



# Development of a Peer Research Consultant (PRC) Program

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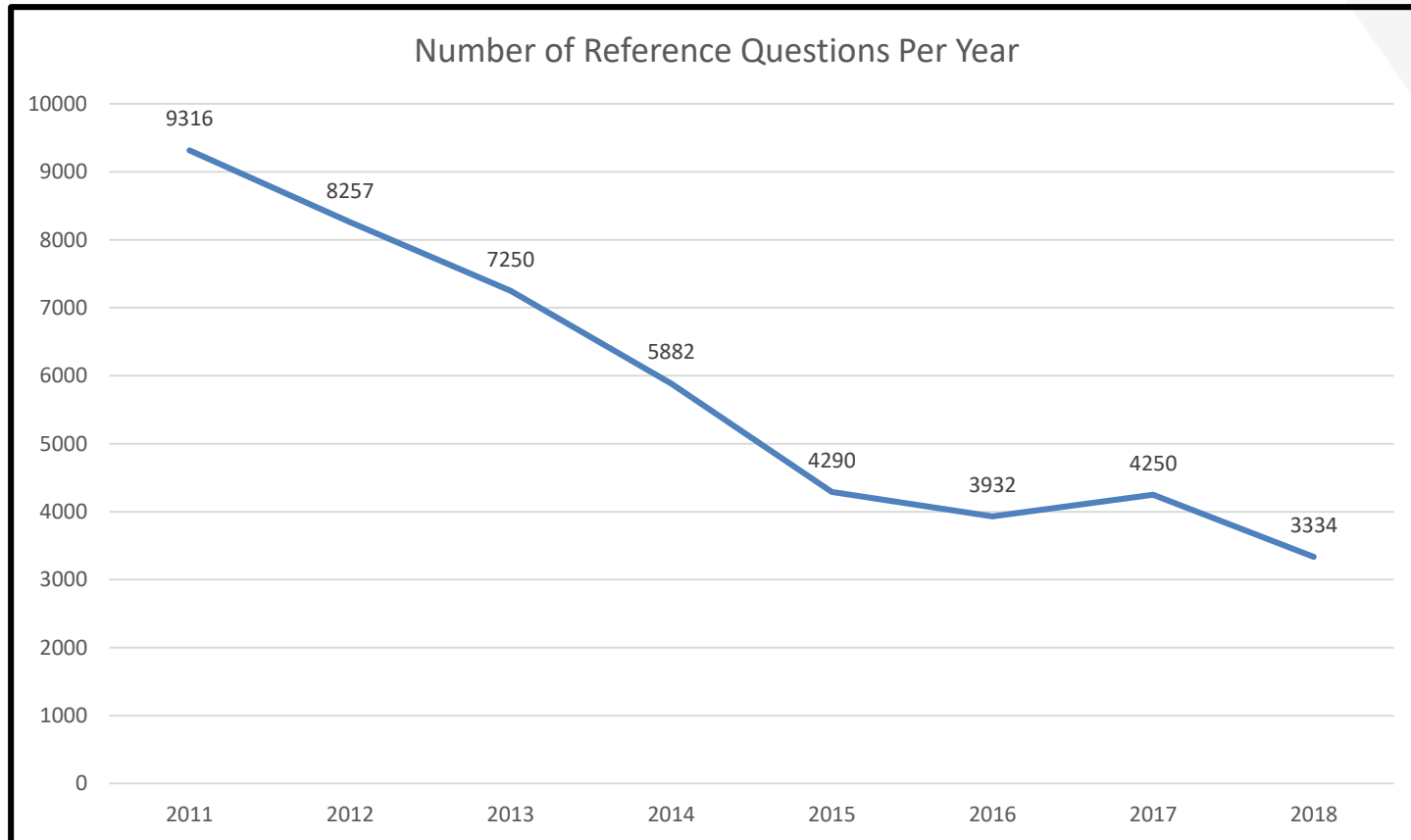
NDLA Annual Conference  
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# The Starting Point

ACRL reported that at U.S. university libraries  
– 57% decline in reference questions  
from 2001 to 2012



# Chester Fritz Library, UND



# Responsibilities and Priorities

## Librarian responsibilities

- Staff desk
- Library instruction
- Collection development
- In-depth research appointments
- Serve on committees

# Start a PRC Program

Two main reasons:

1. Stop tying up librarians' time in a declining service
  - Librarians will stop staffing desk
  - More time for library instruction
2. Implement High Impact Practice (HIP) of peer mentoring
  - Value students' contribution
  - Prepare students for the workplace

# PRC Timeline

- 2015 – Initial Idea
- 2018 – Information Gathering
- Spring 2019 – Built Framework
- Summer 2019 – Program Development
- Fall 2019 – Pilot begins
- Fall 2020 – Knowledge Commons Integration
  - Writing Center
  - Academic Support
  - Career Services

# Information Gathering

- Literature Review
  - Student autonomy
  - PRCs and supervisor
- Discussions
  - Administration
  - Librarians
  - Student library employees

# Discussion with Administration

- Must have buy-in
  - Library Dean
  - President / Provost
- Aligns with UND Goals
  - Liberal arts foundation
  - Increase graduation rates
  - Enhance discovery
- Paying PRCs
  - Justify higher wages
  - Find funding



<https://und.edu/about/strategic-plan/>



# Discussion with Librarians

- Buy-in from librarians
  - Start with core group
- Losing a favorite task
- Concern about students taking over their job duties
  - Knowing when to refer?
  - Knowing boundaries?
- Creation of PRC expectations document

# Rebranding Services

Ask A Librarian changed to Ask Us



# Background

- Access Services
  - Strong training program
  - Student promotions
    - Evaluation of Learning Outcomes
    - Strong customer service skills
    - Reference training
- More prepared



Image by Nick Youngson CC BY-SA

# Discussion with Student Workers

- Expressed desire to:
  - Be more helpful for students using the library databases and online resources
  - Understand library research better
- Going beyond triage at the desk
  - offer more in-depth, personalized sessions
  - role in instruction
- Understand the struggle - taken some of the same classes.
- “There is a lot of information that I wish I knew as an undergraduate. My overall goal is to make you a better researcher.”

# Job Description

- Nine months
- Peer reference assistance
- Assist librarians
- Attend trainings
- Available during business hours

# Required Qualifications

- Minimum of three semesters
- Reference training
- Resume, cover letter, class schedule
- Essay
- Communication & customer service
- Critical thinking
- Understand referral process
- Collaboration
- Demonstrated accountability

# Preferences

- Evaluation 35/40
- English 130
- 3.0 GPA

# Hours & Wages

- 10-15 per week
- \$11.10 per hour

# Training Tools

- Basic training already complete
- Literature & Libraries
  - Interactive games
  - Group discussion
  - Roleplay
  - Online tutorials
  - Videos
- Student requests
  - Checklists
  - Benchmarks



Image by Gerd Altmann from pixabay.com



# Peer Research Consultants

Training and information for PRCs

Home

Required Reading

Librarian

What is a PRC?

Expectations

Evaluating Materials

Database Information

Training Projects

Reference Interview

English 130

Referrals to Subject Librarians

Selling the Program

## Required Reading

Welcome!

Ethics

Thank you for joining the PRC team!

This guide will provide a good deal of information, along with several assignments. You are welcome to read through any and all of the information presented, but please do the assignments in the order presented, and **wait for feedback before proceeding** to the next assignment.

## Librarian



Karlene Clark

# How to Begin

## Reference Interview

RUSA

Narrowing Topics

How to Begin

Extras

Practice

## How to Begin

First Steps

Doing an interview

Help for Interview 2 and beyond

# Introducing the Work

## Training Projects

Exercises

Mining for In-Depth Resources

Tracking Progress

- Start them where they're at
- Give topic and list of resources to find
- Track progress on worksheet

# Tracking Progress

Who:

What:

Where:

When:

Why / Issues:

Contingency Plan:

Resource	
Research Path	
Dates	
Database	
Results Retrieved	
Revised Search Terms	
Results Retrieved	

Resource	
Research Path	
Dates	
Database	
Results Retrieved	
Revised Search Terms	
Results Retrieved	

Search Results:

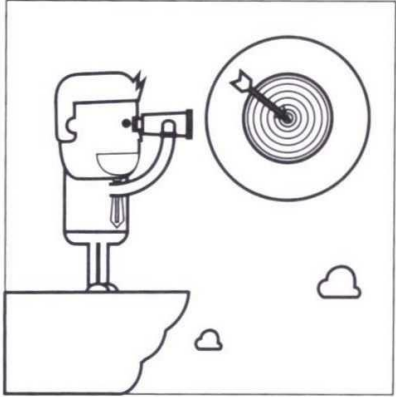
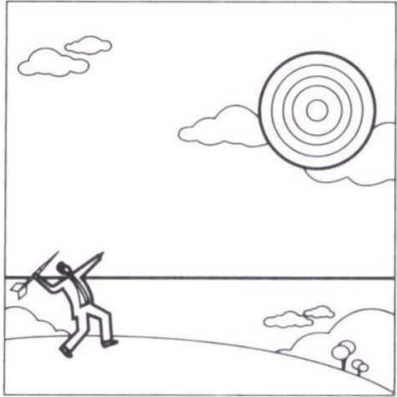
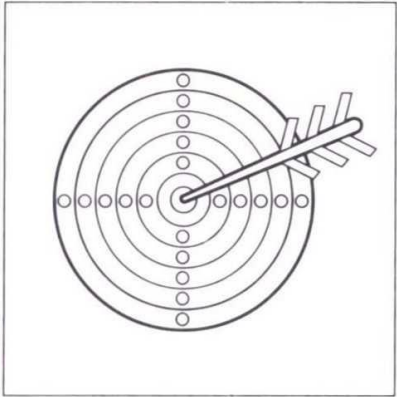
# Getting In-depth

- Subject specific assistance
  - When to use specific database topics
  - Unique search strategies
- Sample questions from subject librarians
- Time for training from each subject librarian
- Furthered librarian buy-in for PRC program
  - PRCs could demonstrate their learning
  - Opportunity to clear up misunderstandings

# Going Live

- Ask Us Desk
  - Shadow in Fall, on own in Spring
  - Primarily serving walk-up patrons
- Research Appointments
  - “Office Hours” in Starfish
- Instruction
  - English 130 Composition Courses
- Will hire 2 more PRCs

# Program Assessment

Learning Goals	Learning Objectives	Learning Outcomes
 A line drawing of a person standing on a rock, looking through binoculars at a target with an arrow in the bullseye.	 A line drawing of a person in a landscape aiming an arrow at a target in the sky.	 A line drawing of a target with several arrows hitting the bullseye.
See the Target	Aim for the Target	Hit the Target

Source: Barkley & Major, Learning Assessment Techniques, 2016

# Goals / Objectives / Outcomes

- See the Target      Clear vision BEFORE beginning PRC recruitment
- Aim for the Target      NACE standards / RUSA
- Hit the Target      Program Improvement / Campus Buy-in



# Evaluation Tools

- Rubric based on RUSA guidelines
- Evaluations by subject librarians
  - Documenting research strategies
  - Permalinking results
  - Creation of topic maps
  - Creating a reference dialogue
- Self-reflections with prompts
- Weekly debrief meetings
- Patron feedback (*forthcoming*)

# Final Thoughts / Benefits

- Highly sought-after employment skills including research, communication, leadership, peer supervision, conflict management, and critical thinking skills.
- Giving student employees increased responsibility can increase pride in their work. The energy and enthusiasm of student employees can be contagious for all library staff and increase staff morale.

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# Thank You! Questions?

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