Instructor: Dr. Wade Bishop

Office: 442 Communications Building

Availability: Tuesdays 8:00-12:00; or by appointment

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Course Description:

Information access, retrieval and use. Information seeking, user interfaces, information services and tools. Database structure, search engines, query logic, and evaluation of retrieval system performance. Required course.

Background

The amount of knowledge and skills you will gain from this course will depend on the amount of time and work you invest each week.

Much of the content of the course is problem-based. You, as a user of information, are and will always be faced with information problems that you need to solve. Users also have their own information problems, but many times they need "expert" assistance to solve them. You are the future information professional who will mediate user needs and find the best solutions for their information problems. What you will gain in this course should equip you with the basic knowledge of the reference tools and services that should be available or provided in libraries and information agencies to meet user needs.

This course may be the most challenging among the core/required courses. It is characterized by stimulating a collaborative learning atmosphere. You will be challenged, intrigued, confused, frustrated, and may be "lost" in using and evaluating interfaces and in solving information problems in both virtual and non-virtual information environments. Your dedication, perseverance, patience, and motivation should help you meet the challenge and find your way in these environments.

This course is structured to be a rewarding learning experience. It is designed to provide a foundation for advanced classes, and some of the knowledge and skills you'll need as you become an information professional who will interact with information on a regular basis.

Learning Outcomes

This course is part of the required curriculum determined by SIS faculty to contain basic knowledge that SIS students must acquire. It is intended to prepare students for specialized electives offered in the program.

Upon completion of the course, you should:

- be familiar with various types of information access and retrieval tools and systems,
- have developed skills for communicating with users/patrons and conducting a reference interview,
- have gained knowledge in using various answer-providing tools and matching user' information need to appropriate tools,
- be familiar with subscription database services,
- be aware of diversity and cultural differences in communicating with users, and
- be familiar with RUSA's (American Library Association/Reference and User Services Association) and other relevant associations' guidelines for providing effective reference/information services in specific library and information environments

…and be able to:

- compare interface options and search logic of selected search engines and databases,
- discuss the implications of selected models of user information seeking for providing effective reference service,
- evaluate the retrieval performance of search engines and databases,
- evaluate a variety of digital reference services,
- evaluate and compare interface options and search logic of selected information retrieval systems (IRs),
- discuss selected information behavior theories and models and their implications for practice,
- use metrics to evaluate the retrieval performance of selected IRs,
- discuss and compare user- and IRs-based criteria for judging relevance of information retrieval,
- evaluate selected Q&A answering services and compare them to human-driven reference services.

Required Text

Cassell, K. A., & Hiremath, U. (2018). *Reference and information services: An introduction*. Chicago: ALA Neal-Schuman.

Reading Materials

Further scholarly and professional readings will be provided each week in advance of each class. Each student will be responsible for completing the readings and contributing in class discussion board activities and meetings. Reading materials outside of the required texts will be available on the Canvas course site.

Assignments and Evaluation Criteria

Format: All assignments should be typed and turned-in via Canvas.

Grades

At the end of the course, I will convert the points earned into a percentage:

93% and above = A

85% to 92% = B+

79% to 84% = B

75% to 78% = C+

70% to 74% = C

60% to 69% = D

below 60% = F

Incomplete—A temporary grade indicating that the student has performed satisfactorily in the course, but, due to unforeseen circumstances, has been unable to finish all requirements. An "I" will not enable a student to do additional work to raise a deficient grade. All incompletes must be removed within one semester, excluding the summer term.

Class Attendance Policy

It is assumed that each student will miss no more than one session and will speak in class -- the equivalent of a "B" grade for "participation." Missing more classes or failing to participate will lower your grade; frequent participation will raise the grade.

Regular attendance is required and necessary. A substantial portion of your grade will be based on in-class work and participation. Unexplained absences will affect your grade. Contact me as soon as possible if you cannot attend class. If you must be absent from class, you must:

- Inform me in advance or as soon as possible after class
- Submit any work due from the missed class period
- Obtain notes, handouts, etc. from Canvas

Acceptable reasons for absence from class include:

- Illness
- Serious family emergencies,
- Military obligation,
- Severe weather conditions,
- Religious holidays and
- Obligations for court imposed legal obligations (i.e., jury duty, subpoena)

Other reasons may also be approved.

Missing more than one class meeting for reasons other than those listed above will have a negative impact on your course participation grade.

Class Cancellations

Should it be necessary to cancel a class meeting, every effort will be taken to do so in advance. Look for e-mail announcements via Canvas

Inclement Weather

"*The University of Tennessee will remain open except in the most severe weather conditions. The Chancellor (or appointed representative) may officially close or suspend selected activities of the university because of extreme weather conditions. When a decision to close is reached, campus and local radio and TV stations will be notified and a UTAlert will be issued. The notice will also be posted on the front page at www.utk.edu...*" ([Hilltopics](#)) SIS will cancel classes when UT is closed. Please check the SIS student listserv (UTKSIS-L@LISTSERV.UTK.EDU) for messages about closing.

Disabilities that Constrain Learning

Any student who feels he or she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 865-974-6087 in 2227 Dunford Hall to document their eligibility for services. ODS will work with students and faculty to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Civility

Civility is genuine respect and regard for others: politeness, consideration, tact, good manners, graciousness, cordiality, affability, amiability and courteousness. Civility enhances academic freedom and integrity, and is a prerequisite to the free exchange of ideas and knowledge in the learning community. Our community consists of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and campus visitors. Community members affect each other's well-being and have a shared interest in creating and sustaining an environment where all community members and their points of view are valued and respected. Affirming the value of each member of the university community, the campus asks that all its members adhere to the principles of civility and community adopted by the campus: http://civility.utk.edu/.

CCI Diversity Statement

The College of Communication and Information recognizes that a college diverse in its people, curricula, scholarship, research, and creative activities expands opportunities for intellectual inquiry and engagement, helps students develop critical thinking skills, and prepares students for social and civic responsibilities. All members of the College benefit from diversity, and the quality of learning, research, scholarship and creative activities is enhanced by a climate of inclusion, understanding and appreciation of differences and the full range of human experience. As a result, the College is committed to diversity and equal opportunity and it recognizes that it must represent the diversity inherent in American society. The College is acutely aware that diversity and fairness are foundations that unite the College's faculty, staff, students, and the larger communication and information community.

Academic Integrity

Students should be familiar and maintain their *Academic Integrity* described in [Hilltopics](#) as: "*Study, preparation and presentation should involve at all times the student's own work, unless it has been clearly specified that work is to be a team effort. Academic honesty requires that the student present his or her own work in all academic projects, including tests, papers, homework, and class presentation. When incorporating the work of other scholars and writers into a project, the student must accurately cite the source of that work.*"

Students should abide by the ***Honor Statement*** described in the same [Hilltopics](#):

"An essential feature of The University of Tennessee is a commitment to maintaining an atmosphere of intellectual integrity and academic honesty. As a student of the University, I pledge that I will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thus affirming my own personal commitment to honor and integrity."

Plagiarism

Plagiarism in any of its several forms is intolerable, and attention to matters of documentation in <u>all</u> written work is expected and required. Inadvertence, alleged lack of understanding, or avowed ignorance of the various types of plagiarism are not acceptable excuses.

Specific examples of plagiarism are:

1. Copying without proper documentation (quotation marks and a citation) written or spoken words, phrases, or sentences from any source;
2. Summarizing without proper documentation (usually a citation) ideas from another source (unless such information is recognized as common knowledge);
3. Borrowing facts, statistics, graphs, pictorial representations, or phrases without acknowledging the source (unless such information is recognized as common knowledge);
4. Collaborating on a graded assignment without the instructor's approval;
5. Submitting work, either in whole or in part, created by a professional service and used without attribution (e.g., paper, speech, bibliography, or photograph).

Infractions of academic integrity are penalized according to the severity of the infraction but **may include a course grade of "F."** Students who may be unsure of the nature of plagiarism should consult the instructor or a guide for writing research reports.

Graded Activities

This table provides a brief summary of assignment names, due dates, and grade distribution. A fuller description of each assignment follows the table.

Activity	Due Date	Points
Participation	ongoing	10
Group Agreement	9/	5
Assignment 1: Reference Observation	9/	25
Quiz	10/	20
Assignment 2: Question Set Exercise	11/	25
Group Project: Presentation and Summary	11/	15
TOTAL		**100**

Class Participation (10%)

Much of the course material will be presented in the readings and discussions. You are expected to do the reading assigned for class and come to class prepared to offer your opinions about it. To participate in class you must be in attendance, so being present (physically and mentally) is important. If you are not the type of student who feels comfortable speaking in class, it's possible to participate online by posting comments and questions to our discussion board, sharing supplementary readings and web pages of interest with classmates, etc. Missing class will have a negative impact on your participation grade.

Assignment 1: Reference Observation Exercise (25%)

This assignment is designed to "reboot" your experience of reference and information services through outsider and participant observation. First, complete the assigned readings related to the Reference Interview, paying particular attention to [RUSA's Guidelines](). Then, visit at least one library *at which you are not known* and

- Spend at least 40 minutes observing activity in the reference department
- Approach the reference desk and ask a reference question.

1. Visit a library or information center of your choice.
    A. Make sure you schedule the visit during peak hours where mediators or reference librarians may be very busy helping patrons (this means that you will need to find out when the reference service is very busy).
    B. If you have a strong preference for a particular area of librarianship (e.g., adult reference, academic information services, services for children or young adults, medical or law librarianship, IT support, etc.), you may use this as an opportunity to observe in that type of reference setting. Otherwise, a "generic" public or academic library setting is perfectly acceptable.
    C. Choose a location in the Reference area from which you can observe what mediators are doing.
    D. Observe what is happening for at least 40 minutes without speaking to librarians or other patrons, if possible.
    E. Take notes on your experience submit a comprehensive narrative that addresses the following:
        ▪ Without naming the library you visited, provide a basic description including information like type, size, and location.
        ▪ Describe the nature of your observation. Provide the day and time, length of visit, and any notable circumstances that you suspect might have had an impact on the activity you observed. Was the library hosting a program? Did you visit in the middle of a thunderstorm? Did the reference department appear to be short-staffed?

- Describe the physical location of the reference desk. You might include the size of the Reference area, the location of the Reference desk, the number of staff members who appeared to be working in the reference department, and any other details you consider important. Include comments about the visibility of the reference desk, signage, and any physical attractions that are inviting to patrons (e.g., displays, colors, lighting).
- Describe what you see the staff and patrons doing. This should be the longest part of this section of the assignment. How did the staff interact with each patron during your observation? Did they remain seated at the desk, or did they circulate throughout the area? Did they accompany patrons to computer workstations or the bookshelves?
- Try to take note of specific details like
    1. The number of patrons to approach the desk
    2. How busy the staff seemed to be

3. The average length of a staff-patron interaction
4. The age range of patrons in the reference area
5. Summarize your observation, noting strengths, weaknesses, and overall impressions of the activity you observed.

2. Visit a library and ask a question at the reference desk. You can conduct the second part of this assignment at the same library on the same day, or in another location and/or at a different time.
   1. Make this a question on a topic that you actually know about or that is meaningful to you. Select a topic that you are comfortable sharing in your report.
   2. It is important that you visit a library at which you are not known. Do not ask a question of a friend, colleague, or professional acquaintance.
   3. Let the staff person lead you through the reference interview and answer as you think a patron needing this information would respond.
   4. Report on the individual's reference interview techniques and quality of the transaction, paying special attention to the following:
      - His/her/zir/hir verbal and nonverbal behaviors.
      - The questions s/he/zie/sie asked
      - Questions s/he/zie/sie didn't ask (but should have)
      - Your comfort with the interaction
      - The staff's treatment of other users
      - The individual's treatment of colleagues/coworkers
      - Evidence of policies for providing reference assistance, including signage
      - The extent to which your question was answered
   5. Note any other impressions (staff person was friendly/harried, user was angry/polite). Were you satisfied? Why or why not? What could have been done differently?
3. Rewrite your notes into an organized essay about your observations, using the assigned readings to support your evaluation.
   1. If you conduct the research for this assignment at two different locations and/or times, make sure that's evident in your paper.
   2. Do not identify the name of the library nor librarians in your paper.
   3. Be sure to cite supporting material (using APA or Chicago style). Attach a bibliography of sources.

Quiz (20%)

Taken during class time. You will be able to use your readings and class notes.

Assignment 2: Question Set (25%)

You will use the resources we've read about and discussed in class to answer a series of questions that an information services professional might be asked by a patron. While you'll be expected to answer the questions themselves, the more important consideration in completing these assignments is an explanation of your process in pursuing the question's answer.

Group Project: Resource Evaluation and Presentation (15%)

Your final project this semester will be done as part of a group. There are several reasons for this: first, to replicate the collaborative environment in which you are likely to find yourself as an information professional; second, to maximize peer learning opportunities, and third, to maximize the quality of your work through blending individual group members' strengths.

I will assign each student to a group based on a variety of factors including areas of interest, scheduling preferences, and proximity. Your group will select, research, analyze, and evaluate two web-based subject databases from a list I will provide to you. Each group will present their findings to the rest of the class.

Your presentation should last approximately 20-minutes and provide an overview of the two databases, describing them according to Cassell & Hiremath's criteria for evaluating reference resources:

1. Scope
2. Content
3. Accuracy
4. Currency
5. Authority
6. Ease of use
7. Arrangement
8. Appropriateness for users/ Treatment
9. Format

You should plan to use a visual component (like PowerPoint slides) in your presentation. It is advisable to include screenshots to illustrate the resources' appearance, capabilities, and limitations. While each group member is not required to speak during the presentation, each group member must participate in some way that is acceptable to the rest of the group. Use the Group Agreement writing process to explore roles and responsibilities.

Group Agreement (5%)

Your group will need to create a group agreement (templates and examples available in Canvas) outlining the group's expectations and processes for completing and submitting work. This is not a graded assignment in that as long as your agreement displays evidence of an appropriate amount of effort, each group will receive full credit.

Class Meeting/ Date	Topics	Readings
Week 1: 8/28	Introduction to course, electronic resources for class Discussion of Schedule, Syllabus, Assignments What is Information/ Reference Service? Standards for Quality Reference & Information Service The Reference Interview	Cassell & Hiremath, Ch. 1, 2 Review RUSA's collection of definitions of a reference transaction Review RUSA's Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Service Providers and Guidelines for Implementing and Maintaining Virtual Reference Services Dewdney, P., & Michell, G. (1996). Oranges and peaches: Understanding communication accidents in the reference interview. *RQ, 35*, 520-535. Saunders, L. (2013). Learning from Our Mistakes: Reflections on Customer Service and How to Improve It at the Reference Desk. *College & Undergraduate Libraries*, *20*(2), 144-155.
Week 2: 9/4	Information Needs and Information Behavior	Excerpts from *Looking for Information: A Survey of Research on Information Seeking, Needs and Behavior*, 2016. Ch 1, 2, and 7
Week 3: 9/11	Relevance; Measuring Information Retrieval performance	Saracevic, T. (1975). Relevance: A Review of and a Framework for the Thinking on the Notion in Information Science. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science, 26*(6), 321-343. Hjørland, B. (2010). The foundation of the concept of relevance. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, *61*(2), 217-237. Bilal, D. (2012). Ranking, relevance judgment, and precision of information retrieval on children's queries: Evaluation of Google, Yahoo!, Bing, Yahoo! Kids, and ask Kids. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, *63*(9), 1879-1896.
Week 4: 9/18 Assignment 1 DUE	Selection and Evaluation of Reference/ Information Materials	Cassell & Hiremath, Ch. 3, 8, 18

Class Meeting/ Date	Topics	Readings
Week 5: *9/25* Group Agreement Due Assignment 2 Distributed	Bibliography Primary Sources	Cassell & Hiremath, Ch. 4
Week 6: *10/2*	"Ready" Information Resources; Encyclopedias, Dictionaries, etc.	Cassell & Hiremath, Ch. 5, 6, 7
No Class – Work on Assignment 2 and study for Quiz		
Week 7: *10/16*	Geographical Sources Biographical Sources Government Documents	Cassell & Hiremath, Ch. 10, 11, 12 Bertot, John C., Jaeger, Paul T., & Grimes, Justin M. (2010). Using ICTs to create a culture of transparency: E-government and social media as openness and anti-corruption tools for societies. *Government Information Quarterly, 27*(3), 264-271. doi: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2010.03.001 Bishop, Wade, & Grubesic, Tony H. (2016). Discovery and Fitness for Use. In W. Bishop & T. H. Grubesic (Eds.), Geographic Information: Organization, Access, and Use (pp. 125-146). Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-22789-4_7
Week 8: *10/23*	CLASS MEETING: QUIZ	
Week 9: *10/30* Assignment 2 Due	Web-based information services and products Social networks as information source and service	Cassell & Hiremath, Ch. 13, 22 Luo, Lili, & Weak, Emily. (2013). Text reference service: Teens' perception and use. Library & Information Science Research, 35(1), 14-23. doi: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2012.03.002

Class Meeting/ Date	Topics	Readings
No Class Meeting – RDA 2018		
Week 10: 11/13	Information Service Issues: management, policy, guidelines, planning	Cassell & Hiremath, Ch. 19, 20 Bishop, B. W. & Bartlett, J. (2013). Where do we go from here?: Informing academic library staffing through reference transaction analysis. *College and Research Libraries, 74*(5), 489-500. https://crl.acrl.org/index.php/crl/article/view/16328
No Class Meeting – Thanksgiving		
Week 11: 11/27	Professional issues: Training, burnout, organizations to join; difficult patrons Ethics	Cassell & Hiremath, Ch. 9, 18, 22 Review RUSA's Professional Competencies for Reference and User Services Librarians Wilkinson, Lane. (2014). Princimplism and the Ethics of Librarianship. The Reference Librarian, 55(1), 1-25. doi: 10.1080/02763877.2014.853270 Matteson, M. L., & Miller, S. S. (2013). A study of emotional labor in librarianship. *Library & Information Science Research*, *35*(1), 54-62.
Week 12: 12/4		**Presentations** Summary due: All Groups