(1) Reference service format: **Email**

Name of the library visited: **Rutgers University Library**

Type of library visited: **email reference**

Reference question you asked: "I was hoping to obtain some information regarding the history of New Jersey. Specifically, would you be able to tell me when Trenton was selected to be the capital of New Jersey?"

Evaluation of the service you received and your reaction in relation to the Ross & Dewdney article. Discuss the following for each of the four services:

- Was your question answered?

My question was answered, in a very succinct and timely manner. Since the question I asked was a ready reference type question that did not require extensive amounts of research, I got a response within 48 hours. The transcript of the reply I got is as follows:

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Thank you for using the Rutgers Libraries Ask a Librarian Service.

According to the state's official website, Trenton became the state capital of New Jersey in 1790.

For more information on New Jersey history see:
http://www.nj.gov/nj/about/history/short_history.html

For information about resources related to New Jersey history available at Rutgers University see:
http://libguides.rutgers.edu/new_jersey
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Your question was:

**Asking About: new jersey history**

**Question:** I was hoping to obtain some information regarding the history of New Jersey. Specifically, would you be able to tell me when Trenton was selected to be the capital of New Jersey?

- Which, if any, negative closures did you experience?

The response, while factual and helpful, was a bit abrupt and did not contain any type of acknowledgement or restatement of my original question. There was also no invitation for any sort of follow-up in the response.

- If so, which counterstrategies did you employ?

Since it was an email reference question, and since I had received an answer that satisfied my information needs, there was really no way nor need for me to employ any counterstrategies. If the response had been confusing in any way, or had not answered my question completely, then I would have sent a reply asking for clarification.

- What did you like and dislike about the experiences?

I liked that I got a response so quickly and that I got it without being oversaturated with information. I believe this to be the best way to answer a question online, since it is so easy (in some cases) to engage in information overload and end up confused. This response was clear and precise, free of confusion.
I disliked that it was so concise that it lacked any sort of personal touch. I almost thought that the reply had been generated through some sort of bot programme, until I read the email address it had come from and saw that it was an employee of Rutgers.

(2) Reference service format: **Chat**

Name of the library visited: **askherepa.org**

Type of library visited: **chat session.**

Reference question you asked: Can you tell me when Trenton was selected to be the capital of New Jersey?

Evaluation of the service you received and your reaction in relation to the Ross & Dewdney article. Discuss the following for each of the four services:

- Was your question answered?

My question was answered, promptly and succinctly. The transcript of the chat log is as follows:

*Date: 23:04 2012/10/19*

*Question ID: 8080693*

*Chat Transcript: Can you tell me when Trenton was selected to be the capital of New Jersey?*

[Librarian 23:04:38]: Librarian 'John (24/7 Librarian)' has joined the session.

[Librarian 23:04:42]: Hello, I'm John, a librarian assisting your local staff at the moment. I'm reading what you wrote to see how I can help you...

[Librarian 23:04:53]: I will check, is this for a history assignment?

[k.rose 23:05:21]: No, just to satisfy my own curiosity.

[Librarian 23:05:34]: It looks like 1790, did you want me to find another source confirming this?


[k.rose 23:05:49]: That's ok, curiosity is just as good!

[k.rose 23:06:04]: This is perfect, thank you!
• Which, if any, negative closures did you experience?
I don’t believe that I encountered any negative closures in this case. I was connected to the representative almost immediately, meaning I didn’t have to wait and constantly check to see if I had a reply. He was attentive and thorough—ascertaining whether I was doing an assignment and would need many sources from him, or if I would be satisfied with his initial search results. He was engaging, even through the chat format and made sure that my question was answered and invited me to return with any other questions.

• If so, which counterstrategies did you employ?
Since there weren’t any negative closures that I experienced, I didn’t employ any counterstrategies. Though I was ready to clarify my question, if I had needed to.

• What did you like and dislike about the experiences?
I liked the succinctness of the exchange. I could think about my question, and then type exactly what I wanted to say without stumbling over my words (as I am apt to do in person). For ready reference style questions, I feel that this is a good format to use—especially if it’s a ready reference question that you’d like an answer to promptly (as there can sometimes be a delay on the email if your question is not claimed by anyone). I liked that he provided sources right away, even though I hadn’t stated whether I wanted them or not. He was covering all his bases, and making sure I had the information and the confirmation of the information.
The only part I disliked was at the very end, when it got slightly awkward and I didn’t know if he was going to say anything else. The exchange was essentially over, but I wasn’t sure if he had any closing questions and neither of us typed anything for a minute or two—I actually ended up signing off the chat before he sent the obligatory askPA closing thank you statement.

(3) Reference service format: **Phone**

Name of the library visited: **East Library, Pike’s Peak Library District—Colorado Springs, CO**

Type of library visited: **Public Library (phone)**

Reference question you asked: “Is there anyone available who would be able to help me get information about New Jersey history, specifically when Trenton became the official capital of the state?”

Evaluation of the service you received and your reaction in relation to the Ross & Dewdney article. Discuss the following for each of the four services:

- Was your question answered?
  
  My question was answered, after I was transferred to the correct desk. After I asked my initial question, I had to clarify that it was a reference question. Once I was transferred to the reference desk, I was connected with someone that could help me.

- Which, if any, negative closures did you experience?
  
  The reference librarian, to whom I was speaking, asked if I had looked for any information on my own before I called. I obviously couldn’t tell from over the phone, but the tone of her voice made it seem like she was rolling her eyes.

- If so, which counterstrategies did you employ?
  
  I told her that I have relatives in New Jersey (a true statement) and I was curious as to some of the basic history involving their city. I then informed her that at the present time I
did not have access to the internet (also a true statement) and I was hoping that she could help me get the information I needed. At that point she began typing and opened the official state of New Jersey website and found the answer for which I was asking.

• What did you like and dislike about the experiences?
This was by far my least favourite method of asking a reference question. The connection through the cell phone was less than ideal (as cell phone reception almost always is), so I had a difficult time understanding the person on the other end. I also have an anxiety disorder that makes it very difficult for me to talk on the phone, so I while I was trying to be as polite as I would have been in an in-person interview, I may not have succeeded and some of my tenseness and anxiety may have been picked up by the librarian on the other end of the connection. All-in-all, this form of reference interview is one I actively try to avoid unless absolutely necessary.

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(4) Reference service format: In person
Name of the library visited: William Jeanes Memorial Library—Lafayette Hill, PA
Type of library visited: Public Library
Reference question you asked: “Would you be able to help me find information about the history of New Jersey? I’m curious about what year Trenton was named as the state capital.”
Evaluation of the service you received and your reaction in relation to the Ross & Dewdney article. Discuss the following for each of the four services:

• Was your question answered?
My question was answered quite thoroughly. I asked my initial question, leaving it open to elucidation and leaving it at “information about the history of New Jersey.” The librarian then asked if I was interested in knowing about general history or if I had a specific event in mind. I then clarified my original question with a desire to know about the year in which
Trenton became the state capital. The librarian then opened the official website for the state of New Jersey and consulted the page regarding state history.

- Which, if any, negative closures did you experience?
In this instance, I did not experience any negative closures. The librarian with whom I was speaking was pleasant and polite and made sure that she understood for what I was asking before she started consulting the computer. Once she found and relayed the information about which I had asked, she asked if there was anything else with which she could help me. She also gave me the names of several state history websites, in case I wanted more information.

- If so, which counterstrategies did you employ?
Had I had been met with a librarian who was less interactive, and sent me unsupervised into the stacks, I would have asked would she be willing to give more assistance if I had been unable to find any relevant material on my own. And I always preempt the inevitable “have you looked in the catalogue,” by telling whomever I am asking for help what research methods I have already employed.

- What did you like and dislike about the experiences?
I liked that the librarian was very engaging and helpful. If she had been having a bad day, she didn’t let it have an affect on her interaction with patrons seeking assistance. She was willing to actually look for information, rather than sending me off into the stacks with a call number without monitoring me. Part of this was in part due to it being a small public library on a non-busy day, but I got the impression that even if there were more patrons requiring assistance, she still would have been approachable and helpful. If she couldn’t have found the information herself and had resorted to sending me into the stacks, I feel that she definitely would have extended the invitation to return to the desk with follow up questions.

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(5) Overall evaluation
• How did the digital reference experiences differ from the in-person and telephone reference experiences?

The digital reference experiences tend to give you more time to plan out exactly what you want your question to say, due to the delay factor and the access to a keyboard. If you are faced with a question you weren't expecting, you have time to consider your answer and amend your question accordingly. With the in-person and telephone experiences, there is always the chance that you can be caught off guard by a question you weren't expecting and not have a response for them.

With the digital responses, however there is always the chance that your question may never be answered (especially in the situation of email) if there is a heavy question-load and not enough people assigned to answer them. With in-person or telephone, you can see/hear the person you are asking in real time, and you can stick around until your question is answered to your satisfaction.

• How did the answers you received differ among the services? Why do you think this is so?

Because my question was a ready reference question, all the answers were identical as far as the factual information they contained, and very similar in their construction. Each time they consulted similar sources of information (official state of New Jersey websites), so they all came up with similarly worded answers, meaning that the method of research in each case was standard.

• Would you use one or more of these reference services again in the future? Why or why not?

I would consider using the email, chat, and in-person services again because those were the three that I had the best experience with. The email and chat services were excellently set up for basic quick reference questions that don’t require mountains of research, or that are just simply for satisfying curiosity. The in-person reference I would use if I was looking for help with more in depth research or looking for obscure information sources.
I wouldn’t use the phone service again, mainly because of the social anxiety I mentioned previously, but also because I don’t think (personally) that the phone is the best way to interface with the reference librarian. Phones tend to bring out the irritability in people, and it’s hard to type if you’re not using a headset or ear clip (which I have never seen at a reference desk).

• To what degree, if at all, can digital reference services replace more traditional reference services?

I don’t think that digital reference services can totally replace more traditional reference services, but there are some situations in which an email reference question might be more appropriate rather than an in-person. If someone wanted information on the genealogy of someone, that would take a bit more research than someone might be willing to stand in front of a desk for—if the question was submitted through email, then the librarian has time to do the research without rushing to meet a time constraint and the reply can be complete and well worded.

Questions in which people are asking for links to different newspaper sources or journals could also be better answered in email than in person. If they just want to be provided with links to the sources, it would be easier to sent them the hyperlinks that they can just click and go, rather than writing the long links out on an index card for them.

But the digital will never completely replace the traditional in-person service, because there are times when you just want to talk to someone face to face when you ask them a question—when you just want that personal interaction.
Reference Interview Evaluations:

**Email Reference Question:**

1. Approachability & Interest
   - Was a greeting given beyond the standard welcoming message? Y N
   - Was interest shown (via attentive comments, etc.) to the user’s questions? Y N

2. Question Negotiation
   - Was there any question negotiation or a reference interview? Y N
   - Number of open ended questions asked: _____0_____
   - Number of closed questions asked: ____0____
   - Was the user’s question restated or paraphrased before searching began? Y N

3. Searching
   - Was the user kept updated on the status of the search? Y N
   - Were sources cited to the user (e.g., names of databases, books, etc.)? Y N
   - Appropriateness of sources:
     1 (not appropriate) → 5 (extremely appropriate) _____5____
   - Amount of information given:
     1 (too little) → 3 (just right) → 5 (too much) _____3____
   - When appropriate, amount of library instruction given:
     N/A → 1 (none) → 2 (basic instruction) → 5 (sufficient instruction) _____N/A____
   - How completely was the question answered?
     1 (not answered) → 3 (somewhat answered) → 5 (fully answered) _____5____
   - If referrals were given, were they appropriate and monitored? Y N

4. Follow-Up
   - Did the librarian confirm that the answer was understood? Y N
   - Was a follow-up question asked that addressed the specific question? Y N
   - Was the user asked to check back, when appropriate? Y N N/A

Chat Reference Question:
5. Approachability & Interest
   • Was a greeting given beyond the standard welcoming message? Y N
   • Was interest shown (via attentive comments, etc.) to the user’s questions? Y N

6. Question Negotiation
   • Was there any question negotiation or a reference interview? Y N
   • Number of open ended questions asked: _____1_____
   • Number of closed questions asked: ____0____
   • Was the user’s question restated or paraphrased before searching began? Y N

7. Searching
   • Was the user kept updated on the status of the search? Y N
   • Were sources cited to the user (e.g., names of databases, books, etc.)? Y N
   • Appropriateness of sources:
     1 (not appropriate) → 5 (extremely appropriate) ___5____
   • Amount of information given:
     1 (too little) → 3 (just right) → 5 (too much) ___3____
   • When appropriate, amount of library instruction given:
     N/A → 1 (none) → 2 (basic instruction) → 5 (sufficient instruction) ___N/A____
   • How completely was the question answered?
     1 (not answered) → 3 (somewhat answered) → 5 (fully answered) ____5____
   • If referrals were given, were they appropriate and monitored? Y N

8. Follow-Up
   • Did the librarian confirm that the answer was understood? Y N
   • Was a follow-up question asked that addressed the specific question? Y N
   • Was the user asked to check back, when appropriate? Y N N/A

Telephone:

9. Approachability & Interest
   • Was a greeting given beyond the standard welcoming message? Y N
   • Was interest shown (via attentive comments, etc.) to the user’s questions? Y N

10. Question Negotiation
    • Was there any question negotiation or a reference interview? Y N
    • Number of open ended questions asked: ____0_____
    • Number of closed questions asked: ____1____
    • Was the user’s question restated or paraphrased before searching began? Y N

11. Searching
    • Was the user kept updated on the status of the search? Y N
    • Were sources cited to the user (e.g., names of databases, books, etc.)? Y N
    • Appropriateness of sources:
      1 (not appropriate) → 5 (extremely appropriate) ____5____
    • Amount of information given:
      1 (too little) → 3 (just right) → 5 (too much) ____3____
    • When appropriate, amount of library instruction given:
      N/A → 1 (none) → 2 (basic instruction) → 5 (sufficient instruction) ____N/A____
    • How completely was the question answered?
      1 (not answered) → 3 (somewhat answered) → 5 (fully answered) ____5____
    • If referrals were given, were they appropriate and monitored? Y N

12. Follow-Up
    • Did the librarian confirm that the answer was understood? Y N
    • Was a follow-up question asked that addressed the specific question? Y N
    • Was the user asked to check back, when appropriate? Y N N/A

In person Reference Question:

13. Approachability & Interest
• Was a greeting given beyond the standard welcoming message? Y N
• Was interest shown (via attentive comments, etc.) to the user’s questions? Y N

14. Question Negotiation
• Was there any question negotiation or a reference interview? Y N
• Number of open ended questions asked: ____1_____
• Number of closed questions asked: ____0_____
• Was the user’s question restated or paraphrased before searching began? Y N

15. Searching
• Was the user kept updated on the status of the search? Y N
• Were sources cited to the user (e.g., names of databases, books, etc.)? Y N
• Appropriateness of sources:
  1 (not appropriate) → 5 (extremely appropriate) ___5_____
• Amount of information given:
  1 (too little) → 3 (just right) → 5 (too much) ___3_____
• When appropriate, amount of library instruction given:
  N/A → 1 (none) → 2 (basic instruction) → 5 (sufficient instruction) ___N/A_____
• How completely was the question answered?
  1 (not answered) → 3 (somewhat answered) → 5 (fully answered) ____5____
• If referrals were given, were they appropriate and monitored? Y N

16. Follow-Up
• Did the librarian confirm that the answer was understood? Y N
• Was a follow-up question asked that addressed the specific question? Y N
• Was the user asked to check back, when appropriate? Y N N/A

ACADEMIC HONESTY STATEMENT

I certify that:
• This paper/project/exam is entirely my own work.

• I have not quoted the words of any other person from a printed source or a website without indicating what has been quoted and providing an appropriate citation.

• I have not submitted this paper / project to satisfy the requirements of any other course.

Signature____________Karen R. Sague______________
Date  __________24 October 2012____________