

### Directional

These questions do not require use of any additional resources. A general, geographic knowledge of where things are and how things are done is generally all that is needed. These questions can be answered with good signage or notices.

*Examples of directional questions are:*

- "Where is the catalog?"*
- "Where do I check out books?"*
- "How late are you open on Friday?"*
- "Do you have today's newspaper?"*

### Ready Reference

There are two types of ready reference questions: Short answer or instructional.

1. Single fact or short answer is answered quickly by consulting one or two standard reference tools, such as almanacs, encyclopedias and directories. Often, these questions will begin with *who*, *what*, *where*, or *when*.

*Examples of this type of ready reference question include:*

- "Who are my state legislators?"*
- "What is the date of the Emancipation Proclamation?"*

2. Instructional questions -- providing the answer involves demonstrating a skill. These questions usually begin with *how*.

*Examples of this type of ready reference question include:*

- "How do I download to a flash drive from your computers?"*
- "How do I search for magazines articles online?"*
- "How do I find DVDs in your catalog?"*

### Specific Search

These questions involve looking for more information than a single fact and generally require

1. Searching multiple sources for the answer. The librarian needs to formulate a search strategy to select appropriate resources to answer the question.
2. Presenting a range of information. The librarian will provide the patron a variety of resources – books, citations to articles, web sites, and reference tools such as indexes, catalogs, and bibliographies.

*Examples of specific search questions are:*

- "I am writing a paper on hummingbirds. What information do you have?"*
- "Do you have anything on the history of atomic energy?"*

*These questions are often a variation of "What are the best sources of information for my needs?"*

**Research**

The answers to research questions depend on what the researcher is able to find. Answering research questions may involve trial-and-error and browsing techniques. The librarian needs to formulate a search strategy to select appropriate resources.

*Examples:*

*Several specific search questions. Someone working on a business plan for a new restaurant will need statistics about the local population (age groups, income, etc.), as well as information about managing a restaurant (staffing, suppliers, costs, etc.)*

*A broad question. Someone is working on the history of an old part of town. Your patron may start by poring over local history materials within the library, but the search is certain to expand to other collections and knowledgeable people in the area. You may need to find guidelines and techniques for specialized research methods such as collecting oral histories.*

**Types of Questions during the Reference Interview:****Open-Ended Questions**

- What kind of information on \_\_\_\_\_ are you looking for?
- Would you tell me more about \_\_\_\_\_?
- Would you give me an example?
- Would you explain that to me [in more detail]?
- What would you like to know about \_\_\_\_\_?
- Where did you hear or read about \_\_\_\_\_?
- I'm not familiar with \_\_\_\_\_. Can you explain it to me?
- What do you already know about \_\_\_\_\_?
- Where have you checked for information so far?
- How will you use the information? That will help me with our search.

**Clarifying Questions:**

- The latest statistic here is 2000. Is that current enough or do you need more recent estimates?
- Do you need the addresses of computer manufacturers for personal computers or all computers?
- Would you prefer the opera on an audio cassette, compact disc, or video?
- Does that picture need to be in color or will black and white do?

**Verifying Questions**

- "What you really need is a recipe for marinara sauce to serve 200 people, right?"
- "Am I correct that you are looking for distributors of ball bearings in eastern Oregon?"
- "So then, you are searching for three or four articles on the Depression for your term paper due on March 1<sup>st</sup>. Is that what you need?"
- "What you are specifically looking for, then, is the Hispanic population of Idaho counties at the last census, broken down by age groups. Is that correct?"

**Follow-up Questions:**

- "Does this completely answer your question?"
- "Do you have everything you need?"
- "Is there anything else I can help you find?"