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As the diamond-dripping glitterati were sashaying into the famed Kodak Theater in Los Angeles on Sunday to catch the 79th Academy Awards, a group of eight movie-buffs were settling down in front of a computer monitor in Darien to take in the buzz from afar.

It was happening at the home of the Darien **Library's** film critic, Barbara Thomas.

That night, the **library** hosted its first-ever online chat in which the staff and their family and friends participated in a virtual **Oscar** party to discuss who would win what awards.

Chatters from various adjoining towns in Fairfield County like New Canaan, Norwalk, Stamford, Bridgeport, Fairfield, and from Manhattan and Albany in neighboring New York, logged on. There were even folks from Miami, Chicago and Denver checking in on the **library's** site, [www.darienlibrary.org](http://www.darienlibrary.org).

"The age range (of the participants) was from 18 up to AARP-card-carrying members, self included," Thomas wrote in response to an e-mail query.

There was a bit of red carpet dissing and celebrity bashing as a warm-up tool, but soon, they got down to chitchatting about the topic of the night -- predicting the winners and to see how close they came to hitting the bull's eye.

"As far as accuracy in predictions (goes), with 15 people in the 'room,' someone present had predicted each winner," Thomas said.

It was fun, no doubt. But it was also an "exercise" in testing the technical infrastructure capable of supporting online chats in the soon-to-come expanded **library**, which promises to be more technologically-advanced than the current one.

"This (chat) is a forum that we believe we must consider, where we may reach an entirely different demographic than we do by the more traditional means," Thomas said. "Instant messaging has become so much a part of daily life. We embrace it here, as an internal tool. An online chat seemed the next logical step and we look forward to trying it again."

"We are building the **library** of the future which will have a cutting edge technology focus, and be a 'great good place' for the community to gather, virtually and in the building itself," said Louise Berry, the **library's** director.

The Darien **Library** has been recognized among **libraries** as being a leader in using "**library 2.0**" social software initiatives manifested in its eNewsletter and an information-loaded Web site, which hosts podcasts and several New York Times blogs among other attractions.

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