



Digital versus Non-Digital Reference: Ask a Librarian Online and Offline

Linda S Katz

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Compare and contrast library reference models and more consumer-oriented models!

Digital versus Non-Digital Reference: Ask A Librarian Online and Offline analyzes the quality of commercial Ask A Librarian (AskA) and tutorial services and how they compare to traditional library services. Edited by Jessamyn West—proprietor of librarian.net and the “hippest ex-librarian on the Web” according to *Wired* magazine—the book looks at library models and more consumer-oriented models, examining a variety of services that range from Ask Jeeves® and Google Answers™ to your own reference desk and Web e-mail reference forms. Academic librarians and information specialists share their experiences—good and bad—in starting, assessing, or ending AskA services and in working with collaborative reference tools and outsourcing reference services, and discuss the highs and lows of dealing with individual online services.

Digital versus Non-Digital Reference: Ask A Librarian Online and Offline chronicles the experiences and interactions of librarians with digital reference, including case studies, how-to guides, and philosophical essays. The book’s contributors discuss their concerns about using the Internet as not only a reference tool but as a reference medium that most libraries find inevitable to some degree. Topics include the political ramifications of offsite or outsourced reference, the truth behind the assertion that “it’s all available online,” cultural and/or language barriers to text-based reference services, and patrons’ experiences with reference tools, from a librarian’s perspective.

Digital versus Non-Digital Reference: Ask A Librarian Online and Offline addresses:

- policy, staffing and technology for telephone reference services
- e-mail reference in public libraries
- the University of Michigan’s Internet Public Library
- archivists and remote users in the digital age
- success and failure with commercial AskA programs
- the history of Q and A NJ, New Jersey’s virtual reference service
- multilingual chat reference systems
- the ongoing debate over the value of digital reference
- the case for nonintrusive reference

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