To: Heads of Public Services

From: The Digital Reference Common Interest Group via Sherry DeDecker

Date: January 13, 2011

In re: Impact of proposed changes in UC systemwide collection development to subject-specific reference services on local campuses

**What is the problem or area of concern?**

How can a campus provide subject specific reference assistance if a librarian with that subject knowledge is not available? The Digital Reference CIG believes we should proactively consider how proposed changes to the UC systemwide collection development model will impact reference services and begin to look for scalable solutions that ensure high-quality reference for all UC students and faculty.

 **Discussion:**

There are a couple of reasons to begin this discussion now.  Of immediate and ongoing concern is finding ways to assist in providing subject specific reference when the subject specialist is on vacation, or when a position is vacant.

The question of providing in-depth, subject specific reference will become more pressing as the UC system moves closer toward shared collections and bibliographer responsibilities.  That was recommended by the Shared Monograph Planning Group (SMPG – page 9).  Some models being discussed by the SMPG include:  (1) appointing bibliographers with regional or system-wide collection development responsibility or (2) following a UCB/UCSB model in which one bibliographer does collection development and provides reference assistance for multiple campuses.

A similar recommendation is in the Next Generation Technical Services Enterprise-Level Task Force report in the “System-wide and Multi-campus Collection Development Activities” section (page 29).  The report does not mention reference, though it does recommend next steps for CDC and HOTS.  The Council of University Librarians noted this recommendation as “High priority for CDC” (page 3).

If the UC campuses change how they collect materials, it seems likely that many campuses may not have a local subject specialist available to assist with in-depth questions.

**Proposal:**

The Digital Reference CIG is the only group that focuses exclusively on reference service at a system-wide level.  For that reason the CIG proposes to explore what options are available that would allow us to create a more fluid way of referring reference questions throughout the system when a subject specialist is not available locally, and to make recommendations as to how to proceed in this new environment.  The Digital Reference CIG also acknowledges that the UC bibgroups, where our subject expertise resides, are germane to any discussion about providing in-depth subject assistance. In addition to proposing an exploration of possible options for providing subject expertise, we encourage HOPS to share these concerns with CDC and look for ways to involve the bibgroups in the discussions.