

June 15, 2011

To: Michael Maziekein
From: Sara Weissman
re: NJ virtual reference service?

Random/miscellaneous comments from Morris County area, each comment from a different librarian:

- Cost per session of QandAnj is too high (\$350,000/26,000*)
- Portion of population served is too low for the money (26,000/6,976,489 age 16 and up = .0037 session/resident)
- NJSL said last year the service was ending..so, let it end.
- Don't undermine the local libraries; let them serve their patrons. End the service.
- Does anyone really want 24/7 reference service anymore?
- In this economy there are better uses of public money.
- How can we evaluate the service if we don't know how many questions? from whom/which sectors? of what type?

**last known annual session figure?*

STATEWIDE VIRTUAL REFERENCE

site: qandanj.org OR asknj.org

- Get volunteer libraries willing to do e-ref (Meebo or web form e-mail, their choice), work out rotating schedule of coverage among them.
Do 6-12 mos trial.
- Set up page that has e-mail form with embedded Meebo window..patrons can use chat, if on duty, else web form if no chat that day/shift.
- Two tier roll out? let libraries use it among themselves first, then go public? (MCL experience: end of toll free phone service dramatically dropped interlibrary consultation. Might virtual ref network increase it?]

Note, based on our work with Library of Congress CDRS (1999-2000) and QuestionPoint beta, 2001: do not sink service with excessive analytics and routing protocols.