

Reference Interviews and Library Research Models

Reference interviews

One person tries to describe for another person not something he knows but rather something he does not know

Library research models

Approaches to satisfying information needs that enlist the principles on which library collections are organized for access

Discipline-specific model



Reserve/coursepack readings

1. Mann, Thomas. 1993. *Library research models: a guide to classification, cataloguing, and computers*. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 3–14).
2. Bopp, Richard E. 1995. “History and varieties of reference services.” In *Reference and information services: an introduction*, edited by Richard E. Bopp and Linda C. Smith, pp. 3–16, skim 16–35. 2d ed. Englewood, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited.
3. Sutton, Ellen D., and Leslie Edmonds Holt. 1995. “The reference interview.” In *Reference and information services: an introduction*, edited by Richard E. Bopp and Linda C. Smith, 36–54. 2d ed. Englewood, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited.
- *4. Herndon, Peter. 1991. “Access to the research literature of library and information science.” In *Statistics: a component of the research process*, pp. 31–7.



Intermediaries in libraries— reference librarians

Origins

Second half of 19th century

Library users not skilled in information organization, handling, retrieval

Need for an intermediary

Varieties of reference services

Information service – providing answers to inquirers' questions

Instructional service – teaching people how to find information on their own

Guidance – advising and assisting users to identify and select appropriate materials on particular topics



Information services (*information seeking models)

Ready reference*

Research questions*

Bibliographic verification

Interlibrary loan and document delivery

Information and referral – identifying community resources and agencies that can provide services or information that the library can't provide

Database searches*

Selective dissemination of information (SDI)



Guidance

(*information seeking models)

Readers' advisory services* – recommending materials suited to users' tastes and interests

Bibliotherapy – using library resources to assist users in the process of physical or emotional healing

Term-paper counseling*

Research assistance*



Reference interviews

Definition of a reference interview: a conversation between a librarian and a user regarding a user's information needs

Librarian's goals are to determine

Subject of the question

Why the question is being asked

Requirements to answer the request, e.g., amount of information desired, desired format

User variables, e.g., aptitude, reading ability, level of motivation

External constraints, e.g., impending deadlines, time user has to spend, availability of materials

Prior search history (what the user has already done to locate desired information)



Steps in the reference interview

Negotiating the question (statement and clarification of the problem)

Locating the information that is needed to answer the question

Progressing toward the solution to the problem

Communicating the answer or closing the interview

Only 13% of reference interviews resulted in interviews that substantially altered the initial query (M. J. Lynch)



Unsuccessful interviews

Inquirer has only a little knowledge of the subject

Inquirer is not sure how to ask the questions or

to inquire or perception that their questions are

Inquirers don't want to bother the librarian

Librarians' non-verbal behavior, greeting, attitude

Physical setting of reference area



Successful interviews

Active listening

Paraphrasing inquirer's interests

Open-ended questions

Neutral questions (isn't the problem?)

Willingness of inquirer to return to same librarian for help in the future



Library research models (T. Mann)

Long-time Library of Congress (LC) reference librarian

Eight models

- Discipline-specific
- Library classification
- Controlled vocabulary
- Published bibliographies
- Type of literature
- Footnote chasing
- Least effort
- Scholar's workstation

Approaches to satisfying information needs that enlist the principles on which library collections are organized for access



Discipline-specific model

~~Disciplines~~ learn A & I sources specific to their

Librarianship – ERIC, LISA, Information Science
Abstracts, Library Literature

Psychology >

Business >

Computer science >

Economics >

An example is “Access to the research
literature in library and information science”

Lists major A & I services

Lists major journals (that most major A & I services
index)

Lists *Current research* and *ARIST*



Problems with the discipline-specific model

Inquirers have trouble venturing outside their major area of study

Inquirers never gain familiarity with interdisciplinary sources that have good coverage of their discipline

Not knowledgeable of major non A & I sources, e.g., encyclopedias, dictionaries, citation indexes, biographies, directories, review series, yearbooks

Internet counterpart to the discipline-specific model >

