Roving Reference: Combating Library Anxiety by Extroverting the Reference Desk

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Roving Reference
Combating Library Anxiety by Extroverting the Reference Desk

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The Problem: anxiety about using the campus library

This anxiety can stem from:
• an unfamiliar cataloging system
• the overwhelming size of the building or collection
• unfamiliarity with doing scholarly research
• damage caused by previous negative experiences

The Solution: roving reference

To combat library anxiety, Gorgas Library:
• utilizes LIS grad students
• each floor is roved once an hour during peak times
• LIS students tweet and/or Instagram “We’re Roving!” as they head out
• iPads are equipped with bookmarks and apps for quick answers
• LIS grad students are trained on best practices each semester

Best Practices

To ensure the consistency of the service provided with our Roving program, we train our student workers on the following best practices:

• Focus on high-traffic periods
• Learn how to approach patrons - know the cues that signal that help may be needed and welcome
• Be cognizant of the impression you are giving; be approachable and friendly and don’t look like you are policing the floors
• Promote your presence by Tweeting that you are roving (the Twitter app is logged in on each iPad)
• Anticipate the types of questions you may receive - most questions will be directional, but be prepared to use the apps and bookmarks to answer other questions
• Remain mobile - if the question becomes more complex, invite the student back to the desk for further assistance
• Be ready to refer patron to a librarian
• Check back with patron if possible

Bookmarks and Apps

Frequently accessed websites are bookmarked in both Safari and Chrome and they include:

- Library mobile website
- Library Catalog - Scout and Classic
- Library LibGuides
- Google Docs
- Course Reserves
- Databases
- Computer Availability
- WorldCat

Library Databases Frequently used apps are on the first screen of the iPad and they include:

- Google Drive
- Evernote
- Haiku Deck
- Kahn Academy
- Dropbox
- Encyclopedia Britannica
- Wikipedia
- BrowZine
- BamaBound
- Twitter
- Instagram

References