

# Combined Services Desk Report



Authored By:

Mary Ann Venner

Contributing Feedback:

Bethany Hardikar, Doug Campbell, Julie Leuzinger, Susan Whitmer, RIS GLAs and Access Services Student Assistants

## Background

The first floor of Willis Library housed seven service desks: the Checkout Desk, Circulation Desk, Reserves Desk, Fines Desk, Interlibrary Loan Desk, Tech Desk and Reference Desk. In the Summer of 2011, the Reserves Desk and Fines Desk were consolidated with the Circulation Desk. Facilities and Systems took over management of the Checkout Desk. Circulation thus became responsible for staffing and managing one service desk which offered circulation, reserves and fines collection services.

In the Fall of 2011, the Circulation and ILL departments were merged together to form the Access Services Department. Circulation staff was trained to conduct ILL services at the Circulation Desk. As a result, the Circulation Desk offered circulation, reserves, fines and ILL services.

In the Summer of 2012, another important merger took place. The Reference Desk was merged with the Circulation Desk to create a single service point. A new name was created for the desk, the Library Services Desk. Managers from both Access Services and Reference worked together to implement transitioning to a single service point. Training plans were created and hours of operation were discussed. Circulation staff would answer basic reference questions. Reference staff (Graduate Library Assistants) would answer basic circulation questions. An on-call librarian service was created to respond to in-depth reference questions. Walkie-talkies were used to contact the on-call librarian. Willis office 123, adjacent to the Library Services Desk, was established as a meeting room on-call librarians could use when needed.

In December 2012, managers of the Access Services and Reference Departments met to discuss how well the merged desk was functioning by answering a series of service desk assessment questions.



## Library Services Desk Assessment

1. What has been working?
  - GLAs work closely with the Circulation student assistants
  - Proximity of reference staff enables reference questions to be answered more quickly
  - Convenient and effective way for patrons to receive research assistance
  - Positive feedback from patrons regarding location of reference assistance
  - Easy to call for assistance-ring bell at the desk for full time help
  - GLAs and Circ student assistants learn a great deal from each other working at the desk together
  - Desk staff feel more useful and accessible-not just providing directions or printer assistance
  - Expanded training for student assistants (reference and fines) has decreased workload for full time staff
  - Teamwork displayed by staff from both departments is why the merged desk concept is working so well
  - Better interaction with 24 Center desk staff
  - Good feedback from managers and service desk staff
  
2. What we need to work on?
  - Improve printing/copying set up, difficult having to send patrons back to the 24 Center Desk
  - Need a dual monitor at the desk where reference is located
  - Librarian on-call librarians too far away, hard to hear on walkie-talkies
  - GLAs would learn more if they could hear how librarians answer questions
  - More circ training for Reference staff
  - Reserve items need to be shelved more quickly
  - Receipt printer-sometimes are delayed in printing out receipts
  - Need better desk chairs
  - Need to be open later at night
  - Would be helpful to have wireless scanners, keyboards and mice
  - Self-Checkout machine does not work efficiently-not all books are accepted due to size
  - Need to encourage Circulation student assistants to contact on-call librarian if they need reference assistance and the GLA at the desk is busy
  - Have on-call librarians stop by the desk at the beginning of their shifts
  - Make sure student assistants are paying attention to patrons coming to the desk



3. Staffing-do we have enough people or too many?
  - Patrons come in waves
  - Good staffing model: 2 student assistants and 1 GLA
  - Too much weekend coverage-not many patrons need help
4. Do we have a developed list of core competencies?
  - Decided this was needed
  - Create key phrases list
  - Include ECL in the discussion since there is a merged service desk there
  - Keep updated with changes
  - Develop a Circulation basics checklist
5. We need written Library Services Desk procedures for training, utilize Blackboard Learn more and have monthly quizzes. What other training methods should we utilize?
  - More circ training
  - Use public services group email to update
  - Require staff to view Blackboard Learn training materials at the beginning of their shifts
  - Encourage people to attend HR customer service training
6. What initiatives have we been able to pursue as a result of the combined service desk?
  - Embedded librarian initiative
  - More instruction
7. How have the Reference and Access Services Departments been affected by having the combined service desk?
  - Positive responses from staff
  - Easier to help patrons
  - Frequent communication between departments
  - Positive and welcoming service desk environment
  - Increased presence of a Public Services Division-teamwork
  - Learn more about each other's departments
  - Lots of on the job training
  - Supportive staff from both departments
8. What additional services should we think about offering at the Library Services Desk?
  - Headphones
  - Dual monitors
9. Should we conduct a survey to evaluate quality of services at the desk in the near future?
  - Yes



10. Can we use an i-Pad at the service desk to provide services: surveys, reserves searching, reference assistance?
- Too small to use for reference assistance
  - Will try to use it for reserves searching assistance
  - Customer service surveys
11. What service benefits/detriments have you observed as a result of the combined service desk?
- Both departments are working better together
  - Desk coverage is better
  - Student assistant expenditures reduced
  - No more desk labels-single service point
  - Better overall service
12. Action items
- Improve marketing of the service desk
    - Head of Access Services developing a marketing plan
  - Review hours of operation each semester
    - Hours of Library Services desk expanded to midnight in Spring 2013, closed on Saturdays
  - Get dual monitor for reference area of the desk
    - Dual monitor installed in January 2013
  - Create a core list of reference and circ competencies
    - Head of Access Services will work with GLA supervisors



## Conclusion

The combined service desk model has created many opportunities for the Public Services Division to build upon its strong commitment to providing excellent customer service. A single service point for reference and circulation services enables patrons to receive better research support. Waiting lines are reduced because we are able to provide more staff at a combined service desk. Librarians are able to devote more time to library instruction.

There are also internal benefits as well. Well trained staffs from both departments are working together, sharing skill sets, knowledge and ideas. Opportunities to provide feedback are sparked by interactions at the combined service desk. This feedback is used to create innovative services based on needs mentioned at the service desk, such as the faculty book delivery service. Managers from both departments work closely together to improve customer service and staff training.

Overall, the combined service desk initiative has been a success.

