

Public Libraries Briefcase

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Help, I'm not a Business Librarian!

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Perhaps you've seen that look before: one of your colleagues runs up to you, face ashen and hands shaking: a patron has asked him a <gasp> business reference question! What should he do? How can he continue his work day with such a heavy burden on his head? Libraries are changing, as are the patrons who use them. More people are starting their own businesses and they are coming to access the great resources that we have

quickly. WIKIs, online web pages that can be used as a collaboration tool that allows users to add and edit entries, come in handy. Simply doing a search online for “Free Wiki” will yield a number of choice

We also utilize a “front-facing” FAQ that our patrons can access via our web site, giving them common questions and answers with links to resources. A large binder with procedures, a list of common questions, a list of our subscription databases, as well as a list of specific unique situations and the telephone extensions of who should be called for each, sits on top of our business reference desk. Our librarians know to use it as a guide when they happen to be sitting at the desk.

On Site Training

If time permits and there is space available, offer training to your staff. They don’t need to know the inner workings of every business database, but they should be comfortable assisting patrons in starting research online. Your colleagues may think that databases such as ReferenceUSA, Hoovers and Dun & Bradstreet require expert training and years to master, but we all know that a little computer know and a few minutes playing around with the interface is enough to get working. A good approach would be to a list of 10 common business reference questions such as: Where can I build a list of potential customers? Where can I find information on a specific company? Where can I find historical stock data? How can I research a financial institution? There are resources that are available that can help answer these questions, and as business librarians we all have our favorite “gos.” Letting your colleagues answer real world questions under your guidance would be a big help. If you have a dedicated business section in your library, give tours. Let all your librarians become familiar with the space..

Be Approachable

Last but certainly not least, make sure your colleagues know that they can always contact you for help, even if it seems to be a question that they think they can answer. There will be times that it is necessary for you to take the call or run to the desk to help. We certainly don’t want our poor fellow librarians to get too far in over their head. Let your colleagues know that you are there if they are stuck. Most importantly, if it is a question that could have been answered with a little more digging, get yourself involved in your research. The more they do, the more they learn, the more confident they will become.

Resources for your Non-Business Librarians

There are some fantastic resources available both in print and online for business librarians (and new business librarians). Here is a list of just a few.

- [BusinessReferenceEssentials](#)(RUSA BRASS)
- [Ask Entrepreneur](#)(Entrepreneur Magazine)
- [Glossary of Business Terms](#)(Washington W10.56 ()Tjn ET /Spfq240.239236.04 127.08 0.48 re f BT 7 (s))TJ E