



# Virtual Dave Lankes

## Presentation

<http://www.DavidLankes.org>

**TITLE:** The Reference Revival

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**ABSTRACT:** Digital or virtual reference has become an active community that has deployed digital reference widely across library types. Now the reference community is using the lessons learned to energize reference and the library as a whole. This talk will outline those lessons and how they can be used to energize the library community on a local, national and international level.

**KEYWORDS:** virtual reference, digital reference, libraries

A close-up photograph of a sandcastle on a beach. The sandcastle has a central tower and a wide, shallow moat. The text is engraved into the sand on the inner wall of the moat. The background shows a sandy beach, the ocean, and a clear blue sky. A red flag is visible in the distance on the right side of the image.

*The Reference Revival*  
R. David Lankes      [www.DavidLankes.org](http://www.DavidLankes.org)



# re•viv•al

- Pronunciation: ri-'vI-v&l
- Function: *noun*
- **1** : an act or instance of reviving : the state of being revived : as **a** : renewed attention to or interest in something **b** : a new presentation or publication of something old **c** (1) : a period of renewed religious interest (2) : an often highly emotional evangelistic meeting or series of meetings



## *Evidence of Revival*

- Standards
  - NISO AZ
  - Quality Standards
- Active Research Agenda
  - The Digital Reference Research Agenda
- Active Software Marketplace
  - 24/7, QuestionPoint, DocuTek, Tutor.com...
- Training/Education
- Marketing
- Conferences



# *The Digital Reference "Movement"*

Coherent Community of Innovators that are  
Motivated and Ready to Face the Problems  
of Librarianship



## *The Problem: External*

- The Public Domain and Fair Use are Shrinking
  - Gov't Information is Moving to the Private Sector
  - Legislation Secures Owners Rights...Above All
    - Movie Licensing Deals
  - Old data may find new life on the Internet, so let's hold on to it just in case
- The Academy Continues to Give Away its Currency to Others' Vaults
  - Scholarly Publishing Far from Reform
- Technologies in Information Dissemination are Increasingly By-Passing Information Sharing
- The Values of Librarianship are Minimized in the Current Market



## *The Problem: Internal*



- Bureaucracy and Reductionism assumes:
  - Static, discoverable environment
  - Unimpeded Flow of Information
- Real Life is Complex!



# Daedalus' Maze

- Libraries have become trapped in their own labyrinth of tools and organizations
- MARC, AACR2, DDC, LCSH, Z39.50, NISO, OPAC, DCMI, LibQual, ILL, AAT, GAC, ILS, LSTA, OCLC
- Paralysis through Analysis







## *The Need to Change*

- We're Top Heavy in Consortia and Organizations
- Need to Adapt the Tools we Helped Create to Become a More Agile Profession and Better Share Knowledge, Resources and Abilities
- Rather than Trying to Classify the Web, Let's Adopt, Improve and Rule It!



# Examples



Open Source Software



Digital Reference



# *What We Can Learn from Open Source*

- Community Development Works
  - And Open Source Doesn't Have to be Free
- Innovation Does Not Have a Job Title
- Sweat is as Good as Money
- More Money Doesn't Equal More Performance
- Technology Can Coordinate Massive Efforts
- Preservation of the Commons is NOT a Passive Activity
  - Actively Develops Good Product
  - Actively Benchmarks Itself Against the World
  - Actively Gains Converts and “Expands the Tent”



# *What We Can Learn from Digital Reference*

- Names Don't Matter, People Do!
  - Digital Reference is About Putting People in the Interface...What's on Your Web Site
- Librarianship is a Technical Profession
  - We Must Retake the Web!
- Share in Public
  - Successes and Failures
- Organizational Type Doesn't Matter
- Peer to Peer Rules
- There are NO Sacred Cows
- Let the Zealots Lead



# *Academy of Librarianship*

- An academy in the oldest sense:
  - Plato's Gymnasium
- Not an Organization, not a conference, modeled on the open source and digital reference communities





# *Academy Components*

- Technically Enabled
  - RSS Feeds everywhere, SOAP, Content Management Systems, Conferencing Middleware, Repositories
- Ongoing Conversations of Theory and Practice...COMBINED!
  - LIS Education and Practice need to get over it!
- Money and Resources
- Continuous Education
- Skunk Works/Test Bed/Playground
- People, People, People
- A Living Memory of the Profession



## *How to Make it Happen*


- Conceptualize It
- Digital, Universal Meeting Places
- Just Do It!



## *Librarians not Libraries*

- You Should Wake up Every Morning Thanking God you are a Librarian
- Librarians and Libraries Only Become Irrelevant if We Become Irrelevant
- “I AM the Library”



A close-up photograph of a sandcastle on a beach. The sandcastle has a central tower and a wide, shallow moat. The text "Slides Available at: www.DavidLankes.org" is stamped in a dark, bold font across the front wall of the moat. The background shows a sandy beach, the ocean, and a clear blue sky. A red flag is visible in the distance on the right side.

**Slides Available at:  
www.DavidLankes.org**