

Awkward Reference Interviews

Scenarios:

- Patron really just wants to chat.
- Patron insists on a particular staff member.
- Patron asks for advice.
- Call every day for horoscopes/gold prices/stock market to be read to them.
- Patrons ask personal questions.



Stock Phrases: keep some practiced and on the tip of your tongue:

- “I’m happy to help you with library related questions.”
- “That is a personal question. How else can I help you?”
- “Why do you ask?”
- “That’s not appropriate to ask me in the work place.”
- “Any staff member can assist you.”
- “I can no longer assist you. Let me get my supervisor.”

Always be sure you are giving Information Vs. Advice

Pay Attention to:

- Patron privacy/ Confidentiality
- Unbiased assistance
- Legal and copyright issues

Check your own:

- Biases
- Moral sensibilities
- Perceptions
- Boundaries

Difficult to stay current on:

- Legal and medical
- “You might want to check with your dr/lawyer about that.”

Reference interview: play detective

Know and follow policy about reporting inappropriate patron behavior. All staff need to be on the same page.

Reference Service Models

Majority offer a combined service desk with varying names like Information Desk.

Pros:

- Less redirecting of patrons
- Better space usage
- Less confusing to patrons
- Staff can cover better

Cons:

- Jacks of all trades and master of none
- Confusion of roles/job duties

Important:

- Greet people and make them feel comfortable

Other:

Many had “roving” schedule, formal or informal, to do a route through the library. Helps people who are reluctant to ask for assistance. Often depends on building lay out.

Some had a Teen Service Desk.

Triage questions with a quick reference interview and either pass it off to another person or answer depending on need.



Computer Assistance Models

One on One Session (Discovery Appts/ Book a Librarian) appointments:

- Volunteers (should a background check be required?) & staff serve
- Some are specific to seniors
- Specific to job seeking needs
- Service Desk as point of service



Scheduled events:

- Tech Time drop in schedule
- Class registration doesn't prevent no shows.
- Themed drop ins: workforce development; device assistance

Hardware & Services:

- Workforce Dev. Laptops
- Wireless printing
- Wireless enabled devices for use in library (laptops, iPads, etc)
- Hotspot check out
- Smart TVs in conference rooms
- Headphones, auxiliary devices, and **flashdrives to loan. **virus concerns about this.

Policy Concerns

- No typing of credit card info.
- Differing policies on touching patron devices.
- Establish policy on what staff will or won't do (i.e. computer repair)

Pro Tips:

- Know who on staff is good with devices/platforms/apps as a go to.
- Beware shocking content on patron devices.
- "Dummy" email address for patrons to email things to for printing/faxing.
- Handouts can help but not replace one on one assistance.

Legal and Medical Reference

Legal:

- Gale Legal Forms
- Westlaw
- Virginia Code website
- LexisNexis
- Nolo
- Senior Navigator
- 311



Community Resources: Legal Aid, Social Services.

Supervised volunteers from medical or law schools.

Printing “evidence” from phone—is this legal reference or tech issue?

Notary Services available in some, not all. Have a witness policy and stick to it.

Medical:

- Medline Plus
- National Library of Medicine
- National Institute of Health
- Mayo Clinic
- Cleveland Clinic
- Local Health Department & Hospitals
- Merck Manuals
- SSA.gov
- SPCA (pets)
- Senior Navigator
- 311

Tax Services:

- TFOP: <https://www.irs.gov/forms-pubs/tax-forms-outlet-program-tfop>

Pro Tip: REAL IDs DO NOT FAX. They come out on the receiving in blacked out.