Virtual Reference in Wisconsin
Jan. 11, 2012 Conference Webinar

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Almost 10 years ago ...

- It’s was brand new and shiny
- Reference service outside the department and the building
- Cooperative possibilities
  - Coverage
  - Extended hours,
  - Route to home or for expertise
- For the first time “really” see what happens in reference transactions
**Today’s Menu**

- Using past PowerPoints
  - You knew there was a reason to keep them
- What we did and why we did it
- Chart changes in approach and attitude
- Results of efforts
- See some lessons learned
- Cautions for the future
Wisconsin Consortium
Academic and Public Library systems
Library type coverage global
Wisconsin type coverage up to library
Monitoring “your own” is your type in WI
Info galore: http://askaway.pbwiki.com
History

- Started in 2002
  - Stand alone in Wisconsin only
  - First QuestionPoint Consortium

- Re-invented in 2006
  - Added 24/7
  - Some LSTA money added
  - True State wide too

- Always thought we would be “trailing edge”, always ended up “bleeding edge”
QuestionPoint

- 2006, big switch and re-alignment
- OCLC system
- Includes 24/7 Reference Cooperative membership
- Original system proprietary web based chat and web form/email
- Full transcript, response, follow up and routing control
Multi-type from the get go
- 2 Queues, 1 BME
- Always asked, always affirmed
- They like working together

Always ran integrated email/web form and chat
- Shared Follow up, Referrals and Quality control
Marketing

- AskAway Day
  - Press Releases
  - Local News, interview prominent folks
  - Give Aways
- Links Everywhere
- Sell to Librarians
- YouTube video contest
Best Practices Webinars

- Monthly hour+ sessions, shared between WI, IL and now MN
- Topics have included YA’s, Links, Problem Patrons, Online Resources, Making referrals, Shared Follow up, etc.
- Recordings now available for a year
  - Posted a couple of hours post session
  - https://www.livemeeting.com/cc/wislineweb/view
  - Don’t have to register for webinar to view
Wikis

- **AskAway wikis**
  - Wisconsin
    - [http://askaway.pbwiki.com](http://askaway.pbwiki.com)
    - Constant updates, members add, edit and proof
  - Illinois
  - QuestionPoint
    - Contract librarians online reference resources
    - Enquire information
Wiki Content

- Admin Information
- How to’s
- Marketing resources
- Meeting support
- Best Practices
- 2007, no spam blocking, started 2008
- Chats to web form % = 50-50% in 2006, 66-33% in 2011

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Why QuestionPoint and 24/7

- Full service and full coverage for our patrons
- A key to creating “digital branch” libraries
- Quality control
- Integration of chat, email/webforms and now the qwidget
- Integration of reply conversations, subject experts and shared follow-up
Importance of 24/7 coverage

Percentages of AskAway patron questions asked before 9am and after 9pm, standard library hours
Importance of 24/7 coverage

Percentages of AskAway patron questions asked before 9am and after 6pm, typical small library hours
Our Portal at www.askaway.info

Have a question? Need an answer?

Librarians from around the country are available whenever you need information -- 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Our free service will connect you to an experienced librarian who has the knowledge and tools to find the information you need.

This service is brought to you by the AskAway Consortium, which is comprised of participating libraries & library systems, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and WiLS. This service is staffed by librarians around the country. For local questions, you may get a faster response by contacting your local library. See the Wisconsin Library Directory for links to libraries' web pages.

If you use a library at a college, university or tech school...

Get the best answers to your questions by choosing your school:

Carthage College
Chipewa Valley Technical College
Edgewood College
Fox Valley Technical College
Gateway Technical College
Madison Area Technical College
Moraine Park Technical College
Northeast Wisconsin Technical College
St. Norbert College
UW Madison
UW Milwaukee
UW Oshkosh
UW Whitewater
Viterbo University
Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College
WISPALS or other technical college
My academic institution isn't listed...

If you use a public or school library...

To get the best answers to your questions, enter your zip code:

Or choose your county from this dropdown menu:

Choose the county where you live

Or click on your county on the map below.

Or if you live in Illinois use the AskAway Illinois service

Flash Demonstration of AskAway
Our Map

Clickable to go to a specific library QuestionPoint entry page
Adding Schools

- Started as a trial, with 4 high schools
- Worked with the schools and their associated public libraries for coverage and training
- Success, being used and endorsed by school librarians and teachers
- Continued slow growth, a couple more high schools and continued to add more
- Requires figuring who covers those critical hours of about 4-6pm, immediately afterschool
Economic stress will create tight budgets for at least another 2 years

Each library contributes some monies and librarian coverage, both have direct costs to each library

Can we continue to deliver value for each library

Growth in patron usage depends on marketing which depends on librarian endorsement

Continuing growth a primary indicator of value in financially stressed times.
Adding Social Links

Welcome to AskAway!
Librarians from all over the United States are available whenever you need information -- 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Our free service will connect you to an experienced librarian who has the knowledge and tools to find the information you need.

The librarian you'll chat with may be from another library but they will be able to help you with resources at your library. They can also forward your question to your local library as needed. If you need help from your local librarian right away, you might be best served to visit or call to them; find your library's phone number and address at the Wisconsin Library Directory.

Follow Us

How the service works.
Step 1: Submit your question using the form on the right side of this screen.
Step 2: Wait a little bit. A librarian will be with you shortly and will send you a message.
Step 3: Work with the librarian. The librarian will chat with you and send you web pages that they think will help answer your question.
Step 4: Use the information. After your session, a complete transcript will be displayed in your browser with all the links you visited with the librarian. If you provided your email address, the transcript will be emailed to you immediately.
MySpace Page

AskAway

Female
38 years old
MADISON,
WISCONSIN
United States

Reliable answers...anytime
A virtual reference service

View My: Pics

Contacting AskAway

Send Message  Forward to Friend
Add to Friends  Add to Favorites
IM / Call  Block User
Add to Group  Rank User

Myspace URL:
www.myspace.com/askawaywisconsin

AskAway is in your extended network
view more

AskAway's Latest Blog Entry [Subscribe to this Blog]

[View All Blog Entries]

AskAway's Blurb

About me:
I'm 100's of librarians in Wisconsin, combined with 12,000
librarians in the world, waiting to answer your questions,
anytime, anywhere about anything.

Jump into my world at the: AskAway web site

AskAway: All About It
AskAway The annual Wisconsin Library Association conference is in full swing. If you're going to be at the conference on Thursday, stop by the Guava room at 4:00 pm for a panel discussion about email, chat and IM reference. The panel includes librarians from public, system, academic and state agency libraries. It's sure to be...

AskAway Today's feedback:

"Sometimes I'm feeling a little lazy or it's 10:30 at night and I've got a pressing reference question that I can't figure out on my own and I don't feel like leaving my apartment. I just want to have this great easy access from home, and it's just so easy to pop on sitting in front of my television c..."
QP’s Widget maker
WordPress Widget

AskAway Now!

AskAway Qwidget

AskAway Wisconsin

The AskAway Wisconsin librarians are off duty, to have your question answered by a 24/7 Reference librarian, click here to start: Chat now

Enter your email address

Your Question/Message

Send

Events Page
Facebook Widget

AskAway Wisconsin

The AskAway Wisconsin librarians are off duty, to have your question answered by a 24/7 Reference librarian, click here to start: Chat now

Enter your email address

Your Question/Message

Please enter your email:

Send
Facebook Widget

AskAway Wisconsin

Your Question/Message

Please enter your email address to start a chat session

Send

Chat Available
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   by Julie Chapman - last updated on Aug 9th, 2010

5. Common Questions about the Library
   by Kim LaPlante - last updated on Aug 19th, 2010

6. Common Questions about the Computer Lab
   by Kim LaPlante - last updated on Aug 9th, 2010

7. Introduction to the Marinette Library
   by Theresa Radandt - last updated on Jul 19th, 2010

8. Introduction to the Sturgeon Bay Library
   by Mary Gracyshyn - last updated on Jul 19th, 2010

   by Kim LaPlante - last updated on Mar 15th, 2010

10. Faculty Services/Policies at the NWTC Library
    by Kim A. LaPonte - last updated on Mar 11th, 2010

Popular Tags (view all tags)

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Featured Librarian

NWTC Library Staff

Ask A Librarian

Click to start a chat session with our 24/7 Reference Librarians (Chat Now!)
Or email your question to us below.

Enter your email address
Your Question/Message
AskAway ~ Ask a Librarian a Question

Answers to your questions...

By Chat
Get live help. Need help? A librarian is standing by to assist you now. Librarians are available to help you 24 hours a day, even when our library is closed.

By E-mail
Send us an email message. Email us any time and we'll respond as soon as possible.

By Phone
Call our library at 920-236-5205 during library hours.

In Person
Stop in at our library at 106 Washington Avenue during library hours. Here's a map showing our location.

If you'd like to suggest the library purchase an item, please use our Recommendation for Purchase Form instead.
AskAway Links in OPAC

Winnefox Library System

# times search word(s) appears | Can't find what you're looking for? | Title: saturday
--- | --- | ---
saturday | [AskAway](#) | saturday
2 | [Saturday](#) afternoon | saturday
1 | [Saturday at The New You](#) | saturday
2 | [Saturday big tent wedding party](#) | saturday_blue
1 | [Saturday blues](#) | saturday_blue
1 | [The Saturday boy](#) | saturday_blue
1 | [Saturday come slow](#) | saturday_blue
1 | [The Saturday escape](#) | saturday_blue
11 | [The Saturday evening post](#) | saturday_evening_post
1 | [The Saturday evening post, 1988](#) | saturday_evening_post
1 | [The Saturday evening post, 1989](#) | saturday_evening_post
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Seeking Synchronicity
Revelations and Recommendations for Virtual Reference

Lynn Silipigni Connaway and Marie Radford
http://www.oclc.org/reports/synchronicity/default.htm

OCLC and others funded, June 2011
R in VR needs to change to "Relationships"
Users want Convenience
Marketing Matters
Seeking Synchronicity
Revelations and Recommendations for Virtual Reference

- Users don’t know about VR services
- When they use, people want Convenience
- Query clarification enhances accuracy and satisfaction
- Positive experiences depend on accurate and quick answers from a personable, friendly librarian
- Users negatives from no answer or source
- Librarians negatives from user behavior
Seeking Synchronicity
Revelations and Recommendations for Virtual Reference

- Users don’t mind scripts, unless over used
- Users prefer face-to-face, but: VR is the least intimidating and distantly convenient
- Instruction during VR can be effective to receptive users, but ask first, don’t force.
- Young stay away from VR because they were taught “stay away from strangers on the internet”
Seeking Synchronicity
Revelations and Recommendations for Virtual Reference

- Market, promote and demo
- Mobile
- Join, start, a cooperative
- Be everywhere, widgets galore
- Multi-ask, intake questions every possible way
- ABC: “Always Be Courteous”
Surveys

- The results
  - Jump to PDFs
- Evaluating old QP set up
- Pricing options
- Deciding on new system
Attitude and Approach, now

- Trying to plan for the future of WI VR, and meet your patrons needs
- Not forcing anyone, looking for solutions
- Can WiLS help move AskAway towards a new VR service that works for you and others, perhaps everyone.
- Using LibraryH3lp will change our approaches
The winner
Cost and flexibility
Check out the Video
http://screencast.com/t/ZB9isCp3PGd
Costs

- $250 a year – minimum
- $350 a year – maximum
- That’s per library entity
- An entity is a library or group of libraries that would act as one for virtual reference: have one administrator, one queue, one staffing schedule for hours, etc.
AskAway.
- New name possible later to fit marketing needs.

WiLS will
- create the group
- negotiate with LibraryH3lp
- bill members
- administer initial service setups and patron interfaces
- train library administrators
- establish a training system for virtual reference librarians.
WiLS will work with the consortium members to establish a self governed and - as much as practical - a self-run group framework to continue AskAway.

WiLS would continue to be the central point for the consortium functions.
New Approaches

- New Service = New Ideas = New Possibilities
  - A holistic to patron reference service

- Examples:
  - Widget based, easier to cover more time in background, as reasonable for local situations of course
  - Coverage expands naturally to meet patrons at demand, similar to desk times and open hours
  - Someday expanded hours through contracts, or interns, or library students
  - Someday expanded agreements with other consortium, such as NC
  - Text message service
Essential Questions

- Requires serious soul searching about what your library believes your reference service should be delivering.
- Problems and solutions are not rooted in technology, it’s the social interactions that either create or solve them.
- “it’s not the tech, it’s the social problems”
Planning Questions

- Is the reference really busy constantly?
  - Circ desks gave away to patron self-check

- What does your library think is it’s role in:
  - Curricular support
  - Research support
  - Life skills support
What does library think is the role of reference?

Is it important for you library to be where your patrons are?

Is point of need service a priority?