Fundamental
Reference Sources

2nd Edition

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and
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Fundamental Reference Sources

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Preface

The second edition of FUNDAMENTAL REFERENCE SOURCES, like the first, is an introduction to selected sources of bibliographical, biographical, linguistic, statistical, and geographic information. The organization remains the same. The introductory chapter has been revised and updated to reflect the literature of reference/information service of the past decade, including the development of guidelines by the ALA's Reference and Adult Services Division, its role in reference/information service, the nature of the reference process, and the reference interview. Guides to reference materials which have appeared since 1970 have been added.

Chapter 2 discusses sources of bibliographic information, broadly defined as compilations of information regarding recorded sources of information and embracing library catalogs, national book bibliographies, bibliographies of government publications, audiovisual materials and other forms, subject bibliographies, indexes, and abstracts. The impact of computer-generated tools has been particularly evident in the past decade and a number of titles so produced, as well as a section on data bases, have been added. The latter cites a few examples and suggests sources of further information on these important forms of bibliographic control.

Chapter 3, on sources of biographical information, is updated to cover new indexes to biography, additional sources of national biography, and

current biographical directories for various professions. It follows the chapter on bibliographic sources because, in many ways, bibliography and biography are closely allied.

Chapter 4 characterizes the principal sources of information on words, with some attention to how dictionaries are made. Unabridged English-language dictionaries are also included, as well as sources of etymology, usage, synonyms and antonyms, pronunciation, slang, dialect, abbreviations, and acronyms. A number of dictionaries in special fields, specifically the social sciences, have been added, most of them published since 1970. Also added are recently published bilingual dictionaries.

Chapter 5 covers the problems and responsibilities of editors and publishers of encyclopedias. A section on the coverage of broad subject fields by encyclopedias has been expanded. Newly added are outlines of the strengths and weaknesses of selected multivolume encyclopedias for both adults and children, and for one- to three-volume sets. Retained and updated is a discussion of some foreign-language encyclopedias.

Chapter 6 has been revised to round out the background of the field of statistics, with attention to important statistical terminology. Bibliographic control and statistical sources in various fields have been expanded and updated with recently published titles.

Chapter 7, covering sources of geographical information, has also been expanded and updated, with more attention to the role of United States government agencies in geography and cartography. Also expanded is coverage of travel and other guide books.

Titles were selected on the basis of their importance in general reference collections in American libraries, and while foreign-language sources were not deliberately avoided, they are not emphasized. The debt that any compilers of another guide to reference materials owe to the more exhaustive guides of Sheehy and Walford is fully acknowledged. Only a few titles published after June 1979 have been included.

Appended are guidelines for the evaluation of atlases, bibliographic reference works, dictionaries, and encyclopedias, prepared by the Reference and Subscription Books Review Committee of the American Library Association and reprinted here with its permission.

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The Nature of Reference/ Information Service

Libraries exist for their users. Many of these users have not yet appeared, but will at some time in the future, and so it is also for the potential user that librarians select and acquire what has been recorded in any available form. It is at this point that reference/information service begins, for without a body of knowledge and information, it is not possible to give service.

It is for the potential user that librarians attempt to organize these materials for easy access to the information they contain, through some system or systems that will provide clues to their location, such as cataloging and classification. Librarians also acquire or prepare indexes and abstracts of the contents of certain types of recorded information, such as periodicals, pamphlets, films, recordings, and maps. The nature and extent of this organization in individual libraries will vary according to the needs of the potential user.

It is for the potential user that libraries have provided persons who are qualified to assist the user in his or her search for information, and who have been designated as reference librarians, or information specialists, or some other term.

To fulfill these responsibilities to the user for selecting, acquiring, orga- nizing, and retrieving this body of recorded knowledge, librarians have

veloped codes for cataloging, systems of classification, and standards of service. These are always in a state of change, subject to continuous inquiry into their effectiveness in meeting current demands.

Definitions

Efforts to set standards for reference and information services must begin with definitions, and reference librarians through the years have tried to define reference service, their terminology reflecting the times in which they lived. Thus William Warner Bishop, in the days before the computer, stated with some conviction that "reference work is organized effort on the part of libraries in aid of the most expeditious and fruitful use of their libraries." With this general statement it is hardly possible to disagree, but it is too broad to be of any value.

In 1930, James I. Wyer, in his still useful *Reference Work: A Textbook for Students of Library Work and Librarians* (Chicago, ALA; 315p.), described reference work as "sympathetic and informed personal aid in interpreting library collections for study and research." This is worth remembering as a reminder that respect for the user is essential to sympathetic and personal aid.

In 1943, the *A.L.A. Glossary of Library Terms* reflected both Bishop and Wyer in defining reference as "that phase of library work which is directly concerned with assistance to readers in securing information and in using the resources of the library in study and research."

In 1961, Samuel Rothstein and Henry Dubester developed a statement, for use by a committee on reference standards and statistics of the Reference Services Division of the American Library Association, that is notable for its outline of the kinds of services reference librarians should be prepared to offer. It was reproduced in Louis Shores, "The Measure of Reference" (*The Southeastern Librarian* 11:297–302 [Winter 1961]), and reprinted in Arthur Ray Rowland, *Reference Services* ([Hamden, Conn.: Shoe String, 1964; 259p.] p. 135–44). Briefly, it described two types of service to the library's patrons: direct and indirect.

Representative of the first type is instruction in the use of the library and information services, ranging from answering simple questions to "supplying information based on search in the collections of the library, combining competence in bibliothecal techniques with competence in the subject of inquiry." Indirect reference service "involves the preparation and development of catalogs, bibliographies, and all other reference aids which help in providing access to the library's collections. . . . This recognizes the significant role of the technical or processing services of the library as indispensable to the reference function."

A further expansion of Rothstein and Dubester's statement appears in "A Commitment to Information Services: Developmental Guidelines" (*RQ* 15:327–30 [Summer 1976]; *RQ* 18:275–78 [Spring 1979], with an added section on "Ethics of Service," adopted January 1979). Prepared by the Standards Committee of the Reference and Adult Services Division, and adopted by that Division in January 1976, it is directed to all who have responsibility for providing reference and information services. A description of reference or information services, both direct and indirect, prefaces an important set of developmental guidelines for services, resources, environment, personnel, and evaluation. These are followed by a draft outline of an information service policy statement.

The developmental guidelines for *services* (1.0–1.9) stress the responsibility for not only meeting but anticipating user needs, for "cooperation among other information handling units, centers, or agencies at local, regional, state, and national levels; and for regular evaluation of services." These are important points and require that librarians be acquainted with wide services and resources beyond their own libraries.

The guidelines for *resources* (2.0–2.4) also stress cooperation in developing selection policies within a given service area, diverse collections, duplication of frequently used materials, and a regular review of information materials.

The guidelines for *environment* (3.0–3.5) emphasize the importance of locating information services and collections in readily accessible points in the library, the provision of places for study, and additional service points for easy access to librarian/information specialists.

The guidelines for *personnel* (4.0–4.6) require that a professional librarian/information specialist be available to users during all hours the library is open, that staff be chosen not only for academic background and knowledge but also their ability to communicate easily with people, and that continuing education be provided.

The guidelines for *evaluation* (5.0–5.3) state that needed data should be collected, that responsibility for evaluation should be assigned to a staff member with skills in this field, and that statistics should be collected on a systematic basis.

"Ethics of service" (6.0–6.5) deals with accuracy of information supplied, confidentiality, impartiality, and avoidance of personal financial gain.

For further comment see Bernard Vavrek, "Reference Evaluation—What the 'Guidelines' Don't Indicate" (*RQ* 18:335–40 [Summer 1979]). According to Vavrek, the twofold purpose of the article is "first, to discuss what is happening in relation to the Guidelines, and second, to talk about an area of reference/information service that received only perfunctory treatment in the Guidelines, i.e. evaluation" (p.335).

Although many of these tenets have been observed by librarians in the past, the formulation of this document, which reflects the requirements of new and sophisticated information retrieval systems, represents a step forward in an important branch of service.

It is unlikely that it will produce uniform reference/information departments, for as Robert Balay points out in his article "Reference Services" (*The ALA Yearbook, 1978*, p. 260–63 [Chicago: ALA, 1978]), "Reference librarians have not always been sure where the boundaries of reference service lie, and they have seemed to engage in many kinds of activities that have had an uncertain bearing on their regularly assigned duties." Balay then summarizes the findings of Paula Watson and Martha Landis, who "reported that the range of responsibilities assigned to reference departments varies greatly. Some do one-to-one reference work and little else. Others take care of documents, periodicals, interlibrary lending and borrowing, microforms, newspapers, bibliographic instruction, maps, exhibits, book selection, computer-aided information retrieval, and so forth."

Balay concludes that "it would appear that reference work consists of whatever it is that reference departments do." But it must be recognized that whatever reference departments do, they must accept responsibility for not only meeting but anticipating user needs in order to qualify as reference/information centers.

One of the most important ways to determine users' needs is the *reference interview,* a subject which has received considerable attention in library periodicals. Geraldine B. King, in "The Reference Interview" (*RQ* 12:157–60 [Winter 1972]), offers five "filters" for structuring the interview: determination of subject, objective and motivation of the inquirer, personal characteristics of the inquirer, relationship of inquiry description to file organization, and anticipated or acceptable answers. She cites the advantages of open questions, including their encouraging the user to talk. Sara D. Knapp examines the reference interview in a computer-based setting and concludes that it differs from interviewing at the reference desk more in degree than in kind. "Mastery of the technology, systems, and vocabulary of searching are vital prerequisites, but I believe the real essence of the search analyst's role lies in the understanding of purposes, in communication, and especially in the application of analytical skills" ("The Reference Interview in the Computer-based Setting," *RQ* 17:320–24 [Summer 1978]).

Samuel Rothstein's "Across the Desk: 100 Years of Reference Encounters" (*Canadian Library Journal* 34:391–99 [Oct. 1977]) is valuable for its review of the pertinent literature on the subject from Samuel Green's paper in 1876 to the present. He believes that geniality, knowing how to find the truth, and a spirit of service are the essential ingredients of the reference encounter over the last hundred years. "I suggest that, with some mod-

ernization but also with some moderation, that same recipe might serve equally well for the foreseeable future." Which nobody can deny.

In 1966, Alan M. Rees, speaking before a conference at Columbia University, posed the question "What, in fact, is the fundamental nature of the reference process?" In answering his question, he began by saying, "I wish to make a clear differentiation between reference *process*, reference *work*, reference *sources*, and reference *services*. The reference process incorporates the sum total of variables involved in the performance of reference work by an intermediary designated as reference librarian. It includes both the psychology of the questioner and the environmental context within which the need for information is generated, together with the psychology of the reference librarian and the reference sources employed. Reference service is the formalized provision of information in diverse forms by a reference librarian, who is interposed between the questioner and available information sources. Reference work is the function performed by reference librarians in providing reference service. The perception on the part of the librarian of the need of the questioner is an important part of the reference process. The formalized representation of this need is the question, which may or may not be an adequate expression of the underlying information requirement."

He continued, "The reference process, therefore, comprises a complex interaction among the questioner, reference librarian, and information sources, involving not only the identification and manipulation of available bibliographic apparatus, but also the operation of psychological, sociological, and environmental variables which are imperfectly understood at the present time" ("Broadening the Spectrum," in Winifred B. Linderman, ed., *The Present Status and Future Prospects of Reference/Information Service* [Chicago: ALA, 1967], p. 57–58).

The librarian's concern for whether users do or do not retrieve their information has made him more conscious of the need to know more about these users. Most librarians would agree with Helen M. Focke "that we do not know enough about our patrons, how their minds operate and what kinds of things they need and ask for, to do a really good job of serving them. We have not gathered objective data continually or been as research-conscious as we should be." Focke's paper, delivered at the same conference where Alan Rees described the reference process, concluded with a proposal that a network of reporters, recorders, and data gatherers be established to build up a data bank of information on library patrons and the questions they ask (Linderman, p.33). Thus far, this network has not been established.

The present emphasis on the need for gathering data and conducting research on the information searching process will continue, stimulated in

part by the increasing mechanization of libraries. In fact, Pierre Papazian attributes this questioning to the advent of mechanization. In "Librarian, Know Thyself" (*RQ* 4:7–8 [July 1965]), he proposes an analytical study of the human search process, advocating two levels of research on this question: the practice of information searching and the psychology of information searching.

James Rettig, in "A Theoretical Model and Definition of the Reference Process" (*RQ* 18:19–29 [Fall 1978]), analyzes various statements on reference service found chiefly in journal articles and theoretically defines reference service "as the interpersonal communication process, the purpose of which is to provide a person who needs information with that information, either directly by culling the needed information from an appropriate information source (or sources) or indirectly by (1) providing the person with the appropriate information source(s) or (2) teaching the person how to find the needed information in the appropriate information source(s)." It is well documented, as is Kenneth Whittaker's "Towards a Theory for Reference and Information Service" (*Journal of Librarianship* 9:49–63 [Jan. 1977]). After reviewing the development of this service from its origins to the present, he offers a base plan for systematic and comprehensive research, including terminology, nature and purpose of the service, its scope and relationships with other subjects.

Another type of continuing investigation is concerned with information needs in specific subject fields. While numerous examples of these investigations exist in science and technology and in psychology, one is singled out here because the author is a cataloger who, at the time of writing her article, was a doctoral candidate in anthropology. Diana Amsden, in "Information Problems of Anthropologists" (*College and Research Libraries* 29:117–31 [Mar. 1968]), brought to her investigation of the anthropologist's difficulties not only a subject competency, but also a knowledge of the organization of library collections in that subject. If her conclusions are not startling, they are at least based on a more complete understanding of the limitations of the existing bibliographical apparatus from the anthropologist's standpoint. She found that anthropologists needed, among other things, a prompt, cumulative, comprehensive index-abstract service and a guide to the literature of the field. This is not unique with anthropologists.

Search

Meanwhile, as the analysis goes on, individual librarians, attempting to provide direct and indirect reference service in a given library environment, must try to deal intelligently with the individual questioner who seeks his or her assistance. Seasoned reference librarians develop confidence in their ability to help patrons as they develop a knowledge of sources of informa-

tion, although they may not express themselves as lyrically as S. R. Ranganathan did in "Reference Service and Humanism" (Rowland, p.31–34). In his inimitable style, he wrote, "When the reader comes amidst the library . . . he will meet a person, who with radiant geniality whispers into his ears, 'Take my hand; For I have passed this way, And know the truth.'"

Less certain of the truth, but with some degree of confidence, the reference librarian should be able to say to the questioner, "Take my hand, for I have passed this way, and know some of the sources of information." Once the questioner has taken this hand or, more literally, has stated his or her question, the reference librarian joins them in their quest, though not always with "radiant geniality." These first steps are usually referred to as the "reference interview," and more recently as the "librarian–questioner dialogue." By whatever name, it is the heart of the matter, and if it is not successfully conducted there will be no resulting restatement of the question, which is so often necessary.

It is at this point that some of the variables mentioned earlier become evident. One definition of *variable* is "having no fixed quantitative value," which may be one reason why reference librarians have never been successful in measuring reference service quantitatively. Another, more applicable definition is "anything that varies or is prone to variation." In this sense, what are some of the "things" that vary? Recognizing that continuing analysis will be expressed in more technical terms, but still daring to use less technical language, we may note that a few of the things that affect the nature of the search and that are subject to infinite variations are:

1. How much the questioner already knows about the subject field in which his or her question falls
2. How articulate he or she is in expressing need for information
3. How interested he or she is in the search
4. How defensive his or her attitude is toward the librarian
5. How much information he or she wants
6. How soon he or she needs the information
7. How much assistance he or she wants
   a. Would he or she rather do it alone?
   b. Would he or she rather have it all done by someone else?

These same variables may be expressed from the standpoint of librarians as

1. How much the librarian knows about the subject field in which the question falls
2. How skillful he or she is in determining what the questioner wants
3. How interested he or she is in the search
4. How defensive his or her attitude is toward the questioner

  5. How much information he or she is prepared to provide
  6. How quickly he or she can locate what is wanted
  7. How much direct assistance he or she is willing to give
      a. Minimum
      b. Middling
      c. Maximum (Samuel Rothstein advocates this in his "Reference Service: The New Dimension in Librarianship," *College and Research Libraries* 22:11–18 [Jan. 1961])

These are only a few of the variables, expressed in very general terms and not in the language of a discipline such as psychology, sociology, or another behavioral science. But to follow them with a few questions, we might ask:

  1. If questioners know more about the subject field of their question than the librarian, is the librarian's attitude apt to be more defensive?
  2. If the librarian knows more about the subject field than the questioner, is the questioner's attitude apt to be more defensive?
  3. What happens if the questioner is more interested in the search than the librarian?
  4. What happens if the librarian is not skillful or sympathetic enough to interpret the question and relate it to the proper source of information?
  5. What happens if the library's resources are not adequate to meet the questioner's need?
  6. What happens if the questioner wants the answer more quickly than the librarian can supply it?

The continuing concerns of those engaged in reference/information services are reflected in the activities of the Reference and Adult Services Division of the American Library Association. Formed in 1972 by a merger of the former Adult Services Division and the Reference Services Division, it is engaged in "study of community information needs; exploration of avenues of community involvement; maximal exploitation of non-print resources and computerized information services; innovative efforts in instruction in the use of libraries; continuing education programs for reference and adult services librarians to enable them to give the best possible service to present and potential clientele."

Already noted are its developmental guidelines for information services, adopted in 1976. Also, the Library Services to an Aging Population Committee has prepared "Guidelines for Library Services to an Aging Population" and has compiled a directory of state and regional agencies that work with the aging.

Evidence of growing interest in computer-based reference service is the formation in 1977 of a new section, Machine-Assisted Reference Section

(MARS), within Reference and Adult Services Division of ALA. This group, together with other groups in the American Library Association, has been concerned with charging a fee for computer-assisted searching. An excellent summary of the arguments pro and con is found in Robert Balay's article "Reference Services" in *The ALA Yearbook, 1978* (p.261–62). The Local History Committee of the History Section conducted a survey of local-history collections and services, which will be used in developing guidelines.

An Interlibrary Loan Committee, a Catalog Use Committee, and a Committee on Wilson Indexes represent further interests of the Division. The latter assists subscribers to Wilson indexes in selection of appropriate periodical titles for inclusion.

RASD's official journal is the quarterly *RQ*, which has expanded from a small leaflet in November 1960 to a valuable source of articles on pertinent subjects, with regular sections of reviews of reference books, government publications, interlibrary loan issues, and news. The Division also prepares an annual list of outstanding reference books, published in April of each year in *Library Journal*. Librarians concerned with reference/information service find it a ready source of essential information.

A good overview of kinds of services rendered and current issues being faced is found in the signed articles, "Reference Services," which has appeared annually in *The ALA Yearbook* since 1976. Appended references include significant journal articles and working papers published during the year. *The ALA Yearbook* also includes an annual summary of the activities of the Reference and Adult Services Division of the ALA.

Two other convenient sources of well-selected articles in recent years are Arthur Ray Rowland's *The Librarian and Reference Service* (Hamden, Conn.: Shoe String, 1977; 281p.), which supplements his earlier collection of articles, and *Reference and Information Services: A Reader,* edited by Bill Katz and Andrea Tarr (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1978).

The most exhaustive bibliography of books, journals, and other sources in English is in Marjorie E. Murfin and Lubomyr R. Wynar, *Reference Service: An Annotated Bibliographic Guide* (Littleton, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, 1977; 294p.), which describes a wide range of sources in English: 1,259 books and articles classified under fourteen aspects of reference service (its history, theory, and teaching in various types of libraries, the reference process, research, etc.).

Guides to Reference Materials

While inquiry into the reference process will continue, one thing is agreed on by all librarians: they must know sources of information. It is because of