

LIS6603

Individual Assignment: Answering Reference Questions

Student Learning Outcomes:

- Students will be familiar with information structure of library databases.
- Students will locate and use reference sources in a variety of formats.
- Students will evaluate reference resources according to user needs.
- Students will recognize differences in the delivery of services in public, academic, and special libraries.

Part 1: Database Searches

In order to be successful, first in your graduate studies and then as a librarian or information professional, you need to be comfortable using a variety of databases. Several resources have been identified that will be useful for you to know well: USF Libraries catalog; Lexis-Nexis Academic; Books in Print; ProQuest; Gale databases; Ulrich's Periodical Directory; World Cat.

Begin this part of the assignment by thoroughly examining the "about," "how to," "help," and tutorial materials provided for each database or resource referenced above. Become familiar with both the basic or quick searches along with the advanced search techniques. Look for access to thesauri and controlled vocabulary lists. Learn about the unique features and functions of each of the resources.

Choose **three** of the following questions. For each question, please provide the following: **1)** The complete answer to the question; **2)** Query analysis (givens, wanteds, and modifiers) and access points; **3)** The search strategy used, including keywords and limits; **4)** The database you consulted to find the answer; and **5)** Any questions you would ask your patron in a reference interview for clarification. All questions are designed to be answered with resources available through the USF Libraries, including the OPAC and article databases.

1. I have to read a couple of books by Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clezio in French for my literature class. What titles are in the library?
2. I am working on a paper for an English class and I need literary criticism for two different books. The first book is *A False Spring* by Pat Jordan c-1973 and *Shoeless Joe* by W.P.Kinsella c- 1982. Can I get them online without coming to the library?
3. Locate a news article about a volcanic eruption that took place on November 15th, 2002. Where did it occur?
4. I'm looking for a copy of the 1929 edition of *The Man in the Queue*. Who is the author and in how many libraries can I find this edition?
5. I'm interested in the domestic beer market. Can you help me find an article with a chart that shows the market share by supplier? Anything from the last 5 years would be perfect.
6. There has been an ongoing dispute over the ownership rights of A.A Milne's characters. Please help me find a recent article that discusses the disputes with Milne's family. What is the current income estimate from these characters? And what are the pertinent points of the dispute?
7. In the last few years there was a fatal accident on a Disneyland Roller Coaster in the U.S. Which roller coaster was involved in this accident and how many other fatal accidents have occurred since the park first opened?
8. I am looking for a transcript of a NPR program entitled "Talk of the Nation". The particular program that I am looking for is about the history of the World Series. Who was the special guest for this show?
9. I really like John Dunning as an author. I'm familiar with all of his bookman novels, and I know that he's written other things. Can you get me a list of his books other than the bookman ones that are available as audio books?
10. I remember hearing a story about quilts being used as signals or maps on the Underground Railway. Are there any books for kids in the USF Library that tells this story?

Part 2: Reference Questions

While it is important to correctly answer the questions, the objective of the reference assignment is to help you become familiar with the research process and the sources available to answer a variety of questions. These questions will require that you have access to a library with a good reference collection as well as the USF Libraries databases. You may use both print and non-print resources that we discuss in class, review in lecture notes, or are identified in readings. (Or anything you can find that seems appropriate.)

Carefully examine the reference sources, reading explanatory materials and help sections. Do not rely solely on Internet resources; there is great value in being familiar with the broad range of resources.

Choose **two** of the following questions. For each question, please provide the following: **1)** The complete answer to the question; **2)** Query analysis (givens/wanted modifiers); **3)** Your search strategies, including any Internet searches you constructed to find initial information about the topic; and **4)** The reference source(s) you consulted to find the answer, using complete bibliographic citations for each resource. In addition you must attempt to verify your answers through a second source. Wikipedia and Wiki Answers are not valid resources for this assignment, though they may be used as starting points, and indicated as such in your search strategy.

1. About 10 years ago a friend loaned me a set of books that I fell in love with. It was set in Victorian England and had to do with a willful young woman named Irene and her adventures as an amateur sleuth. She comes in contact with Sherlock Holmes and eventually marries a lawyer (barrister?). She is bold and flamboyant and befriends a somewhat prim younger woman. I thought one was named Goodnight, Irene. I want to read them again and the friend has since moved quite a ways away and it has been many years.
2. The patron knows the first line of an Isabella Firestone song -- "If I could tell you of my devotion....." and she'd like to have the rest of the words - can you find them?
3. Who was Mad Anthony and according to recent stories where is he buried?

4. We've been invited to a wedding celebration for a longtime friend of my husband's family. We aren't planning to attend, and I need to know whether we're obligated to send a present. I don't even like the bride.
5. I heard that there is some sort of animal that is an honorary resident of Florida. Please help me find a newspaper article with more information about this and how it actually became a citizen.
6. I'm a big fan of the movie "Titanic," but I'm really interested in the real story rather than the Hollywood version. I heard that one of the few remaining survivors died in the last couple of years. Please help me find a copy of the obituary. What was the survivor's name and do you think we could also find out if there are any other survivors still living?
7. Sometime in the last couple of years the U.S. post office released stamps that had snowflakes on them. I read an article about them in a small local newspaper when I was traveling. What I really want to know is where the snowflakes were photographed.
8. I'm working on a paper for my health sciences class. The questions I want to answer are: What type of body images are teenage girls getting from the media? What are ways to correct the problems?
9. I am writing a paper for agriculture statistics, could you please help me find what was the value of fruits and nuts in Florida in 1929?
10. What are the scientific processes of crystal forming in canned shellfish?

Submission:

Please include your name in the file, and saved it as .doc or .docx document to submit.

Answering Reference Questions

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LIS 6711: Basic Info Sources/Services

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Part 1

Question 1

I have to read a couple of books by Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clezio in French for my literature class. What titles are in the library?

To answer this question, I would first repeat it back to patron: So, you need two books written by Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clezio in the French language for your class. Is that correct? I am clarifying the number of books the patron needs because while couple means two, many use the word couple instead of few which could mean more than two. I am also asking the patron if these are books written by Jean-Marie Gustave LeClezio as opposed to books about the author. Confirming that it's just two, I proceed to look up these books in the USF Libraries catalog. I type in the author's name (Last name first) and produce a list of available titles. I then limit that search by selecting French language. What remains are two articles, one video and two books. *Etoile Errante* (PQ2672.E25 E87 1994) and two editions of *Onitsha* (PQ2672.E25 O55 1991, PQ2672.E25 O5513 1997) are available at the USF Library Tampa circulating collection. Clicking on location shows me that these books are on the fourth floor of the USF Library. If allowed, I would take the patron over there myself. I would ask the patron if this answered her question or if she had any others for me. If the patron needed more books by this author in French, I would recommend USF's Interlibrary Loan system UBorrow. A search for French titles by Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clezio in a statewide search yielded 62 results (LeClesio, 1991, 1994, 1997).

Question 8

I am looking for a transcript of a NPR program entitled "Talk of the Nation". The particular program that I am looking for is about the history of the World Series. Who was the special guest for this show?

I repeat the question back to the patron and ask him if he is looking for a transcript of the NPR program "Talk of the Nation." I'll clarify that the episode was baseball focused and went into the history of the World Series. Also, that he wants to know who the special guest was. I see what I can find. I don't remember seeing any databases for NPR or Talk of the Nation in the USF databases, but I go ahead and do a quick search of Talk of the Nation with quotations on the main USF Libraries page. The first result is a "Talk of the Nation" journal from National Public Radio. It is listed as being available through Academic One File. I click on the link. Years of publication were from November 14, 1996 - June 27, 2013. I then type in "world series" under Search This Publication. The second search result is *Analysis: Remembering past World Series 100 years following its debut in 1903*. I click on the link, and it is indeed a transcript of the program. The guest is Alan Swartz, a senior writer with *Baseball America*. I ask the patron if this answers the question and if there's anything else I can help him with (Conan, 2003).

Question 10

I remember hearing a story about quilts being used as signals or maps on the Underground Railway. Are there any books for kids in the USF Library that tells this story?

I repeated the question back to the patron and proceeded to search when I have confirmation. First, I went to the USF library catalog and typed in the words underground railroad and quilt into the USF library site. I then selected books on shelf to see what we had. The only children's book for quilts used in the underground railroad for children that showed up on the list was *The Secret to Freedom* by Marcia Vaughan. The item is located in the Juvenile Books Easy Reader collection. The call number is E V368s. When I clicked on the location of this item, an image appeared showing that the children's section is on the same floor as periodicals, in the basement. I directed the patron to this book and asked if there was anything else I could help her with (Vaughan, 2001).

This was the only book I could find in my USF Library search for this subject. There was also a young adult book titled *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt*, but it is noncirculating (Hopkinson, 1993). I went ahead and typed in the words underground railroad and quilts into the Books In Print database to see if there were other children's books on this subject. This database kept giving me error messages when I used truncated words, so I refrained from that. I did find a few other children's books on freedom quilts, but none of them were in the USF library. However, there are other

children's books about the underground railroad, and they may contain information on freedom quilts. We could always check the indexes.

Bonus Answer (not really)

Question 3

Locate a news article about a volcanic eruption that took place on November 15th, 2002. Where did it occur?

For this information, I searched on the Gale Academic One File database available through USF Libraries. I typed in these truncated words in the search fields: volcan*, erupt*, 2002*, and Nov*. The second article in the search results came from NASA and was titled "Eruption of Stromboli Volcano, Italy." The date listed in this article for this eruption was November 15th, 2002. The Stromboli Volcano is in the Aeolian Islands in Norther Sicily.

I went to find this article again when I was compiling my reference list, but I could not find it. I can Google it with no issue, but I cannot find it again on Gale Academic One File using the same search methods or any other search methods. It's as if the article has been removed from the Gale database. As I couldn't find again while finalizing my assignment, I decided to answer another question in its place, but I wanted to share this with you in case you had any insight as to where I went wrong.

Part 2

Question 4

We've been invited to a wedding celebration for a longtime friend of my husband's family. We aren't planning to attend, and I need to know whether we're obligated to send a present. I don't even like the bride.

This is a fascinating question that pertains to proper etiquette. Etiquette is different across cultures and nations, but for the sake of this reference question, I'll assume it's coming from an average American (if there is such a thing). This strikes me as the type of question that might appear in a Dear Abby or Miss Manners column. I started there but couldn't find anything.

As I work for a public library, I put several books on about wedding planning on hold including *Emily Post's Wedding Etiquette 6th Edition* (Post, 2014). It was in that book that I found the answer to this question. A visiting librarian noticed the book and told me that *Emily Post's Etiquette* guide used to be one of the books available in the Ready Reference at the Reference Desk back before patrons hunting for answers online became the norm. I went ahead and put *Emily Post's Etiquette: The Centennial Edition* on hold and found the answer in there as well (Post 2022).

This made me want review what our textbook had to say about Ready Reference. One of the recommended websites was for *Emily Post's Etiquette* (Cassell, 2023, pp. 120). The search engine on this site did not yield optimum results, but I did

navigate to the wedding etiquette section of the website. Under Destination Wedding Gifts, the first sentence reads, "Every wedding invitation carries the obligation to give a gift." Unfortunately, it does mention anything about what you do if you're not attending (Post n.d.).

I had hoped that this website might prove an adequate substitute for the physical copy of *Emily Post's Etiquette*, but this just proved the value of physical reference materials. The patron asking this question wants to get out of her and husband's obligation to send a wedding gift because she doesn't like the bride. But the husband is close friends with the groom and modern etiquette requires this obligation whether you're attending the wedding or not. You can send a gift that fits your budget or send something handmade, but you must send a gift (Post, 2022, pp 194).

This question taught me the value of having a proper reference section and as a librarian, I will need to figure out which physical materials are still a better alternative to online sources. The USF Library does have *Emily Post's Etiquette* and *Emily Post's Wedding Etiquette*, but both these editions were published in the 1990s. The versions I used were published 2022 and 2014.

Question 4

Sometime in the last couple of years the U.S. post office released stamps that had snowflakes on them. I read an article about them in a small local newspaper when I was traveling. What I really want to know is where the snowflakes were photographed.

A cursory Google search produces an answer from www.snowcrystals.com, but let's see what USF Libraries search tells us. A search on the USF libraries page of "snowflake" and "stamps" leads to a Proquest link for a newsletter article from PR Newswire titled "Pristine Snowflake Photographs Float on U.S. Postage Stamps." They were called Holiday Snowflakes commemorative stamps and were indeed taken from photographs. Caltech Physicist Kenneth Libbrecht photographed the snowflakes. Two of them were photographed in northern Ontario, one was photographed in Michigan, and another in Alaska (PR Newswire, 2006).

Another article from the Washington Post comes recommended titled "What a Flake!; The Appeal of Snow Is Crystal Clear to Scientist Ken Libbrecht." The article mentioned a book written by Ken Libbrecht, *Ken Libbrecht's Field Guide to Snowflakes* (Washington Post, 2006). Unfortunately, neither my local public library nor the USF library had this book available. Searching for this book through USF Libraries brought me to a magazine article titled "Fairbanks Snowflake Gets Stamp of Approval" also available through Westlaw RIA Checkpoint. I did not use the truncated stamp* in my original search, only the word stamps. That eliminated that search result. However, the link to this Alaska magazine article proved to be a dead end as it was no longer active.

A search on the photographer's name brought me to a Physics Today article available through AIP Journals complete. It turned out to be a Washington Post article that the University of South Florida did not provide access to. I did find an article by Ken Libbrecht through JStore in the USF Library databases. The article was titled "The Formation of Snow Crystals." It was published in the *American Scientist* January/February 2007 issue. I found it by searching for "Ken*" "Libbrecht" and "snowflake" in the database. I downloaded a PDF copy of the article, as it was published in the original magazine. The bibliography at the end of the article mentions Ken Libbrecht's website www.snowcrystals.com, the very same website that I encountered at the beginning of this search. Its authenticity has been verified and you can check out the original photographs that were the basis for the stamps and notes on where they were photographed (Libbrecht, 2007).

I've worked in public library for several years and stamp books are one of the few regular editions in our ever-shrinking Reference Collection. If I was answering this question at the public library I work at, I'd be able to direct the patron to the newly arrived *Scott 2025 Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue Volume 1A* where all four of these snowflake stamps can be found on page 111. They are filed under Christmas. I would end the interview asking the patron if I had answered his question and if there was anything else I could help him find (Houseman, pp. 111, 2024).

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