



Minutes
ASK A LIBRARIAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Orange County Public Library
Orlando, Florida
May 27, 2005

Attending: Andrea Ginsky (Sarasota County Library), Barbara Roberts (Miami-Dade College-Wolfson Campus), Susan Szymula (Brevard County Libraries), Patricia Barbier (St. Petersburg College), Dan Lhotka (Bureau of Library Development), Danny Hale (Suwanee River Regional Library System), Gregg Gronlund (Orange County Library System), Dani Lichtenberg (Palm Beach County Library System), Caryl Harris (Lake County Library System), Matt Burrell (Gulf Coast Community College), Ramona Miller-Ridlon (Santa Fe Community College), Peter Van Leeuwen (International College), Judy Born (Manatee Community College), Jennifer Sullivan (TBLC Virtual Reference Coordinator, Tampa Bay Library Consortium), Michael Shires (Nova Southeastern University), Charlie Parker (Tampa Bay Library Consortium), Geraldine Collins (Florida Gulf Coast University), and Vince Mariner (Statewide Coordinator, Ask a Librarian).

Length of Advisory Committee Terms

▪ **Term selection process**

Ask a Librarian Advisory Committee currently has the following representation:

- 6 – Public libraries
- 5 – Community colleges
- 3 – Academic
- 1 – State Library liaison
- 1 – FLNC liaison

The following committee representative's terms of service will expire September 30, 2005:

- 3 – Community colleges

Patricia Barbier, St. Petersburg College
Barbara Roberts, Miami-Dade College
Matt Burrell, Gulf Coast Community College

The following representatives will continue:

J. Michael Shires, Nova Southeastern University, Academic
Geraldine Collins, Florida Gulf Coast University, Academic
Peter Van Leeuwen, International College, Academic
Judy Born, Manatee Community College, Community College
Ramona Miller-Ridlon, Santa Fe Community College
Andrew Briendenbaugh, Tampa-Hillsborough Public Library
Gregg B. Gronlund, Orange County Public Library
Susan Szymula, Brevard County Public Library
Dani Lichtenberg, Palm Beach County Public Library
Caryl Harris, Lake County Public Library
Andrea Ginsky, Sarasota County Public Libraries

The call for advisory committee representation, for terms beginning 10/01/2005, will require the following representatives:

- 0 – Academic
- 3 – Community College
- 0 – Public Library

The State Library liaison, Dan Lhotka, and FLNC liaison, Danny Hales, will continue on the committee.

Overview

▪ Current Status

Vince provided a brief overview of the current status of the Ask a Librarian project as well as future activities. Discussion followed concerning current grant status and process for completing a proposal with detailed accounting. The Ask a Librarian project is a subset of the Florida Electronic Library as is the Distance Learning Library Initiative and it is also considered an internal grant from the Florida Electronic Library. Charlie Parker provided an overview of current funding status and source of funds for the DLLI project, indicating how the project is now funded from statewide and participant funds.

▪ Statistics

Vince distributed and reviewed the Ask a Librarian Statistics – April 2005 report. It was noted that up until December 2004, statistical reporting through the Docutek software did not provide accurate statistical information for local entry points. From December 2004 forward, statistical information is now considered accurate. The committee discussed how to capture information that reflects smaller libraries' contributions proportionate to larger libraries. Susan Szymula stated her library will be surveying 300 staff in the near future.

The committee agreed that the statistical reporting should be modified to reflect top ten users (summarized in percentages) one month and alternate month statistics by point of entry data. This report will be shared with libraries around the state. Consideration should be given to statistics gathering opportunities by like-groups.

▪ Docutek Update

Vince Mariner reported that Docutek was purchased by SIRSI in January 2005 and there has been no indication that SIRSI is attempting to influence future development of the product. CCLA and TBLC staff met with representatives from Docutek to gain an understanding of how the purchase by SIRSI would impact the ongoing enhancements to the Docutek software and to ensure stability of the relationship among all parties.

▪ Easy-to-use links update and feedback

Vince Mariner reviewed the easy-to-use links project and explained the purpose of implementing these new links. The committee felt that they would be more inclined to promote their own links rather than the Ask a Librarian easy-to-use links.

▪ Co-branding project update and feedback

Vince Mariner reviewed the current status of the co-branding project and the committee was pleased with the co-branding effort. They did have some suggestions, which included:

1. Remove the 'Search' button
2. Change the 'not your librarian' text (a working group of advisory committee members will be working on this text)
3. Move the new customizable text field above the 'not your librarian' text

▪ Local desk

The committee discussed how a patron knows when they are communicating with the local library or the statewide service. Suggestion was made that libraries could list hours of operation

(example: Ask a Librarian hours are from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., seven 7 days a week – local coverage for the Ask a Librarian service is 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Monday through Sunday).

▪ **VRLplus Software (new version) update and feedback**

Vince Mariner provided a demo of the VRLplus Software upgrade. Discussion followed concerning the enhancements to the product and status of future upgrades and requested changes.

Some changes to expect with next upgrade:

- One login from local desk
- Can create virtual desks and affiliate institution with it
- Provides IP addresses
- Option to configure co-browsing after connecting with a patron
- Increased ability to connect with all patrons since the software does not automatically configure co-browsing
- Only local questions are displayed in your local admin module

Vince Mariner and Jennifer Sullivan will research if this upgrade includes the ability to create local accounts and report back to the committee the results of their research. Statistics for collaborative accounts are not available with this upgrade.

General release of the software upgrade will be announced once training schedules have been determined. It is anticipated the new software will be available late summer/early fall 2005.

Vince will provide the committee with a list of requests for changes that have been reported to Docutek and the status of those requests. The committee agreed that:

- a) Towards the end of the Docutek contract other vendor softwares would be explored.
- b) Administering a usability study.
- c) Create process for reporting and monitoring software problems.

▪ **Workgroup reports**

It was noted that all workgroups had lost members. Most of the members who have left a workgroup had resigned their positions with their participating library.

- **Policies and Procedures:** Andrea Ginsky reported this workgroup surveyed staff that worked and used the Ask a Librarian service, identified some issues that should have policies developed, and created draft policies. Those policies were posted to the Ask a Librarian listserv. No date to complete this project was noted.
- **Knowledge Base:** Due to reduction in workgroup membership, no report was available.
- **Promotions and Publications:** Due to reduction in workgroup membership, no report was available.
- **Quality Assurance:** Patricia Barbier reported this workgroup has been reviewing chat transcripts each month. As a group, it was determined that chats considered exceptional were spotlighted. The workgroup is having difficulty continuing with this effort due to increase in the number of transcripts to review each month and the loss of workgroup members. More workgroup members are needed. Most significant observation from this effort was the recognition that librarians were becoming more proficient and sophisticated with their research and responses. Discussion followed concerning how to keep up with volume of transcripts, identify and select outstanding chat transcriptions

and give recognition to respective libraries and/or librarians. It was noted that this process would be enhanced if Docutek could sort by school or other identified subjects. Vince Mariner and Jennifer Sullivan reported that more workgroup members would be appointed very shortly.

- **Creation of new working group** – the committee agreed that a Youth Services Working Group should be created to prepare for the recruitment and promotion of AaL to the K-12 school audience.

▪ **Marketing and promoting the service**

Charlie Parker and Vince Mariner led the discussion identifying known concerns or issues and identifying what CCLA ,TBLC, and/or the participating libraries can do to promote the Ask a Librarian service, both locally and statewide.

Concerns:

- a) Need better statistics.
- b) How to resolve problems with answering questions from one college patron regarding another library. It was determined that some questions can only be answered at the local level.
- c) Problems with some web sites.
- d) Most librarians do not understand the term “knowledge base”. Suggestion was made to change “knowledge base” to “local information”. Many believe it is easier to “Google it” than look through current knowledge base.
- e) New participants (library staff) nervous about answering questions from a different library (public library answering academic library questions); some libraries resistant to participating for this reason.
- f) Continue with site coordinator training. (Susan Szymula and Michael Shires have not received formal Ask a Librarian training).
- g) Are there other tools available besides Docutek VRL software?
- h) Option to send notice (contact with patron) not an easy process in Docutek.
- i) Some libraries having difficulty getting the reference call before reference call is picked up by another person.

Advantages to Ask a Librarian service

- a) Part of a statewide effort, offering patrons extended hours of access to information and providing a service when a library does not have sufficient staffing.
- b) Provides a service for the state without over-burdening local library staff.
- c) Libraries are getting from Vince Mariner and Jennifer Sullivan the level of support needed.
- d) Flex hours.
- e) Site coordinators provided hands-on training.

Training updates and planning

Jennifer Sullivan reported that 15 new libraries have been trained since July 2004. During summer 2005, Jennifer will refresh and update the training materials in preparation for new software upgrade release. Discussion followed on how to enhance training for the site coordinators.

- a) Provide live demo of Docutek software first, before training begins.
- b) Provide re-training
- c) Provide virtual training; web cast training

Marketing update

Charlie Parker reported that although the number of sessions increased each month, this project falls short of number sessions experienced by other states offering similar programs. Goals for next year were discussed and included:

- a) Will growth goals for next year be the same as the current year?
- b) Assess how other states market their Ask a Librarian service; small workgroup was proposed to work on this project.
- c) How to communicate with children; how do children react in this environment.
- d) Educate existing operators
- e) K-12 community; committee suggested smaller workgroup to assess this audience. Jennifer will form a workgroup from the Ask a Librarian Advisory Committee and contact librarians (children's librarians) with an interest to serve with the workgroup. This workgroup will report back to the Advisory Committee.

Suggestions for promoting the service

The Advisory Committee discussed how to increase the number of sessions each month with the goal being to reach 3,500 sessions each month. The following ideas were shared:

- Software upgrade will help.
- Locally, the libraries can set up specific times that chat will be devoted to particular subjects such as genealogy. Susan Szymula has implemented this at her library and finds audience participation growing, growing slowly but growing.
- Utilization of Ask a Librarian by the professors as part of a course.
- Must sell other librarians of the value of the Ask a Librarian service. Create 10 -15 minutes video of Ask a Librarian service and distribute to other librarians, etc.
- Online tutorials, demos
- Target audiences that do not have easy access to a library
- Target audiences that are not computer savvy
- Target K-12 audiences
- Professional and/or specialized organizations audiences
- Work through Florida Electronic Library
- Provide training for other audiences
- Differences between public libraries (for everyone) and academic libraries (supports specific entity) – change mind-set of librarian.
- Use statistics to promote service within school.
- Survey evaluations.
- Use listserv to share information; internal communication
- Reference librarians communicate with each other.
- Blog
- Tool kit – video, etc. easy for librarians to have access to
- Professional publications; let others know when articles are written in professional publications
- Ask a Librarian pencils
- Co-branding
- Modifying or enhancing Ask a Librarian web page narrative to draw new users to the service. Changes to the page were discussed.
- Local desk – have field for local library
- Promote Ask a Librarian service through local library web sites/home pages
- Brochures