A view from an academic library: the UCSD Libraries and contemporary academic
library resources

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Much has changed in recent years with the information environment at academic
libraries and
particularly the UCSD Libraries. UCSD Libraries are more
available to the community with free parking at UCSD on weekends

Library information resources are increasingly becoming available on the Web. In
that context,
I would include standard reference works, full text electronic journal and magazine
publishing,
electronic technical reports and short reports, abstracting and indexing databases
covering
magazines and journals, electronic government documents, and general and some
specific textual
information. Book publishing is the same as always and there doesn't seem to be a
movement to
electronic.

Direct user access to indexing databases has made the expertise of reference
librarians in
information retrievel more evident.

Electronic journals are making the cost and expertise of editing more evident.

Electronic journals are not less expensive than print; 80-90% of cost is producing
the issue.
Publishers stress that the editorial cost is a major portion of their cost of
production.

Electronic journals have a licensing fee in addition to the print cost. Web-only
subs may cost
a bit less but the annual price increase structure of scholarly journal publishing
is killing
the golden goose. Universities are unwilling to support library collections with 9%
increases
each year. Change will take time but indicators are that universities and
scientists will
introduce lower-cost electronic journals in competition with more expensive
commercial
journals. This may open up local editing work for those networked to universities

and
scientists.

Many library information resources on the Web are site-licensed so that non-UCSD
users would
have to use them on-site in the UCSD Libraries. However it has never been easier to
get work
one in the academic library environment.

Typically a library user comes in looking for a precise answer, a small amount of
information
on a topic, or a review of information on a topic. As before the Web, one chooses
the approach
and tools depending on the need. The Web is the librarian's friend, we use it
constantly as a
tool for accessing our information resources, and people seem to be better able to
utilize
library information resources when presented to them with a Web interface.

Many academic libraries maintain links to reference shelf resources on the Web.
UCSD Libraries
does so at http://sshl.ucsd.edu/refshelf/

Especially useful to check its links to other reference shelves on the Web like My
Virtual
Reference Desk at http://www.refdesk.com/.

I use or recommend resources offering

Telephone, Address, Email, & Zip Code Directories
News and Newspapers
Wordsmithing (thesaurus, quotations, glossaries)
Currency Conversion
Weights & Measures Conversions
Taxonomic Dictionaries
Tax Forms
Biographical Resources
Product & Company Directories like
Thomas Register of American Manufacturers at
http://www4.thomasregister.com/index.cgi
Hoover's Online: the Ultimate Source for Company Information at
http://www.hoovers.com/

Web search engines are many. A site called Search Engine Watch at
http://www.searchenginewatch.com/ covers them. Excite, HotBot, AltaVista, and
Northern Light
are my favorites due to the number of Web pages they index.

Web directories are useful and I usually start with Yahoo.

UCSD library or UC systemwide has site-licensed access to many abstracting and indexing
databases and several have links to full text. A list of our databases is available on the
Library page accessible from UCSD's home page call Infopath at http://www.ucsd.edu . The
variety is surprising and shouldn't be overlooked if you need to research something further.

The only open-access database covering magazine and journal articles is UnCover at
http://uncweb.carl.org/ which covers over 17,000 multidisciplinary journals including popular
magazines since Fall 1988. Make their money on document delivery.

Some former commercial-only government-produced databases are now available for open access
probably because open access is now deemed to fit within the mission of the govt agency
producing the database:

The National Library of Medicine's PubMed (Medline) at
http://www4.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PubMed/

The National Agricultural Library's Agricola at
http://www.nal.usda.gov/ag98/ag98.html

NTIS technical report database at http://www.ntis.gov/advance.htm (simplified
version, shorter timespan)

USGS Selected Water Resources Abstracts at
http://h2o.usgs.gov/public/nawdex/swra.html

Dept of Energy Reports database at http://www.osti.gov/html/dra/dra.html (shorter
timespan)

Government agencies are now putting many of their technical reports up on the Web and US govt
publications are typically not copyrighted.

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There is a lot you can do on your own initiative to use the library resources at
UCSD effectively and you must be an advocate for your needs. As expected, being polite and
saying thanks goes a lot further in getting a reference staff person to be extra

helpful.
However having said that, some are innately less helpful than others.

Reference desk service has become increasingly reshaped to incorporate more clerical staff.
You may not see a reference librarian when asking for assistance; it is very likely you will
see a clerical reference assistant. Important to look out for your own interests and do not
assume the answer given is the complete or only answer if you don't get what you need. Ask
others whom you see when shifts change. You will find different approaches among reference
providers with some giving brief answers and some giving multi-faceted approaches. Some are
point-and-sit minimal helpers and some get involved.

Ask exactly the question(s) you have in mind and state how much material you need
--- some
general info or a comprehensive review

Classic reference interaction is that people won't ask first exactly what they want; then the
reference service provider engages in a reference interview to learn more to answer and the
actual question emerges

Allow plenty of time because it takes time

Be motivated because you are in a self-service environment. Reference desk staff advise but
don't do the work for you.

There is usually no single source for answering a question. Some resources may be better than
others for the same question due to the organization of infomation within them. If you aren't
quite getting what you need or it seems unusually laborious, ask the reference staff if they
have any ideas on additional resources that may provide an alternate approach to the

information.