

COLLEGE RELATIONS AND MARKETING

4200 CONGRESS AVENUE, LAKE WORTH, FL 33461-4796

561-868-3122 tel

561-868-3123 fax



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PBCC library offers new online reference service

(Lake Worth, Fla. - Jan. 20, 2004) Palm Beach Community College has joined Florida Secretary of State Glenda Hood and nearly 60 other libraries across the state to usher in the future of online library reference services: "Ask a Librarian."

Staffed by professional librarians, Ask a Librarian offers Florida's 16 million residents free, live, one-on-one reference assistance over the Web. The librarians can answer reference questions, help locate and use information on the Web, and provide expert advice on using Web-based information.

Easy-to-use chat and co-browsing software allows the librarian and information seeker to navigate the Web together and find useful information. As they co-browse the Web together, the librarian may help a student use online databases to conduct research, assist a consumer with information about the safety of his car, or point an elderly citizen towards health care information—all in a real-time, interactive, virtual environment.

Since Ask a Librarian is Web-based, it does not matter where in Florida the information seeker is located. An information seeker in Wellington, for example, can simply log onto Ask a Librarian at www.askalibrarian.org to ask a question and receive assistance—assistance that may be supplied by a librarian staffing the service from one of nearly 60 participating libraries across Florida.

PBCC's Harold C. Manor Library in Lake Worth and other participating libraries contribute time to staff the service. Live help is available from Ask a Librarian from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., Monday through Friday to answer reference questions and offer assistance. Questions may also be submitted via e-mail at any time, day or night.

"Now our students have direct live access to a librarian whether or not they are able to come into the library," said Brian Kelley, library director at PBCC. "The challenge for us is to reach out to the population of students that is more comfortable with chat and e-mail than they may be with approaching a librarian directly. We are also excited about using this service to serve our distance learning students. In many ways they are the ideal audience to test this service with."

(MORE)

Other participating libraries in the area include the Palm Beach County Library System, Broward Community College and Lake Worth, West Palm Beach and Miami Dade public libraries.

An integral component of the new Florida Electronic Library, Ask a Librarian was co-developed and is supported by the College Center for Library Automation (CCLA) in Tallahassee and the Tampa Bay Library Consortium (TBLC). The service is funded by a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant administered by the Florida Department of State, Division of Library and Information Services.

Media contacts:

Brian Kelley
Library Director
PBCC
(561)868-3800

Vince Mariner
Statewide Coordinator, Ask a Librarian
(850) 922-6044