QUESTIONS FOR REFERENCE POSITIONS
Possible Interview Questions

There are some old dogs included in this list and a few with some different twists. Review the particular job ad and expect to be asked about each qualification mentioned in the description. Be prepared to give specific examples to back up your answers.

Why did you choose librarianship?

Why did you apply for this particular position?

What are your strengths? Weaknesses or areas you would like to improve?

What would you like to be doing in five years? or What are your career goals or plans in librarianship?

What kind of research or publishing projects interest you? (especially if position is tenure track)

Describe your responsibilities in the last position you held?

What do you think you could bring from your past experience with something seemingly unrelated or tangential to librarianship that would contribute to your effectiveness as a librarian?

What is your philosophy of reference service?

What is the purpose behind library's having Reference departments?

In your opinion, what are some of the major challenges libraries/reference departments face?

What would you do if you were unsure how to answer a reference question?

How do you see Reference/Public Services interacting with Technical Service units?

What impact is technology having on reference service, particularly in the area of bibliographic instruction?

What do you find most appealing/rewarding about reference work? Unappealing?

What do you like least about the profession of librarianship?

What did you like most about your last position? Like least?

If you could create the "perfect" user, what qualities would such a person have?

Do you have a favorite user group/subject area? Why?

How would you handle a hostile patron?
What would you do if you overheard a colleague giving incorrect information?

What would you do if two phones are ringing and there is a line of patrons waiting at the desk? Not only that but you recognize one of the patrons as a demanding faculty member. How will you handle this situation?

Can you tell us about a particularly tense or chaotic situation at the reference desk and how you handled the incident?

How do you think others perceive you as a colleague? How would they describe you?

Would you rather work independently or in a group?

What did you do in your last job to contribute to a teamwork environment. Be specific.

Please describe a situation in your last position that you handled poorly. How would you approach it differently if you had to do it over again?

Describe a risk you have taken and the consequences.

Why should we hire you? Why are you the best candidate for this position?

What are your interests outside of work?

Give me an example of an important goal which you had set in the past and tell me about your success in reaching it.

Describe a time on any job which you’ve held in which you were faced with problems or stresses which tested your coping skills. What did you do?

Give me an example of your creativity in the workplace.

Give me an example of a time you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.

What motivates you to do well?

Give me an example of a group project and how you worked with the group. What did you personally contribute to the group’s success. (Doesn’t always have to be work based, use your academic experience too).
Open Meeting Questions

1. Why did you choose academic reference librarianship?
2. What kinds of professional activities interest you?
3. How do you see Reference/Public Services interacting with Technical Services?
4. What do you find most appealing/rewarding about reference work? Unappealing?
5. What things do you think you would miss most about your current position and what most appeals to you about this position?
6. In what type of working environment are you most effective?
7. How would your colleagues describe you?
8. What strengths could you bring to this position?
9. What did you do in your last job to contribute to team work environment? Be specific.
10. Which electronic databases do you use most frequently and why? What are some other databases you are familiar with but only use occasionally?
11. Describe a reference interview that you, as the Reference Librarian, handled poorly. Why did it not go well and what did you learn from that experience?