



W N Y L R C

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NEWS RELEASE • FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 31, 2010

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Buffalo & Erie County Library Joins Ask Us 24/7 Online Reference Program

The Buffalo & Erie County Library System has joined a group of Upstate New York libraries that offer the Ask Us 24/7 online reference service. Ask Us 24/7 — a free “virtual reference desk” service — was launched in March of 2003 by the non-profit Western New York Library Resources Council.

Currently, 43 libraries and library systems throughout the state link to the Ask Us 24/7 service from their websites, offering patrons direct access to a professional reference librarian 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Although New York State librarians staff the service more than 60 hours a week, Ask Us 24/7 partners with libraries across the country to provide around-the-clock staffing.

“It is wonderful to have another resource for assisting our patrons,” said Keri Thomas-Whiteside, a reference librarian at the Central Library. “We can now offer remote reference service by phone, email and through live 24-hour, 7-day-a-week Internet chatting.”

Ask Us 24/7 is just one of the online services available from the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library, which includes an assortment of periodical databases, and “Downloads 2 Go,” a collection of downloadable audiobooks and eBooks.

“I think AskUs24/7 is a great addition for our library system,” said reference librarian Michael Leyland. “It gives our patrons the opportunity to access information anytime they desire. I also see it as a great resource for students who are already inclined to communicate through this type of chat technology. Twenty first century learners are much more comfortable seeking information in the comfort of their own home. I am confident that this service, along with the many other services we provide, will keep libraries from becoming obsolete”.

Ask Us 24/7 is managed by the Western New York Library Resources Council (WNYLRC), a non-profit consortium of 90 member libraries and library systems serving Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Niagara, and Orleans counties. It is supported by WNYLRC and contributions from participating libraries.

To access the service, visit the Buffalo & Erie County Library’s website at <http://www.buffalolib.org> and click on the Ask Us 24/7 logo, or the “contact us” link.