

REINVENTING REFERENCE

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REINVENTING REFERENCE

How libraries deliver value in the age of Google

Edited by **Katie Elson Anderson** and **Vibiana Bowman Cvetkovic**

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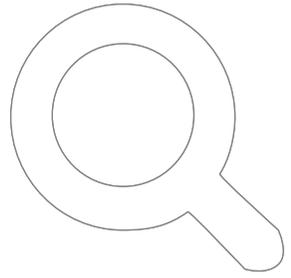
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INTRODUCTION

Referencing the Future

Katie Elson Anderson and Vibiana Bowman Cvetkovic

A survey of recent articles in library journals underscores an unsettling trend. Cities and towns across the United States are curtailing library hours, services, and (all too often) closing the doors. Public libraries in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Camden (New Jersey), Charlotte (North Carolina), and Boston have all cut services or closed branches. Public, school, and academic libraries have to deal with shrinking budgets, increasing numbers of students, and decreasing numbers of employees. Many library schools, the institutions whose charge it is to prepare the next generation of professionals, are also facing hard times. Some library schools are broadening their focus. The School of Communication, Information and Library Studies at Rutgers University, for example, is now the School of Communication and Information. Others, like the libraries themselves, are closing their doors and shutting off the lights. However, the profession is not ready to put itself on the endangered species list. Scholars, administrators, and practitioners from all aspects of librarianship are reimagining the profession as well as how information services can be delivered. The goal of this book is to contribute to that effort.

Reinventing Reference takes a critical look at the megatrends and factors (such as public policy, economics, and popular culture) that affect current library policy and practice regarding the process of delivering information services and that will continue to affect them into the foreseeable future. The contributors to this work, which include library leaders and visionaries, place these issues in historical and cultural contexts and offer practical solutions for new paradigms of reference service for all users. They also project how library services will be reshaped by new and emerging technologies.

Reinventing an Image and a Profession

The chapters in this book focus on how different libraries are adapting to the social, cultural, and technological changes that are constantly being presented to them. Librarians and educators address these changes in different ways, providing a variety of perspectives based on their research, experience, and workplace environment. These different experiences and perspectives help to provide the reader with the tools and information to move forward into the future of reference. The diverse librarian voices represented in this book are just a small sample of professionals who embrace reference librarianship in this changing and challenging time.

This is both an exciting and uncertain time to be a reference librarian. As a whole, the profession seeks to march forward with technology while not losing sight of convention and the principles reference professionals hold dear. Some chapters in this book focus on the current state of reference, detailing the challenges faced by reference librarians in academic, school, public, and special libraries as they forge ahead into the future. Other chapters look to the future to ascertain what the state of reference librarianship will be in years to come. Any discussion of the current and future states of reference should include a brief examination of the image of the reference librarian in popular culture because it is this perception of the profession by the general public that can either help or hinder a reference librarian's ability to provide services to patrons in any type of library.

The image of the librarian in popular culture has been examined, discussed, argued, mourned, and praised. Academic articles, conference presentations, books, blogs, and social media sites address the stereotypes and images of the library profession in popular culture. Much of the discussion involves

how librarians are depicted in popular movies, television shows, and print and how this may affect the profession. It is difficult to make it through library school without someone referencing the movies *Desk Set* or *Party Girl*, quintessential viewing for librarians in training. If those movies are not enough, there is an annotated filmography (Raish 2011) that, while no longer being updated, is still the most complete listing of librarian appearances on the big screen. Many of the movies on the list, as well as television shows and other media, perpetuate the popular images of a librarian: female, introverted, sexy in an intellectual sort of way. Male librarians, when actually depicted, tend to be characterized as gruff, overzealous protectors of libraries and the books they contain.

It is unfortunate that many of the images of libraries and librarians in popular culture are not entirely positive, especially when the target is a younger audience. Future library patrons and supporters are being exposed to the perpetual image of the library as a dark and foreboding place of knowledge with intimidating librarian guardians. The librarian in the popular Harry Potter movies and book series, Irma Pince, is protective and possessive of the books in the library and is described by the books' own fans on the Harry Potter Wiki (2012) as "a severe and strict woman . . . thin, irritable and looked like an underfed vulture. As such, she was deemed highly unpleasant by most of the student body." The continuance of the image of the librarian as protector of books is also present in fantasy writer Terry Pratchett's popular Discworld series, whose librarian is an orangutan who was once human but prefers to remain in primate form so as to better terrify library patrons. He protects his library and the viscous, hairy books with teeth, which are tethered on chains in a rather menacing way. Another popular book among young students is *How to Train Your Dragon*, which has the horrific "Hairy-Scary Librarian," who is exactly as he is described. The main characters dare venture into the dark and dangerous library only to be violently attacked by the librarian, who does not want his books disturbed. A review of librarian stereotypes in young adult literature finds that "overall the librarians in the young adult books reviewed were portrayed in a more negative or neutral light" (Peresie and Alexander 2005, 29).

With a few exceptions, movies, television, and literature do not take advantage of the opportunity to portray librarians in a more positive light. Sadly, even the Jedi librarian in the popular series Star Wars, whose target audience includes just about everyone, portrays a stereotypical bun-wearing woman who is "superficially helpful but also somewhat arrogant in her

position of knowledge keeper” (Tancheva 2005, 540). While the reference interview itself could be thought of as a Jedi mind trick (the question you are asking will not give you the answer you are looking for), librarians are not often held in the same esteem in popular culture as Jedi Knights are in the Star Wars universe.

These images of an arrogant, unapproachable keeper of books or the smart/sexy/shushing librarian can often serve as a barrier to patron-librarian interaction. Thus, as with all barriers to providing patrons with the answers to their questions, librarians seek to break them down by using the tools of popular culture to dispel these myths.

The blog *This Is What a Librarian Looks Like* (<http://looklikelibraryscience.com>) states its purpose as “challenging the stereotype one post at a time.” Librarians are invited to submit pictures of themselves in order to illustrate the (diversity) of the profession. Images on the site include librarians sky-diving, motorcycling, playing musical instruments, rollerblading, and working in the stacks. There are glamour shots, candid shots, costumed shots, vacation shots, and work shots of male and female librarians, both young and old. Those librarians who wish to focus more on their wardrobe that is “not always buns and sensible shoes” can submit a picture to *Librarian Wardrobe* (www.librarianwardrobe.com), which, according to its description, shows that “librarians at various types of libraries have different styles (and dress codes).”

Marilyn Johnson’s 2010 book, *This Book Is Overdue!*, attempts to provide the public with profiles of librarians who do not fit the stereotype, describing tattooed librarians, librarians on the streets providing “radical reference,” and librarians embedded in online games and other available media. There is no question that librarians are working to dispel the myth of buns and sensible shoes. The question is whether the public is actually aware. How successfully are librarians immersing themselves in popular culture with these alternate images? Are nonlibrarians becoming more aware of the various types of librarians who are available to help them with their information needs? What can librarians do to expose the general public to the alternate images of a librarian? Some of these questions are addressed in the chapters that follow. Obviously, books and articles and a presence on social media are helpful to the cause. However, another, more personal way for a nonlibrarian to learn that not all librarians fit the same mold is for him or her to have a positive interaction with a librarian either at the reference desk, over the phone, via instant message, or through video chat or social media.

Technology: The Mother of Reinvention

Reinventing Reference aims to define and describe how these interactions are changing and what librarians are doing to embrace the paradigm shift. As we move to a more web-based, online environment for finding information, the image of the librarian as keeper of the books should be dissolving. However, one concern is that the archaic image is not being replaced by one of a savvy online searcher but instead with the picture of a colorful six-letter word that begins with *G* and ends in *e*. Having gained popularity as a search engine, relatively recently with an international presence established in 2000, Google is sometimes seen as competition to library services. An article written in 2005 points out that at the time of publication, “For libraries, Google does have very profound implications, and is accelerating trends that would have developed eventually anyway, such as the digitization of library collections, and a shift to disintermediation which leaves many librarians feeling like fifth wheels, even while it empowers users and seemingly frees them from dependence on library buildings and collections” (Miller, 2005, 2). Google, along with the rest of the Internet, empowers not only users but also information specialists, who can redefine the antique image as keeper of books to finder of information. For example, social media services strengthen communication, conversation, and collaboration while also providing patrons and librarians with entire new frontiers for finding information. The reference librarian of the future should embrace the technology that is being developed in order to strengthen existing skills, skills that many patrons do not even realize are necessary for finding good, authoritative, and accurate information on the World Wide Web.

The purpose of this book is to propose questions and suggest strategies for information professionals regarding the future of reference. *Reinventing Reference* is intended to be inclusive of all aspects of librarianship: public, academic, school, and special collections. While professionals in each of these categories have unique considerations and unique sets of resources according to the primary communities that they serve, they all share a commitment to providing information and services to those communities, and reference is a fundamental—one could argue *the* fundamental—service that all libraries offer. To place *Reinventing Reference* into proper focus, a definition of terms seems in order. What is it that the collaborators of this book are talking about when speaking of “reference” and what “future” is being prognosticated?

The definition of the “reference transaction” as developed by the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) of the American Library Association states:

Reference Transactions are information consultations in which library staff recommend, interpret, evaluate, and/or use information resources to help others to meet particular information needs. Reference transactions do not include formal instruction or exchanges that provide assistance with locations, schedules, equipment, supplies, or policy statements.

Reference Work includes reference transactions and other activities that involve the creation, management, and assessment of information or research resources, tools, and services. (RUSA 2008; emphasis in the original)

RUSA cites other professional organizations’ definitions of the terms, including those by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), that are precise and carefully crafted and are important for quantifying substantive, reference exchanges versus simple, informational exchanges (such as library hours and directions). The main ingredient that characterizes a reference exchange is that the information professional is called upon to use his or her expertise and knowledge base in response to the user’s query. *Reinventing Reference* draws upon these definitions but also uses the terms in their broadest sense; that is, a reference transaction involves the act of negotiating the information needs of a patron/user with the resources available to meet those needs by an information professional. It also encompasses instruction, as the information professional both guides the patron to and facilitates the use of a resource or guides the patron through the next step of the process to get to a resource. Thus, while the “reference exchange” is exact and quantifiable, the practice of providing reference is an art and its boundaries are porous.

This book is also about the future—the near future, which is just at the doorstep of the present. The act of writing about “the future” is well-known to be a risky business. A trope in contemporary popular culture is the refrain of “Dude, where’s . . . my jetpack?” (Arar 2012). Author John Green writes, “Imagining the future is a kind of nostalgia. . . . [Y]ou just use the future to escape

the present” (Green 2005, 54). “Future-casting” seems to be a lens through which the fears and dreams of a very real “now” are projected. Fears of a totalitarian society, precipitated by the nearly successful rise of Fascism in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s, and the then-current rise of Communism, underlie the near-future dystopia of George Orwell’s *1984* (published in 1949). The rapid rise of industrialization at the expense of workers’ rights is at the heart of Fritz Lang’s dystopian future portrayed in *Metropolis* (released in 1927), wherein oppressed workers of 2026 live and toil underground to serve giant, maw-like machines. A more lighthearted view of the future is evidenced in the Hanna-Barbera cartoon series *The Jetsons* (originally broadcast 1962–1963), which portrays a future in which the booming post–World War II prosperity of the 1950s and 1960s continues on, with even better and more souped-up consumer goods and flying cars. Thus, “the future” is a Rorschach test that reveals current concerns. For librarians and library administrators, those current concerns center on dire economic realities and the perception of a diminishing role for libraries in the age of Google and Siri, the disembodied “reference librarian” featured in Apple’s iPhones and iPads. These concerns are echoed in this work. However, there is also optimism and the advocacy of the idea that the profession of librarianship and libraries themselves are being reinvented and reshaped as society advances into an exciting new age of information services.

This work, like the ghosts in Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol*, harkens to the past, the present, and library reference yet to come. The chapters in Part I, “Understanding Reference,” define reference and situate the concept in both historical and contemporary contexts. In chapter 1, “A History of Reference,” Julie M. Still covers what the chapter title implies, outlining the history of libraries from ancient Alexandria to Andrew Carnegie to Apple. Chapter 2, “Terrorism, Privacy, and Porn: Reference Ethics in the Twenty-First Century,” provides the reader with an overview of the professional standards and ethics that have evolved with regard to reference and instruction. Zara Wilkinson and Vibiana Bowman Cvetkovic examine the American Library Association as the “major player” in the development of ethical standards and guidelines for the profession. In chapter 3, “The Real Reference Revolution: The Digital Library User,” Susan J. Beck examines recent history, specifically how the personal computer and the World Wide Web radically altered the way information is generated and consumed. Beck also explores how libraries and librarians are interpreted and presented in both pop culture and popular media and looks at how these public perceptions influence the funding and policies that affect libraries.

Part II, “Reference 2.0,” examines the current state of library services. Chapters 4 through 7 present the state of reference for the various kinds of libraries: academic (“Reference Service Trends and Forecasts for Academic Librarianship,” by Gary Golden); school (“The State of Reference in School Libraries,” by Lawrence V. Ghezzi and Walter Johnson); public (“The Future of Public Library Reference,” by Justin Hoenke); and special collections (“The Central Image: The Future of Reference in Academic Arts Libraries,” by Sara Harrington), respectively. Each chapter details current issues, delineates problems, and offers solutions.

Part III, “Dude, Where’s My Jetpack?’ Near Future of Reference,” is a look at the future of library services. Chapter 8, “Whither Libraries? User-Driven Changes in the Future of Reference,” by John Gibson, is an examination of emerging technologies and new methods of delivery for information services that are being driven by user demand. In chapter 9, “Future World: Strategic Challenges for Reference in the Coming Decade,” Stephen Abram explores new paradigms of reference and poses questions regarding the delivery and implementation of those services to librarians and library administrators. Finally, in “Coda” by John Gibson, the author prognosticates as to how reference may be delivered in 2052.

This book went to press in 2014. As librarians know, and as they tell beginning researchers as they guide them through the research process, in this digital age, as soon as something appears in print, it is already out of date. It is our hope that continued dialogue on the topic will forge new solutions.

Finally, this book is not just for librarians and library administrators but for all those concerned about the future of “the library”—indeed, this should be everyone concerned with the future of the next generation of citizens. According to Thomas Jefferson, “Whenever the people are well informed, they can be trusted with their own government; whenever things get so far wrong as to attract their notice, they may be relied on to set them to rights” (Padover 1939, 6). In this information age, the ability to be well-informed means not only access to information but also the ability to find, interpret, and evaluate that information. In short, it means the ability to ask and answer questions in a meaningful way. This is the heart of reference librarianship.

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Part I

UNDERSTANDING REFERENCE

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A History of Reference

Julie M. Still

Perhaps the best definition of reference librarians was coined by W. W. Bishop in 1915 when he wrote, “they are the interpreters of the library to the public” (134). And yet, he noted that reference librarians were not often considered part of the scholarly content of the library, but instead part of the machinery of the library, like a catalog or a file. Bishop later said of a reference librarian, “he is a lubricant, making the wheels run noiselessly and well. Little glory and less reputation accrue to him” (139).

There are a number of books written on the history of libraries in general, on specific types of libraries, on public and academic libraries, and on how to perform individual library functions, including reference, but there is very little on the history of reference. A bibliography of American library history lists only a page and half of references on the history of public services, and not all of those entries concern reference (Davis and Tucker 1989, 272–73). Several that do are theses. Only two books listed are on the history of reference services, and both are association publications. One of them, Samuel Rothstein’s *The Development of Reference Services through Academic Traditions*,

Public Library Practice and Special Librarianship, published by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) in 1955, is Rothstein's doctoral dissertation. In his book, Rothstein himself comments on the lack of historical and evaluative studies of libraries (1). Standard reference service textbooks offer little or nothing on its history.

Reference service proper, with an official name, may have a set beginning point, but realistically, as long as libraries have existed, there have been people who have been asked the questions "Where is . . . ?" or "How do I find . . . ?" and have done their best to answer. As soon as library collections became so large that patrons could not easily find what they needed, libraries would find someone able to keep track of titles, especially those bound together, on a full-time basis. As collections became larger still, the job became specialized, with librarians keeping track of only part of the library's materials. And yet, while the history of this occupation probably has enough fascinating anecdotes and meaty statistics and stories to fill at least a few books, both scholarly and popular, it remains a subject unmined.

History of Early Libraries

The lives of the greats are chronicled, but the lives of those who stand and wait are often not. All the same, it is provable that librarians came into being not long after libraries. In Babylonian and Assyrian empires a librarian had a title ("Nisu-duppi-satri" or "man of the tablets"), and librarians were named in records as far back as roughly 2,000 BC ("Babylonian and Assyrian Libraries" 1870, 313). While we cannot be certain that the Nisu-duppi-satri was responsible for answering reference questions, it is not unrealistic to imagine that he did answer them. Just as the years BC were turning into AD (or CE), the Portico of Octavia was built and included a library. When the Portico was given to the public, funding was included for library attendants, slaves who had been trained for such work (Thompson 1940, 82–83). When Sulla captured Athens, around 100 BC, he had one of the city's private libraries taken to Rome. Two librarians, Tyrannion (also known as Tyrannio) and Andronicus of Rhodes, were chosen to take care of it (Thompson 1940, 29–30). Tyrannion later arranged Cicero's library (Lerner 1998, 33). The library at Alexandria had such a large staff that the slaves at the lowest rung of library workers were numerous enough to have their own doctor (Thompson 1940, 79). The names of some of

the librarians were recorded and are still known, among them Eratosthenes and Aristarchus. Different classifications of library work had different titles, though none translate directly as anything resembling reference librarian (Thompson 1940, 78).

The Middle East, Greece, and Rome were not alone in hosting libraries. China also housed and developed large libraries. In the seventh century, some of the library staff members were women (Lerner 1998, 57). The oldest surviving book on librarianship was written in eleventh-century China by Ch'eng Chu, who outlined the technical aspects of library work but did not include reference among them (Lerner 1998, 58–59). Most of these early libraries had catalogs, by subject in larger libraries and by author or title listing in smaller libraries. The largest, like the library at Alexandria, divided the collection by subject, with librarians and staff dedicated to each area. Royal and monastic libraries had staff assigned to them. Surely those librarians offered a service similar to what current practitioners of this art would call reference, although it was not recorded or discussed as such. Much of their work revolved around copying manuscripts and maintaining existing manuscripts. Jones (1947) provides a list of librarians mentioned in the archives of the monastery at Corbie along with a synopsis of their accomplishments (197). Thus, the works of Gondacer and John the One-Eyed are not lost to history.

Early American society had subscription or private libraries, the forerunner of contemporary public libraries. The larger of these libraries had a designated librarian, though this was not necessarily a full-time job. In some cases, the job involved only unlocking the door for people to enter the room or, in the case of a home-based library, setting aside a room in a house and lighting a fire and providing candles (Stiffler 2011, 390). Although the duties were few, being the librarian and taking care of the library in a home was considered a position of trust and status. When President William Henry Harrison was governor of Illinois, his house served as the location of the local subscription library, and one of his sons was the designated librarian (Peckham 1958, 656). When the Library Company of Philadelphia was formed in 1751, its articles of governance included appointing a clerk, who would serve as librarian, and enumerated the clerk's duties, among which were opening the reading room at set times and lending out books under prescribed circumstances (Lamberton 1918, 197). While these libraries served as cultural centers and social spaces, they were seldom large enough for the librarian to do much more than allow members into the library space and see to the upkeep of the collection.

Development of Reference Desks and Departments

It was not until centuries later, when public libraries began to open to a broader public (the great unwashed, as it were) and academic institutions began to do more rigorous research, that libraries developed what we think of as reference today. Even then, it took some time for that part of librarianship to coalesce as a separate function in the minds of the librarians and library patrons. One of the first separate reference departments was started in Chicago by William Frederick Poole in the late 1800s (Garrison 1979, 29). It is somewhat difficult to understand exactly what that entailed. British libraries in the 1850s were differentiating between the “reference library” and the “lending library” (“Free Public Libraries” 1856, 389). What they meant by those terms related more to the use of the books, ones that could be taken out and ones that were consulted in house, than to the jobs of the people who worked in those parts of the library. By 1881, people were referring to the “reference department” as opposed to the “reading room” at the Chicago Public Library (“Our Chicago Letter” 1881, 196). Library architects were incorporating a reference department into their suggested plans in 1881 (“Construction of Library Buildings” 1881, 138). In general, these reference departments did not refer to the functions of the staff who worked in the departments but to the type of books located there. A history of the Cleveland Public Library published in 1887 states that some books were better suited to staying in the library than to circulating, and those books should be kept in the “Reference Department” (Brett 1887, 58).

However, it is clear that reference work was being done. In 1876, Samuel Swett Green spoke in favor of librarians assisting public library patrons in finding information and establishing a working relationship with them; college librarians adapted his suggestion for creating a teaching role for themselves (Rothstein 1955, 21–22). Green’s view that people should be treated with courtesy and assisted in finding the answers to their questions was considered radical (Jackson 1974, 343). In 1882, William Frederick Poole held a meeting with the principals of local Chicago schools to outline a plan wherein the schools would bring students to the public library on a Saturday. The teacher would introduce the students to a particular subject. The librarian would have selected books on that subject from the collection and would tell the students how to further their research (“Letter from Chicago” 1883, 4). Rothstein cites the earliest definition of “reference work” as a speech by William B. Child at the New York Library Club in 1891, but he himself dates the beginning of reference

back to 1875 (Rothstein 1955, 3). An 1885 survey of librarians showed that personal service by librarians was more important than finding aids like catalogs and bibliographies (Kaplan 1947, 287). By 1894, the work had become commonplace enough for someone to write a short piece on the life of a reference librarian for *The Critic* (“The Lounger” 1894, 277), which sounds exactly like the sort of comments one hears from reference librarians today. In 1898, the new library at Princeton included a room for the reference librarian (“New Buildings of Princeton” 1898, 283). Yale was somewhat slower; it did not appoint a reference librarian until 1900 (Rothstein 1955, 34). When writing of Andrew Carnegie’s gift to the country’s libraries, Melvil Dewey himself, the father of the Dewey Decimal System, foresaw the growth of reference librarianship. He said that already, in 1901, it was impossible for any one librarian to know all of a library’s collections and that reference librarians would need to specialize in subject areas, forming what he called a “library faculty” (Dewey 1901, 144).

Nor were American librarians alone in this. Special and other types of research libraries in other parts of the world were also expanding their offerings, which required hiring more staff and allowing librarians to specialize in particular subject areas. The reference reading room in the British Museum was opened by Richard Garnett, who became the superintendent of the reading room in 1875. He also had electric lights installed (Koch 1914, 259). As in American libraries, the title “reference librarian” was not used, but reference was certainly being done. When Garnett stepped down from supervising the reading room in 1884, he remarked upon some of the odd queries that had come his way, such as requests to see the signature of Jesus (“In the British Museum” 1885). Sir John McAlister, who became the resident librarian at the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society (later the Royal Society of Medicine) in London in 1885, decided that the library would provide literature searches for those who could not come to the library in person (“Library of the Royal” 1953).

By 1915, most research libraries offered reference service with some staff devoted solely to that work (Rothstein 1955, 40). Special libraries were also developing reference collections. New York was the first state to institute a legislative reference department, in 1890, and other states followed suit (Fisher 1909, 223). In 1910, the national Civic Federation’s Conference on Uniform State Legislation passed a resolution encouraging all states to open legislative reference bureaus (Cleland 1910). Indeed, the level of involvement in legislative matters grew to such an extent that one of the best-known state legislative

directors, Charles McCarthy of Wisconsin, was accused of having “undue influence” over lawmaking in that state (Rothstein 1990, 408). Academic libraries (and likely larger public libraries) further specialized as time went on. Reference librarians became less focused on making library materials accessible, a task more suited to catalogers, and more focused on acting as intermediaries between professors, students, and the materials they needed to complete assignments (Fenton 1938, 154). Wagers (1978) offers a well-researched but brief overview of the shifts in the approach to and view of reference work in the twentieth century. As early as 1911, expectations for reference librarians, especially in academic libraries, were high, as this quote from the annual report of the College and Reference Committee (1911) of the American Library Association (ALA) demonstrates: “The reference librarian must needs possess a larger grasp of information than any professor, for this member of the staff must know in general all that the faculty knows in detail” (259). This attitude is also reflected in an article by E. C. Richardson of Princeton University that he presented to the ALA in 1916, wherein he wrote, “There is no single unit in a university education more valuable than being shown by a reference librarian how to find the best book on a given topic or class of topics” (9).

History of Reference in Library Education

In the 1880s, larger libraries with reference assistants began to offer formal training in patron assistance. Public libraries in Boston, Chicago, St. Louis, and Milwaukee, along with Harvard and the Boston Athenaeum, were among the early adopters (Kaplan 1947, 287). The School Libraries Section of the ALA convened a Committee on Standardizing Library Courses in Normal Schools, which published a report in 1915. The list included a class called “The Reference Course, or, the Use of the Library and Books” (“School Library Section” 1915, 280). By 1916, ten states required special training for school librarians, and reference work was frequently mentioned as a necessary skill (Walter et al. 1916). The author of an early British text on reference notes in the preface that starting in 1938, students in accredited library programs will be required to pass a test in “library stock and assistance to readers” (McColvin and McColvin 1936, v).

In the textbooks used in contemporary reference classes, there is very little on the history of reference. A 1944 text published by the ALA, *Introduction to Reference Work* by Margaret Hutchins, devotes a little over one page to a definition of reference work but does not provide any historical material.

William Katz, whose two-volume *Introduction to Reference Work* has become a standard and is currently in its eighth edition, changed the introductory history section. The first edition included a short (six-page) overview of the development of reference service, which notes that Rothstein's 1955 work is the only history of reference available (Katz 1969, 2:5–11). In the eighth edition, the history of printed works and reference librarianship is covered in just slightly more than one page. Another text, *Introduction to Library Public Services* by Evans, Amodeo, and Carter, has also gone through several editions. In the sixth edition, published in 1999, there is a short, four-page introduction and history of reference.

Reference in Professional Library Associations

Formal reference service and the ALA began around the same time. Samuel Swett Green, referenced previously as an earlier proponent of reference service, expounded on his theories in the first volume of the newly formed association's official publication, then the *Library Journal*, in 1876 (Kaplan 1947, 286). The Public Library Association (PLA) published professional standards in 1933; these were the first such published guidelines. The two-page statement noted that reference was a valuable part of library service (Phelps 1957, 282). The 1943 revision was more than ninety pages long (Martin 1972, 164). However, the Reference and Adult Services Division (now Reference and User Services Association) was not formed until 1957, when the reference sections of the PLA and the ACRL combined (Hansen 1995). The PLA, formed in 1944, grew out of the Public Library Section, which had a Reference Committee going back at least as far as 1929. It is in the academic area that reference librarians found their first home with the ALA. The College Library Section was started in 1890 and renamed the College and Reference Section in 1897 (Davis 2003).

Conclusion

Reference librarians appear to show little interest in the history of their profession. This may seem odd in a profession whose work is centered on curiosity. It may be, however, that while the tools used have changed, clay tablets to hand-copied books to mass-produced printing to computer databases to the

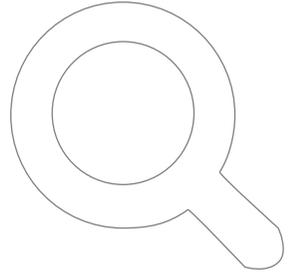
Internet, the nature of the work has not. Reference librarians and their forebears have always done their best to connect the inquirer to the best source available. Since reference work has been written about as such, the themes running through those commentaries are identical to the ones written about in library blogs and peer-reviewed articles today. Those include the surprising inability of people to locate materials in the library, the reluctance to ask questions, a lack of respect from other professions and from the general public, and the constant lack of funds. Given that there is, as the saying goes, nothing new under the sun, reference librarians could prefer not to look backward, at a profession unchanged except for some of the tools used, and instead prefer to dwell within the moment, answering questions as they arrive. The presence of professional organizations and organized, standardized education provides structure and a means of interacting with like-minded individuals. What is clear is that the history of reference remains a field available for study and in need of more in-depth research.

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