

Core Competencies for Digital Reference

The following critical skills, abilities and aptitudes for staff providing virtual reference were adapted by the L-net Training Team from the Washington Statewide VRS Training Committee's Core Competencies for Virtual Reference, <http://vrstrain.spl.org/textdocs/vrscompetencies.pdf>.

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1. Ability to derive professional satisfaction from virtual reference transactions.
2. Keyboarding proficiency.
3. Ability to use all necessary software. Example for L-net:
 - logging in and using OCLC's Questionpoint software
 - logging in and using AIM
 - knowing how to find help for the above
4. Ability to effectively conduct a collaborative browsing session with a patron.
5. Multi-tasking and managing multiple windows.
6. Ability to conduct an effective reference transaction in online environments, including the creation and use of pre-scripted messages.
7. Online communication skills and etiquette, for chat, e-mail, and other online communication.
8. Excellent online searching skills.
9. Ability to effectively search, and demonstrate searching of library databases. Knowledge of licensing guidelines connected with use of library databases. Ability to lead the patron to home library databases. Understanding of L-net's guidelines for working with licensed resources, http://www.oregonlibraries.net/staff/docs/licensed_resources.shtml.
10. Ability to assist online users in applying critical thinking skills in locating, using, and evaluating information.
11. Technical troubleshooting skills and ability to explain technical problems to facilitate diagnosis and solution.
12. Ability to apply reference transaction policies in an online environment.
13. Evaluation of online reference transactions, and identification of improvement strategies.
14. Commitment to continuous learning and motivation to improve skills in all areas of reference services.
15. Awareness of privacy issues and the L-net Privacy Policy, <http://www.oregonlibraries.net/privacy> .