Beyond the Desk: Reference and Readers' Advisory Resources and Tips

Stephanie Schulz - stephanies@eauclaire.lib.wi.us - LEPMPL, Eau Claire Anita Slate - aslate@riverfallslibrary.org - River Falls Public Library Jenna Gilles - jgillesturner@mycfpl.org - Chippewa Falls Public Library

What is a Reference Question?

"An information consultation in which library staff recommend, interpret, evaluate, and/or use information resources to help others to meet particular information needs."



Information resources might be...

Printed and non-printed material

Machinereadable databases The library's own catalog and holdings records

Other libraries and institutions, including referrals

Persons inside or outside the library

Common Types of Reference Questions

Library services and events

Catalog search

Ready reference

Genealogy

Readers' advisory

Community resources

What is a Reference Interview?

A reference interview is the process of determining a library user's information needs and fulfilling those needs



Approachability Interest Listening/Inquiring Searching Follow Up

Approachability and Interest

1

Be easy to find and identify as staff

2

Be friendly

3

Set aside other projects to focus on the customer

4

Open body language

Listening/Inquiring

- Active listening shows the speaker you are paying attention and encourages them to provide more information
 - Allow the customer to fully state their question in their own words
 - Verbal and non-verbal encouragement
 - Rephrase the question or request
 - Open-ended questions to gather more information
 - Closed questions to refine/clarify
 - Don't rush

Searching

- Find out what sources have already been consulted
- Verify spelling
- Explain the search process or guide the customer in completing the search themselves
- Ask additional questions as needed
- If you cannot find or access the information, refer the customer to another resource

Follow Up

01

Ask the customer if their question is answered

02

Encourage them to return if they need further assistance

03

Provide additional resources or referrals

Reference Resources

BadgerLink

- Consumer Reports
- EBSCOhost
- Auto Repair Source
- US Newsstream
- Consumer Health Complete
- HeritageQuest

LibraryThing MDS guide

MyVoteWI

More Resources...

Legal Resources

- Wisconsin Judicare
- I Need a Lawyer!State Bar of WI

Tax Resources

- IRS
- Wisconsin DOR
- VITA and TCE sites

Job Center of Wisconsin

Fantastic Fiction

RA for All

Matching Readers With Books Through Your Local Public Library

Becky Siegel Spratford

Readers' Advisor, MLIS

bspratford@hotmail.com http://raforall.blogspot.com

@RAforAll

708.250.6698



Why RA for All?



Books are our brand. But books are not our business. READING is our business.

#librarylife #duncansmith #readadv

12:55 PM - 12 May 2015



Remember, books are the words. The delivery system may vary.

10:36 AM · Apr 23, 2021 · Twitter Web App



2020 could be my year of I told you so to all the library ppl who told me 5 years ago that no one wants #ReadAdv training, that libraries were repositioning as a "third space," focusing on our buildings, that we were "more than books," that no one would want or need my training

2:39 PM · Jul 8, 2020 · Twitter Web App



Replying to @RAforAll

I could do that, but I am too busy trying to fill all the requests for #ReadAdv training you all need right now.

2:39 PM · Jul 8, 2020 · Twitter Web App



RULE #1

"Never apologize for your reading tastes."--<u>Betty</u>
Rosenberg

Strike "guilty pleasures" from your vocabulary

Read a <u>non-judgmental list of what you "should read"</u>

Read a longer post about books you "should" read

Set a better example of the first rule of RA

RULE #2

Suggest don't Recommend

Library anxiety is real; including your own TBR Anxiety

This means you can talk about anything!

RULE#3

Becky Spratford's
Ten Rules of
Basic RA Service

Everyone reads a different version of the same book.

RULE #4

Write down <u>adjectives</u> about what you read & plots you can find.

Why you like the book, NOT what happens

RULE #5

Read ABOUT books widely, so you can suggest widely

Library Journal's Book Pulse

Publisher's Weekly Newsletters

Shelf Awareness

-- make sure you are reading with an <u>equity</u>, <u>diversity</u>, <u>and</u> <u>inclusion</u> lens

RULE #6

Share what you read--with staff and patrons.

--RA Service is about CONVERSATIONS not transactions

LISTEN...conversations require listening

Curbside and Discovery [Passive RA]

Use the words of others

--<u>Step-by-step guide</u> to improving your staff's book-talking skills

RULE #7

Use resources

Think of your job as "leisure reading reference"

Ask your patrons how they find book suggestions

Use awards lists as a RA Tool

RULE #8

Working together is your MOST valuable resource

...both across whole staff and with other libraries

Stock Your RA Pantry

RULE #9

Bridge the physical-virtual divide

Opposite sides of the same coin

Find ways to get your in building stuff online AND your online stuff in building

Examples: <u>unboxing videos</u>, <u>interactive</u> <u>displays</u>, "<u>props</u>" [post online or use in person]

RULE #10

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

Get Booked podcast as a practice tool

Participate in #AskaLibrarian

TEN RULES
IN 5 WORDS

Read

Reflect

Record

Share

Repeat

Sarah Statz Cords, MLS (WI)

NON-FICTION RA TIPS

Consider both subject and "mood" cues

Wikipedia everything

Watch for "deal breakers"--this stuff is real

Try to keep up with current events and pop culture

Don't be afraid to mix F and NF (esp. on displays and booklists)

Find a nonfiction RA buddy (good general tip, too)

Sarah Statz Cords, MLS (WI)

GENERAL RA TIPS

Commit to the "Kelly Ripa School of Enthusiasm" (when possible)

Write down everything you can, re-use it, and don't be afraid to find & use your own "gems"

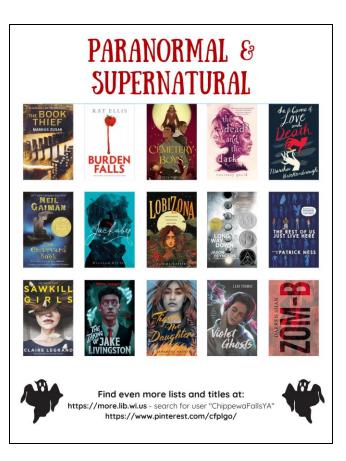
Ask questions like:

- What are you currently reading?
- How do you decide what to read next?
- Do you separate reading into "work" and "fun"?
- Where and when do you do your best reading? (from Mikita Brottman, *The Solitary Vice*)

Support your co-workers so everyone can have a bit of time and energy to devote to RA, material production (& "ownership") & "preparedness"

Youth & YA RA

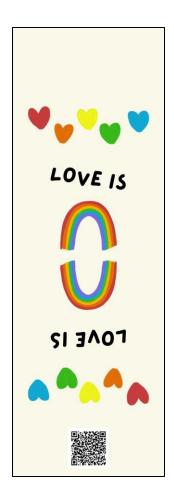
- Child development refreshers
- Interests and dislikes
- In a hurry? Cheat sheets & bookmarked links are great!
 - Read-alikes for frequently checked out titles and genres
 - Diverse authors, illustrators, and titles
 - What's Next?
- Navigating common situations
 - Adults who come in without the kid
 - Kids who know what they like/don't like but have a tough time verbalizing what they want
 - Reading levels
 - Shyness, social anxiety, non-verbal
- MORE catalog
- Familiarize yourself with your collection, resources, etc.



Youth & YA — Stealthy RA

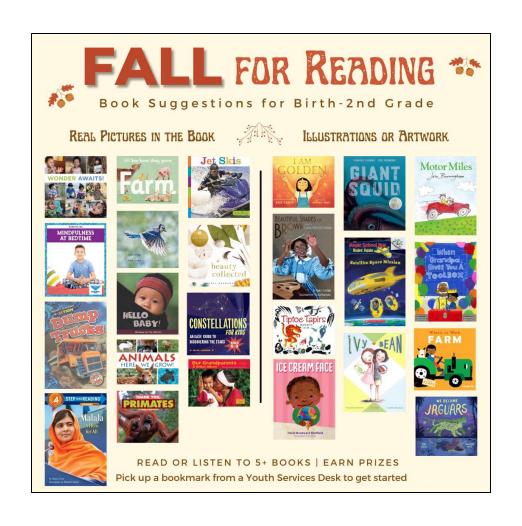
- Bookmarks QR codes are your friends!
- Booklists
- Shelf talkers
- Displays
- Bulletin boards & passive programming
- Booktalks during storytimes and programs
- Suggested reading list with book bundles & subscription boxes
- Newsletters, social media posts, blogs





Youth & YA — Favorite Resources

- Your collections
- ALA Tough Topics
- Book Riot
- CCBC
- Social Justice Books
- Social media accounts & hashtags
- Reviews
- Novelist Plus, Bibliocommons
- See our Resources handout



Thank You







QUESTIONS?

COMMENTS?

OTHER RESOURCES OR TIPS TO SHARE?