

The Reference Interview: Different Approaches

From Katz's *Introduction to Reference Work, Vol. II: Reference Services and Reference Processes*:

1. What is the question? *Always first clarify the question.*
2. Essential information *What kind of information is needed, how much information is needed, how is the information going to be used, what sort of information is appropriate, how much time does the user wish to devote to finding/using the information, when is the information needed.*
3. Isolating and correcting the question *Attempt to make corrections for errors in accuracy; classify the need (e.g., the forest (location of index) or the trees(articles on a topic)?)*
4. Question summary *Repeat back! "If I understand you correctly ..."*
5. Open and closed questions *Employ open and closed questions as necessary to find out what the user really wants.*
6. Expediting *Go to the stacks, take information down to contact the patron later, follow up.*

From Sutton and Holt (Bopp & Smith, *Reference and Information Services: An Introduction*, Ch. 2):

1. Informal interaction *Building of rapport will facilitate a better interaction.*
2. Questioning *Used to define and negotiate the request.*
3. Locating the answer / Searching for information *This may be undertaken by the librarian or by the user.*
4. Communicating the response / Closing the interview *Provide source information, refer patrons to appropriate sources of further information, invite further questions.*

RUSA Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Service Providers categories:

Approachability; Interest; Listening/Inquiring; Searching; Follow-up

[URL: <http://www.ala.org/ala/rusa/rusaprotools/referenceguide/guidelinesbehavioral.htm>]

The following approach falls into the "quick and dirty" category; they were passed along to me in my first class on Reference Services while completing my degree. Credit is due to Dr Joyce Taylor.

Quick and Dirty: Four Steps to a good interview

1. Set the tone
2. Get the facts
3. Give information
4. Follow up