

Virtual Reference Adventure: Choose Your Own Experience

What are the basic skills for effective chat reference?

Here are some questions about basic skills and core competencies to explore at your library. Look at the [Core Competencies](#) for Virtual Reference (Washington State VRS Project) and the [Competencies Rubric](#) for Digital Reference (DREI).

(These questions are based on a discussion of “Assessing Competencies for Virtual Reference,” sponsored by the RUSA/MARS Virtual Reference Discussion Group at the 2005 ALA Conference in Chicago.)

- Have you considered competencies or proficiency requirements for providers of your virtual reference service? Are these competencies in print? Do you present the expectations to staff in a formal or informal manner?
- When you provide training for your staff, do you base the learning outcomes on determined goals for proficiency? How do you determine if these outcomes are met? What happens with employees who do not meet the competencies?
- Do you provide any on-going training or measurement of competency for your virtual reference providers?
- Which aspects of the Washington State VRS or DREI competencies are the most challenging for your staff to maintain?
- Do you have different expectations of competence for different levels of staff? (e.g., administrators and reference providers, librarians and paraprofessionals, new and experienced employees). How are these different expectations reflected in training and assessment of staff?
- What are the implications for these competencies beyond training? (e.g., writing job descriptions, recruitment and selection, evaluations)
- Do you think there are any important skills missing from the competencies?