



Secret Shoppers in the Library

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LIBRARY SOUTH



Background

Secret shopping project in 2010

Purpose

Use the secret, or mystery,
shopper approach to assess library employees' reference skills

Goal

Identify weaknesses in the reference services provided by the library
as a whole in order to inform employee training





- Team-based planning
- 5 shoppers recruited from among engaged populations
- 13 scenarios
- Evaluation form based on RUSA Guidelines with rating scale and open-ended comments
- 7 service points: Face-to-face, telephone, and email





Initial Question: Where are the newspapers?

The real question, the details of which you can reveal as the employee requests more information: I need some primary source materials from December 7, 1941, the bombing of Pearl Harbor. I need accounts of what happened. Wouldn't newspapers have stories like this?





Any employee should be able to help with this, so a referral should not be necessary. If the employee refers you to another employee or library department, the transaction is over. You do not need to continue. Please note the referral on your evaluation form.

The employee should ask questions like (these are just examples):

- We have a lot of newspapers. Are you looking for a particular newspaper?
- Do you need current issues or old issues?
- Tell me about your assignment.
- Are you looking for a specific article?
- Are you looking for a newspaper from a specific date?

Some appropriate resources to use are:

- New York Times Historical (database)
- Atlanta Constitution Historical (database)
- The catalog (GIL) to find diaries or other first-hand accounts.





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In-Person Interaction – Research Support Desk (Library North 2)

Please rate the following items on a scale from 1 to 6, with 1 being Completely Disagree and 6 being Completely Agree.

Date and time of your visit: _____

1. The employee appeared approachable. Examples of approachable behaviors include looked up from computer or book, made eye contact, smiled, and greeted you.					
Completely Disagree 1	2	3	4	5	Completely Agree 6
Comments:					
2. The employee showed interest in the interaction. Examples of showing interest are giving you his/her complete attention, maintaining eye contact, and nodding in understanding.					
Completely Disagree 1	2	3	4	5	Completely Agree 6
Comments:					
3. The employee conducted a reference interview by listening and inquiring. Example behaviors include rephrasing or restating the question to ensure it is understood; asking open-ended questions to gather more information; and maintaining objectivity.					
Completely Disagree 1	2	3	4	5	Completely Agree 6
Comments:					
4. The employee effectively searched for information to fulfill the request. Example behaviors are selecting search terms, explaining the search process and sources used, and managing time appropriately.					
Completely Disagree 1	2	3	4	5	Completely Agree 6
Comments:					
5. The employee followed up with you to ensure you were satisfied with the results of the interaction. Example behaviors include asking whether your question has been answered; making referrals to other sources of information; and inviting you to return if you have additional questions.					
Completely Disagree 1	2	3	4	5	Completely Agree 6
Comments:					
6. Please share anything else you think would be helpful to us in evaluating the reference skills of the employee.					
Comments:					



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Phone Call – Circulation Desk, 404-413-2820

Please rate the following items on a scale from 1 to 6, with 1 being Completely Disagree and 6 being Completely Agree.

Date and time of your call: _____

1. <input type="checkbox"/> My call was answered in ____ rings. <input type="checkbox"/> If your initial call was not answered, please check here and try again later. How many times did you call before an employee answered? ____					
Comments:					
2. The employee's tone was pleasant and welcoming.					
Completely Disagree 1	2	3	4	5	Completely Agree 6
Comments:					
3. The employee showed interest in the interaction. Examples of showing interest over the phone are offering brief verbal comments.					
Completely Disagree 1	2	3	4	5	Completely Agree 6
Comments:					
4. The employee conducted a reference interview by listening and inquiring. Example behaviors include rephrasing or restating the question to ensure it is understood; asking open-ended questions to gather more information; and maintaining objectivity.					
Completely Disagree 1	2	3	4	5	Completely Agree 6
Comments:					
5. The employee effectively searched for information to fulfill the request. Example behaviors are explaining the search terms selected, explaining the search process and sources used, and managing time appropriately.					
Completely Disagree 1	2	3	4	5	Completely Agree 6
Comments:					
6. The employee followed up with you to ensure you were satisfied with the results of the interaction. Example behaviors include asking whether your question has been answered; making referrals to other sources of information; and inviting you to call again if you have additional questions.					
Completely Disagree 1	2	3	4	5	Completely Agree 6
Comments:					
7. Please share anything else you think would be helpful to us in evaluating the reference skills of the employee.					
Comments:					



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Email – libref@langate.gsu.edu

Please rate the following items on a scale from 1 to 6, with 1 being Completely Disagree and 6 being Completely Agree. Please print the transcript of your email transaction and submit it with this evaluation form, or forward the transaction to jlink@gsu.edu.

1. My email was acknowledged within ____ hours/business day(s).					
Comments:					
2. The employee provided a pleasant, welcoming, appropriate greeting.					
Completely Disagree 1	2	3	4	5	Completely Agree 6
Comments:					
3. The employee conducted a reference interview by, for example, rephrasing or restating the question to ensure it was understood and asking open-ended questions to gather more information.					
Completely Disagree 1	2	3	4	5	Completely Agree 6
Comments:					
4. The employee explained the selection of search terms, the search process, and sources used.					
Completely Disagree 1	2	3	4	5	Completely Agree 6
Comments:					
5. The employee followed up with you to ensure you were satisfied with the results of the interaction. Example behaviors include asking whether your question has been answered; making referrals to other sources of information; and inviting you to email again if you have additional questions.					
Completely Disagree 1	2	3	4	5	Completely Agree 6
Comments:					
6. Please share anything else you think would be helpful to us in evaluating the reference skills of the employee.					
Comments:					

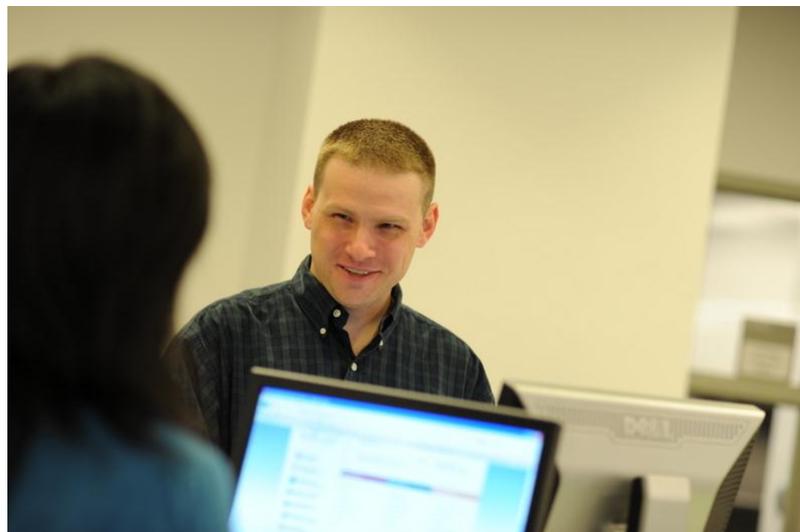


- Results presented in aggregate
- Reference questions taken at face value
 - Where are the newspapers?
 - Over there.
 - Can you help me find a photograph of Flannery O'Connor?
 - The library at Georgia College & State University [another institution!] has a Flannery O'Connor archive.





- But . . . employees were:
 - “Very friendly”
 - “Professional”
 - “Pleasant”
 - “Very approachable”





We used a numeric rating scale, but results were qualitative, not quantitative.





- Regularly scheduled reference interviewing training
 - Emphasis on the reference interview
 - Emphasis on reducing referrals
- Supervisor/employee communication regarding reference interviewing expectations





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