



# REFERENCE SECTION QUARTERLY

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE SECTION PRESIDENT

Hello and happy summer to you all. I am honored to assume the responsibility of President of the NJLA Reference Section for 2008-2009.

I remember fondly my very first section meeting at Princeton Public Library in December of 2005. I was working at the Evesham Branch of the Burlington County Library System, but had worked for a number of years in Princeton at the Institute for Advanced Study, so I was well aware of the long-awaited erection of the new library building on Witherspoon Street. It was worth the wait! The Assistant Director, Elba Barzelatto, in conjunction with the Director, Leslie Burger, gave us an insider tour of the entire facility, from technical services to the fish tank in the children's section. What a fine specimen of a functional and beautiful library it is!

As nice as the tour was, the meeting prior was what piqued my interest in joining the section. Paul Schroeder, then Vice President, had recently published the first issue of the Reference Section Quarterly in November 2005. In that issue I saw the announcement about the Princeton Public Library meeting and tour. I emailed immediately to reserve my spot. At this meeting, there was lively discussion about weeding, the physical reference desk, electronic vs. print materials – all the same issues we have today. The donuts and coffee probably helped, too!

But on a more serious note, the emergence of the newsletter was a boon for the section. It has been a great way to post announcements, foster discussions, and gather support from the field. The Reference Section is a compilation of academic, public, and

school librarians interested in the various issues pertaining to library reference. I hope to encourage and enhance the diversity of the section during my tenure. If you have any questions, comments, suggestions, please feel free to contact me ([lcoats@monmouth.edu](mailto:lcoats@monmouth.edu) or 732-923-4537).

I want to personally thank Paul for his dedication and hard work over the last several years, and I hope to benefit from one of his accomplishments – the institution of the position of “Past President.” I look forward to working with him, the other dedicated members of the board, and all the other section members who contribute to the section's continued success.

Enjoy the rest of your summer!

*Lisa Coats*

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## LIGHTNING STRIKES AT THE REFERENCE DESK

Someone once asked what was my most rewarding experience as a reference librarian. My most rewarding experience was also the most interesting research I have ever undertaken.

We got an email from a lady named Ruth V., a resident of Florida. She was born in 1935 in New Jersey, and was named after a cousin, Ruth W., who died in a bizarre accident sometime before the sender of the email was born. All Ruth knew was that her

cousin and the cousin's husband were killed by lightning on the beach at the Jersey Shore. She knew that they were on some kind of church outing.

Ruth V. was hoping to learn something about the woman for whom she was named. No one in the family would ever discuss the incident, but when Ruth V. was in her teens, her aunt gave her a bracelet with the cousin's initials engraved on it, and the

cousin's class ring from Glassboro High School, class of 1928. That was all she had to go on, but she was hoping that we would somehow be able to find a news clipping or at least an obituary that would give her some information. As it happens I live in Glassboro, so I undertook the research.

First, I searched census records and found records of Ruth W. in 1920 and 1930. In resident. She recalled the

1930 she was 19 and living with her parents in Glassboro, so I know the accident had happened after 1930 and before 1935, when Ruth V. was born. (I sent copies of these records to Florida by mail.)

The trouble was Ruth V. had no idea who her cousin married, and finding anything about her death would be hard without knowing what name I was looking for.

Glassboro is still not a big

*Cont'd on page 2*

## LIGHTNING STRIKES AT THE REFERENCE DESK

*Cont'd from page 1*

town so I figured I could find someone who remembered this accident. I went first to my next-door neighbor, then age 80, and a life-long Glassboro resident. She recalled the event and the big stir that such a bizarre incident caused in a little town in the '30s. She even remembered attending the viewing. She had a vivid picture in her mind of the two caskets side-by-side in the funeral home, but my neighbor was a child then and did not recall anything else about the couple.

I needed to find someone older than my neighbor. I called a friend whose mother is in her 90s and also a life-long Glassboro resident. I explained the story and asked my friend if she thought her mother would know anything about it. The reply: "Mom knows all about it, because that woman's husband was my uncle, Mom's brother-in-

law." Jackpot!

I called the 90-something Mrs. S. (whose mind is still very

Ruth V. was born. I wrote Ruth V. and gave her a brief synopsis, promising more.

pastor. I was delighted to mail copies of the article to Ruth V. in Florida.

Ruth V. was ecstatic! I got a lovely letter from her. She was happy to know that her namesake was such a fine young woman. I was ecstatic, too. She told me I had answered a question she had wondered about her entire life. It was a great feeling.

An added bonus was that I gave copies of the article to Mrs. S., her children, and grandchildren. She had told them the story, and now they had documentation for that unusual family tragedy.

About a week later a floral arrangement was delivered to the library addressed to me - a thank-you gift from Ruth V.

*Nancy Polhamus*

*Public Information Coordinator  
Gloucester County Library System*

## TWO KILLED; FOUR STUNNED BY LIGHTNING BOLT WEDNESDAY

SEVERE ELECTRICAL STORM AT SHORE KILLS FORMER COUPLE; FOUR OTHER MEMBERS OF GLASSBORO PARTY RECOVERING.

sharp) and heard the whole story. The young couple were newlyweds and were on a camping trip with a group from their church. They were setting up tents on the beach near Sea Isle City when a sudden thunderstorm approached. Carl S. had his hands on a metal tent pole when lightning struck. His wife reached out to him and the electricity killed them both instantly. Others inside the tent were injured. This happened in August of 1934, about one year before

Our Glassboro branch library has the old weekly local newspaper, The Glassboro Enterprise, on microfilm, so it was not difficult to find the article with huge headlines, describing the accident in great detail. Of course everybody knew everybody back then. There was lots information about Carl and Ruth, who were active in church and community, loved and respected by all. There was also funeral information and a brief, touching tribute written by the church

## INVALUABLE REFERENCE EXPERIENCE FOR RUTGERS SCILS STUDENTS

Library students have been working at the Rutgers' Alexander Library reference desk since approximately 1976. This program, currently overseen by Dr. James Niessen, World History Librarian at the Alexander Library, provides qualified students with paid positions as mentored Reference Assistants (RAs). Some of the Spring 2008 RAs at Alexander Library were available to provide feedback on this unique opportunity.

All the RAs who responded to queries about their work in Alexander are very positive about the experience. They enjoy helping students, and they are gaining confidence in their abilities with each answer they provide. One reference assistant

said that "being a reference assistant is like being a teacher, providing guidance so the students ultimately find the answer themselves."

The RAs are responsible for answering the phone and determining if a query should be handled by a reference librarian. Usually the RAs answer common questions (e.g. directions to the stacks, showing students how to use the databases), but sometimes the questions are a little more unusual. One RA said she "stayed on the phone and guided a lost driver to their destination, using landmarks to identify whether the driver was headed in the right direction."

Several RAs commented that they were becoming more pro-

ficient at conducting the reference interview and helping students focus on what they really needed. The RAs all agreed that they are learning a great deal through exposure, practice and support from their fellow librarians, and that they enjoy interacting with such a diverse group of people.

The RAs are also responsible for identifying shy students who need help, but aren't comfortable coming right out and asking for it. According to one RA, this only works for students who might be hovering near the reference desk. A chat system is now being used in the library, and this RA hopes that students on other floors in the library will ask the librarians more

questions now using this system.

This group of librarians-in-training is certainly enthusiastic. They appear to be up to the challenge of reference work, and definitely feel the "the thrill of the hunt" when asked a particularly difficult question. The RAs also admit to feeling particularly gratified when students appreciate the help. One Rutgers student returned to the library to credit the RA for an A received on a paper. Just another day in the life of the RA!

*Elizabeth McDermott*

*Library Assistant  
Red Bank Public Library*

## RUTGERS GRADUATE REFERENCE ASSISTANTS AT A CROSSROADS?

We must make many unpleasant choices in times of budgetary hardship. It is disappointing to contemplate the possible end of the Rutgers RA tradition, but change is, after all, one of the few constants in library work.

Like many New Jersey libraries, we are facing budgetary challenges in the coming fiscal year. Budget cuts mean we will likely have less money to pay graduate assistants and may need to rely upon federal work study awards for RAs.

These need-based awards enable employers to hire awardees at no cost to themselves. We would prefer to employ MLIS students, but work study is increasingly awarded to undergrads rather than grad students. The RAs would do the same work they are doing now, but there would likely be a

smaller pool of eligible applicants.

In addition, the volume of traffic at reference desks is declining all over the country as library users gravitate to online resources, don't need to enter the library, and conclude they have no need of a librarian's assistance. Virtual reference (email and chat) undoubtedly also serves to reduce the traffic at the desk.

The Rutgers libraries are experiencing these trends. A statistical comparison of Alex reference traffic before and after a temporary increase in the RA budget during the Spring of 2008 revealed a surprisingly modest increase in the number of questions when we could employ more RAs.



Still, statistics do not tell the whole story: when librarians and RAs share the desk, they have more time for consultation with users and each other. The elimination of RAs would have consequences for service quality and for our valued role as mentors.

The Alexander Library RA program has provided a stepping stone for many future librarians in its 32 years of existence. The first grad student to work at our reference desk was Diane Harvey. Diane went on to a successful career at Johns Hopkins and now the University of Maryland.

Other former Alex RAs include Kevin Mulcahy (still here today), Perry Willett, who later worked at Indiana and is now Head of the Digital Library Pro-

duction Service at Michigan, and Bill Brockman who is Paterno Family Librarian in Literature at Penn State. More recently Mira Foster graduated from an RA position to a full time non-tenure track job here and then a tenure track position focusing on instruction at San Francisco State.

Information Assistants (IAs) at Douglass and Kilmer Libraries, supervised by Kayo Denda and Jeris Cassel, provide many similar services to Alexander's RA program. All of these programs face similar hardships, and administrators are searching for alternative funding in case conventional voucher sources run dry.

*Jim Niessen  
World History Librarian  
Alexander Library RA Supervisor  
Rutgers University Libraries*

## THE CONCERT HALL AND REFERENCE DESK: ISN'T IT THE SAME THING?

I recently attended a performance at a performing arts center that convinced me that I would not go back. When trying to take a seat closer to the stage, I was turned back by a strict usher-- despite hundreds of empty seats. Even after the first intermission, I noticed the ushers fanning out and stopping other deviants. The pre-concert lecture was so esoteric that even I, with a Master of Music degree, gathered little from the exercise. The speakers and ushers contributed nothing to the concert experience; and they certainly did not smile. Art centers will not survive with a mantra of: "We are extending to you the privilege of hearing..." Music performance has many competitors, especially the virtual kind over iTunes and the like -- despite our

purist protests that "It is not the same!"

This concert experience made me think about our everyday manner at the Reference Desk and in our libraries. Do we as library "ushers" highlight the user's experience? How often do we complain about infractions rather than debate about more successful user interactions? Despite the "quality" issue that remains dear to our hearts, our former users are gathering information from many sources without our help. We don't have the luxury of acting the part, but need to enthusiastically support access to our resources on our users' terms.

Haven't you been to the concert where ushers greet you and talk with you during the break; and where the pre-concert lec-

ture and words from the stage piqued your curiosity? There are libraries offering increased user interaction and instruction, but for too many others I think users leave still wondering. We have to believe that user interactions are critical -- that for this user standing in front of me, on this day, and for this "performance" -- it is a once in a lifetime opportunity to get the message across. They may "get it" and realize how to obtain high-quality, focused, useful information or they may give up, put on their headphones, and turn on their iPod.

*Mark Thompson  
Assistant Director for Patron  
Information Services  
Bergen Community College*

Do you have a new reference librarian on your staff?

*Let us know!*

Did you host an exciting, informative, well-attended program?

*Let us know!*

Did your library win a grant or an award?

*Let us know!*

Send an e-mail to:

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SPECIAL LIBRARIES AND IMMERSIVE SERVICES AND PROGRAMS IN SECOND LIFE

Second Life is a virtual world platform with over 6 million active registered users. Not a structured game, Second Life is a continually evolving, fluid world where “residents” have the opportunity to build, create and own their own content. Within this world, a thriving community of over 1,000 librarians has sprung up on Info Island (and other affiliated library islands). With such services offered as a 24/7 staffed Reference Desk and theme-based immersive experiences (special libraries), this



platform can be especially appealing for those librarians who enjoy creative thinking for outreach programs and services.

Because you aren’t limited by bricks and mortar, a virtual world library can be anything your imagination conjures. Two such libraries in Second Life are the West of Ireland Library and Cultural Center and the Firelight Spiritual Resource Center and Retreat.

The West of Ireland Library, managed by Derry McMahon (Micki McIntyre outside of Second Life), opened in March 2008

during the Festival of St. Patrick. The collection contains links to full-text electronic editions of classic books, as well as literature related to the library's exhibits.

The library’s first exhibit explored the link between the Easter Uprising in 1916 and incidents mentioned in common Irish drinking songs. Its current exhibit highlights Celtic myths and legends. Future exhibits include the topics of dance, music, history, sports and the importance of textiles to Ireland.

The library also schedules three to four weekly storytelling sessions. A genealogist conducts bi-monthly workshops. One June 16th, Bloomsday was celebrated at the library with readings from James Joyce’s Ulysses by Derry McMahon and West of Ireland’s Cura-

tor, Cunningham Docherty. The library hopes to provide a slice of Irish culture to its Second Life visitors.

The Firelight Spiritual Resource Center and Retreat, located at Wings of Hope, was designed and built by Brielle Coronet (Elisabeth Jacobsen Marrapodi) in April 2008. Instead of using a tradi-



tional building model, the resource center is located in a serene, park-like setting complete



with hooting owls, singing birds and crickets. Trees, butterflies and flowers simulate a lush forest scenario. There are seating areas for reflection and prayer.

A large campfire encircled with cushions provides the Campfire Circle discussion group area for weekly moderated discussions on various faith-based topics. Some examples of past Campfire Circle topics have been The Power of Prayer, Spiritual Warfare, The Tribulation and The Christian’s Guide to the Secret.

The Center also has a small collection of books. By clicking on a stack of books piled on the grass under a tree, the user gets a notecard containing links to web-based editions of the books.

Firelight’s future plans include a book club and a forum for guest speakers.

The Firelight Spiritual Resource Center was created to offer outreach programs and services to Second Life

residents to inspire, comfort, inform, promote fellowship and encourage the exchange of ideas in a non-traditional setting. The inspiration to develop the virtual resource center came from Elisabeth’s creation of a spiritual collection in her real life hospital library.

These are just two examples of how boundaries can be stretched for special library services in virtual reality. Please come into Second Life to build, imagine and offer your library services as well. If you do, look us up. We’ll be glad to give you a tour of our virtual world.

*Elisabeth Jacobsen Marrapodi  
Director Library Services  
Trinitas Hospital*

*Micki McIntyre  
HealthyNJ Librarian  
UMDNJ*

**Visit West of Ireland’s Library :**

<http://slurl.com/secondlife/West%20of%20Ireland/44/171/26>

**Firelight is located at:**

<http://slurl.com/secondlife/Wings%20of%20Hope/27/116/24>



## THE SEASONED LIBRARIAN

The reference librarian's duties have changed over the past 10-20 years. Many times, this has involved a member currently on staff- a seasoned librarian. As the duties have changed, she has used varied knowledge, skills, and abilities to evolve as well. The reference librarian is uniquely poised to service our library communities. We help our patrons gain the knowledge, skills, and abilities they need in this rushed and harried world.

The seasoned reference librarian has an important role to play in the future in provision of library services. Yet, this person is sometimes marginalized. Often she is paid at current starting salary rates for new hires rather than at an added amount in recognition of experience. Let me tell you why she should be paid more- with the seasoned librarian, one gets five intelligences in one person.

In "Five Minds For The Future," by Howard Gardner (Gardner, 2007) he refers to five intelligences that one should strive to obtain. Please read below for a description of each intelligence. It is important to note that the seasoned reference librarian has all five intelligences already. She is qualified and prepared to help our customers as they seek to develop within themselves the five minds for the future.

The five intelligences are described in a Business Week Book Review by Catherine Arnst: (Arnst, 2007)

1. Disciplined. Here, he refers to mastery of scholarship. A reference librarian exhibits this intelligence. Over the years, she has acquired a Masters degree and through personal readings, professional workshops, and additional courses of study taken she has gained a certain amount of knowledge about various

fields of study outside of professional skill. The reference librarian is constantly learning about new resources and techniques to share with her customers.

2. Synthesizing. Here, he refers to taking bits of data from various sources to synthesize into new knowledge. The librarian does this when she acts as translator of the various points of views and data into succinct descriptions of materials. Or when she explains library organization to patrons. In some cases librarians will find themselves explaining basic tenets of scholarship on a subject matter. Over the years she has built a strong nonfiction core collection synthesizing current standard practices of any given field, its history, and new strains of scholarship. Anyone with a budding interest on any topic can find information at the library.

3. Creative. Here, he refers to going beyond the collection of knowledge to the posing of something new. As a librarian progresses through her career, most serve on some sort of professional committee working to move the field of librarianship forward. Many are authors in their own right or have become reliable "experts" on one or another field of scholarship outside of librarianship.

4. Respectful. Here, she refers to "responding sympathetically and constructively to differing individuals or groups." (Arnst, 2007) The Reference Librarian does this by respectfully greeting each person and actively listening to the questions from the easy to the hard from the where is the bathroom? to the- how would you compare the Korean and Vietnam wars? In each case she treats each person with their full attention and provides the best and most appropriate guidance for

that person, place, and time.

5. Ethical. Here is a reference to the practice of ethical behavior. The Reference Librarian does good work and is a good citizen. The seasoned librarian has always strived for fair and equal treatment whether in self, library materials' coverage of topics, our suppliers, and in society in general.

The seasoned reference librarian already has all of the five intelligences that Gardner urges the business community to strive towards obtaining for future functioning. The reference librarian has been through many job changes over the years, and has always shown her flexibility and adaptability by easily taking on new skills. The reference librarian is the definitive link to the library mission as a vocation. And as so goes the profession, so goes the library. Future directions and library librarian missions should be a matter of professional discussion not a matter of a fearful tearing down.

The reference librarian, with her one to one contact with patrons, can pick up on trends and patterns in customer needs, wants and directions. In turn she can relay this information to the Director.

For the above mentioned reasons, I believe the seasoned or older reference librarian should not be paid at the starting or hiring level for the position title under which she works. He or she has earned a corrective salary adjustment to bring her to a higher level of pay that recognizes the unique skills, knowledge and abilities she brings as an experienced representative of our profession. The seasoned librarian should be paid 20 to 25% above the going rate to the person just starting out in that position. This adjustment in compensation would recognize

the care and trust put in him or her to tend to the members of our communities. After all, she is the super librarian.

### REFERENCES:

- Arnst, Catherine. "Brave New Brain." IdeasBooks. Business Week May 7, 2007.
- Gardner, Howard. "Five Minds For the Future" Harvard Business School Press c2007

*Beatrice Priestly works as a Principal Librarian at a medium-sized public library in New Jersey. She also works as an Adjunct Librarian at Monmouth University Library in New Jersey. She in no way speaks as a representative of the public library or of the University. Through the graces of Monmouth University she is also able to take courses toward the MBA degree. She has always been concerned with salary matters and makes efforts to move the profession forward when it comes to compensation. She believes it is important to attend meetings and work on at least one committee in the state library association. Her views in no way represent those of the New Jersey Library Association.*

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## SECTION TOURS TCNJ LIBRARY

On May 28<sup>th</sup>, the Reference Section sponsored a tour of The College of New Jersey's beautiful library. A group of about 20 section members, library students, and interested librarians were treated to a detailed tour of the building by Dean Taras Pavlovsky, who is pictured below, with the group. Many thanks to Melissa Hofmann for her assistance in organizing the event, Linda Dempf for her participation, and to Dean Pavlovsky for his energetic and informative tour.



## MOUNT LAUREL LIBRARY WELCOMES NEW LIBRARIAN



The Mount Laurel Library is pleased to introduce our newest Adult Services Librarian, Stefanie Gostautas. Stefanie began working at the library on February 25. Originally from Kansas, she moved to the East Coast with her husband and two cats four years ago. She graduated from Rutgers University with a Masters in Library and Information Science in May. Her responsibilities at the library include serving customers at the Information Desk, staffing the Q&ANJ chat reference service, developing Web 2.0 services for the library, and collection management. She is a member of NJLA and anticipates getting acquainted with the Reference Section in the months ahead.

*David Calvanico, Head of Reference  
Mount Laurel Library*

**We're looking  
for a few good  
articles.**

**Send your**

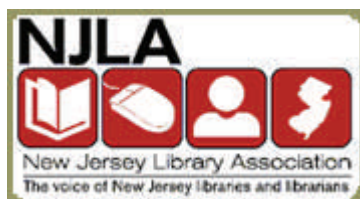
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## NJLA REFERENCE SECTION MISSION STATEMENT

The section fosters professional development and networking opportunities for reference librarians. Members plan continuing education programs, including a major workshop during the year, programs at the annual NJLA Conference, opportunities to interact with colleagues and tours of specialized libraries or collections.

It is the goal of this newsletter to provide a forum for New Jersey reference librarians, from public, academic and school libraries, to read and write about the issues that they face.



+ NJLA Reference Section  
= Happiness

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