MARS Section Review, June 1997

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I. Preface

MARS has welcomed the opportunity (presented by the Section Review process mandated by RUSA) to look closely at our structure, activities, products and plans, to ensure that our activities and products have not outstripped our plans, and to make sure that our planning is thoroughly incorporated into our structure. A Review is an opportunity to look backward; and looking backward we find we have much to feel proud of and to celebrate. More importantly, however, a Review reminds us to look forward, to preview not just where our current plans will carry us, but where our current planning process can lead us.

This year's Section Review, coinciding with a milestone twentieth birthday for MARS, finds the section strong, vital, active, and productive. The previous Section Review coincided with a thorough reorganization of MARS. That reorganization, performed in 1990, was obviously a successful one. The current structure of MARS is responsive to the needs and interests of MARS members, who include both managers and practitioners of "machine-assisted" reference services. MARS committees have been increasingly productive. RUSA's "Occasional Paper" series, for instance, has been dominated by very well-received MARS products. MARS programs continue to attract large audiences. (see Appendix 1)

This year we find no need for sweeping reform. Suggestions for minor changes have emerged in task force discussions, however, and are incorporated in part VI, "Where Do We Go From Here?" below.

The MARS 1997 Section Review Task Force (to whom the MARS Chair gives her most grateful thanks) was composed of:
The issues raised in this Section Review document were discussed at a MARS Executive Committee Meeting at the Midwinter 1997 conference, and in many email messages to, from, and among the task force members. MARS committee chairs coordinated contributions to this report from every MARS body. Announcements on MARS-L and in "Messages from MARS" (in the RUSA Update) solicited comments from MARS members who are not currently serving on MARS committees. The draft report was posted on the WWW as a "Request for Comment" and the URL was announced on MARS-L. A final report will be presented to the MARS Membership at the Annual 1997 conference, before it is presented to the RUSA Organization Committee. The task force believes the report accurately reflects the perception of the Section, by the Section.

II. Section Procedures for Creating and Updating Section Goals

MARS has instituted a broadly based planning process to insure that the Section's activities are both founded on its established, published goals, and responsive to changing concerns and evolving issues.

After the Section's major reorganization in 1990, the Planning Committee developed the document, "MARS Goals, Strategies, and Objectives" (recent examples of MARS goals may be found online at MARS Goals: Previous Years). It is updated each year, based on RUSA's own seven priority areas. MARS Committees and Discussion Groups, and the Section as a whole, are expected to pursue and develop activities and projects which implement these goals. As a member of the Planning Committee, the Section Vice-Chair / Chair-Elect works with the rest of the Committee to establish which objectives are to be given priority during her or his term as Chair.

To promote implementation of Section goals, and current priorities, and to learn whether new ones may become necessary, the Annual Conference begins with a three-hour "MARS Orientation Meeting," where the Planning Committee, Executive Committee, and both current and incoming chairs of all MARS Committees and Discussion Groups discuss ongoing and planned activities. The Midwinter Conference begins with a similar, less formal, joint meeting. During subsequent meetings at both conferences, Committee chairs further discuss their activities with the Executive Committee. At the end of Annual, each committee chair prepares a review of their group's accomplishments for the year, specifically addressing which goals and objectives have been targeted.

III. Activities of the Last Five Years that Fulfill the Section's Stated Goals and Objectives
The annual statements of MARS’ priorities, goals, and objectives include several recurrent themes; this part of the Review attempts to relate some of MARS’ activities during the last few years to those themes. It mentions some of the highlights of the last five years, and is by no means an exhaustive list of MARS activities. (Here’s a more detailed list of MARS activities by theme. Here are more detailed lists of MARS Programs, Discussion Groups, Open Forum sessions and publications)

Concern with new technologies.

Many Hot Topics discussion group sessions have, by definition, focused on the library service implications and effects of new technologies. Titles of their sessions reflect this, for example: "Organizing Gopherspace for Reference Service; or, Digging Tunnels through the Internet", "Reference Expert Systems, or Use of Knowledge-Based Systems in Reference Service", "Collection or Virtual Mess: Integrating OPACs, CD-ROMs and Internet Resources", "Web as Universal Interface: The Promised Land or Pandora’s Box?". Recent sessions of the Managers in MARS Discussion group (for example, "Weaving Our Webs: Managing Library Homepages" and "The Care and Feeding of Electronic Texts and Journals") and the Public Libraries Committee’s Open Forum "Hindsight is 20/20: Things You Haven’t Thought about Public Access to the Net" also fall into this category. So would the very successful 1996 Annual Preconference, "Creating a Digital Library Presence: Designing, Organizing and Executing an Electronic Page", and the 1991 MARS Program "Crossing Information Frontiers: the Impact of National Networks on Reference Service and Research in the Nineties".

Evaluation of products and services.

Much of the recent work of the Local Systems and Services Committee come under this category. Their 1996 Open Forum on web interfaces to bibliographic databases raised a number of issues, and the Committee is now pursuing this topic further by evaluating various products based on a set of elements and criteria which came out of the open forum. (For more details see http://www.fcla.ufl.edu/RASD/local.html.) Evaluation is not the exclusive concern of this Committee, however. The Discussion Groups often deal with these issues, as witness the Managers in MARS Discussion Group session on "Quality Control in the Electronic Reference Environment".

Training of staff and users.

Many discussions and open forum sessions have been concerned with these issues -- most notably the Managers in MARS Discussion Group, but also the Public Libraries Committee and the Hot Topics Discussion Group. Titles of discussions like "Investing in People – Staffing for Electronic Reference", "The Role of Support Personnel in an Electronic Reference Environment", "Keeping Current on Electronic Resources and Systems and Sharing that Information with Colleagues" and "Services beyond the Library, Using the Web for Instruction, Full-Text Databases" all focused on these concerns. The Education, Training and Support Committee’s selective annotated list of sources on setting up a Web server and managing a library Web presence (available at http://www.ala.org/rusa/mars/etsbib.html), and their current projects to identify instructional materials for teaching the Internet and to study existing Web search engines also come under this category. This year’s MARS Program is on the absolutely pertinent topic of “How to Plan, Implement, and Deliver a Teleconference for Staff Training.”

Access for users at all kinds of libraries, with varying degrees of "computer literacy," varying physical abilities, and an increasingly broad spectrum of information needs.
No one MARS group has been exclusively concerned with these issues; the Hot Topics Discussion Group, Public Libraries Committee, and of course the User Access to Services Committee have all touched on different aspects. The 1994 MARS Program "Electronic Access to America's Diversity," and the User Access to Services' document *Electronic Publishing Alternatives for Collections of America's Diversity* (published as Number 18 in the RASD Occasional Paper series) came out of the User Access to Services open forum on the same topic at Midwinter 1993. The 1996 MARS program "Distance Education Needs: Coordinating Electronic Reference Services" introduced a focus on the needs of remote users. This year the Public Libraries Committee will be offering a second MARS program on physical barriers to access of library collections and services.

**Integration of electronic services into regular reference activities.**

This is probably the first topic which comes to mind when one thinks of MARS. Numerous discussions and open forum sessions have covered aspects of this theme, as witness titles like "New Models of Reference Delivery: Forming New Partnerships" and "The Ghost in the Machine: Dealing with Culture Conflicts". Most of the MARS Annual Programs have taken this 'integrationist' approach, as for example "Electronic Reference in the 21st Century: Innovation through People, Money, and Imagination" and "Digital Libraries: a New Focus for Reference." The 1991 Preconference "The Electronic Library: Linking People, Information and Technology" also comes under this category.

**Concern for the quality of MARS programs and products.**

The MARS retrospective bibliography recently published in *RQ* exhibits the range and depth of our publications. (Also available at [http://www.cs.wisc.edu/~awel/mars.htm](http://www.cs.wisc.edu/~awel/mars.htm).) The constantly evolving pro-active stance of the Publications Committee gives further evidence of a continuing commitment to publications of which MARS members can be proud.

As for MARS programs, reports of attendance of 500 or more, or programs with standing room only, demonstrate that MARS continues to select topics which match the needs of librarians. Recognition of MARS programs includes the fact that the 1990 MARS program, "Technostress in the Library" was "adopted" by RASD as its President's Program (Chicago). The 1993 program, "Challenges in the Electronic Information Age: Technical, Legal and Ethical Issues," received a "Special Allocation" from ALA President Marilyn Miller. In addition, the 1995 MARS program, "Digital Libraries: a New Focus for Reference," was designated as part of the "ALA Goal 2000" program indicating "programs with a special focus on helping librarians to incorporate new technology and to advocate for libraries and information policy in order to secure public access to information in the era of electronic information." (Statement from ALA 1995 (Chicago) Program Book, p. 157.)

**Communicating ideas and issues to librarians who can not attend MARS meetings.**

Here some laudable steps have been taken, especially in using "Messages from MARS" and MARS-L to report on what has occurred in MARS Discussion Groups and Open Forums at ALA Conferences. However, it would be desirable to ensure that more such sessions are reported. A very recent development is the suggestion made by the Managers in Mars Discussion Group at Midwinter 1997 to establish a short-term listserv to continue discussion of issues raised at the meeting, and to provide follow-up to what could otherwise be a one-time event. Similarly, the Local Systems and Services web page, communicating evaluations of web products is a welcome innovation. (The User Access to Services
Committee has also just recently created a web page for its work-in-progress.) Another related MARS concern has been to collaborate effectively with other units of ALA; see part IV of this Review, following.

IV. MARS Contributions to RUSA Goals and Priorities

RUSA, as stated in both the *Handbook of Organization* 1996-7 and its own *Bylaws*, is responsible for:

- conducting activities and projects within the scope of the Association
- encouraging the professional development of librarians;
- fostering cooperation with like-minded units within ALA;
- representing and interpreting the Association's activities in "contacts outside the profession"
- contributing programs of study and research to the profession as a whole;
- and continuously assessing its activities.

In addition, the *RUSA Guide to Policies and Procedures* also lists seven priority areas for the Association

- quality and availability of information sources (Priority Area A);
- library services personnel and the effective use of reference services (Priority Area B);
- studying user needs and information-seeking behavior (Priority Area C);
- promoting appropriate physical facilities for reference services (Priority Area D);
- promoting RUSA effectiveness (Priority Area E).
- examining library service patterns for quality, responsiveness, and ability to adapt to change (Priority Area F);
- improving reference service management (Priority Area G);

In looking at how MARS activities have contributed to these responsibilities and priority areas, it is useful to review these categories and also the recurrent themes in MARS’ own priorities.

First, regarding cooperation and synthesis with other ALA units, we note that MARS has collaborated with several other ALA sections. It has formally cosponsored programs with other RUSA/RASD sections, and also with ACRL, LITA, GODORT, LAMA/SASS, and YASD. (A more complete list of cosponsored programs is at [http://gort.ucsd.edu/ek/mars/review/activities.html](http://gort.ucsd.edu/ek/mars/review/activities.html).) Less formally, those MARS sections which share interests with other ALA units (specifically Public Library Committee, Education Training and Support Committee, Hot Topic Discussion Group and Managers in MARS Discussion Group / Management Committee) strive to stay aware of related activities in other ALA units, and to facilitate the exchange of ideas among them.

Another means for creating synergy with other library groups (or librarians) working on similar topics is to publish our activities -- which also highlights the work of RUSA and contributes to its visibility and effectiveness. In addition to the many MARS-related items in print, MARS has also tried to make good use of electronic publications -- MARS-L and committee reflectors, gophers, ftp documents and websites -- not only to get the word out about what MARS is doing, but also to solicit participation from the broader library community and to reach a larger audience than those who could attend a meeting at ALA Annual or Midwinter. For example, MARS Committees have often electronically published notes, bibliographies, and guidelines which resulted from MARS programs or presentations. (A list of e-publications that came out of MARS activities can be found at [http://www.ala.org/rusa/mars/](http://www.ala.org/rusa/mars/).) All of these activities are strong contributions to RUSA Priority Area E, as they contribute to the parent Association's effectiveness and visibility.
MARS' concerns in "contacts outside the profession" have primarily been with library applications of new technologies, particularly along the lines of RUSA Priority Areas A (information sources) and F (as "delivery strategies"). Some recent examples of this focus are the ongoing Local Systems and Services Committee's project to evaluate and set benchmarking criteria for worldwide web interfaces to bibliographic databases (details available from http://www.fcla.ufl.edu/RASD/local.html); the Products and Services Committee's goal of providing forum discussions between information producers and library customers; the User Access to Services' RASD Occasional publication A Guide to Publishing Alternatives for Electronic Access to America’s Diversity (available from http://www.ala.org/rusa/mars/pubs.html#2); the Products and Services Committee article "Checklist of Items for Inclusion in CD-ROM Vendor Documentation" in RQ 34; and the 1996 Annual MARS preconference "Creating a Digital Library Presence: Designing, Organizing, and Executing an Electronic Page" (available at http://www.ala.org/rusa/mars/preconf.html).

A large portion of MARS activities have encouraged professional development and supported management of library services, through MARS' emphasis on helping reference services use information technologies in effective ways. It has been a recurrent topic over the years at MARS Discussion Groups (particularly Managers in MARS) and open forums (especially Public Libraries), with program titles like "Investing in People - Staffing for Electronic Reference," "Keeping Current on Electronic Resources and Systems, and Sharing Information with Colleagues," and "Internet Competencies for Librarians". These all contributed to the Education Training and Support Committee's 1995 RASD Occasional Paper, Electronic Resources Skills: an Assessment and Development Log for Reference Staff (available at http://www.ala.org/rusa/mars/pubs.html#3).

This in turn built on the earlier Measurement and Evaluation of Services Committee's article "Information Specialists' Use of Machine-Assisted Reference Tools: Evaluation Criteria" in RQ 31. MARS is also interested in technological means to provide professional development: the upcoming 1997 MARS Annual program is "How to Plan, Implement, and Deliver a Teleconference for Staff Training," and the Education Training and Support Committee is currently collecting references to internet-based Web training materials (following up on the 1997 Midwinter Hot Topic Discussion Group session on "Services beyond the Library, Using the Web for Instruction").

It is perhaps also worth noting, in light of the RUSA priority on library service personnel in general, that MARS programs have tended to be inclusive, instead of reinforcing divisions between librarians, information professionals, library paraprofessionals, and other information technology professionals. For example, the Public Libraries Committee hosted two open forums on staff training and education for technology at the 1991 and 1992 ALA Annual Conferences, and the Managers in MARS Discussion Group picked up this theme in 1992. The following year the Managers in MARS Discussion Group considered "The Role of Support Personnel in an Electronic Reference Environment" at the 1993 ALA Midwinter Conference. Just as we strive towards synergy within units of ALA, MARS has also been concerned with the many agencies or "players" involved in information technology in libraries -- and programs like the Managers in MARS Discussion Group 1993 session on forming partnerships with University departments to deliver technological reference services, and the 1996 MARS Annual program on "Distance Education Needs," have addressed interrelationships among them. All of the activities mentioned in this and the previous paragraph have contributed to RUSA Priority Areas B (personnel) and F (service patterns). A related concern has been fostering librarian advocacy on information technology policy issues. As seemingly long ago as 1991, the MARS Annual program "Crossing Information Frontiers: the Impact of National Networks on Reference Service and Research in the Nineties" raised
those issues; the 1993 MARS Annual Program was a bit more specific, focusing on "Challenges in the Electronic Information Age: Technical, Legal and Ethical Issues."

The paragraphs above mention some of the several recent studies and research coming out of MARS activities. As the authors of the recent "Twenty Years of MARS in Print: an Annotated Bibliography" state, "the many publications produced by MARS committees serve as a significant contribution to the library profession in general and to reference librarianship in particular"(Dew, S. H.; Buchanan, N. L.; and Knight, L. A. "Twenty Years of MARS in Print: an Annotated Bibliography." RQ 36:3 (Spring 1997), p. 382. Available at http://www.cs.wisc.edu/~awel/mars.htm.)

MARS also continues to provide programs of high quality and interest -- reports of attendance of 500 or more, or programs with standing room only, demonstrate that MARS topics do indeed match the needs of librarians. Recognition of MARS programs include: the 1990 MARS Annual program, "Technostress in the Library" was "adopted" by RASD as its President's Program; the 1993 Annual program, "Challenges in the Electronic Information Age: Technical, Legal and Ethical Issues," received a 'Special Allocation' from ALA President Marilyn Miller; in addition, the 1995 MARS Annual program, "Digital Libraries: a New Focus for Reference," was designated as part of the "ALA Goal 2000" program.

These activities all fall within RUSA's scope of stimulating and supporting "the delivery of reference and information services to all groups ... [particularly] general library services and materials to adults." These include direct services to patrons, programs and guidelines for services to meet library users' needs, and assisting libraries to reach potential users. (ALA Handbook of Organization 1996-7 and RUSA Bylaws). All of these are recurrent themes in MARS activities and priorities. MARS programs on computer resources have focused not on the emerging technologies per se, but on library service applications and library implications, as indicated by discussion group topics like "Organizing Gopherspace for Reference Service; or, Digging Tunnels through the Internet"; "Reference Expert Systems, or Use of Knowledge-Based Systems in Reference Service"; "Weaving Our Webs: Managing Library Homepages"; "Using Electronic Media (email, chat) to do Reference"; and "Hindsight is 20/20: Things You Haven't Thought about Public Access to the Net" (which included a discussion of censorship issues).

One major implication for libraries is all the issues of providing access to electronic resources for users at all kinds of libraries, with varying degrees of "computer literacy," varying physical abilities, and an increasingly broad spectrum of information needs; also users who are remote from libraries (all of which fall under RUSA Priority Areas C and F). MARS established the User Access to Services Committee in 1990 as one means of addressing these issues; however, that group is not alone. The Hot Topics Discussion group, the Public Library Committee, the MARS Annual Program, and the Managers in MARS Discussion group have all dealt with these concerns in the recent past.

Another recurrent theme for MARS activities is integrating electronic resources into "regular" reference products and services (RUSA Priority Area F). Besides being the topic of several discussions, this was also the subject of each of the MARS Annual programs since 1990. (A list of MARS Programs is at http://gort.ucsd.edu/ek/mars/review/programs.html.) In addition, in several activities MARS has explicitly addressed a concern only implicit in RUSA's mission statements, that of evaluating the quality of information and library services to users. Discussion sessions have had titles like "Quality Control in the Electronic Reference Environment" (1994 Managers in MARS); "Intelligent Consumers of Internet Resources and Basic Management of Information Delivery" (1994 Hot Topics); and the several MARS published guidelines and checklists.
As described above, MARS has actively supported all of RUSA's goals, and has been directly involved with all RUSA priority areas except, perhaps, Priority Area D (physical facilities). That is changing, however -- the 1996 MARS Annual Program on distance education covered facilities for remote reference and instructional services, and at the 1997 ALA Annual Conference the Public Libraries Committee will be addressing physical barriers to electronic information, including disability access. Given the attendance and popularity of MARS programs, the number of publications resulting from MARS activities, and membership in this section, we can say that MARS has made many contributions to RUSA, indeed.

V. Interest Level in MARS

MARS Membership

As membership data from RUSA for the last thirteen years attest, MARS remains strong, and in fact, continues to be the largest Section within RUSA. MARS current membership (2,200) represents 41% of the RUSA membership. Today the next largest group within RUSA, BRASS, is less than half the size of MARS, comprising 20% of RUSA membership. Although MARS membership has declined somewhat from its 1987 peak of 2,983, this decline could be seen as a direct result of the development of other special interest groups such as BRASS and CODES and later MOPPS and SUPS. (See the MARS and RASD/RUSA Membership table appended to this document; also available at http://gort.ucsd.edu/ek/mars/review/members.html.)

Attendance at MARS Programs

MARS activities have regularly drawn large numbers of participants and observers. Many programs have been reported with attendance of 500 or more, or simply "standing room only." A list of the Program topics for the last five years is included at http://gort.ucsd.edu/ek/mars/review/programs.html.

Discussion Groups

Attendance at sessions of the two Discussion Groups has been as high as 90; the median attendance figure has been 30, with four meetings recording 40, three with 50, two with 70, and one with 90. The best-attended was the discussion on "Organizing Gopherspace for Reference Service" at Annual 1993. The next most popular discussions, with attendance of 70 each, were "Death of Online? or Online Searchers: Where to Next?" (Midwinter 1993) and "Reference Expert Systems" (Midwinter 1994). More complete lists of the topics of the Hot Topics Discussion Group and of the Managers in MARS Discussion Group are included at http://gort.ucsd.edu/ek/mars/review/hottopics.html and http://gort.ucsd.edu/ek/mars/review/managers.html respectively.

Open Forums

Open forum sessions offered by various MARS committees have been characterized by lively and provocative discussions; attendance between 30 and 40 has frequently been reported. A partial list of
Participation in MARS Committees

MARS committee meetings have always welcomed visitors; recently a new form of committee visitation has been reported: the electronic "drop-in!" As committees have established listservs to facilitate committee business, their discussions have been expanded as non-members discover the list and join in to offer their perspectives. Progress within committees is not always constant, and committees occasionally find themselves floundering. The MARS Management Committee has recently undergone some self-questioning as to their role and viability within the Section. However, it appears that they are on their way to recovery. It should be noted that there is a prior model for incredible rejuvenation of a near-moribund committee. During the previous MARS reorganization, serious consideration was given to abolishing the Public Libraries Committee, partly because committee members brought up the issue. In the intervening years, this committee has been exceptionally active, to the point of presenting a second MARS program at the 1997 San Francisco meeting.

VI. Where Do We Go From Here?

MARS has been extremely active during the past five years. It is a vital part of the RUSA organization as well as ALA. Publishing, programming, committee work, and overall interest in the Section’s work is vibrant. For the MARS Review, in addition to the questions requested by RUSA, the MARS chair posed additional points for discussion. These questions were reviewed by the MARS Executive Committee and within each Committee. The general responses to these questions as they were discussed in the MARS Executive Committee follow each question.

1. Can we do anything organizationally to relax the requirement that committee members attend two conferences a year?

The section committees and the MARS Executive Committee will attempt to encourage members to be flexible in their means of communication and work efforts. We will explore allowing committees to present work strategies on a case by case basis that represent a variety of options from conference meetings to electronic communication means.

2. What are the proper roles of the Managers in MARS Discussion Group and the Management Committee? Do we need both? How do they relate to MOPSS?

We feel that the MARS Management Committee is still needed to address specific management issues in electronic reference work, and a separate but related Managers in MARS Discussion Group is also useful. (However, the Discussion Group title may need to reflect more specifically what "Managers in MARS" means.)

3. Do we need a Web Issues Discussion Group, or is Hot Topics sufficient?
The entire concept of Discussion Groups within MARS will be reviewed in further detail. However, the Hot Topics group does cover a variety of issues that are specifically "hot" at the moment and relevant. Web issues have received substantial consideration within various discussions.

4. Are issues surrounding the use of non-bibliographic text resources in machine-assisted reference work covered adequately by existing MARS groups?

This question will be referred to the MARS Planning Committee for future review.

5. Should the Program Planning Committee have some kind of oversight responsibility for the quality of audio visual presentations at a MARS program?

Yes, this is being incorporated into MARS 1998 Program Planning.

6. What's the best way to ensure that program proposals that come before the RUSA Program Committee are as strong as they can be and are benefitting from the experience of past program planners? Is the chair of the current PPC the best representative to the RUSA PPC?

This issue will receive further attention by the MARS Planning Committee.

7. Should MARS have a closer relationship with the MOPSS Catalog Use Committee as to projects, activities, and communication in general?

The MARS chair will pursue this outreach effort.

8. How should the duties of the Publications Committee, MARS-L Coordinator, and "Messages from MARS" Editor best be allocated?

This issue is already being resolved by splitting the positions of MARS-L Coordinator and Editor for "Messages from MARS", as well as the fact that both positions will serve as ex-officio members on the MARS Publications Committee.

The specific areas of high interest which have emerged from the review process will be integrated into the MARS planning process, to enhance and develop further its goals and objectives for the upcoming years. Further efforts will also be made to periodically review RUSA priorities, in conjunction with input from the MARS membership, to set Section goals and objectives. Formalized input from the MARS Committees was an important part of this Section Review, and the completed questionnaires from each may be found at:

Education, Training and Support Committee [http://gort.ucsd.edu/ek/mars/review/ets.html](http://gort.ucsd.edu/ek/mars/review/ets.html)

Local Systems and Services Committee [http://gort.ucsd.edu/ek/mars/review/localsyst.html](http://gort.ucsd.edu/ek/mars/review/localsyst.html)

Management Committee [http://gort.ucsd.edu/ek/mars/review/management.html](http://gort.ucsd.edu/ek/mars/review/management.html)

Planning Committee [http://gort.ucsd.edu/ek/mars/review/planning.html](http://gort.ucsd.edu/ek/mars/review/planning.html)

Products and Services Committee [http://gort.ucsd.edu/ek/mars/review/products.html](http://gort.ucsd.edu/ek/mars/review/products.html)

Publications Committee [http://gort.ucsd.edu/ek/mars/review/pubs.html](http://gort.ucsd.edu/ek/mars/review/pubs.html)
The MARS Review Task Force looks forward to utilizing the vast amount of valuable input from its members in relationship to this review to further expand the realm of electronic resources to its membership.

VII. Summary

To benefit from the opportunity for self-review requires more than a cursory reflection. It requires that we identify and consider our basic assumptions. Neither activity has been easy, but both have been rewarding. What we found was a strong Section, measured both in terms of membership numbers and in terms of ideas generated, followed up on, and subsequently turned into shareable products. This Section Review was made considerably easier by a previous Section Review, which resulted in support and change where needed, and by a solid working knowledge of the Section, present and past, generously shared by all who contributed to the review process.

As always, there is room for improvement. The previous portion of this Review, “Where Do We Go From Here?”, describes needed improvements and identifies a responsible party to ensure success. Needed improvements can be summarized as:

1. Develop even more remote activities via electronic communications within the section.

2. Report through wider means of communication to those not attending conferences.

3. Integrate the Section Review into the existing MARS planning process by referring all ideas for change to the MARS Planning Committee: outcomes from this Section Review can inform planning activities the Planning Committee will undertake with future MARS chairs.

4. By expanding communication, recruit new members to ALA in general, and to RUSA and MARS in particular.

Seeking to address these issues provides further opportunities for MARS to meet its members' professional needs, now and in the future.

To reiterate, we find no need for sweeping reform. We find a viable and dynamic organizational framework which continues to make MARS attractive to practitioners and managers of electronic references services. Further, we find a truly collaborative and progressive Section which continues to grow.
Appendix 1: Activities of the Last Five Years that Fulfill the Section's Stated Goals and Objectives

The annual statements of MARS' priorities, goals, and objectives include several recurrent themes. This is an effort to relate some of MARS' activities during the last few years to those themes.

1. Collaboration with other units of ALA: note cosponsorships with such groups as:

- GODORT program: "Government Information on CD-ROM: Making It Work for You" (1992 San Francisco)
- GODORT program on GILS, the Government Information Locator Services (1997 San Francisco).
- LAMA/SASS Management Practices Committee program "Drinking from a Firehose: Developing and Managing Staff Electronic Mail" (1993 New Orleans)
- LITA Human-Machine Interface Interest Group program "Intrepid Interfaces: Access to Multiple Information Sources" (1990 Chicago)
- RASD MOPSS Catalog Use Committee program: "Building Bridges: Effective Communication of End-User Needs to Electronic Library System Designers" (1994 Miami)
- YASD Committee on Computer Applications to Young Adult Services program: "Emerging Technologies and Resource Sharing and Document Delivery" (1991 Atlanta)

2. Concern with new technology: discussion group and open forum session, other committee activities:

- 1992 Annual: Hot Topics Discussion Group: “Reference and the Internet"
- 1992 Annual: Public Libraries Committee open forum, including issues of access to and use of the Internet.
- 1993 Annual: Hot Topics Discussion Group: "Organizing Gopherspace for Reference Service; or, Digging Tunnels through the Internet"
- 1994 Midwinter: Hot Topics Discussion Group: "Reference Expert Systems, or Use of Knowledge-Based Systems in Reference Service"
- 1994 Annual: Public Libraries Committee open discussion forum: "Public Libraries and the Internet: Reasons to Get Connected"
- 1995 Midwinter: Hot Topics Discussion Group: "Caught in the Web"
- 1995 Annual: Hot Topics Discussion Group "Collection or Virtual Mess: Integrating OPACs, CD-ROMs and Internet Resources"
- 1996 Midwinter: Managers in MARS Discussion Group "Weaving Our Webs: Managing Library Homepages"
- 1996 Annual Preconference: "Creating a Digital Library Presence: Designing, Organizing and Executing an Electronic Page"
- 1996 Annual: Hot Topics Discussion Group: "Web as Universal Interface: The Promised Land or Pandora's Box?"
3. Evaluation of products and services.

- 1996 Annual: Local Systems and Services Committee open forum on web interfaces to bibliographic databases, focusing on indexing/abstracting services and online catalogs. Issues included various screen design elements, system functionality, customization options, output options, basic navigational techniques, and browser compatibility.
- Based on the large number of issues raised, LSAS decided to pursue this topic further and develop evaluations of various products based on a set of elements and criteria drafted at the meeting. This material will be available by September 1996 at the Committee's web site from the following URL: [http://www.fcla.ufl.edu/RASD/local.html](http://www.fcla.ufl.edu/RASD/local.html)
- Evaluations will be provided by members of the Committee and relevant links will be included to any additional information and to demo versions of the products, if available. The committee will also be updating its page on evaluating WWW sources. This information will be added to and updated at intervals.

4. Training of staff and users: discussion group and open forum sessions, other committee activities:

- 1992 Annual: Public Libraries Committee open forum, including staff training and education for technology.
- 1995 Midwinter: Managers in MARS Discussion Group: "Keeping Current on Electronic Resources and Systems and Sharing that Information with Colleagues" [included discussion of Internet and World Wide Web issues]
- 1995 Annual: Managers in MARS Discussion Group: "Internet Competencies for Librarians"
- 1996 Annual: Education, Training and Support Committee
- In conjunction with the MARS Preconference "Creating a Digital Library Presence: Designing, Organizing, and Executing an Electronic Page," ETS compiled a selective annotated list of 34 print and electronic sources covering installing and configuring a Web server, managing your Web presence, design considerations, learning HTML, HTML editors and policies.
- The bibliography is now available in electronic form at this address: [http://www.ala.org/rusa/mars/etsbib.html](http://www.ala.org/rusa/mars/etsbib.html)
- ETS began to explore future projects at its meeting in New York. Committee members will be searching both the World Wide Web and print resources to identify instructional materials covering teaching the Internet. The committee expects to compile and distribute the materials via MARS Web site.
- Committee members also agreed to undertake a study of existing Web search engines, to attempt to identify up-to-date documentation and to continue this discussion at its Midwinter 1997 meeting.
5. Communication of ideas and issues arising at Conference sessions to librarians who do not attend ALA meetings. Here some laudable steps have been taken, especially in using Messages and MARS-L to report on discussion groups and open forums. However, it would be desirable to ensure that more such sessions are reported. Unfortunately, an open forum with an intriguing title may sometimes have absolutely no follow-up. A very recent development is the suggestion made by the Managers in Mars Discussion Group at Midwinter 1997 to establish a short-term listserv to continue discussion of issues raised at the meeting. Similarly, the Local Systems and Services web page communicating evaluations of web products is a welcome innovation.

6. A high quality publications program: the MARS retrospective bibliography recently published in RQ exhibits the range and depth of publications. The constantly evolving pro-active stance of the Publications Committee gives further evidence of a continuing commitment to publications of which MARS members can be proud.

7. Continuing to provide programs of high quality and interest. Reports of attendance of 500 or more, or programs with standing room only, demonstrate that MARS continues to select topics which match the needs of librarians.

Recognition of MARS programs includes the fact that the 1990 MARS program, "Technostress in the Library" was "adopted" by RASD as its President's Program (Chicago).

The 1993 program, "Challenges in the Electronic Information Age: Technical, Legal and Ethical Issues," received a 'Special Allocation' from ALA President Marilyn Miller. The major criteria used in making the award decisions include: (1) applicability to the ALA President's theme, 'Empowering People through Libraries,' and (2) quality and thoroughness of the proposal." ["Messages from MARS, in RASD Update 14(1), p. 14]

In addition, the 1995 MARS program, "Digital Libraries: a New Focus for Reference," was designated as part of the "ALA Goal 2000" program indicating "programs with a special focus on helping librarians to incorporate new technology and to advocate for libraries and information policy in order to secure public access to information in the era of electronic information." [Statement from ALA 1995 (Chicago) Program Book, p. 157]

8. Access for users at all kinds of libraries, with varying degrees of "computer literacy," varying physical abilities, and an increasingly broad spectrum of information needs; also users who are remote from libraries.

- 1992 Midwinter: Hot Topics Discussion Group: "User Aspects of Electronic Services"
- 1994 Annual: Hot Topics Discussion Group: "Intelligent Consumers of Internet Resources and Basic Management of Information Delivery"
- 1994 Annual: MARS Program "Electronic Access to America's Diversity," focused on computerized availability of publications reflecting cultural diversity. It was a follow-up to the User Access to Services open forum on the same topic at Midwinter 1993, Denver. The User Access Committee took on the responsibility of developing the program; they also prepared a document:

- 1996 Midwinter: User Access to Services Committee open forum: "Using Electronic Media to do Reference" (including E-mail and chat to provide support for internal and external users).
- The 1996 New York program introduced a focus on the needs of remote users: "Distance Education Needs: Coordinating Electronic Reference Services."
- 1997 Midwinter: Hot Topics Discussion Group: "Services beyond the Library, Using the Web for Instruction, Full-Text Databases"
- The 1997 MARS Public Libraries Committee Program (San Francisco) is slated to address the physical barriers faced by some users.

9. Integration of electronic services into regular reference activities.

- 1991 Annual Atlanta Preconference "The Electronic Library: Linking People, Information and Technology"
- 1991 Annual Atlanta Program "Crossing Information Frontiers: the Impact of National Networks on Reference Service and Research in the Nineties"
- 1992 Annual: Hot Topics Discussion Group: "Reference and the Internet"
- 1993 Annual: Managers in MARS Discussion Group: "New Models of Reference Delivery: Forming New Partnerships" [Collaboration with other University Departments -- Computing Centers, Research Centers and Faculty Groups]
- 1996 Midwinter: User Access to Services Committee open forum: "Using Electronic Media to do Reference" (including E-mail and chat to provide support for internal and external users).
- 1996 Midwinter: Hot Topics Discussion Group: "Who's Afraid of Government Documents?"

Submitted by Pat Riesenman, 5/19/97; revised 6/16/97.
Appendix 2: Detailed list of MARS Activities

Part A: MARS PROGRAMS

1992 - San Francisco

"Electronic Reference in the 21st Century: Innovation through People, Money, and Imagination."

1993 - New Orleans

"Challenges in the Electronic Information Age: Technical, Legal and Ethical Issues"

"...This program ... received a 'Special Allocation' from ALA President Marilyn Miller. The major criteria used in making the award decisions include: (1) applicability to the ALA President's theme, 'Empowering People through Libraries,' and (2) quality and thoroughness of the proposal." Attendance more than 500.

1994 - Miami

"Electronic Access to America's Diversity" The program was a follow-up to the User Access to Services open forum on the same topic at Midwinter 1993, Denver.


1995 - Chicago

"Digital Libraries: a New Focus for Reference,"

This program was designated as part of the ALA Goal 2000 initiative. "The ALA Goal 2000 logo indicates programs with a special focus on helping librarians to incorporate new technology and to advocate for libraries and information policy in order to secure public access to information in the era of electronic information." [ALA Conference Program, 1995, p. 157]

1996 - New York

"Distance Education Needs: Coordinating Electronic Reference Services."

1997 - San Francisco: MARS Program

"How to Plan, Implement, and Deliver a Teleconference for Staff Training."

Information is available on the Web about Teleconferencing.

1997 - San Francisco: MARS Public Libraries Committee Program

"Technology and Reference for Persons with Disabilities."
Program scheduled on June 28 9:30 AM-12:30 PM. Working on handouts and Web site.

1998 - Washington, DC

"Who are Our Users and What are They Doing?"

PreConference

1996 - New York

"Creating a Digital Library Presence: Designing, Organizing and Executing an Electronic Page"

CoSponsorships

1992 - San Francisco


Cosponsor GODORT program: "Government Information on CD-ROM: Making It Work for You"

1993 - New Orleans

Cosponsor LAMA/SASS Management Practices Committee program: "Drinking from a Firehose: Developing and Managing Staff Electronic Mail."

1994 - Miami

Cosponsor RASD MOPSS Catalog Use Committee program: "Building Bridges: Effective Communication of End-User Needs to Electronic Library System Designers"

1997 - San Francisco

MARS will cosponsor the LITA Technology and Access Committee program: "Universal Access to Tomorrow: Silicon Valley Meets the Library," focusing on equity and the Information Superhighway. Saturday, June 28, 1997, 2-4 p.m.

MARS will also cosponsor the GODORT program on GILS, the Government Information Locator Services. Monday, June 30, 1997, 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Information submitted by Pat Riesenman, 4/14/97; revised 6/13/97.

Part B: MARS COMMITTEE OPEN FORUM SESSIONS
1992 - Annual San Francisco

Education, Training & Support "Help solve the Internet puzzle for users."

Public Libraries Three topics covered: (1) staff training and education for technology; (2) cost effective solutions to big problems; (3) issues of access to and use of the Internet.

1993 - Midwinter Denver

Local Systems & Services "How to Develop the Perfect Front End or Gateway."

Public Libraries [No topic listed]

User Access "Electronic Access to America's Diversity: Problems, Strategies, Solutions" [NOTE: This developed into the MARS program at Annual 1994, Miami.]

1993 - Annual New Orleans

Public Libraries "Information Access Strategies for Public Libraries."

1994 - Annual Miami

Local Systems and Services "How to Evaluate Local Systems."

Public Libraries "Public Libraries and the Internet: Reasons to Get Connected" will be held on Sunday 2:00 PM.

1995 - Midwinter Philadelphia

Local Systems and Services Forum on design implications for gopher and Mosaic homepages.

1995 - Annual Chicago

Local Systems and Services Initiated a web page as model for discussion and criticism

Public Libraries "Internet Superhighway: Avoiding Road Kill Now that You're Connected."

1996 - Midwinter San Antonio

Education, Training and Support "Using the Assessment Log for Staff Training or for Documenting One's Own Personal Development"

User Access to Services "Using Electronic Media to do Reference"

1996 - Annual New York

Local Systems and Services "Web Interfaces to Bibliographic Databases"

Web Follow-up to Forum: The discussion generated a large number of points so the committee decided to pursue this topic further and develop evaluations of various products based on a set of elements and
criteria drafted at the meeting. This material will be available by September 1996 at the Committee’s web site from the following URL: [http://www.fcla.ufl.edu/RASD/local.html](http://www.fcla.ufl.edu/RASD/local.html)

Public Libraries "Hindsight is 20/20: Things You Haven't Thought About Public Access to the Net." [Discussion topics included policies, hardware (e.g., printers), costs, security.]

**Part C: HOT TOPICS DISCUSSION GROUP**

**Midwinter 1992 - 11 meetings through Midwinter 1997**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Chair/Co-Chairs</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#D1 &quot;User Aspects of Electronic Services&quot;</td>
<td>Elliot Kanter, Peggy Seiden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midwinter 1992</td>
<td>Elliot Kanter, Peggy Seiden</td>
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<td>San Antonio</td>
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<tr>
<td>#D2 &quot;Reference and the Internet&quot;</td>
<td>Elliot Kanter</td>
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<td>Annual 1992</td>
<td>Elliot Kanter</td>
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<tr>
<td>San Francisco</td>
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<tr>
<td>#D3 &quot;The Death of Online? or Online Searchers: Where to Next?&quot;</td>
<td>Elliot Kanter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midwinter 1993</td>
<td>Elliot Kanter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
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<tr>
<td>#D4 &quot;Organizing Gopherspace for Reference Service; or, Digging Tunnels through the Internet&quot;</td>
<td>Elliot Kanter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annual 1993</td>
<td>Elliot Kanter</td>
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<td>New Orleans</td>
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<tr>
<td>#D5 &quot;Reference Expert Systems, or Use of Knowledge-Based Systems in Reference Service&quot;</td>
<td>Lori Bronars</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midwinter 1994</td>
<td>Lori Bronars</td>
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<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
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<tr>
<td>#D6 &quot;Intelligent Consumers of Internet Resources and Basic Management of Information Delivery&quot;</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Annual 1994                                       Lori Bronars
Miami
Joint Meeting with Managers in MARS Discussion Group

#D7                      "Caught in the Web"

Midwinter 1995               Lyman Ross
Philadelphia

#D8               "Collection or Virtual Mess:
                  Integrating OPACS, CD-ROMs and Internet Resources"

Annual 1995               Lyman Ross
Chicago

#D9   Who's Afraid of Government Documents?"

Midwinter 1996              Debbie Bezanson
San Antonio                Sean Crumley

#D10                  "Web as Universal Interface:
                      The Promised Land or Pandora's Box?"

Annual 1996               Nicholas Rosselli,
New York                  Member

#D11            Services Beyond the Library,
                 Using the Web for Instruction,
                 Full-Text Databases

Midwinter 1997          Nicolas Rosselli,
Washington, DC           Chair

[Revised 6/12/97 by Pat Riesenman]

Part D: MANAGERS IN MARS DISCUSSION GROUP

Midwinter 1992 -
11 meetings through Midwinter 1997

Meeting                      Chair/Co-Chairs
#C1 "Designing Space for Electronic Reference"
Midwinter 1992 Patricia Ianuzzi,
San Antonio Janice Simmons-Welburn

#C2 "Investing in People -- Staffing for Electronic Reference."
Annual 1992 Patricia Ianuzzi,
San Francisco Janice Simmons-Welburn

#C3 "The Role of Support Personnel in an Electronic Reference Environment"
Midwinter 1993 Janice Simmons-Welburn
Denver

#C4 "New Models of Reference Delivery: Forming New Partnerships" [Collaboration with other University Departments -- Computing Centers, Research Centers and Faculty Groups]
Annual 1993 Janice Simmons-Welburn
New Orleans

#C5 "Quality Control in the Electronic Reference Environment"
Midwinter 1994 Ann Jensen
Los Angeles Ree DeDonato

#C6 "Intelligent Consumers of Internet Resources and Basic Management of Information Delivery"
Annual 1994 Ree DeDonato
New Orleans Ann Jensen
Joint Meeting with Hot Topics Discussion Group

#C7 "Keeping Current on Electronic Resources and Systems and Sharing that Information with Colleagues"
[included discussion of Internet and World Wide Web issues]
Midwinter 1995 Ann Jensen
Philadelphia Doris Ann Sweet
Part E: Twenty Years of MARS in Print: An Annotated Bibliography

by

Stephen H. Dew

Engineering/Physical Sciences Librarian
J. Murrey Atkins Library
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Nancy L. Buchanan
Coordinator of Electronic Resources
From its official inception in 1977, the Machine-Assisted Reference Section (MARS) of RASD has actively pursued its purpose of representing "the interests of those planning, managing, teaching, or conducting computer-based reference service in libraries." Given the fact that the issues relating to computer-based reference service have been vast and varied, with computer technology producing tremendous changes in reference librarianship, fulfilling this purpose has been no easy task. Throughout the last twenty years, MARS has been a central source of activities and information designed to assist librarians attempting to come to grips with the opportunities and changes brought on by computer technology.

On the tenth anniversary of the creation of MARS, Nancy Green-Maloney recounted the accomplishments of the section as well as its evolution during the first decade. Recognizing the importance of MARS committees in the section's efforts to fulfill its goals, Green-Maloney reported, "MARS committees have kept up with current computerized reference issues and served as an information resource to both the division and ALA in matters concerning new information technologies." A major part of the effort to fulfill the section's purpose has included the compilation and publication of information relating to computer-based reference service. Cumulatively, the many publications produced by MARS committees serve as a significant contribution to the library profession in general, and to reference librarianship in particular. This annotated bibliography of publications by and about MARS provides a summary of that work. It is divided into four sections:

1. Books, Monographs and Eric Documents
2. RASD Occasional Papers
3. MARS in RQ
I. Books, Monographs, and ERIC Documents


This collection of thirty previously published papers is arranged under eight topical headings—background, education & training, search process, enduser as searcher, facilitating endusers, programs that work, ethical & legal issues, and future directions. Four of the papers are from MARS committees. "An Introduction to Online Searching: A Suggested Outline," was prepared by the Education and Training of Search Analysts Committee (annotated under RASD Update), while the Direct Patron Access to Computer-Based Reference Systems Committee was responsible for preparing three of the papers—"Planning for Enduser Searching: A Checklist of Questions" (annotated under RASD Occasional Papers), "Remote Access to Library-based Information Systems: A MARS Checklist" (annotated under RASD Update), and "Library Users and Online Systems: Suggested Objectives for Library Instruction" (annotated under RQ 1981).

**Reviews:**


This collection of 26 articles (most previously published) is arranged under such broad categories as early development of online searching, training courses and aids, search techniques, end-user training, and databases. "Online Training Sessions: Suggested Guidelines," prepared by the Education and Training of Search Analysts Committee (annotated under RQ 1981), is included as one of the articles relating to training courses and aids.

**Reviews:**


*Library Association Record* 92 (October 1990): 769.


Concerned that many children and young adults were not benefiting from machine-assisted reference service, the MARS Use of Machine-Assisted Reference Services in Public Libraries Committee conducted a survey, and the results are presented in this booklet. A questionnaire was developed during 1986 and 1987, and the survey was mailed in January 1988 to a random sample of 638 ALA members specializing in children and young adult librarianship. The overall return rate was approximately 74 percent. Questions relate to such things as number of searches done, types of databases and vendors, charges for service, limitations on searches, obstacles to offering service, referral services, etc.


The twelve articles included in this collection of conference papers cover such major topics as direct and indirect costs for online services, creative approaches to funding, the economics of enduser systems, grant funding, choosing vendors and databases, improving technologies, and management services. The program was organized under the framework of two outlines prepared by the MARS Cost and Finance Committee (provided as appendices to the text)—"Online Reference Services: Funding Methods" and "Online Reference Services: Costs and Budgets."

Reviews:

Booklist 83 (April 1, 1987): 1175.


Australian Academic & Research Libraries 18 (December 1987): 228-29


RQ 27 (Fall 1987): 149-50.

Education for Information 7 (September 1989): 290-91.


This booklet provides a list of librarians with expertise in online search services who volunteered to advise novices about all aspects of online reference service. Each entry provides name, address, telephone number, and type of expertise (setting up a search system, budgeting/planning, hardware/software, and vendor specific).

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A collection of seventeen papers presented at a MARS preconference program, the articles address such topics as basic concepts and applications of databases, the training of database searchers, financing, record keeping, institutional considerations, politics, and procedures. "An Introduction to Online Searching: A Suggested Outline," prepared by the MARS Education and Training of Search Analysts Committee, is provided as an appendix. Intended for librarians planning introductory sessions with novice searchers, the outline is designed to be compatible with the committee's earlier work, "Online Training Sessions: Suggested Guidelines" (annotated under RQ 1981).

**Reviews:**


*Online* 8 (January 1984): 81-82.

*RQ* 23 (Spring 1984): 378-79.


This microfiche set is a MARS-produced collection of documents and other materials used by libraries to promote, conduct, and administer online searching. Examples come from all types of libraries, and in the selection process, an attempt was made to illustrate the wide variety of materials available. Categories include such subjects as search request forms, evaluation forms, billing forms, statistical forms, log sheets, policy statements, statements explaining search results, and publicity documents.


Prepared for the Measurement and Evaluation Committee, this document is based on the analysis of online search evaluation forms collected from all types of American libraries. While focusing on commercially available systems such as DIALOG, ORBIT, and BRS, the report emphasizes the process of evaluating online services, especially the key importance of identifying clearly stated and measurable goals. The report discusses the pros and cons of various questions from the collected evaluation forms. A model evaluation form recommended by the committee is provided as an appendix.


Compiled for the Education and Training of Search Analysts Committee, this guide was designed for librarians and administrators needing to find information about various aspects of machine-assisted reference. The text includes extensive lists of books, journal articles, indexes, abstracts, databases, training manuals, training opportunities, etc., that relate to computer searching.


This booklet includes three papers--Haynes McMullen's "The History of Charging for Services in American Libraries That Have Traditionally Been Free," Zoia Horn's "Charging for Computer-Based Reference Services: Some Issues of Intellectual Freedom," and Jan Egeland's "To Charge or Not to Charge: The Choices and the Implications." In addition, the last fifteen pages cover a discussion of the key issues among the speakers and those attending the program.

Reviews:
This collection of conference papers presents a good summary of the status of online searching in 1976. Issues and concerns are addressed within a context of what was currently being done as well as what was foreseeable. This conference program was sponsored by the Information Retrieval Committee of RASD, and it has been described as the birthplace of MARS, for it was at this conference that the Discussion Group on Machine-Assisted Reference Service was officially formed and approved by RASD, with Watson serving as the first chairperson.

Reviews:

American Reference Book Annual 10 (1979): 133.


II. RASD Occasional Papers Series


This publication grew out of a discussion forum, "Electronic Access to America's Diversity," sponsored by the MARS User Access to Services Committee at the 1993 ALA Midwinter meeting in Denver. The guide identifies various options available to libraries and other organizations that have collected material by, for, and about traditionally underrepresented groups in American society. The guide is intended to assist collectors of such information in developing and following through with projects to share their resources electronically, and in addition, it can serve to lead students and researchers of underrepresented groups to electronic information already available. The document is divided into five sections-- (1) case studies, (2) working with vendors, (3) electronic formats, (4) electronic format comparisons, and (5) a resource list.

The work was designed for two primary purposes--(1) to provide a standardized means for database searchers to document their training and proficiency and (2) to provide a method for search service supervisors to more readily detect gaps in training coverage and more easily develop training plans. It includes reproducible forms with clearly written instructions that will allow supervisors and trainers to determine the experience new staff as well as plan orientation and training activities. The forms are entitled as follows: "Searcher Identification and Experience," "Local Orientation Program," "Search System Self Checkout," "Continuing Proficiency Record," and "Record of Formal Training" (one system/vendor specific and another database specific).


This guide is directed toward anyone interested in exploring the many library catalogs worldwide that are on the Internet. It may also be useful to librarians or computer center staff as a resource for preparing materials to assist their users. The guide provides an overview of using the Internet to reach remote systems, suggests reasons for exploring library catalogs, lists resources for identifying which catalogs are available, and provides practical tips on navigating the Internet as well as using unfamiliar systems. It emphasizes a nontechnical approach and consolidates information from a number of sources.

This report is divided into four sections. "Part 1," the introduction, gives an overview of the methodology and purpose of the study as well as a list of the participating institutions and a copy of the survey form. "Part 2," Data Analysis, contains an analysis of the technical data such as hardware, software, and data files, including a summary analysis and detailed data for each institution. "Part 3," Analysis of Questions 2, 3, and 11 through 16, is a summary analysis of the more qualitative aspects of the data, including questions on access, instructional methods, selection, staff, etc. "Part 4," the indexes, provides access by geographic region, database, and software.


The opening chapter, "Historic Review of Attitudes: 1976 and 1988," by Danuta Nitecki compares attitudes of Reference Librarians on seven issues relating to automated reference services taken from surveys conducted in 1976 and 1988. The seven issues are (1) degree of personal involvement, (2) extent of library involvement, (3) barriers to online retrieval services, (4) management of services, (5) information needs, (6) channels of information, and (7) responsibility of library schools. Other chapters include "Impacts on Personnel" by Becki Whitaker, "Physical Environmental Issues" by James Crooks, "Variety of Formats and Approaches" by Ann Bristow, and "Future Trends" by Tina Roose.


The work is based on a study of policies solicited from public, academic, and research libraries from across the nation. The topics include (1) "Parameters for Ready Reference Use," which provides examples of instances when ready reference searching might be appropriate, (2) "Guidelines for Search Analysts," which covers pre-search, search, and post-search factors of concern, (3) "Outline for Managers," covering concerns such as finances, equipment, training, statistics, evaluation, and planning, (4) "Appendix I: Sample Ready Reference Log," and (5) four other appendices containing sample policies from New York Public Library, Louisiana State University, Pennsylvania State University, and Stanford University.


This checklist was not published as a separate document, but instead it was included as an article in RASD Update. It presents a variety of pertinent and useful questions intended to assist librarians planning for end-user searching. Questions are grouped into categories of (1) needs assessment, (2) administrative issues (service considerations, staff resources, cost factors, vendor characteristics), (3) scope of system being evaluated, (4) software, and (5) hardware. Later published in The Online Searcher, edited by Ethel Auster (annotated above).
III. MARS in RQ

1995


The guidelines are designed to assist those preparing training sessions for library users on electronic resources (including online and CD-ROM databases, OPACs, and the Internet), as well as those evaluating such training sessions. Topics include purpose, audience level and size, presentation type and content, handouts, publicity, hands-on practice, and training facilities. Each topic is addressed in terms of basic training sessions, advanced sessions, and subject- or database-specific sessions.


A history of the origin and development of RASD, this article discusses the origin of MARS and briefly mentions MARS' work on standards and guidelines.

1994

Local Systems and Services Committee. "Designing Local Interfaces to Distributed Information: A Selected Bibliography." RQ 34 (Fall 1994): 41-47.

An item in the "From Committees of RASD" column, this article is a revision of a bibliography distributed at a 1993 ALA Midwinter Meeting discussion and entitled, "How to Design the Perfect Front End or Gateway." The selected items focus on such topics as staff organizational adaptations to a networked environment, principles of interface design, online catalog interface design, local systems applications, and local interfaces to the Internet. Includes annotations.

1993


An item in the "From Committees of RASD" column, the checklist is designed to help vendors prepare documentation for CD-ROM products. It includes sections on organization, overview, retrieval software/system, databases, and technology.

1991

This article lists skills and abilities that online searchers should possess. These are divided into the following categories: technical skills, knowledge base, interpersonal skills, search interview, search execution, and professional responsibilities. Includes a bibliography.

1987


In her review of a book (annotated above) containing papers presented at a day-long program sponsored by MARS at the 1986 ALA Annual Conference, Stenstrom judges that the papers vary in quality, “but the best are excellent,” and they provide insight as well as practical information and advice.


Highlighting the information that should be included in any database search guide, the guidelines cover such major elements as database and producer information, retrieval capabilities and access points, indexing and abstracting policies and procedures, examples and illustrations, and supplementary lists (including abbreviations, codes, journals indexed, etc.). Includes a glossary.


An item in the "Current Issues in Reference and Adult Services" column, the article describes how MARS helps keep librarians current with new developments, as well as how MARS keeps itself current. Committees within MARS provide information to librarians via meetings, publications, and programs, and in addition, MARS works on standards and guidelines for new technologies and services. To assist in keeping itself up-to-date, MARS formed a Planning Committee in 1985 to act in an advisory capacity to the MARS Executive Committee on such issues as goals, objectives, and priorities.


An item in the "Current Issues in Reference and Adult Services" column, the article includes a definition of nonbibliographic databases, information on how they are accessible, a summary of how the different types can be searched, a discussion of major cost considerations, and an overview of their reference and research uses. Includes a bibliography.

An item in the "Current Issues in Reference and Adult Services" column, the article asserts that search analysts need ongoing training, not just introductory training. The importance of continuing education is highlighted by such factors as the restructuring of search systems, new database providers, new databases, and new products and technologies. Includes a selective directory of continuing education opportunities.

1985


Prepared for the MARS Direct Patron Access to Computer-Based Reference Systems Committee, the article provides a list of objectives for instruction programs, including printed and online instructional information for online systems. The objectives focus on understanding the system, planning the search strategy, operating the system, and interpreting the search results. The article was also later published in The Online Searcher, edited by Ethel Auster (annotated above).

Hansen, Andrew M. "ASD, RSD, and RASD." RQ 25 (Fall 1985): 13-18.

An item in the "Current Issues in Reference and Adult Services" column, the article provides a history of RASD from the formation of the Adult Services Division and the Reference Services Division in the 1956-57 ALA restructuring. This is an "informal look," not a detailed history. The origin of MARS, first as a discussion group and then as a section, is discussed.


A piece in the "Current Issues in Reference and Adult Services" column by the chair of the MARS Measurement and Evaluation of Services Committee and the current and former chairs of the MARS Education and Training of Search Analysts Committee, the article lists tasks deemed necessary for search analysts and search-service managers, as identified by these two committees. Analyst tasks focus on the interview process, strategy development, the search, and post-search activities. Manager tasks deal with coordination, training, management of physical facilities, evaluation, and publicity. Includes a five-page selective annotated bibliography.

1984

A piece in the "Current Issues in Reference and Adult Services" column by the "Messages from MARS" editor, the article discusses the evolution of online searching from being primarily a bibliographic tool to being a resource for ready reference and other nonbibliographic data. Online searching’s expanded role is reflected in the growth of MARS and the appearance of database reviews in RQ. Major issues in implementing online searching in libraries are discussed; MARS committees that attempt to address online searching issues are mentioned; and the 1984 ALA Annual Conference MARS program “The Ready Reference Use of Online Resources” is previewed.


Allen reviews a collection of seventeen essays based on the MARS program at the ALA Annual Conference July 11, 1982. The first part of the book deals with search techniques and equipment needed to conduct online searching; the second covers management of online searching services. Allen judges the book (which is annotated above) to be a good source of practical information, especially for those new to online searching.


An examination of the search evaluation form recommended by the MARS Committee on Measurement and Evaluation of Service, the article discusses the goals and processes for evaluating online searches, the uses of the form, and the design of the form. Included in the discussion are the purposes and uses of each question on the form, as well as an explanation of the reasons certain question are not on the form. The form is included as an appendix.

1982


This article provides a partially annotated bibliography of books and articles recommended by the MARS Use of Machine-Assisted Reference in Public Libraries Committee. The bibliography focuses on information resources of value to those librarians creating and managing online search services. Coverage ranges from the practical matters of equipment needs to the more philosophical issues of the appropriateness of fee-based services.

1981

In her column, Josephine announces that, beginning with this issue, RQ will include database reviews, and she notes the important role that MARS committees have played in this development.


Nitecki discusses the advent of published reviews of online databases as a regular feature of RQ. She mentions that the MARS Committee on Data Base Products and Computerized Search Service Vendors helped identify the elements to be included in reviews.


These guidelines are intended to assist libraries in the planning of training workshops for online searchers. Purpose, audience, timing, equipment requirements, experience of trainer, type of presentation, and documentation are defined for five different types of training. Special consideration is given to cooperation with vendors, publicity, location, and follow-up evaluations. Multiple training levels are reviewed. The guidelines were later published in two separate works—Training and Education for Online, edited by Angela Jackson, and Online Searching Technique and Management, edited by James Maloney (both annotated above).

1980


This article provides the proceedings of the MARS Program held on June 29, 1980, at the ALA Annual Conference in New York. Entitled "Cooperation: Facilitating Access to Online Information Services," the program addressed public access issues related to computerized information services. The texts of three presentations are included in the proceedings. Roger K. Summit provides an analysis of online pricing structures and trends; Howard F. Lehnert and Harold A. Scott describe an online system that provides weather data to farmers; and Mark Piakias discusses emerging trends in consumer-based information services and their potential impact on libraries. A recording of the complete program, including discussions, is reported to be available from ALA on two audiocassettes.


Josephine announces the creation of a new RQ column, "Online Services," and she reports that henceforth RASD Update will convey committee and section news, incorporating Messages from MARS. She also discusses the need for RQ to include reviews of non-print reference sources. For reviews of databases, she announces that advice will be solicited from a MARS ad hoc committee.
Nitecki, Danuta A. "Online Services." *RQ* 19 (Summer 1980): 319-22

In her introduction of the new column, "Online Services," Nitecki provides a list of information resources (such as bibliographies, journals, and guidebooks) for online searchers. She notes that Messages from MARS serves as a source of collegial information exchange and that the activities of MARS serve as a resource for professional development and learning opportunities.

1979

Hansen, Andrew M. "Notes from RASD Headquarters." *RQ* 19 (Winter 1979): 105-07.

In his discussion of the nominations for officer and executive committee positions during the 1980 ALA Annual Conference, Hansen also announces the availability on audiocassette of two MARS programs from the 1979 Annual Conference in Dallas. Options for Training Online (2 cassettes), produced by the Education and Training of Search Analysts Committee, includes speeches by Trudy Ballardo, Judith Wagner, Stephen Harter, Thomas Crawford, and Charles Gilreath. The Future of Computerized Reference Services in the Library (2 cassettes), produced by the Data Base Products and Services Committee, includes speeches by Carlos Quadra and Wilfrid Lancaster.


Compiled by the MARS Committee on the Education and Training of Search Analysts, this annotated bibliography reviews the literature of online searching education for 1970-1979. Entries include articles and conference papers based on library school curricula and on-site training programs.

Hansen, Andrew M. "Notes from RASD Headquarters." *RQ* 18 (Summer 1979): 379-80.

The article discusses two MARS documents, both reported to be available from ALA Headquarters Library through interlibrary loan. Computer Based Information Service Forms, the product of a cooperative effort by MARS and the RASD Information Retrieval Committee, is reported to be a looseleaf compilation of online-search-related forms collected from many libraries. Fees and Costs of Machine-Assisted Reference Service is described as a compilation of library-submitted policy and procedure forms for the charging and billing of online search services.

1978

Boucher repeats the announcement of the formation of MARS and the purposes of the section. She also mentions Messages from MARS and the naming of Martha Packer as editor.

Hansen, Andrew M. "Notes from RASD Headquarters." RQ 18 (Fall 1978): 61-63.

Hansen announces the officers and executive committee members in MARS' first election as a section of RASD.

1977


In her discussion about the RASD’s newest section (MARS), Boucher announces the creation of the section's newsletter, Messages from MARS.

Hansen, Andrew M. "Notes from RASD Headquarters." RQ 17 (Fall 1977): 41-42.

Hansen announces that the Machine-Assisted Reference Section (MARS) is a new section of RASD, per a decision made at ALA Annual Conference in Detroit. Sara Knapp is named as chairperson of the Organizing Committee for 1977-78. The goal of MARS is to facilitate communication among librarians interested in computerized reference service and, in addition, to encourage communication between librarians and the suppliers of computerized information services.

IV. MARS in RASD Update


This glossary was developed by the Public Libraries Committee and distributed at an open discussion forum held at the 1993 ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans. The forum was entitled "Information Access Strategies for Public Libraries."


This checklist was developed to assist librarians in planning electronic systems and services that will be accessible to users outside their libraries. Intended to provoke thought about the possibilities, opportunities, and consequences of remotely accessible library-related services, the checklist is divided


This outline is designed to aid librarians who are planning introductory workshops or lectures for an audience with no previous online experience. The outline is compatible with the recommendations presented in "Online Training Sessions: Suggested Guidelines," *RQ* 22 (Summer 1981):353-57. Topics covered include advantages of online searching, limitations, initial considerations, applications, databases, vendors, financial considerations, contract options, mechanics of searching, etc. The outline was later published in two separate works-- *Online Searching Technique and Management*, edited by James J. Maloney, and *The Online Searcher*, edited by Ethel Auster (both annotated above).


Designed for bibliographic and directory databases, this matrix is intended to provide a standardized method of listing database elements for comparison purposes. In addition it also serves as a guide for reviewers, a beginning point for producers of new databases, and a starting point for studies on the value of particular data elements.

**REFERENCES**