

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.

"Coaching in a Library Setting," Academic Library Management Toolkit, Princeton University, 2004. Available at <http://libweb.princeton.edu/hr/training/Coaching.doc>

Metz, Ruth F., *Coaching in the Library: A Management Strategy for Achieving Excellence*, ALA Editions, 2002.