Interchangeable terms:

IP / Information Professional / Librarian
Patron/User/Information Seeker
Success/Patron satisfaction/ Willingness to return to librarian for information needs

For many patrons, public libraries can be overwhelming, intimidating and confusing places. Accessing pertinent information from a vast array of resources on an almost infinite variety of topics is not intuitive; many information seekers need help and guidance in their information quest. Providing this help is the job of public service information professionals. Initial contact with the patron occurs during the reference interview; the user comes to the reference desk, states his information need, and the librarian attempts to link him with relevant information resources. The reference interview is the cornerstone of the patron/librarian interaction.

Traditionally, public libraries have only considered accuracy as the primary measure of success. Equating accuracy and success is problematic because it assumes that librarians are only in the business of answering questions. Focusing solely on one outcome of the interaction (correctly answering a question) implies that all questions have only one answer; therefore, any information professional who cannot provide the “correct” answer is unsuccessful. This seems shortsighted. It does not take into account how “user friendly” librarians are, whether the patron was referred to appropriate sources, or if the librarian instructed the patron in the use of pertinent resources. It ignores the interpersonal interaction between librarian and user, and overlooks the patron’s
satisfaction (defined as willingness to return to the same librarian with other information needs) as a measure of success.

There is a considerable amount of coverage of factors that influence the success or failure of the reference interview in library and information science literature. Joan Durrance's "Willingness to Return" study and Patricia Dewdney and Catherine Sheldrick Ross's "Best Practices" are arguably two of the most well-known studies.

Baker and Field, in their “Reference Success” article (2000) state, “Few follow-up studies have been undertaken to assess the effects of this literature. Are information professionals heeding the suggestions for improving the reference interview process made by various authors?” This study was conducted to determine if the behaviors evidenced by staff members in public library reference departments, as identified by Durrance in (1989), and Dewdney and Ross (1994) have changed over the past eleven years. First and second year students who were either enrolled in, or had completed the core reference course in the School of Library and Information Science (SILS) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill were asked to conduct unobtrusive visits to a public library of their choice and ask a reference question of the information professional. First year students who were currently enrolled in the reference class were instructed to gather information for the pathfinder they were creating as part of their coursework. Second year students (volunteers) could ask any question of personal interest to them. Their comments and ratings were used to compare present behaviors and environments with those reported by Durrance in 1995, Dewdney and Ross in 1994, and Baker and Field in 2000.
Literature Review

In his 1968 article "Question-negotiation and Information Seeking in Libraries" Robert Taylor described the reference interview as "one of the most complex acts of human communication . . . [in which] one person tries to describe for another person not something he knows, but rather something he does not know." Ross and Dewdney take this notion a step further, stating that the librarian must engage in a conversation in "which the librarian asks one or more questions (a) in order to get a clearer and more complete picture of what the user wants to know, and (b) to link the user to the system."

In 1980, Nicholas J. Belkin, developed his theory of "ASK" (Anomalous States of Knowledge) in which he theorized that all information seekers' states of knowledge change and vary, as each bit of information is uncovered. According to the ASK theory, both the information professional and user are in anomalous states of knowledge throughout the reference interaction. The user is asking for information concerning something about which he may know little or nothing at all. The librarian, by asking questions, is trying to determine just what it is that the patron is looking for, so that the patron may be united with an appropriate resource. It is this verbal back-and-forth that ultimately clarifies the user's and librarian's various ASKs and determine the true nature and scope of the information being sought. Durrance, Dewdney and Ross are unequivocal in stating that measurement of reference "success" must concentrate on the quality of the reference interaction.

In 1995, Joan C. Durrance published Factors That Influence Reference Success: What Makes Questioners Willing to Return?" In this article, data is reported from her ongoing (1983-1989) Willingness to Return Study, conducted using unobtrusive
methodology. Students enrolled in the University of Michigan’s School of Information and Library Studies (as it was then known) were sent to various libraries, to ask IP’s questions on topics of personal interest. The purpose was to determine if the information seeker would be willing to return to the same person to ask another question at a later time, based on his/her reference interview experience with the information professional. This particular study, based on 486 observations, coupled with her previously published (1989) studies, identified various behaviors exhibited by information professionals in response to questions asked by users, and examined the influence of several different factors on reference success. Her studies indicate that users felt the reference interaction was most successful when specific “helpful” behaviors were exhibited by librarians:

- **Approachability:**
  - the user could identify the librarian by name;
  - the librarian was open, friendly, greeted the patron, and was not actively engaged in something else.

- **Needs Clarification**
  - librarian responded to the initial information request with enthusiasm;
  - librarian asked both closed and open-ended questions in order to understand exactly what the patron needed;

- **Active Search and Follow-up**
  - librarian explained the search strategy;
  - librarian escorted patron to possible resources, and offered instruction and/or help to get patron started on the search;
• the encounter was followed up by the librarian checking to see if the patron found the resources useful;

• IP used conditional closures such as “If this isn’t what you need, come back.”

According to Durrance, the least successful reference interviews (behaviors exhibited by an information professional which led the user to not want to return to the same IP) occurred when the information professional:

• engaged in an “anonymous encounter” (i.e. the IP’s name or function was not identified by a nametag);

• seemed impatient or bored with the patron's question;

• asked “Have you checked the catalog?” in response to the user inquiry;

• immediately started typing on the computer without clarifying the user inquiry;

• didn’t explain any search method/strategy;

• just handed the user a slip of paper with a call number on it, or pointed to resources;

• took off without indicating that the user was to follow;

• didn’t follow up to see if the patron found what he needed

• signaled the reference interaction was over by walking away, or turning to something else.

Durrance’s findings indicate that approximately 29% of the information providers either pointed or otherwise indicated that information retrieval was pretty much “a self-service” proposition. This affirms the notion that information professionals are in business to answer, not negotiate, questions and that librarians primarily provide
directional assistance. Typically, only about 55% of the information seekers said that they would return to the same librarian for future information needs. This figure is astonishingly consistent with other studies of reference success, based on accuracy of the “answers” given to a question.

The findings of Dewdney and Ross seem to corroborate Durrance’s findings. In *Best Practices: An Analysis the Best (and Worst) in Fifty-Two Public Library Transactions* (1994) and *Flying a Light Aircraft: Reference Service Evaluation from a User’s Viewpoint* (1994), Dewdney and Ross focus on those behaviors of librarians which users specifically identified as “helpful” and “not helpful.” In these studies, approximately 55% – 59% of the users said they would be willing to return to the same librarian with another question. The studies grew out of an assignment which Dewdney and Ross have routinely given their M.L.I.S. students at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science and the University of Western Ontario. Their students are required to think of a question which is personally important to them, and ask it in a library. Students must then do three things: fill out a questionnaire evaluating their experience as a user of reference services; produce a step-by-step account of what happened in the reference encounter, and summarize their experience, noting which aspects of the encounter were helpful, and which were not.

"Helpful behaviors" were defined as both the verbal and non-verbal communications skills that signal attentiveness and willingness to help the user. These behaviors include the broad range of strategies that information professionals use in the reference process, from the initial interview through the development of the search strategy and assessing the adequacy of the answer in terms of the information seeker's situation. Specifically,
Dewdney and Ross recommend the use of open, closed and neutral questions by the librarian during the interview to clarify the user's information need. They suggest that IP's should: volunteer help to determine if the user knows how to use the resources; monitor the referral by checking to make sure that the user has found the resource to be useful, and finally, the IP should follow up with the patron, welcoming the patron to return if more help is needed.

Dewdney and Ross state that "unhelpful behaviors" tend to occur together. A librarian's perceived unwelcoming body language may be interpreted by patrons as the librarian trying to get rid of the patron. A librarian who considers an information seeker's question impossible to answer, or of no great importance, will be less likely to volunteer additional help, or suggest alternative search strategies. A librarian who is perceived as desiring to get rid of a user, will not use follow up questions, nor leave the door open for the patron to return. Finally, a librarian who simply hands a user a slip of paper listing call numbers has no way of knowing if the transaction was successful. Their findings indicate that about 44% of IPs accepted user's initial question at face value and did not conduct reference interviews.

In 1999, Lynda M. Baker and Judith J. Field revisited the studies of Durrance and Dewdney and Ross, in order to compare present practices with the historical practices of IPs, as identified by Durrance, Dewdney and Ross. In their study, 37 students enrolled in two sections of the fall 1998 core reference courses at Wayne State University visited either academic or public libraries, and asked a question of personal interest. Their instruction sheets included five major categories and several subcategories, which were modeled on the Durrance or Dewdney and Ross studies. The categories included:
• the library environment (signs, lighting, position of the reference desk);
• personnel (was the IP a librarian?), the perceived warmth or coolness of the IP;
• questions the IP asked;
• level of satisfaction with the librarian (would the student return to the same person or recommend the person to others);
• user’s level of satisfaction with the answer to his/her question.

In this study, Baker and Field report that the physical environments of most libraries (i.e., signage, lighting and location of the reference desk) were generally considered to have made a favorable impression on the students. However, they point out that chairs are rarely provided for the user, leaving them with the negative impression that librarians want to hurry the information seeker out of the reference area.

Lamentably, their results unveiled very little progress in advancing helpful IP behaviors. Using Dewdney and Ross’s definition of “unhelpful” behaviors, Baker and Field report that certain behaviors are still common. Identification of the staff member as a librarian was impossible for 63% of students because their nametags didn’t indicate IP’s position. They report that 46% of the student users felt that the IP was disinterested in their topic. Baker and Field report that this resulted in the students regarding this behavior as a “major barrier to the reference process.” Citing Dewdney and Ross’s suggestion that librarians use a combination of open, closed and neutral questions, Baker and Field report that almost half of their 35 students reported the use of only closed questions, approximately 17% indicated that they were asked open questions. Only 1 student reported being asked a neutral question, while 9 students (26%) stated that they had not been asked any questions at all.
Helpful behavioral characteristics, which included body language, tone of voice and facial expressions, were largely seen as positive: 88% stated that the IP’s body language was encouraging, 58% reported smiles as the predominate facial expression, 68% of students described the IP as “friendly.” Three students characterized the librarian as “cold” and three reported business-like behavior, characterized as neither warm nor cold.

Baker and Field admit that because they did not “replicate exactly the methods of either Durrance or Dewdney and Ross,” direct comparisons were impossible. In addition, their students were asked to comment on whether or not they were satisfied with the answer to their question. In their study, 56% were satisfied with the answer provided by the information professional, 15% stated that they had obtained a partial answer, and 29% indicated that they received no answer to their question.

Comment analysis comparing satisfaction with the IP behaviors and the relevance of the answer they received revealed that only 63% of those receiving a satisfactory answer were content with the staff members’ behaviors. Although 37% reported receiving satisfactory answers, they were dissatisfied with the IP, and negative behaviors on the part of the IP was cited as the primary reason for not wanting to return to the same individual for future information needs.

Conversely, of those students who were either only partially satisfied, or totally unsatisfied with the answer they received, 53% stated that they were satisfied with the librarian because they were either treated well, or they felt that the IP had done everything she could to help find the answer. The other 47% of students who received partial or no answers indicated that they would not return to the same staff member because of the meager quality of service they had received.
Significance of the work

This study is designed to emulate and continue the research of Dewdney and Ross and Durrance – that is, to seek information in public libraries, and examine the reference interview from the patron’s viewpoint. Everyone who has had a Master's level Reference course (at least at UNC-CH!) is taught that the reference interview is key to understanding what the patron wants or needs, in order to provide the patron with information and resources which will be contextually relevant and useful to the patron. It is disappointing to find that the patron satisfaction rate (measured by patron willingness to return to the same IP with another request for information) hovers fairly consistently around the 55% mark.

The aim of this study, to engage in unobtrusive research by seeking information from information professionals, in the public sector, is twofold. First and foremost is the measurement of whether the quality of the service patrons receive is such that they would be willing to return to that individual. Since public libraries exist at the will of the public, they must satisfy the taxpayer and community constituents in order to remain viable and continue to be supported at public expense. In this day of economic retrenchment and competition from alternative sources of information (i.e. the World Wide Web and private information brokers), the way business is conducted in public libraries needs to be examined. This is necessary for economic survival especially when competing for a share of tax dollars.

The second aim of this study is to give incipient IP's first-hand experience in being information seekers. By directly experiencing library services as non-professional users, students should be able to identify areas where improvement in the reference interaction
is needed, as well as identify certain behaviors that contribute to user satisfaction. It is also hoped that this study will provide the student/future information professional with a way of experiencing the anomalous state of knowledge that the patron often experiences during the reference interaction.

This will provide the students doing the unobtrusive research with some "real-life" practical research experience. It should also help the students develop some theoretical underpinnings in the formulation of future staff training and education. By observing and measuring the behaviors exhibited during the reference interaction, the information seeking students should become cognizant of the small and often unintentional behaviors that alienate patrons. It is intended that this experience will help the students engage in helpful behaviors that contribute to patron satisfaction, when the student users become the information professionals.

This study does not ignore the question of accuracy. Participants also indicated whether or not their questions were satisfactorily answered. While accuracy was not the primary focus of this study, it cannot be ignored in the overall experience. Consideration of process and result together provides a more comprehensive picture of the reference encounter than does either alone.

**Methodology**

The methodology utilized in this study is unobtrusive naturalistic research. The reason for doing an unobtrusive study is that it has been well documented that participants, who are aware that a study is being conducted, exhibit significantly different behaviors than those who are unaware that their behaviors are being observed.
Twenty students in the SILS program at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill visited a public library of their choice. Ten students enrolled in the spring 2000 core reference course were assigned to do this as part of their coursework. These students were instructed to seek information relating to the pathfinders that they were compiling as part of their coursework. Ten second-year students (volunteers) also asked questions of personal interest to them. All student participants were asked to read *Factors That Influence Reference Success: What Makes Questioners Willing to Return?*” by Joan C. Durrance and *Best Practices: An Analysis of the Best (and Worst in Fifty-Two Public library Reference Transactions* by Patricia Dewdney and Catherine Sheldrick Ross prior to their reference encounter. (Note: Baker and Field’s article was published after this study was already underway.)

Academic libraries were excluded from this study, because this project was specifically designed to measure user satisfaction rate in public libraries. The public libraries were located in central North Carolina and southeastern Virginia, and included large central and medium-sized branch libraries. The only restriction placed on choice of libraries was that students could not visit a library in which they were currently employed, or had been previously employed. It was recommended that the observation take place in an unfamiliar library.

Students were instructed to approach the information or reference desk and ask a general question of the IP. At the conclusion of the interaction, students filled out a behavior assessment form, noting the behaviors, step-by-step, then rated the encounter, according to their satisfaction level as an information seeker. Students were given careful instructions on noting behaviors. Since the field is largely female, all librarians and
information professionals are referred to as females, regardless of the IP’s gender. This is done to encourage anonymity. This study is not personal; it is solely concerned with the helpful or non-helpful behaviors as they affect the success of the reference interaction, indicated by the user’s willingness to return to the same librarian with future information needs.

**Operational Definitions**

The factors assessed in rating the success of the reference encounter were: Approachability, Assessing Information Need, Active Search Behaviors, Follow-Up Behaviors, Accuracy of the Search and Overall Patron Satisfaction. Operational definitions for these factors are as follows:

**Approachability:**

- Was the information professional wearing a nametag or any other form of identification that identified her position?
- Were there physical barriers between the patron and IP?
- Was the IP engaged in other work when approached by the user?
- Did the information professional greet the user, or acknowledge the user's presence?
- Was the librarian focused completely on the patron's question?

*Rating IP Approachability:*

*Unsatisfactory* – not approachable, user was treated as an interruption.

*Moderately satisfactory* – moderately approachable, user was acknowledged, other work was put away for the duration of the interaction.

*Very satisfactory* – librarian very approachable, user greeted pleasantly, IP was focused on the information need of the user.
Assessing the Information Need:

- What was the librarian's first reaction to the patron's question/statement?
- Did she attempt to clarify the user's information need by asking questions?
- If so, were they open or closed questions?
- Did the information professional attempt to find out what the user already knew about the subject?
- Did her behaviors indicate enthusiasm for the information need?
- Did her behaviors indicate boredom or disinterest in the information need?

Rating the librarian’s verbal clarification and interest in the user’s needs

Unsatisfactory – librarian made no attempt to clarify user’s query, appeared disinterested.

Moderately satisfactory – librarian attempted to clarify user’s information needs, asked some questions, appeared interested in the user’s need.

Very satisfactory – librarian showed enthusiasm for the user’s need, asked open-ended questions, found out what the patron already knew about the subject.

Active Search Behaviors:

- Did the librarian explain what she was doing as she conducted the search?
- Did the librarian offer any instruction on how to use the library resources?
- Were search alternatives offered or suggested (i.e. Internet searching, fiction/non-fiction bibliographies, etc.)?
- Did the IP physically accompany the patron to the appropriate area or source?
- Did the librarian just point to/toward resources?
- Did the IP just give call numbers to the user?
• Did the information professional indicate that the patron was to accompany her to the resources?

• Did the information professional just start walking toward the resources?

*Rating Active Search Behaviors*

*Unsatisfactory* - IP conducted the search without explanation or instruction, just handed user call numbers or pointed to resources, librarian did not indicate patron was to accompany her on the search.

*Moderately satisfactory* - searches explained, patron guided to resources.

*Very satisfactory* - librarian explained searches, offered instruction, suggested alternative resources, guided patron to source.

*Follow-Up Behaviors:*

• Did the information professional check with the patron to see if the recommended resource(s) were relevant and/or appropriate?

• Did the IP encourage the patron to return if the information was not pertinent or unclear?

*Rating Follow-Up Behaviors:*

*Unsatisfactory* - librarian performed no follow-up with the patron, did not encourage patron to return to the desk.

*Satisfactory* - librarian checked to see if the resources were pertinent, encouraged user to return to the desk if there were more questions.

*Accuracy of the search:*

Was the librarian able to provide satisfactory resources to answer the question?

*Successful Reference Interaction / Patron Satisfaction*
Success of the reference interactions (and ultimately, patron satisfaction) was measured by willingness of the patrons to return to the same IP individual for other information needs, based on the behaviors exhibited during this study. Unsuccessful reference interactions were indicated when patrons stated that they would not return to the same individual for future information needs.

Students in this study were asked to rate the behaviors (approachability, needs clarification, active search and follow up), state whether or not they were satisfied with the accuracy of the search and indicate if they found the reference interaction successful. This study was modeled largely on the Durrance and Dewdney and Ross studies, but is not an exact replica of their studies. It has been simplified and does not approach the level of detail that the earlier studies included. For example, students were not asked to comment extensively on body language and facial expressions, nor were they asked to write five page reports chronicling every detail of the reference interview and the physical environment of the library.

**Results**

A. **Approachability**

In this study, approachability was measured by looking at a combination of factors and behaviors: IP use of nametags; librarian greeting/acknowledging patron; physical barriers separating IP and patron; librarian being engaged in other work, and librarian’s focus on user question. Students were then asked to rate the approachability of the IP based on the factors.

The following table shows how often the factors were encountered.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approachability Factors</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was IP wearing a nametag or other identification?</td>
<td>7 (35%)</td>
<td>13 (65%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were there physical barriers between IP and user?</td>
<td>17 (85%)</td>
<td>3 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was IP engaged in other work when approached?</td>
<td>11 (55%)</td>
<td>9 (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did IP greet user, or acknowledge user’s presence?</td>
<td>20 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was IP completely focused on user’s questions?</td>
<td>20 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Durrance has pointed out that the “anonymous encounter” is unsettling to the user, and recommends the use of nametags by IPs. Additionally, the public generally assumes that anyone staffing the reference desk is a librarian, and is therefore trained to provide professional public service. In this study, 7 students (35%) indicated that the IPs who helped them were wearing nametags that identified their position, 13 students (65%) reported that the IP wore no identifying nametag. For the most part, students just indicated whether or not a nametag was worn. However there were a couple of observations noted by a couple of students.

One student whose encounter involved a librarian wearing a nametag commented, “The reference librarian was wearing a nametag and she was professionally dressed.” Another commented on the lack of a nametag.  

I couldn’t tell what her position was. Was she a librarian, a paraprofessional, or a circulation staff member? Since the circulation and reference desk were one and the same, I wasn’t sure who I was dealing with. Did this person just do it all? Is this reasonable to expect? A “jack-of-all-trades?”

Like the findings in both Durrance and Dewdney and Ross’s studies, librarians are still not identifiable by name tags. Baker and Field (2000) lament this practice, stating:
[This] desperately needs to be corrected because it perpetuates the myth that every one who works in a library is a librarian. All staff . . . should wear name tags that clearly display their name, credentials and title, thereby allowing clients to distinguish among pages, library technicians and librarians. . . . The profession will not get the respect it deserves until the public knows what educational requirements are necessary to be a librarian. (p. 27).

Physical barriers were reported by 17 students (85%). Three students (15%) indicated that the librarian approached them from the user’s side of the desk. Most indicated that the barriers were generally either the work desk or a combination desk and counter. No one made any comments about the barriers that were negative, so it assumed that for the students involved in this study, these barriers were viewed as neutral – neither negative nor positive factors influencing the reference interaction.

The librarian’s first interaction with the patron often sets the tone of the rest of the interactions. Students were asked to indicate whether or not the IP greeted them, or otherwise acknowledged their presence when they approached the reference desk. All 20 students (100%) indicated that they had been greeted or acknowledged by the librarian. Students were also asked to note whether the IP was engaged in other work when approached. Eleven students (55%) indicated that the IP was engaged in other work when the students approached the desk; all were asked to describe the initial interaction. Behaviors recorded by 12 of the 20 students were pretty evenly divided as being perceived as either welcoming and helpful, or as unwelcoming and unhelpful.

Those comments that indicated a welcoming behavior were pretty straightforward. “She smiled and asked how she could help me.” “She acknowledged that I was waiting and asked if I needed help” One student commented that “She took herself away from her work very quickly and asked if she could help me.” Another student indicated that the
approached the desk and waited for the two IPs to stop talking and acknowledge me. After a minute one of them did. She smiled a little which reassured me.”

After noting these five behaviors and factors, the students were asked to rate the information professional’s approachability as: “unsatisfactory”, “moderately satisfactory” or “very satisfactory.” None of the IPs were considered “unsatisfactory” in their approachability. Of the 20 reference encounters, 8 students (40%) reported information professional approachability to be “moderately satisfactory” and 12 students (60%) rated the IP approachability to be “very satisfactory.”
B. Assessing the Information Need

In order for a librarian to help patrons find answers to their questions, it is critical that the librarian develop a clear picture of what the user’s information need is. There is a considerable amount of library literature devoted to the art of the reference interview. It cannot be assumed that every patron can articulate his/her information need in a way that the IP will understand the true nature of what the user is seeking. Robert Taylor has pointed out the difficulty involved in this process. The user is in the position of trying to describe something about which he/she presumably knows very little. It is also reasonable to suppose that the IP may know very little about the topic. Belkin points out that both IP and user are adrift in the anomalous state of knowledge, until they come to agreement on just what information is being sought. In order to clarify the kind of information the user is seeking, Dewdney and Ross advocate the use of both open and closed questions. In the core reference course at UNC-CH, the reference negotiation process is stressed. Students in this study were instructed to initially ask a general, broad question which could be narrowed down to a more specific one. They were asked to note the following:

- IP’s initial reaction to the question,
- types of questions (open or closed, etc.) asked for clarification, and
- whether or not the IP queried what the user already knew about the topic.
- perceived enthusiasm and interest or boredom and disinterest in the topic.

Durrance’s 1989 study indicated that patron willingness to return to the same librarian depended not only on “skill variables, determining need, and interviewing a was also influenced by the librarian's “interpersonal variables of comfort, friendliness and
interest in the question.” Based on these factors, students were then asked to assess the information professional’s verbal clarification of their information needs.

Only 3 (15%) of the students reported that the IP attempted to find out what the users already knew about the topic. The use of open questions was reported by 5 students (25%), closed questions were asked of 3 students (15%) and 2 students (10%) reported the use of both open and closed questions for clarification. Half of the students indicated that the information professional asked no clarifying questions at all. Other reactions included: immediate typing into the computer, reported by 3 students (15%); 2 users (10%) were told that they needed other libraries, and 5 students (25%) received reactions of uncertainty. Uncertainty was assumed when the librarian “looked away” or responded

The following table shows how the student users rated the information needs assessment and verbal clarification behaviors exhibited by the IPs. (Numbers in parentheses are student/user code numbers for the reference encounter. These codes were employed to visualize patterns of behavior for a particular reference encounter.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need Assessment and Verbal Clarification Rating</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
<th>Moderately Satisfactory</th>
<th>Very Satisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IP Asked What Patron Already Knew About Topic</td>
<td>1 (20)</td>
<td>2 (7, 13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Questions Asked</td>
<td>1 (19)</td>
<td>2 (9, 11)</td>
<td>2 (7, 13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed Questions Asked</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (12, 16)</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open &amp; Closed Questions Asked</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (20)</td>
<td>1 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Questions Asked</td>
<td>7 (1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 14, 15)</td>
<td>3 (5, 17, 18)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Need Assessment and Verbal Clarification Rating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
<th>Moderately Satisfactory</th>
<th>Very Satisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enthusiasm and Interest Shown</strong></td>
<td>5 (5, 12, 17, 18, 20)</td>
<td>4 (2, 7, 10, 13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boredom or Disinterest Shown</strong></td>
<td>8 (1,3,4,6,8, 14, 15, 19)</td>
<td>3 (9, 16)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neutral Transaction</strong></td>
<td>1 (11)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Percentage</strong></td>
<td>8 (40%)</td>
<td>8 (40%)</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results are consistent with Durrance’s findings. In this case, 60% of the students rated the IP behaviors as “moderately satisfactory” or better. The 4 students (20%) who rated the information needs assessments as “very satisfactory” also unanimously reported that the IP showed enthusiasm for the topic and used a combination of strategies to clarify the user needs. Comments from these students included the following. (Note: It cannot be assumed that these are verbatim, as they were not recorded on audio tape. Students may have paraphrased parts of the encounter, since they were written after the encounter.) They are reported here exactly as they were written by the students.

Basically what I told the [IP] was this. “I am creating a key resources list for the Lewis and Clark Expedition. I am currently looking for important biographies or autobiographies about the key characters of the expedition.” The [IP] skillfully recited all the information back to me for clarification. I thought this was a great idea. She then asked if I wanted any books on the expedition in general, too. I said no. She did not ask anything about why I was doing the search.

She began to tell me about three resources in the library that would work for my search: the library’s e-catalog, BIP and World Catalog. She then
launched into a 2-minute speech about all the details of World Cat. I thought it was interesting but am not sure the average patron would find it as stimulating. Then she asked a great question. Did I need to physically have the books? She asked this because she knew I was only writing a resource list. She was serious but also friendly. She asked many probing questions. She was completely focused on my needs.

When should librarians be concerned with the why of the search? In other words, under what circumstances should the [IP] ask about why you are seeking the information you are seeking? In some cases it could help clarify the search and help show the patron the [IP] is interested. In other cases, the question could be seen as intrusive.

The librarian approached me and I asked her for help on locating information on “child development.” She asked for clarification. “Do you need magazine articles, books, etc.?” She [also] wanted to know what specific information I already knew on child development and psychology.

I walked up to the reference desk and asked if the library had any materials on the history of “xxxx, xx” (city, state). The librarian seemed genuinely interested in the topic and probed deeper to find out if I had already done any research on the topic. She did not “quiz” my knowledge in a direct way, which was very good on her part. The question I asked was a common question received by this library and librarian, but she did not seem bored by its subject. Her voice was cheery and she seemed to gain some energy from the question.

Of the 8 student who rated the librarian information needs assessment and verbal clarification behaviors as “moderately satisfactory,” 5 consistently reported the use of a combination of open and closed questions, and 3 of these 8 students indicated that the IP did not ask any questions for clarification.

When I told her that I needed information on solar energy, she immediately started typing into her computer. I purposely left it open to see if she would ask me to narrow my focus. After she looked through a couple of screens, she did turn to me and ask what about solar energy was I looking for. I told her I currently live in a passive solar home and my partner and I were thinking of building our own home and wanted to do some research on solar homes and businesses geared toward solar products.

More than anything I got the impression from her that I didn’t need her help. She told me that I could use the Internet and InfoTrac for more current information but never asked if I knew how to use the sources. Oddly, she seemed irritated after I told her I [wanted] to build my own house! I just caught a strange vibe from her.
I told her briefly (and broadly) what kind of information I was looking for. [I said] I was looking for some information about buying a computer. Later I said that what I wanted to know was how to find out what I needed in a computer. [Her first reaction was] uncertainty. She asked closed questions in an attempt to clarify. I could only really answer “yes” or “no” but thought to myself “I’m not sure.” She stayed with me for quite a while, but did not really seem interested in my question.

I said I was interested in a student exchange with Zimbabwe and wanted current information on the country, economics, culture, politics, etc. [She] recommended a reference source because of their superior graphics and maps. [She] seemed faintly uncomfortable with text [resources]. [Her] recommendations were all standard and boring like encyclopedias. [She was] much more enthusiastic for Internet searches. [I felt like] she was hired solely for her computer skills, she showed very little comfort with the collection and was relieved to get back to the computer.

The 8 students who rated the IP information assessment and verbal clarification behaviors as “unsatisfactory” were also very consistent. Only 1 student reported the use of questions to clarify the information need, and all reported that the IP showed boredom or disinterest.

I told the IP I needed some information about the Civil War. She immediately started typing on the computer. She didn’t ask “which Civil War” “or even what I needed to know about the Civil War. I said that I was specifically looking for information about Irish soldiers who fought in the American Civil War, not names or anything like that, but why so many fought on both sides, how they were conscripted, and why they were fighting on both sides. She said “We’re not going to have anything that specific.”

I said “I need to find some information about animal rights.” (I wanted to see if she would probe for specific information.) She immediately began to look in the library catalog to see what they had on the shelves. She stated that “animal rights” was being cataloged under “animal welfare.” I would say [her behaviors indicated] disinterest. She looked up a few records and asked if they were what I was looking for. No other comments or questions.

I said, “Excuse me, I need information on resources on the American homefront during World War II. I’d like primary resources, if possible, but just something to point me in the right direction.” She looked like she wasn’t sure what to tell me. She didn’t ask any questions. [She wanted to help, but
[was] not enthusiastic, [she] only wanted to scratch the surface. She suggested I try UNC or another university library.

I told her I was interested in finding out about Polish cinema, famous directors, general history, that sort of thing, and that I’d heard there was a famous film institute there. I told her I was just starting out. She looked away from me like she might be thinking of where to start. She didn’t clarify my question, just headed straight to the reference section, where she started pulling books off the shelf and looking up “Poland.” She didn’t tell me what books they were and made no attempt at “small talk” which I interpreted as disinterest.

I stood near the reference desk, looking for help. The IP did not look up from her computer, but asked “May I help you?” I told her I was looking for information on stamps. She asked, “What kind of stamps?” I said, “You know, postage stamps.” (I wanted information on collecting stamps.) She need to know about them?” I replied, “I want to find out about collecting stamps.” Then she turned back to her computer and typed in “poster” stamps. She got no results, I had to spell “postage” for her. I did not feel that she was interested in the topic.

I asked her if she could help me find some books on public relations. She looked at me like I was retarded. Then she showed me the computer and said “This is the computer.” She started looking up circulating books! She just acted like what I had asked for was so routine that I should be able to do it myself.

C. Active Search Behaviors

According to Durrance, responding to a user’s question by directing them to the catalog or just pointing to resources tends to discourage interaction. In addition she cautions librarians against just getting up and heading for the resources. She states that the “disappearing librarian” is unsettling to users they often don’t know whether they are to follow, or if they are to wait for the librarian to return.

She also suggests that helpful behaviors include “instruction and walking in that order.” (p. 248) Dewdney and Ross concur, stating that “For many users, the library is a foreign territory full of unfamiliar and frightening features: it is not obvious to non-librarians how to get from a call number to a book on the shelf or how to use catalogs or
indexes.” (Best Practices, p. 265). Not only should librarians physically accompany the user to the resources, it is also incumbent upon the IP to make sure the information seeker knows how to retrieve information from the resource.

In this survey, students were instructed to rate the IP’s active search behaviors. The following tables break the behaviors down into those behaviors which are seen as either helpful or unhelpful, according to the suggestions of Durrance, Dewdney and Ross.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active Search Behaviors</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>HELPFUL BEHAVIORS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did IP explain search?</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
<td>14 (70%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2, 3, 7, 12, 13, 18)</td>
<td>(1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did IP offer instruction in use of resources?</td>
<td>5 (25%)</td>
<td>15 (75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2, 7, 13, 18, 20)</td>
<td>(1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did IP suggest alternatives?</td>
<td>11 (55%)</td>
<td>9 (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 20)</td>
<td>(1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 18, 19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did IP physically accompany user to sources?</td>
<td>11 (5%)</td>
<td>9 (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 18)</td>
<td>(1, 2, 6, 8, 12, 15, 17, 19, 20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did IP indicate user was to accompany her to sources?</td>
<td>7 (35%)</td>
<td>13 (65%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3, 5, 7, 10, 11, 13, 16)</td>
<td>(1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNHELPFUL BEHAVIORS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did IP just point to/toward resources?</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
<td>16 (80%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1, 2, 12, 19)</td>
<td>(3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did IP just hand call number to user?</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
<td>14 (70%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1, 2, 6, 9, 15, 19)</td>
<td>(3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this study, librarians seem to come up a little short in practicing helpful behaviors during the active search process. Only 30% of the users indicated that the IP explained her search methods, and only 25% of the users reported that the IP offered instruction in the use of the resources. The “disappearing librarian” is evidently alive and well as only 35% of students reported that the IP indicated that they were to accompany her to the resources. The second table shows that 25% of the students reported that the librarians just started walking toward the sources, and 35% of the students indicated that the IP never left the desk.

Librarians did suggest alternatives to 55% of the users, and physically accompanied 11 (55%) of the users to the sources. These figures are fairly consistent with the Durrance and Dewdney and Ross studies.

However, the IPs scored better in avoiding unhelpful behaviors. Only 4 students (20%) reported that the IP just pointed toward sources, and 6 students (30%) reported just being handed a call number. It would appear that IPs in this study were more aware that patrons need guidance and accompaniment when navigating libraries than in the previous studies. The students then rated the active search behaviors according to the above criteria as shown in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(UNHELPFUL BEHAVIORS cont’d.)</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Didn’t leave desk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did the IP just start walking toward sources?</td>
<td>5 (25%) (4, 8, 9, 14, 17)</td>
<td>8 (40%) (3, 5, 7, 10, 11, 13, 16, 18)</td>
<td>7 (35%) (1, 2, 6, 12, 15, 19, 20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rating the Active Search Behaviors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active Search Behaviors</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
<th>Moderately Satisfactory</th>
<th>Very Satisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 (40%)</td>
<td>10 (50%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1, 4, 6, 8, 9, 14, 15, 19)</td>
<td>(2, 3, 5, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 20)</td>
<td>(7, 13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The user assessment of the active search behaviors is also very consistent with the earlier studies. IP search behaviors were rated as moderately to very “satisfactory” by 12 (60%) of the students, while 8 students (40%) judged the active search behaviors to be “unsatisfactory.” Students who rated the active search behaviors as “very satisfactory” commented:

I asked her for help on locating books and articles on “child development.” She showed me a computer that had InfoTrac to look for magazine articles [and] then helped me use the Internet (EbscoHost) to find articles in magazines from recent years. She said more technical information would be found in journals. She then searched the catalog for the call numbers of the magazines and journals that I needed. She let me do most of the searching on the Internet because she claimed “People learn it better if they have to do it themselves.” After probing me for information, she took me to the location of resources on my topic. The library is extremely small, so there was no need for catalog use. She explained that the books on my subject were in one location. [She] warned me that I might not find everything that I was interested in at this library. She told me about some alternative resources to use to find out more about my subject.

Comments from those students rating IP active search behaviors as “moderately satisfactory”

She told me the library had three resources that could answer my question [important biographies or autobiographies about the key characters for the Lewis and Clark expedition], and created a hierarchy for them. She then showed me each resource from easiest to most difficult to use. She showed me the e-catalog terminal and told me that if I typed in a person’s name (she stressed Last, First) in the subject field I would get biographies I asked her
if there was a specific way to search only for books that were biographies and she said the subject search would do this. I later found through my own investigation that she was wrong. I figured out though that LC Subject Headings helped pick out books that were specifically biographies. She next showed me the BIP subject index. She did not open the book but gave me a verbal example of how to search. Finally, she led me to a station where there were some computers. She asked me if I was a computer user. I paused a bit confused by the question and eventually told her I was pretty adept at computer use. She then took a World Cat explanation card off one of the computers and told me how to access World Cat. She asked if I wanted to sign up for computer time and I said I would start my search at the e-catalog and see how that went.

Should the [IP] actually do the search for the patron? This particular IP showed me the e-catalog and told me to use the subject search. She went no further. I think that [an IP] should always ask to make sure the patron knows how to use all of the resources and then also ask if the IP can help you do the actual search.

I was looking for some information about buying a computer. She took me to a table that had a catalog (i.e. purchasing) and explained that another [patron] had been in asking the same kind of question and wondered if we were working together. She told me about a magazine but never showed me where it was, instead showing me a product catalog and pointing out the descriptions for each computer (i.e. 20GB blah, blah, blah.) That’s when I knew what that stuff meant so I wasn’t sure what I needed in a computer. She then suggested I go to a computer store, like Gateway. I started to say that I was afraid to do that because I was afraid they’d try to

She walked me to the periodicals shelf and picked up a copy of PC Week and flipped through and said “this issue doesn’t have information on hardware, but flip through these, one will.”

Then she asked me if I had access to the Internet. I said yes and she wrote down the address for www.whatis.com and explained that I could put in a computer term there and it would give me a definition. She said she used that a lot.

I told her that I was looking for information on censorship in public libraries. She asked if I had already checked the OPAC as she started to type. She told me that she was not very familiar with the area. She then suggested I check a specific reference text and gave me a call number. She walked around the desk and asked me if I was familiar with “Reader’s Guide” and walked me to it. There she also suggested that I check InfoTrac if I was also interested in serials.

Later I noticed that she was using InfoTrac. Even later, she came and
found me in the reference section and told me that she had found several
good hits on InfoTrac.

This student didn’t get the specific information she was searching for, but felt that the
IP was creative in her approach.

My question: “Where can I find a list of the San Francisco City Librarians
since the beginning of the library?” She seemed confounded by such an
esoteric question, but determined to find the best answer.
IP: “Have you looked at their website yet?”
Me: “Yes but they don’t have a history sectio
IP: “Do they offer online reference help?”
ME: “Yes but I sent my request at least five days ago.”
At this point she [the IP] start[ed] brainstorming for possible resources
within the branch or main library. She searched the online catalog and
recorded the call number for the American Library Directory. She wrote
down the SFPL main phone number, the current City Librarian’s name, the
fact that they have a documents department and a newspaper morgue in case
either location held the information I was looking for. Then she asked
whether I was in Library School and upon confirmation she asked if this
was for an assignment. I said, “sort of.” She wished me luck in finding my
information and gave me the information she had written down.

Those students rating the IP search behavior as “unsatisfactory” commented:

When I clarified that I was looking for postage stamps, she seemed
undecided about her approach, then searched OPAC. She chose a keyword
search and typed in “poster” stamps. Got no results. She did a new search
on “stamps” and got several results. The first book she selected was a
juvenile book, she pointed to the screen and looked at me. When I didn’t
react, she moved on to another. That one has an “R” next to it. I asked, “Is
that a reference book?” “Yes,” she answered. “Where would I find it?”
“Let me write down the call number.” I asked her “Is it in this room?” She
responded, “The 700’s are over there,” and point[ed] to the far wall as a
general area.

When I told her that I was interested in finding out about Polish cinema, she
went to the reference section and pulled some books off the shelf, then she
looked up “Poland” in each one and left it open. (She hadn’t indicated I
was to follow her to the reference books, but I did without thinking.) She
didn’t tell me anything about the books she was consulting not what type
of books they were, not what information I could expect to find there –
nothing! Then she walked away, saying she was going to go check the
catalog. She never came back. Although I did find some useful information
in those books, they were really only a very general starting point, and did not direct me to any more in-depth sources.

My question: “Could you help me find information on Lee Smith? Not primary sources, but biographical information or literary critiques?” There wasn’t much reaction. She just nodded her head and started walking towards the reference area. No catalog search was done. She started looking at a specific shelf. At first she couldn’t find the book she wanted and told me that. I don’t think she told me what she was looking for at any point. She later found the book she had in mind, *Southern Modern Writers*, opened it to the Lee Smith section and then handed it to me. Then she said “Ok?” and walked away. Although the interaction wasn’t great, she did find me a text which would be useful.

She went to the computer, typed in a keyword search (I was lucky I knew what she was doing because she didn’t offer any explanation) and started spitting out call numbers. So I wrote them down and she walked away. That was the last I saw of her.

She handed me a slip of paper with a call number on it and said “This is the Civil War section.” The library signage was so poor, I didn’t have a clue where the 973’s were. I asked her where they were located and she pointed off to her left and said “down aisle 11.” Later she came over to me and said that there was a book called the *Irish Brigade* at the central branch of the library, but it didn’t circulate, so I’d have to go there to use it.

The comments about IP search behaviors seem to suggest that patrons expect the librarian to provide them with more than just a title or source of information. It is apparent that users want/need instruction in how to use sources, they want to understand the structure of the material, and want to be active partners in the search. Both students who rated the behaviors as “very satisfactory” were involved in the search, and both students (numbers 7 and 13) indicated that the IP explained the search, and offered instruction in the use of resources. By the same token, all of the students who rated the search behaviors as “unsatisfactory” also indicated that the IP did not explain the search, nor did the IP offer instruction in the use of the resources.

D. Follow up Behaviors:
Durrance unequivocally states that follow up behaviors indicate that the IP is interested in the outcome of the question. She posits that the follow up question need not be extremely formal, simply asking: “Have you found what you needed?” is sufficient to signal to the patrons that the librarian is concerned that they find relevant information. She also states that this gives the IP an opportunity to correct any mistakes (i.e. misconceptions, not understanding the question, faulty assumptions, etc.) that may occur during the reference encounter. In her study, she reports that less than one quarter of the IPs observed actually asked any follow up questions. However, she reports that where follow up questions were asked, three quarters of the users indicated that they would return to the same IP. Dewdney and Ross report that fewer than one third of the librarians they observed used follow up questions. They indicate that librarians who do not use follow-up questions are living in a “fool’s paradise” and are providing much poorer service than they think they are.

In conjunction with follow up questions, Durrance and Dewdney and Ross also stress the importance of “conditional closure” to bring the reference interview to an end. Saying something like “If this isn’t what you need, let me know,” or “If you need more, just ask,” lets users know that they are welcome to come back, and that the reference won’t end unless they have what they need. Dewdney and Ross plainly state, “Librarians should routinely use the follow-up question in every transaction.” (Best Practices, p. 266). The table below shows the use of follow up questions in this study.
Results from this study indicate that follow up behaviors have not improved much since Durrance’s original study. Comments from those students who were satisfied with the behaviors indicated that the follow up statements were fairly informal.

She asked me if they were what I was looking for and I answered “yes.” She mentioned I could [also] look for magazine articles, and I said the books were fine for now. She told me to go to the desk if I had any questions and I thanked her.

[She] left by telling me to come see her if I needed any additional information. She came back to check on me, to see if I was doing ok, after some time.

Students who reported little or no follow up commented:

An awkward moment passed as I waited for her to close the “interview,”

I just said “thank you” and she nodded her head
and walked away.

She walked away, saying she was going to go check the catalog. She never came back and checked on me and never indicated that I should come back to her if I needed to. That was the last I saw of her.
[She] handed [the book] to me. She then said “ok?” and walked away. She did not ask if I had any other questions, or if the book was helpful. Also, there was no suggestion that I should come back to the desk if I had any other questions. I didn’t really feel comfortable asking additional questions because she seemed kind of busy and at no point asked me to expand on my initial question.

E. Accuracy of the Search:

Students were asked to determine whether or not they had been provided with satisfactory sources to answer their questions. Historically, accuracy has also hovered around the 55% mark. It was a pleasant surprise to see that 75% of the students felt as though they had been given relevant information. The following table indicates the breakdown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating the accuracy of the search</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was IP able to provide satisfactory sources to answer the question?</td>
<td>15 (75%)</td>
<td>5 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, 19)</td>
<td>(4, 14, 16, 18, 20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F. Patron Satisfaction:

Students were asked to state whether or not they would be willing to return to the same IP for future information needs, based on this reference interaction. Historically, the success of reference interactions has relied on accurate question answering as a measure for reference success. Using the Durrance / Dewdney and Ross models, this study was undertaken to see if IP helpful behaviors influenced a patron’s willingness to return to the same librarian. If accuracy of the answer were the only criterion for reference success (patron willingness to return), it could be assume that 75% of the students would be willing to return to the same IP. The following table shows that accuracy is not the only factor patrons consider to be a measure of a success.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating Users’ Willingness to Return</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Based on this reference interaction, would you be willing to return to the same IP with future information needs?</td>
<td>10 (50%) (3, 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 20)</td>
<td>10 (50%) (1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 19)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this study, only 50% of the students reported that they would be willing to return to the same IP for future information needs, despite the fact that 75% of the students reported that they received satisfactory sources from the IP to answer their questions. This would suggest that users, while primarily interested in the accuracy of the information they receive, are also influenced by the quality of the reference encounter. No one expects all librarians to be experts in every conceivable area, but it is clear that users expect librarians to do some problem solving, rather than just point users toward the catalog.

**Conclusion:**

This study reinforces the conclusions stated in the earlier studies. Public librarians need to focus on the whole of the reference interview, and pay particular attention to those behaviors which are seen as helpful. That is, there are specific behaviors which strengthen the quality of the reference encounter. The purpose of the study was to provide librarians in training with experience in seeing what behaviors enhance the quality of the reference interview. Dewdney and Ross spelled them out by very clearly stating that reference librarians must receive training in the following five skills: using welcoming body language; asking open-ended questions, volunteering help in using the resources, monitoring the referral, and following up with the patron to see if the
resources are relevant. We know what behaviors are helpful, it is up to us to practice those behaviors, and to encourage ongoing training and education in the field.
Information Professional Behavior Assessment

A. Approachability:
1) Was the information professional wearing a nametag or any other form of identification that identified her position? Y____ N_____
2) Were there physical barriers between the patron and IP? Y_____ N_____
3) Was the IP engaged in other work when approached by the user? Y____ N_____
4) If Yes, please describe what the IP did when the user approached her
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
5) Did the information professional greet the user, or acknowledge the user's presence? Y_____ N_____
6) Was the librarian focused completely on the patron's question? Y______ N_____

Please rate the information professional's approachability according to the following scale:
1 - unsatisfactory - not approachable, user was treated as an interruption.
2 - moderately satisfactory - moderately approachable, user was acknowledged, other work was put away for the duration of the interaction.
3 - very satisfactory - very approachable, the user was greeted pleasantly, information professional was focused on the information need of the user.

B. Assessing the Information Need:
What was the librarian's first reaction to the patron's question/statement?
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

1) Did she attempt to clarify the user's information need by asking questions? Y_____ N_____
2) If so, were they open or closed questions? Open_____ Closed_____
3) Did the information professional attempt to find out what the user already knew about the subject? Y_____ N_____
   If Yes, how (describe)_________________________________________________________
4) Did her behaviors indicate enthusiasm for the information need? Y_____ N_____ 
5) What was/were the behavior(s)?_________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________ 
6) Did her behaviors indicate boredom or disinterest in the information need? Y_____ N_____ 
7) What was/were the behavior(s)?_________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________ 

Please rate the librarian's verbal clarification of the user's needs on the following scale:
1 - unsatisfactory - librarian made no attempt to clarify user's information needs.
2 - moderately satisfactory - librarian made an attempt to clarify user's information needs - asked
some questions, appeared somewhat interested in the user's need.
3 - very satisfactory - librarian showed enthusiasm for user's information need, asked open-ended questions, found out what the patron already knew about the subject.

C. Active Search Behaviors: 
1) What was the IP's first behavior in answering the information need? 
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
2) Did the librarian explain what she was doing as she conducted the search? Y____ N_____ 
3) Did the librarian offer any instruction on how to use the library resources? 
   Y_____ N_____
4) Were search alternatives offered or suggested (i.e. Internet searching, fiction/non-fiction
   bibliographies, etc.)? Y_____ N_____
5) Did the IP physically accompany the patron to the appropriate area or source? Y____ N_____ 
6) Did the librarian point to/toward resources? Y____ N_____ 
7) Did the IP just give call numbers to the user? Y_____ N_____

8) Did the information professional indicate that the patron was to accompany her to the resources? Y_____ N______

9) Did the information professional just start walking toward the resources? Y_____ N______

**Please rate the information professional’s active search behaviors on the following scale:**

1- **unsatisfactory** - IP conducted the search without explanation or instruction, just handed user call numbers or pointed to resources, librarian did not indicate patron was to accompany her on the search.

2- **moderately satisfactory** - searches explained, patron guided to resources.

3- **very satisfactory** - librarian explained searches, offered instruction, suggested alternative resources, guided patron to source.

**D. Follow-Up Behaviors:**

1) Did the information professional check with the patron to see if the recommended resource(s) were relevant and/or appropriate? Y_____ N______

2) Did the IP encourage the patron to return if the information was not pertinent or unclear? Y_____ N______

**Please rate the follow up behaviors on the following scale:**

1 - **unsatisfactory** - librarian performed no follow-up with the patron, did not encourage patron to return to the desk.

2 - **satisfactory** - librarian checked to see if the resources were pertinent, encouraged user to return to the desk if there were more questions.

**E. Accuracy of the search:**

Was the librarian able to provide satisfactory resources to answer the question? Yes______ N______

**Patron Satisfaction:**

Based on this reference interaction, would you be willing to return to the same individual for additional information needs? Y_____ N______

*Please use this space (and additional sheets, if necessary) to record the interaction, as it occurred, step-by-step.*
BIBLIOGRAPHY


