**Reference Encounter Report Form**

*Part I: Reference Interview with Abductive Reasoning (Designed to transform an explicit question into the tacit question)*

1) What was your patron’s original (explicit) question?

My patron’s question was: “I’m opening a nursery in the next county over and I was hoping to find a good, recent book with information specifically about flowering plants, preferably with illustrations. Can you recommend something?”

2) Describe your patron’s motivation and secret.

After hearing my patron’s question, I could deduce that she was opening a nursery and needed materials to help her with her work. She said she wanted a book that was recent, and the subject of the book needed to be specifically about flowering plants. A book with illustrations of some kind were preferred but not essential. After completing the interview, my patron told me her secret was that she recently got in trouble for growing marijuana and wanted to find some legal but still interesting plants to grow. I partly discovered the secret when I asked if there were any plants she particularly wanted to know about, and she said she was looking for information on more exotic plants.

3) What clarifying questions did you ask, and why?

I first asked my patron to be more specific about what she meant by recent, so I could narrow my search to books that she would find most helpful. I then asked her what she meant by illustrations – would pictures also work or did she want illustrations only? I asked this because her meaning could have matched either description of illustrations. I asked if she was looking for information on any flowering plants in particular because that could help me narrow my search and bring the patron more relevant information. Finally, I asked if she would want only print books or if e-books would also work because her answer could dramatically alter the number of results I would be able to search as well as ensure I would find the most helpful materials for my patron.

Reference book

4) Summarize the clues you have discovered with your clarifying questions using the FATES method:

Format – What type of media is the patron interested in? (Books, Articles, Ready Facts, Archival Objects, Web Sites, etc.)

The patron said she would like print books so she could use bookmarks to assist her research, but later reconsidered and said e-books would also work for her.

Audience – What level of scholarly sophistication is the patron looking for in their results?

The patron was looking for information pertaining to her business and not for academic research, so she did not need a high level of scholarly sophistication. She was more interested in finding good options for plants to feature at her nursery than in-depth information about flowering plants.

Topic – What is the question about?

The question is about flowering plants.

Essential Content – What is must be included in the answer in order for it to be complete?

The answer must direct the patron to at least one book about flowering plants that is recent enough by the patron’s standards. The book will preferably feature pictures of some sort and should feature at least in part more exotic plants.

Scope – What are the historical, geographical, or conceptual limits set by the patron’s question?

The patron only wanted recent books – when asked to clarify how recent, she said nothing older than 1990. The patron also set some geographical limits by stating that she was interested in exotic plants. Because my patron lives in Washington D.C., I defined exotic plants to plants not native to the northeastern U.S. I did not believe there were any conceptual limits set by her question.

5) Recapitulate your patron’s explicit question to reflect your understanding of their tacit question.

After asking clarifying questions, my patron’s question could be summarized as: “I’m opening a nursery in the next county over, and I was hoping to find a good book or e-book no more than a decade old with information specifically about flowering plants, preferably with illustrations or photos. I’d especially like books with information about exotic flowering plants. Can you recommend something?”

*Part II Determining Where to Begin with Deductive Reasoning (Designed to build a starting strategy)*

6) What do the FATES tell you about how you should construct a search? Example: “My patron’s topic is Golden Age Science Fiction, and they want to know who the editors of Astonishing Tales were, specifically. Because the patron only needs general information on a broad topic not looking for research, I don’t need to search the article databases since those tend to focus on very specific topics. Since this is for personal edification instead of something that need to cite in a paper, the work doesn’t have to be scholarly or peer reviewed. Since they care about the Golden Age, I’ll need to make sure it has coverage for the 1940’s – 1950’s and maybe a little earlier if Astonishing Tales was from the Pulp Age instead.”

My patron’s topic is flowering plants or, more specifically, exotic flowering plants. She wants information on these plants because she is opening a nursery, so a source that presented a wide variety of plants with more general information would be preferable to one that had in-depth information. Therefore, I will not search article databases because they wouldn’t provide the best information for my patron. She also asked specifically about books, so I will need to filter my search to books and e-books only. My patron also asked for recent material, so I will limit my search to materials from 1990 to today. The work will not need to be scholarly because the patron needs the source for personal use.

7) Given your answer in question 6, which of the following type(s) of reference sources are most likely to hold the answer to the patron’s questions? justify your selection in a way that mentions the purpose or function of the type of reference source. If none of these seem like a good fit, explain why not. Example: “My initial strategy is to consult an almanac because it is the reference source most concerned with facts associated with the time of year and my patron is looking into when is the best time to plant heirloom tomatoes in Florida.”

Almanac, Atlas, Bibliography (Including Library Catalogs and Archival Finding Aids), Biographical Dictionary, Chronology, Concordance, Dictionary, Directory, Encyclopedia, Gazetteer, Guidebook, Handbook, Index (Including Article Databases), Manual, or Yearbook. (Note: The Internet, Scout, and Search Engines like Google and Bing are not types of reference sources.)

The resource most likely to fulfill my patron’s needs would be an encyclopedia because it includes general information on a variety of subjects and can be tailored to specific topics such as plants. Because my patron is looking for information about a variety flowering plants, a plant encyclopedia of some kind would be an ideal reference source.

8) Using 6 and 7 as your logical building blocks, give your rationale for where you intend to begin your search. Be as specific as possible. (Example: “Given my understanding of the question, and of the types of reference sources that exist, I should begin my search trying to find a retrospective encyclopedia of 20th Century Science Fiction and Fantasy since it will likely have general interest entries for Astonishing Tales. I can then move on to look up any references it sites if the patron wants further details.”

After reflecting on my patron’s question and the reference sources available, I should start my search looking for an encyclopedia of plants from the past 20 years or so because it will likely have a section on flowering plants plus illustrations of some sort. It will also probably include information on more exotic plants that my patron is interested in.

*Part III: Documenting Your Search Process with Experimental Reasoning (Designed to illuminate your decision making)*

9) Tell the story of how your search unfolded. Here you will leave a breadcrumb trail, beginning with the starting point your deduced in question 8, then documenting each subsequent source you visited in your search process. Provide the following for each: A). The name of each source used during your search (especially those you used unsuccessfully), B). A statement of why you selected that source, and C). how you knew this resource would not answer the question and it was time to move on to the next resource. You may find it useful to type up this section as an outline. At the end of this section, please include the unique identifier(s) you gave to your patron so that I can examine your final sources. Examples of a unique identifier are a full bibliographic citation, a digital object identifier (doi), or a webpage permalink. If no unique identifier was available, explain what you did to ensure the patron could access the source(s) you provided.

I chose to start my search with Scout advanced search because we were looking for a more general resource and because I felt most comfortable with Scout. I started off by putting flowering plants as subject terms, limiting the publishing date to the years my patron specified, and checking off the box for print books. This returned no results. I tried unchecking the print books box and then changing from subject terms to no limiter and still got no results. At this point I did think of switching to another method but didn’t for a few reasons: I was confident I could yield some results from Scout; I was unsure of how to search for encyclopedias; and I was getting more conscious of how much time I was taking and didn’t want to find a whole new database to use. I then tried a more general search of flowers and only limited by publication date and got some results. My patron had said at this point that e-books were also okay, so I then limited the search to e-books by using the side menu. This search led me to two e-book options for my patron, listed below. I chose these books because they both included information on exotic flowering plants. I read their descriptions and looked at sample chapters to ensure that these books would meet my patron’s requirements. They were both recent, featured photos, and contained the desired information. The patron told me the options worked for her, and we concluded the interview.

Gustafson, R., Herbst, D. R., & Rundel, P. W. (2014). *Hawaiian plant life: vegetation and flora*.

Webb, M. (2013). *Australian native plants: The Kings Park experience*. Collingwood, VIC: CSIRO Publishing.

10) Per your patron state did you complete the reference encounter successfully? If not, what else might you have done?

My patron said she was satisfied with the sources I came up with. Although I did not completely uncover her secret, she said I understood it enough to provide some helpful information. She also said that I consistently explained my search strategy as I went, and she could follow along with my though process. She also appreciated that I asked if she had anything else she needed before completing the interview. Although my partner did not mention this, I believe I could have been more successful if I had been more familiar with the search tools available and knew how to use them better. After repeatedly pulling up no results on my first search attempts I started to feel panicked that I wouldn’t be able to find anything for my patron. I realized that just learning about the resources in class wouldn’t be enough, and I would play around with them myself to really understand how they work.

11) Please reflect on what you learned about user services as a result of answering the patron’s question.

I learned about the pressure you feel when a patron comes to you with a question that cannot be easily answered. Most of the questions I field at work come down to, “Do you own this material?” This question was much more complex than that and proved even harder once I tried to search for it. I kept a running commentary of my search results for my patron, but it became embarrassing to keep admitting I wasn’t pulling up anything. Dealing with that pressure will probably be one of the hardest parts of the reference interview for me, but I learned that it is more important to pull up quality information than quick information. As someone who relies on Google, it is hard for me to not have that instant gratification. This exercise taught me that library searches are much more complicated than a typical Google search, and I will have to learn how to use the library’s resources better in order to be successful.