

Gamestorming Virtual Reference

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How do you build rapport with students in a chat session? How do you get the word out about virtual reference to students you may never see in the Library? Try the gamestorming method “Challenge Cards” to get ideas for improving virtual reference services at your institution, as well as your virtual reference skills. With this method, you will divide up into two teams. One team will brainstorm problems or challenges with virtual reference. Independently, the other team will brainstorm features and strengths of virtual reference. Then play begins. The challenge team picks a card and puts it on the table. If the solutions team has a card to address the challenge, they get a point, if they don’t, the challenge team gets a point and teams work together to design cards to address the challenge. Play continues until all challenges have been addressed. Have fun and learn from librarians at other institutions about how to meet challenges involved in providing virtual reference.

Gamestorming Resources

Gray, Dave, Brown, Sunni, and James Macanufo. *Gamestorming: A Playbook for Innovators, Rulebreakers, and Changemakers*. Sebastopol, CA: O’Reilly, 2010.

Gamestorming: A Toolkit for Innovators, Rule-Breakers, and Changemakers www.gogamestorm.com
Website based on the book. Find games for... Any Meeting, Closing, Decision-Making, Design, Fresh Thinking and Ideas, Opening, Planning, Presenting, Problem-Solving, Team-Building, Update or Review Meetings

Evans, Brynn. *Gamestorming Cheat Sheet* j.mp/gamestorming-cheatsheet
Games for communicating core concepts, ideation, different perspective, making a decision, pro/con games, thinking through problems, making a decision, managing meetings, team bonding

Evans, Brynn. *Gamestorming Design Kit* bit.ly/GamestormingKit
Contains materials for design challenges (Modern cities, Bike Safety) and gamestorming exercises (Brainwriting, Sketching, Elevator Pitch).

Virtual Reference Training Resources

Hirko, Buff and Mary Bucher Ross. “Chapter 7: Learning Activities: Taking the User Perspective.” *Virtual Reference Training: The Complete Guide to Providing Anytime, Anywhere Answers*. Chicago, IL: ALA Editions, 2004.

MARS/RSS Virtual Reference Tutorial Subcommittee. “Skills: Virtual Reference Resources.” *Virtual Reference Companion: A Guide for VR Coordinators and Librarians*.
www.ala.org/rusa/vrc/resources#Skills

Table 2
Summary of the popularity and effectiveness ratings for chat reference training techniques.

Training techniques	Experienced by # of respondents	Mean rating	Standard deviation
Training on chat software			
Trainees pair up as patron and librarian to gain hands-on experiences on using the software.	196	6.16	1.20
Trainer breaks down the learning into a list of concrete tasks and subtasks to make it more manageable.	139	5.70	1.12
Trainer demonstrates the features and functions of the chat software.	213	5.29	1.42
Trainer provides complete and objective information about the software, including advantages and disadvantages.	159	5.28	1.34
Training on chat reference transaction			
Trainees review selected chat transcripts to learn more about the transaction.	107	6.01	1.15
Trainees ask questions to real chat reference services as users and evaluate their experiences—the secret shopper approach.	35	5.89	1.35
Trainees have more experienced librarians as mentors to monitor their real chat sessions for a given period of time and provide feedback to them.	57	5.54	1.23
Trainees pair up and engage in predesigned reference scenarios to practice the reference interview and online communication skills.	89	5.47	1.43
Trainer discusses/demonstrates how to apply reference interview techniques in chat sessions where no visual and verbal cues exist.	133	5.35	1.33
Trainer discusses the service policy and procedural issues, including the scope of the service, when to provide instructions and when to give direct answers, etc.	133	5.35	1.15
Trainer discusses/demonstrates online written communication skills and chat etiquette skills to help trainees better understand the chat communication method.	139	5.29	1.37
Trainer explains the concept of chat reference and how it has impacted library reference work, preparing trainees at the conceptual level.	92	5.25	1.34
Trainer discusses/demonstrates user management techniques, such as making referral or follow-up decisions and dealing with rude users, etc.	142	5.18	1.26
Trainer discusses/demonstrates database and Internet searching skills.	53	5.09	1.38
Supporting training materials			
Cheat sheet containing vital information librarians might need to access quickly and often while covering the service.	109	5.81	1.17
Training manual (either print or electronic) containing all the training-related information to facilitate the training process and for future reference.	128	5.15	1.53
Communication methods like electronic mailing list, online discussion board, or regular feedback meetings for trainers and trainees to exchange their thoughts on the training program.	99	4.88	1.55
Online tutorials created by software vendors on learning how to use the chat software.	70	4.36	1.63
Ongoing training			
Librarians pair up to practice chat reference skills on a regular basis for a certain period of time.	30	5.83	1.23
Software training refreshers are provided on a regular basis.	66	5.55	1.23
Training modes			
Training is provided in-house where trainer is physically present with trainees.	164	5.79	1.32
Training is provided through teleconferencing or web-conferencing.	62	4.31	1.53
Training is provided online, through software like WebCT or BlackBoard.	17	4.29	1.90

Liu, Lili. "Effective Training for Chat Reference Personnel: An Exploratory Study." *Library & Information Science Research* 31.4 (2009): 210-224.