

## **Roving Reference**

Definition: A service where staff leave a fixed service point to assist patrons instead of waiting for them to approach the reference desk. This concept was developed when resources moved into an electronic format and users began performing tasks further away from the reference desk.

Reference desks have become a barrier to service because patrons are hesitant to approach them. Whether patrons feel embarrassed by their question, intimidated by the librarians, or don't feel like waiting in line, the amount of reference questions have declined over the years. Roving reference is a method used to relieve patrons of their fear to approach the reference desk because it is the librarian coming to the patrons instead.

### **DOs & DON'Ts of Roving Reference**

#### **DOs**

- Identify yourself: wear a name tag.
  - Use verbal and non-verbal cues to appear approachable.
  - Carry a notepad to provide notes for follow up.
  - Know when to use an active or passive approach.
    - active roving: librarian approaches patrons and asks if they are finding what they needed or if they have any questions
    - passive roving: librarian roams the library and waits for patrons to approach them
  - Keep up to date with resources and new technology.
  - Establish a consistent schedule.
  - Keep statistics on interactions.
  - Assess success using patron and staff feedback.
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#### **DON'Ts**

- Don't desert reference staff at desk when there is line.
- Don't stay in one place for too long.
- Don't project yourself as policing patrons.
- Don't intrude on patron's privacy.
- Don't be frustrated if you get non-reference questions or indifference.
- Don't exaggerate the time spent roving to boost statistics.
- Don't use roving time as leisure time.