

Q and A NJ Press Tip Sheet

What (is Q and A NJ)?

A Web-based service that lets the user connect online with a real librarian—one to one in real time—for help with any topic or information need.

Accessible on the Internet at <<http://www.QandANJ.org>>.

There is no “typical” question—users ask questions across the board whether they are

- seeking health or legal information;
- doing genealogy research;
- researching a term paper topic;
- looking up real estate prices and business contact information;
- embarking on a job hunt;

or researching virtually anything else.

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 pertinent information directly to the user’s computer screen.

Librarians use both electronic sources and library print collections to answer questions.

All the user needs to use Q and A NJ is a Web browser.

Q and A NJ is managed by the South Jersey Regional Library Cooperative <<http://www.sjrlc.org>> and supported by Federal Library Services and Technology Act funds administered by the New Jersey State Library.

Who?

Who’s Providing: 300+ librarians from forty-four different libraries and library systems across the state of New Jersey staff

the service, working mostly from their libraries but some from home. Like users, all they need to connect is a Web browser.

Who's Using: Adults, college students, and school-age children. More than half of Q and A NJ users are students, K-12 through college. Many live or attend school in communities directly served by the participating libraries, but any New Jersey resident or student can use the service. A valid New Jersey zip code or affiliation with a New Jersey college or university is all that is required.

When?

The service is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It closes only on major national holidays such as July 4th, Thanksgiving and the like.

Where?

Anyone with an Internet connection and Web browser can connect to Q and A NJ whether from home, office, school, on the road, in flight, etc. It is truly anytime, anywhere access to a professional librarian's expertise.

Why?

Real feedback from real users:

- **Interaction with a live person:** "I was talking to a real person, not a computer!"
- **Professional help finding the answer:** "The librarian found information that my Mom and I had been looking for and could not find no matter where we looked."
- **Always open:** "I got the answers I needed, especially when the library was closed."
"[My] first contact was at 2 a.m. Sunday morning."

- **The Library came to me:** “I am house-bound ...this opportunity is greatly appreciated.”
“I didn’t have to go out in the rain.”
- **Fast:** “I like the fact that you get an immediate answer to your question instead of having to click on a hundred different links and still not find the information you need.”

Accomplishments

- Q and A NJ celebrated its second full year of service on October 1, 2003 and its first full year of ‘round-the-clock service on January 28, 2003.
- Only four months after launch date, Q and A NJ went from 44 hours a week to 24/7.
- Usage grew more than 1000% between opening day and January 2003 and continues to steadily grow.
- It is the busiest service of its kind in the world.
- Q and A NJ is the first statewide virtual reference service in the United States and has served as a model for other states.
- Live Homework Help staffed by Tutor.com joined Q and A NJ’s service offerings in September 2002. Online tutoring is available from 2-10 pm, seven days a week. See: <http://www.qandanj.org/tutor.htm> for more information.
- Q and A NJ librarians enjoy a tremendous opportunity for networking and professional growth—and revel in the excitement of doing something truly innovative and useful!
- The public loves it! ‘Nuff said.