Virtual Reference Adventure: Choose Your Own Experience

Here’s a “what if” scenario to think about as you train staff for your virtual reference service.

WHAT IF a newly hired reference provider is scheduled on chat reference during his first week on the job?

You work in a rural county library with three branches. Branches are open limited hours. Two librarians and two para-professional staff members provide chat reference service at the main library. (The library director fills in on rare occasions.) The senior reference librarian recently retired, and one para-professional is recuperating from major surgery. Because of this staff shortage, a newly hired librarian is immediately assigned to chat reference shifts.

What kind of help can be provided to a staff member who is new to chat reference?

What would you recommend that this new librarian read before his first chat reference shift? What should he practice?

Here are some resources that can help:

Digital Reference Education Initiative, School of Information Studies, Syracuse University. Wide variety of training materials available at http://drei.syr.edu/item_list.cfm?NavID=8.
