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REFERENCE 360: A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO REFERENCE INSTRUCTION

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Knowledge of the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) *Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of the Reference and Information Service Providers* and an awareness of the books, databases, and other resources generally available in library reference collections are excellent pathways to train confident practitioners in reference service. Procedural knowledge of RUSA guidelines and intellectual ability are the basic skills required to answer a reference question. Yet at times, the reference interview is a labyrinthine process laden with confusion and emotion. Tacit knowledge – unwritten, unspoken knowledge based on experience, insights, and intuition – is a skill that allows librarians to navigate the reference transaction labyrinth and leave the patron feeling validated and confident in their research experience.

Library patrons today are typically not looking for a finite piece of information, but rather are trying to sift through and interpret the massive amount of unmediated information available to them. This means patrons are operating under a high cognitive load before they begin their library research, often leaving them anxious and unmoored before they venture to the reference desk for advice. Because of this, it is essential that library students view the reference transaction holistically, as they interact with the patron.

In order to create an environment conducive to the holistic reference transaction, empathy, communication, and critical thinking should be at the forefront of a new librarian's skillset. Emotional intelligence should be studied and practiced to ensure library students leave a reference course with the ability to not only meet their patrons' information needs, but also to help their patrons feel comfortable navigating the library and its resources. The practice of mindfulness ensures self-awareness and openness to new information and promotes calm, clear interactions with patrons. Finally, critical reflection upon one's reference training and practice

while in the classroom and beyond is key to incorporating the ideals of emotional intelligence and mindfulness into a comprehensive reference librarian's skillset.

The Foundations of Reference 360

Emotional Intelligence

Although the history of emotions has long been discussed, it became a respected area of research in the 1980s when researchers began expanding their scope to look at the study of emotions singularly rather than emotions as a contributing factor in other studies such as social behavior or family studies.[1] Salovey and Mayer contributed to the research of emotions with their groundbreaking research on emotional intelligence (EI), which they define as: "the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions."[2] Prior to Salovey and Mayer's introduction to EI, it was often thought, in Western tradition, that emotions and intelligence were contradictory and emotions were considered "disorganized interruptions of mental activity."[3]

Salovey and Mayer's EI research was widely adopted in the fields of business and management, among others, with Goleman's publication of *Emotional Intelligence: Why it Can Matter More than IQ*. For Goleman, while technical acumen is important, emotional intelligence is as important as intellectual ability in the workplace, and the most successful employees are those who are able to manage their own and others' emotions.[4] Goleman's Emotional Competence Framework includes the personal competence characteristics of self-awareness,

self-regulation, motivation and the social competence characteristics of empathy and social skills.[5]

Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee have continued EI research to examine the science behind emotional intelligence, explaining that a leader's ability to manage mannerisms and emotions lies in the open-loop nature of the human brain. While the circulatory system is a closed-loop system that manages itself, the brain is an open-loop system that feeds off interpersonal interactions to regulate and manage itself.[6] Because of this physiological intermingling, "other people can change our very physiology—and so our emotions."[7] Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee write that superior customer care is affected most by this open-loop mood contagion.[8] Librarians observing Reference 360 are clearly attuned to the open-loop system and consider their own emotions as well as those of the patron.

Mindfulness

Kabat-Zinn describes mindfulness as "paying attention, in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally." Applying the practice of mindfulness in the workplace requires examining oneself to gain "greater awareness, clarity and acceptance of the present-moment reality." Kabat-Zinn explains that if we are not fully aware and present we "fail to realize the…depth of our possibilities for growth…."[9]

Langer writes that there are three main elements involved in the practice of being mindful: the creation of new categories, openness to new information, and awareness of more than one perspective. The creation of new categories in a mindful way is the act of "paying attention to the situation and the context," rather than relying on old categories of thought.[10] Openness to new information allows individuals to carefully process stimulating new

information, as they are mindful of the conversational cues that create more effective communication.[11] Awareness of more than one perspective encourages us to consider how others perceive our thoughts and actions, because in everyday conversations there are potentially as many interpretations as there are participants.[12]

There is clear evidence that educators who engage in mindfulness have more positive outcomes than those who do not. Being mindful is shown to have positive effects on leadership in higher education, resulting in improved decision-making and organizational practices, improved morale, and increased empathy for others.[13] Schoeberlein adds, "mindfulness improves focus, increases responsiveness to students' needs, promotes emotional balance, supports stress management and stress reduction, supports healthy relationships, enhances climate and supports well-being."[14] The characteristics noted by Langer and Kabat-Zinn and the positive effects noted by Davis and Schoeberlein are valuable qualities and outcomes that can translate into successful reference desk transactions. While it is not possible to control every aspect of the workday, the practice of being mindful offers choices as to how reference librarians experience and respond to everyday challenges.

Critical Reflection

In a holistic reference encounter, the librarian engages in continual systematic thought processes that result in compassionate and positive learning interactions. These thought processes are examples of critical reflection-in-action, and are based on the works of John Dewey, Donald Schön, and Stephen Brookfield.

Many treatments of reflection in education situate the concept in the works of Dewey. Dewey conceived of reflective thinking as the "active, persistent, and careful consideration of

any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends…."[15] Rodgers, in her explanation of Dewey's concept of reflection for teaching and learning, writes, "… the process of reflection is rigorous and systematic and distinct from other, less-structured kinds of thinking." For Dewey, writes Rodgers, the practitioner must remain engaged, open-minded, seek out many possible answers to the situation, and be willing to shift one's outlook in response to a changed understanding of any single experience.[16]

Schön introduced the concept of reflection-in-action, or "… intuitive knowing in the midst of action … to cope with the unique, uncertain, and conflicted situations of practice."[17] This inherently mindful act is different from reflection-*on*-action, which is the procedure of questioning one's practice before or after the event. Schön notes that reflection-in-action is based on tacit knowing, rather than learned knowledge of one's field. Tacit knowing is the mindful observation of and response to workplace challenges in a manner that falls outside of one's professional training or procedural knowledge.[18] The framing of reference interactions in such a manner, on the spot and while interacting with students, is important to notice. Librarians must balance this with attentive, active listening and nonjudgmental, mindful responses.

Critical reflection is an opportunity to make a fundamental change for the learner or the learning structure. Brookfield emphasizes that "[w]e reflect on our teaching so that we can create the conditions under which both teachers and students become aware of their own power of agency."[19] For Brookfield, critical reflection is a deep practice with the purpose of illuminating power dynamics and bringing to light hegemonic assumptions. Brookfield offers four "lenses" with which to engage in critical reflection: "(1) our autobiographies as teachers and learners, (2) our students' eyes, (3) our colleagues' experiences, and (4) theoretical literature."[20] Critical

reflection in the service of the Reference 360 framework focuses primarily on Brookfield's lenses one and two, which shift and interrelate throughout the reference encounter. The first lens, our autobiographies, encourages librarians to examine biases for or against topics, learning methods, and patron attitudes. The second lens encourages librarians to strongly consider how patrons may perceive the reference encounter.

Reference 360 Framework

Reference 360 and RUSA Guidelines

By its nature, the reference transaction is a complex and intertwining process. In 1992 the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) division of the American Library Association formed an Ad Hoc Committee on Behavioral Guidelines for Reference and Information Services. The committee was charged with "the creation of specific guidelines to aid librarians and information professionals during the reference process." The goal of the guidelines, formally titled *Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Service Providers*, was to "identify and recommend observable behavioral attributes that could be correlated with positive patron perceptions of the reference librarian performance." The guidelines were last updated in 2012, and are widely accepted as the benchmark for in-person and virtual reference services.[21]

The RUSA guidelines are arranged in a numbered five-item list: Approachability, Interest, Listening/Inquiring, Searching, and Follow-up. These items are the foundation of a reference librarian's procedural skillset, but they promote an understanding of reference interactions that foster one-way communication. The patron approaches a librarian who appears

open to interaction; the librarian signals that they are interested in the interaction; the librarian listens to the patron, restates their need, and asks questions to clarify their need; the librarian searches for the information while teaching the patron how to search for the information; the librarian closes the transaction by asking if the information need has been fulfilled or by referring the patron to another librarian.[22]

As VanScoy notes, the RUSA guidelines promote soft skills, but are limited in their emotional and reflective scope.[23] The RUSA guidelines also lack clear indications of how to practice negotiated, two-way communication. Combining the Reference 360 framework with RUSA guidelines enhances the RUSA guidelines by promoting two-way communication and bringing emotion and reflection to the forefront of the reference interaction. This, in turn, promotes a partnership between librarian and patron as the power structure that is inherent in traditional interviews is disrupted during a Reference 360 interview.

Reference 360 Ideals

The Reference 360 framework has five ideals: Emotional Awareness, Mindful Practice, Engaged Communication, Empathetic Reflection and Action, and Reassurance. These ideals are emotional and reflective tacit knowledge that enhances the RUSA guidelines' procedural knowledge. Working in concert with the RUSA guidelines, the Reference 360 ideals create a synchronous and full-circle interaction, rather than a linear and proscriptive experience.
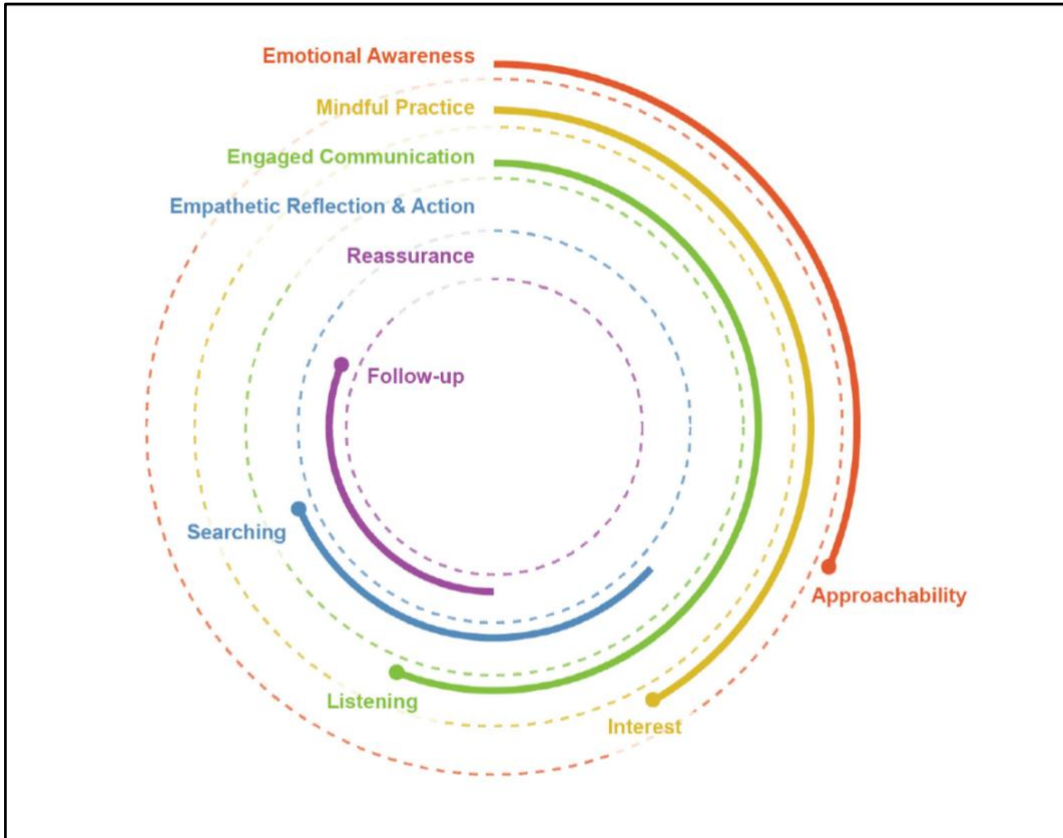
Reference 360 Framework

Emotional Awareness

The first Reference 360 ideal, Emotional Awareness, is a manifestation of strong emotional intelligence. This skill requires a mindful approach to assess one's own and others emotions and to acknowledge how feelings and emotions are contributing to verbal and nonverbal behavior during a transaction.[24] According to the RUSA guidelines, the first step to a successful reference transaction is the awareness of your demeanor as the patron approaches. All patrons should sense that librarians welcome their presence and are ready and willing to help, even if the librarian on duty is assisting other patrons.

To be adept at the ideal of Emotional Awareness, librarians should recognize emotions in themselves and others and work to create a positive experience for the patron. This can be

accomplished by setting a positive emotional tone at the outset of the interaction. The open-loop nature of our brains causes our emotions to shift, register, and sync with our conversational partner.[25] This attunement has been shown in laboratory experiments. Two strangers enter the lab with different physiological rhythms, but as the subjects get to know one another their physiological rhythms begin to "mirror" one another if their conversation is going well.[26] Cheerfulness and warmth are the emotions that spread the easiest, and rudeness and grumpiness also tend to be contagious.[27] Because of this possibility of emotional mirroring, reference librarians must be emotional leaders during the reference transaction, and expressively transmit positive feelings.

Negative emotions, if left unchecked, can have a significant effect on patrons and librarians. In a study of the research journals of 6,000 undergraduate students, Mellon found that 75-85 percent of students experienced "fear, confusion, a sense of being overpowered or lost, and a feeling of helplessness and dread" – a feeling that was directly attributable to lack of knowledge about library services and the research process.[28] Some of these feelings have only magnified as information has become more ubiquitous online. A 2008 Project Information Literacy study found that students doing academic research reported feelings of information overload and frustration at their inability to identify credible source material online, among other negative emotions.[29] Students with these feelings may come to the reference desk with overt signs of anxiety or frustration, or patrons may deflect these feelings by presenting themselves at the reference desk with an unformed need, or, more likely, a question of lower importance than their actual need.[30] For the librarian, anxiety and distress can have a negative impact on cognitive capabilities, as these feelings tend to reduce one's ability to be empathetic, diminishing social skills and ultimately result in an inability to demonstrate emotional intelligence.[31]

When we consider the fact that patrons may be approaching the reference desk with some degree of anxiety, librarians need to be mindful not only of their own emotions, but also how the patron's emotions may be affecting their emotions, and therefore, changing the dynamics of the interaction. To practice recognizing this, reflect on a conversation you have had in the past that has been comfortable, or a conversation where you felt like you really connected with someone. How did you feel after the conversation? Elated? Energized, perhaps? Now consider a conversation that was not as emotionally fulfilling. How did you feel afterwards? Uncomfortable? Edgy? What emotions may have been exchanged via the open-loop system? Why were you or your conversational partner feeling that way?

Mindful Practice

The second Reference 360 ideal is Mindful Practice. Practicing mindfulness improves the quality of attention a reference librarian gives the patron, but maintaining the practice of mindfulness can be a challenge when internal and external distractions are everywhere. Mindful Practice aligns with RUSA guideline 2.0 of "… demonstrat[ing] a high degree of interest in the reference transaction," as well as the seventh tenet of the Code of Ethics of the American Library Association, which encourages librarians not to "… allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources."[32] Mindful Practice, when utilized in concert with all other Reference 360 ideals, allows the librarian to discover the patron's true information need without judgment or bias.

Practicing mindfulness and demonstrating interest allows the reference librarian to be fully attentive to and present with the patron. Listening without reacting will vastly reduce misunderstandings and judgment during the reference transaction. As Kabat-Zinn stated, when

we are not fully aware and focused on the present moment other problems will inevitably become present, due in part to our own fears and insecurities.33 The automatic action of leading a researcher in a direction where we are comfortable and with the resources we can readily offer, rather than truly listening to their desired research need, can be one result of mindlessness. For example, a patron asks for research articles that discuss the negative effects organic farming has on the environment. A librarian who does not engage in Mindful Practice may be thinking, "Negative environmental effects of organic farming? Seriously?" The librarian who pays attention with Mindful Practice takes on the challenge of finding the information the patron is requesting, and is less likely to persuade the student to find research that supports the librarian's own views of organic farming.

Kabat-Zinn also writes that if we do not allow for mindful growth, over time confidence may be lost, leading to feelings of dissatisfaction and unhappiness.34 Seasoned librarians may take simple reference transactions for granted. If we are asked for articles on legalizing marijuana several times throughout the semester, it is easy to revert to automatic pilot and lead each of these patrons to the same databases, possibly even using the same keywords for fear of not answering the question quickly or successfully. However, each patron requesting information about marijuana may have a different aspect or perspective they want to explore. Being aware and practicing mindfulness also allows individual patrons to feel validated, starts them on their own research path. If we face our fear and take on the challenge of each individual transaction, the results will lead to greater satisfaction during reference transactions and increased confidence in our professional skills, and enlivens and refreshes our time at the reference desk.

Engaged Communication

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Engaged Communication, the third Reference 360 ideal, is a multifaceted act. Engaged

Communication consists of active listening, awareness of nonverbal communication, and

deliberate two-way conversation. The ideal of Engaged Communication enhances RUSA

Guideline 3.0 Listening/Inquiring: "The librarian must be effective in identifying information

needs and must do so in a manner that keeps the patrons at ease."

The practice of Engaged Communication begins with active listening. To be an effective

active listener requires a "contemplative mind: open, fresh, alert, attentive, calm, and

receptive."[35] The first step in active listening is to focus on the information being received, rather

than your interpretation of the information.[36] This is especially important when applying

Reference 360 ideals. As the striking examples from Dewdney and Michell's classic *Oranges

and Peaches* article demonstrate, disconcerting miscommunications can occur in reference

transactions when the meaning your conversational partner attributes to a concept or term is not

the same as yours.[37]

Engaged Communication also includes awareness of nonverbal cues. Private and public

organizations consider the skill of "reading people," or the ability to assess nonverbal behavior, a

desired skill for emotional intelligence and critical when interacting with colleagues and

clients.[38] Nonverbal cues guide our conversations and clue us in to the emotions present during a

conversation. "Back channel" communication – a wrinkled nose, a furled brow, and umms and

ahhs – is part of the message we receive and decode during interactions. Paralanguage, or the

disfluencies, pauses, and style and tone of speech should also be taken into account when

listening actively and mindfully.[39] Eye contact, smiling, and nodding, and moving forward

slightly are all cues to the speaker that the listener is interested and tracking the conversation.[40]

Patrons are keenly aware when one-way communication is occurring during a reference transaction with an inattentive librarian. The inattentiveness may be caused by physical distractions, such as another patron waiting to ask a question, or internal distractions, such as the meeting you just attended. Limiting distractions and mindless one-way communication can lead to two-way communication where the patron sends the message, the librarian receives the message and provides feedback to the patron. This full-circle communication pattern is the foundation the Reference 360 ideals build upon for an enhanced experience at the reference desk.

Empathetic reflection and action

The fourth Reference 360 ideal is Empathetic Reflection and Action. This is the ability to reflect on the reference interaction *as it happens*, staying in tune with one's intuition regarding the patron's information need and current state of mind, and responding in a considerate and appropriate manner in light of these reflections. The RUSA guideline of Searching (4.0) also promotes communication and teamwork as the librarian works with the patron to identify resources and search terms, evaluate the results, and refashion the search if necessary. The Reference 360 ideal of Empathetic Reflection and Action urges librarians to go further with this partnership by reflecting on the following questions: In what type of learning context is the patron operating? How might the patron be framing this interaction? How am I framing this interaction? How can I offer agency to the patron while assisting them with their information need? These four questions complement one another and allow an opportunity for relationship building between patron and librarian. As the librarian learns more about the patron's learning context and their expectations or assumptions about the interaction, the librarian can adjust their own expectations, recognize and clear their assumptions, and engage mindfully with the patron.

To reflect on the patron's learning context, find out what they are asking for and why they are asking. Is this for a class, or personal curiosity? Inquire, if time permits, about their history with the topic. Are they familiar with the terminology? If not, explain the jargon that surfaces throughout the interaction. Do they have experience with the library, and have they asked for help at the reference desk before? If not, explain the library jargon, and narrate your line of thinking and action. Are they required to seek you out, or have they found you on their own? Keep in mind that a forced interaction may be less successful, as the patron may be reticent about receiving advice.

To find out how the patron may be framing the interaction, it may be most helpful to ask directly: What are their expectations? Do they expect us to give them the right answer, find the sources, or give advice about how to find information? From this, you can deduce if the patron views librarians as authority figures, knowledgeable community members, or public servants, and adjust the formality of the interaction to match (for more information about how and why to adjust the formality of the interaction, see the next ideal, Reassurance).

Knowing how the patron is framing the interaction by finding out answers to some of the questions above allows librarians to frame their side of the interaction in a thoughtful, helpful manner. Despite our best intentions, though, what Brookfield calls our "autobiographies as learners" may color the interaction.[41] For example, librarians who have advanced subject degrees may overwhelm students beginning their studies in that area, while librarians without extensive subject experience may feel ill equipped to complete a reference transaction in certain advanced specialties. Clearly articulating your area of expertise allows the patron to understand the librarian's frame of reference.

Perhaps the most important part of this ideal is the librarian's willingness to offer agency to the patron while assisting them with their information need. Throughout the reference interview, as RUSA guidelines suggest, ask the patron for advice and clarification while searching. Teach the patron how to search for and analyze the information by modeling good questions and thinking aloud. Realize that even an offhandedly "simple" question, such as, "Would you like help finding the book on the shelf?" allows the patron to take control of their learning experience by assessing their own skills and level of comfort with asking for help in the future.

Reassurance

Reassurance is the fifth Reference 360 ideal. Reassurance removes fear and anxiety and puts confidence and competence in its place. The practice of this ideal brings the Reference 360 framework full circle, as it is the culmination of competency in all other ideals. Reassurance can be practiced in both ways, towards the patron or oneself. In the RUSA standards, the final standard is Follow-up (5.0). While Follow-up is noted as extending the reference transaction, it is primarily a closed action in that it wraps ups the interaction. In following up, librarians ask the patron if their question has been answered and refer the patron to other librarians, resources, or libraries if necessary. Librarians also encourage patrons to return to the library or reference desk with further questions. The addition of Reassurance, regardless of timing, encourages the patron to see the transaction as the beginning of a useful relationship and turns a closed transaction into a positive learning opportunity for patron and librarian.

Putting this ideal in practice during a reference encounter eases patron anxiety through the use of deliberate informality, humor, and positive reinforcement. These three methods to

incorporate reassurance into the reference interaction are all based on agile use of language. Deliberate informality is the act of adjusting one's speech patterns to match those of the patron. As with Engaged Communication, subtly mirroring the patron's speech patterns shifts the power dynamic to place patron and librarian on equal footing during the interaction.[42] A genuine practice of informality affirms one's training and expertise as an information professional and allows the patron to be comforted by familiar speech from someone in a position of power. There are several ways to practice deliberate informality, but the easiest is to use contractions and slang in place of formal English.[43]

Humor can relieve anxiety and promote a less formal view of library services.[44] In measured doses, humor, especially self-deprecating humor, builds rapport with the patron.[45] Poking fun at oneself for "being obsessed/nerdy about" library search techniques or a particular subject matter gives patrons the opportunity to share one's enthusiasm. A reference to a popular meme or even a lighthearted joke about the weather allows patrons to think about something – anything – other than the tension they may feel about the reference encounter.

Positive reinforcement is the act of giving voice to encouraging comments in order to overcome the internal negative voice of the patron. These phrases may seem pithy or unimportant to librarians, but to stressed and overworked students, small words resonate. At times, positive reinforcement may contradict the Code of Ethics ideal of reserving judgment about a reference question, but in the service of reassurance and rapport-building these comments deserve a voice.[46] Try working the following phrases into the repertoire of small talk at the reference desk: "Wow, this is a challenging question. Thanks for bringing it here," "You've got a great start. Let's see what else we can find to dig a little deeper," and "This can be an overwhelming process. But you can do it! Let me teach you a few tricks to start out."

A vital codicil to the reassurance ideal is reassuring *oneself* about the decisions and communication used during the reference interaction. Using reflective journaling or thinking eases anxiety about one's effectiveness as a reference librarian and puts a plan in place for future interactions. This kind of journaling also incorporates the ideals of Mindful Practice and Empathetic Reflection and Action. Being empathetic and accepting of oneself makes it easier to release a poor reference interaction as a one-time event, instead of ruminating it on it and accepting it as a character flaw.[47] This, rather than actions taken during the RUSA follow-up standard, can be the point at which the librarian may consider the interaction "closed." To practice the reassurance ideal reflectively, librarians may choose to keep a physical or online notebook at hand, jotting down a few key elements of the interaction and, most importantly, cataloguing the emotional reactions on the part of the patron and themselves. Answer these questions: What happened? What did I do? How did the patron respond? How did this make me feel and/or react? How will I do things differently in the future?

Reference interactions are delicate, and can be laden with emotion. While the RUSA guidelines can be seen as a way to establish a service standard within your institution, it is important to handle reference interactions ethically and professionally while incorporating emotional intelligence, mindfulness and critical reflection skills in the Reference 360 framework.

Teaching Reference 360

The articulation and practice of Reference 360 ideals partners well with discussions of RUSA guidelines and typical library reference resources. However, emotional intelligence, mindfulness, and critical reflection are difficult concepts to teach in a classroom setting. In some cases, these forms of tacit knowledge are developed long after other building blocks of reference

service knowledge are internalized. To complicate matters, emotional intelligence, mindfulness, and critical reflection are very personal acts and thus are challenging to assess. The following activities are intended for educators to help students strengthen their practice of the Reference 360 ideals of Emotional Awareness, Mindful Practice, Engaged Communication, Empathetic Reflection and Action, and Reassurance.

Reference 360 class activities

Activity #1: Define It!

Ideal: Emotional Awareness

Learning Objective: To create awareness of the link between external body language and internal emotions during high-pressure learning and public speaking situations.

Directions: Project a series of words overhead, or pass out a sheet of paper with a list of uncommon words. Students volunteer to stand and try to puzzle out the definition of a word, or just make up a definition on the spot. Once the word has been defined, other students in the class describe the definer's body language and emotional state of mind. The definer chooses the student whose description most closely matched what he or she was feeling. That person is the next person defining terms.

Activity #2: Teach Me Something

Ideal: Emotional Awareness, Mindful Practice, Engaged Communication, Empathetic Reflection and Action, Reassurance

Learning objective: To place students in the emotional places of beginning learner and mindful teacher using origami and drawing.

Directions: Have students choose partners, or assign partners randomly. Have each pair decide on a "first teacher" and a "first learner." Hand out origami squares to the learner, and folding directions for an origami shape to the teacher. The teacher will direct the learner how to fold the shape without gesturing or touching the other learner's paper. During the second part of the activity, the teacher becomes the learner and vice versa. This time, hand out drawing paper to the learner and a simple coloring book page to the teacher. The teacher describes the coloring book page to the learner, who draws the scene as the teacher describes.

In class afterwards, reflect on the activity.

- What emotions did you feel as you were teaching?

- What emotions did you observe in your partner?

- How did you determine that was how your partner was feeling?

- What type of body language and facial expression did you observe?

Activity #3: Learning Log[48]

Ideal: Empathetic Reflection and Action, Mindfulness, Reassurance

Learning Objective: To build awareness that a patron may attribute a different meaning and significance to the reference transaction than the librarian.

Directions: Students must step out of their comfort zone, and participate in a new learning experience. It would be best if the new experience has new jargon to learn. For example, students may take a class to learn to knit, ice skate, dance, cook, etc. Or, ask someone to explain how to play a new board game, an online game, or how repair or build something.

Ask students to keep notes during and after the experiment.

- Describe the event.

- Was this a generally a positive or negative experience, and why?

- Did your instructor do anything to reassure you during this experience? How did that make you feel?

- What could the instructor have done differently that would have changed your outlook on this situation?

- When something strikes you as important, significant, or out of the ordinary during the experience, jot it down. How did it make you feel? Excited, angry, frustrated?

- What did the instructor do well?

- What could the instructor have done to make the experience better?

- What could you have done to make the experience better? Did any of your actions or prior experiences affect how you participated in this experience?

- How can this experience make you more mindful when patrons ask for help at the reference desk?

After sharing in small groups, come back together to discuss observations with the full class.

Activity #4: Top Six Habits of Bad Listening[49]

Ideal: Mindful Practice, Engaged Communication, Empathetic Reflection and Action

Learning Objective: To be mindful of listening practices of oneself and others, and practice critical reflection on how mindless communication affects your experiences and the experiences of others.

Directions: Throughout the week, reflect on your listening habits and the listening habits of others during one-on-one, small group (family, work groups, etc.), and large group (school, sporting activities, large lectures, work, etc.) conversations. Identify situations where one or

more of Nichols and Stevens' "six bad listening habits" occurred (see table 1). Jot down notes to share the experience with others in the class.

- Describe the setting and situation: one-on-one, small group, large group

- Were you the sender, receiver, or observer of the message?

- Did you get caught in the act of faking attention? Did you catch someone else in the act of faking attention? How did these situations make you feel?

- Was there a time when the listener did not understand the terminology or the concept being discussed? What happened?

- What emotions, nonverbal cues, and tone of voice did you observe?

- What could have been done differently that would have changed the outcome of the situation?

After sharing in small groups, come back together to discuss observations with the full class.

Table 1 Six bad listening habits

Source: Nichols, Ralph G. *Are You Listening?* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1957), 104-112.

Activity #5: Mindful Eating[50]

Habit	Description
Faking attention	Pretending to listen to the speaker.
***"I-get-the-facts"* listening**	Memorizing facts the speaker is presenting, rather than understanding the overall idea being presented.
Avoiding difficult listening	Tuning out when it becomes difficult to understand the information.
Premature dismissal of a subject as uninteresting	Tuning out when information becomes uninteresting.
Criticizing delivery and physical appearance	Dismissing a speaker based on a clothing choice, accent, speech defect or appearance, rather than based on the content of the information.
Yielding easily to distractions	Averting your attention from the speaker due to noise and/or uncomfortable conditions.

Ideal: Mindful Practice

Learning Objective: To practice mindfulness and consider ways being mindful can enhance other areas of career and life.

Directions: Provide a small, inexpensive, edible treat for the students. Ask students not to eat until instructed. Once two treats are distributed to each student, instruct the students to eat one treat. This will provide the students with a recent experience of consuming a treat in a typical fashion. Next, ask the students to eat the second treat mindfully:

- Pick up the treat

- Look at it carefully and smell the treat

- Place treat in mouth but don't chew it yet

- How does it taste? How does it feel?

- Carefully, and with attention, chew and swallow the treat.

- Are there any aftertastes or other sensations in your mouth?

Engage in a discussion about the experience.

- How did slowing down when eating a treat change the experience?

- What areas of our professional or personal lives could benefit from slowing down?

- How can a reference transaction benefit when the librarian takes the time to interact mindfully?

Activity #6: Name Those Feelings[51]

Ideal: Emotional Awareness

Learning Objective: To foster a sense of self-awareness and an awareness of others emotions.

Directions: Throughout the following week, observe interpersonal interactions you have with individuals or small groups. This may be coworkers, friends, family, or strangers. During the interaction, be mindful of:

- How are you feeling emotionally? Happy, excited, angry, nervous, etc.?

- Why are you feeling this way?

- As you participate in the interaction, do you notice your emotions changing?

- What part(s) of your body responds to these emotions (stomach, chest, throat, skin temperature, etc.)?

- Are others moving toward your emotional state or vice versa?

- Are you intentionally working to change the atmosphere of the interaction? How so? Were you successful?

After each interaction, reflect on questions above in writing. In class, after sharing in small groups, come back together to discuss observations with the full class.

Activity #7: Online Chat Help

Ideal: Mindful Communication, Reassurance, Emotional Reflection and Action

Learning Objective: Observe and reflect on miscommunication, and mirror language choice to build rapport in online environment.

Directions: Students participate in a text-only customer conversation. This activity can be done in class where students role-play a customer service interaction via texting or instant messaging a classmate. Outside of class, students can participate in a chat customer service help center interaction. Being mindful during this experiment, note the following:

- The setting, the information need, and the conversation

- During the transaction experiment with varying (more formal or less formal) word choice. How did that impact the conversation?

- Did your chat partner mirror language with you?

- Did you or your chat partner use reassuring language during the experience? When/why/how was this accomplished? Did this enhance the experience? If not, how did that make you feel?

- Could you determine the tone of the conversation?

- Were any emoticons, or ALL CAPS used during the conversation? Did this affect your experience?

- Reflect on your emotional state during the transaction? What did your chat partner do that made you feel that way?

Students share their experiences with the class. What went well, what didn't go well, and what could have been done differently? Has this experience made you reconsider how you will interact with patrons during chat reference?

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