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# Video Reference A Pilot Project 2010

# Origin

- Changing nature of reference service
- Decrease number of staff available
- Increased size of new buildings
- Growing awareness of customer preferences for contact – email, chat, im, comment boxes, twitter, facebook

# Genesis

- Make effective and efficient use of technology as a tool for providing reference service
- Retain reference expertise between and throughout buildings
- Increase capacity of in -building staff to be available for alternate assignments in and out of buildings

# Technology Tools

- Free software (Skype)
- Existing computers
- Low cost microphones
- Low cost or built in video cameras

# Changing nature of librarian's role

- Increased desire to serve in community and provide programming
- Make best use of professional staff – ‘just-in-time’ reference staffing rather than ‘just-in-case’

# Process

- Set up Pre-Test
  - at six locations
    - Learn about sound quality
    - Customer Interest
    - Impact on in building activities
    - Placement of station

# Process

- Initial meeting in test locations
- Talking points sent out prior to test and communication plan in place
- Set-up and test software and equipment
- One staff with customer workstation and librarian out of sight location in same building
- Run sessions and take surveys
- Collect staff observations

# Customer Response

- Overwhelmingly positive
- Initial concern about replacing staff with computers
- Liked the use of technology to address needs
- Found it easy to use



# Staff Response

- Enthusiastic
- More libraries wanted to be pre-test sites than we're able to accommodate
- Sparked a lot of staff ideas on how the tool could be useful for their work

# What we've learned

- Customers appeared comfortable
- Easy to use and setup
- Staff saw the tool as useful
- Was not disruptive to other library business
- During pretest found no reason not to move forward with structured pilot project

# What we've learned

- Video reference is hugely attractive to children
- Time of day and location of service important
- Buy in by staff is important to success

# Limitations

- In house access to tool only
- Limited hours
- Equipment quality
- Limits on customization of software

# Proposed Staffing Model

- Not a replacement for reference staff
- Method to manage reality of reduced number of professional staff
- May require redistribution of staff from existing locations
- Move forward with staff in centralized location for limited number of hours per week – contrast with distributed model for IM/Chat
- Centralized location as host site could allow better connection with IT staff, subbing behind illness and vacations, but may not be feasible

# Our Next Steps

- Pilot Project (if pre-test warrants)
  - One location
  - Fixed hours – 10 per week/2 daily
  - Possible temporary staff reassignment
  - Fixed duration – 6 months
  - Assess success

# Thank You

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