Virtual Reference Adventure: Choose Your Own Experience

Here's a "what if" scenario to think about for your collaborative virtual reference service.

WHAT IF you think a partner library isn't providing high-quality chat service?

Your library is part of a virtual reference consortium consisting of three community colleges and four medium-sized public libraries. All have shared staffing on chat reference for the past 18 months, although your community college library and one public library began the service three years ago. Several of your colleagues have mentioned recently that they hear some complaints from your students about the service provided by one of the public libraries. Receiving an incomplete answer is the most frequent complaint. The consortium has service standards for chat reference and training was provided last year for staff.

How will you determine the reason for the students' perception of poor service?

What can you do at the local and consortium levels to ensure that your service standards are met?

Here are some resources that may help:

"Digital Reference Transcripts," Digital Reference Education Initiative, School of Information Studies, Syracuse University. Available at http://128.230.185.43/item_list.cfm?NavID=22

"Guidelines for Oregon Statewide Digital Reference Service," L-Net, 2003. Available at http://www.oregonlibraries.net/staff/docs/service_guidelines.shtml

"Service Guidelines," Librarian's Online Manual, QandANJ. Available at http://www.qandanj.org/manual/service