

Virtual Reference Adventure: Choose Your Own Experience

Here's a "what if" scenario to think about as you adapt your reference interview skills to the chat reference environment.

WHAT IF a significant number of customer surveys report dissatisfaction?

Your university library serves not only students, faculty and staff, but also the surrounding metropolitan community. The library participates in a national academic cooperative that offers around-the-clock chat reference service. The pop-up survey completed by customers includes the question "Did you find the service effective in meeting your needs? Nearly 20% of respondents answer "No."

How will you pinpoint the problem areas?

What process will you use for reviewing the transcripts of chat reference sessions?

How will you implement customer service improvements?

Here are some resources that may help you:

"Customer Service Committee Bibliography," Monroe Community College Educational Technology Services. Extensive list of print and online resources from many perspectives available at <http://www.monroecc.edu/depts/ets/cs/resources.htm>

"H*E*L*P* Reference Interview Skills," McKay Library, Brigham Young University. Available at <http://emp.byui.edu/twitchell/refinterview.html>

Trochim, William, "Question Wording," Research Methods Knowledge Base, 2005. Available at <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/quesword.htm>

Weismann, Sara, "E-Ref Characteristics," observations on providing reference via the Internet by a virtual reference veteran at Morris County Library, NJ. Available at <http://www.gti.net/weissman/character.html>