

KnowItNow24x7 2010 Year in Review

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KnowItNow24x7

KnowItNow24x7, Ohio's statewide collaborative online reference project, opened the year with its three web portals (KnowItNow, HomeworkNow, and ReadThisNow) consolidated under one name and one web address: www.knowitnow.org. This came with a number of benefits for patrons. As part of this restructuring and rebranding, a new logo was also chosen through a statewide contest. The [winning logo](#) was designed by Kristin Klatka, Community Relations Associate and graphic designer for Euclid Public Library. Klatka's logo is now



featured prominently on all web sites and promotional materials of KnowItNow24x7 (including the service's [Cafe Press](#) site). Logos are available at the KnowItNow24x7 provider site's [Marketing Materials page](#) for download by libraries to post on their own web pages.



Several libraries joined the KnowItNow24x7 network this year: Canal Fulton Public Library, Chancellor University, Ohio Dominican University, and Case Western Reserve University. Training for these new institutions was coordinated by Don Boozer (KnowItNow24x7 Statewide Coordinator) and Megan Mitchell (KnowItNow24x7 OhioLINK liaison and Oberlin College librarian).

76,210 sessions (through November 2010) were handled by librarians staffing the service as part of their duties at Ohio's public, academic, and special libraries as well as the AfterDark librarians supervised by the Northeast Ohio Regional Library System. KnowItNow24x7 remains one of the busiest statewide virtual reference services in the country. Even so, less than 20% of the public libraries in Ohio actively participate and serve patrons through KnowItNow24x7. With the different ways to become involved, libraries are highly encouraged to take a second look at sharing the load with their colleagues helping Ohioans on the statewide service.

77.9% of this year's sessions through November were initiated by those self-selecting as K-12 students, demonstrating that KnowItNow24x7 is a useful part of the educational environment in the Buckeye State. As further evidence of this, KnowItNow24x7 was included in [INFOhio's](#) new online learning initiative launched in 2010 entitled [21 Essential Things for 21st Century Success](#).

A partnership with the [School of Library and Information Science](#) (SLIS) at Kent State University (KSU) highlighted another educational aspect of KnowItNow24x7: the training of new librarians. During the Spring 2010 semester, Dr. Miriam Matteson and Dr. Jodi Kearns contacted KnowItNow24x7 about using a sampling of transcripts for their respective reference services classes. After this successful venture, Dr. Matteson contacted KnowItNow24x7 about expanding her students' experience with real-life virtual reference experience, and in the Fall 2010 semester, students in the class were trained to staff limited shifts on the service and assigned to reflect on their interactions. Dr. Matteson's reference class students were not the first SLIS students to staff KnowItNow24x7. Three student interns staffed regular shifts on the service this year during the Spring 2010 semester. All three had very positive interactions with patrons and gained valuable, real-world experience in serving the public online.

The annual LSTA grant application to fund KnowItNow24x7 was submitted on [May 13](#) at the State Library of Ohio Board meeting. The Board members appreciated the [booklet of quality transcripts](#) compiled by the Quality Assurance Committee for KnowItNow24x7 ([QuACK](#)). The motion to approve the 2010-2011 LSTA grant proposal passed unanimously, and the continuing support of the Board and staff at the State Library is greatly appreciated.

In addition to the consolidation of web portals that opened the year, KnowItNow24x7's subject queues were consolidated in June. Once again, this came with a number of benefits for patrons, including the elimination of the need for patrons to choose the topic of their question before connecting to a librarian. In an effort to address concerns about subject expertise from librarians, a committee was subsequently formed to promote the creation of subject [pathfinders](#) to be posted to the KnowItNow24x7 provider site. This Pathfinder Editorial Committee for KnowItNow24x7 (PECK) continues to work on expanding the offerings available there and encouraging participation by KnowItNow24x7 librarians in the creation of the pathfinders. Both the quality committee (QuACK) and the pathfinder committee (PECK) have greatly expanded the grassroots involvement of public and academic librarians in the work of KnowItNow24x7.

In keeping with KnowItNow24x7's commitment to the future of libraries and reference service and to continue to maintain the service's nationwide reputation, the Statewide Coordinator this year accepted an invitation to become Co-Chair of the [Virtual Reference Committee](#) of the American Library Association. Also this year, both the Statewide Coordinator and Web Services Coordinator presented a program at the Reference Renaissance Conference in August. The presentation, co-presented with Caleb Tucker-Raymond (Project Coordinator of Oregon's statewide online reference service, L-net), outlined the successful ongoing partnership between Ohio and Oregon in the area of virtual reference. KnowItNow24x7's Statewide Coordinator also presented a [poster session](#) on this topic at the American Library Association Annual Conference in June.

In an effort to make the service more responsive to librarians, online chat forums were initiated in September to provide a place for KnowItNow24x7 librarians to discuss areas of concern or to share information with each other. These take place within the same software platform used to serve patrons, allowing librarians to chat within a familiar environment.

Finding ways to make the service more responsive to the needs of patrons is, of course, also an ongoing effort. More streamlined interfaces for mobile devices are being implemented, and KnowItNow24x7 is also in conversations with a vendor to bring text messaging as an option for patrons to submit questions to the service. In addition to statewide texting, KnowItNow24x7 will also be providing a local-based texting benefit for existing partner libraries as well as providing an incentive to other libraries to join the network. More details will be released soon.

2010 was a very eventful year right from the start, and there are more exciting innovations coming in the months ahead. For more information or to learn how to become involved with KnowItNow24x7, contact Don Boozer, Statewide Coordinator, at support@knowitnow.org.