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## Ask librarians questions any time of day or night

By Teresa Anicola

For The Inquirer

It's Sunday night and your child has just told you about a project that needs to be done for school the next day. What do you suggest your child do? Try using QandANJ.org, the state's 24-hour, seven day a week, Web-based answering service staffed by librarians from 47 member libraries.

The site allows New Jersey residents to chat live with a librarian for help with research projects, homework or general questions.

According to Peter Bromberg, assistant director of the South Jersey Regional Library Cooperative, which manages the organization, about 50 percent of the site's users are students from elementary school through college. For that reason, QandANJ.org recently ran a commercial in New Jersey markets during the MTV Video Music Awards held on Sept. 10.

"It was very affordable and got the message out in a new way," Bromberg said. "It was also perfect timing at the beginning of the school year."

Users can sign on at the organization's Web site or a member library's site, where they can click on the link for QandANJ. Through a live-chat component, the user interacts with the librarian, who then sends relevant Web sites, articles from specialized databases, multimedia files and other information directly to the user's computer screen. All that's needed to use this service is a Web browser, Bromberg said.

Brenda Muhlbaier, a librarian at the Greenwich Township branch of the Gloucester County Library System, also works as project manager of QandANJ.org at her library. Her library was one of 10 selected to launch the project in 2001 before it became a statewide initiative.

Muhlbaier and her staff monitor the site, fielding questions from students working on homework assignments as well as from people stumped by crossword puzzles, she said.

"It's a reference transaction, just as if they had walked into the library. It keeps us on our toes," Muhlbaier said. "I enjoy doing it. For the most part, everybody is friendly. A lot of people ask if you're a real person. It's very convenient for New Jersey residents to be able to contact us at any time with any question."

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