# ASKMN: THE LIBRARIAN IS IN – MINNESOTA'S COOPERATIVE DIGITAL REFERENCE SERVICE

Carla Steinberg Pfahl

# Purpose

Create a cooperative network for libraries to more easily contribute and participate in an online reference service for the benefit of its communities.

# About

- An online service for information and research help available to Minnesota residents and students 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

- The service is staffed by experienced librarians from Minnesota and QuestionPoint's 24/7 National Reference Cooperative

# Participating Libraries

- Academic Libraries
  - College of St. Catherine *
  - Joint Libraries of the College of St. Benedict/St. John's University *
  - Macalester College's DeWitt Wallace Library
  - Minnesota State University – Mankato *
  - St. Cloud State University *
  - University of Minnesota – Duluth *
  - University of Minnesota – Twin Cities
  - University of St. Thomas

- Public Libraries
  - Dakota County Library
  - Hennepin County Library System – Suburban *
  - Hennepin County Library System – Minneapolis *
  - Lake Agassiz Regional Library
  - Rochester Public Library *
  - St. Paul Public Library
  - Washington County Library

  * Founding Member

Minitex

DEDICATION.
EXPLORATION.
INNOVATION.

askmn.org

# Staffing

- Currently, over 60 librarians from all participating libraries staff AskMN

- Each staff member is scheduled a 1 – 1 ½ hour shift per week (on average)

- Off hours handled by QuestionPoint's 24/7 National Reference Cooperative

Minitex
DEDICATION.
EXPLORATION.
INNOVATION.

askmn.org

# What Librarians have to say

- "It is an exciting service to be able to offer our customers." – Hennepin County Library

- "Here is an example (referring to a transcript) of what I see as a beneficial aspect of the weekend/extended evening coverage. Our patron successfully served by another librarian." – Minnesota State University – Mankato

- "The co-op and contract librarians have done a good job answering our users' questions… We've been impressed with the quality of service provided by our partners around the state and in OCLC's cooperative." – UM Twin Cities

# What Patrons have to say

- "While we were not able to locate the info, the experience was very worthwhile and I will certainly use it again. Glad you're open 24/7. I think that is definately one of your best features!"

- "wow that was fast - thank you!"

- "Very quick, friendly service."

- "It was a tough question, but the librarian was very nice. This is a great program!"

- "[The Librarian] was great and very prompt with her answers and navigating the internet! I'm so happy about this Chat option and will definitely use it again in the future!"

Minitex
DEDICATION.
EXPLORATION.
INNOVATION.

askmn.org

# Patron feedback, cont'd.

- "[The Librarian] from Univ of Hawaii was extremely helpful and very friendly. I will definately use this again. It's 11:15 pm on a Thursday night and I feel too stupid to go ask someone face to face. I have triplets and can't go to the library at night, so this was awesome. I don't know much about libraries and I'm a grad student. That is rather embarrassing. Thanks!"

- "This service is very helpful, especially for non-trad students who do not live on campus. Thank you!"

- "This resource saved my life!! I was super anxious and feel much more confident that I will be able to access the information I need or access the help I need when I need it. This is a great service. Thank you"

# Benefits to Libraries

- Extending access to your collections, resources, other services to your patrons 24/7

- Having experienced librarians a click away

- Serving your patrons in a new way

- Reaching the distant learner/patron

- Giving patrons another option to connect with your library (after hours coverage)

Minitex
DEDICATION.
EXPLORATION.
INNOVATION.

askmn.org

# Benefits to Libraries, cont'd.

- Centralized training and support

- Marketing and promotion done centrally

- Local staffing commitment is limited

- Many libraries cannot support a stand-alone virtual reference service

# Benefits to Patrons

- Information and research assistance 24/7

- Continuity in service

- Experienced, quality service

- Point of time and need contact

- Access to text and hot links of sites visited after their session

# Asking a question

- The only information required to ask a question is zip code and question

- A name and email address is helpful but not necessary

Please enter the following and click the "Connect" button.

**\* = Required information**

**Email Address**

**First Name**

**\*Zip Code**

**\*Your Question:**

Connect     Exit

Minitex
DEDICATION.
EXPLORATION.
INNOVATION.

# Statistics

## Number of Sessions

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Academic** | 2620 | 62% |
| **Public** | 1592 | 38% |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Total Sessions*** | 4212 |
| **Answered** | 83% |
| **Follow up** | 17% |
| **Average Length** | 17 minutes |

## Resolution of Session

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Academic** | Answered | 2143 | 82% |
| **Academic** | Follow up | 477 | 18% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Public** | Answered | 1343 | 84% |
| **Public** | Follow up | 249 | 16% |

Minitex

DEDICATION.
EXPLORATION.
INNOVATION.

*Total Sessions: 3/24/08 – 02/28/09

askmn.org

# Types of questions

- <u>Subject Specific Research</u> (by far, the most popular type of question being asked) – I need to find information on… I have to write a paper for school.  Where can I find good resources on a topic…

- <u>Resources</u> (second most popular category) – Do you own a specific resource?  How do I access online databases from home…

- <u>Circulation</u> – How do I renew books?  I have fines, can I pay them online?  I need to Interlibrary Loan an item -- where is this book located…

- <u>Library Information</u> – What are your hours?  Do you have media equipment to borrow?  Can I print from my laptop in the library…

- <u>Technical Problems</u>  – This database isn't working.  My ID and password aren't being accepted…

# What is being asked?

| Category | Public | Academic | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Subject Specific | 892  /  56% | 1101  /  42% | 47% |
| Resource | 239  /  15% | 734  /  28% | 23% |
| Library Information | 191  /  12% | 341  /  13% | 13% |
| Circulation | 127  /  8% | 185  /  7% | 8% |
| Technical Problem | 48  /  3% | 181  /  7% | 5% |
| Non-Question | 95  /  6% | 78  /  3% | 4% |

Minitex
DEDICATION.
EXPLORATION.
INNOVATION.

askmn.org

# When are they asking questions?

| Queue | 12am – 3am | 3am – 6am | 6am – 9am | 9am - Noon | Noon – 3pm | 3pm – 6pm | 6pm – 9pm | 9pm – 12am |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Academic | 74 | 22 | 130 | 565 | 491 | 488 | 474 | 378 |
| Public | 18 | 5 | 66 | 453 | 402 | 269 | 215 | 162 |
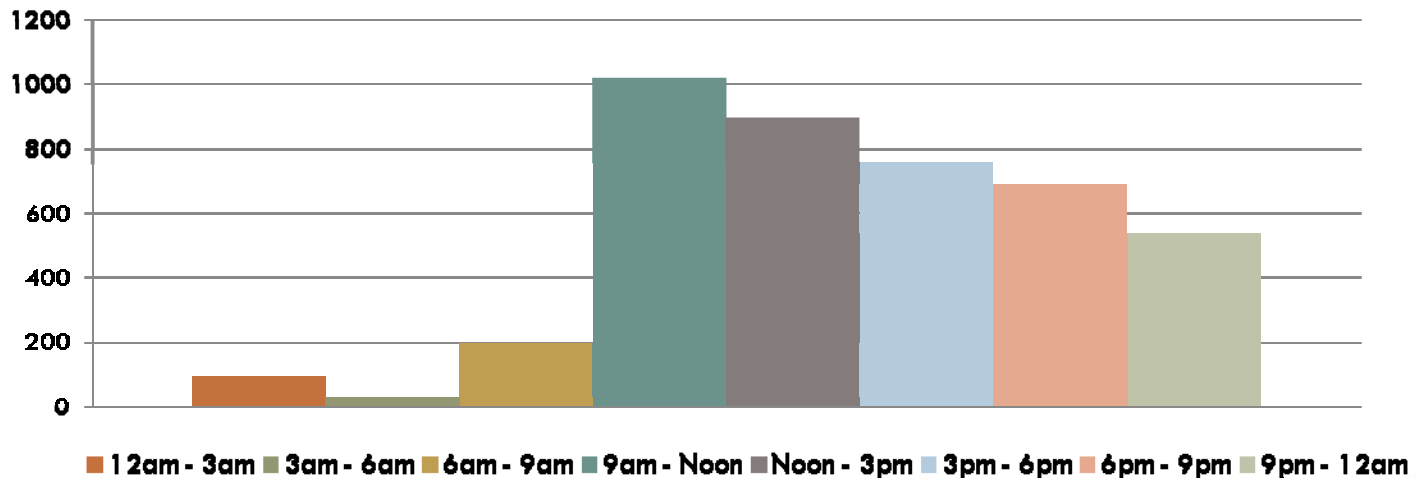
# What do users tell us?

| The Librarian was helpful. | | |
|---|---|---|
| No | 13 | 5% |
| Yes | 231 | 87% |
| N/A | 19 | 7% |
| Not Submitted | 3 | 1% |

| Were you satisfied with the answer to your question? | | |
|---|---|---|
| No | 17 | 6% |
| Yes | 218 | 82% |
| N/A | 25 | 10% |
| Not Submitted | 6 | 2% |

| Would you use this service again? | | |
|---|---|---|
| No | 6 | 2% |
| Yes | 241 | 91% |
| N/A | 13 | 5% |
| Not Submitted | 6 | 2% |

4 Institutions reporting | 266 responses |15% of all sessions

Minitex
DEDICATION.
EXPLORATION.
INNOVATION.

askmn.org

# Contacts

- AskMN Coordinator:

  Carla Steinberg Pfahl

  pfahl001@umn.edu

  612-626-6845

  800-462-5348

- Electronic Resources Librarian:

  Rita Baladad

  balad001@umn.edu

  612-626-8252

  800-462-5348

# Questions?

Thank you!

# AskMN – The Librarian Is In!

An online service for information and research help available to all Minnesota residents and students 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. AskMN is a cooperative service of Minnesota libraries.

**Get real-time help from a real librarian on any topic or information need.**

**QUESTION ON ANY TOPIC**

**Get real-time help with your college research from an academic librarian.**

**COLLEGE RESEARCH**

Do you have a visual impairment or other print limitation? Please use our partner site, InfoEyes.org.

Connecting from outside Minnesota? You will need a Minnesota public library barcode number to access AskMN.org. If you do not have a Minnesota public library card, please contact your local public library directly.

## Contact Us

- Feedback Form – give us feedback on how our service is working for you or any technical issues you may have encountered.

## Funding

AskMN is brought to you by MINITEX and participating Minnesota libraries.

# About AskMN

## What Is AskMN?

AskMN is a live interactive chat service that allows you to converse with a librarian in real-time. A librarian will be available 24/7 to answer questions and direct you to various websites if needed. A normal session lasts 5-20 minutes. It can take several minutes for the librarian to search and send you an answer.

The librarian may ask you questions to get a better understanding of what you need. He or she may offer to follow up by email if your question requires further in-depth research or assistance. The librarian will then have the opportunity to refer you to print and local resources, as well as subject specialists who may not be available during the live session. Follow-up replies by email can be expected within 72 hours.

## Can Anyone Use This Service?

This service is intended to answer questions from Minnesota residents and students only. If you are outside of Minnesota and you want to ask a question you will need to enter the barcode number on the back of your Minnesota public library card. If you do not have a Minnesota public library card please contact your local public library directly.

## Accessibility

Do you have a visual impairment or other print limitation? Please use our partner site, InfoEyes.org.

## Funding

AskMN is brought to you by MINITEX and participating Minnesota libraries.

# Privacy Statement

This privacy statement explains the procedures followed by AskMN in collecting and using information regarding use of this service. Use of this service is your agreement to the Privacy Statement.

Below we describe what information we request and how it is used:

## Name

A name is not required but is helpful so we can be friendly. Feel free to use any name you like, within reason.

## Email Address

An email address is not required to use this service. If one is provided, it will be used only in the provision of service from this site. No email addresses will be sold or given to any other entities. The Libraries may use the email address to:

- Send a transcript of the session for your reference.
- Send a scanned document at a later time.
- Follow up on an incomplete session.

## Zip Code

The number of sessions for each zip code is tabulated for statistical reporting. This information will only be used to gauge the reach of this service.

## Transcripts

Transcripts may be used:

- To email to the user as a record of the session and a reminder of any resources provided during the session.
- To monitor and improve the overall quality of service.
- To develop aggregated statistical data for reporting on the number of requests received, the number of requests completed, and the average length of sessions.

We will remove identifying information from transcripts shared with outside entities for the above purposes.

## Additional Information

In the course of clarifying the request for information the Librarian may ask for information regarding purpose (for instance, is this for a homework assignment?), or reading or grade level. Such incidental information will be used to identify appropriate resources only.

# Tips & Troubleshooting

## Getting Started

Click on the state/question mark symbol for either Question on Any Topic or College Research. Enter your question in the form to the right of that page and then click on the "connect" button. Please include as much detail as possible as you type in your question. This will help us give you a better answer!

After you've sent your question: **You will connect with a librarian usually in about one minute.** A librarian will send you a welcome message, and clarify your question if necessary. Chat messages from the librarian will appear in the left frame of your browser. You may receive answers in the form of web pages. These will appear in the right frame of your browser.

When you're finished or would like to end the session click on the "Exit" link. When you or the librarian ends the session you will see the full transcript of your session including hyperlinks to web pages that were sent to you during the session. There will also be an option to email the transcript to yourself.

After your session has ended you may also receive a quick survey asking if you found the service helpful. Please feel free to take a moment to let us know what you thought of AskMN.

## Tips on Chat Communication

- Be informal, but courteous.
- Use short replies and hit the send button between sentences.
- Expect what might seem like delays. Some questions require the librarian to search in several places to find exactly what you need.
- If you have to leave the computer, please politely let the librarian know: for example, "Sorry, I have to go now - the computer lab is closing. Please email me whatever you find at [your email address]. Thanks!"

## Session Transcripts

If you entered an email address at login, a full transcript of your session, including hyperlinks, will be emailed to you. It is very important that you add *askmn@askmn.org* to your email "safe list" if you would like to receive a transcript or any other communication from us.

If you didn't enter an email address, you will have another chance to do so as soon as the session is ended. You will see the full session

# Resources

## Minnesota Resources

- Electronic Library For Minnesota (ELM)
- Minnesota Digital Library
- Minnesota North Star
- MnLINK Gateway – search for Minnesota library materials
- My Health Minnesota – Go Local
- Research Project Calculator
- U of M Libraries History Day Research Guide
- U of M Libraries list of free resources

* Please also check the resources available from your library.

## Legal Resources

- Law Moose
- Minnesota Association of Law Libraries
- Minnesota State Library Legal Resources
- U of M Law Library Legal Research
- William Mitchell College of Law Legal Resources

## General Reference

- Calisphere – University of California's public gateway to a world of primary sources
- Citation Styles Online
- Evans Early American Imprint Collection
- Librarians' Internet Index
- Internet Public Library
- KidsClick! – web search for kids by librarians
- OAIster – union catalog of digital resources
- QuestionPoint 24/7 Reference: Global Knowledge Base
- The "Second Wave" and Beyond – Primary Sources of the Women's Movement, 1960-2000
- UMN Libraries IMAGES Repository

# COLLEGE OF ST CATHERINE

**Home Page URL:** http://library.stkate.edu

**Web Catalog URL:** http://clicnet.clic.edu

The College of St. Catherine is a member of the Cooperating Libraries in Consortium (CLIC), a group of private colleges and universities in the Twin Cities metro area. The library catalog, CLICnet, is a shared resource between the following institutions: Augsburg College, Bethel University, The College of St. Catherine, Concordia University, Hamline University, Macalester College, Northwestern College and the University of St. Thomas.

**Policy Page E-mail Contact:** Sue Gray, sagray@stkate.edu
**Library Card Number:** A 14-digit barcode number located on the back of CSC IDs.

## Phone
**St. Paul Campus:**
Circulation: 651-690-8737
Reference: 651-690-6652
Media Services: 651-690-6658

**Minneapolis Campus:**
Circulation: 651-690-7784
Reference: 651-690-7898/7780
Media Services: 651-690-7793

| Phone | Hours | Location | Available Technology and Equipment | Databases | Research Guides |
|-------|-------|----------|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Library Cards | Loan Periods | Renewals | Holds | Late Fees | Interlibrary Loan |
| Course Reserves | Library programs and events | Library Policies | Cooperative Arrangements/Delivery | | |

## Hours
Vary by location. **Hours:** http://library.stkate.edu/admin/hours.html

## Location
**St. Paul Campus Library:** 2004 Randolph Avenue St. Paul, MN 55105 (1st floor of the Coeur de Catherine building)

**Minneapolis Campus Library:** 601 25th Avenue S., Minneapolis, MN 55454 (4th floor of the Education building)

**Maps & Directions:** http://library.stkate.edu/about/directions.html

## Available Technology and Equipment
Public access computers, laser printers, and photocopiers (.10/page) are available in the libraries on both campuses. Both libraries have wireless access.

## Databases

**Databases:** (Popular CSC databases are listed on the right-hand side of the screen) http://library.stkate.edu/connect/databases.html

**Database Guides:** http://library.stkate.edu/guides/handouts.html

**The Periodical Cat: Journals A-Z** An alphabetical list of our print and online journals, magazines, and newspapers. http://library.stkate.edu/per_list/index.html

**Remote Access** to the databases requires a CSC network login or KateWay login. http://library.stkate.edu/connect/off_campus.html

**Troubleshooting Off-Campus Access to Library Databases:** http://library.stkate.edu/connect/ezproxy_troubleshoot.html

**RefWorks:** http://library.stkate.edu/refworks/index.html
Off-campus patrons must use the CSC Group Code, in addition to their log-in name and password, to access their RefWorks accounts. (The group code can be accessed from the RefWorks page using a CSC username and password.)

## Research Guides

Library staff have compiled lists of resources on a variety of academic subjects, reference and general interest areas. **Research guides:** library.stkate.edu/guides/index.html

**Citation Style Guides:** http://library.stkate.edu/guides/style.html

## Library Cards

A valid library card is required to check out materials, including items on reserve. The CSC ID card is the library card for students, faculty and staff (the library barcode is on the back of the ID).

**Library cards:** http://library.stkate.edu/access/circ.html#student

## Loan Periods

http://library.stkate.edu/access/circ.html#loan

## Renewals

Items may be renewed up to two times. The first renewal may be done by phone (St. Paul: 651-690-6647 and Minneapolis: 651-690-7784). To renew a second time the items must be presented at the Circulation Desk.

## Holds

Holds may be placed on items via CLICnet or library staff may facilitate requests. Items may be recalled for reserve use at any time. Items with holds on them may not be renewed. When the requested item becomes available, it will be placed on the hold shelf and the requester notified to pick up the item. If there are multiple requests for a single item, they will be honored in the order received.

## Late Fees

http://library.stkate.edu/access/circ.html#overdue

## Interlibrary Loan

The College of St. Catherine Libraries provides interlibrary loan (ILL) service to obtain books and theses or photocopies of items not owned by the Libraries. This service is available to current faculty, students, and staff of the College and to the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet.

**ILL Services:** http://library.stkate.edu/access/ill.html

## Course Reserves

Course reserve readings are retrievable through CLICnet (the library catalog) and can be printed. Click on the Search "CSC Reserve Readings" in CLICnet link on the library home page at http://library.stkate.edu. In order to view items on electronic or e-reserve, patrons will need to enter their library barcode, found on the back of their CSC ID.