Last year I was fortunate enough to be selected for the Westchester Library Association Professional Development Award. I used the award to take a four-day Reference and Information services online class hosted by Amigos Library Services. I was motivated to take the class to refresh my reference skills and serve as a better resource for my colleagues who fill varied roles as employees of a small neighborhood library.

The reference course I took prior to the Amigos training was a required part of my library school curriculum. This was an excellent foundational course and served as a touchstone through which I use to guide my reference practices today. I was not employed by a library when I took the class and I found myself with many on-the-job questions about reference interactions. While I had been enjoying the learning-by-doing approach, I was sure that the added context of a structured course would help scaffold my learning as I gained experience.

Each day of the Amigos course was devoted to a topic critical to reference work. The first day of the course covered core reference skills; the different types of reference service (ready reference, reader's advisory, research consulting, subject specialists, reference verification/citation and instruction); the different models of reference service (reference desk, roving reference, tiered reference services, reference by appointment and service to remote users) and front-line skills (establishing rapport, negotiating the question, developing a search strategy, locating the information, and closure). My professional experience so far has taught me that often I have a very limited amount of time to work through negotiating the question and developing the search strategy components of the reference interview. The information I gained on this day of the class improved my efficiency when navigating reference interactions with patrons. The opportunity to discuss the appropriate behaviors and methodologies have been especially meaningful in informing my current professional practice.

The second day of the course extended the discussion of search strategies, source evaluation and concluded with a discussion about how to integrate digital literacy into our reference practice. Our assignment of the day was to create a brief tutorial for an online resource or our institution's catalog. I created PowerPoint tutorials while completing my MLS and I really wanted to try creating a video version. I created a screen-capture video about how to search for a book using our catalog. It was a challenge to create a tutorial that conveyed what information I wanted with clarity, but now I have experience that will inform my ability to create quality content in the future.

During day three we learned how to develop a reference collection. When evaluating potential additions to a collection it is important to consider content, authority,

format, user interface, accessibility, and indexing. My previous reference course didn't cover this topic at length so I found this day's discussion especially fruitful. This information has served as a guide as myself and my colleagues work on weeding projects and parse through potential additions to the collection. The day concluded with an overview of free online ready reference sources. The ready reference list included resources I had not encountered previously and has been a valuable—frequently used guide.

The final day of the class considered policies, ethics, equality of access, patron privacy/confidentiality, intellectual freedom, copyright and fair use in the context of reference work. I particularly enjoyed learning more about copyright and fair use. I now subscribe to the Library of Congress' Copyright blog—this has proven to be relevant to my everyday work navigating resource accessibility issues. For the final assignment, we wrote a policy statement for a reference service in a library of our choosing. Writing the reference policy statement was an interesting exercise in balancing a reference services' offerings, considering the needs of patronage while adhering to appropriate ethics, accessibility and privacy practices.

Taking this Reference and Information Services course aided in my goal of reaffirming the core principles of reference work and enhancing our library's service practices for patrons. As a recent graduate, I am extremely grateful to the WLA for selecting me to receive the award so that I could further develop my reference skills and knowledge.