

## Virtual Reference Adventure: Choose Your Own Experience

*Here's a "what if" scenario to think about as you work to keep your knowledge of virtual reference current.*

### **WHAT IF instant messaging is added to the virtual reference software currently in use at your library?**

Your library wants to attract more young patrons to its chat reference service. Recognizing that many young people are frequent users of online chat rooms, IM (instant messaging), and SMS (short message service on cell phones), your library decides to add an instant message option for chat reference. But few staff members at your library use or are familiar with IM or SMS.

*How will you educate yourself and others about the increasing use of IM? About IM and "chat speak"?*

*How will you personally gain skills in using IM? Which IM service will you use for practice?*

**Here are some resources that may help you:**

"Chat 101: Chat Terminology (Chat Speak)" A complete glossary available at <http://www.ker95.com/chat101/html/chatterms.html>

Schmidt, Aaron and Michael Stephens, "IM Me," *Library Journal*, April 1, 2005, pp. 34-35.

Sullivan, Danny, "New Google Talk Offers Instant Messaging and Voice Chat," SearchEngingeWatch.com, 2005. Good overview of IM and comparison of various services at <http://searchenginewatch.com/searchday/article.php/3529566>

Shiu, Eulynn and Amanda Lenhart, "How Americans Use Instant Messaging," Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2004. Available at [http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/133/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/133/report_display.asp)