

Answering Reference Questions

Peter Krauss

School of Information, College of Arts and Sciences, University of South Florida

LIS 6603: Basic Information Sources and Services

Dr. Richard Austin

April 21, 2025

Answering Reference Questions

Part 1: Database Searches Questions and Answers

Question 1

I can't remember the title of a book that was written that pokes fun at Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*. Can you help me find it and tell me if it's still available?

Answer 1

1A. The Complete Answer to the Question

The title of the book is *The wind done gone* by Alice Randall (Randall, 2001). It is available, and you can find the nearest available library copy through WorldCat here:

<https://search.worldcat.org/title/49875596>.

1B. Query Analysis (Givens, Wanteds, and Modifiers) and Additional Access Points

Givens: The user is looking for a book that is a parody or satire of *Gone with the Wind*, but can't recall the title. Wanteds: The title of the parody book and if the book is still available.

Modifiers: It's implied that the book is popular enough to be found based on its relationship to *Gone with the Wind*. Potential additional access points (if the patron remembers): author name, publication date, description of the cover or plot, other potential keywords.

1C. The Search Strategy Used, Including Keywords and Limits

I used USF Libraries Primo Research Assistant to find the correct answer by entering the full question into the search bar (University of South Florida Libraries, 2025a). It didn't give the answer, but suggested parodies, which gave the correct answer. I then took the answer and searched it on the WorldCat website and found one near me. Keywords include parody, *Gone with the Wind*, satire. Limitations: lack of information could lead to incorrect answers or search tools misinterpreting inputs.

1D. The Database You Consulted to Find the Answer.

I started with Primo Research Assistant, then entered the answer I found into the WorldCat library book database.

1E. Any questions you would ask your patron in a reference interview for clarification.

Is there anything else you remember about the book (author's name, a character, or where you heard about it)? Is there a specific format you're looking for the book to be in? Is there a particular project you're finding this book for? Do you need a citation for this information?

Question 2:

The Andrea Doria was a ship made famous by its sinking in the 1950s. When was she first launched?

Answer 2***2A. The Complete Answer to the Question***

The Andrea Doria was launched on June 16, 1951 (Moniz, 2016).

2B. Query Analysis (Givens, Wanteds, and Modifiers) and Additional Access Points

Givens: the ship is named Andrea Doria. It became famous for sinking in the 1950s. Wanteds: the launch date of the Andrea Doria. Modifiers: the patron is interested in historical facts, and the time period is the 1950s. Potential additional access points: information on the ship, news/archives about the launch or sinking, and maritime databases.

2C. The Search Strategy Used, Including Keywords and Limits

I began my search using Primo Research Assistant by entering the full question, and it provided a link to a magazine article in Proquest that provided the correct answer (University of South Florida Libraries, 2025b). Keywords include Andrea Doria, launch date, 1950s ship.

Limitations include potential access limitations to databases, potential confusion between launch date and crash date.

2D. The Database You Consulted to Find the Answer.

Primo Research Assistant led me to Proquest.

2E. Any questions you would ask your patron in a reference interview for clarification.

Is there any other information about the ship you would like me to find? Is there a specific angle or type of resource you're looking to get this information from? Would you like primary sources? Do you need a citation for this information?

Question 3

There have been at least two live elephant calves born at Disney. When was the first one born and was it male or female? And can you tell me what it was named?

Answer 3

3A. The Complete Answer to the Question

The first elephant calf born at Disney's Animal Kingdom was a male named Tufani, born in 2003 (Koeh, 2025).

3B. Query Analysis (Givens, Wanteds, and Modifiers) and Additional Access Points

Givens: Disney has had at least two elephant calves born at Animal Kingdom. Wanteds: date of the first elephant's birth, sex of the elephant, and its name. Modifiers: specific location is Disney's Animal Kingdom. Potential additional access points: the Animal kingdom website, elephant birth and name records, and species registries/databases.

3C. The Search Strategy Used, Including Keywords and Limits

I couldn't find it in the USF databases, so I googled "Elephant Database" and was taken to this website: <https://www.elephant.se/>. At the Elephant Database I searched for Disney's

Animal Kingdom, then clicked on the births section. Keywords include elephant, birth, Disney, animal kingdom. The main limitation is a lack of academic sources.

3D. The Database You Consulted to Find the Answer.

The database I consulted was Elephant Database, a public database.

3E. Any questions you would ask your patron in a reference interview for clarification.

Is there any other Disney elephant information you would like (other Disney elephants and information on them, other elephants in general, etc.)? Does the source of the information matter, like does it need to be academic, or are public databases acceptable? Do you need a citation for this information?

Part 2: Reference Questions

Question 1

I'm worried about allowing my child to have foods with aspartame. How much of it is safe to eat on a regular basis?

Answer 1

1A. The Complete Answer to the Question

Unless the child has phenylketonuria, aspartame is safe at the current acceptable EFSA levels of less than 40 mg per kg of body weight, or almost 90 mg per pound of bodyweight (Biernikiewicz, J., Biernikiewicz, M., Wilewska, A., Pomirski, B., & Pomirska, A., et al., 2025).

1B. Query Analysis (Givens, Wanteds, and Modifiers) and Additional Access Points

Givens: the patron is a parent concerned with the safety of their child's aspartame consumption
Wanteds: information on how much aspartame is safe for a child to regularly

consume. Modifiers: specifically about children and aspartame consumption. Potential additional access points: other potential keywords.

1C. The Search Strategy Used, Including Keywords and Limits

For my search strategy I typed “Is aspartame safe children” into the quicksearch bar and found a variety of results. Reviewing results, this was an article in a peer reviewed journal with more than one author and that didn’t focus strictly on aspartame studies on rats or mice. I reviewed the information and found that it adequately answered the question. Keywords include aspartame, safe consumption, acceptable intake, and in children. Limitations include potential unaccounted for bias, influence from sources focusing on rat/mice studies, and adult centered studies.

1D. The Database You Consulted to Find the Answer.

The database this answer was sourced from is the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ).

1E. Any questions you would ask your patron in a reference interview for clarification.

Does your child have phenylketonuria? Are there any sources in particular you’re looking to get an answer from (WHO, EFSA, FDA)? How much does your child weigh? Would you like a citation for this information?

Question 2

In human services, the word "elopement" is sometimes used to characterize a patient "illegally" leaving a nursing home (as with an Alzheimer’s patient) or a mental health facility, as in so and so is an "elopement risk." I was wondering if you know how this romantic term came to be coined this way.

Answer 2

2A. The Complete Answer to the Question

The word elopement, or specifically elope, is borrowed from the French word aloper in the 14th century (Oxford English Dictionary, 2025). It is hypothesized to trace back to a Middle English word meaning “to leap away.” It’s also similar to Dutch and German words that mean “to run away.” Both the romantic connotations of running away and the general concept of running away evolved side by side and the term was later adopted in healthcare settings to refer to patients leaving without authorization.

2B. Query Analysis (Givens, Wanteds, and Modifiers) and Additional Access Points

Givens: elopement has meaning in both healthcare and romance. Wanted: An explanation of how the term elopement came to be applied in a healthcare context, and the historical/etymological pathway of the word. Modifiers: the patron is curious about the shift in meaning and possibly reasons for clinical adoption. Additional Access Points: historical context and shifts in clinical terminology.

2C. The Search Strategy Used, Including Keywords and Limits

I remembered learning that the Oxford English Dictionary was a credible go to source for etymologies, so I searched the word “Elope” and found what I was looking for. Keywords include elopement, elope, and etymology. Limitations include lack of clinical context, few sources giving a history of standardized healthcare literature.

2D. The Database You Consulted to Find the Answer.

I consulted the Oxford English Dictionary.

2E. Any questions you would ask your patron in a reference interview for clarification.

Are you primarily interested in the etymology of the word, or how it came to be used in clinical and institutional settings? Are you looking for any specific kind of sources? Would you like a citation for this information?

Question 3

When Al Gore published *Earth in Balance* in 1992 he became the second incumbent senator to have a best-selling title. Who was the first?

Answer 3

3A. The Complete Answer to the Question

The first senator to have a best-selling title was JFK with *Profiles in Courage* (HarperCollins Publishers, 2025).

3B. Query Analysis (Givens, Wanteds, and Modifiers) and Additional Access Points

Givens: Al Gore published Earth in the Balance in 1992, which made him the 2nd incumbent senator to have a best-selling book. Wanteds: the identity of the 1st incumbent senator to have a best-selling book. Modifiers: must have been an incumbent U.S. senator when the book became a best-seller, and the book must have been considered a bestseller. Potential additional access points: bestsellers by senators, incumbent senators with best selling books, and a cross-reference of people in senate and best selling books.

3C. The Search Strategy Used, Including Keywords and Limits

Due to a lack of coverage in academic databases, I corroborated the answer using multiple independent sources including HarperCollins and Biblio.com. Although they do have a bias and are not as credible as an archival or academic source, recognizing the limitations of non academic verification. Keywords include senator, bestseller, and incumbent. Limitations include

lack of academic sources, lack of clarification on “bestseller,” and potential bias from commercial interests.

3D. The Database You Consulted to Find the Answer.

Due to a lack of coverage in academic databases, I corroborated the answer using multiple independent sources including HarperCollins and Biblio.com. Although they do have a bias and are not as credible as an archival or academic source, recognizing the limitations of non academic verification.

3E. Any questions you would ask your patron in a reference interview for clarification.

Are you looking for senators who had best selling books while in office, or is any other time in their life okay? Do you need confirmation from academic or peer reviewed sources acceptable? What qualifies as a bestseller to you? Does the genre of book matter? Would you like a citation for this information?

References

- Biernikiewicz, M., Biernikiewicz, J., Wilewska, A., Pomirski, B., Pomirska, A., Borowiec, A., Alabrudziński, K., Borowiec, K., Kwaśniewska, P., & Hovsepyan, A. (2025, December 2). Aspartame in the Diet: A Contribution to the Debate on Safety and Health Impact. *Journal of Education, Health and Sport*, 78. <https://doi.org/10.12775/jehs.2025.78.56847>
- HarperCollins Publishers. (2025). *Profiles in courage*. 200.hc.com. <https://200.hc.com/stories/profiles-in-courage-2/>
- Koehl, D. (2025). Facts about captive born elephants at Disney's Animal Kingdom in United States. Elephant Encyclopedia. https://www.elephant.se/location2.php?location_id=304&show=3
- Moniz, R. (2016, September). Survey of Legendary Andrea Doria Wreck. *Sea Technology*, 57(9), 25-27. <https://www.proquest.com/trade-journals/survey-legendary-andrea-doria-wreck/docview/1822424378/se-2>
- Oxford English Dictionary. (2025). Elope, v. In Oxford English Dictionary. Oxford University Press. https://www.oed.com/dictionary/elope_v
- Randall, A. (2001). The wind done gone. Houghton Mifflin. <https://www.worldcat.org/oclc/45002181>
- University of South Florida Libraries. (2025, April 11). Primo Research Assistant (Beta) [Large language model]. Response to prompt ‘I can’t remember the title of a book that was written that pokes fun at Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind*. Can you help me find

it and tell me if it's still available?"

https://usf-flvc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/researchAssistant?vid=01FALSC_US

[F:USF](#)

University of South Florida Libraries. (2025, April 11). *Primo Research Assistant* (Beta) [Large language model]. Response to prompt "The Andrea Doria was a ship made famous by its sinking in the 1950s. When was she first launched?"

https://usf-flvc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/researchAssistant?vid=01FALSC_US

[F:USF](#)