

Essential attributes in a Reference Librarian

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- The librarian will negotiate the query in order to establish exactly what the user needs.
- When the user lacks the knowledge of the library and understanding of the librarian, he looks for clues/signs to give him/her an idea of what to expect.
- It is therefore important that the Reference Librarian possesses certain desirable qualities/attributes

Essential attributes in a Reference Librarian

Broad subject knowledge:

- It is important that the librarian be knowledgeable in all subject fields in order to deal with diverse queries from users.
- In special libraries and systems with subject departments, though, in-depth knowledge of the relevant subject field is a requirement.
- In this case subject specialists are most suitable to be reference librarians.

Essential attributes in a Reference Librarian

Adequate knowledge of reference tools:

- It is desirable for the reference librarian to be familiar with various categories of reference works in print or electronic format.
- This requires one to browse through each source and be acquainted with the content of the work and how to use it to retrieve required information items.

Essential attributes in a Reference Librarian

A keen analytical mind:

- This is important in order for the reference librarian to figure out the meaning of questions and statements which are not properly phrased by the information seeker.
- More often than not inquirers will over-generalize instead of being specific on what information they seek.

Essential attributes in a Reference Librarian

Ability to put people at ease:

- The user is in a foreign land and thus needs to be put at ease.
- The reference librarian does this by being approachable.
- Users can be encouraged to approach the librarian through a smile and a generally inviting disposition.

Essential attributes in a Reference Librarian

Ability to communicate effectively with people of different ages, temperaments and abilities:

- The reference librarian needs to be adaptable and flexible and quickly be able to assess the caliber of the inquirer in relation to the type of question one is asking.
- In an academic library the librarian will have to deal with undergraduates, postgraduate students, researchers and lecturers in the same field.
- He will relate differently with each category of users.
- In a public library the clientele will vary from teenagers, senior citizens, manual workers, and professionals.
- All this require that the librarian to be able to adapt to the situation.

Essential attributes in a Reference Librarian

An equable temperament:

- This is especially desirable when one works in an environment where several users simultaneously demand that what they seek may be found urgently in order for them to meet deadlines.
- Under such circumstances the reference librarian should not easily get flustered but needs to remain calm and deal with the situation level-headedly.

Essential attributes in a Reference Librarian

Good judgment in deciding when to stop the search and look to outside resources:

- Sometimes, the question posed by the user cannot be answered from resources within one's collection.
- After searching from catalogues, indexes, abstracts, and other likely sources and drawing a blank, the librarian should know that it's time to look elsewhere for the answer instead of spending many hours searching for what is not there.