Library 102 - Course Project: The Secret Researcher

It's important for you to get an idea of what constitutes good reference service. This project will allow you to experience a variety of approaches from the user standpoint.

1. Develop a reference question that will require the assistance of a reference librarian. A good question for this project is…

- One that is essentially factual; an answer to the question (or an authoritative response) can be located by a librarian consulting a library resource or resources.
- One whose answer you're genuinely interested in.
- One that will take the librarian you approach longer than 5 minutes to answer, and/or that can't be answered with a simple Google search.

Submit your question to Prof. Sheldon by e-mail for approval before January 29th (Week 3). Prof. Sheldon has to approve your question before you start using it. You may help each other develop your questions, but each student must have a unique question.

2. In the first half of the semester visit three different libraries, choosing one library from each of three categories listed on the back of this page. (You may visit and use a library not listed **only with prior approval** from the instructor.) When visiting the libraries, do <u>not</u> tell the reference librarian that you are asking the question as a part of a school assignment. **Be a "Secret Researcher."** Pretend as if you are a real library patron.

You *do* need to **find an answer to your question** and describe it in the final reflection. So be persistent with the librarians you engage with in asking for help to locate the answer/s to your question.

3. Complete a report using the form(s) provided for each library you visit. You will visit three libraries, so you will complete and submit three form reports. The forms will be collected on dates designated between February 12th and March 26th.

4. Prepare a typed report that analyzes and reflects upon the most important aspects of reference service, basing your reflections upon your experiences at the three visited libraries and best practices introduced in class readings, lectures, and discussions. Minimum 4 pages total for "B" points. Address and describe:
- Quality of service. For <u>each of RUSA's five major categories</u> (Visibility/Approachability, Interest, Listening/Inquiring, Searching & Follow-up), name the guideline you feel is most important to successful reference service, and describe an instance of that guideline being well or poorly modeled in a library. How did this guideline impact your own experience at the libraries? Why is it important for the guideline to be implemented?
- Quality of resources. Describe the best library resources—whether books, reference works, databases, or Internet material—that you consulted in your research. Provide their titles, authors, and access information (call number or URL). Describe how/why they were helpful, with evaluative notes regarding the sources' authority, currency, objectivity, and usability. Were the items intended for a special audience? Did they require special logins or access permission?
- Answer to your research question. Describe and provide the answer you discovered to your research question, with <u>sources cited in correct MLA style</u> (in-text citations & Works Cited list).
- What you learned through the library visitations and class content about ideal reference service in libraries.

The written report reflecting on your experiences visiting all three libraries is due on April 16th, (Week 13).

The class will be split into two groups. The first group will present an oral report of 3-5 minutes duration on April 23 (Week 14) regarding what you learned about reference service through the library visitations; the second group will present this oral report on April 30 (Week 15).

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LIBRARIES APPROVED FOR VISITATION

> If you wish to visit a library not listed here, you must contact Prof. Sheldon in advance for approval.

Large Libraries (Main branch only)
Burbank
Santa Monica
Long Beach
Pasadena
Glendale
San Bernardino
Los Angeles (city of, not county)

Medium-sized Libraries
Altadena
Alhambra
South Pasadena
Arcadia
Glendora
Monrovia
Monterey Park
Beverly Hills
Downey

Branch Libraries
You can use any of the smaller branch libraries of the Pasadena Public Library.
There's a list and map at the reference desk.

Community College Libraries
PCC
Glendale Community College
Mt. San Antonio College
Fullerton College
L.A. City College

College/University Libraries
UCLA
USC
Cal Poly Pomona
CSU Los Angeles
CSU Northridge
CSU Long Beach
CSU Fullerton