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EXPERIENCE YOU CAN DEPEND ON BAKER & TAYLOR a GRACE company
The Telephone Interview: A Preliminary Screening Tool

Katina Strauch
Head, Collection Development Department
Robert S. Small Library
College of Charleston Library

Bruce Strauch
Asst. Prof. of Business Administration
The Citadel

The hiring of professional librarians is a very important administrative activity. According to Richard Fear, the early selection process should have two objectives: (a) to eliminate applicants with inappropriate qualifications; and (b) to provide as much information as possible to the interviewer. Whether or not a library can afford to pay travel and expenses for prospective employees, the fact that travel expenses are soaring is of great relevance in this process. Alternative solutions for obtaining information about applications prior to a formal interview on campus are worth considering.

One alternative which has been explored at the College of Charleston Library is the telephone interview. Using this interviewing tool can allow an institution to obtain further information on a candidate in a minimum of time and at minimum expense. Indeed, telephone interviews keep one from judging an applicant on extraneous factors, such as dress, appearance, and the like, making the selection process more objective.

Logistics

The selection committee chooses potential candidates for a position. Candidates are called first to assure scheduling of a date when they can answer questions from the entire selection committee. Generally, candidates prefer to be called at home and the interview takes from thirty minutes to one hour. Each member of the selection committee is present for the interview at a separate telephone. The chair of the committee asks the questions, but the individual members of the committee are introduced at the beginning of the interview and the candidate is told beforehand that each member will be “listening in” on the interview. At the end of the interview, the candidate and members of the entire committee have the opportunity to ask questions.

Candidates are asked prepared questions by the members of the selection committee. These questions are designed by the committee members who are furnished with a copy of the questions, so that as questions are asked they can make notes. In accordance with affirmative action and equal opportunity guidelines, this procedure assures that all candidates will be asked the same questions in the same manner. Also, each member of the selection committee hears answers to questions at the same time and in the same context. Though interviews have never been tape recorded at the College of Charleston, this is certainly a possibility and was reported favorably by Kegel.

Applicants’ reactions to the telephone interview have been favorable, given the fact that, in an interview situation, opinions may be less than candid. However, upon having the procedure outlined to them, applicants have been supportive and eager to answer questions. Indeed, some have commented (either orally or in writing) that they appreciate the opportunity of exchanging information prior to an on-campus interview.

Conclusion

At the College of Charleston, the telephone interview has provided valuable input into each of the three functions of an interview: (a) determining relevant experience; (b) appraising personality, motivation, and character; and (c) evaluating intellectual functioning.

Obviously, it cannot take the place of an on-campus, in-person interview, but it can help refine and expedite the selection process.

Footnotes

3 Examples of questions asked are in the appendix to this paper. Copies of all questions asked are available from the author.
4 Kegel, p. 50.
5 Fear, p. 24.

Appendix

Examples Of Questions Asked

I. General Experience
   a. Have you ever worked with approval plans? Tell us about your experience.
   b. Do you have any bookkeeping experience? Please elaborate.
   c. What is your philosophy of collection development?

II. Supervisory Experience
   a. How many professional and paraprofessionals have you supervised?
   b. Have you done formal, written evaluations on these people?
   c. How would you describe your supervisory style?

III. Teaching Experience
   a. What sort of college teaching have you done?
   b. What do you think the role of the Technical Services Librarian is in teaching?

IV. Professional Growth and Development
   a. What are your professional goals?
   b. How do you think that this job would help you achieve those goals?
   c. What do you think is your most outstanding accomplishment as a librarian?
An Online Workshop: Implications For Public Services

Suzanne Holler
Chair, SCLA Online Users' Interest Group
Windthop College

The question of what makes an online interview and search process less effective than it could be was addressed by the entire group. Some of the typical problems encountered and for which a searcher should be prepared follow.

Problems relating to patrons.
1. Patron is a "muddy thinker." 2. Patron is uncooperative or totally ignorant of subject. 3. Patron will not spend time necessary for interview; will not allow time to check thesauri. 4. Patron will not tell why search is needed; will not get into specifics of what is needed or what is expected. 5. Patron is requesting search for a third party. 6. Patron has specific cost limits. 7. Patron feels he or she knows it all and will not listen to searcher; patron forces direction of search in way that will not work. 8. Patron is not a native English speaker. 9. Patron is visually handicapped. 10. Patron has poor handwriting.

Problems relating to unrealistic expectations.
1. Interview is expected on-the-spot. 2. Results are expected immediately. 3. Costs are felt to be unreasonable. 4. Computer is bestowed with omnipotence. 5. Concepts of precision and recall are not adequately grasped. 6. Library is expected to own all sources listed.

Problems relating to the search topic.
1. Topic is not well defined (too broad; too narrow; unclear). 2. Searcher is not experienced with subject terminology. 3. Patron is requesting search for a third party. 4. What is needed or what is expected. 5. Patron is not a native English speaker. 6. Patron is visually handicapped. 7. Patron is not a native English speaker. 8. Patron has poor handwriting.

Problems relating to search mechanics.
1. Scheduling problems arise. 2. Distractions occur during interview. 3. Searcher is weak on database and patron is present. 4. Searcher is nervous because patron is present.

The Online Reference Interview

Trish Ridgeway, head of reference at Winthrop College in Rock Hill, discussed "The Online Reference Interview," making the major point that communications is really the core of any type of interview. As with people involved in all communication processes, library patrons have a need to preserve their own self concepts, and a good interviewer will keep in mind those aspects of a search interview that a patron may find threatening, particularly a new patron who does not know what to expect in terms of assistance or who is unsure of his or her own subject knowledge. A real desire to help, good manners, and a sincere interest in the topic are the qualities that are basic to a good interviewer.

The essential difference between a search interview and a reference interview is the effect of a bad interview on the search process. While in a regular interview misinterpretations may be worked out and strategies changed or renegotiated, all of the information necessary to conduct an effective search must be garnered beforehand, as there is usually no second chance to verify the searcher's assumptions about the search topic.

Some of the items which should be covered in a pre-search interview are listed below. They do not need to be discussed in order, some may be covered simultaneously, and others skipped if the patron has had previous searches.

The Interview

1. Explain what a computer search can and cannot do (e.g., appropriateness of a search; Boolean logic; recall vs. precision; limitations in data-base coverage; print and price options; etc.). 2. Discuss the topic (e.g., consult appropriate dictionaries, etc., for clarification; look at any known relevant citations; etc.). 3. Choose online system(s) and database(s) to be searched (including discussion of differences among relevant systems and databases). 4. Clarify search restrictions (i.e., language; geographic area; time period; price limitations). 5. Select access terms (e.g., examine controlled vocabularies; choose free-text terms; consider truncation, synonyms, etc.). 6. Develop search strategy (e.g., decide concept categories; work out search sequence; anticipate false drops; plan alternatives; etc.). 7. If the patron is to be present at terminal) Explain what will go on; review potential tactics; be prepared to try alternative strategies or to log-off if necessary.

The Online Reference Services: Does Your Program Need a Facelift? had broader implications and wider applicability than simply presenting considerations for online services personnel.

For the benefit of those librarians who did not attend the workshop, or for those who did and did not take notes, what follows is a summary of workshop sessions that yielded information having a bearing on public service policies and reference work in general. Much of what is listed below was generated from group work at the meetings.

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those libraries, there is very little difference between the way that online services are
publilization and the way that library services in general are promoted.

Judith Duffie, information specialist at American Hoechst Film Division in
Greer, addressed the problem of publicity within special libraries. From a survey she
conducted of the special libraries in the Greenville-Spartanburg area, she discovered
that there is very little systematic effort within those libraries to publicize online
services. The vast majority of special libraries are small enough that their staffs have
and frequent contact with their patrons. This means that special libraries rely
heavily on word-of-mouth publicity for their services. Other methods which are
employed successfully include brochures and hand-outs, meetings, in-house
demonstrations, and new employee orientation sessions. As a general rule, users of special libraries have more of an awareness of search services, and a
recognition of their need for those services, than do patrons in other types of libraries.

The issue of publicity for online services in academic libraries was presented by
David Lincore, reference librarian at USC's Thomas Cooper Library in Columbia. He
stressed eliminating the misconception in libraries that only formal marketing and
advertising have price tags and that publicity is "free." To be effective, a publicity
campaign for an online service, especially a new one, should be quite active, should
identify the various markets within the patron community, and should target its
efforts toward those markets. An academic library could define its market by patron
status (student, faculty, staff, etc.), by information needs (research, problem solving,
decision making, etc.), or by subject (departmental approach). A promotional
brochure is imperative, but it should only be an adjunct to other effective means of
publicity, such as letters to individuals or groups, online demonstrations (but only if
well organized and thought out), and mentions in seminars and bibliographic
instruction classes. Finally, of course, word-of-mouth will also play an important part
in publicizing search services.

The representative for public libraries, Doris Wright, head of reference at
Spartanburg Public Library, spoke last on this topic and stressed the need for active
and continuous publicity in a library whose patrons are the general public. Those
patrons are less likely to perceive a personal need for search services than are those
other types of libraries. (It is for that same reason that so few public libraries even
make online searching available.) Many of the same marketing techniques presented
earlier are also applicable to public libraries, but they must also avail themselves of
such methods as direct mailings to the community, in-house presentations, speeches
to civic groups, and providing occasional unsolicited searches targeted to a person's
or a group's needs in the hope that more business will thus be generated.

Online Service Policies: Why Do We Write So Few?

In an examination of why so few search services have gotten beyond writing
down who is eligible for search and how and what they will be charged, Carol
Iglauer, coordinator of online services at the University of North Carolina at
Charlotte, went a long way toward alleviating the guilt so many online coordinators
feel at having not written policies. A fairly extensive survey of North and South
Carolina libraries offering search services and of a comprehensive literature search
show that there is very little systematic written in the way of online policies.

The difference between policies (overall principles and operating procedures) and
procedures (step-by-step instructions) is often misunderstood. Some libraries have procedures manuals, almost unavoidable when there is more than one
searcher, but very few have policy manuals. Policies must follow from the objectives
of the program, but many libraries have never gotten beyond the objective that

"search services will be offered". Frequently, those policies that do exist are "appeal"
policies or "common law" policies decided on an as needed basis.

There are a number of conflicts or potential conflicts that arise when trying to
formalize online policies. One such conflict is that the policies developed may not be
in agreement with existing policies. (The classic dilemma of whether to provide
information or provide instruction is a case in point.) The administrative organization
of the library may be another problem area. Many, if not most, search service
coordinators are not department heads, and this can raise sticky questions of
authority when matters of evaluation come up.

The largest problem which arises out of formalized written policies is that they
quite often constrain, rather than enhance, the search service. Searchers may find
themselves locked into a way of doing things that has no room for flexibility or
exceptions to the rules. It is desirable in many situations not be forced into inflexibility
in matters of patron responsibility (the patron must be present for the interview; the
patron must always pay all costs charged to the library; the patron may not be present
when the search is run; etc.), and it is certainly to the advantage of the searcher to
have some leeway in matters of searcher responsibility (questions of who pays for
costly mistakes; legal and privacy issues that arise with the use of signed search
forms, etc.)

To write a policy manual that merely reiterates the policies of the larger
departmental division is counterproductive (although all too often, the broader
division has also not thought out its policies). Perhaps what is needed in terms of
policies and policy manuals for online search services is not explicit and detailed rules
and regulations covering every possible situation, but broad statements that imply
policy or set down those existing appeal policies. Most search services seem to be
muddling through fairly effectively without policy manuals at all, and it may be the time
to stop worrying about not having one.

In an exercise designed to make the group think about the kinds of instructions
and information an incoming searcher taking over an existing search service would
need, the following list was drawn up identifying those areas of policy that at least
merit thought and attention. Deciding the policies for a search service is one area
where the ramifications are great for other areas in the organization, for the goals,
objectives, and policies of the online service are entirely dependent upon those of
the larger body of which it is a part.

In the group exercise, the basic premise was granted that before any other
questions were addressed, certain procedural matters would have to be settled in
order for the incoming searcher to search at all. The policy list does not, therefore,
concern such things as how to use the terminal, where the terminal is located, what
password to use, how to fill in the search log (if there is one), etc.

Policies to consider.

1. Goals of the parent organization. 2. Philosophy of service (including goals and
and down) 5. Scheduling (on-demand service? hour limitations?) 6. Interviewing (face-to-
face? phone? written? how much information must patron provide?) 7. Searching
(patron present? patron allowed to perform own search?) 8. In-house use of service
(staff, reference questions, etc.) 9. How far to take subsidized searches. 10. Search
delivery (through search service only? mailed to patron? etc.) 11. Document delivery
(provided? collection development policies?) 12. Retention policies (searches kept?
records kept? how long? any attempt to act as clearinghouse for duplicate searches?)
Recent South Caroliniana: A Partial List

John K. Waters
South Carolina Library
University of South Carolina

This bibliography is the 23rd of its kind to appear in the South Carolina Librarian. It cumulates the previous lists and is intended to serve as an acquisitions tool for the State's librarians. Works whose primary interest is genealogical have been omitted this year.

Aiken, South Carolina as a health and pleasure resort. Aiken, SC: Dorothy K. MacDowell, 1982. 60 p. (reprint of 1889 ed.)

Alexander, Jerry L.

Baker, Robert Andrews.
Adventure in faith, the first 300 years of First Baptist Church, Charleston, South Carolina, Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1982. 400 p.

Barnwell, John.

Bleier, Carol.

Boyd, Blanche M.

Boyleston, Samuel L.

Brantley, Tootsie Dennis.

Bridwell, Ronald Edward.
That we should have a port: a history of the port of Georgetown, South Carolina, 1732-1865. Delivered at the 1982 South Carolina Institute of Archeology, 1982. iv, 52 p.

Brooks, Mark J.
An intensive archaeological survey and testing of the proposed lower Dorchester County wastewater facilities project. Columbia: U.S.C. Inst. of Archeology, 1981. vii, 97 p. (Research manuscript series, no. 183)

Brooks, Mark J.

Bush, Charles H.

Byars, Alvin W.
Olympia Pacifie, the way it was, 1895-1970. West Columbia, SC: Professional Printers, 1981. xiv, 482 p.

Calhoun, John C.

Campbell, Edward D.C.

Canoutis, Veletta.

Carpi, Claude R.

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Greene, Karen.

Hall, Reid.

Hammet, Ben Hay.

Harris, Charlane.

Haskell, Helen Woolford.

Herd, Elmer Don.


Holcomb, Brent.
Fairfield County, South Carolina, minutes of the County Court, 1780-1799. Easley: Southern Historical Pr., 1981. 193 p.

Holcomb, Brent.

Holcomb, Brent.
Marborough County, South Carolina: minutes of the County Court, 1785-1799 and minutes of the Court of Ordinary, 1791-1821. Easley: Southern Historical Pr., 1981. iii, 147 p.

Hoole, William Stanley.


Kimsey, John Lansing.

King, G. Wayne.

Lake, William Calkhoun.

Lake, William Calkhoun.

Lashley, Dolores C.

Latham, Robert.
History of Hopewell Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, Chester, Co. Genealogical Society, 1981. 79 p. (Facsim. of 1879 ed.)

Littlefield, Daniel C.


Lumpkin, Henry.

Lumpkin, Henry.

Lumpkin, Julie.

Mabrey, Mannie Lee.

MacDowell, Dorothy Kelly.
An Aiken scrapbook, a picture narrative of Aiken and Aiken County. Aiken: D.K. MacDowell, 1982. 2 v. (194; 144 p.)
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The Bibliographic Instruction Coordinator;
Orientation/Instruction Round-up

Lea Messner has been recently hired at Clemson in a newly established position for Clemson—bibliographic instruction coordinator. I asked Lea to serve as guest columnist this issue and share her philosophy and ideas about her new job. - Trish Ridgeway.

Noises from a New Animal

“Bibliographic instruction,” the current phrase in the reference librarians’ vocabulary, is quickly becoming the slogan for the 1980’s. We encounter the term weekly, if not daily. It has replaced online bibliographic searching experience as the number two requirement in many job announcements. It sneaks up on library directors as they reappoint their budgets, and has caused many reference departments to reassess their purpose, analyze their services, and restructure their job descriptions. It even has its own lingo. We are not just public service librarians, we are educators and consultants.

New terminology? Maybe. A new service? Hardly. Librarians have been practicing bibliographic instruction or providing user education services on a one-to-one basis since the initiation of open stacks. Many “trend-setting” institutions foresaw the value of expanding these individual consultations into organized programs, benefiting a large number of their users at one time. However, these programs were often left to the discretion of the reference staff as a whole, taken for granted by administrators, and reflected the enthusiasm and imagination of individual reference librarians with diverse approaches. Other libraries struggled to maintain the barest essentials, often waiting until they were approached by patrons requesting these services.

Having finally been recognized as a service common in some form to almost all libraries, bibliographic instruction is now coming into its own. Efforts are and have been made by national, regional and state library associations to bring these institutions together, while clearinghouses are being established to make available materials and ideas for new and better programs.

Yet, there is much more to be done. In many libraries it is still left to the discretion of each reference librarian to develop, promote and teach bibliographic instruction classes on their own. As a result, programs may be strong in some disciplines and nonexistent in others, depending on the interest and initiative of the members of the reference staff. Therefore, it is not surprising that some may look upon the Robert Muldrow Cooper Library at Clemson University as “futuristic” in its establishment of a reference position designated as Bibliographic Instruction Coordinator. The key term in this title is that of “coordinator.” It is not a supervisory position which could limit the input or creativity of other reference staff members, nor does it place the burden of developing and teaching every user education class on the shoulders of one person. The position has been recently established to coordinate the individual efforts of the reference staff and to create an efficient and promotable service.
The most obvious and immediate benefit of such a program is the elimination of duplication of both materials and effort. Maintenance and production of audio-visual aids located in an area strictly designated for bibliographic instruction makes available to the entire reference staff individual collections once scattered in files throughout the reference department. This is also true for handouts and class syllabi, thus allowing librarians to fill in for their colleagues if necessary and teach classes normally not in their field.

Promotion of the newly organized service is also a major responsibility of the bibliographic instruction coordinator. We can no longer wait for the university community to come to us and ask for the service, it is time we let them know what we can and will do. All faculty members will be made aware of this program, not just the few we encounter individually at the reference desk, as has usually been the case in the past.

The program is still in its infancy, and as any proud parent would, I look forward to sharing reports of its growth with you in the future.

SELA Forms Instruction Round Table

A Library Instruction Round Table was organized at the SELA biennial conference last November. Officers of the round table are Steve Laughlin, University of Alabama at Birmingham, Chair; William Mott, Morton College, Pulaski, Tenn. Vice-chair, Chair-elect; and Nancy Davidson, Secretary. South Carolina librarians who want more information about the round table or who are interested in working on a committee of the round table should contact Nancy Davidson, Bibliographic Instruction Coordinator, Winthrop College Library, Rock Hill, S.C. 29733.
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