

Questions keep staffers on their toes

BY LINDA WILKINS

AT THE WESTERVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY, questions come in by phone, at the desks and by email.

Often, finding information or a book for a child is similar to a treasure hunt. The children know what they are talking about, and the librarian is trying to figure it out. So the staff member keeps searching and asking questions.

Here are a few notable exchanges.

Kid: Do you have the book called *My Hamster Is Missing*?

Librarian: I don't see that title in our catalog. Do you know the author's name?

Kid: No.

Librarian: Have you seen this book before at school?

Kid: No.

Librarian: Well, can you tell me anything about the story?

Kid: Oh ... well, I can't find my hamster. I thought if I read a book about someone else losing a hamster it might help me find mine.

Child: Do you have books on the holy cross?

Librarian (after much searching in the catalog and retrieving a book from the shelf): Here's a book that talks about that topic.

Child: Oh, no, I mean that thing that happened in Germany during World War II.

Librarian: Ohhhhh, let's search under the word "holocaust."

Some conversations are priceless.

Mom to child, looking at catalog: That's an e-book.

Child: I am way past (reading level) E, mom! I can read at least level F or G!

Mom: No, that (decorative and very lifelike) tree is definitely not for climbing.

Preschool daughter (dumbfounded): Why else would it be here?

Librarian, to woman in picture book room: Hi. Can I help you?

Child in play bus: No thanks. We're just browsing.



COURTESY WESTERVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Youth services librarian Susan Carr sits at the department's help desk.

During a class visit, when a first-grader was told he could get a library card and then borrow books, movies and music for free, he asked in amazement: "How do you people make any money?"

The "Ask Here" desk in Adult Services attracts heavy traffic from questioners who stop by, call and send emails to answers@westervillelibrary.org.

The No. 1 question received by Adult Services for the past five years?

Patron: How do I download ebooks to my Kindle (or other specific device)?

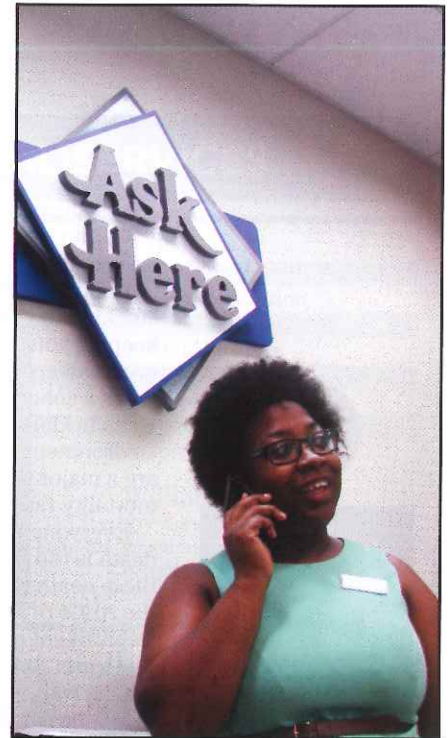
Librarian: Bring it in and we'll help you. Also, we provide step-by-step instruction sheets in print and online, and you can even come to one of our free classes.

Our Outreach staff members receive lots of questions as they deliver library materials to homebound residents or those living in senior citizen apartment complexes, nursing homes or assisted living centers. Many queries are routine, but others are unexpected.

How much do I have to pay to have my books delivered? No fee. It's a service we provide.

Can you bring me a voter registration form? Yes.

I just had surgery. Can I have items



COURTESY WESTERVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Adult services librarian Kaya Burgin fields patron questions at the "Ask Here" desk.

delivered to me while I recover? Yes.

Can you help me with my tablet? Smartphone? Laptop? Sure. We'll make an appointment and come to you.

Senior-living facility director: If I bring our residents into the library, can you give them a tour?

Outreach staffer: Most definitely.

Senior-living resident: While you're here, can you put the CD in the player for me so I can listen to my book right away?

Outreach staffer: Of course.

Do you conduct exorcisms? (This was a serious question.)

For more Q&A, check out westervillelibrary.org/faq.



LINDA WILKINS is the marketing coordinator at the Westerville Public Library. For more information about library services and programs, go to westervillelibrary.org.