

ASSISTING RESEARCHERS

REFER TO WHEN:

A researcher in the Reading Room needs assistance in locating materials

PURPOSE:

Outline the steps in answering simple reference questions

OUTLINE:

1. Approachability – be aware when a researcher approaches, use a friendly greeting to initiate conversation
2. Interest – focus complete attention on the researcher and his/her information need. Show an understanding through verbal and non-verbal confirmation, such as nodding of the head, offering brief explanations, or asking additional questions to better understand the researcher's query.
3. Listening/Inquiring – allow the researcher to fully state his/her information need before responding in a receptive, cordial and supportive manner.
 - a. Use open-ended questions to expand on the researcher's question, e.g. "Please tell me more about your topic"
 - b. Use closed questions to refine the query, e.g. "What have you already found?" or, "Are you looking for a manuscript or oral history?"

You should attempt to narrow the focus of the query (e.g. Asheville during the Depression, rather than a broad topic of 20th century Asheville.)
4. Searching – find out what the researcher has already tried. Demonstrate the Special Collections website, and explain a simple search strategy and offer pointers to help the researcher find the answer to their query.
5. Follow up – ask if the query has been answered. If it has, encourage the researcher to return if they have future information needs. If not, refer the researcher to a member of staff for further assistance.

Remember:

Don't be afraid to say "I don't know, I'll get more help." Asking for help is preferable to giving a researcher incorrect or incomplete information.

Your role is help researchers locate information, not to write their research paper

Interactions with researchers should not last more than five minutes. If you have not resolved the query in that time, ask a member of staff for assistance.