



The Role of the Academic Reference Librarian (New Directions in Information Management)

Jo Bell Whitlatch

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This volume examining key factors related to successful reference service practices provides librarians with an important and significantly different perspective on the reference process. Author Jo Bell Whitlatch describes the major factors that need to be considered to obtain a comprehensive view of the reference process in academic libraries, arguing that the understanding of the reference process can be enhanced by borrowing from current research in other disciplines that place an increasing emphasis on service organizations rather than on manufacturing organizations. The book identifies major studies and theories related to how people who are served participate in organizations. Further, Whitlatch discusses how such studies can contribute to an understanding of the academic reference librarian's role. In addition, the study that constitutes a central part of *The Role of the Academic Reference Librarian* reports on the results of testing parts of a model of the reference process.

The material presented here is drawn from four principal sources: the literature on reference service; broader literature on service organizations from the disciplines of business, psychology, and sociology; the author's professional experience; and a detailed study of reference encounters in five academic libraries that assesses reference service effectiveness by focusing on the librarian's perception of the quality of service, the library users' perception of the quality of service, and whether or not the information sought was located. Included are tables and figures that graphically enhance the text. For academic librarians and library researchers, the volume will serve as a guide to designing studies of reference services that will add to the present understanding of the subject. Graduate students in library and information science will find this handbook indispensable for the successful practice of reference services.

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