

Delaware Reference Services

BEST PRACTICES FOR DELAWARE'S VIRTUAL REFERENCE SERVICE,
ASK A LIBRARIAN DELAWARE





Best Practices: Consistency and Convenience



No matter what format the service, our patrons deserve excellent help and expect a level of consistency in how we provide excellent customer service, in the locations where *they are reaching out to us.*

Elements for Question-Answering

There are five main parts to a good reference conversation.



What you do with these is the “**art of reference**” you uniquely bring out when serving library customers.



1. Greeting



- Sets the tone! (formal or informal)
- Nice, friendly, approachable librarian and welcoming atmosphere
- If you use personalization, it helps patrons know you are not a robot!

*"Hi Steve,"
"Hello Mary,"
"Dear Ms. Smingleheimer,"*

2. Clarification

- Sets expectation!
- Paraphrasing let's patrons know what you believe they are asking.

"Thank you for your question about..."



3. Choosing Resources

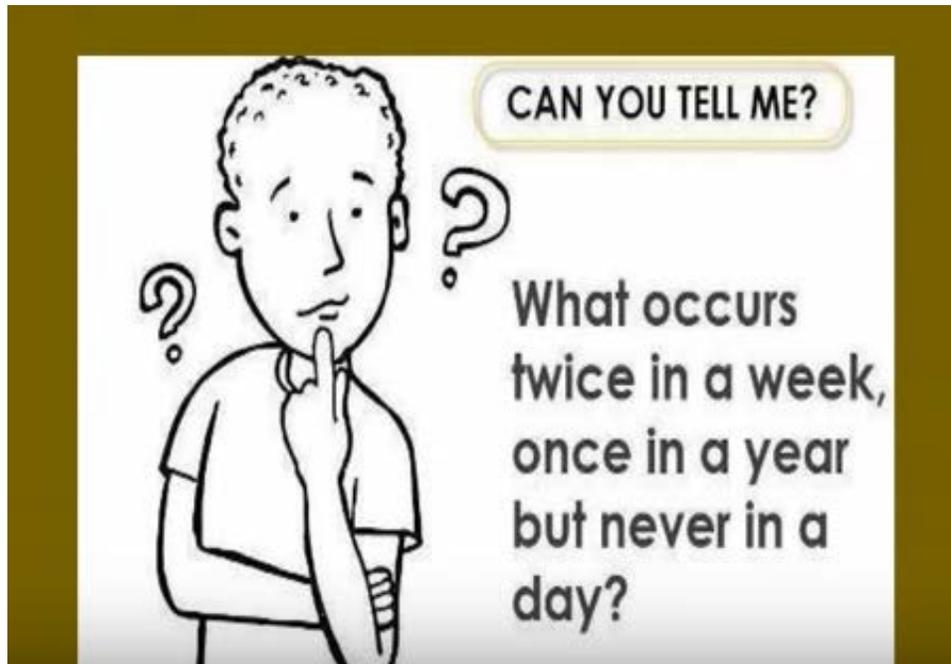
- Delaware Library's online Resources
Databases, e-Resources, LibGuides, "help" areas (<http://lib.de.us/>)
- Your library's additional online resources
- Freely available online and print resources (many to choose from – here are two):
 - Internet Public Library <http://www.ipl.org/> (IPL closed as of March 2016 – is still available and most info will be current for a while)
 - Ready Reference on QuestionPoint's wiki: <http://wiki.questionpoint.org/w/page/13839491/readyref>
- Choose age appropriate resources (patrons know how to use Google – use Advanced search filters)
- Always evaluate resources - Here is a PDF link to the CRAAP test for website evaluation:
 - http://www.csuchico.edu/lins/handouts/eval_websites.pdf



4. Providing the answer

Always give the source of the answer.

Giving the answer is okay...but with 'teaching to fish' as your primary method.



Whenever possible, give steps for finding the answer.



5. Checking with patron

It's always good to make sure the patron has received the information they need.

"Does this completely answer your question?"

"Is there anything else we can do for you today?"

**Google can bring you back
100,000 answers; a librarian
can bring you back the right one.**

— Neil Gaiman



Grammarly.com Quotes



6. Closing

- Close your response in a friendly and professional way that matches your personal style.
- Closings should include:
 - thank you for using the service and for supporting Delaware Libraries
 - invitation to use the service again and to return if more information is required
 - Your signature –

Amanda Presley
Laurel Public Library
www.laurelpublib.org



- *Provide appropriate Analytics (Dewey Delaware) and if this is an email, “Submit as Closed”*

For further study

1. RUSA (Reference User's and Services Association) **Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Service Providers:**

<http://www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=Home&template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=26937>

2. ALA's recommended resources regarding reference standards:

<http://www.ala.org/tools/guidelines/standardsguidelines/#RefSvcs>

3. Best Practices in Library Services presentations offered through Slideshare:

<http://www.slideshare.net/verzosaf/best-practices-in-library-services>

4. Tampa Bay Regional Consortium's "Quick Tips for Successful Virtual Reference" video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJMSDzv5WEE>

5. "Seeking Synchronicity: revelations and recommendations for virtual reference" by

Connaway and Radford: <http://www.oclc.org/content/dam/oclc/reports/synchronicity/full.pdf>