

Shared Expectations:

Getting Comfortable and Providing Quality Service in Cooperative VR

Panel sponsored by OCLC: "Best Practices in Cooperative Virtual Reference"
Renaissance Mayflower Hotel, Chinese Room
Saturday, June 23, 2007, 1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Lynn Silipigni Connaway, Consulting Research Scientist
OCLC Online Computer Library Center, Inc.
Email: connawal@oclc.org
Phone: 303-246-3623
Web Site: <http://www.oclc.org/research/staff/connaway.htm>

Marie L. Radford, Associate Professor
Rutgers University SCILS
4 Huntington St., Room 329, New Brunswick, NJ 08901
Email: mradford@scils.rutgers.edu
Phone: (732) 932-7500 x8233 (o)
Web Site: <http://www.scils.rutgers.edu/~mradford>
Blog: <http://librarygarden.blogspot.com/>

Bibliography of Additional Readings

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PowerPoint Slides and handouts for today's presentation will be available at the *Seeking Synchronicity* web site: <http://www.oclc.org/research/projects/synchronicity/>

This research is one of the outcomes from the project: *Seeking Synchronicity: Evaluating Virtual Reference Services from User, Non-User, and Librarian Perspectives*. It is funded by the Institute of Museum & Library Services (IMLS), Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, & OCLC, Online Computer Library Center.

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Recommendations for Cooperative Reference Services

- **Dazzle ‘Em (From a Distance)**
 - Advertise cooperation
 - Promote global/local presence
 - Seize opportunities to build rapport
- **Overcome Boundaries & Heighten Awareness of Remote Access Issues**
 - Don't tease or bait and switch (offer only the resources they have access to)
 - Guide users beyond consortial limits (suggest in person visit to library or make other referral to resources they may have available)
 - Don't force instruction
- **Develop & Share Expectations**
- **Exceed Expectations – Aim for Excellent Service & Cultivate Repeat Users**

Recommendations for Individual VRS Librarians/Staff

- **Start Off on the Right Foot!**
 - Minimize number of scripts you send before greeting user personally
- **Accentuate the Positive – Always Put the Cooperative Service in the Best Light**
 - Maintain a professional tone
 - Be yourself
- **Do Not Dismiss Questions Out of Hand**
 - Questions that seem rude or inappropriate may be genuine
- **Clarify the Question**
 - Even if you think you understand, your interpretation may be incorrect
- **Increase Accuracy – Answer the Specific Question**
 - Check to make sure page you are pushing has the specific information
- **Provide a Variety of Resources, Citations & Referrals**
 - Give user the option to go beyond initial resources
- **Manage Complex or Multiple Queries**
 - Refer complex questions to the cooperative specialist service or to another mode
 - Use traditional approaches to multiple queries, answer easy ones first, make sure you have answered all parts
- **They Disappeared? Complete the Inquiry Anyway**