Genealogy librarianship is different from medical/health, business, and general reference is two very important ways:

a. Often there isn't a readily findable "one right answer."
b. Frequently, the reference interaction is helping patrons learn the process of finding their own answers, rather than providing them with the answer.

If a patron asks for the five-year survival rate for breast cancer, or the five largest businesses in Maine, there's a 'right' answer to those questions.

But genealogy patrons are looking for broader answers <about the range of a person's life> and assistance with how to do the research themselves, so they can continue on their own, in ways that most other reference patrons aren't expecting. It's a different mindset from most of the reference librarianship courses you will take.

General genealogy patron types:

➢ Absolute beginners ~ this occasionally happens. Someone sees one of the genealogy television shows, or finds Grandma's scrapbook with pictures and obituaries.
➢ Exhausted Ancestry <or think they have>: this is the most common patron type I work with. They have some information from family members and they've done basic searches at Ancestry ~ but they don't <for example> know that you can search Ancestry with just a first name and specific location. They are usually frustrated because they think they are stuck.
➢ Advanced researchers ~ they generally know what they are doing, at least for the most part, and they are generally looking for
  o A second person to bounce idea off
  o Obscure resources they don't already know
➢ Genealogy tourists ~ interested in what is available locally that isn't available elsewhere. There are two subtypes:
  o where a patron really has exhausted the on-line resources and is looking for sources that aren't on-line. These patrons usually don't need much help, but the librarian needs to know the collection well to know what is locally specific.
  o The visitor knows a great grandmother was born in/near town being visited ~ maybe the parent/grandparents have memories of visiting. So the visitor decides to stop in the library on a rainy day to see what they can find. Other than not living nearby, these are usually also absolute beginners.
➢ Specialized/focused ~ particular person, house history, local event. These researchers often aren't actually interested in traditional genealogy, but genealogy resources can help them find who built and lived in the house they just bought, or trace the life of someone who was mayor for 30 years, and so on.