Virtual Reference Desk / Librarian

As we continue to work with our customers and lean more about the creative ways in which they are using Elluminate *Live!*, one recent application that has come up frequently is a Virtual Reference Desk or a Virtual Librarian.

Digital reference has already had a significant impact on library use and practice across library types and geography. The evidence of impact can be seen in the growing number of digital reference publications, conference presentations, and large-scale digital reference projects. Digital reference is no longer a limited experiment in some libraries, but increasingly a new reality in many library or reference environments. However, academic institutions have found that this new reality has outpaced the library training and education infrastructure to support it. Customers are looking for technologies that allow librarians and students to use the online reference materials effectively.

In an article in U.S. News & World Report written by Vicky Hallett on October 17, 2005 it states: "Even the most venerable symbol of higher education – the campus library – is not safe from this extreme technology makeover. The University of Texas – Austin, for instance, took a radical step this summer by removing all 90,000 books from the undergraduate library to open more room for a Wi-Fi powered learning space. The building, open 24 and packed with computers, has retained five digital librarians, who help students navigate the vast world of electronic media. The library website has a virtual reference desk with a chat function, and librarians are augmenting course web pages with recommended eLearning books, journals and databases.

Educational institutions have to constantly find cost-effective ways to offer interactive services to their students and faculty and Elluminate *Live!* helps facilitate applications such as this. Elluminate *Live!* Academic Edition is a world-class, real-time training, demonstration, and collaboration environment that is powerful, flexible, and easy to use. Because it is designed with pedagogy in mind, this moderator-led, rich collaboration environment enables the delivery of live, online learning, training, coaching, mentoring, and meeting.

Elluminate *Live!* is perfect for instructor-led courses, peer-based or professional tutoring, student projects, staff meetings, virtual office hours, professional development, and much more. Elluminate *Live!* allows you to:
- Expand and Enhance the Classroom
- Enhance Professional Development
- Build Student Communities
- Leverage Limited Teaching Resources
- Conduct Meetings/Operations
- Offer Services and Support

Let's examine this application in more detail.

What is a Virtual Reference Desk or a Virtual Librarian?
The Virtual Librarian or Virtual Reference Desk service allows students and faculty to interact directly with library staff online. With the transition to online content and reference materials, library staff can meet virtual with faculty and students to help orient them to the available resources and support educational activities by providing students, faculty and staff with access to online information for research and learning.

How Does it work Using Elluminate *Live!*
Elluminate *Live!* provides an environment where users can interact with Library Staff 24 hours a day if desired. Users can interact with the ability to talk over the Internet (with full, 2-way audio), view live video, chat online, and share whiteboards, applications and websites — all in one intuitive, graphical interface.

Using Elluminate *Live!*, library staff can publish a schedule of when they will be available online to assist students and faculty. During scheduled times, students and faculty can simply log into an Elluminate *Live!* session, either from campus, home, their office or anywhere they have an Internet connection, and interact with a member of the library staff to ask questions about resources that they are searching for, best practices on the type of resources to use for an upcoming project or seek knowledge from the experts in the library staff. Librarians can also offer virtual orientations on all the available resources in the library to all users.

There are several features in Elluminate *Live!* that allow users to interact with library staff effectively including:
- Audio / Voice Over the Internet
  - With Elluminate *Live!* all audio communication uses crystal-clear, integrated voice over the Internet. Library staff and students/faculty can speak to each other through standard microphones connected to their computers.
- The Whiteboard
  - The Elluminate *Live!* proprietary, shared whiteboard features easy-to-use and flexible tools for writing, drawing, and erasing. Multiple whiteboards can be created and the library staff can makes notes on the whiteboard to assist the user.
  - Library staff can also have prepared content such as PowerPoint presentations loaded onto the whiteboard to assist with general questions from users.
- Video and Multimedia Support
  - Library staff have the capability to transmit live video and display multimedia files.
- Application Sharing and Viewing
  - Library staff or any user granted permission to do so can share his or her entire desktop, region of the desktop, or single application running on the desktop with everyone else in the session. Users can share ANY application including their browser (to share websites and perform guided Internet browsing), high-resolution images, videos, and animations, such as Flash or PowerPoint.
  - This allows library staff to share websites with students, or show how to log into databases to retrieve resources and search on key words.
- Synchronized Web Tours
  - The Elluminate *Live!* environment features a synchronized Web Tour feature that allows the teacher to take students on a guided Web Tour, bringing them to each Web page the teacher visits in real time.

At the end of the session, all the whiteboard screens can be saved to a PDF file so that students have a record of the notes made during the session. Moreover, using Elluminate's record and playback feature, the entire session can be recorded and made available to students by simply emailing a link at the conclusion of the session. This allows to the user to review the session with the library staff at any time.

Contact your Elluminate sales representative for more information on this application.