

Virtual Reference Adventure: Choose Your Own Experience

Here's a "what if" scenario to think about as you begin your virtual reference adventure.

WHAT IF you are assigned the new responsibility as the manager of chat reference?

You have worked in the reference department of the Central Library, Mid-Counties Public Library System for the last year. The library serves the communities in small towns and surrounding rural areas in several counties. The number of in-library questions has declined dramatically and the library director thinks that meeting patrons at their point of need—at home, school, or office—is appropriate and that chat is the answer. Because you are comfortable with technology, you are asked to manage the new service.

How will you learn about implementation of chat reference service in other libraries? Different service models for delivering chat reference?

How will you get staff members at your library involved in planning the chat service?

Here are some resources that may help you:

Zhang Ying and Corinne Bishop, "Project Management Tools for Libraries: A Planning and Implementation Model Using Microsoft Project 2000." *Information Technology and Libraries*, September 2005, 147-52. Discusses the implementation of QuestionPoint at the University of Central Florida. Full text available through ProQuest.

Rodgers, Michael, ed., "Colorado State Library Talks Virtual Reference," *Library Journal*, September 15, 2005. <http://www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA6256267.html>

Hirko, Buff, "Mainstreaming Chat," *Library Journal*, September 15, 2005. <http://www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA6269280.html>

Houghton, Sarah et al, "Web-based Chat vs. Instant Messaging: Who Wins?" *Online*, July-August 2005, 26-30. Full-text available through ProQuest.