LBSC 650-0201: Information Access Services  
Spring 2011: Thursdays 5:30pm – 8:15pm  
Hornbake 0123

Instructor  
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Office: Hornbake Library Building, South Wing, 4105C  
Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Website: http://elms.umd.edu (Note: The course website weekly schedule should supersede those found in this printed syllabus and will be updated throughout the semester.)

Course Email List: lbsc650-0201-spring11@coursemail.umd.edu

Course Goals  
By the end of the semester, students will:  
• Understand the nature and theory of individual and community information needs and how to best meet them through reference and information services.  
• Become proficient at applying a variety of search strategies to effectively locate and then evaluate relevant information from various print and electronic resources.  
• Understand the current problems, trends, and issues in the field of reference and information services.  
• Be able to characterize the role of information mediator in the broader information landscape of the 21st century.

Evaluation Criteria

• Assignment 1: Q&A Services Comparison Paper (15%)  
• Assignment 2: Reference Interview In-class Practicum (10%)  
• Assignment 3: Reference Resources Annotated Bibliography Group Project (20%)  
• Assignment 4: Digital Research Resources Guide (20%)  
• Assignment 5: Database Question & Answer (25%)  
• Class participation (10%)  

Course Textbook & Readings  
Earlier versions should not be used. Copies should be available in the University bookstore and online at Amazon or Barnes & Noble.

Those interested in improving their search skills may look to the following optional books, although we will not discuss these in class:  
A basic primer on search query formulation (e.g., Boolean operators)
Other course readings will be linked to from the ELMS course site. They will be available for free through the University electronic reserves or via the University of Maryland’s subscription journals and databases. Readings may be updated throughout the semester.

**Academic Integrity**
The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit [http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/code.html](http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/code.html) and [http://www.studentconduct.umd.edu/](http://www.studentconduct.umd.edu/).

**Students with Disabilities**
Please let me know at the beginning of the semester if you have any kind of physical or learning disability that will affect your coursework. I am happy to work out appropriate accommodations for you along with the University’s Disability Support Services (301-314-7682; [http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS/](http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS/)).

**Attendance policy**
Attendance is extremely important in this course, as much of the learning that will occur is based on in-class activities and discussion. As such, attendance will be taken and will influence each student’s class participation grade. Allowances can be made for special circumstances such as illness (self or dependent), religious observances, and other compelling circumstances beyond the student’s control (see the University’s attendance policy at [http://www.testudo.umd.edu/soc/atedasse.html](http://www.testudo.umd.edu/soc/atedasse.html)). Please contact me as soon as you know (or suspect) that you will not be able to attend. When the university closes due to inclement weather we will not meet (see the campus website or snow line 301-405-SNOW if there is a question). I will email the class to clarify any changes in assignment due dates and re-scheduling.

**Late Assignments & Grading Procedures**
It is important that assignments are turned in on time since we will typically be discussing them as a class once they are submitted. A hard copy of written assignment will be turned in at the beginning of class, unless otherwise indicated. If there are extenuating circumstances that make it impossible to turn in an assignment please let me know ahead of time (i.e., before the assignment is due) so that we can make appropriate arrangements if possible. If you believe an assignment has been graded unfairly, you may send me an email outlining the reasons why you believe the assignment grade was inappropriate. I will re-grade the assignment taking into consideration your additional comments. However, this does not assure that the grade will increase. In fact, I will grade it as consistently as possible to those that I have graded from other students, making it possible for the grade to go up or down.

**Student Expectations**
As graduate students, you are expected to fully participate in all class activities. Although grades are an important indication of the effort that you put into a class, a good grade should not be the end goal of a course. Instead, the goal should be to internalize the skills and concepts covered in the course and learn to apply them to real-world settings – both current and future. Unlike some undergraduate courses, you should not expect that I will re-hash all of the same material contained in the readings. Instead, it will be
used as a starting point for a discussion that will only be meaningful if everyone is well prepared for class and has read AND thought about the material ahead of time. You should be prepared to answer questions about the assigned readings and participate in activities related to them. In addition, I highly encourage all of you to introduce the class to your own experiences and relevant readings, and continue conversations and debates concerning the course content outside of the classroom, in our course website and in the halls. I believe that as you take a shared ownership in your learning you will be richly rewarded. To help you take some initiative, I have included “additional optional readings” for many of the topics we will discuss in class. We will not be able to cover them in depth in class, but they are noteworthy papers.
## Course schedule (subject to revision)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Session Topics</th>
<th>Assignment Due</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jan 27</td>
<td>Class Introductions; syllabus Q&amp;A, reference services past, present, and future</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Feb 3</td>
<td>Information needs &amp; behaviors; community needs; information seeking; Information mediation: reference interview</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Feb 10</td>
<td>SLA Guest Speakers</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Feb 17</td>
<td>Reference Interview In-class Practicum</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Feb 24</td>
<td>Search part 1: Bibliographic control &amp; search strategies</td>
<td>Q&amp;A Services Comparison Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mar 3</td>
<td>Search part 2: Search techniques &amp; search engines</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Mar 10</td>
<td>Information evaluation; access tools; instruction</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Mar 17</td>
<td>Information Sources part 1: Dictionaries, Encyclopedias, &amp; Ready Reference</td>
<td>1 Group Presentation</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Mar 24</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Mar 31</td>
<td>Information Sources part 2: Gov Docs; Collection development; document delivery &amp; interlibrary loan</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Apr 7</td>
<td>Information Sources part 3: Health, Law, &amp; Business; Archives</td>
<td>2 Group Presentations</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Apr 14</td>
<td>Information Sources part 4: Maps, Atlases, GIS Systems, Travel Guides; Visual Arts Resources; Library 2.0</td>
<td>1 Group Presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Apr 21</td>
<td>Information Sources Part 5: Biographical Resources; Bibliographic Resources; Open Access; Scholarly Communication</td>
<td>1 Group Presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Apr 28</td>
<td>McKeldin Library Site Visit: Karen Patterson, Guest Speaker</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>May 5</td>
<td>Digital Research Resources Guide Presentations; course wrap-up</td>
<td>Digital Resources Guide</td>
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Assignment 1: Q&A Services Comparison Paper

Purpose & Background:

Asking and answering questions is a key activity of all information professionals that occurs in a variety of settings. Librarians and archivists continue to provide reference services in-person and via telephone, as well as via email, discussion forums, and chat services. In addition, a variety of free or fee-based question and answer services have cropped up in non-library or archive settings such as ChaCha, Yahoo! Answers, and a variety of specialized online communities. It is important to recognize how these services are similar or different in order to know when one is more appropriate than another, as well as how to effectively interact when using different media. The purpose of this assignment is to get you thinking about the differences and similarities of these services so that you can effectively navigate and participate in them.

Instructions:

The following steps should be completed:

1. For this assignment, you will pose a reference question via two different services. Your question may relate to a paper you are writing or a personal information need. It should be something you are genuinely interested in. It should not be a ready reference question that can be found by googling. It should be a question (or series of questions) that is likely to lead to a reference interview or at least some back-and-forth with the answerer. When developing your question, also make sure you have a scenario of why you need the answer.

2. Decide on two different types of reference services that you will pose your question to. Make sure they are significantly different services. For example, don’t choose two different chat services, instead choose a chat service and a phone service or a face-to-face service. A far from complete list of different services is provided below to get you started, but please feel free to try something not listed below.

3. Ask your question on both services you have chosen. Feel free to ask your question multiple times if your initial experience doesn’t give you much to talk or write about. You can play around with more than just 2 types of services, but you should end up focusing on just two in your write-up. Otherwise, you won’t have enough space.

4. Write a 5-6-page (double-spaced, 12 point font) paper comparing the experiences. Your write-up should state the question you posed, identify the different services used and how the interview unfolded, and compare the overall interaction, drawing attention to the similarities and differences of the services and your experiences. It should consider how the underlying platform and nature of the service impacted the experience. You should relate your experiences to several concepts from the readings (e.g., around 3-6 references to class readings we’ve covered or perhaps pertinent readings from another class). You should consider things like the level of interaction and negotiation of the question, the quality and timeliness of the response, your overall satisfaction with the answer, the enjoyability of the interaction, etc. Try to do more than simply state the obvious. You may supplement your own experience with the experiences of others that you may have observed in the same setting if desired, although this is not required. The readings from Joseph Janes in Introduction to Reference Work in the Digital Age may help inspire you (see readings on ELMS site). The write-up should not exceed 6 double-spaced pages (references may be included at the end, in footnotes, or on a 7th page). At least 2.5 pages should be dedicated to the comparison, so don’t spend too much space discussing the nuances of what
you did. Instead, spend the space analyzing your experience and comparing the two experiences, focusing on how the medium affected the experience.

**Example Q&A Services:**

You may want to familiarize yourself with a broad array of question-answering services before settling on the ones you will use for your assignment. Be sure that the services you select are appropriate for the question you ask. A few examples of different services include (but are certainly not limited to):

- **Face-to-face interaction** at the reference desk of a public library, UMD academic library, or archive.
- **Telephone interaction** via a library telephone reference service (e.g., Enoch Pratt in Baltimore at 410-396-5430 see [http://www.epfl.net/ask/](http://www.epfl.net/ask/) ; **Montgomery County Public Libraries Telephone Reference** 240-777-0001 ; McKeldin Library 301-405-0800 see [http://www.lib.umd.edu/help.html](http://www.lib.umd.edu/help.html)
- **Asynchronous interaction** via a library or non-library service (e.g., Internet Public Library at [http://www.ipl.org/div/askus/](http://www.ipl.org/div/askus/) ; Yahoo! Answers; a specialized online help-based community; or another service – see Yahoo's list at [http://dir.yahoo.com/Reference/Ask_an_expert/](http://dir.yahoo.com/Reference/Ask_an_expert/) )
- **Synchronous interaction** via chat or video-conferencing (e.g., Maryland's AskUsNow! at [www.askusnow.info](http://www.askusnow.info) ; U of M library chat service; or see LiveRef(sm): A Registry of Real-Time Digital Reference Services at [http://www.public.iastate.edu/~CYBERSTACKS/LiveRef.htm](http://www.public.iastate.edu/~CYBERSTACKS/LiveRef.htm) ; Chat Reference Services at [http://liswiki.org/wiki/Chat_reference_libraries](http://liswiki.org/wiki/Chat_reference_libraries) ).
- **Mobile phone Q&A services** (e.g., ChaCha – see [http://www.chacha.com/](http://www.chacha.com/))
- **Any other platform** you want to try (e.g., posting your question on Facebook or Twitter in a status feed)

**Due Date; February 24**

**Evaluation:** This assignment represents **15 points** of your final grade. The grade will be based on the level of engagement with the readings (including citations of the readings), the depth of analysis in your comparison of the experiences, and the nuanced observations you made about the interaction itself.
Assignment 2: Reference Interview In-class Practicum

Purpose & Background:
The reference interview is one of the key activities of an information services professional, regardless of the setting, (i.e.—libraries, archives, special information environments.) Developing the skills needed to engage in and complete a successful interview with a patron requires practice. The purpose of this exercise is to provide the opportunity to develop those skills through a role-playing activity, simulating the reference interview experience in class to allow for feedback and peer review.

Instructions:
In pairs, students will create a reference interview process. Utilizing behavior models and practices located in the course readings and subsequent discussions, each student pair will develop a 10-minute long question and answer experience that could realistically occur in an information setting of their choosing. One student will act as the information professional, the other as the patron. The pairs will practice this role-playing independently and will “perform” the experience in class. The instructor will give feedback, and the class as a whole will provide a constructive critique of the performance.

Due Date: February 17

Evaluation:
This assignment represents 10 points of your final grade. The grade will be based upon the application of best practices in the provision of reference service as found in the readings, the development of the questions and answer, as well as the communication skills demonstrated in the performance.
Assignment 3: Reference Resources Annotated Bibliography Group Project

Purpose:

Information professionals are largely distinguished by their extensive knowledge of information sources that are available and their ability to match those sources to specific information needs. They are also expected to present information in the most useful ways. The purpose of this assignment is to help you delve deeply into one set of the following reference resources:

1. Bibliographic Resources
2. Encyclopedias, Dictionaries, and Ready Reference Sources
3. Health, Law, and Business
4. Maps, Atlases, Geographical Information Systems, and Travel Guides
5. Biographical Resources

…and create a useful annotated bibliography and share your insights and lessons learned with the class.

Instructions:

This is a group assignment consisting of teams of 3 students. Groups can be formed independently or the instructor will assign them alphabetically. Each group will select one of the resource categories listed above.

Once you have identified a group and selected a category, you will then develop an annotated bibliography of resources on that category in a manner that is appropriate for them (e.g., print copy, a website, a handout, a Zotero group, Squidoo page). Each group will present the final annotated bibliography to the LBSC650 class and instructor, and will explain and demonstrate how this resource would be used in an information literacy setting. You will then report to the class on the process you went through, the resources you examined, and the lessons learned. The class presentations will be limited to 1 hour for each group.

Due Date: Groups will sign up for a time slot for their presentation on one of the presentation days (see schedule)

Evaluation: This assignment represents 20 points of your final grade. All team members will receive the same grade on the assignment (unless there is clear evidence that one of the members did not participate), so make sure you coordinate and help one another as appropriate. The following criteria will be used to grade the assignment:

- Comprehensiveness of resources provided: inclusion of the most important resources, as well as diversity of types of resources presented – 4 points
- Usefulness of annotations: insightful evaluations and descriptions of resources and their unique benefits and drawbacks – 4 points
- Appropriateness of medium and visual appeal of final annotated bibliography – 4 points
- Insightful, engaging, and clear presentation style of in-class presentation – 4 points
- Demonstration of how the resource would be used in an information literacy setting – 4 points
Assignment 4: Digital Research Resources Guide

Purpose:

All information professionals are largely distinguished by their extensive knowledge of information sources that are available and their ability to match those sources to specific information needs. They are also expected to present information in the most useful ways to satisfy user needs. The purpose of this assignment is to help you delve deeply into one specific subject and create a guide of digital resources for that specific topic. The guide should be created with a specific user group in mind. This is an opportunity to be creative and to research a topic that is of interest to you.

Instructions:

This is an individual assignment. Each student will identify a topic of their choosing. It should not be as broad as the subject areas identified for the group bibliographies, but should be a specific topic that requires a more finely structured reference inquiry. Some examples may be: Outer Banks folklore; the music of John Cage; Canadian female fiction writers; housing foreclosure; the 1986 Red Sox baseball team; the “stink bug,” to name only a few. Use this exercise to explore a topic of interest to you for research or pleasure, or a topic of interest for another student or researcher, friend or family member.

Use this topic for the research consultation comparison assignment, so that you can build on the assignments and really utilize most of the semester to delve into the topic and create a fully comprehensive research guide, demonstrating a mastery of knowledge of the topic.

Using the sources discovered through the research consultation and continued independent research, create a research guide of digital resources for the topic. The topic should be represented in a medium and format appropriate to the research findings. You might want to create an online document that includes video or audio clips if your guide is on a performing arts or sports subject. You might want to develop a printed guide with illustrations if your guide is on a visual art subject. You will give a 10-minute presentation to the class on the research process and the development of the guide, including rationale for the selected topic and product medium and format.

Due Date: May 5. Individual student presentations will be scheduled alphabetically; products submitted at the beginning of class.

Evaluation:

This assignment represents 20 points of your final grade. The following criteria will be used to grade the assignment:

- Comprehensiveness of resources provided: inclusion of the most important resources, as well as diversity of types of resources presented – 5 points
- Usefulness of the guide to the researcher, as evidenced in the product – 5 points
- Appropriateness of medium and visual appeal of the final product – 5 points
- Insightful, engaging, and clear presentation style of in-class presentation – 5 points
Assignment 5: Database Q&A

Purpose: The purpose of this assignment is to improve your ability to find relevant resources and answers to questions efficiently and effectively, as well as introduce you to information resource databases and how to use them effectively. It is also meant to give you experience teaching others how to search effectively and what to look for in a database or similar resource.

Instructions: Each student will be responsible for coming up with a challenging reference question and describing an effective strategy or tactic for answering the question using a high-quality database. Every student will try and answer other students’ questions and post their answer on their ELMS journal before class. Below is a description of each piece of the assignment:

Step 1: All students sign up on ELMS wiki for a database they will use and a week they will develop a question for. After the first day of class, each student should use the ELMS wiki to sign up for a week they will present. They should put their name by one of the weeks (making sure that only 2-3 students sign up for any single week), as well as the database they will be using. Students should make sure to all use different databases, ideally ones mentioned in the book or ones UMD subscribes to, rather than esoteric databases that classmates are not likely to use again in the future.

Step 2: Askers post question to ELMS wiki. Develop one specific, challenging reference question where the answer is best found in the database you chose. Try and choose a real-world question where the answer cannot be found through a basic Google search (it may be harder than you think). Feel free to ask reference providers or friends for ideas. You may devise the question so that students will need to use advanced features of the database. The question should be such that someone would know if they got it right or wrong, or at least they would know if they had a solid or a weak answer. Post the question to the class ELMS wiki at least one week before your presentation so your fellow students will have a week to work on answering it.

Step 3: Class members post answers to their ELMS answer journal. Each student should post a journal (i.e., private blog) entry with their answer to the questions posed by other students for the given week. Nobody but the instructor will see the answers. If you cannot find the answer, just briefly describe what you did to try and find the answer. You must post your answers before class starts for full credit. Students may try and answer the questions using other databases they are familiar with or general search engines. This will allow them to contrast the experience with the approach of using the database.

Step 4: Askers give 10-minute in-class presentation. On the week you are signed up for, you will have 10 minutes to give a presentation on the database you chose and the search question/answer you devised. This is not a long time, so you should prepare well ahead of time and anticipate potential problems with demos etc. You may use PowerPoint slides, but do not need to. The presentation should include the following items:

- A brief description of the database you used and why it was a good one to use for the particular question (e.g., its credibility; coverage; unique features). You may look at reviews of the database or comments in the book about the database for expert opinions on it.
- A demo of the search strategy, tactics, and/or database features used to effectively find the answer (including your own commentary reflecting on tips or tricks or lessons you’ve learned about the search process)
- The answer (including an evaluation of the reliability of the answer)
Step 5: Askers provide short ELMS wiki database write-up. Provide a 1 paragraph critical write-up of the database you focused on, highlighting its coverage, limitations, and unique characteristics. This will largely mirror what you discussed in your presentation. You do not need to discuss your specific question and answer in the write-up.

Due Date: 1-2 Askers will sign up for each week. Class members will post answers each week.

Evaluation: In total, this assignment will make up 25 points of your final grade. The quality of the question you develop, its answer, your presentation of the database to the class, and the wiki write-up will make up 12 points. More challenging questions (i.e., those that not all students can find and are not easily found via Google) that are meaningful are ideal. Insights about the database that others may not know are also desirable. Your attempts to answer the questions of others will make up the remaining 13 points (~1 point for each week). Your grade will be lowered for late posts, but you’ll still get partial credit.
Class Participation

Purpose:

Much of the learning that will occur in this class will be a result of the discussions and activities we hold in class and on the course website. Therefore, it is essential that class members attend class and come prepared to actively participate in classroom activities. Sharing news and insights related to the class via the email list can help supplement our in-class discussions.

In-Class Participation:

You are expected to show up to class every week and be ready to participate. This means that you should be ready to be called upon to discuss any of the readings and provide your own ideas and experiences related to the topic at hand. Throughout the semester I will ask students to participate in various ways (e.g., join a debate, summarize an article, share a personal experience, answer a discussion question posted on the course site). You should try and make at least one substantive comment during classroom discussions each week and actively participate in small-group activities. Feel free to take initiative and share news articles that are pertinent to the class or raise questions or topics we haven’t covered, although we may not have a considerable amount of time to address those not directly related to the content at hand.

Email List Participation:

You are all encouraged to send links to news, reflections on how readings from other classes relate to our readings, personal experiences or observation related to the class, announcements of pertinent events, etc. to the course email list (lbsc650-0201-spring11@coursemail.umd.edu). Contributions to the list are not required, but can help compensate for students who do not participate in class as often.

Reference Environment as Place and Space Site Visit:

As part of your class participation grade you will visit a physical place where the reference experience occurs, such as buildings that house libraries, archives, or other information settings and locate the physical reference place. Observe the environment as a physical structure and as an informational transaction space. Consider the following questions in your observations:

- What aspects of the structure make it workable (or not) for this type of activity?
- What aspects of the reference activities space make it conducive (or not) to transmitting information and addressing informational needs?
- For the information provided by this specific library, archive or other setting, evaluate what is required by way of place and space?
- Could the information be transmitted and the reference activities take place without the physical reference structure? Why or why not?

Record your observations and be prepared to discuss in class.

Evaluation: Class Participation represents 10 points of your final grade. 7 points will be awarded for simply showing up to class (1/2 point each day) and the other 3 points will be awarded for actively participating in the class. If you miss a class period ask me and I will give you some alternative way of making up the points.