Reference Observations

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For observations of reference work two types of library in Sonoma County were visited. Since permission to observe at the Central Library Branch was not ultimately granted, the public library observation was completed at the Northwest Branch. The second two-hour stretch was spent observing near the reference desk in the Doyle Library at Santa Rosa Junior College. Though there are clearly differences in both the physical plants and the intended purposes of the two library systems, for a consideration of the role and future of reference librarians, the similarities observed were more striking and instructional.

The Sonoma countywide library system has ten regional branches, and two rural stations. According to the library's web site, more than half of Sonoma County residents have library cards--the population of Sonoma County is currently 466, 741 as of July 2008 (U.S. Census, 2008), so half would be 233, 370. The library's data shows that these cardholders check out more than half 2.5 million items a year, which sounds like a large number, but is in fact fewer than one book per month per person. Expert reference librarians, the library site shares, "answer nearly half a million reference questions annually for individuals, businesses and government agencies. They offer instruction in the use of Library resources in such fields as genealogy, grant seeking, and use of the Internet" (Sonoma County, 2009).

The Central Library in Santa Rosa is a 60,000 square ft. structure built in 1968, when the population of the Santa Rosa area was ¼ its current size--the County Facilities Master Plan recommends an increase to 80-97 thousand square feet. The size of its book collection is approximately 217,000 volumes (Sonoma County, 2009). The Central Branch is located in central downtown Santa Rosa and has had an ongoing problem with heavy use by a homeless and vagrant population. A visit to the Central Library eighteen months ago found stained carpeting, a strong urine smell, and many clearly indigent male patrons asleep in chairs for hours at a time. Anecdotal evidence and local news reports indicated a drop in use by families and

long-term users. Policy changes have clearly been made, as on this visit there was new carpeting, a fresh atmosphere, and a courteous but highly visible security guard.

The Northwest Branch of the Sonoma County Library is very small--7, 840 square feet-- and worn; the air was overly warm and the carpets, people, and material gave off a rather ripe and salty smell. The County Facilities Master Plan (2003) reported that shelf space, noise, and lack of technology are all problems at this branch; the population of the area has increased tremendously and the report recommends a new building almost three times as big.

Santa Rosa Junior College, which has a major satellite location in Petaluma, serves over 36 thousand students. The Doyle Library on the main Santa Rosa campus is a beautiful new 145 thousand square foot building. Its collections include over 142,000 book holdings, over 400 current print subscriptions, and 30 electronic databases. More than 700 students per semester are enrolled in library classes taught by faculty librarians. (Human Resources, 2009)

In each of the three libraries visited, one common fact could be immediately observed: upon entering the building, it was very difficult to discover where to find the desired service— there was virtually no way to discover the layout of the library without either doing a physical reconnoiter or asking someone, and the effects of this deficit on the reference librarians were obvious**.** If the entrance to a building can be considered as a type of user interface, then the user interface for these libraries has no links, no pull-downs, and no menu.] The Central Branch first presents a large entryway, with a right-side door leading out to a spacious courtyard centered on a low, rectangular fountain. Straight ahead are double doors which lead into a relatively narrow entrance area. On the left is the long U-shaped circulation desk, but all the people at this desk are facing the exit side, where books are checked out--the entry side is just book drop-off. Walking past the long edge of the book drop side, in the mid-ground on the left is the glassed-in and clearly labeled Children's Room, but moving to the right there is all the wide-open 60 thousand

square feet of the library stretching ahead. The first time or infrequent visitor gazes out over lots

of low shelving for reserved books and some genre books, perhaps 200 feet to the next

signposted area, which is the Reference desk.

Between the two public libraries, though the scale was different, the effect was the same.

At the Northwest branch a tiny foyer led to a U-shaped check out desk on the left, with the

patron service area facing away toward the exit. Users walk a few steps along the book drop

counter; the children's area, immediately recognizable by its mural and furnishings, is straight

ahead, and to the left the rest of the library is squeezed into various bays of shelving, with the

clearly labeled reference desk right next to the circulation desk, not 6 feet away.

At the SRJC library the main level doors are upstairs, which is initially confusing. Inside

the double doors is a hall with an art display area, and the circulation counter along one side,

with several people moving around behind it, but no one standing expectantly or making eye

contact. The hall ends in a circular space with openings on all 4 sides. On the right the opening

leads directly to the reference desk beneath a large identifying sign, and there sits the reference

librarian, the first person a visitor would see upon arrival who looked available to dispel any

confusion about how to navigate the library. As emphasized in Fritch and Mandernack's

2001article on the changing reference paradigm, "Effective reference transactions are about

good customer service" (p. 299). When these authors wrote "Users are more confused than ever

about where to turn for high quality information" (p. 299), they weren't referring to the physical

world, but in libraries, in fact, this is often literally true, and when it is, the reference librarian is

often the first and only accessible human prepared to answer a library orientation question.

By far the largest number of questions directed to the reference librarians at all three sites

during these observations were of this kind. The first reference interview observed at the Central

Branch, a query from an elderly gentleman about local deciduous trees, was interrupted by the

arrival of a man with a "box of PARS—for Public Review" who had to be directed to the

receiving area. More than one person asked what time the library closed. There was a steady

stream of people asking where different parts of the collection were shelved—the signage with

this information was very small. At the JC library a student wanted to know how to make copies.

The librarian told her where the machines were. The student asked the librarian for change; the

librarian explained to the student how to acquire a copy card. At the JC the situation was

exacerbated because many of the questions belonged in different areas of the college altogether.

A man told the librarian there was a problem with the funding for his priority registration, which

was though some sort of recovery program.. She looked at the school website for him and gave

him the hours of the registration desk, but he wanted her help with clarifying his funding

situation, which she tried to explain to him she would not be able to give. He was agitated.

Gorman (2001) discusses the quandary of this situation. Many questions which come to

the reference librarian are indisputably "purely directional" (p.177), or questions on library

policy, such as the number of books that can be checked out. He observes that few would argue

that such queries could appropriately be answered by support staff or student assistants. It should

be added that many of these questions would never arise if the welcoming apparatus of layout,

signage, maps, and even video tours were improved. Gorman does express the concern that the

most mundane directional question can actually be a "veiled inquiry" from the very patrons most

in need of the reference librarian's support, but a look at the observation excerpt provided above

shows that many of the questions which come to the reference desks are not seeking any sort of

bibliographic information. For this reason, in addition to improved signage and labeling, the

Sonoma County system should consider instituting a volunteer program of trained greeter/guides,

such as Amtrak now provides. The Sonoma County Library site reminds volunteers that their

shelving volunteer work requires some lifting and pushing—many educated retired potential

volunteers would probably prefer to direct patrons entering the library toward the requested or most appropriate resources, including the reference desk. At the Junior College student assistants could provide this work, whether paid or volunteer. No one wants a needy patron to go unserved because her question is vague. On the other hand, in times of scarce resources, we do not need to use the time of some of the most highly compensated staff in the library to answer repeated inquiries about the location of the restroom.

In Library and Information programs the value and importance of neutral questions in reference work is foundational. Since Dervin first published on neutral questions in 1981, it must be assumed few librarians working today remain unaware of these principals, and yet in these observations their use was rare, especially in the phone answers overheard. One phone user at the Central Branch requested the phone number of a certain library. "I'm gonna need a city and state", the librarian replied. This was provided, and she quickly gave the number and hung up the phone. A woman, in person, said she needed a map of New York. The librarian responded "City or state", which didn't seem particularly relevant to her next act, which was to point out the location of the atlases. A Central librarian was moving to answer the phone. A patron walking by asked the librarian where he could look at job listings; the librarian pointed at the public computers and picked up the phone.

It's all too easy for a student to be critical of the routines of a working professional—the useful thing here is to analyze why closed questions seem often preferred. "Neutral questioning is…user-oriented rather than system-oriented"; "Closed questions such as "Is this for a project?"…limit the expected range of response" (Dervin & Dewdney, 1986, p. 508-509). It seems clear that limiting the duration and length of response is actually an intended consequence of some of the lines of questioning observed—why would this be so?

These observations were completed on a Friday afternoon. Only the solitary librarian at the Northwest Branch was almost consistently occupied with users. He had only a few moments of chat with his colleagues the entire time of observation. The Central reference area has a desk with a seat, which is angled out facing into a main open area of the site, then when the corner of the desk is turned is there is a long counter at stand-up height, with shelves of books in front of a hidden office space behind it. There were 2-3 people working in the reference area at the Central Branch and one in the internal office; they had a steady but not unceasing flow of clients. However, according to the County Strategic Plan (2000), "lines are frequent — both physical and virtual". The Santa Rosa JC library reference area has openings on 3 sides of the counter for seated librarians with monitors on the inside of the space, and chairs for inquiring patrons outside the openings. Behind the seating for the librarians was an enclosure, containing a desk with no public access. On this Friday afternoon the computers and tables were fairly full, but the reference area was not very busy; only one librarian was stationed at the desk; another worked inside the enclosure—clearly, the space is set up for its typically larger volume of business. One would think that these professionals would have had the luxury, on a relatively calm Friday afternoon, of answering their patrons' questions with some deliberation and care, but there is another factor to consider in these transactions—all of the librarians were doing a significant amount of other work.

The Sonoma County Library web site (2009) lists reference service by chat through the national "Ask Now" service, by email, and by phone). No answering of emails was observed during this time, but the librarians on duty were clearly responsible for phone reference as well as in-person. On the SRJC web site a notice declares that service to those in the library will take precedence over answering calls (Santa Rosa). At the Central Library the distribution of attention between electronic and face-to-face customers is not so clearly delineated. During one exchange

a female reference librarian moved through the reference area very quickly, waving a book in an explanatory way as the phone began to ring. A patron walked up to the seated male librarian and said, "How's it goin'?" The male librarian at the desk smiled at the patron, gestured, answered the phone, and put someone on hold. He then started to answer the "How's it goin" man. The phone rang again; he answered it and put it on hold again. The user asked his question, the male librarian typed and stared at the screen, then told the patron where to look. The patron wandered away; the librarian picked up the phone and began to converse. In the meantime the speedy lady came back, and right after, so did the "How's it goin" man, who clearly didn't find what he had been sent to look for, but by then *both* librarians were on the phone, and he had a long wait for more assistance. At the Junior College the phone rang quietly but steadily, though most of the answers overheard were brief responses on library hours. The computer screen of the JC librarian was visible from the side. Several times IM pop-ups could be seen. Behind the IM's could be seen at first SFGate.com, the San Francisco Chronicle website, and on two later glimpses, a long page of gmails. An initial assumption was that she was answering reference questions, since the SRJC website does advertise the offer of this service through Meebo, but not, according to the website, on Friday. After later research it is clear that the JC librarian could have been answering live chat questions through many different services with which the JC has reciprocal arrangements, such as Ask Now. The Northwest librarian had a project on his computer which he quickly returned to in the rare moments that no one was looking for his help—it appeared to involve older newspapers—maybe early 20th Century-- that had been scanned. The screen of the JC librarian inside the publicly inaccessible cubicle could also be seen—she was looking at watches for sale online—someone's Christmas research?

Both these cash-strapped public systems probably have sensible intentions—to maximize the use of the time of their relatively highly paid professionals by assigning them tasks to complete

when they are not assisting patrons. However, this cost-cutting measure may have hidden costs.

Durrance (1995) warned that "Librarians should factor into reference desk management the

potential impact of staffing patterns on those who attempt to approach librarians with a

question". Studies have found that people are very reluctant to interrupt a librarian who seems to

be intent on other work, and "Interviews which interrupted a librarian who was doing other

work at the desk were the least successful" (Durrance, 1995, p. 249). Furthermore, though

overworked librarians may use closed questions as a way of regulating the length of interviews

and simplifying the range of responses, this strategy may easily have the opposite effect. One

such exchange began when a young man asked the Central Branch seated reference librarian for

"the book on water use". Seated librarian answered, "Let's look over here". He moved over to

the shelves; the user followed him. He pulled out a book saying, "Take a look—see what you

think of that." The user gave a low reply. The librarian answered, "Oh, you want the *Operator*

Course Manual. Is this something you checked out before?" It turned out that the user wanted to

locate a certain resource a librarian offered him before in this very library. As observation in the

Central branch ended many minutes later, the user was suggesting to the librarian that he search

under the authors' names, which the user said were the same as those on the book the librarian

had given him, instead of what the librarian was typing in, which was: WATER.

In a similar example, the JC librarian consulted at length with her colleagues regarding

words for "recency" of date and time. She listed the resources she had enlisted. Her colleague

asked about the thesaurus and dictionary entries, where they re-examined the synonyms,

including 'recentness'. After the caller had been on hold for a long time, the librarian checked

back to give the caller an update. It turned out that the caller didn't want synonyms for 'recency'

at all; he/she only wanted to know if 'recentness' was a legitimate word that could be used. This

was a phone question-- the response was, "Hold on please".

Financially motivated directions from management might be one reason users are given such superficial service; another explanation may lie in the situations of these public employees. The 2000 Sonoma County Library Strategic Plan, now almost a decade old, promised "Excellent services…sufficient staff…a welcoming environment". The document stressed changes in management and organization which would increase morale and positive attitude. Instead, though a few communities have seen new construction, facilities and staffing in the county have deteriorated while demands on staff for new services and tasks have grown. Morale and overwork may well have been a factor in the unfriendly reception given to this student observer at the Central Branch, brusquely told by the female librarian that "This is not a school". Though in the surveys included in the Strategic Plan (2000) many patrons listed 'friendly staff' as a favorite asset, unfortunately for those appreciative users surveyed, their warmth is not returned, as on the staff survey only 8% said they liked the patrons most.

Though perhaps an example of advice classified 'easier said than done', an observer with a union background must recommend that professionals in public institutions begin to advocate for themselves more effectively. Samuel Green had a vision in 1876 of a kindly, cultivated, and modest female librarian. Maybe this uncomplaining female was the one sent to the bargaining table when librarians were handed new work on top of their old. The Sonoma County Strategic Plan (2000), which predates the current budget crisis, is specific about facilities development, but vague and general about adequate staffing needs. The Sonoma County Library, where half this observation was completed, will close for ten days at Christmas time due to the state budget crisis. The average public librarian's salary in 2004, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, was $42, 500, which puts them at or below the level of notoriously underpaid teachers, a job which does not require a Master's degree. (Degree Directory, 2009). The average salary of a junior college reference librarian is substantially higher at $58, 420, but most of the

advertisements for librarians at Santa Rosa Junior College are for hourly paid adjunct pool employees. "In order to survive", Tyckoson (2001) reminds us, "a library must develop a symbiotic relationship with its parent community. Successful libraries serve their community and are rewarded for that service. The community benefits from the information and services provided by the library; the library benefits from receiving a strong political, economic, and social status" (p.184) Although in these insane economic times a service may be both valued and under funded, it is time for librarians, teachers, and other public professionals to become activists for the revision of Proposition 13 and other state funding sources. As it currently says on the bookmarks tucked into each Sonoma County book checked out, "Free to Use…But Not Free to Operate: Tough Times Demand Tough Choices".

An ongoing debate in the library world is between what Tyckoson (2001) calls the ""conservative" or "minimum" model, with the ultimate goal being to train patrons to use the library independently", and the " "liberal or "maximum" model, which simply provides the information requested. Both kinds of answers were provided with frequency during the interviews observed, even by the same librarian. Following closely after the most frequently asked--directional or simple policy questions, the next most common request was for information which is easily accessible within the library catalogue. It is instructive to examine both the nature of the questions and the pattern of answer to see what information may be gathered about why patrons ask this type of question, and how librarians decide how much bibliographic instruction to provide.

There seem to be two types of requests for catalogued information—those from users who are not yet aware of the content and capacity of the catalog, and those who do not want to do that work themselves. At the Northwest Branch, a young teen big sister with two younger kids in tow wanted *Twilight—New Moon.* The patient librarian looked on the OPAC. He told her they

were all out; one was due back in two days. She walked back into the library shelves. A young

woman in worker's uniform wanted a certain manual in Spanish. He got up and showed her

where it was. It was some kind of test prep book by the format. In both these encounters the

users were hesitant—they appeared to be of low socio-economic status, and very unsure about

how to use the library. In contrast, at the JC library a very well dressed young man slouched in

the chair and handed the librarian a card, saying, "Do you have these?" She asked if they were

books or periodicals. He said they were books--one was called *Gestating Morality*. She looked it

up in the Library catalog with no commentary. They did not have the books. Appearances can be

deceiving, but this user behaved as an affluent and capable college student. His inquiry appeared

to exemplify the findings in a study quoted by O'Gorman (2009), which noted that "the students'

model is based on their life experience of self-service models in retail sales and is in direct

conflict with the librarian's model that involves mediated interactions between the librarian and

the user " (p.333). Fritch and Mandernack (2001) note that ATM's, online shopping, and drive-

thru's promote a wide expectation of user convenience and "immediate gratification" (p.291).

        Whether the patrons were needy or lazy, these encounters are examples of what Tykoson

(2001) discusses as "the Traditional Reference Model", which "emphasizes the values of

personal service, access to information…accuracy, and timeliness" (p.193). It is the quickest way

for the librarian to move from one query to the next, and provides the most direct answer for the

user. One interesting observation is that none of the phone questioners ever received any

bibliographic instruction—they all received direct service. It is clear when observing, however,

that there are some trigger points which cause the librarians observed to make the decision to

invest the time in "The Teaching Library Model", which is also called the " "conservative" or

"minimum model", with the ultimate goal being to train patrons to use the library independently"

(Tykoson, 2001, p.191, 193). The young teen in the Northwest Branch who did not find copies of

New Moon checked in returned to the desk—she asked for books on witches. The second request caused the librarian, though very busy, to change his strategy and focus on this girl. He answered "Anything on real witches you'll find in 133. Do you know how to use the Dewey Decimal System?" "No-oo", she didn't think so. He answered, "Ok, I'll show you where those are." They looked together at the catalog out in the room. "Then the fiction ones you'll have to look up in the catalogue—use the keyword 'witches'." He showed her how to check to see if the books are in. On a second inquiry the young woman received much more time and instruction than she did after her first request.

This record leads directly to some thoughts on trends and necessities for future reference work. One important consideration is the increasing complexity of reference information, and another is the changing nature of reference clientele and their needs. Considering reference information, the ramifications of the change from use of print resources to digital merit discussion. Each of the libraries visited was well supplied with print reference material in relation to its size. Many of the newer titles in the public libraries (*America's Top Doctors, History of Science and Technology, Guide to American Graduate Schools*) were from 2004-2005, dating back to an era of better funding, but still usable. The Santa Rosa Junior College print reference collection was outstanding—the spines gave a uniform impression of shiny recency, and the collection seemed comprehensive. However, in all the time spent observing in these libraries, no patron was ever observed to consult even one of these volumes, and only twice was a reference book used by a librarian—when the Central librarian searched for a library phone number in the American Directory of Libraries, and when the JC librarian used the thesaurus off her own desk. Fritch and Mandernack (2001) write that print media continue to proliferate; O'Gorman (2009) considers the early 21st Century a " Golden Age of reference publishing" However, he also notes, "these excellent resources are less sought by users. Their

learning habits do not include picking up a title, reading, and taking notes or photocopying. Contemporary students are used to full-text searching of databases and are less comfortable and less willing to spend time with print tools that they see as cumbersome to search. So, at the same time that the content and access are the best that they have ever been, users are not using the reference collection" (330).

Librarians today find, as do teachers, that "many of our users consider themselves expert at searching because they are slightly familiar with Web search engines" The article gives a clear picture of the modern user, who may not "even know what control means or when to ask for help" (Fritch and Mandernack, 2001, p. 294, 295). For these users reference librarians need to provide new types of support for evaluating, prioritizing, and organizing digital information. Though the 2001 Fritch article voiced concern that reference inquiries were decreasing, O'Gorman's 2009 article cited studies showing that, though short informational questions are fewer, as the average user can manipulate Google-type search engines for ready reference, there is an increasing number of the more complex and time consuming questions which arise when the user has not been able to locate what is needed on the Internet, sometimes because "the information is not there, but often it is because their search skills are not as focused" (p. 328). An often-quoted study from UC Berkeley which is summarized on Wikipedia found that in 2000, it was estimated that the deep Web consists of about 91,000 terabytes. In comparison, the surface web, what the average Google search will reach, was about 167 terabytes. For comparison, the 1997 Library of Congress was estimated to have approximately 3,000 terabytes. (Wikipedia). Since 2000 web crawlers have improved, but it is still true that the majority of high-quality information is contained in proprietary databases, the existence of which is unknown to many beginning information seekers, and the manipulation of which can be daunting even for trained researchers. Given this reality, Gorman (2001) does seem correct when he exclaims that it

"borders on the fatuous to propose that technology can be employed to provide a satisfactory alternative to the nuances of the interaction between librarian and user" (171). Even though simple information needs are easily met by the private person, the need for support in more complex queries continues and grows, not only as the Internet becomes more complex, but as the nature of users changes.

In the reference interactions observed in two very different types of Sonoma County libraries, virtually every user described was an English language learner in various stages of acquisition—many Latino, but some Middle-Eastern or Asian. Also, many of the users were clearly of low socio-economic status. In one exchange at the Northwest Branch, the librarian also helped a boy of 7-9 who exhibited behavioral difficulties of ADD-HD or even Asperger's type. Not only did the boy face this challenge, but he was looking for a book on the language of his home area of Eritrea, and he was there with an older, white foster grandparent. In each of the three libraries observed, the problem of staff interaction with homeless or vagrant users was evident and obviously ongoing. Though the Central Branch seemed to have reached a solution in allocating some of its scarce funds to a security guard, the librarian at the JC spent a significant amount of time interacting with indigent and mentally impaired visitors, which was probably not her original motivation for entering the field of academic librarianship. A man paced around the reference area talking to himself; he sometimes sat at a computer but he was not using it. The librarian came out and politely asked him to keep the things out of the walking aisle. He did not answer her, but did put away the bags. An apparently homeless lady was very angry that one of the computers still did not work, although she reported it days ago. The reference librarian said in a neutral voice that said she too had reported it. Two users with the appearance of vagrants had an argument about which would sit at a certain computer. Their voices rose. The librarian

came out from behind the desk and spoke to them in a low voice; one walked away and both were quiet.

Not only are many patrons second language learners or troubled individuals, but for a variety of reasons, lower levels of both library experience and literacy among users are common. Some patrons are so needy that they do not know where to turn for help. At the JC library a young woman with a Middle-Eastern accent and headscarf asked the reference librarian to read the final draft of her English paper, which was due the next day. The librarian said she couldn't do that, but spent some time finding and writing down for the patron the hours of the Writing Center, which was unfortunately closed. This woman was struggling to educate herself, but Gorman (2001) also writes of the trend toward " a low level of functional literacy and the rise of aliteracy, particularly among the young" (p. 178). Genz (1998) reminds us, "people do not need "experts" to help them find answers to simple routine questions. People do need experts to answer difficult questions or to create paths for them". An examination of the OPAC at the Junior College found many different research pathways and support structures prepared for librarians for students. In addition to curricular library skills classes students can sign up for free ad hoc seminars, such as a Noodle Bib introduction scheduled in early December. On the public library catalog, no such guides are offered.

Fritch and Mandernack (2001) discuss the high ideals of library service as the only institution that "serves and supports all the generally recognized needs, and resulting institutions, of a society (p.292). However, while some service, such as providing education and support to immigrant learners, is well within the role for which American society has traditionally funded and trained librarians, other service, such as serving as a front-line case manager for the unhospitalized mentally ill, is a relatively new task for the librarian, and the unforeseen result of spending decisions made far from the library. Again, we would like to see librarians more active

and articulate in advocating for the sort of social change which would mitigate these additions to

their work, especially since the need for their traditionally provided services has grown

exponentially.

As students in U.S. schools are more frequently second language learners, impoverished, or from

challenging and unsupportive family backgrounds, ideas about the proper role of the school have

changed. Schools no longer can afford to say "not my job" when presented with students'

deficits—the cost to society is too high. As schools attempt to deal with this enormous social

change, some lessons emerge clearly—one is a broad need for intensive instruction in

educational basics and social norms which is reminiscent of the social mandate recognized by

Samuel Green. The other is the power of flexibility, innovation, and personal connection (Also

recognized by Green) in facilitating this instruction. Reference librarians also need to accept this

educational responsibility.

Fritch and Mandernack (2001) were astute in stating, "Proactively serving contemporary

users necessitates change in reference services. Services and programs must become more

responsive, more flexible. more convenient, and more personalized for users, taking into

consideration many different learning styles, attitudes, belief systems, and orientations" (p. 300).

How this daunting but crucial task is ever to be achieved with such insufficient funding should

be a primary concern, but some changes in procedure and attitude cost nothing. For example,

personal connections are easier to establish when we know someone's name. None of the

reference librarians observed for this assignment had desk signs, name badges, or any other

means of identification or distinguishing mark. None of them introduced themselves to any of

the patrons, or offered their contact information for follow-up, in spite of the fact that studies

showed long ago that patrons who know the name of a librarian have a more positive experience

and are more likely to return (Durrance, 1995, p. 249).

At the Northwest Branch, almost all users observed were Latino--either young adults looking for manuals or training material, or mixed age family groups of kids looking for their Friday entertainment. They were checking out DVD's, manga, comics, and magazines--there were big bins of these in the small YA section. They all seemed to be having a lot of fun at this library, and obviously felt comfortable and welcome here. This is the library where the patient librarian took the time to show a young woman caring for two younger siblings how to use the catalog so she could look for books on her own. Gorman (2001) made a crucial point: "A reference query can be seen as either as a closed loop (a question asked, a question answered, and no more) or as a knock on a door. Opening the door may lead to a lifetime of learning (p.178)

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