

**February, 2022, Meeting Minutes for the NJLA Reference & Adult Services**  
**Section meeting on 2/22/22; 10:00 am to 11:00 am.**

**Welcome:** Theresa Agnostelli, hosting on a Zoom based online meeting.

**Attendees:** Theresa Agnostelli, Kate Russo, Joe Louderback, Eric Schwartz, Karen Vaias, Nicole Marconi, Tony Joachim, Rich Wiest, Lisa Bruckman (taking notes).

**Review of [January minutes](#):** Minutes Approved at 10:08 am:

Eric Schwatz was seconded by Therersa Agnostelli.

**Introductions:** attendees introduced themselves.

**Vice President, Kate Russo, discusses** the outcome of the Reference & Adult Services Section Proposals for the NJLA Conference 2022:

- **NJLA Conference Proposals - Kate Russo**  
**Not Accepted:**  
Revise and resubmit next year:  
Databases: Tips and Tricks and Something New
- **Approved:**  
**Effective Presentation Skills: Practical Tips for Success;** Thursday, June 2, 4:10-5:00 PM, Wildwood 6 & 7  
**Something's Got to Give: When to Say No, and How;** Friday, June 3, 2:10-3:00 PM, Wildwood 10 & 11
- **Co-Authored and Approved:**  
**History & Preservation Section panel co-sponsored by Adult Svcs approved:**  
**Now More Than Ever – Expanded Online Sources for Local History Research;** Thursday, June 2, 3:10 - 4:00 PM; Wildwood 12 & 13 (posted by John Beekman)

**Upcoming September event:** (to be rescheduled for September, 2022, when Kate Russo takes over as President of the Reference & Adult Services Section, July, 2022).

**General Discussion:**

- How is everyone doing? How are things going at your library? What programs/projects are you working on?

**Open discussion about the Importance of "Soft Skills" in Reference Services currently: best practices in recent or past experiences:**

- **Theresa:** from her experiences on Long Island professional meetings with Marie Radford when she was studying at Pratt Institute and presented the same to other Library professionals who dismissed this idea; (Marie is now a Professor in the School of Information & Communication at Rutgers

University), Theresa feels that the “Soft Skills” of Reference Librarianship are more important: in her personal experiences in a public library as visitor, a Librarian who had helped her “figure out” the equipment she needed to use, rather than bark a direction for the How-To was a far better feeling/ more encouraging feeling and changed her perception of the Library as a resource in itself, greatly increased the probability Theresa would feel comfortable enough to ask her Questions in that Library again: ieApproachability as a Librarian on the Reference Desk is important.

- **Karen Vaia:** “creating a relationship” is important when at the Reference Desk and created by giving what the community needs per patron communicates credibility to the Library community.
- **Joe Louderback:** Said he has to remind himself to offer alternatives, that he was told that on average you have about a 20 second (?) window before you can offer a solution to someone asking a reference question and realized that he has to introduce his protocol to students on a Chat Question at DeVry University, has to remind students to wait for instructions on how to search the database he might have just suggested as a GoTo;
- **Tony Joachim:** said he likes to use a List technique in relating HowTos to students, so they are aware there is a process and something comes next. He finds students fall into 4 categories (those Who Know; those Who Think They Know; those Who Don’t Know but Don’t Want to Admit it; and those Who are Open to Admitting Don’tKnow status and Allowing Guidance). Said he prefers the In Person Tutorial but When He Fails to fully communicate: will Clean-up by reContacting the Student or Self-Assess how to avoid the same pitfall;
- Theresa: asks “How are you?” to students and opens them to discuss their needs as an extension of how they feel/ are at this moment. Then, Students become more open with the Inter-Personal shift and Caring communicated.
- Lisa: the Reference interaction is not the same online as in person; And leading with a “No” turns visitors off to your GoTo share or to seeing you as a caring Individual, not an extension of The Institution (if using “we” in discussing what resources outside of your Library are available to them: other GoTos.);
- Theresa: found that using “I can’t but...” or “No But....” was a better practice;
- Karen: said that the full Reference Interview was important to the visitor/ patron actually getting what they needed despite the unavailability of one specific resource, that the need could be supplied by another resource but the user is maybe not fully identifying or expressing exactly what information they need and getting at the core need is vital;

- Lisa: added that sometimes users are not aware of other outside resources, other types of Libraries that may be able to help them get the information they need as well, and that as Librarians we have experiences with the regional institutions that can better locate that kind of info. As people, we also might have heard through conversation the resources others have used - like textbook rental and important info on how to best use these resources;
- Tony: shared that the “How are You?” that he began every Virtual Library Instruction session in the time of pandemic has been dropped since class time is limited and the instruction part of the class is more important when sessions might be scheduled for a shorter period. Tony felt my “mentoring” suggestion in approaching students/users as a Reference Librarian should be a practice of “modeling” for students an interest in personal researches and Life-applied use for Database searching skills like Geneological researches or....etc.
- Lisa: clarified that “Mentoring” meant a kind of sharing of advice to students, discussion of Best Practices heard from the Librarian/ Private Life and outside organizations/ relationship based info learned in the Librarian’s personal community is included in a portfolio to draw from on the Reference Desk (ex. Her daughter’s discussions about how to Rent Textbooks and those best practices...)
- Joe: said he does this kind of Mentoring when despondent students in the past have shared their desperation and readiness to quit school: he asks them to switch from a Chat session to a Zoom session to have a more personal and approachable Tutorial presence with the student;
- Tony: WPUNJ is now looking at a major number of faculty layoffs again: Library so far OK but there will be 3 yrs ahead of a “potential reduction of faculty”;
- Lisa: shared the appropriateness of destressing staff with some of the practices suggested in the The Mindful Librarian, the book Richard Moniz has based his co-authored 2016 book on and based the free Module offered to ALA members on their eLearning platform, Mindfulness for Librarians: Handling Stress and Thriving under Pressure - she’ll send the book title, etc to all members of the section.

**Announcements:**

**Future Section Meetings: (as follows):**

- Volunteers to present or moderate on different topics for a portion of a meeting.
- What topics would you like to see addressed?

■ **Next meeting- Tuesday, March 22nd at 10am**