Reference Services: Tried, True, & New

Jennifer Hootman

“Every experience is the answer to a reference question.” – Vanessa Irvin Morris

The evolution of our library reference services remains a hot topic. At most professional development venues from large conferences to webinars, we have opportunities to participate in discussions and listen to presentations specifically about reference services. This indicates to me that reference services are not only alive and well, but also continue to organically respond to the changing nature and significance of information needs and access. Yet, despite these inevitable evolutions in library services, Vanessa Irvin Morris, Assistant Teaching Professor, College of Computing & Informatics at Drexel University, argues that the goal of reference services has remained constant: “helping patrons access, learn, and use the information they need easily, quickly, and accurately regardless of technology.” No matter how reference is approached the service itself continues to address this goal.

Recently, Morris was the featured presenter in WebJunction’s webinar, “Reference Services: Tried, True, & New.” On the WebJunction website you can find the webinar’s recording, chat archive, and slides. If you engage in professional discussions about what works, what doesn’t, and what you’re going to try next in reference services at your library (and I suspect you do), then this webinar is definitely worth an hour of your time.
In this webinar you’ll learn about the reference “interaction” rather than the reference “interview.” Morris states that reference is less of an interview and really more of a “series of social interactions leading to a literacy event” where we encounter “what we understand about one another, what we misunderstand about one another, and what we learn from one another.” She further explains that “There's an information literacy action going on here as we learn what we NEED to know about one another in order to learn what the answer is to the question, based on how life experience informs our understandings.” It’s important to highlight, then, that the reference interaction does not end when the patron or student walks away. It continues with the librarian documenting what he/she learned from the interaction.

Additionally, a recent job advertisement for a Reference/Web Librarian from the Rochester (MN) Public Library gets some positive recognition from the presenter. Morris uses it to underscore the traditional as well as new qualities that are expected of librarians and new hires. Way to go, RPL! It’s also a hoot to hear her indirectly describe the Midwest (teaser: “straight up American”). I love it.

Morris covers the reference landscape from the tried and true services such as the reference desk as social interface, roving reference, and outreach beyond the library walls to true and new services such as blended approaches to reference utilizing the entire range of modes (e.g., desk, phone, roving, mobile) and resources (e.g., Wikipedia, Google, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, blogs, print & ebooks/databases) available to us.

Librarians are approaching ever-evolving reference services in different ways across the variety of library types. Whether it’s morphing to an on-call service, integrating students at the desk and librarians providing research consultations, staffing a desk, roving, embedding services, emailing, chatting, or video conferencing, Morris maintains that a librarian’s purpose is timeless.

And as a final pitch for the webinar recording, the following is one of the best webinar chat responses I’ve seen in a long time: “I wonder how one maintains rebel spirit in a protocol-driven profession.” If you’d like to learn more about “Reference Services: Tried, True, & New” and the “rebel spirit,” take some time and listen to the webinar.

Back to June 2014
Are You a Minnesota Transplant?

Carla Pfahl

Jerilyn Veldof, Organization Development Associate with the University of Minnesota University Libraries, has co-written and self-published an ebook with Corey Bonnema, Human Resources Specialist with University of Minnesota, that is now available on Amazon: *Minnesota Nice? A Transplant’s Guide to Surviving and Thriving in Minnesota*. Jerilyn is a transplant herself from New Jersey and, over the years, has talked with hundreds of transplants from all over who struggle to adjust to the culture. In her side project with Corey, Jerilyn has been helping transplants make the transition to Minnesota and has culled most of their knowledge on the topic for this book.

Jerilyn and Corey also manage the website *Surviving and Thriving in Minnesota Nice* where you can find much of the content from the book. They break information out in many lists and steps that are easy to understand and give the east-coaster (Jerilyn) and Minnesota native (Corey) perspectives. The work Jerilyn and Corey have put together is a project of awareness that would be useful in any environment, not just the workplace.

Back to June 2014

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Foreseeing the Second Wave of the Digital Divide

Matt Lee
Efforts to narrow the digital divide continue across the country, within libraries and without. While 72% of Americans currently have broadband access at home (up from 63% four years ago), 28% still don’t. And that’s just one facet of the digital divide. As we crest the first wave of the digital divide by expanding technology infrastructure, another wave daunts us collectively. That second wave involves using technology effectively. Panelists at a local government briefing meeting in Washington, D.C., called “Responding to the Second Wave of the Digital Divide,” discussed the information and digital literacy skills needed to make informed decisions in a networked world.

Read a briefing of the briefing via American Libraries for more on the current state of the digital divide and digital readiness, as well as proposals to address the problem via additional infrastructure, policy shifts, and community involvement.

And if you’d like to hear a bit more about digital literacy innovations you can emulate right now, a recent WebJunction webinar seems useful. “Don’t Reinvent the Wheel: Digital Literacy Resources” provides insight from three presenters on their experience creating, promoting, and providing digital literacy programs and tools.

Back to June 2014

ROI at Summer Conferences

Beth Staats

ROI is happy to report that we will have a presence at a couple summer conferences. We will be presenting two sessions at the eLearning Summit on July 30th at University of Northwestern in St. Paul. Matt Lee will be presenting a session on creating infographics using web-based applications, and Carla Pfahl will be presenting a session on ELM. The eLearning Summit offers 96 1-hour breakout and poster sessions! For more information or to register for the eLearning Summit go to http://www.mnelearningsummit.org/. See you there!
Beth Staats will be presenting a session on August 22 at the Minnesota Literacy Action Network’s ABE (Adult Basic Education) Summer Institute at St. Cloud’s Rivers Edge Convention Center. This session will focus on information literacy strategies, tools, and resources for research. For more information on the Summer Institute, go to http://www.literacyactionnetwork.org/summer-institute/2014-summer-institute-schedule.

Back to June 2014

ELM Professional Development Sessions for Summer / Fall / Winter 2014

With the school year coming to an end you’re probably eager to set work aside for some more relaxing fun in the sun. Keep in mind you can schedule ELM training for your staff / librarians / paras / or teachers for this summer, fall, or winter right NOW! ROI is happy to customize ELM training to suit your audience and schedule.

For those schools and libraries within the Metro area, we can come to you and provide an informative overview on ELM or a more in-depth hands-on experience for staff. Whatever you and your staff are interested in, we can adapt information on ELM to suit your needs. For those of you living a significant distance from the Twin Cities, we can either offer a webinar for staff or, depending on distance and number of attendees, we may be able to accommodate an in-person session. If you’re interested in setting up any sort of training related to ELM, please fill out our online request form or if you’d rather talk to someone in-person, call 1-800-462-5348 and ask to speak with Beth Staats.
ELM Training & Support Survey

Please participate in this 5-minute survey to help Minitex Reference Outreach & Instruction staff continue to
create relevant support materials, workshops, and webinars for the Electronic Library for Minnesota (ELM). Your responses are anonymous and will assist us in focusing our efforts on current needs and interests. Please take this opportunity to tell us what you need and how we might better serve you!

Thank you for your time and participation!

**Back to June 2014**

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**Common Core Best Practices with Points of View Reference Center**

*Reprinted from POV Newsletter, an EBSCO publication*

This month we're featuring a Common Core best practice from a high school in New York.

**Common Core Best Practices**

Ballston Spa High School, Saratoga County, NY

Library Media Specialist Marie Rossi uses *Points of View Reference Center* to teach close reading and analysis in ninth-grade English classes. Once students have their topics, Rossi uses the Point and Counterpoint articles to model highlighting and annotating an article, determining its relevancy, and evaluating the author credentials. “They're learning about the validity of sources and analysis of ideas,” says Rossi. “They're learning about the larger world through research.”

**Back to June 2014**

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**A Widget Goes a Long Way**

*Carla Pfahl*
Having a chat widget on your library website can draw in patrons when they need assistance. We have had the AskMN chat widget on the ELM website since July 2011. Since that installation we have seen a steady increase in questions being initiated via the widget rather than the chat form. In the past, when patrons were on the ELM website, we had a link to the AskMN service so patrons would click on the link which would take them to the AskMN website, http://www.askmn.org/. They would then need to click on the “Question on Any Topic” link or “College Research” link to ask their question and be connected with a librarian. Those steps would take the patron away from their point of need in order to ask a question. By adding the chat widget on the ELM website, we were able to eliminate the extra steps that took the patron on a journey to ask a question.

In the interest of keeping the patron at their point of need, in August of 2012 we placed the AskMN widget within the ELM EBSCOhost databases, Gale's PowerSearch databases, and ProQuest Newsstand Complete (accessible via http://www.elm4you.org/). On the same day the chat widget became available, patrons began using it. That was an indicator that we were reaching patrons at their point of need. Since then activity from chat widgets within the databases has grown. While I compile statistics for the AskMN FY14 Report, I have been intrigued by the growth of widget's use. Currently, nearly 60% of all traffic for AskMN (via the AskMN and ELM websites, which does not include participating libraries usage) comes from the chat widget and almost 30% of all widget usage is from within an ELM database.

The Minitex fiscal year ends on June 30, 2014. The AskMN FY14 report will follow soon after. As the AskMN service grows, we will continue to explore ways to identify usage and points of need to better reach patrons with intuitive technology and better connections to the information they seek.

Back to June 2014

Gates Foundation Ending Global Libraries Program

Matt Lee

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation recently announced the forthcoming closure of their Global Libraries program. The program, which has existed to support public library programs worldwide since 2000, will be phased out over the next three to five years. According to the Foundation, the “transition will happen slowly with no programmatic changes to our budgets this year or next year.”
You can see a listing of current awarded grants, supporting everything from the Urban Libraries Council in the U.S. to research development in Moldova, in the Gates Foundation Grants Database. High profile grantees in the United States include the Digital Public Library of America, the American Library Association, and OCLC.

Libraries have certainly benefited from Gates' wealth, which is considerable, as illustrated by everyone's favorite modern-day scientist Neil deGrasse Tyson (apologies to Bill Nye), in this video from 2011.

Find links to more on the Global Libraries program via INFOdocket.

Back to June 2014

Once Upon a Reader

Edited from CRPLSA press release
The official launch of *Once Upon a Reader: Minnesota Libraries Bring Kids and Books Together* will take place at the Minnesota State Fair Alphabet Forest on Saturday, August 23 and will be featured at the Minnesota Library Association Conference, October 8 and 9 in Mankato.

*Moo!* written by David LaRochelle and illustrated by Mike Wohnoutka and winner of the 2014 Minnesota Book Award in Children's Literature, has been selected for the 2014-2015 program. The author and illustrator plan to be involved in the activities surrounding the launch.

*Once Upon a Reader* is a statewide one-book program, focusing on preschool aged children and highlighting the importance of reading and sharing of great literature with children. The program is sponsored by The Council of Regional Public Library System Administrators and funded through the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

Library Strategies is working with a Steering Committee of librarians from across the state to coordinate the event. Members of the committee are:

- Anna Krueger, Ramsey County Library, Project Manager
- Jackie Blagsvedt, Youth Literacy & Library Program Specialist, State Library Services
- Jolene Bradley, Brainerd Public Library, Kitchigami Regional Library System, Pine River
- Kathleen James, Metropolitan Library Service Agency, St. Paul
- Barbara Misselt, Director, East Central Regional Library, Cambridge
- Gail Nordstrom, Viking Library System, Fergus Falls
- Chris Olson, Director, Metropolitan Library Service Agency, St. Paul
- Beth Rimgush Stolpman, Great River Regional Library, St. Cloud
- Emily Savageau, Northwest Regional Library System, Thief River Falls
- Kirsty Smith, Director, Great River Regional Library, St. Cloud
- Vicki Sorn, East Central Regional Library, Cambridge

Library Strategies staff:

- Sue Hall, Director
- Melissa Brechon, Program Coordinator
- Slade Kemmet, Marketing/Design Associate
For more information, contact Melissa Brechon: melissa@thefriends.org.

**WebJunction June Webinars**

**Best Small Libraries in America: Vital, Innovative and Thriving**

Thursday, June 5, 2014 / 1 pm Central / 60 min


*Library Journal*'s annual Best Small Library in America Award, cosponsored by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, was created in 2005 to discover and reward exemplary work by libraries serving populations under 25,000, and to showcase these best practices to provide a replicable case study for their peers.

**Be Fearless: Public Speaking for Librarians**

Wednesday, June 18, 2014 / 1 pm Central / 60 min


Do you quake at the thought of public speaking? Are you also faced with the need to communicate to audiences, small or large, the importance of your work in libraries? You really can overcome your anxieties and master the art of public speaking.
One-Second Poll: Tell Us About Your Summer

What are you most looking forward to in your library this summer?

Submit

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Back to June 2014