

VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY  
MASTER OF LIBRARY & INFORMATION SCIENCE  
MLIS 7100 Information Sources and Services  
Syllabus—Spring Semester 2008  
Three Credit Hours

**Instructor:**

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**Catalog Description**

An introduction to concepts and processes in reference and information science and to fundamental information sources and services provided by libraries and information organizations. An overview of the reference function includes the history and future of reference service, question negotiation, information needs analysis, effective research strategies, evaluation of information sources in various formats, and ethics of information services.

**Course Outcomes**

Each student will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of theoretical concepts and techniques that support the provision of reference and information services.
- Demonstrate familiarity with current issues and trends in reference services.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the reference process including techniques for question negotiation.
- Develop successful search strategies.
- Evaluate fundamental information sources.
- Demonstrate an understanding of ethics of information services.

**Textbook**

Cassell, Kay Ann, and Uma Hiremath. *Reference and Information Services in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: An Introduction*. New York: Neal-Schuman, 2006. ISBN: 1-55570-563-4

Please familiarize yourself with the MLIS policy that prohibits the use of VSU's Interlibrary Loan service for obtaining textbooks at [http://www.valdosta.edu/mlis/student\\_resources/documents/ILL\\_Textbooks.pdf](http://www.valdosta.edu/mlis/student_resources/documents/ILL_Textbooks.pdf)

**Instructor Availability & Support**

Dr. Ondrusek checks her e-mail and telephone messages at least once daily throughout normal business hours (M-F, 9-5). By institutional policy, instructors are asked to communicate with students online through VSU accounts (WebCT/Vista and BlazeNet e-mail). If you are registered for the course as a non-degree student, a BlazeNet account will be assigned to you for this semester. Your BlazeNet login and password serve as your WebCT/Vista login and password. The BlazeNet login page is at <http://luminis.valdosta.edu/cp/home/loginf>.

All discussion posts and assignment submissions for this online course must be sent via WebCT/Vista. In the case that we encounter technical problems with the WebCT software, group e-mail assignments will be routed through BlazeNet. For instructions on using a student BlazeNet account, go to: <http://www.valdosta.edu/helpdesk/guides/blazenet/>.

## **Attendance**

This is a Web-delivered course, with no required face-to-face meetings. Attendance at the Live Classroom student presentations will be arranged based on the size of the class and the number of presentations. Attendance at the final Live Classroom presentations is mandatory.

## **Course Activities Overview**

### **Bibliographic Retrieval Exercise** 15%

This exercise will be designed to reinforce the material covered under *Reference as a Key to Bibliographic Information* in Week 2. Look for it on the WebCT site. Due end of Week 3.

### **Online Searching Techniques Exercise** 15%

This exercise will be designed to reinforce the material covered under *Reference Resources as Access Points* and the *Librarian as a Guide* in Weeks 4 and 5. Look for it on the WebCT site. Due end of Week 5.

### **Group Reference Blog Participation** 15%

You will be assigned to work in small groups to “build a reference collection” for a library. If possible, you will be placed in a group with others who share your interests in a particular library type (e.g., public, academic, or a special area of reference). Small-group discussion boards in WebCT will be created to serve as each group’s “Reference Blog.” During Weeks 6, 7, and 8, you will be expected to select titles of resources appropriate for inclusion in a reference collection serving the needs of users of your library type. To be considered for inclusion, a reference “work” should have the characteristics of those resources discussed in your textbook in Chapters 5, 6, 7, 9, and 11. Reliable sources typically used by librarians for the selection of reference works will be recommended.

Share your selections by posting them to your group blog on a weekly basis. You must include bibliographic citations, sources from which you identified those titles, and annotations that summarize the title’s worth as a reference work based on the standard criteria used to evaluate reference resources (see p. 293 of the textbook). Regular feedback from the instructor will be posted to your group blog. Examples for you to follow will be available on the WebCT site. Your participation will be evaluated based on a combination of quality and quantity of your submissions and adhering to the weekly submission time table.

### **Pathfinder Project** 15%

Using the reference works compiled in you group blog, create a pathfinder to your “collection.” This should be carried out as a group project. Examples of pathfinders will be provided on the WebCT site. Criteria on which your pathfinder will be evaluated will also be posted on the WebCT site.

Projects that are incomplete, formatted incorrectly, or contain extensive spelling or grammar errors will be returned for revision and can receive no higher than a B upon re-submission.

## Reference Transaction Report

20%

### Part 1.

Visit a library and ask a question at the reference desk. 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. Let the librarian lead you through the reference interview and answer as you think a patron needing this information would respond. Report on the librarian's interview techniques and quality of the transaction. If you don't collect enough information from this first attempt to write your report, try another librarian (later), OR remain near the reference desk and document at least one transaction with another patron that included an interview. 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.

### Part 2.

In addition, submit a question to a virtual reference service. You may use the same question if you think it is appropriate. This can be an e-mail, chat, or IM service. Again, report on your experience in terms of the quality of the reference interview and your satisfaction with the outcome of the transaction.

Submit your observations and findings as a **Reference Transaction Report**. Due at the end of Week 12. Reports that are incomplete, formatted incorrectly, or contain extensive spelling or grammar errors will be returned for revision and can receive no higher than a B upon re-submission.

## Reference Simulation Project

20%

This is the culminating activity for this class in which you will simulate a hypothetical reference activity. To do this, you will role-play **ONE** of these situations:

Conduct an interview and follow through on a transaction from a single user.

To answer the query, use a reference work or works that we covered in class.

(You will have to partner with a classmate to do this. One person plays the librarian, the other person acts as the patron asking the question.)

**OR**

Teach students how to use a reference tool to meet a particular information need.

To create your instruction, use a reference tool or tools that we covered in class.

(You may do this on your own or "team-teach" with a partner.

The MLIS 7100 audience will be your "class.")

You will receive notes on how to use the "instructor" features of Live Classroom. Use the final weeks of classes to create your "dramatization" and to refine and practice presenting it "live." In the last week of the course, you will present your simulation to your classmates, and you will be able to see what your classmates created. Dates will be announced.

## A Word about Group Projects

Play to the strengths of each other in group work. Some of you will emerge as good "detectives," as able writers, or as creative designers. If you are uncomfortable in your group or the group finds that a member is not participating equally, communicate this to Dr. Ondrusek privately. The situation will be resolved based on the individual circumstances.

## Assignment Calendar

<i>Week of:</i>	<i>Activities:</i>
Week 1 Mon. Jan. 7	<u>Reference Work as a Profession</u> Read Cassell and Hiremath text: Chapter 1.  FYI, print out or bookmark RUSA's: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o <i>Professional Competencies for Reference and User Services</i> at <a href="http://www.ala.org/ala/rusa/rusaprotools/referenceguide/professional.cfm">http://www.ala.org/ala/rusa/rusaprotools/referenceguide/professional.cfm</a></li><li>o <i>Guidelines for Behavioral Performance for Reference and Information Service Providers</i> at <a href="http://www.ala.org/ala/rusa/rusaprotools/referenceguide/guidelinesbehavioral.cfm">http://www.ala.org/ala/rusa/rusaprotools/referenceguide/guidelinesbehavioral.cfm</a></li></ul> Take the “ <b>Reference Preference</b> ” survey. Results will be used to place you in groups.  Use the “ <b>Introduce Yourself</b> ” discussion board to say “hello” to all.  Questions? Use the <b>Ask Me</b> discussion board from here on out for answers. Background materials will be posted on the WebCT site for this and all subsequent weeks.
Week 2 Mon. Jan. 14	<u>Reference as a Key to Bibliographic Information</u> Tools for Identifying Reference Materials Read Cassell and Hiremath text: Chapter 4. View material on the WebCT course site.  Evaluation criteria for reference works, printed and online Read Cassell and Hiremath text: Chapter 17.
Mon. Jan. 21	Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Week 3 Tues. Jan 22	<u>Bibliographic Retrieval Exercise</u> Due: Mon., Jan. 28, midnight.
Week 4 Mon. Jan. 28	<u>Reference Resources as Access Points to Accumulated Knowledge</u> Read Cassell and Hiremath text: Chapter 8 and Chapter 12. View material on the WebCT course site.
Week 5 Mon. Feb. 4	<u>The Reference Librarian as a Guide to Information</u> Read Cassell and Hiremath text: Chapter 3 (pp. 42-48) and Chapter 13. View material on the WebCT course site.  <u>Online Searching Techniques Exercise</u> Due: Mon., Feb. 11, midnight.
Week 6 Mon. Feb. 11	<u>Types of Reference Works: Part 1</u> Short-entry “look-up” tools: Dictionaries, Directories, Almanacs, Handbooks, Manuals, Gazetteers, Reviews (for books, theater, films, music), Chronologies. Read Cassell and Hiremath text: Chapter 6, Chapter 7, and Chapter 9.  Begin contributing entries to your group’s <b>Reference Blog</b> . Follow the instructions and examples on the WebCT course site.

- Week 7  
Mon. Feb. 18 Types of Reference Works: Part 2  
Encyclopedic works: Encyclopedias, Biographical collections, Literary criticism,  
Read Cassell and Hiremath text: Chapter 5 and Chapter 11.  
View material on the WebCT course site.
- Continue contributing entries to your group's **Reference Blog**.
- Week 8  
Mon. Feb. 25 Types of Reference Works: Part 3  
Special works (those that require either special storage or dispensation):  
Atlases, Art portfolios, Musical scores, AV and E-media programs, Children's ref works.  
View material on the WebCT course site.
- Finish contributing entries to your group's **Reference Blog**.
- Week 9  
Mon. Mar. 3 Pathfinder Project  
Working with your group, create a Pathfinder using selections from your **Reference Blog**.  
Submit as specified on the WebCT site.  
Due date: Saturday, Mar. 8, midnight.
- Mon. Mar. 10 Spring Break
- Week 10  
Mon. Mar. 17 Giving the Best Reference Service Possible: Part 1  
Reference and information services competencies  
Read Cassell and Hiremath text: Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 (pp. 31-top of 42).  
Check the WebCT course Web site for assigned journal articles.
- FYI, print out or bookmark:
- *ALA Code of Ethics* at  
<http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/statementspols/codeofethics/codeethics.htm>
  - *Library Services to Older Adult Guidelines* (RUSA) at  
<http://www.ala.org/ala/rusa/rusaprotools/referenceguide/libraryservices.cfm>
  - *Guidelines for Library Services to Spanish-Speaking Library Users* (RUSA) at  
<http://www.ala.org/ala/rusa/rusaprotools/referenceguide/guidespanish.cfm>
  - *Competencies for Serving Young Adults* (YALSA) at  
<http://www.ala.org/ala/yalsa/profdev/yacompetencies/competencies.cfm>
  - *Competencies for Librarians Serving Children in Public Libraries* (ALSC) at  
<http://www.ala.org/ala/alsc/alscresources/forlibrarians/professionaldev/competencies.htm>
  - *Guidelines for Medical, Legal, and Business Responses* at  
<http://www.ala.org/ala/rusa/rusaprotools/referenceguide/guidelinesmedical.cfm>
- Week 11  
Mon. Mar. 24 Giving the Best Reference Service Possible: Part 2  
Reference and information services delivered virtually  
Check the WebCT course Web site for assigned journal articles.
- If using an e-mail virtual reference question, submit it this week!
- FYI, print out or bookmark:
- *Guidelines for Implementing and Maintaining Virtual Reference* (RUSA) at  
<http://www.ala.org/ala/rusa/rusaprotools/referenceguide/virtrefguidelines.cfm>
  - *Project Wombat* (formerly *Stumpers-L*)  
<http://project-wombat.org/>

- Week 12      Reference Transaction Observation Week  
 Mon. Mar. 31    Complete your **Reference Transaction Report** and submit as specified on WebCT.  
 Due date: Mon. April 14, midnight.
- Week 13      Reference as a Teaching Endeavor  
 Mon. Apr. 7      Read Cassell and Hiremath text: Chapter 15 and Chapter 16.  
                          View material on the WebCT course site.
- Week 14      Reference Simulation: Prep & Practice Week  
 Mon. Apr. 14    Decide on the reference activity that you want to simulate, either a reference  
 through        transaction between a librarian and a patron OR teaching students how to find  
 Wed. Apr. 23    reference tool(s) that fit a particular need. You will receive notes on how to use the  
                          “instructor” features of Live Classroom. Use this week to refine your simulation and  
                          practice presenting it “live.”
- Week 15      Reference Simulation: Presentation & Performance Week  
 Thur. Apr. 24   Present your **Reference Simulation** to your classmates on Live Classroom.  
 through        Dates and times to be announced.  
 Wed. Apr. 30

### Graded Course Requirements

As a student in this class, you are expected to: (1) read or view all assigned background materials; (2) participate in class follow-up activities; (3) visit a library as needed (to examine print reference works and to pose a question to a reference librarian); (4) present your reference simulation to your classmates using Live Classroom; and (5) submit all projects on time and according to the format designated by the instructor. Assignments are usually graded on a 4.0 (A) to 1.0 (F) scale with plus and minus grades scaled in-between (e.g., 3.7=A minus and 3.5=B plus; 2.7=B minus and 2.5=C plus).

Bibliographic Retrieval Exercise	15%
Online Searching Techniques Exercise	15%
Group Reference Blog Participation	15%
Pathfinder Project	15%
Reference Transaction Report	20%
Reference Simulation Project	20%

### Grading

Your final grade will be one of these letter grades:

Exceptionally exceeds minimum standards	A
Exceeds minimum standards	B
Meets minimum standards	C
Barely meets minimum standards	D
Fails to meet minimum standards	F

### Technical Requirements

All class materials will be placed on a password-protected Web site using the WebCT/Vista course management program. If you are a new WebCT user, go to the WebCT/Vista help pages at <http://www.valdosta.edu/vista/>. On the right margin are “Self Help” links. View the “Getting Started” tutorial first. Then return to the WebCT/Vista page and login using your BlazeNet email ID and password.

To meet all class requirements, you should be prepared to: (1) open and save/print all documents that are required background reading - this requires the Adobe Acrobat Reader on your computer; (2) view all Powerpoints placed on the course WebCT site – if your personal version of Powerpoint is a lower version, you will need to install the free Powerpoint 2007 viewer on your computer; (3) participate in Live Classroom sessions – login links and instructions will be available through your WebCT course homepage; (4) check discussion groups as needed; and (5) keep electronic backup copies of each assignment and project you submit.

Unless otherwise stated, assignments must be submitted using a word processing program compatible with Microsoft (MS) Word. The preferred document format is **MS Word 2007**. Lower versions of MS Word are acceptable. If you are using WordPerfect or sharing documents with classmates who have a different version of Word, save your documents in Rich Text Format (rtf). Documents that can not be opened on VSU equipment will be returned to you for re-formatting.

The university's Information Technology department provides step-by-step guides on how to use VSU's email and other sources. The IT Help Desk is at <http://www.valdosta.edu/helpdesk/guides/> and their phone hot line is 229-245-4357.

### **Distance Learning Support**

A VSU reference librarian, Ms. Shiloh Smith, is responsible for coordinating library services for off-campus VSU students. She may be reached by email at [shismith@valdosta.edu](mailto:shismith@valdosta.edu) or by phone at 229-245-3717. An online guide for distance education students is on the Odum Library Web site at [http://www.valdosta.edu/library/services/revise\\_students.pdf](http://www.valdosta.edu/library/services/revise_students.pdf).

### **Academic Dishonesty**

"Valdosta State University expects that graduate students will pursue their academic endeavors and conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner. All work that a student presents to satisfy course requirements should represent his or her own efforts, including appropriate use and acknowledgement of external sources."

Specific regulations related to student conduct and behavior are contained in the *Student Handbook*, *Student Code of Ethics*. Please acquaint yourself with the full policy at <http://coefaculty.valdosta.edu/trout/eced4300/Academic%20Dishonesty.doc>.

### **Special Needs Statement**

Valdosta State University is an equal opportunity educational institution. It is not the intent of our institution to discriminate against any applicant for admission or any student or employee of the institution based on the sex, race, religion, color, national origin, or the handicap of the individual. It is the intent of the institution to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and subsequent executive orders as well as the Title IX section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Students requiring classroom accommodations or modifications because of a documented disability should discuss this need with the professor at the beginning of the semester. Students not registered with the Special Services Program should contact Special Services in Nevins Hall, Room 2164, 229-245-2498 (ttv).

### **Student Agreement**

Enrollment in this class signifies that the student has agreed to abide by and adhere to the policies and regulations specified above. It is understood that the instructor may adapt or change this syllabus and the assignments contained within it according to circumstances that may arise during the course of the semester.