

A Letter from Your Library Liaisons

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Zach S. Henderson Library | Georgia Southern University

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A Reference Gem

By Kay Coates, Information Services Librarian and Liaison for the College of Education

Like in syzygy, the reference process can be illusive until the patron and reference librarian finds congruity in need. The librarian's need to offer the best and most appropriate resources to fulfil the unique need of a particular patron's information request. Above everything else the library's responsibility is meeting the patron's information need.

Given that any information need comes packaged with situational determinants—time and spatial confetti. The trick is to not simply answer the first question posed but to encourage and hold the patron's attention long enough to find out what exactly it is, that is truly being sought. Sometimes, this appears much distorted, as far as information-seeking behavior is construed. The key is to find direct alignment between information need and resource offering. All the while being fully aware that fulfilling one information need usually sets the stage for the immediate creation of new needs and new questions.

People of disparate backgrounds have different needs and go about meeting these needs in correspondingly dissimilar manners (Prentice, 1980). Take for example, the freshman who is seeking some materials on *site marking* (phraseology of the request). Initially, this request appears to be of an architectural nature. A basic keyword search in Discover yielded a result of 630,274 entries, none to the satisfaction of the student. Being guided by a kind of forensic psychology, the reference librarian seeks clarification and asks for some background information—what essentially is the nature of the assignment; what is the targeted end-product of the information-seeking exercise?

The reference interview revealed that the freshman was being asked to write about one of his hobbies. Purportedly, the information being sought was not in keeping with surgical site markings, archeological sites, pavement or land marking that Discover so voluminously returned. From the patron's point of view the request was accurately stated. In fact, the student, an amateur gemstone collector was asked to research and produce a term paper on marcasite. Linguistically, this was rephrased as *mark a site*. This revelation changed the trajectory of the inquiry ipso facto. This happens often, when a patron may be scared of making a “dumb request.” As circuitous as it may seem, the reference interview often has to be robustly delivered with genteel and caring so as to transcend any language barriers or semantic error.

An attractive mineral, Marcasite is common. It is often confused with pyrite because both minerals display similar characteristics. They exhibit the same chemistry but have a different structure, symmetry and crystal shape. No wonder

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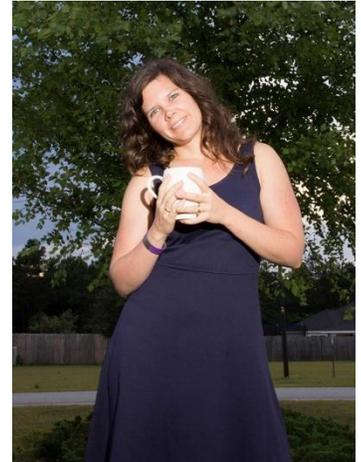
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the freshman could not decipher what he was asked to write about. Kudos to reference librarians who recognize that the exegesis of information-seeking endeavors is quite beyond definition.

Prentice, A. (1980). Information Seeking Patterns of Selected Professionals. *Public Library Quarterly*, 2, 27-60.

Meet...Jessica Garner, Interlibrary Loan Librarian

Jessica Garner is the new Interlibrary Loan librarian at the Henderson Library. Jessica began her library career in Statesboro after earning a BA in English from Georgia Southern ('06). She worked full time at the Statesboro Regional Library while earning a MLIS from Valdosta State ('09). Jessica returns to her alma mater from the Live Oak Public Libraries system, where she worked in Hinesville and Savannah in a range of capacities, most recently as the head of Tech Services at the Bull Street library. Jessica is a fitness enthusiast as well as a book lover. She lives in Statesboro with her husband, Scott, and son, Atticus.



It's Spring! Check Out Henderson Library's 'Sustainable Seeds' Collection



Zach's Sustainable Seeds provides seeds to patrons. Most of the seeds are considered "heirloom;" that is, old and somewhat rare. Our selection is designed to make sure we are not in competition with commercial seed sellers. We give the seeds out, and we ask patrons to return some if their crop is successful.

Zach's Sustainable Seeds has for spring and summer gardens two types of heirloom tomatoes, one variety of watermelon, and poppies. Also, from the Georgia Southern Campus Garden, we have a small quantity of tomatoe and watermelon seeds. Another type which is out of the ordinary is milkweed seeds. The Monarch butterfly is in decline, partially because they must have access to milkweed to sustain their lifecycle. So we encourage the planting of milkweed to support the Monarch population. The seeds are at the Checkout Desk on the second floor. Patrons will typically get one packet of seeds with planting instructions.

