



Ready For It? Training Library School Graduate Students to Provide Reference Services

Sandy Hervieux
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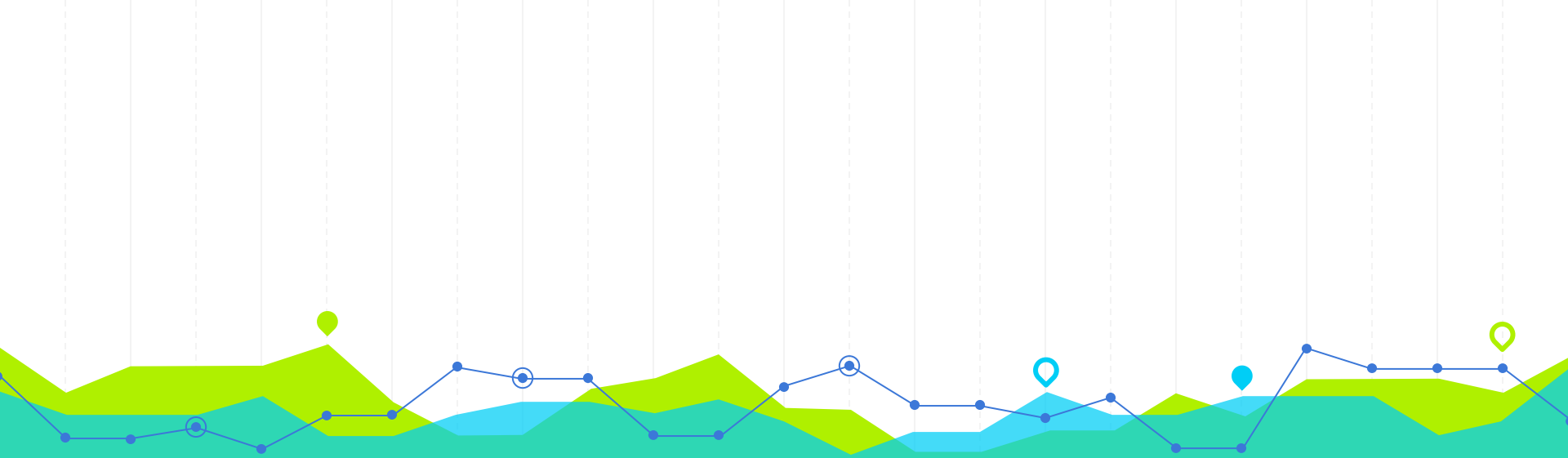
Land Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge that we are all joining this session from many places, near and far, and acknowledge the traditional owners and caretakers of those lands. I am joining from the land on which McGill University is situated, which is on the unceded traditional lands of the Kanien'kehà:ka, a place which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange for many First Nations. I recognize and respect the Kanien'kehà:ka as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters within the Montreal community.

Introduction



Sandy Hervieux
Virtual Reference Coordinator,
McGill University



Context and Rationale

Agenda

- Institutional Context
- Rationale
- Graduate Reference Student Assistants Program
- Training Program Overview
- Special Projects
- Lessons Learned and Next Steps

Institutional Context

- McGill University is located in Montreal, Qc, Canada
- Research focused university (graduate programs, Medicine and Law faculties)
- 40 000 students
- 8 branch libraries
- Humanities and Social Sciences Library is the biggest branch
- In-person and virtual reference available to students, faculty, staff and members of the community

Reference Service

Reference Desk

- In person at the Humanities and Social Sciences Library
- Offered Monday-Friday 10am to 5 pm
- Staffed by librarians

Virtual Reference

- Offered through the LibAnswers platform
- Chat, email and text
- Offered Monday-Friday 10 am to 6 pm and Saturday-Sunday 12 pm to 5 pm
- Staffed by librarians

Rationale

**Provide LIS
students
with practical
experience**

**Assist
librarians
who have
multiple
demands for
their time**

**Better
service for
Library users**



Graduate Student Reference Assistants

Graduate Student Reference Assistants Program

- Previous iteration of the program
 - In 2016, two graduate students were hired to provide virtual reference
- In 2018-2019, the program was expanded to include in-person reference
- Two graduate students offer a total of 20 hours of reference
- Supervised by the Virtual Reference Coordinator
- Funded by the Library
- Selected from students in the School of Information Studies
- Put on hold in 2020-2021 due to the pandemic

Training Program Overview



Training Program



Onboarding

- Tour of library spaces
- Overview of the reference desk
- Library policies
- Circulation policies
- 2 hours



Reference Training

- Formal training based on RUSA guidelines
- One-on-one with experienced reference librarian
- 2 hours



Virtual Reference Training

- Overview of the LibAnswers platform
- Difference with in-person reference
- Common questions
- 2 hours



Online Resources

- Library catalogue
- Subject guides
- Subject-specific and multidisciplinary databases
- 2 hours



Shadowing

- 12 hours of shadowing with experienced librarians
- In person and online
- Paired with librarians in different disciplines (sciences, humanities, social sciences, etc)



Continuous Training

- As needed
- Meetings with subject librarians to deepen knowledge
- Assessment of chat transcripts to identify areas of improvement

Reference Interview Training

- What is the Reference Interview?
- Goals
- RUSA Guidelines
- Steps
- Challenges
- Referrals
- Practice

RUSA Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Service Providers

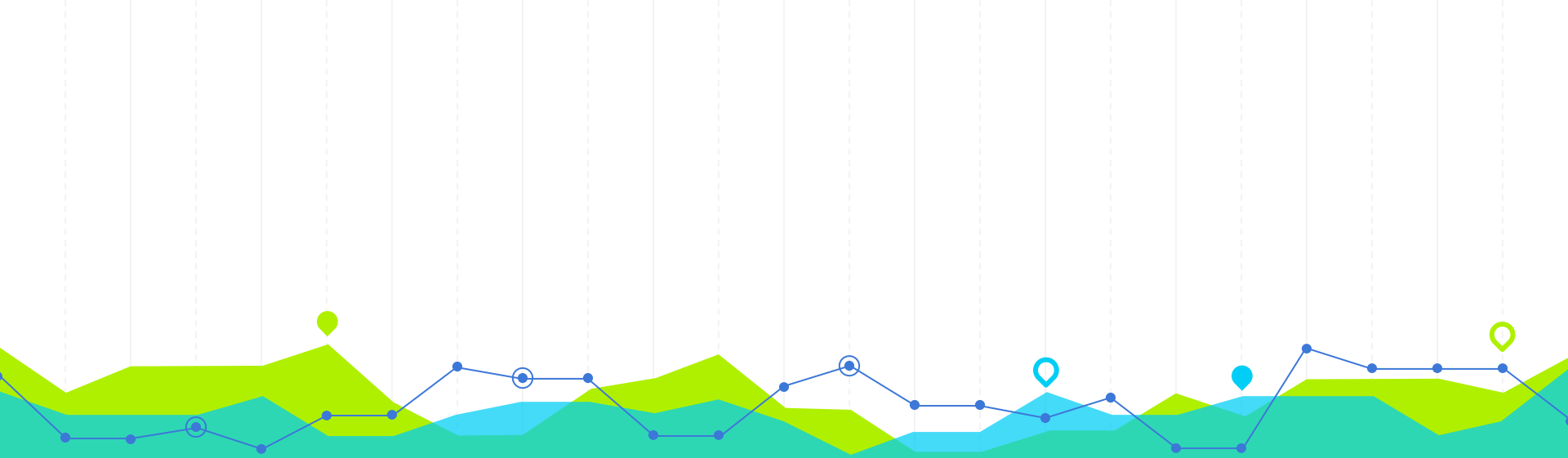


Special Projects

- Paired with librarians to complete special projects
- Co-teach an information literacy instruction session
- Create a library subject guide (LibGuide)
- Curate book displays

Informal Mentorship: Kick Starting their Academic Careers

- Opportunities for mentorship
 - Help with CV, interview process and applications to academic library jobs
- Facilitated meetings with other librarians to learn about different positions and subject areas
- Invited to participate in conference presentations
- Contributed to scholarly articles



Lessons Learned and Next Steps

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

- Students appreciate the opportunity to meet with different librarians and learn about different subject areas
- They frequently mention how useful the practical experience is
- Next steps:
 - Introduce an anti-racism component to the reference training
 - Evaluate the efficiency of the training program by assessing virtual reference interactions

References

Reference and User Services Association. (2008). *Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Service Providers*. Reference & User Services Association (RUSA).
<http://www.ala.org/rusa/resources/guidelines/guidelinesbehavioral>

CREDITS

Special thanks to all the people who made and released these awesome resources for free:

- Presentation template by [SlidesCarnival](#)
- Photographs by [Unsplash](#)

THANK YOU!

Any questions?

You can find me at
sandy.hervieux@mcgill.ca