Carrying the Torch for Users in an On-Demand World:
Premier Reference Service for our users

GOLD/Gallileo

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Cooperatives Work!

- Resource sharing networks
- OCLC shared cataloging
- Shared databases
- Consortial purchases
- Training and other programs
- Reference Referral and 2nd level reference

Strength in Numbers: Accomplish together what you couldn't do alone

Library Users?

- Self-sufficient
- Convenience
- Seamless interfaces

Popular information tools

- Google: over 250 m searches/day
  - Simple interface
  - Search engine does all the work
- Amazon
  - Readers' Advisory + Catalog
  - "Search Inside"
- The Library?

Why Virtual Reference?

Go where the users are, on the Web

Redefine and reassert the role of librarians and libraries in the Internet age

Virtues of Virtual Cooperatives

- Expanded coverage (even to 24/7)
- Seamless access to subject specialists
- The "killer app" for libraries
- Sharing = Cost savings

There's no desk

Librarians monitor queues, they don't staff a desk

Coverage:
- A few librarians can staff many libraries
- More efficient use of librarians' time
- Bunny slipper librarians (more staffing options)

Network:
- Tap into subject expertise worldwide
- Access to subject experts/language beyond what individual library can offer

Cooperative VR Benefits

- Expanded hours = increased usage
- Shared publicity, branding
- Shared training, Best Practices
- Networking, collegiality
- For just a few hours a week of existing staff time, increase service exponentially
- Size doesn't matter

Case Study: 24/7 Reference

- 2 24 hour cooperatives: 1 public and 1 academic
- Subject experts
- Each library agrees to:
  - Submit a policy page, included in the library policies database
  - Cover a specified number of hours per week for the group
  - Review session transcripts for quality control
  - Assist with Follow Up

24/7 Reference provides:

– Network for academic and public libraries
  - Scheduling
  - Matchmaking for special libraries
– Technical support with software
– Back-up after-hours staff for 24 hour coverage
– Quality Control process
– Resources
  - Databases
  - Training

What's in it for the community?

- Assistance from trained reference librarians, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Available from the web: patrons can be at school, at home, or anywhere there is web access
- Access to subject expert/language referral network
- Guided assistance to quality information resources, such as databases, not found via usual search engines

What's in it for Librarians?

- For minimal time commitment per week, provide 24 hour service to community
- Use "co-browsing" to instruct patrons how to use library resources
- Access the "Meeting Room" feature for distance learning
- Expand reference skills of online librarians
- Collegial/networking opportunity
- Shared publicity: power of a brand
- Best practices: reference, resources, web design

It's All Reference...

Issue #1: Think Global, Act Local

- Approx 30% of questions are local – harder for non-local library to answer:
  - Library policy database
  - Scripted messages
  - Referral via Conference/Transfer, scripted messages, E-mail
- Library user assumes librarian is from their local library
  - Scripted messages; web page

Issue #2: Quality Control

- Quality control: other librarians may not answer the question the way you would
  - Transcript review = opportunities for training
  - Development of Best Practices guidelines
  - Each library can follow up with its own users
- Trust issues

Issue#3 New Skills for VR

- Importance of being Web savvy
  - More reliance on online/web-based resources
  - For print, follow up or scan
- Chat etiquette
- Cooperative skills: answering Qs for "their" patrons
- Transcript Trauma? Raising the bar on reference
- Training issues

24/7 Reference-QuestionPoint

- 24 hour managed cooperative
- QP reference management tools
- Global Reference network

- Transition Task Force
- Get involved!
- Integrated platform: available Jan 2005

Questions, Comments?

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