Reference vs. Non-Reference Questions

Reference Questions Include:

1. **SEARCHING** for information by library staff, including locating facts, helping with literature searches, performing database searches, referring the customer to other persons or agencies and other similar tasks.
   Examples:
   - Where can I go for GED classes?
   - Where can I find a specific address or phone number?
   - What year was Benjamin Franklin born?
   - Which movie won the Oscar for Best Picture in 1968?
   - Help me find a picture by a particular artist.

2. **USING** the library catalog to answer customer questions on titles and availability
   Examples:
   - Do you have this title?
   - Do you have this title in Large Print?
   - September Issue of Consumer Reports?

3. **LOCATING** an item in the catalog under a certain topic to place a Reserve.

4. **PROVIDING** Reader's Advisory service
   Examples:
   - What books do you have for 5 year-olds?
   - Do you have any authors similar to Stephen King?
   - Do you have any murder mysteries?

5. **IDENTIFYING** a shelf number for a customer.
   Examples:
   - Where can I find a book on dogs?
   - Where are the needlepoint books?

6. **TEACHING** a customer how to use resources such as the catalog, microfilm, or Internet computers.

7. **PLACING** Inter-library Loan requests

Non-Reference (Directional) Questions Include:

1. **CHECKING** the shelf for a customer at the request of another MLS library.

   Note: The requesting library will count this as a reference question.

2. **PLACING RESERVES** when the correct title and format is already known.

3. **INSTRUCTING** a customer in the mechanical operation of equipment, such as copy machine, telephone, computer or the microform reader/printer.

4. **ANSWERING** a question or performing a task related to *CIRCULATION FUNCTIONS*.
   Examples:
   - Performing a shelf check for materials improperly cleared.
   - Answering a question such as, "Where am I on the system reserve list?"

5. **DIRECTING** a customer to a specific location in the library.
   Examples:
   - Restrooms, children's area, meeting rooms, water fountain, etc.
   - Specific material locations when the customer has supplied a correct shelf number.
   - General material locations such as DVDs or magazines.

6. **RETRIEVING** materials for a customer when the arrangement or storage practices of the library create a physical barrier that prevents the customer from accessing the material on their own.
   Example:
   - Retrieving materials from the backroom.
   - Retrieving materials from the Oklahoma Room.