

# Reference and Readers' Advisory

This class is presented by the Public Library Academy and sponsored through a grant from IMLS.



# Introductions

Tell us about yourself! What is your name? Where do you work? What is your job title?

Feel free to share a little about your learning goals for this class or some details to help us get to know you a little better.

# Class Objectives

- Identify reference sources for various topics
- Perform a reference and readers' advisory interview
- Read one book in an unfamiliar genre
- Create a list of reference resources

# Reference Services



# Curating Resources

- Gather a range of resources that you can utilize or share directly with customers
- You will need both informational and community resources

# Where can I find...?

- Housing/rental assistance
- Information about the three-toed sloth
- Resume help
- Home repair guides
- Crochet patterns
- Lease agreement examples
- Information about a medical diagnosis
- Contact information for an incarcerated family member
- Census information for ancestry research



# What is a reference interview?

- Conversation between a library employee and customer in which the librarian guides the customer towards clarifying their information need so they can help.
- Can be in person, over the phone, or virtual

# Why conduct a reference interview?

- Myth 1: Library customers are usually clear about what information they need and how to ask for it, so reference interviews are unnecessary.
- Myth 2: Customers are responsible for knowing what they want and should express their needs clearly.

Adapted from *Conducting the Reference Interview: Third Edition* by Catherine Sheldrick Ross, Kirsti Nilsen, and Mary L. Radford





# Tips and Tricks

- Acknowledge the customer immediately
- Actively listen to their question
- Utilize open and closed ended questions
- Don't guess/make assumptions
- Avoid interrupting
- Rephrase their question/information request to make sure you understand
- Don't forget to follow up!

# Example Questions/Statements

- If you're able to share more information about what you're needing, that will help guide our search.
- Have you already looked anywhere?
- Can you tell me more about what you're needing?
- What would help you the most?
- If I'm understanding correctly, you're needing information about... Does that sound right?
- What kind of information about \_\_\_\_\_ are you hoping to find?
- Can you give me an example or help me understand?



# Closure and Following Up

- Please let me know if you don't find what you're looking for, and I'll be happy to keep looking with you.
- Does this completely answer your question?
- Is there anything else I can help you with today?
- Are you finding what you're looking for?

# Reference Interview Practice

- Find a partner to practice conducting a reference interview
- You will take turns roleplaying as the customer and interviewer
- Interviewer:
  - Identify at least 5 questions you can ask to discover their real information need
  - What resources could you use for their request?

# Readers' Advisory



# Resources

- Goodreads
- Bestseller lists (NY Times, Amazon, etc.)
- Professional reviews (Kirkus, Booklist, School Library Journal, etc.)
- TasteDive
- Whichbook

# Tips and Tricks

- Locate or create sheets of “read-alikes” for popular titles
- Ask them what books they’ve liked before and what they liked about them
- What has been popular with customers who like similar stuff?
- Read everything you can! (books, reviews, best-seller lists)
- Try to get out of your bubble when you can
- If they aren’t an avid reader, ask them what types of movies or television they like to start

# Appeal Factors

- Appeal factors go beyond genres to provide more specific reasons that a customer may have enjoyed a specific book.
- What does the customer like (or not like) about the pacing, storyline, tone, character, writing style, illustration, or audio of a story?
- *The Secret Language of Books: A Guide to Appeal* by EBSCO has an extensive list of appeals with definitions and additional advice for conducting Readers' Advisory interviews.



# Selling the Book

- Think of a book that you did not personally like for some reason. Take a few minutes to think about what Appeal Factors might make someone else like it.
- In small groups, practice a book talk (1-2 minutes) in which you sell that book to the group using Appeal Factors.

# Five Finger Rule – primarily for children

- Choose a book and read the first two pages
- Hold up 1 finger for every word you don't know
  - 1 Finger – The book might be too easy
  - 2-3 Fingers – This book should be readable by themselves
  - 4 Fingers – This book should be read with an adult/someone with higher reading comprehension for help
  - 5 Fingers – This book might be too hard right now

# Readers' Advisory Interview Practice

- Find a partner to practice conducting a readers' advisory interview
- You will take turns roleplaying as the customer and interviewer
- Interviewer:
  - Identify at least 2 recommendations for them – it's always a great idea to give options when possible

# Keep reading!

- Talk to your peers and utilize readers' advisory tools to finish filling out your 5x5 Book Challenge Sheet
- Pick 1 book from your list that you will commit to reading
  - It should be outside of your normal interests/genres to expand your horizons

# Class Evaluation



[bit.ly/RARfy25](https://bit.ly/RARfy25)



# Log Attendance



1. Write your name on your certificate
2. Visit [bit.ly/3PWYm0H](https://bit.ly/3PWYm0H)
3. Fill out the form and upload a picture of your certificate

# Thank you!

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