Virtual Dave Lankes

Presentation

http://www.DavidLankes.org

TITLE: Research in Digital Reference: A Town Hall Meeting
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ABSTRACT: Participate in a "town hall" meeting on research. After a brief update on selected issues, the speakers will solicit ideas for supporting an ongoing research effort to study and improve digital reference.
KEYWORDS: Virtual reference, digital reference, research

Research in Digital Reference: A Town Hall Meeting

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Current Context

- Budgets are often stagnant and money for research very difficult to find
- Demand for better services with newer technology is expanding, what do we do?
- Directors, Governing Boards, and state officials, want increased accountability and better justification of services
- New information technology is having a major impact on the library and its provision of services, what do we buy?
- Can't afford to make WRONG and COSTLY decisions

How is Digital Reference Research Supported Now?

- Grant/Foundation money
- Some limited support within individual libraries and consortia
- "In-kind" support by dedicated folks within individual libraries as directed by the library
- Done pro bono because the researcher is interested in the topic

So What's the Problem?

- There is not enough money available to address all the research needs in this area
- There are too many topics/issues related to Digital reference that need investigation
- Want to maximize impact from the limited research monies that are available
- Don't want to be reinventing the wheel

Basic Models for Supporting Research

- Submit proposal and (hopefully) get funded by a grant awarding institution – oftentimes have to address their priorities

- An individual gets interested in a research question/topic and pursues it with little external support

- A group of libraries and/or others partner together and support a specific project

Some Examples…

Quality Study

- Goal: Develop metrics and standards to assess quality in Dig_Ref
- Cost $125,000
- Supporters: ▷
- Deliverables
  - Literature Review
  - Review of Best Practices from Participating Libraries
  - Field-Testing of Measures and Quality Standards
  - Presentation of Findings and Final Report
- Governance: Advisory Board of Funders

Statistics, Measures and Quality Standards for Assessing Digital Reference Library Services: Guidelines and Procedures

Charles R. McClure
R. David Lankes
Melissa Gross
Beverly Choltco-Devlin

Supporters

- OCLC Online Computer Library Center, Inc.
- The Digital Library Federation
- University of Maryland Library
- Reference and User Services Association
- Liverpool John Moores University (UK)
- Pennsylvania Office of Commonwealth Libraries
- Florida State University Library

- Multnomah County Library (Portland)
- Library of Congress
- State Library of Florida
- Cleveland Public Library
- Mid-York Library System (Utica NY)
- Bristol University Library (UK)
- The Library of Michigan
- Syracuse University Library

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Research Symposium

- Goal: To Develop a Dig_Ref Research Symposium
- Supporters: IIS, NLC, ACRL, QuestionPoint
- Phases:
  - White Papers
  - Symposium
  - Dissemination
- Governance: Editorial Board

Draft White Papers

Digital Reference
Research Symposium
Cambridge, Massachusetts
August 1-3, 2002

Digital Reference Education Initiative

- **Goal: To develop a repository and knowledge and materials in Dig_Ref**
- **Cost: $250,000**
- **Supporters: IMLS and Content Providers**
- **Deliverables:**
  - **Rubric, Portal, VRD Events**
- **Governance: Advisory Board**

Town Hall Meeting Questions

- What models of supporting research related to Digital Reference are likely to be most productive for us?

- What are the KEY research topics and issues that would be BEST addressed by a coordinated effort (of some type)?

- How do we make the models happen and attack the most significant research?

Parting Shots

- Rethink the existing models for how to support research related to Digital Reference

- Increase the pool of available funding sources

- Better coordinate and leverage the research that is possible to do

- Forge better partnerships between practitioners and researchers

- Demonstrate that the research we DO get done has an impact and has made a difference.

So... Let the Discussion Begin!