

# Reference Interview

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# Outline

- Definitions
- Approachability
- Open Questions
- Restate and Rephrase
- Closed Questions
- Phone Reference
- Referrals
- Follow-Up
- WORF
- Further Resources

**Leave time for your comments and questions**

# Some Definitions of Reference Interview

A “dialogue” or “conversation” where the reference librarian takes responsibility for finding out the information need of the patron

A “partnership” where both the patron and reference librarian are equals and have mutual goals to accomplish

Any “interaction” between a patron looking for information and a reference librarian offering to help find information

# Why don't patrons ask for what they really want?

- Can't remember the details
- Don't fully understand the topic or the terminology
- May be embarrassed by the topic
- English may be their second language
- Assume that they are an inconvenience
- We may not seem approachable

# Approachability

How we appear when we first meet our patrons will impact the outcome of our entire interaction

- Pause whatever task you're working on
- Raise or lower yourself to match their eye level
- Make direct eye contact
- Maintain an open stance, lean in if seated
- Offer a friendly "Hello" "How can I help you?"
- Allow the patron to state their information request fully, in their own words, and without being interrupted

**PLEASE**

**INTERRUPT ME**

**I'm here to  
help you!**

**Your question is  
important to me.**

# Be Careful In Responding Too Quickly

Question:

*“Can birds fly?”*



# PET TRAVEL OPTIONS

We offer several options to get your pet to your destination, and we treat our four-legged friends with the same attention and courtesy our human passengers expect.

**Note:** Some states may require a health certificate for your pet. Your veterinarian, the [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#), or the Department of Agriculture for your destination state may provide you with more information.

- [Carry On Your Pet](#)
- [Check Your Pet](#)
- [Ship Your Pet in Cargo](#)
- [Connection Carriers & Pet Travel](#)

## CARRY ON YOUR PET

Dogs, cats and household birds\* can travel with you in the cabin for a one-way fee\*, collected at check in, to/from the following destinations:

- U.S./Canada: \$125 USD/CAD
- Virgin Islands: \$125 USD/CAD
- Puerto Rico: \$125 USD/CAD
- Outside the U.S.: \$200 USD/CAD/EUR
- Brazil: \$75 USD

CAD amount will be charged exit Canada, and EUR amount will be charged exit Europe. Fees established by the contract of carriage in effect at the time of ticket issuance will apply.

\*Household birds are only permitted to travel on domestic U.S. flights.

### Special cases:

For any travel to or from South Africa, Hong Kong or the United Kingdom — with the exception of service animals — pets must travel as cargo and are not permitted in the cabin.

For travel to Hawaii, pets are not permitted to travel in the cabin, and other restrictions may apply. See [Pets to Hawaii](#) for details.

\*CAD amount will be charged exit Canada, and EUR amount will be charged exit Europe. Fees established by the contract of carriage in effect at the time of ticket issuance will apply.

## RELATED LINKS

- [Pet Travel Requirements & Restrictions : Delta Air Lines](#)
- [U.S. Domestic & International Pet Travel : Delta Air Lines](#)
- [Flight Ticket Refunds : Delta Air Lines](#)
- [Reservations & Customer Support : Delta Air Lines](#)
- [Connection Carriers & Pet Travel : Delta Air Lines](#)





# Start With Open Questions

Open questions are questions that do not have a yes/no or either/or answer in mind

Don't ask: *"Is this for a school report?"*

Ask: *"Could you tell me what you're working on?"*

*"What kind of information are you looking for?"*

# Restate or Rephrase the Question

Accomplishes three important tasks:

1. It reassures the patron that you are listening to them
2. It confirms that you have heard them correctly
3. The patron may then clarify or amplify their original request with more information

# Closed Questions

Present patron with a yes/no question or options from which they may choose. They are used to narrow in on the particulars of their information request.

*“What material have you already looked at?”*

*“Are you looking for current or historical information?”*

*“What’s your timeline for this request?”*

*“Can you wait for materials to be brought from another library?”*

*“Are you looking for the novel or the movie?”*

# Phone Reference

Harder to gauge patrons immediate responses to your questions, no visual clues

More important to describe the resources your consulting, each step you're taking, the path you're using to meet their request

Ask if they have time to wait or if they would prefer to be called back

# Referrals

Better to admit you don't have access to the information they need than to "hold onto" a question you cannot answer

Keep potential referrals in mind (other people, libraries, or organizations)

It's best to first confirm that the referral destination can indeed help the patron and someone is available

# Follow-Up and Closing Interview

Ask your patron directly *“Does that completely answer your question?”*

Use phrases like *“If you don’t find what your looking for, please stop back and we’ll see if we can try and find something else”* *“I’ll be here on the desk until 5:00 pm”*

Ask as they pass back by the desk *“Did you find what you needed?”*

# Negative Closure

When the Reference Interview is bypassed without asking questions or providing explanations

*“Research consistently finds that in about 50 percent of reference interactions, there is no reference interview.”*

*(Source: Reference and Information Services: An Introduction, p. 73)*

# Positive Interaction > Accurate Results

“Some studies have even found that a positive interaction, one in which the user feels that the librarian has listened and been concerned, is more important to the user’s willingness to return with another question than the accuracy of the answers that are received.”

(Source: Reference and Information Services: An Introduction, page 58)



# Remember WORF



**W** = welcoming, open attitude and body language

**O** = open ended questions first

**R** = restate and rephrase the question

**F** = follow-up to make sure the patron has gotten what they need

# Online Resources

ALA | RUSA Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Service Providers

<http://www.ala.org/rusa/resources/guidelines/guidelinesbehavioral>

Infopeople Webinar - The Reference Interview, Time for a Tune-Up

<https://infopeople.org/civicrm/event/info?reset=1&id=142>

Ohio Reference Excellence on the Web, Module 2, Interview

<http://www.olc.org/ore/2interview.htm>

# Print Resources

*Reference and Information Services: An Introduction*

Richard E. Bopp and Linda C. Smith, Editors

*Reference Reborn: Breathing New Life into Public Service  
Librarianship*

Diane Zabel, Editor

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

Dave Harmeyer

# Special Thanks

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# Questions?

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