

Linscheid Library
Peer Reference Evaluation Form

Refer to the attached Appendix: *Tips on Conducting an Effective Reference Interview*

Librarian: _____

Observer: _____

Date: _____

1 = does not meet expectations 2 = meets expectations 3 = exceeds expectations
You must provide support for a rating of 1 or 3

1. Does the librarian seem approachable and generally aware of the reference floor while at the reference desk?

1___ 2___ 3___ Comments: _____

2. Does the librarian greet people in a courteous manner as they approach the reference desk?

1___ 2___ 3___ Comments: _____

3. Does the librarian understand the user's needs and respond accordingly?

1___ 2___ 3___ Comments: _____

4. Does the librarian make full use of the available resources to meet the user's needs?

1___ 2___ 3___ Comments: _____

5. Does the librarian seem at ease and take steps to make the user comfortable?

1___ 2___ 3___ Comments: _____

6. Does the librarian ask follow-up questions to ensure the user's needs are met?

1___ 2___ 3___ Comments: _____

7. Does the librarian close the transaction tactfully and make the user aware they are available should they require further assistance?

1___ 2___ 3___ Comments: _____

8. Comments (use a separate sheet if needed): For comments pertaining to a specific item, refer to the item number:

Appendix
Tips on Conducting an Effective Reference Interview

1. **Be approachable.** Be aware that some patrons feel intimidated by the law library. They may be shy about asking questions. Try to put them at their ease. Be aware of body language and nonverbal cues. Look up when patrons approach (don't be buried in a book or the computer screen). Smile. Sit up. Welcome patrons into the office. When you turn to look something up, you may be turning your back on the patron. If so, then it helps to say what you're doing:

- I think that phone number will be in a directory here; let me see.

Sometimes you can approach *them*, rather than waiting for them to come to you. Watch for patrons who look lost or confused. Possible openers:

Are you finding what you need?
Can I help you find something?
Would you like a little help with our catalog?

2. Ask **open-ended questions** to get patrons to tell you what they're looking for. Examples:

Can you tell me more about what you're looking for?
Could you be more specific about _____?
What sort of material are you hoping to find?

The idea is to give patrons a chance to state their own questions and not to have the reference librarian define what the patrons want. However, there are times when you need to **focus the question** to fit within some legal categories, especially jurisdiction:

Do you think the statute was federal or state?
Do you know what state that case was in?
How recent do you think that case is?

3. Once you think you know what the patron is looking for, **verify** by paraphrasing the request and asking a yes-or-no question. Examples:

You're looking for some books and articles about desegregation; is that right?
You'd like to find Washington statutes and cases about first degree murder; is that right?

4. It is often a good idea to give patrons a **research framework**. That is, as you recommend that they start with a particular source, tell them why:

- The *Washington Real Property Deskbook* is a multivolume set that covers all sorts of property and land use issues. Why don't you start out with that for an overview? You'll see that it cites statutes and cases—I can show you how to look those up later.

- For a question like yours, it's a good idea to start out looking for recent periodical articles. If you find a good article, the author will give you an overview and cite cases that you can then look up.

5. **Avoid jargon** (or be sensitive to it and explain it). Many patrons are unfamiliar with legal jargon ("code," "session law," "certiorari"). Think of synonyms or thumbnail definitions:

- Let's go out to the *Revised Code of Washington*—it contains the statutes that the legislature has passed, arranged by subject.

Be aware of library jargon, too: terms you are used to ("CD-ROM," "full-text," "monograph," "classified," "URL") can confuse some patrons.

6. Ask **follow-up questions**, such as:

Are you finding what you need?
Was that source helpful?

7. **During busy times**, try to help patrons in the order in which they come to the reference office. It is unfortunate, however, if someone has to wait five or ten minutes just to ask where the restroom is or whether we have Kentucky statutes, so if the first patron's question is long and involved, try suggesting:

- Your question is going to take a while. I wonder if I can quickly see what the next person needs. I'll be back with you soon.

Try not to spend so much time with one patron that you are unavailable to other patrons who may need you. If you need to leave the office, don't forget to put the sign up ("The librarian is helping someone else and will be back soon."), and then return quickly by showing the first patron where to start (e.g., RCWA, catalog, LegalTrac) and saying:

- This should get you started. Come on back to the reference office when you have more questions.

If patrons are in the reference office when you come back, thank them for waiting.