

TECHNOLOGY ADVISORY AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

DATE: January 15, 2008

MINUTES AND ACTIONS

Attendees: Anne McCarthy Kennedy, John Barrie, Kari Mack, Colleen Lougen, Ellen Rubin, Laurie Shedrick, Matt Smith, John Shaloiko, Tessa Killian, Zack Spalding, Judy Fischetti, Sue Hermans

Conference Call Participants: Muriel Verdibello, Newburgh Free Library; Jeanne Stiller, Newburgh Free Library; Mary Climes, Middletown Thrall Library; Jerry Kuntz, RCLS; Claire McDonough, Lockport Public Library; Sheryl Knab, WNYLRC; Laura Osterhout, WNYLRC

Excused: Elaine Goldman, Beti Horvath, Stuart Moss, Terry Sparks, Amy Schuler

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- ◆ The committee held a conference call with staff from WNYLRC and the Lockport Public Library to learn about WNYLRC's Ask Us 24/7 Reference Service. The following information was presented during the call:
 - If the SENYLRC region participates in WNYLRC's implementation, the cost will be \$18,000.
 - WNYLRC's Ask Us 24/7 Reference Service is a multiregional service for libraries in NY State started in 2000. The Central NY Library Resources Council is a participant and the Capitol District Library Council is considering joining the service. Public library systems include Nioga and Onondaga. In addition to the library systems and councils, 15 academic and specials libraries are also participating. The goal is to make it statewide.
 - Each participating library pays a small participating fee to cover the OCLC costs. WNYLRC's advisory committee determined the fee structure which is included on their website. CLRC uses the same fee structure.
 - OCLC purchased the QuestionPoint software from a California multi-type library consortium. OCLC changed and improved the software after the purchase. WNYLRC deals directly with OCLC and not with Nylink. They negotiate the price based on population and are applying RBDB funding. Due to the pricing tier at OCLC, additional libraries participation lowers the cost.
 - Laura Osterhout, WNYLRC, provides support and free training. Each location has a site supervisor. A train-the-trainer approach is used. An online tutorial is also available on WNYLRC's website. The training includes instruction in reference negotiation.
 - WNYLRC assigns participating library systems a number of hours to work the online reference desk and coordinates the schedule. The participating system determines who fills the hours. Sessions of one to two hours time slots are suggested. A weekly minimum of 2 hours per library is also suggested.
 - WNYLRC has branded the service "Ask Us 24/7". A marketing toolkit is available. Participating libraries in the region who are not able to assign staff to work at the reference desk, can add the "Ask Us 24/7" button to their website.
 - Claire McDonough, Lockport Public Library, described their experience with the service. The software works well and she indicated that the changes were all positive. Younger patrons often prefer to chat online. The patron using the service may be in the library and prefer to ask questions via the service. Lockport staff were able to answer 60% of the questions received. The average length of time for a session is 10 – 15 minutes to do the reference interview and chat with the patron. Claire uses standard websites including government websites and the Wikipedia as well as databases.

- Some libraries have a dedicated work station. Staff should perform their work for the Ask Us 24/7 reference desk away from regular work area or public area.
 - Special libraries' patrons' questions can go to a subject specialist queue. WNYLRC region's questions can be referred to medical subject experts, the earthquake center and for Buffalo local history.
 - When a patron submits a question, the local site is given one minute to respond to it. Then it is fair game and can be answered by anyone. Queues are not tiered. If a librarian is unable to answer a question, it can be referred. A librarian can research the answer and email the patron later. The librarian can continue with the session until the patron is satisfied.
 - Information about the patron's library is available to the librarian including contact numbers, policy pages and available databases.
 - The patron and staff member can co-browse a website or database.
 - Each library's link has a code and follows the patron. Patrons need to submit a question through their library's web page or through the generic Ask Us 24/7 site. No patron is sent away but they can be directed to the website. The Internet page that a question came in on can be identified.
 - The heaviest traffic times are from 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm and noon – 4:00 pm. Questions submitted after the library is closed may be answered by librarians in California, Australia and United Kingdom.
 - School libraries have experienced technical difficulties at their sites due to firewall and lock down issues. School librarians may be unable to take reference desk time. Some students in Lockport are accessing the service through their public library.
 - Questions are coded in a number of ways such as: answered, followed-up by staff member, or followed-up by patron's library.
 - Quality checks are taken by reviewing transcripts of the sessions. Patron satisfaction surveys are also used.
 - Transcripts are saved for a knowledge base, however it is not used much because the same question is not asked often enough.
- ◆ A discussion took place after the conference call to determine the next steps. One option is for a demo. Ramapo Catskill Library System expressed interest. They are writing an LSTA application which is due 3/30/08.
 - ◆ John Shaloiko reviewed the plans and the budget for the technology event. The cost to use the Wallace Center at FDR depends on the number of people attending that will determine the number of rooms needed.

ACTIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ Ellen Rubin moved to approve the minutes of the December 18, 2007 meeting. John Barrie seconded. The motion passed as moved.
- ◆ The committee requested statistics regarding the usage of Ask Us 24/7. WNYLRC staff offered to present a live demonstration of the service. Online demos are also available from OCLC. TRAC members recommended that a demo be held.
- ◆ The committee members indicated their approval of the plans for the technology event.

OTHER MEETING NOTES:

- ◆ A discussion regarding electronic resources will be planned for the next meeting.

NEXT MEETING: Feb 19, 2008
 LOCATION: SENYLRC conference room
 RECORDER: Judy Fischetti