

## Virtual Reference attracts VIP

At the conclusion of his computers in libraries program, Bill Gates visited Whitman County Rural Library District. His goal was to see to firsthand the impact the program was having on communities and libraries. Gates Foundation officials selected Whitman County Library for the visit, "because of their innovative approach to library service" a big part of which was Ask Us 24/7 Virtual Reference.



Bill Gates meets with Whitman County Library staff

## Virtual Reference



**Ask Us 24/7**

## A Rural Perspective

*From Whitman County  
Rural Library District*

**Ask Us 24/7**

**Virtual Reference: A Rural Perspective**  
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# Virtual Reference a hit in Whitman County



Imagine living in a place so remote, the nearest neighbor is 10 miles away and the closest town 40 miles away. In that town, you have a library that is open 2 days per week for a total of 8 hours. Where do you turn for information?

Fourteen branches serve the Rural Library District of Whitman County. In that town, you have a library that is open 2 days per week for a total of 8 hours. Where do you turn for information?

## Virtual Reference - of course!

Thanks to virtual reference, anyone in Whitman County with access to the Internet can talk with a real librarian 24/7. Even those in the remotest of locations.

In Whitman County, use of virtual reference has remained steady while the quality of the answers customer receive is high.



One of many Virtual Reference photo opportunities. Here, Secretary of State Sam Reed presents library representatives with a Virtual Reference grant award.

## Virtual Reference A marketing dream

From the very start, virtual reference was a marketing dream for WCL. Viewed as a high-tech resource for rural customers, local radio and newspapers were eager to cover the service. Ask Us 24/7 has been featured and mentioned in hundreds of news stories and continues as a regular feature in one rural newspaper.

## Libraries promote Web info service

Ask Us 24/7 allows users to contact librarians at all hours.

Whitman County Library System  
The Whitman County Library System is pleased to announce that it has been selected to provide virtual reference services to the public. This service, known as Ask Us 24/7, is available to all library users at all hours of the day and night. The service is available through the library's website at [www.whitmancountylib.org](http://www.whitmancountylib.org). The service is available to all library users at all hours of the day and night. The service is available through the library's website at [www.whitmancountylib.org](http://www.whitmancountylib.org).



## Virtual Reference and Online classroom instruction

With Ask Us 24/7 and a few databases available at our website, WCL was off and running. Trained staff provided area school districts with accredited classes that highlighted these products, online research techniques and information literacy skills.



Online class in small rural school

Today, WCL's classroom offerings have expanded, database usage still climbs and Ask Us 24/7 is a service mainstay.

**Ask Us 24/7**  
Sponsored by Whitman County Library

Who were the 1000 forwards last year?  
To find the answer, visit [www.whitmancountylib.org](http://www.whitmancountylib.org) and choose user's bookmark on the right-hand menu. On the 1000th page of the forward list, you'll find the answer. The forwards listed for 2004 were listed as follows: (Click on the number to see the list.)  
1. Open Learning and Life Sciences  
2. Open Learning and Life Sciences  
3. Open Learning and Life Sciences  
4. Open Learning and Life Sciences  
5. Open Learning and Life Sciences  
6. Open Learning and Life Sciences  
7. Open Learning and Life Sciences  
8. Open Learning and Life Sciences  
9. Open Learning and Life Sciences  
10. Open Learning and Life Sciences

Ask Us 24/7 is available to all Whitman County Library users at all hours of the day and night. Visit [www.whitmancountylib.org](http://www.whitmancountylib.org)