

News Release

For Immediate Release

Contact: Karyn Bardes (813) 622-8252 (ext. 235)

Ask a Librarian comes to FIU

Library experiences record highs in student usage

MIAMI, Fla. (April 9, 2007) — Florida International University recently implemented Ask a Librarian and made history in the process. During its first 10 days of offering the service, FIU's students took advantage of the program so often that the school achieved the highest opening usage of any participating college or university in Ask a Librarian's five-year history.

Ask a Librarian is a free online service that allows users to chat in real time with a librarian for immediate assistance with research projects, reports, or just general questions. Although the service is available to all Floridians, FIU officials had hoped that their participation would make FIU students more aware of the useful service, and they are thrilled to see that it has.

"It's important to us to make this valuable service easily accessible to our students," said Susan Weiss, FIU's Ask a Librarian site coordinator. "By promoting Ask a Librarian on our Web site, we put our students in contact with the service quickly and efficiently."

Ask a Librarian administrators realize how important it is for college students to be able to access information promptly online. To fulfill this need, Ask a Librarian has several librarians monitoring the Web site 84 hours a week to answer users' questions.

"Our students appreciate the instant gratification of the chat service," said Weiss. "And we like knowing that if they have a successful chat and are able to quickly get the information they need, they'll tell their friends about the service, or come back themselves to use it."

Five other Miami-Dade County libraries participate in Ask a Librarian: Miami-Dade Public Library, Miami Dade College, Hialeah Public Library, North Miami Public Library and Barry University.

Ask a Librarian is available 10 a.m. to midnight Sunday through Thursday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For more information, visit www.askalibrarian.org.

Ask a Librarian is a joint project of the College Center for Library Automation (CCLA) and the Tampa Bay Library Consortium (TBLC). Ask a Librarian is funded as part of the Florida Electronic Library (www.flelibrary.org) by the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant.

The Tampa Bay Library Consortium, Inc. (TBLC) is a nonprofit multi-type library cooperative that assists and empowers libraries. Since 1979, TBLC has worked with member libraries to provide better, faster service and resource sharing to the residents of Florida. For more information, call (813) 622-8252 or visit www.tbtc.org.

The College Center for Library Automation (CCLA) operates the statewide Library Information Network for Community Colleges (LINCC) and the associated Web-based information portal, LINCCWeb, from its headquarters in Tallahassee, Fla. As an administered program of the Florida Department of Education's Division of Community Colleges, CCLA serves 70 community college libraries in 57 cities throughout Florida. For more information, visit www.cclaflorida.org.

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