

C. Reference and Research, Option 1

The reference and research service utilizes 7.25 PYs, of which 6.65 PYs are allocated to its primary function of answering reference questions. The service is heavily used and appreciated, and in relation to the overall federal library community, the service could be described in the superior category.

The library is open, with staff, 32.5 hours per week, starting at 10:00 a.m. each day. Comments made in interviews and focus groups suggested that reference service is needed earlier than that. Our survey of eight other comparable federal libraries shows that their average is 42.8 hours per week. In order to make service more conveniently available to the Department, we recommend that the staffed hours of opening be extended to 40 per week without increasing PY levels. The result of extended hours might not be a commensurate growth in volume of enquiries so much as the spreading of a slightly greater workload over a longer period.

On-line searching of reference databases is carried out both by librarians in the Client Services Section and by two specialists in the Systems and Automated Research Services Section. This latter section reports direct to the Library Director.

Complex searches, or those requiring access to databases not fully familiar to the reference research librarians (e.g., Dow Jones, Lexis/Nexis), are carried out by the automated research services specialists. Since the on-line searching work done by both of these groups serves the same purpose, we recommend that the two staff members doing on-line searching in the Systems and Automated Research Services Section be organizationally relocated to the Client Services Section; and that additional training be given to the reference research librarians to enable them to consult all on-line data bases with equal ease. Searching would be made simpler though the purchase of software packages which allow commands for one database to be used for another.

As a research library specializing in international relations, the library must have comprehensive collections, including materials that are consulted only infrequently but must be there when the need arises. This is one of the features that distinguishes a research collection from a working collection. Every measure should be taken to use library space as efficiently as possible. This is especially important since space in the Lester B. Pearson Building is now very limited. To this end, we believe it would be worthwhile for the library to conduct a critical review of its collections in order to identify long backruns of government documents, serials and other materials that are not central to the field of international relations, that are rarely used, and which on the occasion when they might be needed, could be obtained readily from the National Library or Library of Parliament. Materials of this nature should be removed from the collection.

As well, additional compact shelving should be installed to hold infrequently consulted materials in the international relations field. A perusal of the shelves shows that many monographs have, in the past, been acquired in multiple copies, sometimes numerous. This practice reflected heavy demands on the library for reports of commissions of enquiry, important political biographies and memoirs, and the like. Extra copies of materials of these kinds, no longer in demand, can now