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## **THESE LIBRARIANS A PUBLIC RESOURCE Bethlehem reference staffers field all kinds of queries**

**By JENNIFER RITENOUR  
Of The Morning Call**

Never play "Trivial Pursuit" with a reference librarian.

After fielding questions all day, some of the answers are bound to sink in.

"We're generalists," says Jane Gill. "We tend to know a little about a lot of things. Just doing your job, you pick things up."

Gill, who heads the Bethlehem Area Public Library's public services division, says people ask all sorts of questions of the reference librarians — about 23 an hour.

"You never know what the next question is going to be. Is it going to be something erudite and scholarly, or is it going to be something about Mr. Magoo's first name?"

"People ask everything they can possibly think of," says librarian Mary Kupferschmid. "We've had people ask how to write a thank-you letter to their mother-in-law for a gift they hate, and calls from bars to settle sports arguments."

The eight librarians who staff the information and audio-visual departments often work together to solve some of the tougher questions. "We pool information," says Barbara Subber. "There really isn't any competition," Kupferschmid adds.

Gill says the information staff will keep looking for answers until they satisfy themselves that they've exhausted all their resources. Sometimes, they'll continue their search even after telling the patron the information is unavailable. "We'll keep our antennae out," she says. "It's a real challenge. The more trivia-oriented it is, the more it challenges us to find the answer."

"It's like doing a puzzle," Donna Horvath explains.

Some of their toughest challenges?

Determining the real names of Frick and Frack, Swiss skaters for the Ice Follies. (The answer was eventually found in an old *Life* magazine.)



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