

Ready, Set, Go!
90 Minutes to a
Collaborative Virtual
Reference Service

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www.askusnow.info/denver08

Funding

- **where is the money coming from?**
- **charging a fee--creating an equitable fee structure**
- **getting buy-in, pitching the service**
- **who's the host agency?**
- **getting state funding for the project**

Software Selection

- **what to expect from the process / from the vendors**
- **do they have access to backup staff? 24/7?**
- **Request For Proposal (RFP)**
- **other selection criteria**

Customer Access

- **have a separate public and academic queue**
- **have minimum barriers to access service**
- **if you must authenticate, make it easy for the user**
- **make your site findable**
- **add the link to the service on every logical page**

Recruiting

- **get creative when recruiting participants**
- **try to recruit at least one local history expert**
- **recruit at museums, hospitals, etc., not just traditional libraries**
- **road show**

Training

- **provide training on Internet searching and free resources**
- **train on transcript evaluation**
- **have an easy set of standards of quality for providers**
- **train on administration and reports/statistics**
- **offer online, on-demand training modules specific to your service**

Staffing

- **have a minimum number of hours per week for contribution**
- **emphasize the importance of collaboration for libraries contributing staff time**
- **allow non-MLS who provide reference to staff service**
- **how to be 24/7**
- **if someone doesn't like or want to chat, don't force them**

Marketing

- **start with a solid campaign that appeals to most**
- **target certain demographics with additional marketing**
- **web links and banner ads on non-library sites are essential**
- **advertise outside of the library!**
- **find them where they are:**
 - **MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, MTV, movie theatres**

Running the Show

- **be willing to repeat yourself**
- **embrace troubleshooting**
- **develop policies and procedures**
- **be gentle with criticism and quick/generous with praise**
- **if something goes wrong, take the blame**
- **create a committee to help guide the service and make decisions**

Building Community

- **communicate directly with front-line staff**
- **have Listservs for both staff and site coordinators**
- **visit/have face time with participating libraries often**
- **meet with site coordinators on a regular basis**

Keeping Up to Date

- **join a user group or advisory committee, if possible**
- **attend conferences and workshops on virtual reference**
- **meet your colleagues/counterparts in the field, create relationships**
- **share your tips/tricks with others**

Succeeding

- **set your own measurement of success**
- **have an action plan but be flexible**
- **be willing to play, try new things**
- **don't get discouraged--cooperative activities take a long time to get going**

Questions?

Thank you for joining us today!

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