

Virtual Reference Adventure: Choose Your Own Experience

MORE TO EXPLORE: COLLABORATION OUTSIDE THE CONSORTIAL BOX

In virtual reference, collaboration is not limited to partners in the same consortium.

Here is an example of collaboration between an academic librarian (Nancy Huling at the University of Washington) and a public librarian (Jodee Fenton at the Seattle Public Library). A UW student asked a chat reference question that could potentially be better addressed by SPL staff. While chatting with the UW student, Nancy contacted SPL through its chat reference service and was connected to Jodee. The patron's question was referred to SPL using QuestionPoint and was subsequently answered by Jodee using e-mail.

There's a lot to learn from this chat reference transcript.

Question:	Where can I go to find architectural plans and history of the University Branch of the Seattle Public Library?
Patron Name:	
Currently Assigned to:	Seattle Room at Seattle Public Library
Routed/Referred by:	NANCY HULING At University of Washington

Patron:	Where can I go to find architectural plans and history of the University Branch of the Seattle Public Library?
Librarian 1:	The Librarian will be with you shortly.
Librarian 1:	[Nancy - A librarian has joined the session]
Librarian 1:	Hi, [name of patron]
Patron:	Hello--you're quick :)
Librarian 1:	Hmmm, that is a very good question :)
Librarian 1:	I type fast . . .
Librarian 1:	but can't think quite that fast!!
Librarian 1:	Can you hold on while I hunt around for a moment?
Patron:	I'm pretty sure there are building plans in some archive on campus, but not sure where that would be.

Patron:	yes, I can certainly wait
Librarian 1:	But you're wanting plans for the University branch of Seattle Public, right?
Patron:	correct
Librarian 1:	Because I'm not sure we'd have those -- we have plans for our campus buildings, in most cases -- not sure that we'd have them for a non-campus entity
Librarian 1:	But I will hunt around . . . be back ASAP
Patron:	hmmm...It's quite a historical building because it's a "carnegie library" if that helps
Patron:	thank you
Librarian 1:	We do have books on Carnegie libraries, but I don't think they'll get in to detail about the building plans . . .
Librarian 1:	I'm still looking . . .
Patron:	Ok... I appreciate your help
Librarian 1:	While poking around, I found (and you may know this already) that a student in Architecture wrote her MA thesis on the Fremont library -- in 1999
Librarian 1:	Also a Carnegie library
Patron:	How are masters theses published?
Librarian 1:	Author Wirsching, Meredith Ann Title For the common good : redefining the Fremont Carnegie Library / Meredith Ann Wirsching Pub info 1999 AUP General Stacks NA25 TH48536
Librarian 1:	They aren't really published, unless the student writes an article or seeks a book publisher later
Patron:	I'll take a look at that, thanks.
Librarian 1:	They are sort-of "gray literature," existing only on the campus where they were written
Librarian 1:	It might provide some insights into where she found her material
Librarian 1:	BUT -- I'm still looking!!
Patron:	Ok :)
Librarian 1:	Take a look at this (if you haven't already): < http://www.spl.org/default.asp?pageID=branch_open_about&branchID=27 >
Librarian 1:	Also a little on the Historylink page: http://www.historylink.org/essays/output.cfm?file_id=2998
Librarian 1:	I haven't been able to find that we have any of the plans
Librarian 1:	SO -- I hope you don't mind that I contacted Seattle Public and they are now helping me
Patron:	I did look at that. It had a good start for the carnegie background. I also talked to the librarian there, and she let me into the basement where I could look at some historic University District pictures, but none of the library.
Patron:	ooh. that history link one looks good...

Patron:	Oh no, I don't mind--I really appreciate it!
Librarian 1:	Are you planning to write a paper or thesis on the subject?
Patron:	I'm writing a comparative analysis between the university branch and the brand new capitol hill branch
Patron:	I'm supposed to use published sources :\
Librarian 1:	And are you primarily focusing on the architecture or are you also looking at services?
Librarian 1:	That's really a challenge -- trying to find actual published sources . . .
Librarian 1:	Wouldn't the history link essay be considered "published?"
Patron:	The assignment only requires a comparison of the two. It's only 6-8 pages, so I think I could write that much just by looking at the two. The comparison can (but is not required to) compare function, structure and/or design.
Patron:	Yeah. the published is tricky. I have a draft due this week and a final copy due at the end of the quarter, so I will be able to get some advice from the teacher for additional sources.
Librarian 1:	Ok, I heard back from the SPL librarian.
Librarian 1:	She want to know if she can get back to you via email
Patron:	they're quick too ;)
Librarian 1:	The Art Librarian has to check their storage area for the plans
Librarian 1:	I can tell SPL what your deadline is
Librarian 1:	Is the paper for an architecture class?
Patron:	ok, would you like to give them my contact information so that can get get back to me?
Librarian 1:	Yes, that would be great!
Patron:	yes, for an arch class.
Librarian 1:	is _____ the best email address to use?
Patron:	my final deadline is March 7. I have a draft due tomorrow (I've procrastinated...)
Patron:	yes, that email works
Librarian 1:	:) I can relate to that
Librarian 1:	OK, I'll let them know
Patron:	oh good
Patron:	Thank you so much!
Librarian 1:	Perhaps some general books on the Seattle Public library might also help you?
Patron:	Sure
Librarian 1:	If you search our Libraries catalog, just put in seattle public library
Librarian 1:	and that will pull up some books

Librarian 1:	I don't know if any articles have been written, but that is a possibility -- especially newspaper articles
Librarian 1:	e.g., from the old Seattle papers
Patron:	wow, there are quite a few
Patron:	would proquest be the best way to look for newspaper articles? or is there an index of older papers?
Librarian 1:	Proquest doesn't really go back far enough -- good for current stuff though
Librarian 1:	Let me check a couple of dates
Patron:	ok, I have about 5 more minutes.
Librarian 1:	Oh, I'd better hurry
Librarian 1:	In the interest of time, we have a Pacific Northwest Regional Newspaper and Periodical Index
Librarian 1:	The "paper" version is a card catalog in Special Collections, in Allen Library
Librarian 1:	But we are slowly putting it online -- not everything is available yet, but it can be searched through our Research Databases listing
Librarian 1:	That's probably your best bet, since nothing goes back that far online -- except the New York Times!! You could check to see if they wrote anything.
Librarian 1:	So I'm going to forward your question to SPL and they will be responding to you
Librarian 1:	And if we all have other thoughts, we will inundate you!
Patron:	I found how to access that index...
Librarian 1:	Oh, that is excellent!
Patron:	Sounds good! Thank you so very much :)
Librarian 1:	The New York times can also be accessed through our Research Databases list
Librarian 1:	It covers from 1851-2000 or so, I think -- and is full text'
Patron:	I will check there. You have given me quite a few good places to look.
Patron:	I'm curious--do very many people use this chat feature?
Librarian 1:	It's off and on -- but growing!
Patron:	I think it's great...this is my second time using it.
Librarian 1:	Wonderful! Tell all of your friends :) 00:11 2005/02/15
Patron:	Ok :)
Librarian 1:	Seattle Public also has this service and that's how I communicated with them!
Patron:	Alright, gotta head to class. Thanks again!
Librarian 1:	OK, bye [name of patron]
Patron:	eniov the rest of your dav (and the sun!)

Librarian 1:	Come back into the service if you have more questions!
Patron:	Bye
Librarian 1:	Bye!
Librarian 1:	Note to staff: RESEARCH [Nancy - user has closed this session]
Librarian 1:	Referred from: University of Washington(10082) by: NANCY HULING(100246736) to institution: Seattle Public Library (Washington)(10057) Reason: Hi: Thanks again for all of your help with this! If you have additional ideas for [patron name], I know he'd be thrilled. I guess his professor wants "published" material, so web documents might or might not be acceptable. Buried in this long transcript is additional information on the topic and what he is doing. –Nancy
Librarian 2:	Hi, [name of patron]- I do not know if I have plans for the University Branch in our storage facility. When we moved out of the old library (2001) a lot of things were sent to this storage location without detailed lists. However, I know that we have a set of plans here in the Central Library that is used by our Facilities department. I can make an arrangement for you to see those. I don't know how historical they are--for sure they would have things like updated mechanical systems, electrical/plumbing and the like. Just let me know when you can come to the Library. We don't have a way to copy plans in-house--however if you have a camera you could take some pictures. I do have some photographs of the University Branch that might be interesting--I think there are some interior shots taken shortly after opening. I also have historical records from University that I can pull for you (these are in storage so the earliest I can get them would be Friday). I usually go to the storage facility on Friday mornings and could look in the files that I have there. The UW Press published a book on the history of Seattle Public Library called "Place of Learning Place of Dreams" by John Marshall. There is a nice section in it on the Carnegie libraries. And some interesting observations about Seattle's relationship to Carnegie. We have circulating copies of the book and I have one here in the Seattle Room. The Seattle Room is open 1-8 on Mondays, 1-5 Tues-Fri and by appointment. Please let me know what is the best way to get this information to you. Jodee Fenton, Manager Hugh and Jane Ferguson Seattle Room 386-4610
Librarian 2:	Closed by Librarian #108270.