



INFORMATION SOURCES AND SERVICES

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INTRODUCTION

- ▶ Try to imagine a library with a great collection, an excellent catalogue, lots of subject headings, signage, etc. but with no one to provide direct assistance to the user
- ▶ Can such a library exist?
- ▶ Are finding tools so good that users are able to figure them out on their own?
- ▶ Is information so easy to do without personal aid?
- ▶ Think of what a library would be without any form of assistance

Introduction cont

According to Ranganathan,

- ▶ no matter how well the collection is classified and analyzed by various manual and mechanical means, if any of them are not aided by the human element to translate the potential energy of these tools to kinetic energy, the aids in information retrieval developed are useless.
- ▶ It is the human factor that puts the library to use and no matter how interactive a system for reference service is built, the human element is irreplaceable.
- ▶ It is because humans come to the library and their needs and psychology are just like any other human beings and it is appropriate that human beings can satisfy them.

Introduction cont

- ▶ With the increasing complexity and quantity of information, users need more assistance in identifying, retrieving, and evaluating the specific information that fits their needs
- ▶ The above is what reference service does

Introduction cont

- ▶ Reference service is the supreme and ultimate function of the library.
- ▶ This is in fact the hub of all library activities.
- ▶ Reference service is sometimes referred to as 'reference and information services' or 'reader services'.
- ▶ Regardless of the name used, reference service is intended to help library users find what they want

Introduction cont

What then is reference service?

- ▶ Reference service includes direct personal aid within a library to persons in search of information for whatever purpose and also various library activities especially aimed at making information as easily available as possible

Introduction cont

What then is reference service?

S.R. Ranganathan offered a definition of reference service in a precise manner:

- ▶ a personal service to each reader in helping her/him to find the document, answering the particular query, pin pointedly, exhaustively and expeditiously.
- ▶ Ranganathan has also emphasised that the reference service aims at “providing the right book/information to the right reader at the right time.”

Introduction cont

What then is reference service?

According to S.R. Ranganathan

- ▶ A collection of library resources would not be used fully unless the reference librarian makes effort to help the users to exploit the resources of the library (law 1: books are for use).
- ▶ This personal service will lead to the greater use of books.

Introduction cont

What then is reference service?

According to S.R. Ranganathan

- ▶ The reference staff establishes a contact between the book and the reader by providing Reference Service, thereby saving the time of the reader
(fourth law: save the time of the reader)

Introduction cont

What then is reference service?

Reference service can be divided into:

- Direct reference: a person to person relationship
- Indirect reference: consists of behind the scenes activities e.g preparation of bibliographies, CAS, SDI, signage, etc.

Library user communities

To serve the community effectively, librarians must learn who composes that community, what their information needs are, and how those needs are changing.

- ▶ Every library serves a specific, defined community
- ▶ **Public libraries** as a library provided wholly or partly from public funds, and the use of which is not restricted to any class of persons in the community but is freely available to all.
- ▶ serves residents of a particular geographical area; users range from toddlers to senior citizens; first graders to scholars

Library user communities

- ▶ **School Libraries:** an integral part of a school that educates students in kindergarten through the twelfth grade. They serve information needs of pupils and teachers

Library user communities cont

- ▶ **Academic libraries:** support the faculty, students, and staff of the college or university and in so doing help to achieve the mission of the parent institution within which the library is located.
- ▶ **Special libraries and information centers:** include medical, law, corporate, and many other highly specialized collections.
- ▶ In each of the above cases, the function of the library is to provide information to its parent community.

Library user communities cont

- ▶ All information users fall into four main categories regardless of the type of library or user community you are dealing with. Hence we have:
- ▶ **The specialist**, who knows much more about the subject and its literature than the librarian
- ▶ **The educated non-specialist**, who is intelligent, well-informed and accustomed to the use of books and the library.

Library user communities cont

- ▶ **The person who has practical knowledge of his subject** but is unfamiliar with its literature and the use of books in general
- ▶ **The person who has little or no knowledge of the subject** and so little reading ability that only the simplest statements can be used and even those have to be explained and interpreted.

What libraries do

- ▶ To fully understand reference service, one first needs to understand how it relates to the other functions of the library.

Collections: historically, the first function of libraries was to select, collect, and preserve information.

- ▶ From ancient times, librarians have collected and retained documents of interest to the parent communities.
- ▶ Today information takes many forms, librarians will also collect any information formats that will be developed in the future.
- ▶ Although collecting is the oldest function of libraries, it remains a vital role to this day

What libraries do

Organization:

- ▶ This is the second function of libraries.
- ▶ The fact that librarians organize information is intuitively obvious, but it is a much more recent function than collecting.
- ▶ When libraries were very small, the user could simply browse the entire collection to find what was needed.
- ▶ But as libraries grew in size, it became more difficult for users (and Librarians) to find the information in which they were interested.
- ▶ Methods of organization were required.
- ▶ Today we use Anglo American Cataloguing Rules II, RDA, MACHine Readable Cataloguing (MARC) records, etc to describe our collections.

What libraries do

Service:

- ▶ The third and historically most recent function of libraries is to provide direct assistance to users in their search and retrieval of information,
- ▶ what librarians now call reference service.
- ▶ Although everyone today has grown up with this function of the library, it was truly a revolutionary concept when first introduced.

Historical development of reference service

- ▶ The development of reference service is linked to two different, yet related 19th-century ideals: universal education and public libraries.
- ▶ Universal education was the concept that all children in the United States, no matter what class, race, or religion, would be able to receive free public education.
- ▶ Reasons for establishing universal education for all school-age children varied widely:

Historical development of reference service

- ▶ Business leaders saw universal education as a way to create better workers.
- ▶ Labour leaders saw it as a way for people to move up in society.
- ▶ Religious leaders saw it as a way to make it possible for more people to read the Bible.
- ▶ Politicians saw it as a way to create a single national identity among a varied immigrant population.

Historical development of reference service

- ▶ State and local governments throughout the nation established free public schools, which did in fact result in a more highly educated society.
- ▶ As a direct result of universal education, the literacy rate in the United States rose significantly.
- ▶ At the same time as universal education was becoming the norm, the concept of the free public library was being established.

Historical development of reference service

- ▶ The Boston Public Library become a reality and opened its doors to the public on March 20, 1854.
- ▶ It was an instant success. In less than six months of operation, more than 35,000 volumes were borrowed.
- ▶ The concept of the free public library was rapidly adopted by other municipalities, with 188 such libraries having been established in 11 different states by 1876.
- ▶ But what does the development of universal education and public libraries have to do with reference service?

Historical development of reference service

- ▶ Reference service came about as a direct result of these two innovations.
- ▶ Universal education taught the public to read, and public libraries offered material to read.
- ▶ The newly literate members of society knew how to read, but not how to use a library and its resources.
- ▶ They came into the library in ever-increasing numbers but did not know what they wanted to read.
- ▶ Naturally, they asked the librarians for advice.
- ▶ By 1876, the idea of reference service had been born.

Historical development of ref. service: changes since 1876

Technology

- ▶ Much has changed since 1876. The area that is most obviously different is the technology used in libraries.
- ▶ Whereas librarians in the 1870s had essentially two formats, books and periodicals, librarians today use a wide range of resources.
- ▶ Various types of machines are found throughout the library.
- ▶ Over the decades, the library has gone from a place that relied on paper and pencil to one that uses computers and other ICTs.
- ▶ The reference librarian today is more likely to consult a computer than a book in response to a question.

Historical development of ref. service: changes since 1876

- ▶ Technology has transformed the way that libraries operate and the way that readers use the library.
- ▶ Technology generally enhances library service but do not fundamentally change the nature of that service.
- ▶ The next several years will undoubtedly bring about even more technological developments.
- ▶ Libraries will have to adapt and move with technological advances

Historical development of ref. service: changes since 1876

Information explosion

- ▶ The information explosion is the rapid increase in the amount of published information or data and the effects of this abundance.
- ▶ The 21st century has witnessed a huge burst of information explosion and the library as a knowledge repository is not an exception to this fact
- ▶ As the amount of available data grows, the problem of managing the information by individuals becomes more apparent, which can lead to information overload.
- ▶ Information explosion has brought about several user expectations which libraries have to meet
- ▶ Users need information literacy skills in order to cope with information explosion

Historical development of ref. service: changes since 1876

Diversity

- ▶ In the 1870s, libraries existed to serve adults.
- ▶ Currently, libraries have established a number of specialized services and departments for various segments of the population, including children, teens, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, students, teachers, etc.
- ▶ Diversity has had an impact on reference service by creating the need to respond to these demographic changes.
- ▶ Reference librarians have to tailor information services according to the various user needs

FUNCTIONS OF A REFERENCE LIBRARIAN

Supervising function

- ▶ Organization of facilities, selection of reference materials, direction of personnel and study of library users

FUNCTIONS OF A REFERENCE LIBRARIAN

Provide personal assistance and instruction in the use of the library

- ▶ All libraries need to include instruction in the use of libraries as one of the primary goals of service.
- ▶ Instruction in the use of the library facilitates independent information search and retrieval process among users
- ▶ Library instruction takes many forms such as library orientation, library instruction, information literacy instruction, etc

FUNCTIONS OF A REFERENCE LIBRARIAN

Provide assistance and instruction in the use of the library

- ▶ prior generations struggled with a scarcity of information.
- ▶ the challenge for today's user is finding what is needed in an environment of information abundance.
- ▶ Due to information explosion and changes in information storage, organization, and retrieval, it has become increasingly apparent that individuals need instruction in the use of libraries and use of information throughout their lives.
- ▶ E.g orientation programme, use of resources and how to locate materials (OPAC)

FUNCTIONS OF A REFERENCE LIBRARIAN

Aid readers in selecting resources & Reader's advisory

- ▶ The reference librarian Aids the reader in the selection of resources relevant to a particular need
- ▶ Public libraries offer reader's advisory services in order to guide patrons to books that they might like to read.
- ▶ Academic librarians do a great deal of reader's advisory service as well, but they do not usually call it by that name.
- ▶ In academic libraries, reader's advisory often takes the form of referring students to sources or databases relevant to their research.
- ▶ In academic libraries, the question "Where should I look for information on my topic?" is really a request for reader's advisory service.
- ▶ The student is seeking not an answer to a specific factual question, but sources that can lead to further information on the topic.

FUNCTIONS OF A REFERENCE LIBRARIAN

- ▶ The librarian must understand the general interests of the community served by the library and must also relate to the specific needs of each patron.
- ▶ The librarian must also be aware of the universe of sources from which to recommend selections.
- ▶ The librarian must know the local collection.
- ▶ Most reference librarians are also involved in collection development, and the subject knowledge gained from building the library collection transfers over to reader's advisory.

FUNCTIONS OF A REFERENCE LIBRARIAN

Answer patron queries

- ▶ A reference librarian/section is typically expected to answer users' queries, ranging from simple factual queries to in-depth research projects.
- ▶ The librarian is expected to be able to answer—or more accurately, to provide sources that would answer—all of these types of questions.
- ▶ With the advent of the Internet, it has become very easy to find unauthoritative sources, but finding an answer that is believable can be quite difficult.
- ▶ The value that sets reference librarians apart from other services that answer questions is their dedication to finding authoritative information.

FUNCTIONS OF A REFERENCE LIBRARIAN

Promoting the library and demonstrate its value within the community

- ▶ Reference librarians also promote the library in the community
- ▶ Without support from the community, the library will not stay viable.
- ▶ Promoting reference services among individual library users can go a long way toward achieving this goal, especially insofar as it demonstrates how the library can serve them.
- ▶ In large communities however, promoting the library through individual users is not enough
- ▶ To attract new users, marketing or publicity campaigns are important.

REFERENCE SERVICE VARIETIES AND APPROACHES

STYLES/LEVELS OF REFERENCE SERVICE

- ▶ This involves determining the degree to which librarians should instruct the users as opposed to answering questions

1. conservative/minimum

- ▶ The librarian teaches patrons how to use the library – instruction
- ▶ Helps them find resources but does not read or interpret those sources for the user.
- ▶ Most common approach in academic libraries

2. Moderate or middling

- ▶ The librarian teaches users how to use sources and also provides answers to many questions
- ▶ The librarian will search exhaustively to find answers for research and factual questions
- ▶ Model most common in public libraries

REFERENCE SERVICE VARIETIES AND APPROACHES

3. Liberal or maximum

- ▶ The librarian takes the user's question, conducts the research and finds appropriate material for the user
- ▶ Librarian may also write a summary of the information found
- ▶ Model most common in special libraries

TYPES OF REFERENCE SERVICE

- ▶ Several particular types of reference service have been developed

1. Readers advisory

- ▶ Process of recommending sources to library users
- ▶ Sources are recommended based on the user's past readings
- ▶ The librarian chooses the source for the user based on the librarian's skill level and the nature of the user's question

2. Ready reference

- ▶ The provision of short, factual answers to highly specific questions
- ▶ Answers to these questions are verifiable as accurate or inaccurate
- ▶ In the past, reference librarians did more ready reference because the sources required to answer such questions were not in the users' hands
- ▶ Ready reference is in decline in all types of libraries

TYPES OF REFERENCE SERVICE

3. Research consulting

- ▶ Assisting users with research questions
- ▶ The librarian may suggest sources, search terms, and pathways that will lead to material relevant to the topic
- ▶ Research questions do not have single factual answers
- ▶ A variety of search strategies are used to find the best solution
- ▶ Librarian acts as a research consultant
- ▶ The librarian may get the user started in the research but the user will do most of the searching
- ▶ More common in academic and research libraries

TYPES OF REFERENCE SERVICE

4. Subject specialists

- ▶ Many libraries hire specialists in a specific discipline
- ▶ Most common in disciplines society sees as requiring more specialized knowledge to succeed e.g law, medicine, business, etc.
- ▶ Subject specialists often have advanced degrees within their field of specialization
- ▶ They select materials for the collection and assist users with specialized research
- ▶ Most often found in academic libraries, special libraries and large academic libraries

TYPES OF REFERENCE SERVICE

5. Interlibrary loan and document delivery

- ▶ Process of sharing materials between libraries
- ▶ Interlibrary extends the range of material available to users beyond the home library's collection
- ▶ ILL librarians spend a lot of time doing bibliographic verification
- ▶ Primary responsibility is to search for material requested by users, verify that the information is accurate, determine that the home library does not own it
- ▶ After verification potential leading partners who can provide the material are identified

6. Instruction

- ▶ Instruction takes two forms: direct and indirect
- ▶ Direct instruction is characterized by the library communicating directly to the user
- ▶ Direct instruction maybe one-on-one, voluntary group or required

TYPES OF REFERENCE SERVICE

6. Instruction cont.

- ▶ In indirect instruction the librarian does not communicate directly with the user, but communicates through instructional tools, such as how to use a catalogue, a database, or a specific reference source
- ▶ Indirect instruction is provided in anticipation of users

7. Literacy programs

- ▶ Designed to teach reading skills to members of the community who have not acquired such skills through other channels
- ▶ Mainly for adults who have not completed their schooling
- ▶ Most common in public libraries

TYPES OF REFERENCE SERVICE

8. Outreach and marketing

- ▶ Librarians today have gone beyond a passive approach of waiting for users to come to the library and now work to generate interest in their communities.
- ▶ Helps in increasing the use of the library within the community
- ▶ Outreach programs continue to grow in libraries especially public and academic libraries

MODELS OF REFERENCE SERVICE

1. Reference desk

- ▶ this is the traditional model where the librarian staffs a desk/counter at a fixed position within the library
- ▶ Materials consulted by the reference librarian are usually found adjacent to their desk
- ▶ Under this model, the user initiates the transaction
- ▶ Advantage: easy to locate the reference desk

2. Roving reference

- ▶ Reference librarians may wander through the library looking for users who may have questions
- ▶ Meant for proactive reference service
- ▶ The librarian initiates the reference transaction by approaching a potential user
- ▶ Advantages include: allowing more hesitant users to be helped; eliminating physical barriers that the desk itself poses to users; offering assistance to users already working on their questions

MODELS OF REFERENCE SERVICE

3. Tiered reference service

- ▶ Staff members with varying levels of skills answer different levels of questions
- ▶ Paraprofessionals or student assistants staff an information desk and answer directional questions and basic questions regarding the holdings as well as ready reference questions
- ▶ Reference librarians answer all of the research level questions
- ▶ Advantage: high level staff time is not wasted on routine directional questions
- ▶ Not widely adopted but very common in academic libraries

MODELS OF REFERENCE SERVICE

4. Reference by appointment

- ▶ Users who wish to consult a reference librarian must make an appointment
- ▶ Mostly used by subject specialists in research and special libraries
- ▶ Advantage: gives the librarian time to work on the query and that the user has the librarian's full attention

5. Service to remote users

- ▶ Accessing of service without being physically in the library
- ▶ Made possible by advances in ICTs
- ▶ Individuals can communicate instantly with the librarian using technologies such as telephone, e-mail, social networking tools, instant messaging-whats app, bbm, etc.