Mary K’s Rules of RA  
   
LISTEN TO THE USER and try to find out what the person likes and/or loathes to read.  
  
It doesn’t matter what you (the librarian) read; only what the user does. Do not suggest something you’ve liked unless you are sure that it matches what the reader likes.  
  
Do not say that you have not read or heard of the author the user presents you with. It doesn’t matter and is not an excuse for poor service. Do not mock your suggestions in a self-deprecating manner.  
  
Do not use the library catalog as your first resort, nor foist it off on the user.  
  
Do not automatically assume the user wants another book by the same author. Find out before you suggest books by the same author.  
  
Do not automatically assume the author mentioned only writes the same kind of books every time.  
  
Do not just point to the new books shelf or send the user to the stacks without making it very clear where they should be going. Preferably go with them.  
  
Explain what you’re doing as you search.  
  
If you use an RA electronic tool, explain what it is and how to use it.  
  
Suggest more than one read-a-like since suggestions are at best imperfect matches. This increases your chances of a good match.  
  
Do not assume that the need is urgent without asking. Taking a little more time and emailing or phoning a result can lead to a better result. Don’t be afraid to ask for more time to help them.  
  
Do not assume that genre readers read EVERYTHING in a genre. Find out what subcategories they might like first. Be aware of the genres and types of books you dislike personally so you don’t inadvertently ignore them for users who do like them.  
  
Be sure to verify your suggestions with the library’s collection.