MINITEX Library Information Network

REFERENCE NOTES

A program of the Minnesota Higher Education Services Office (HESO) at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities

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## INFORMATION BITS

Upcoming ELM Workshops
If you're interested in refreshing your electronic resource skills, you must attend one of the following workshops to be held in Wilson Library on the West Bank of the U of MN campus:
Gale InfoTrac and Resource Centers: Thursday, August 1, 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. (1 hour break for lunch).
OCLC FirstSearch Basics: Tuesday, August 6, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. or 1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m. For more information or to register, contact Christine Powell at 800-462-5348 or powel020@umn.edu.

Wedding Bells
Congratulations to Beth Friedmann, of MINITEX Reference Services, and Randal Staats who were married on June 1, 2002. Beth has taken her husband's name and is now known as Beth Staats (pronounced stats, i.e., statistics).

A QuestionPoint Primer
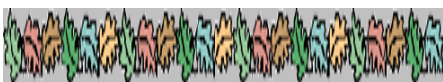
QuestionPoint, the culmination of LC and OCLC joining together to offer a nationwide digital reference service, has been the focus of much interest and discussion in the library profession of late. Will it bring reluctant users into a library's orbit? Will it pull libraries up even with commercial search sites like Ask Jeeves? Does it represent the way libraries have to go to survive and thrive in an Internet-based information world? How much do you know about QuestionPoint? We thought that we would use this month's *Reference Notes* to offer some basic information about the service and where MINITEX fits into the QuestionPoint picture.

QuestionPoint is one of the latest iterations of digital reference, which started in the late 1980's/early 1990's with the use of email applications to take in and return reference questions from remote library users. A next significant step superimposed Web software on email reference, standardizing correspondence between remote users and library staff through the use of Web forms and creating metadata behind the scenes on user behavior.

Once the use of interactive forms became a service norm for those libraries doing virtual reference service, the desire to cement connections with remote users, especially students, business people, government, and other "early adapters" followed multiple threads of digital experimentation. Currently woven into the virtual reference transaction, you can find text-based "chat" options, video-conferencing, audio-looping, co-browsing (where a librarian latches onto the client and walks the client through the search process to a desired source), and "pushing" Web pages to a client based on answers to a predetermined set of queries that the client answers.

A second trend in virtual reference delivery (noted in a 2002 report compiled by Outsell, an information industry analysis firm based in California) is the not-so-new application of collaboration among libraries to provide digital service. Collaboration among libraries makes it possible, in theory, to provide local or specialized information to a global network, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

The foundation for QuestionPoint was provided by the Library of Congress (with help from OCLC) through its Collaborative Digital Reference Service (CDRS.) CDRS began in 2000, with LC and sixteen partner libraries linked through a telecommunications web and a set of profiles identifying the subject expertise of the participating libraries. Participation was voluntary, and entrance into the collaborative was free. At its peak, over 260 libraries were participating in the project, including the University of Minnesota Libraries, with its collections strengths in South Asian materials, YMCA archives and other special

collections contributed to the strength of the service. MINITEX Reference Services, Traverse des Sioux back-up reference, and Rochester Public Library also particpated in the project. The MINITEX Reference profile reflected our access to both the U of M Libraries and the Minneapolis Public Library collections.

So what is QuestionPoint, and how does it differ from CDRS? According to promotional materials on the QuestionPoint web site—http://www.questionpoint.org—QuestionPoint is a "…collaborative reference service [created by LC and OCLC], with input from participating libraries of the Global Reference network (a group of international libraries lead by LC) committed to the development of digital reference capacity in libraries worldwide. [QuestionPoint] enables libraries to:

- Respond to, track, and manage reference questions from patrons via the Web
- Refer unanswered questions to other libraries [in the cooperative]
- Refer still unanswered questions to experts through a global Web-based network using an automated routing system
- Provide libraries with tools to add simple links from any page on their library's portal to support local use of the QuestionPoint service
- Search a global FAQ of previously asked and answered reference questions."

Unlike CDRS, participation in QuestionPoint is by subscription. Libraries pay an upfront annual fee to participate in the service.

Where does MINITEX fit into this overview of QuestionPoint? MINITEX has joined the collaborative as a full member, allowing MINITEX reference librarians to participate locally, using web-based question submission forms, email, and live chat, and to refer questions based on expertise and resources available. We are also part of the Global Network, where questions are automatically routed to libraries with specific collections or staff strengths based on previously submitted profiles. As we participate, we will be evaluating the viability of using QuestionPoint as the platform for a statewide digital reference network.

QuestionPoint provides an opportunity for MINITEX to extend our capacity to answer reference questions from Minnesota citizens, work with libraries and specialists locally and internationally, and provide content and input on an ambitious and complex project--providing quality, real time information to users anywhere in the world.

Minneapolis Public Library Access

Minneapolis Central Library will officially close its doors on August 3, 2002, to make way for a new facility, designed by world-renowned architect, Cesar Pellito, to be opened in 2006. This means that materials which MINITEX Reference Services has had access to in the past will be limited. The interim site, known as "Central Library Marquette," will open August 19, with part of the collection still accessible to MINITEX staff, including songbooks, musicals, sheet music, and song indexes. The interim site is slated to open in "full capacity" on September 30. Rumor has it that there will not be any access to SAMS Photofacts and schematics and pre-1995 government documents. Magazines and journals, 2001 to present, are currently available and will continue to be available at the interim site. During this time, all fourteen Minneapolis Community Libraries will be open, providing full service. MINITEX Reference Services can borrow circulating materials from these branch libraries. We will keep you posted as we learn more about how the temporary closing of Minneapolis Central Library will affect us and your patrons.

⬤WEB SITE HITS

The Free Expression Policy Project (FEPP)
http://www.fepproject.org/

"A think tank on artistic and intellectual freedom," this site's focus and resources include "empirical research and policy development on censorship issues and free speech-friendly solutions to the concerns that drive censorship campaigns." The Project began in 2000 with the goal of stimulating "more thoughtful debate among policymakers about the value of free expression and to provide useful resources for anti-censorship advocacy."

Some areas of focus for the Project are:
• Restrictions on publicly funded expression in libraries, museums, and universities as well as arts and humanities agencies.
• Internet filters, rating systems, and other measures that restrict access to information and ideas in the presumed interest of shielding adolescents and children.
• Other threats to free expression, including disputes over intellectual property, governmental or corporate control of academic research, and mass media consolidation.

This site allows you to link directly to the issues covered by the project like copyright, arts funding, sexuality education, Internet, pornography, and violence in the media. You can also access fact sheets, commentaries, press reports, court briefs, and policy reports like "Media Literacy: An Alternative to Censorship." For more information on censorship and freedom of expression click on the "Links" link, which takes you to a list of fifteen other censorship related organizations. This site is also searchable.

BookMuse
http://www.bookmuse.com/

BookMuse offers "book group members and avid readers of all ages materials, support, and guidance for the reading and discussion of books." The people behind the scenes of BookMuse range from an information broker, to a literature and writing teacher to a children's librarian. The majority of staff have degrees in English. Their goal is to enhance the joy and satisfaction of reading.

The site is filled with literary information and resources. It contains tips for starting and maintaining stimulating and enduring book discussion groups. There is a "What to Read Next" section, as well as a "Kids' Corner" divided by reading levels. Book Muse offers a free monthly electronic newsletter and a template that allows adults and kids to submit book reviews. The "Muse Notes" section contains book synopses as well as suggestions and topics for book discussion.

ELM Update on The OCLC Collection

OCLC is integrating the OCLC NetFirst database into WorldCat on the OCLC FirstSearch service. NetFirst will no longer be available as a separate database. On July 23, OCLC will begin turning off access to NetFirst, and access will be removed from all FirstSearch authorizations by July 31, 2002. Virtually all NetFirst records have been part of WorldCat since August 2000, and WorldCat searches can now easily be limited to Internet resources. WorldCat also includes records for Internet resources that have been added by member libraries and netLibrary records, thus making WorldCat a more complete source of information on high-quality web sites.

Two ancillary services, NetFirst Hot Topics and the NetFirst Calendar Planner, will be discontinued in early September.

The ongoing addition, by member libraries, of web sites to WorldCat via the OCLC Connexion, the growing practice of adding web resources to subject-specific databases, and the improved quality of general-purpose web resource locating services such as Google have contributed to OCLC's decision to discontinue NetFirst as a separate database on FirstSearch.

Reference Service in Minnesota

Library Development and Services (LDS) and MINITEX Reference Services hosted a full-day meeting on Reference Services in Minnesota on June 4, 2002, at the Hilton North in Brooklyn Center. LDS and MINITEX staff met with over forty librarians representing public library systems and academic and state government libraries to identify and discuss issues effecting delivery of reference services. Facilitator Jerilyn Veldof, User Education Coordinator of the University of Minnesota Libraries, charged the group to:

- Develop a good sense of what is happening in our communities that impact services;
- Propose task forces to focus on key areas of service provision about which we need to know more; and
- State expectations for potential task forces.

Attendees conducted an environmental scan identifying the impact of various forces on reference practice and service delivery. Then they ranked the forces and factors. MINITEX Reference Services will begin working on the following top two goals:

- Determine the readiness of libraries to participate in digital reference services as another mechanism for extending and improving library services to all Minnesota citizens and provide/coordinate a statewide virtual reference service and
- Assist libraries in forecasting and anticipating new reference services, technologies and trends.

The 3rd and 4th ranked goals have been forwarded to LDS as they are areas that a state library agency would undertake:

- Help libraries document their services as community assets and
- Examine methodologies for collecting information on user needs and expectations, segment population groups to be surveyed (i.e., youth, retirees, non users), implement pilot surveys, and identify desired practices for improving services to citizens.

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