

Virtual Reference Adventure: Choose Your Own Experience

Here's a "what if" scenario to think about as you decide how to staff your virtual reference service.

WHAT IF your library subscribes to new licensed databases?

Your small college library serves 1,500 students and 175 faculty and staff. There are 23 majors and six graduate programs offered. Your library partners with four similar college libraries to provide chat reference service. As a result of a large private donation, your library is adding five new licensed databases to support graduate studies in nursing, engineering and art. Are you and your colleagues equipped to help customers find appropriate resources in Corbis, CINAHL, NTIS, and others? How well do you know search techniques for non-text resources like images or diagrams? Do you understand licensing restrictions when helping customers from partner libraries?

How will you ensure that your reference providers, including those at the other colleges, are competent in these new databases?

How will you adhere to any authentication requirements and usage restrictions in the licensing agreements?

Here are some resources that may help you:

"Basic Database Searching Techniques," Indiana University Libraries, 2003. Available at http://www.indiana.edu/~libugls/Publications/database_search.html

"Help With...Database Searching," Lucy Scribner Library, Skidmore College, 2004. Available at <http://www.libraries.iub.edu/index.php?pagelid=16>

Good, Robin. "How to Search for Images Online," 2003. Available at http://www.masternewmedia.org/2003/12/02/how_to_search_for_images.htm

LibLicense: Licensing Digital Information, Yale University Library, 2003, available at <http://www.library.yale.edu/%7Ellicense/index.shtml>.

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