



The Reference Interview Today: Negotiating and Answering Questions Face to Face, on the Phone, and Virtually

By Dave Harmeyer

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More an art than a science, the reference interview requires not only knowing a specific set of skills, but also how to apply those skills in an ever-changing world. Good reference interviews accomplish three goals: establishing contact with the user, determining what the user's information need actually is, and checking to make sure that the answer actually meets that need completely.

Built around timeless service principles including Ranganathan's Five Laws, *The Reference Interview Today: Negotiating and Answering Questions Face to Face, on the Phone, and Virtually* is a practical field guide to conducting reference interviews in every modality: face-to-face, phone, chat, text, virtual world such as Second Life, and even mashup reference interviews where multiple modalities are used to answer the question.

Following a concise presentation of reference interview basics, the heart of the book is 12 different reference interview scenarios set in different modes and demonstrating a specific principle. Each of these twelve follows a similar construction: a general overview of the principle (for example, save the time of the reader), a script of the reference interview, and then learning questions designed to demonstrate the principle(s) as illustrated in the script. Examples range from assisting faculty members with scholarly resources to helping a high school student with a paper to assisting a hairdresser with a reference question. One scenario is based in the year 2025 to emphasize the timeless nature of reference service.

Seamlessly combining both time-honored principles and multiple technologies, this practical book demonstrates how librarians can be as relevant and necessary in the digital age as in the print world. Appropriate for both novice and experienced librarians as well as for LIS students, this concise handbook speaks to those working in or preparing for careers in public, school, academic, and special libraries..

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Editorial Review

Review

[This book] successfully demonstrates that despite the internet and Google, the reference interview is not dead and reference librarians still provide vital services. This book provides 13 scenarios of reference interactions, ranging from more traditional reference services at the reference desk to virtual reference in synchronous chat environments and the online world of Second Life. These scenarios, set in both academic and public libraries, consist of anecdotal stories for how and why the reference interview is still relevant. These scenarios also offer some advice on best practices for reference interviews, such as keeping your text short and on point during online chat interactions and trying to incorporate information literacy instruction into any reference situation. Each scenario ends with reflective questions in the following areas: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, which makes this book a helpful resource for library school students or those who are new to reference services. . . . This book also includes a two-part literature review on the topic of reference interviews. The first part utilizes three bibliographic sources (WorldCat, Citation Indexes, and Google Scholar), while the second part covers three distinct types of reference interview (literature reviews, anecdotal observations, and inferential statistical studies). In addition, a study analyzing the accuracy of answers given during chat interactions is also included. . . . This book is more of a practical, how-to resource on providing reference services using traditional (in-person and over the phone) and nontraditional (e-mail, chat, Second Life) methods, explained through the utilization of anecdotal scenarios. . . . This book could be a helpful learning tool to those who are new at reference or those who are looking to learn more about how other librarians are keeping the reference interview alive. (*American Reference Books Annual*)

This book is a practical guide to reference interviews using different methods, such as telephone, chat, virtual and the traditional face-to-face method. Author Dave Harmeyer is committed to improving the reference interview and creating a best practices guide. . . . This book is written in an informal style, yet the author has examined a range of available literature in addition to anecdotal sources. It is well researched and a labour of love, as Harmeyer has devoted many years to the study and development of university reference services. This book is suitable for both new and the experienced reference librarians, in addition to acting as a useful text for library management students. (*Australian Library Journal*)

From the foreword:

I love the idea of anything that will improve the quality of service rendered in our libraries, whether we are talking about checklists, flowcharts, or other systems analysis techniques. Here are 13 wonderful chapters full of anecdotes, intuition, and evidence-based practices to help us out. Dave Harmeyer's *The Reference Interview Today* will make an important contribution to our field, specifically in our shared interest of improving reference librarianship. (John V. Richardson Jr., Professor Emeritus of Information Studies, University of California, Los Angeles)

Harmeyer has been gracing our journal *The Reference Librarian* with his reference interview scenarios for some time now, and it is good to see his effort codified and expanded into this book. I wish I had had something like it as a guide before commencing my career as a reference librarian. People pay lip service to the idea of the reference interview, but pay precious little attention to the actual thing itself. Dave shows people how it is done, in detail, and the accompanying exercises will make prospective and current reference librarians think and rethink what they do and how they could do it better. (William Miller, Dean of

University Libraries, Florida Atlantic University and co-editor of *The Reference Librarian*)

About the Author

Dave Harmeyer is a professor and Associate Dean of University Libraries at Azusa Pacific University. He has written many articles for *The Reference Librarian*.

Users Review

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Madelyn McDowell:

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Donald Worsley:

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James Labrecque:

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