciting, high attendance, practical offerings. The MARS Best Free reference web sites publication is a significant strength in many ways.

Weaknesses: The ALA and MARS web site and lack of technology support from ALA and RUSA were cited as particular problems for the organization. Issues of identity must be faced, including the name/logo of the organization and our interaction with the Reference Services Section (RSS). Issues important to MARS members arise quickly and need to be addressed in programs and discussion groups, but the machinery of program planning and approval leaves MARS with less flexibility than is needed for currency. Time (both the need for long lead times and less than optimal communication between meetings) is also a problem in creating publications and innovative information sources. There is concern that participation among non-academic librarians is too low.

Opportunities: The rise in the use of technology in libraries, among library users and from information providers is seen as a significant opportunity for MARS. As reference and user services evolve, boundaries shift and create new areas for exploration. At the same time, there are more common interests and opportunities for collaboration with other RUSA groups and other groups within ALA. New librarian members bring strong skills and the opportunity to expand MARS' virtual presence/services and membership. MARS should consider a stronger focus on the future and ways to work more closely with vendors.

Threats: Most of these reflected directly or indirectly on the issues raised in the weaknesses discussion. The ALA information technology infrastructure, conference and other budgets, and the hotel/meeting venues do not support innovative programming and the ponderous structure of sections and divisions within ALA does not allow MARS to be as nimble as it needs to be. In addition, there are societal forces that provide threats: training and information is now available from a variety of sources; local funding for libraries does not allow for as much conference attendance or participation; and there is perceived conflict between our largely pay-based information sources and structure and the "free" information world our users expect.

MARS has enthusiastic members, great programs, and motivating areas for exploration. At the same time, it will be important to deal directly with the weaknesses, opportunities and threats identified to keep the organization moving forward.

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APPENDIX A   THINKING STRATEGICALLY: SUMMARIZING IMPORTANT TRENDS IDENTIFIED BY MARS COMMITTEES, June 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL TRENDS

1. **Web 2.0** and next-generation searching (wikis, widgets, social networking, IM, any and all Google initiatives, podcasting, blogs, etc.) Almost every committee had social networking and its possibilities for libraries on its list, including Facebook, MySpace, Second Life.
2. Need for **integration of services** into a transparent system for the user.
3. **Federated searching**: local WorldCat, open source programming for bibliographic management, e.g. Zotero. One group noted that federated searching must "work as well as Google."
4. Developments in **catalog interfaces** (faceted browsing, user-initiated additions to catalog information).
5. Increased comfort with **sharing personal information**.
6. Increasing reliance on **digital resources over print**.
7. Growing emphasis on **assessment** of e-resources as a worthwhile activity leading to value.
8. Need for increased **usability** of digital resources overall.
9. **Data mining** (ability to explore for data resources in depth). Image and individual URL item tagging allowing for increased discovery possibilities.
10. Exploration of "**Virtual Midwinter Meetings**" because of library budget cuts.
11. **Financial impediments**: e.g. budget cuts affecting a library's ability to provide e-resources, particularly in public libraries.
12. **User-centered services** and customizing point-of-need services for users- characterized as "guided self service" and one group felt that work on open URL resolvers would be important to make this happen.
13. The increasing sense of **humans (including librarians) as the backup** for when machines don't yield the answers.
14. Increasing importance of **mobile devices** and computing anywhere, anytime – growing importance of the phone for communication (text messaging, podcasting.)
15. **Harvesting digital material** (currently metadata especially) from union catalogs.
16. **Cross-institutional discovery tools**.
17. Take advantage of the "**gaming** mentality."
18. Library presence and content integration into **course management systems**.
19. **Educational needs** of librarians (every generation) and all types of users to survive in the 21st century information environment.

WHAT MAKES MARS UNIQUE?

1. The people are important. MARS is an extremely collegial group and provides librarians with excellent experiences with committee involvement and programming. "For many of our members who are new to the profession, it is the first opportunity to interact within a professional group."
2. MARS provides active outreach to other committees, such as those in RSS and LITA.
3. MARS provides a unit for bridging any gaps between public and academic libraries.
4. MARS has its finger on the pulse of new trends in reference combined with technology. Several of the brainstorming groups indicated that it differs from RSS in its primary focus on human-computer interaction. MARS provides a unique service through its active members. The Section balances traditional services with technology.
5. MARS was ahead of its time and the virtual library has come of age. The Section offers highly relevant programs for all types of libraries.
6. One group's response indicated that RSS, History, STARS and CODES all have clear missions, but that MARS' mission differs very little from the newly reorganized RSS section. "Because of the ubiquitous presence of electronic resources and services in reference, it is impossible to separate the two. Is it time to merge efforts with RSS and be a more cohesive group with a clear mission? Increasing the size of the existing committees and possibly forming some additional interest groups could address specific needs."
7. In order to fulfill a need, MARS will need "to be as cutting edge as it had been 25-30 years ago."
8. MARS can provide an expanded leadership role through its focus on delivery of e-services and training, also in using digital application tools in library settings.
9. MARS committees are engaged with the latest technologies and how they can be used for quality reference service.

APPENDIX B   MARS PROGRAMS, 2002- THROUGH ANNUAL 2007; BY SPONSORING COMMITTEE

Program Planning Committee
 MARS Chairs Programs
- Annual 2007. Harnessing the Hive: Social Networks and Libraries.
  In 2007, we also developed a conference wiki in 2007 for members not able to attend.
- Annual 2006. Who's out There and What are They Doing? Supporting the Independent User.
- Annual 2005. E-Reference Services: What Are Our Users Telling Us?
- Annual 2004 Celebrating a Decade of Web-based Reference Collections -- Where do we go from here?
- Annual 2003. Information Commons Challenge: Take Ownership of Technology Before It Takes Ownership of You!
- Annual 2002. Bridging Resources Together: The Digital Library Meets Google.
- Annual 2001. Ships Passing in the Night: Librarian/Vendor Communications.

Preconference Planning Committee
- Annual 2007. Reinvented Reference 3: Emerging Technologies for Reference Services. June 22, 2007. Highlights are available at Jami Haskell's blog: http://librarianlikeme.wordpress.com/2007/06/22/reinvented-reference-iii-emerging-technologies-for-reference-services/
- Annual 2006. Reinvented Reference 2: The Integration of Digital and Traditional Reference Services. June 23. 2006.
- Annual 2005. Reinvented Reference: The Integration of Digital and Traditional Reference Services. June 24, 2005.
- Annual 2003. Digital Reference @ Your Library II: Directions and Opportunities.
- Annual 2002. Digital Reference @ Your Library

Digital Reference Guidelines Committee (Ad Hoc)
- Draft Guidelines for Implementing and Maintaining Virtual Reference Services. Discussion Forum.

Education Training and Support Committee
- Annual 2006. Library Website as Branch Site.
- Midwinter 2005. Discussion Forum. [Topic unavailable.]
- Annual 2004. Going the Distance: Librarians Supporting Online Courses.
- Annual 2002. Care and Feeding of the Virtual Librarian: Training & Support for Electronic Reference.

Hot Topics in Electronic Reference Discussion Group
- Annual 2007. Libraries2Go: Library Services for Handhelds.
- Midwinter 2007. Not Your Dad's Interface: Next Generation OPACs and Search Engines.
- Annual 2006. Expanding the Library: Integrating Library Services into Course Management Systems, Portals, and Beyond.
- Midwinter 2006. Integrating Electronic Reference Resources into the Library.
- Annual 2005. Metasearch and the cutting edge! What are libraries doing to extend basic metasearch services?
- Midwinter 2005. Metasearch: What Is, What Could Be, and How Standards Can Help Us Get There!

- Annual 2004. Outsourcing MARC records for electronic journals holdings -- the ultimate access solution?
- Midwinter 2004. [Topic unavailable.]
- Midwinter 2003. Metalib and SFX-Enhancing access to electronic resources.
- Annual 2003. Two topics: ALA Web Page; Information common Approach to Reference.
- Annual 2002.   Quality Virtual Reference Service.
- Midwinter 2002. Pitfalls, pratfalls, and positive potential of personalizable library websites in delivering customized content to your core constituencies.
- Annual 2001. Silver Bullet? OpenURL and Link Servers (SFX, Openly Jake) Take Aim at the "Appropriate Copy" Problem.

Local Systems and Services Committee
- Midwinter 2005. Usability and Interface Issues for Federated Search Systems and OpenURL Resolvers. Discussion Forum.
- Annual 2003. Federated Search Systems vs. Corporate discussion forum.
- Midwinter 2002. Usability Testing for Reference Librarians: Doing It Cheap, Doing It Right, Doing It Yourself.

Management of Electronic Reference Services (MERS) Committee
- Midwinter 2005. (Co-Sponsored with Virtual Reference Discussion Group.) Is Virtual Reference Changing the Subject Specialist Model? Discussion Forum.
- Annual 2004. Management Tools and Issues in Digital Reference

Managers in MARS Discussion Group
- Annual 2003.   [Topic unavailable.]
- Midwinter 2003. Security; IT decisions without librarian input.
- Annual 2002. Negotiating with Vendors for Better Pricing and Other Advantages.
- Midwinter 2002. Electronic Resources on a Shoestring.
- Annual 2001. [Topic unavailable.]

Products and Services Committee
- Midwinter 2006.   RSS and News Feeds discussion forum.
- Midwinter 2005. Newspaper Content and Access discussion forum.
- Midwinter 2004. Library Instruction In the Courseware Environment.
- Midwinter 2003. One Stop Searching: Effects on Information Literacy, Research, and the Learning Process.
- Midwinter 2002. We Deliver! Bringing Live Reference To Our Users.
- Midwinter 2001. How Much? Why? The Economics of Online Full-Text.

Public Libraries Committee
- Annual 2007. Electronic Databases: Training That Works.
- Annual 2005. Paper or Plastic? Print vs. Electronic? Which Sources do Public Librarians Go To For Information? Discussion Forum.
- Annual 2003, Fading Line Between Public and Academic Libraries: Are Public Libraries Electronic Reference Services Supporting Academic Communities?
- Midwinter 2002. I'm addicted to Google and Feel Guilty About It! Discussion Forum.

User Access to Services Committee
- Annual 2006. Co-sponsored program with RSS Catalog Use Committee. [topic unavailable]
- Annual 2005. Do You Trust Your IT Staff? Do They Trust You? Whose Computers Are These Anyway?

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Virtual Reference Discussion Group
- Annual 2007. [Co-sponsored with MERS] Changing the Subject Specialist Model? Discussion Forum.
- Annual 2007. If you could fix your VR system, what would you change?
- Midwinter 2007.   [Topic unavailable.]
- Annual 2006.   [Topic unavailable.]
- Midwinter 2006. It's All Just Reference.
- Annual 2005. Assessing Core Competencies for Virtual Reference.
- Midwinter 2005. [Co-Sponsored with MERS] Is Virtual Reference Changing the Subject Specialist Model?
- Annual 2004. Assessing Your Market.
- Midwinter 2004. Collaboration and Quality of Service.
- Annual 2003. Staffing a Virtual Reference Service   [Had to cancel this scheduled program in Toronto.]
- Midwinter 2003. Inaugural meeting of the DG, topic not available.

Other
- Annual 2007. RUSA RSS/MARS Virtual Reference Services Committee. See It, Hear It, Touch It: How do Communication and Learning Styles Affect Virtual Reference Service? MARS/RSS Virtual Reference Committee
- Annual 2006. Abuse is in the Eye of the Beholder: Managing Challenging Users in Chat Virtual Reference.
- Midwinter 2006. RUSA/RSS Hot Topics in Front Line Reference Discussion Group. Who Says We're Not Busy?!? New Ways of Measuring Reference Activity.
- Annual 2005. (RSS/MARS co-sponsorship) Yours, Mine, and Ours: Quality of Service in Cooperative Virtual Reference.
- Annual 2002. LITA/ALCTS Authority Control in the online environment interest group and the LITA Library Consortia Interest Group, (MARS co-sponsorship) Real World Steps to Interoperability between Electronic Resources
- Annual 2001. RUSA/MARS and LAMA.   Having it All? Work and Family.

APPENDIX C   MARS GOALS, 2006-2007
(most recent for the reporting period)
(http://www.ala.org/ala/rusa/rusaourassoc/rusasections/mars/marssection/marsgoals200607.cfm)

1) Complete the five-year section review

2) Draft Strategic Goals for MARS in concordance with the RUSA 2006-2009 Strategic Plan.

- Following the RUSA model, begin planning for a SWOT analysis either at Midwinter 2008 with input virtually before that date to determine areas of opportunity and change for the next 5 years. Participants in this SWOT will be all interested section members.
- Write an introduction to the process written and implement a timeline.
- Identify a facilitator for the 2008 SWOT.
- Appoint a task force to plan and coordinate the Strategic Goals process.
- The SWOT (conducted during the next Chair's term) will be used with the completed section review to determine if there are areas for retreat as well as growth. What is being done elsewhere in RUSA/ALA? Do we partner, do it better, or stop doing it?

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3) Meet the continuing education needs of members. CE was identified in the RUSA Value survey as the 5th most important function of RUSA (out of 11 categories) and 10th in the successfulness of RUSA in meeting member needs.

- Ascertain the skills needed by reference services personnel in the future and ways of preparing both new and experienced reference personnel to fulfill these needs.
- The MARS Continuing Education and Publications Task Force is at work on determining member interests, areas of need, and methods of delivering continuing education content.
- Develop at 3-5 plan for continuing education and publication activities for both conference attendees and non-conference attendees

4) Continue to develop the MARS Web Site as the public face for the section – both for members and non-members.

- Determine and distribute deadlines for various content (committee rosters, program announcements and content, etc.) and a "nag schedule" for committee chairs to ensure appropriately current content on MARS-level and committee-level pages.
- Recognizing that most members and non-members will not visit the MARS page every week, current and accurate content is vital to return visits as well as the smooth functioning of the section.
- Determine archiving mechanism and schedule for aged content. Determine if ALA has standard procedures and mechanisms for archiving. In the absence of organization standard, create our own. Determine what content should be archived.
- Appoint an intern or assistant for the webmaster so that this person has assistance and has an heir-apparent. This may require a change in the bylaws?

5) Encourage a broader and more active membership in the MARS section

- 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. Encourage and support virtual membership wherever appropriate.
- Explore use of technologies such as Web broadcasting and meeting software to expand MARS programming to reach more members and potential members.
- Write a guide for working with virtual members. This is something that RUSA has talked about. Need to include in minutes of meetings work which has done virtually, particularly any actions that were taken.

6) Focus on current issues in technology and the provision of electronic reference through the work of MARS committees and ad hoc groups.

- Explore the impact of new technologies such as linking services, metasearch, and NextGen library catalogs on users, on library reference services, and on reference collections. Stay abreast of emerging standards for reference technologies and assisting RUSA in the development of those standards. Advocate for the needs of users, especially those with disabilities or with limited access to technology.
- Keep informed of legislation that affects access to electronic products, including copyright and licensing, archiving and fair use guidelines.

(Other years' goals available at
http://www.ala.org/ala/rusa/rusaourassoc/rusasections/mars/marssection/marshandbook/handbook_pgs_61thru68.pdf - Appendix C)

Appendix D   SECTION REVIEW SURVEY QUESTIONS COMPLETED BY MARS COMMITTEES

[Responses most relevant to the report are addressed in the Section Review content; questions were based on the suggested template from RUSA]

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

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?

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?**

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.)?**

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.**

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.**

7. **List the products, significant activities, and programs of the committee for the last 5 years in chronological order, most recent firs, 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.**

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?]

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

9. The value and focus of MARS publications (MARS has a Continuing Education and Publications Task Force currently investigating these areas.)

   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?

[Note: See *Report of the MARS Task Force on Continuing Education and Publications*, June 2008, for detailed information; Task Force chaired by Linda Keiter]

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

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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 <u>MARS Handbook</u> 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

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- 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 then 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

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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 firs, 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.

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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 to 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. (cl)
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

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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.