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IST 605 – Reference Question Quest
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For this assignment, you will use the internet, online databases, books, or anything else you can think of to answer the following 6 relatively easy reference questions plus a bonus question. We are, of course, hoping you will find an answer but are more concerned with the processes you use in answering the question and how you determine that the answer you find is actually accurate.

Please complete the attached worksheet template, rename it as RQQ<last name>.doc and upload to the Assignment drop box.

This assignment will not be graded, but must be completed, and will serve as practice for and count toward the final Pathfinder assignment.

QUESTION 1

Third grader wants to know: does Barbie (the doll) have a last name?

Resources used:

I first went to the Mattel and official Barbie Doll websites and did not find the information to answer this question. I then proceeded to Ask.com and searched directly for “Does Barbie have a last name?” The second search result was from About.com, and selected that as my resource.

The answer or a brief description of the answer with a link or citation to “the best” source for the answer:

Barbie’s full name is Barbie Millicent Roberts. I found this information by going to the About.com (<http://inventors.about.com/library/inventors/blbarbie doll.htm>), and then clicking on “Barbie Trivia,” which led to <http://collectdolls.about.com/library/blbarbiefacts.htm>. The answer to the original question, and plenty of other Barbie fun facts, were present.

How and why you decided that the resource chosen was the correct answer:

As stated at the bottom of the webpage, the information on the Barbie Fun Facts were courtesy of Mattel, Inc. Also, the guides (contributing writers) for About.com are experts in their field, and are selected based on experience, so I felt I could trust the information that is published there.

Difficulties or successes you encounter in the process:

I wanted to be able to find this information in print, and was hoping to be able to easily access a book on Barbie trivia or fun facts. Since I could not find anything at my local library, I decided online was the best route to go. I knew I could easily find the answer through Wikipedia or Yahoo Answers, but since these sites have information contributed by anyone, I wanted to ultimately find a more credible source.

QUESTION 2

Patron’s son has been diagnosed with Von Recklinghausen’s disease. Can you help her find current information about the disease and some type of support organization?

Resources used:

I began by searching in the AMA Complete Medical Encyclopedia (Published 2003 by Random House Reference), and found that the disease is also called neurofibromatosis 1, or NF1 (there is also neurofibromatosis 2, or NF2). This source gave a brief description of the disease, its

symptoms, as well as treatment options. I decided that I would be able to find more information online. After doing a simple Yahoo search, I found three useful websites, The Neurofibromatosis Information Page from the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, Understanding NF1, and Neurofibromatosis, Inc.

The answer or a brief description of the answer with a link or citation to “the best” source for the answer:

I think the best resources for this parent would be Neurofibromatosis, Inc., (<http://www.nfinc.org>) and Understanding NF1 (<http://www.understandingnf1.org>). The first site was extremely helpful in providing information about the disease, finding local support groups or a doctor who specializes in treating the disease, and even gave links to recent clinical research articles. The second site contains video segments of personal stories, as well as worksheets to print out and bring to doctors appointments.

How and why you decided that the resource chosen was the correct answer:

These sites are both dedicated to providing parents with information to help their children, and are advocates to not only education, but also raising money to finding a cure and helping people to cope with the disease. They are both reputable resources of information (NF Inc. is a national charitable organization, and Understanding NF1 is a resource from the Harvard Medical School Center for Neurofibromatosis and Allied Disorders.)

Difficulties or successes you encounter in the process:

Initially, trying to find out about the disease could have been a challenge if I didn't know it was mainly referred to as NF1, not necessarily Van Recklinghausen's disease. Also, I was frustrated that I could not get NF.org to work, the site sponsored by the National Neurofibromatosis Foundation. It could have been the best resource, but in each browser I tried, I just kept getting a blank page.

QUESTION 3

Why do hot dogs generally come in packages of ten (10) while the buns usually come in packages of eight (8).

Resources used:

I again went to Ask.com and lo and behold, I discovered a page on Central Michigan University's library website called "Stump the Librarian" where this question was answered. This site referred me to "The Straight Dope," which provided a very lengthy and informative answer.

The answer or a brief description of the answer with a link or citation to “the best” source for the answer:

It seems the answer, as described on The Straight Dope (http://www.straightdope.com/classics/a2_350.html), is because meat packagers prefer to work with items in pounds, while bakers just don't like tens. The site is by Cecil Adams, "the world's most intelligent human being."

How and why you decided that the resource chosen was the correct answer:

If the librarians of Central Michigan University can trust Cecil Adams, then I guess I can too! Also, I am not sure this question has a right answer or not, but the question will definitely make you think and maybe come up with your own reasons as to why the items are sold in different numbers. I myself just assumed it was a marketing ploy – you would have to buy 2 packages of buns so that you would have enough for each hot dog.

Difficulties or successes you encounter in the process:

I thought this would actually be a lot harder to find than it was, and was expecting only “silly” answers with no sort of explanation. I was pleasantly surprised with what was found!

QUESTION 4

Political Science major is writing a paper on the conflicting estimates of the civilian death toll in Iraq. He would like sources of information that discuss this issue. Specifically he would like the citation for and a copy of both the official government estimate and the scientific study conducted by the team of epidemiologists that estimated a much higher death toll (Do not worry about finding the actual articles or reports, just the citations will be fine for this assignment)

Resources used:

I first did a Yahoo search to acclimate myself with some background information on the topic. I then proceeded to Wikipedia, hoping to find links to references on their article entitled “Casualties of the Iraq War” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casualties_of_the_conflict_in_Iraq_since_2003). This led me to several other sites, including NPR’s “The Toll of War” (<http://www.npr.org/news/specials/tollofwar/tollofwarmain.html>), and a January 2008 article by BBC news (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7180055.stm). A link to a Washington Post article (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/10/AR2006101001442.html>) helped me to discover the location of the study conducted by epidemiologist at the Johns Hopkins University's Bloomberg School of Public Health.

The answer or a brief description of the answer with a link or citation to “the best” source for the answer:

<http://www.thelancet.com/webfiles/images/journals/lancet/s0140673606694919.pdf> provides the study done by JHU epidemiologists. www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS22537.pdf seems to provide the answer that the US Government has not released an estimate of Iraqi civilian deaths, but has provided estimates from January 2006 to February 2008. The report by the US Government can be found at www.defenselink.mil/pubs/20051013_publication_OSSRF.pdf.

How and why you decided that the resource chosen was the correct answer:

These three PDF’s seemed to be the best resources for the student – they provide the official information for what he was looking for. He needed something VERY specific, and I hope I was able to provide it for him!

Difficulties or successes you encounter in the process:

The most frustrating was that both the NPR and BBC articles stated that neither the US or Iraq governments provide official counts of Iraqi civilian deaths, so I just wanted to give up after reading that. Also, I felt like I just didn’t know where to go – I was just hopping from one website to the next. I also think it took me a LONG time to find this information, and if the student was sitting with me at the computer, the lengthiness and disorganization of the search would have not made me look very knowledgeable.

QUESTION 5

High School student is writing a paper on the artist Czech artist Alphonse Mucha. The teacher is requiring him to use at least one book, one online database and one authoritative website.

Resources used:

I first started looking for a book using online catalog of the Onondaga County Public Library, Onlib.org. There were four books in the system about Mucha, although three of them were complete graphic works and might not provide as much biographical information as the student would need. I searched for an online database of artists through Yahoo, and found the-artists.org, which provides biographies and images of the masters since 1900. I also was able to find the official Alphonse Mucha website, which would be a good authoritative website.

The answer or a brief description of the answer with a link or citation to “the best” source for the answer:

I would assume that the book would give the student the most information, although based on the review found through the OnLib’s online catalogue, it might be something that is for someone who is reading at a collegiate level (*Alphonse Mucha*, by Sarah Mucha, published 2005 in association with the Mucha Foundation). The-Artists.org (<http://www.the-artists.org/ArtistView.cfm?id=8A01FA50-BBCF-11D4-A93500D0B7069B40>) provides links to the Mucha Museum site in Prague, as well as a list of print resources about the artist. The Official Mucha Website (<http://www.muchafoundation.org/MHome.aspx>) had an extremely thorough biography of Mucha organized by date.

How and why you decided that the resource chosen was the correct answer:

The book by Mucha’s grandson’s wife was chosen in part because that was the only book available through the Onondaga County Library System. A Library Journal Review is included in the listing, which states the book is “...the only available overview of his life and art...,” so it seems this would be a very good resource. The other two online resources could provide a lot of visual information that may not be included in the book.

Difficulties or successes you encounter in the process:

Finding an online database was the most challenging part of this search. Most of the databases I found were for displaying images of the artists, not biographical information. I also did not have very much luck using EBSCOhost or Gale InfoTrac, so that was frustrating. I was extremely happy with how easy it was to use the libraries online catalogue, and thought adding the book reviews was very helpful.

QUESTION 6

You are working as a corporate librarian for an automobile company that would like to move into the field of hybrid vehicles in order to respond to the current energy crisis. You have been asked to locate information on the two leading automobile companies that currently sell hybrid vehicles

Resources used:

The first step was to find what automobile companies produced and sold hybrid vehicles. I did a simple Yahoo search and found hybridcars.com, which listed all current hybrid models. I decided to continue with the top two manufacturers according to this site, Toyota and Honda. I then decided to go directly to the company websites for the information the company was requesting.

The answer or a brief description of the answer with a link or citation to “the best” source for the answer:

I thought the automobile company sites, www.toyota.com and <http://corporate.honda.com>, would be the best sources, even though they can be looked at as a huge advertisement. These sites both provide recent news items about the manufacturers, information about recent innovations, as well as annual reports.

How and why you decided that the resource chosen was the correct answer:

This case doesn't really have any "correct answer," and the amount of information out there about hybrid vehicles is endless!

Difficulties or successes you encounter in the process:

I was just hoping for some more information. Does the company want information about the hybrids Toyota and Honda produce, what their plans for the future are, if the sale of these hybrid vehicles is successful, or information about the companies in general? I just would have asked a lot of questions regarding what they were looking for. I think that is what made this search difficult; it just didn't seem specific enough.