The Impactful Research Appointment: Combating Research Anxiety and Library Stereotypes

Meika E. Matook

Johnson & Wales Library, Johnson & Wales University, Providence, RI

The Impactful Research Appointment: Combating Research Anxiety and Library Stereotypes

Abstract

The academic library research appointment provides invaluable benefits to both the academic library and the student, such as improved information literacy skills, trust, and a sense of community. Based on the rewards that the scheduled consultation can potentially yield, it is a service that should not be overlooked. A highly impactful research appointment derives from the librarian's behavior. Throughout the consultation, the librarian must employ interpersonal skills and practice empathy. In doing so, they will dissolve the user's research anxiety and negative library stereotypes, allowing information literacy capabilities to develop. In this opportune setting, it is the librarian's responsibility to build up the user's research confidence by drawing them out of their passive state and engaging them in the research process. Through a collaborative, communal partnership with the student, the librarian will familiarize them with the library's online system. By considering the user's perspective and responding appropriately, the academic librarian will inspire a highly impactful and transformational research appointment. This lasting impression will lead the student to view the library as a safe, dependable space. While the librarian's attuned behavior is necessary for any consultation, it was especially vital in the wake of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

Keywords: Research appointment; individual research; reference services; interpersonal skills; COVID-19

Introduction

A variety of methods are available to academic reference librarians in the pursuit of improving undergraduate and graduate students' information literacy skills. One option is the library research appointment, occurring either physically or virtually. The benefits of the scheduled consultation are plentiful, as the service not only impacts a patron's research capabilities positively, but also dissolves library stereotypes, reduces research anxiety, and builds the user's trust in the library. As Mitchell et al. (2011) state, "Research appointments are perhaps the most vital and rewarding aspect of our reference program" (p. 365). The library research appointment's ability to carry such an impact is partly due to its design and purpose. In its essence, it is a "personalized research service" (Whelan & Hansen, 2017, p. 68) that supports students at all levels of their academic career in "devis[ing] search strategies, find[ing] appropriate resources, and refin[ing] research topics" (Mitchell et al., 2011, p. 365). Clearly, extending beyond the user's immediate information query, the research guidance imparted during the scheduled session helps to sharpen the student's lifelong learning skills as well.

Research appointments are integral to the wellbeing of both the student and the academic library. The value that the research consultation provides makes it a service that should not be overlooked. At first glance, one may question the depth of its influence, especially in comparison to the breadth of information literacy instruction. After all, during an instruction session, the librarian can reach an entire classroom of pupils while providing information literacy guidance. Within an academic year, a library's information literacy instruction service can potentially reach thousands of students (Campbell et al., 2015). In contrast, only one student is present during most research appointments. However, the individualized nature of the scheduled research consultation serves as the basis of its strength. Comparative to tutoring, the session enables the

librarian to "elicit from each student a much higher level of on-task attention and effort" (Lepper & Woolverton, 2002, p. 138). Likewise, the one-on-one meeting allows for a personalized interaction between student and librarian, during which, ideally, the patron has the "undivided attention of the librarian for the duration of the consultation" (Rogers & Carrier, 2017, p. 33). This design allows the librarian to more deftly meet the user's specific information needs in a space that is commonly shielded from the distractions, "noise and privacy concerns" at the public desk (Whelan & Hansen, 2017, p. 76). Furthermore, the positive impact of the research appointment does not solely derive from the precision of the information support given. Instead, the session's effectiveness also emerges from the perceptive and responsive behavioral approaches of the librarian during each stage of the research appointment (RUSA, 2008).

The core weight of the research appointment depends on the librarian's performance, namely, whether or not they employ interpersonal skills, practice empathy, and build trust. In conjunction with providing adept information literacy guidance, these qualities lay the foundation for a successful research appointment, resulting in the diminishing of a student's library anxiety and the establishing of community. In the wake of the global coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, scheduled virtual consultations aimed to serve college students personalized research support and comfort at a deeply stressful time. As is true of any research appointment, the most meaningful interactions result from the librarian considering the user's perspective, building up their research confidence, engaging them as a research partner, communicating in a manner that resonates, and creating a lasting positive impression.

Having Perspective

Considering the student's perspective must be one of the librarian's main priorities. Despite the uniqueness of each user, many students share two commonalities: misconceptions

introduced by library stereotypes and research anxiety. As Luthmann (2007) states, "stereotype[s] still exist within the public perception," often as a result of popular media which tends to characterize librarians as judgmental, dry, unapproachable, all-knowing experts (p. 776). Although these traits are inherent to the traditional library stereotype, the negative consequences that they breed should not be brushed aside. For example, Kneale (2009) asserts, "How we are perceived and thought of directly affects how our patron groups, whatever they may be, approach us and use our skills" (p. 4). Therefore, negative stereotypes could lead a student to interact apprehensively with a librarian or to avoid seeking library assistance completely. Additionally, if a patron perceives the librarian as a stuffy, all-knowing individual, then they may expect the librarian to wordlessly solve all of their information needs. As such, the student will believe that their own contribution during the research appointment is unnecessary.

Research anxiety may persuade users to undervalue their capabilities as researchers, leading them to lose confidence in their independent ideas. According to Kwon (2008), students' library anxiety and "negative attitudes and mistrust about their own thinking abilities could cause illogical fear and inadequacy in performing academic activities" (p. 118). Self-doubt could derail a student's proficiency not only in a select course, but also for their overall college performance and possibly their professional future. Coupled together, research anxiety and library stereotypes inspire feelings of inferiority in the user, especially in the company of the librarian during a research appointment. Unfortunately, the session's social imbalance can serve as a distraction, hindering the user's absorption of imparted research guidance. At times, this social imbalance is reflected through the student's interpersonal behavior. Based on this author's own experiences with research appointment interactions, nonverbal indicators of a student's unease often include avoidance of eye contact, silent nodding, a lack of elaborative language, and the absence of an

activated webcam in a virtual meeting. Initially, stereotype and anxiety driven discomfort causes the patron to converse less naturally with the librarian. If this observed state of disquiet is left unaddressed, a dangerous consequence is that the user will be less likely to express the full extent of their research needs. As this author has professionally experienced, a student's lack of elaboration during a research appointment will prevent the librarian from offering attuned information support. To avoid such a dilemma, the librarian must commit themself to creating a comfortable setting and to uncovering the depth of the student's needs.

First Impression

Whether the research consultation exists in a physical or virtual space, instilling a positive first impression is key to setting the tone for the appointment's entirety. A positive first impression extends beyond the surface level of polite pleasantries. Instead, it helps to dismantle library stereotypes while laying the foundation for a trusting relationship (Zabel & Pellack, 2009). To accomplish this, the librarian should purposefully conduct themself in a manner meant to dissolve the student's anxieties and negative preconceptions. For instance, the librarian should begin the session by welcoming the user and engaging in comfortable conversation. As with any reference interview or consultation, these actions, in which the librarian "smiles, makes eye contact, and offers a friendly greeting" aid in establishing a librarian's approachability (Coonin & Levine, 2013, p. 76). While this advice may seem obvious, it helps to remind oneself that not every patron interaction absolutely needs to begin with research-centered talk. Forming a connection with a student, a member of the community, is vital.

Throughout the research appointment, the librarian's demeanor helps to dictate the student's perception of the session's effectiveness. According to Durrance (1995), "factors [such] as approachability, effective use of open question, possession of an ability to listen,

showing interest, or the ability to determine needs are present" outweigh the importance of accuracy when measuring reference success (p. 257). In this regard, the librarian's level of approachability directly relates to the success or failure of the research appointment. For instance, not being a "unidimensional activity," an intricate tie exists between fulfilling a student's information need and defying their negative preconceptions during a research appointment (Durrance, 1995, p. 244). As such, the librarian must positively impact the student's library perception in order to earn their interest and engagement, which will then help to improve their research skills. Consequently, a successful research appointment is one that the student perceives as effective. Therefore, conversing casually at the start of the session should not be viewed as a waste of time, but as a vital component in inspiring the bond between student and library. In a comfortable environment that helps to humanize the librarian, the patron will be more likely to fully share the breadth of their research needs. However, the complete expression of the query depends not only on the user, but also on the librarian. For instance, unsuccessful reference interactions occur when librarians "'conduct superficial reference interviews'" in which they "'fail to identify the actual information need'" (Hernon & McClure, 1987, as cited in Saunders & Ung, 2017, p. 48). Therefore, during any reference interview, it is in the librarian's best interest to listen to the student's needs, pose open-ended and follow-up questions, and then verify that they understand the user's research focus (Coonin & Levine, 2013). Through pleasant, inquisitive conversation, not only will the librarian understand the researcher's needs, but the student will also have a greater sense of their project's direction.

Considering that the initial steps of the research appointment shape the course of the interaction, the librarian must remain completely focused, mentally present, and free from distraction. The patron's needs should serve as the focal point. This mental commitment to the

reference interaction is what Prieto (2017) describes as mindfulness. While Prieto (2017) relates the need for a humanistic perspective to virtual reference, it is a state of mind that can be applied to all user interactions. Through the practice of mindfulness and emotional intelligence, the librarian is "fully aware of the present moment," granting them a better connection and deeper understanding of the patron's needs (Gonzalez, 2008, as cited in Prieto, 2017, p. 696). As a result of maintaining an emotional presence, the librarian has the opportunity to provide a more meaningful interaction.

Building Confidence

Comparatively, the necessity of building up the student's research confidence is equally as important as fulfilling their information needs. For instance, although responding to the user's immediate query serves as the primary focus of the research appointment, the librarian must also recognize the presence of lurking research anxieties. Whether they derive from sustained gaps in the student's information literacy skill set, or relate to the specific research challenge at hand, research anxieties exist as stress factors that trigger feelings of insecurity and self-doubt, leading students to limit the potential of their own ideas. If these anxieties are left unchecked, the user's critical thinking skills and research capabilities will greatly diminish (Kwon, 2008). Aware of this commonality, the librarian must strive to boost the attendee's self-confidence and morale. By serving as a "positive enabler" for the student and "creat[ing] a learning environment that encourages intellectual curiosity," the librarian will positively impact the user's research perception and integrity (Kwon, 2008, p. 129). As a result, the user will have the confidence to engage more fully in the research process, allowing their lifelong learning capabilities to increase.

The successful fostering of a user's research assuredness can be achieved naturally through casual conversation and words of encouragement. As an example, in response to a student sharing their project topic, the librarian ought to draw out the conversation by asking about their progress, inspiration, thought-process, and intent, which will improve the user's satisfaction with the session (RUSA, 2008). From there, it would be beneficial for the patron if the librarian commended them on their independent ideas and spoke positively about their project's possibilities. However, positive feedback must be balanced with constructive criticism as well, because praise alone does not challenge the student to strategically overcome obstacles or to advance to new learning goals (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Therefore, it would prove advantageous to encourage the learner to further develop and extend their thinking. In this manner, the librarian assures the student that their own ideas are valuable. Consequently, as the user's inner research angst lessens, their research confidence will increase, motivating them to delve into the research process. As Kwon (2008) states, "confidence breeds competence" (p. 129). Therefore, in correlation with the renewed willingness to undertake research, the student's information literacy skills will gain greater definition, allowing them to become a more adept information user.

Building the patron's research confidence becomes especially pertinent when one considers that all users, from freshman to graduate students, experience research anxiety at least once during their academic career. According to McAfee (2018), library anxiety is a natural and prevalent state that derives from the isolating, emotional state of shame. Similarly, Black (2016) argues that many students avoid asking for research assistance due to a "fear of being exposed as ignorant" (p. 46). While shame-born anxiety is natural, one must also expect it to reoccur in a number of instances. As McAfee (2018) writes, some "students naturally experience shame

during the initial stages of research," while others experience it when entering the library (p. 252). Despite its differential occurrences, shame is reliable in causing "self-conscious emotions where one feels diminished," and without the interruption of meaningful support from a librarian, it will not yield (McAfee, 2018, p. 239). Therefore, during a research appointment, the librarian must take care to build the student's confidence, to create an atmosphere of acceptance, and to convey that research anxiety is a normal part of the student experience (Black, 2016). Part of this effort requires the librarian to recognize factors that may cause students to feel "alienated and disconnected" during a research experience or library interaction (McAfee, 2018, p. 253).

Recognizing Experiential Differences

While imparting research guidance, the librarian must not take their own expertise for granted. Undoubtedly, the librarian has an immeasurable amount of wisdom to share with the user. However, the student will not properly absorb and process that wisdom unless it is communicated in a manner that resonates. In order to convey information literacy guidance effectively, one must consider the patron's point of view. Primarily, the librarian must not overlook the difference between their own research experience and that of the student's. Such inattention would prove detrimental to the consultation's success. After all, while the librarian can seamlessly navigate an information interface, the user often views the same online platform as foreign and intimidating. At times, these obstacles translate into "frustrations with the library" which continue to mount if search dilemmas remain unresolved (Kwon, 2008, p. 125). Similarly, many students simply do not know how to begin their research and lack the necessary search strategies. Some of this unfamiliarity derives from library anxiety which "may impede cognitive processes during the information search process in the library" (Kwon, 2008, p. 118).

Unfortunately, this scenario is all too common. Searching struggles tend to not only result from, but also cause, library anxiety.

The Problem of Passivity

The cycle of research obstacles and disappointments further convinces the user that they are incapable of independently navigating the information landscape. As a dangerous consequence of research anxiety, a student may enter a state of academic "self-handicapping" (Thomas & Gadbois, 2007, p. 101). Self-handicapping is a case in which a student, immersed in a negative self image, inevitably "cope[s] with stress through both mental and behavioural disengagement" and "work-avoidant" tendencies (Thomas & Gadbois, 2007, p. 104). In this state, the student, engaged in a pessimistic mindset and expecting to fail at an academic endeavor, often chooses to avoid studying or to procrastinate (Thomas & Gadbois, 2007). While Thomas and Gadbois (2007) mainly attribute self-handicapping to coursework, applying it to research efforts and library use seems just as likely. In this sense, the weight of self-doubt can prompt a user to halt their research efforts. Similarly, in the setting of a research consultation, self-handicapping behavior may tempt the patron to adopt the role of the information bystander. In this unpromising position, the learner may feel uninspired to improve their information literacy skills. Moreover, they might resign themself to passively wait for the librarian to solve their information dilemmas. Not only does this kind of interaction lack meaning, but it also fails to provide the student with the experience needed to become a capable researcher. As Lepper and Woolverton (2002) note on the subject of exceptional tutors, merely transmitting information and instruction to a student is not enough. Rather, when adopting the role of the tutor, one must "devote constant and considerable attention to motivating and providing emotional support" (Lepper & Woolverton, 2002, p. 141). As such, with the goal of strengthening the user's

information literacy competency, and having considered the user's perspective, the librarian must respond appropriately. In this situation, the most effective method would be to engage the student, to draw them out of their passive state, and to involve them in the search.

Research Partner

During a research appointment, the librarian has the opportunity to advance their position from that of research teacher to research partner. To earn this enhancement, one of the librarian's prime aims should be to engage the student in the search, rather than taking full control of the session's direction. As Ellis (2004) argues, "the reference librarian cannot be effective in their teaching role, unless they resist the urge to commandeer the reference engagement by making decisions or worse, providing answers, as is the case in ready reference questions" (p. 12). Obviously, the success of the appointment partly relies on the librarian's willingness to share the stage with the student through engagement. By involving the user in the search, the librarian is providing them the skills to become a more capable researcher. This partnership between student and librarian should take form after the user's information needs are presented. The solidification of this dynamic can occur quite simply, and in a number of ways. For instance, the librarian may request the patron's opinion at the onset of the search: *What do you think our search terms should be?* or *Can you think of any synonyms for these keywords?* Such casual questioning has a number of meaningful effects. For instance, if posed in a relaxed but encouraging tone, it reestablishes the librarian as an open figure that the student can trust, allowing for comfortable cooperation. In this regard, Jiao and Onwuegbuzie (2002) suggest, "librarians should strive to foster a collaborative environment" in which students' research goals are achieved, and their library anxiety is reduced (p. 72). By asking the user open-ended questions in the approach of

Socratic teaching, and by inspiring a safe setting, the user will understand that their participation is welcomed and necessary (Lepper & Woolverton, 2002).

To further establish the partnership, the librarian may admit that they are not an all-knowing expert. Specifically, while the librarian has research expertise, they do not have the same familiarity with the student's chosen academic discipline. As such, the librarian would appreciate guidance and brief subject overviews from the student at times. This partnership reflects social interdependence, a theory which proposes that "positive interdependence culminates in promotive interaction," consisting of the user and librarian collaborating to fulfill the user's "library search goals" (Jiao & Onwuegbuzie, 2002, pp. 75-76). In such an instance, the librarian is not only establishing teamwork and partnership, but also trust. Mainly, the librarian is trusting the student to provide background information and context for the research topic. Knowing that the librarian is relying on the patron in some capacity will instill a sense of pride and purpose in the student. Moreover, this arrangement will help to dismiss the stereotype of the librarian as a superior, all-knowing figure. Furthermore, it confirms the equally significant roles in the partnership: the librarian, the provider of research expertise, and the student, the provider of subject insight.

Demystifying the Search

In respect of the student's point of view, the librarian must maintain sensitivity and personalized communication throughout the session. This practice is especially necessary while introducing the user to the academic library's online resources. Despite today's internet savvy culture, many users face "immense emotional challenges" as they struggle to navigate a library's online system (Kwon, 2008, p. 129). Therefore, during the research appointment, the librarian should strive to familiarize the student with some of the library's electronic resources. As

Saunders and Ung (2017) state, "integrating some instruction in the location, evaluation, and use of the resources in order to help the patron become self-sufficient" is an important aspect of the research consultation (p. 46). This suggests that a research appointment should not simply provide a student with an information source, but also lead them through the search. Guiding a user through the search steps is important, partly because the user may not truly realize the expanse of their information literacy gaps. In actuality, they are "'unaware of what they do not know'" (Neely, 2002, as cited in Ellis, 2004, p. 11). As such, the librarian can be "intentional" in including a "brief IL session" on how to navigate and utilize the library's online resources during the research appointment (Harmeyer, 2010, p. 359).

In order to secure an authentic partnership, the librarian must convey advice in language that resonates with the student. After all, most patrons are not privy to the technical terminology regularly used in research and the library field. As Augustine and Greene (2002) comment in reference to a library website's design, "the use of highly technical language and jargon in library Web sites frequently poses difficulties for users of library Web sites as well" (p. 355). Imaginably, similar barriers could create unwelcome distractions for the student during a research appointment. For that reason, unless deemed necessary, the librarian should avoid using excessive jargon. When certain terminology is needed, however, it would be helpful to first state the word, and then offer a synonym or brief description that illuminates the term's meaning. By doing so, the librarian bridges the gap between the technical and vernacular language. For example, when claiming that a source is *relevant*, the librarian may want to add: *The source matches our research topic and keywords.* Similarly, the librarian should demonstrate exactly *how* they reach specific conclusions. For instance, the librarian could point to the clues that helped to identify the source as relevant. Awareness of the student's perspective must remain

present throughout the research appointment, especially when accompanying a student in the search process.

Introducing students to a search can be accomplished through the use of accessible descriptions and comparisons. While the "real-world analogies" may be informal in nature, they can "be used to help students understand difficult new concepts" (Lepper & Woolverton, 2002, p. 145). For instance, a database's array of search limiters often has a dizzying effect on users. To lessen this overwhelming sense, the librarian could compare the database's search limiters to categorized options on a restaurant menu or to search filters used on online shopping sites. Additionally, after the librarian introduces the student to a few of the filters, they could decide together which limiters would be most effective in the search. The librarian should also highlight important features that can make the patron's research experience easier. For instance, in relation to a source's abstract, the librarian might say: *The abstract provides a brief, critical summary of the article. It's like a movie preview. It helps you to decide whether or not you should watch the whole thing.* Overall, by making relatable comparisons, lessening unnecessary jargon, and speaking in familiar terms, the student will gain a sense of empowerment. Moreover, they will attain the comfort of knowing that the academic library's resources do not exist to intimidate, but rather to make their research more effective and efficient. Positively reinforcing these details will lead to a beneficial conclusion.

Closing Impression

Equally as important as creating a comfortable environment is initiating a positive, lasting impression at the close of the research appointment. At this moment, the librarian must reiterate that the academic library is a welcoming, caring, and "safe place [where] a student may go to find answers" (Grallo et al., 2012, p. 190). Adhering to the research consultation's theme of

partnership, the closing exchange should be conveyed with sincerity and enthusiasm. For instance, the librarian could congratulate the student once again for developing a compelling research topic, or for overcoming a research hurdle. Additionally, the librarian could invite the patron to keep in touch about their academic progress and to reach out for future assistance. Lastly, the librarian should thank the student for scheduling the appointment. This *thank you* should not be out of blind politeness. Rather, it should be in response to the recognized benefits that result from scheduled consultations. Namely, despite existing on an individual level, research appointments lead to community building, a more accurate understanding of the student perspective, and the identification of common information literacy gaps. However, these invaluable rewards will only come to fruition if a user has the awareness to schedule an appointment with a librarian. Certainly, a *thank you* is much deserved, considering that a dialogue between student and librarian is "mutually beneficial" (Appleton & Abernethy, 2013, p. 210). After all, the insight gained from research consultations can potentially aid in the improvement of library services and instruction practices.

The benefits of the closing impression can extend beyond the appointment. For example, during particularly stressful times in the academic year, such as midterm and final exam periods, the librarian may choose to check in with and remind past research appointment attendees over email that personalized research support is available. Similarly, if the librarian happens to recognize a research appointment participant at the library or on campus, it would be meaningful to offer a kind greeting. This will indicate to the student that the librarian remembers them, and that the library is their space. Lastly, what is most significant about the closing impression is that it solidifies the relationship between librarian and patron. In this regard, it reaffirms the academic library's role as a safe environment in which students are welcome and research obstacles are

overcome. Moreover, it reassures the user that during their most troubling moments, they can turn to the library, physically or virtually, for research support and encouragement.

A Timely Opportunity and Responsibility

Certainly, the need for virtual research appointments has been especially prevalent during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. In a time of quarantining and social distancing, the general population has experienced anxiety at new heights. As Otu et al. (2020) state, COVID-19 prevention strategies, "which limit normal human interaction–combined with fear of the consequences of infection and social media misinformation–increase the levels of chaos, stress and tensions within communities," (p. 3). This unrest easily spreads, affecting society as a whole. However, it also affects people on an individual level (Moukaddam & Shah, 2020, p. 12). After all, fears of infection, social distancing, and "job losses and financial instability" have led to serious mental health symptoms (Otu et al., 2020, p. 3). In this regard, Moukaddam and Shah (2020) emphasize that preventative measures "may differentially exacerbate anxiety and psychosis-like symptoms as well as lead to non-specific mental issues (eg [*sic*], mood problems, sleep issues, phobia-like behaviors, panic-like symptoms)" (p. 12). What helped to trigger these timely mental health outcomes was COVID-19 robbing the general public of their sense of normalcy.

When applying the reality of the coronavirus pandemic to college students in academic communities, the negative mental health effects seem quite urgent. For instance, college students often have "amplified energy, novelty, motivation, curiosity, and enthusiasm" (Imran et al., 2020, p. S-3). Moreover, they are traditionally accustomed to the rhythm of an on-ground classroom setting, one in which participation is encouraged and casual socialization with classmates naturally takes place. Therefore, the reality of COVID-19 prevention strategies

essentially barring them from their intellectual and social environments can feel devastating. Combined with uncertainty, economic stresses, and health anxieties, college students may feel "frustrated, nervous, [and] disconnected" (Imran et al., 2020, p. S-3). This new, shaken reality can easily exacerbate students' academic stresses, making the completion of assignments feel difficult. Consequently, librarians have the opportunity and responsibility to utilize the research appointment service as a vehicle to address users' information needs while providing social support.

In the current climate, social interaction is one of the main interests and needs of students. It is imperative for librarians to create a comfortable interaction for the user during the scheduled virtual consultation. While fulfilling the patron's immediate research need should be the goal, the focus should also be offering kindness, empathy, and sincere interest in the student's personal well-being. While adopting the role of the "nurturant," a blend of sincerity, consideration, and imparted information guidance will carry great significance (Lepper & Woolverton, 2002, p. 145). As Bennett (2017) writes, the convenience, conciseness, and attention available to students through virtual research appointments "not only boosts the research success of the student, but helps them to feel more positive about the library, and connected to campus" (p. 197). Now, more than ever is the time for librarians to employ interpersonal skills, to engage in lighthearted conversation with students, and to assure users that physically or virtually, the library is a safe haven that offers information support and a sense of community.

Conclusion

The academic library research appointment is a service that should not be overlooked. When effective, a scheduled consultation leads to invaluable benefits such as improved

information literacy skills, the dismantling of library stereotypes and anxiety, and the building of community. These rewards are intrinsic to the librarian's behavior. Unless the librarian fully commits themself to the success of the interaction, the full extent of the service's values will not be attained. As such, it would be the librarian's misstep to assume that fulfilling the patron's immediate research query ensures the appointment's effectiveness. It is the librarian's ability to humanize themself, to form a partnership with the student, and to establish trust that cultivates the service's positive outcomes. During the personalized interaction, the librarian is representing the library itself. Therefore, it is the librarian's responsibility to embody what the library ideally provides: a welcoming, safe, dependable environment. In doing so, the librarian will create a communal relationship with the student, paving the way for research goals and positive connections to be attained. Undoubtedly, the academic library research appointment is a service that can yield a multitude of impressive benefits. However, only if the librarian employs interpersonal skills and practices empathy will the research appointment serve as impactful and transformational.

References

Appleton, L., & Abernethy, P. (2013). We said… we did!: A partnership approach to developing library and student support services. *New Review of Academic Librarianship, 19*(2), 208–220. https://doi.org/10.1080/13614533.2013.800766

Augustine, S., & Greene, C. (2002). Discovering how students search a library web site: A usability case study. *College & Research Libraries, 63*(4), 354-365. https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.63.4.354

Bennett, J. L. (2017). Virtual research consultations study. *Internet Reference Services Quarterly, 22*(4), 193-200. https://doi.org/10.1080/10875301.2017.1305475

Black, S. (2016). Psychosocial reasons why patrons avoid seeking help from librarians: A literature review. *Reference Librarian, 57*(1), 35-56. http://doi.org/10.1080/02763877.2015.1096227

Campbell, L., Matthews, D., & Lempinen-Leedy, N. (2015). Wake up information literacy instruction: Ideas for student engagement. *Journal of Library Administration, 55*(7), 577–586. https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2015.1076313

Coonin, B., & Levine, C. (2013). Reference interviews: Getting things right. *Reference Librarian, 54*(1), 73–77. https://doi.org/10.1080/02763877.2013.735578

Durrance, J. C. (1995). Factors that influence reference success: What makes questioners willing to return? *The Reference Librarian, 23*(49/50), 243–265. https://doi.org/10.1300/J120v23n49_18

Ellis, L. A. (2004). Approaches to teaching through digital reference. *CUNY Academic Works.* https://academicworks.cuny.edu/bb_pubs/1115

Grallo, J., Chalmers, M., & Baker, P. (2012). How do I get a campus ID? The other role of the

    academic library in student retention and success. *Reference Librarian, 53*(2), 182-193.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/02763877.2011.618787

Harmeyer, D. (2010). Hybrid reference: Blending the reference interview and information

    literacy. *Reference Librarian, 51*(4), 358–362.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/02763877.2010.503316

Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research,*

    77(1), 81-112. http://doi.org/10.3102/003465430298487

Imran, N., Zeshan, M., & Pervaiz, Z. (2020). Mental health considerations for children &

    adolescents in COVID-19 Pandemic. *Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences,*

    36(COVID19-S4), S67-S72. https://doi.org/10.12669/pjms.36.COVID19-S4.2759

Jiao, Q. G., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2002). Dimensions of library anxiety and social

    interdependence: Implications for library services. *Library Review, 51*(2), 71-78.

    https://doi.org/10.1108/00242530210418837

Kneale, R. (2009). *You don't look like a librarian: Shattering stereotypes and creating positive*

    new images in the internet age. Information Today.

Kwon, N. (2008). A mixed-methods investigation of the relationship between critical thinking

    and library anxiety among undergraduate students in their information search process.

    College & Research Libraries, 69(2), 117-131. https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.69.2.117

Lepper, M. R., & Woolverton, M. (2002). The wisdom of practice: Lessons learned from the

    study of highly effective tutors. In J. Aronson (Ed.), *Improving academic achievement:*

    Impact of psychological factors on education (pp. 135-158). Academic Press.

    https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-012064455-1/50010-5

Luthmann, A. (2007). Librarians, professionalism and image: Stereotype and reality. *Library Review, 56*(9), 773-780. https://doi.org/10.1108/00242530710831211

McAfee, E. L. (2018). Shame: The emotional basis of library anxiety. *College & Research Libraries, 79*(2), 237-256. https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.79.2.237

Mitchell, M., Comer, C., Starkey, J., & Francis, E. (2011). Paradigm shift in reference services at the Oberlin College Library: A case study. *Journal of Library Administration, 51*(4), 359-374. https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2011.556959

Moukaddam, N., & Shah, A. (2020, March 15). Psychiatrists beware! The impact of COVID-19 and pandemics on mental health. *Psychiatric Times.* https://www.psychiatrictimes.com/view/psychiatrists-beware-impact-coronavirus-pandemics-mental-health

Otu, A., Charles, C. H., & Yaya, S. (2020). Mental health and psychosocial well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic: The invisible elephant in the room. *International Journal of Mental Health Systems, 14*(1), 1–5. https://doi.org/10.1186/s13033-020-00371-w

Prieto, A. G. (2017). Humanistic perspectives in virtual reference. *Library Review, 66*(8/9), 695-710. https://doi.org/10.1108/LR-01-2017-0005

Rogers, E., & Carrier, H. S. (2017). A qualitative investigation of patrons' experiences with academic library research consultations. *Reference Services Review, 45*(1), 18-37. https://doi.org/10.1108/RSR-04-2016-0029

RUSA. (2008, September 29). *Guidelines for behavioral performance of reference and information service providers.* Reference & User Services Association (RUSA). http://www.ala.org/rusa/resources/guidelines/guidelinesbehavioral

Saunders, L., & Ung, T. (2017). Striving for success in the reference interview: A case study. *Reference Librarian, 58*(1), 46–66. https://doi.org/10.1080/02763877.2016.1157778

Thomas, C. R., & Gadbois, S. A. (2007). Academic self-handicapping: The role of self-concept clarity and students' learning strategies. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 77*(1), 101-119. https://doi.org/10.1348/000709905X79644

Whelan, J. L. A., & Hansen, A. (2017). Personal research sets the stage for change. *Reference Librarian, 58*(1), 67–83. https://doi.org/10.1080/02763877.2016.1194245

Zabel, D., & Pellack, L. J. (2009). First impressions and rethinking restroom questions. *Reference & User Services Quarterly, 49*(1), 4–6. https://doi.org/10.5860/rusq.49n1.4