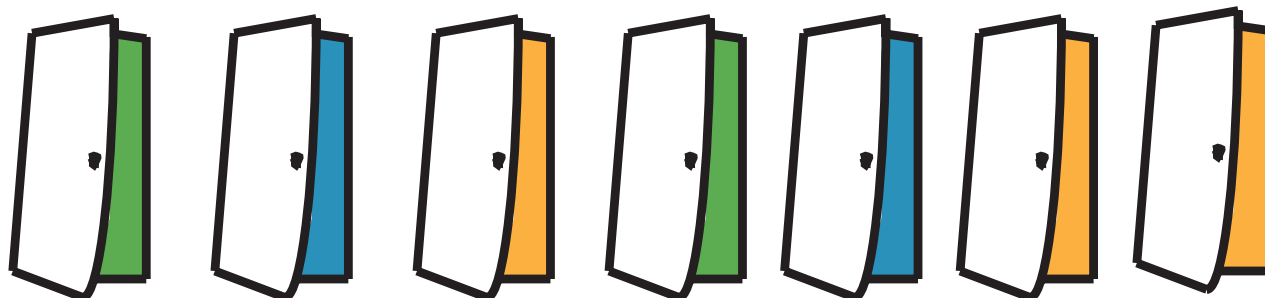


AskAway

Actions and Achievements

2011





AskAway Actions and Achievements
2012

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Your service saved me a good deal of time. When I became frustrated trying to locate a reference within an online journal that did not provide a works cited, I remembered the askaway option. I'd already tried several journals and several databases without success. By providing the librarian with details of my original source document, she was able to locate the two articles I was searching for—and in a more timely manner than I could ever have accomplished. Your service saved this Ed.D. student time and energy and probably saved me from a big spike in blood pressure, too! Cudos to you all.

– University of BC graduate learner

Message from Our Advisory Committee Chair

2011 has been a year of evolution for AskAway. While the service has continued to expand outwardly through increased usage, the joining of new institutions, and the exploration of new technologies and tools, it has also developed internally through a strengthening of the AskAway service infrastructure.

Throughout this evolution, AskAway has remained committed to its mission of providing flexible, equitable, and adaptable educational support to the BC post-secondary system.

Growth in 2011 has been marked by increased usage of the service, with 10% more questions being asked in 2011 over the previous year. The addition of Columbia Bible College to the collective of partner libraries speaks to the value this service brings to both public and private institutions. In the realm of technology, the service has further explored tools that further enhance the user and service provider experiences.

A major focus of the past year has been the development and solidification of operational infrastructure for the AskAway service. Released this year, the Service Continuity Plan operates as part of a risk mitigation strategy in the event of disruptions such as natural disasters or job action at participating institutions. The revised Library Commitment and Service Support Fee models provide increased foundational structure to the service. This vital internal work contributes to strengthening the collaborative organization of AskAway, in turn benefitting all institutions that rely on its infrastructure. With these affirmed parameters in place, AskAway can further support growth and make future decisions from a position of strength.

AskAway: Opening Doors to Learning and Collaboration

AskAway shares BCcampus' goal to foster and support educational collaborations amongst institutions that benefit students, leverage knowledge, and reduce costs.

AskAway meets this goal by opening doors:

- to vital online research assistance for students, educators, and researchers seven days a week, often well past regular library reference hours;
- between institutions by facilitating exchanges of expertise and sharing of resources; and
- for individual libraries whose costs are greatly reduced by participating, and whose returns on investment are vast.

In partnership with BCcampus and AskAway partner libraries, we look forward to future growth, and to opening new doors!



AskAway opens doors... to vital online research assistance; between collaborating institutions; and for individual libraries seeking to maximize services.



Todd Mundle
Chair, AskAway Advisory Committee, and Associate University Librarian,
Simon Fraser University
tmundle@sfu.ca

A Vital Service

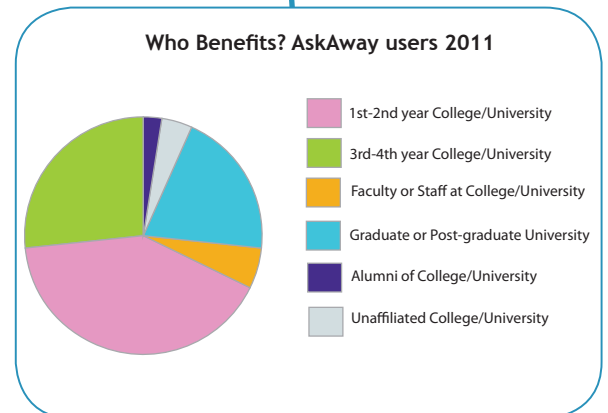
AskAway enables real-time, chat-based research assistance for learners when they need it. With a single click, students can connect with a librarian to receive expert guidance. Staff from 29 post-secondary libraries across BC and the Yukon chat online with learners, providing flexible, timely access to province-wide reference resources beyond the limitations of library buildings and traditional hours of service.

Responding to educational needs with a collaborative approach, AskAway is able to extend this service to learners via cost-sharing and coordination of infrastructure and resources amongst institutions.

Standing alongside phone, email, and in-person reference services, AskAway chat reference has become a core mode of service delivery for post-secondary libraries.

AskAway:

- Extends equitable access to quality information to over 186,000 post-secondary learners at 29 institutions
- Meets learners “where they are” – online – and offers educational support at point of need
- Provides 67 hours of virtual reference service per week, effectively leveraging professional expertise across the system to facilitate reference and referral



Governance & Structure

AskAway Advisory Committee

The AskAway Advisory Committee oversees AskAway policy development, planning and operations, and reports to the BC ELN Steering Committee. Composed of representatives from a cross-section of BC ELN partner libraries based on type and region, the Advisory Committee reflects the diversity of BC post-secondary libraries. This governance structure ensures that the service remains attuned to the needs of BC learners and libraries. BCcampus has a permanent seat on the Advisory Committee, along with the AskAway Administrative Centre.

The AskAway Advisory Committee:

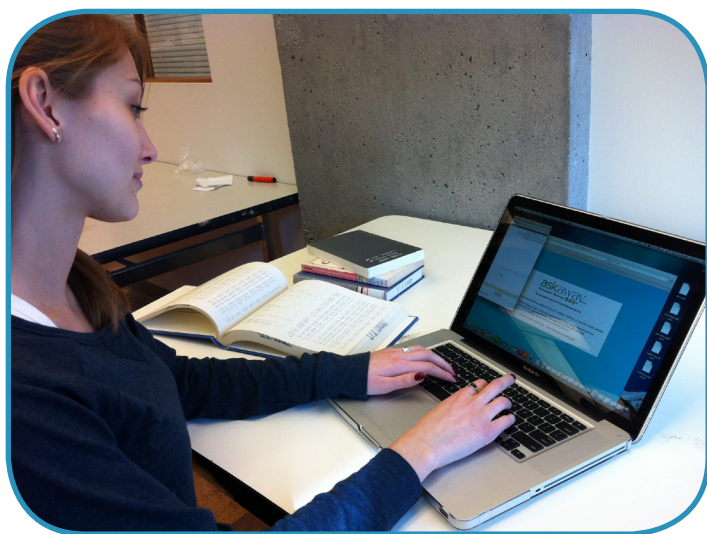
- Advises on policy issues
- Represents the interests and concerns of regions and institutions
- Carries out research to support service and brings forward recommendations
- Communicates internally and externally on the AskAway service
- Oversees the work of the Administrative Centre

AskAway Administrative Centre

AskAway functions successfully as a collaborative program due in large part to the AskAway Administrative Centre's centralized coordination of the service, which ensures that systemic needs and issues are responded to quickly and efficiently. As a BC ELN core service, AskAway profits from BC ELN's lengthy history of successful collaborations and partnerships in the post-secondary system. Within this context, the AskAway Administrative Centre operates from a position of strength, bolstered by BC ELN Office experience and its capacity and infrastructure for project management, communication, governance, and technology.

The AskAway Administrative Centre:

- Coordinates scheduling, support, training, marketing, and communication from a centralized position
- Delivers pre-service, in-service, and professional development training to AskAway service providers
- Negotiates software licenses and maintains stable costs over the course of the license term
- Provides quick, responsive technical support and vendor liaison
- Supports networking and communication between institutions, BCcampus and stakeholders
- Manages marketing and communicates the value of AskAway to partners libraries through the AskAway portal, regular updates and annual reports
- Evaluates the service on a regular basis; tracks usage, gathers feedback, measures and reports effectiveness
- Supports post-secondary libraries in addressing system-wide needs and moving forward with emerging new opportunities for learning support



Simon Fraser University AskAway user

AskAway Advisory Committee Members (as of December, 2011)

Sheryl Adam
University of British Columbia

Anita Cocchia
BC Electronic Library Network

Debra Flewelling
*Douglas College
Member-at-Large*

Marjory Jardine
*Justice Institute of BC
Member-at-Large*

Leva Lee
BCcampus

Todd Mundle
Simon Fraser University

Christina Nilsen
*Thompson Rivers University
Member-at-Large*

Sunni Nishimura
AskAway Coordinator

David Pepper
*BC Institute of Technology
Regional Universities
and Institutes with 4 year
Programs*

James Rout
*Emily Carr University of Art
+ Design
Small Universities*

Tracie Smith
University of Victoria

Ross Tyner
*Okanagan College
Urban Colleges*

Melanie Wilke
*Northwest Community
College
Rural Colleges*

Essential Partners

Through collaboration, cost-sharing, and coordination of existing infrastructure and resources, AskAway provides a service far beyond what any individual institution could offer on its own. AskAway is a collaborative partnership between BCcampus, British Columbia Electronic Library Network, the Ministry of Advanced Education, and participating libraries.



A primary goal of BCcampus is to support institutional collaborations that leverage knowledge, generate benefits for students, and reduce costs. AskAway is a collaborative

service that meets these goals. BCcampus has supported AskAway since AskAway's inception in 2006, reflecting BCcampus' commitment to providing flexible, adaptable options that address the diversity of BC life-long learners. As both a Shared Service and Collaborative Program, AskAway coordinates province-wide library expertise so that students at even the smallest institutions have access to 67 hours of reference service a week, learning support those students would not otherwise have.



The BC Electronic Library Network (BC ELN) provides essential infrastructure for AskAway through its partner libraries and the BC ELN Office. BC ELN partner libraries contribute

over 220 staff hours per week to the AskAway service, which makes 67 hours of reference service per week available to AskAway users. BC ELN also contributes funding to the AskAway service. Through the BC ELN Office, the AskAway Administrative Centre provides critical support and central coordination of AskAway, thus maximizing the efficiency, benefits, and cost-effectiveness of this Shared Service and Collaborative Program.



As part of its commitment to expanding library access and services to British Columbians across the province, the Ministry of Advanced Education

provided seed funding for AskAway from 2006 to 2008. This foundational support was critical to AskAway's transition to a sustainable funding model, ensuring its continuity as part of a larger cradle-to-grave continuum of library services for British Columbians. Access to innovative library services such as AskAway supports the Ministry of Advanced Education's work "making BC a destination of choice for students to study and stay to live, work, and invest." (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2010/11 Annual Service Plan Report).

Partner Institutions (as of December, 2011)

Alexander College
BC Institute of Technology
Camosun College
Capilano University
College of New Caledonia
College of the Rockies
Columbia Bible College
Douglas College
Emily Carr University of Art + Design
Justice Institute of BC
Kwantlen Polytechnic University
Langara College
North Island College
Northern Lights College
Northwest Community College
Okanagan College
Quest University Canada
Royal Roads University
Selkirk College
Simon Fraser University
Thompson Rivers University
Trinity Western University
University of BC
University of the Fraser Valley
University of Northern BC
University of Victoria
Vancouver Community College
Vancouver Island University
Yukon College

Benefits of AskAway

AskAway brings significant benefits to individual users and institutions, as well as to the post-secondary system as a whole. Users benefit from flexible, online access to learning support that is responsive to their evolving needs. Institutions and the entire post-secondary system benefit from low costs and protection in the event of service disruption.

Benefits for Users

Flexible, learner-centred service

Growing numbers of students are now accessing library resources online and from off-campus. By providing flexible, digital access to library services beyond regular hours of operation, AskAway supports a learner-centred approach to higher education. Data gathered from the exit survey that users fill out upon completion of their AskAway session indicates that AskAway is responding appropriately to online needs of today's post-secondary learners:

- 63% of survey respondents told us that they chose the AskAway service because they were at home or off-campus.
- 40% used AskAway because they were looking for online resources
- 30% told us they prefer using online services

Fast, convenient, friendly service

Research is not something that only occurs during regular working hours. By offering extended hours of research assistance into most evenings and on weekends, AskAway is a fast, convenient service that meets students at their point of need. Positive anecdotal comments gathered from the AskAway exit survey indicate that students appreciate the expedient and friendly help they receive from AskAway service providers.

- 83% of survey respondents said they thought their question was answered quickly
- 82% of survey respondents indicated their question was answered in a friendly manner.

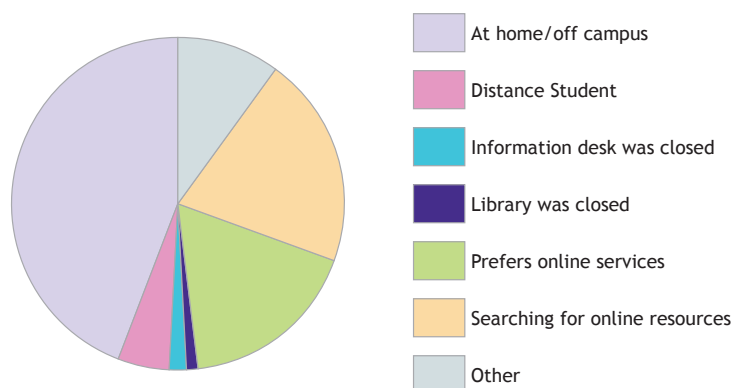
AskAway responds to user feedback

AskAway values constructive feedback from users. User suggestions have prompted the service to deliver a faster, more responsive, and easier-to-use Qwidget.

I am very grateful to this tool, it is very convenient and easy to use, and they are extremely friendly... Thank you very much!

- Okanagan College learner

Why AskAway? Reasons users choose AskAway



Note: many users give multiple answers; this chart documents their primary response.

Additional opportunities for learning

Through contact with service providers, users have opportunities to improve their research strategies, as well as to learn about educational resources held within their institution's library. Service providers teach users how to conduct searches and use library catalogues and databases. Improved skills, especially for new post-secondary students, can have a significant effect on future research.

Benefits for the Post-Secondary System

Strong Partnerships through Collaboration

Partnerships and affiliations between post-secondary institutions are strengthened by the collaborative work supported by AskAway. Institutions benefit by sharing expertise and knowledge of resources and teaching strategies.

Equitable and expanded support for learners

Thanks to the cost-sharing model supported by AskAway, even the smallest institution is able to provide the same 67 hours of online research assistance as a large institution provides. Libraries are able to provide expanded reference services since AskAway is available most evenings until 9 pm, as well as weekends. AskAway further assists institutions in meeting the needs of distance education learners who do not have access to on-campus library services.

Significant Cost Reductions

Through joint licensing, collaborative staffing, centralised coordination, and leveraging of existing infrastructure, AskAway makes it possible for 29 BC post-secondary institutions to offer chat reference to their students, a service otherwise unattainable for many of the smaller institutions.

For \$117,000 total system cost, 29 institutions can offer a service that, in a non-collaborative environment would total over \$122,000 for a single institution's software and minimum-staffing costs. In other words, for a BCcampus/BC ELN investment of \$70,000 in the collaborative service, and an average \$2000 contribution per institution, BC's post-secondary students benefit from a service worth \$3.5 million.

AskAway is an outstanding investment for the BC post-secondary system, providing equitable access to reference help for students across all institutions. Only the largest of institutions could dedicate more than a single staff person to chat reference for 67 hours per week in order to truly replicate what AskAway provides. By harnessing the synergy of collaborative staffing, 3-5 AskAway service providers are always available, ensuring every student experiences immediate response at their point-of-need.

[Librarian's name] was a great resource, helping to find the book I was searching for and doing it with humour--she taught me a new way of searching too! Great service.

- University of British Columbia faculty member

\$117,000: total system cost for the AskAway collaborative service, with 3-5 staff per hour, 67 hours per week, including coordination and support

\$3.5 million: total system cost for 29 stand-alone services, with 1 staff per hour, 67 hours per week, with no coordination or support

Reaching new library users

AskAway is a powerful method of increasing the visibility and accessibility of other learner services. A positive experience getting research assistance through AskAway empowers new users to explore additional library services. With 10% of exit survey respondents telling us they have never used library services before, AskAway truly has the potential to have a positive influence on new library users.

Risk Mitigation

AskAway functions as part of a risk mitigation strategy for the BC post-secondary library system. Individual institutions are protected in that AskAway provides back-up research help for students should their home library services be disrupted by network failures, disasters or weather events. In the event of a widespread disruption affecting numerous institutions, the system as a whole would be able to absorb the impact thanks to collaborative services like AskAway. AskAway has developed a Service Continuity Plan to ensure systemic resiliency and continuity of service in the event of disruptions such as natural disasters, severe weather events, fires, pandemics or job action at participating institutions.

AskAway Quick Facts

AskAway's busiest day in 2011 was November 15, with 216 sessions, or 324 questions. That is 10% higher than the busiest day in 2010.

94% of AskAway survey respondents say they would use the service again.

For 10% of AskAway survey respondents in 2011, it was their first time using the library.

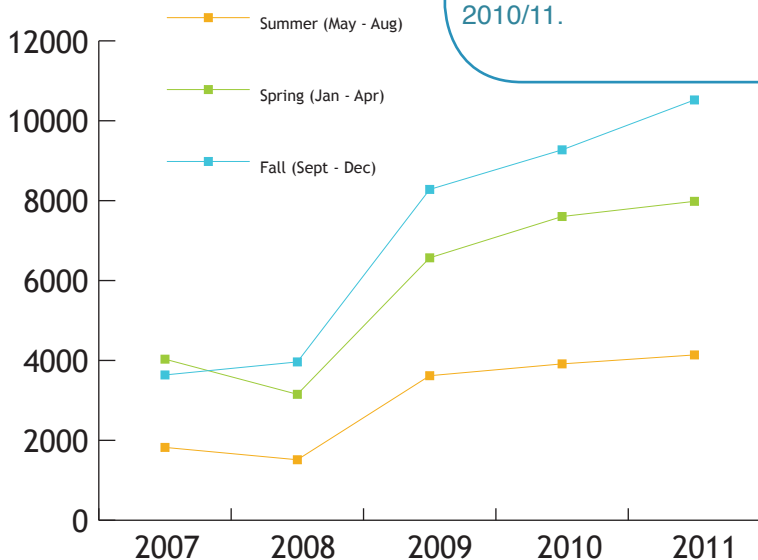
70% of AskAway survey respondents in 2011 turned to AskAway after they had been unable to find the information they needed on their own.

13% of AskAway survey respondents learn about the service through word-of-mouth, or through an in-class demonstration.

80% of faculty and staff members who used AskAway in 2011 say the service was both quick and accurate.

Mobile use doubled after AskAway introduced the mobile site mid-2011.

Steady Increase in Usage: AskAway traffic continues its steady rise, with a 14% overall increase from 2009/10 to 2010/11.



Sessions per term, 2007 - 2011

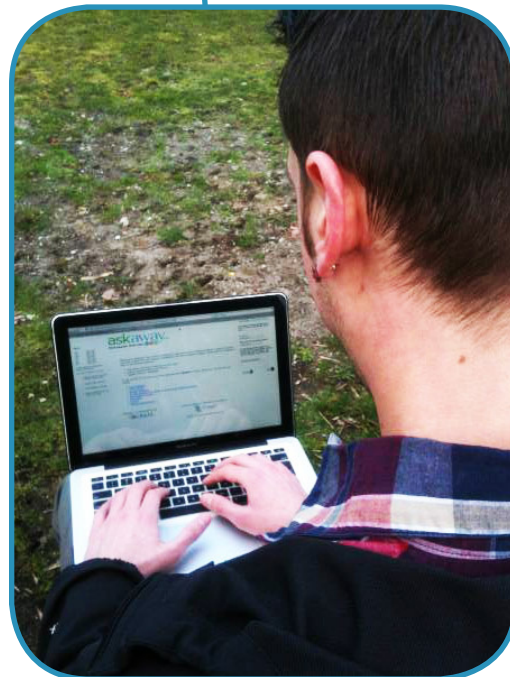
Key Achievements in 2011

Financial

- **Negotiated low Inflationary Price Increases:** Negotiation resulted in a low 2% increase to the virtual reference software licensed for AskAway.
- **Reduced Costs:** In 2011, AskAway achieved a cost per transaction of \$3.32, a 34% reduction from 2010. As the AskAway service continues to mature and achieve greater efficiencies, cost savings will increase.

Service

- **Revised the Library Commitment and Cost-sharing Models (Fall/Winter Terms):** In 2011 the AskAway Advisory Committee undertook a major revision of these key models, which outline the manner in which participating libraries contribute staff hours and provide their service support fees through the fall and winter terms. This provides foundational structure to the service, effectively outlining the parameters of collaboration for all institutions.
- **Released AskAway Service Continuity Plan:** This plan was created to provide guidance in the event of service disruptions due to natural disasters, epidemics, job action at participating libraries or severe weather occurrences.
- **Welcomed New Partner Institution Columbia Bible College:** New partners help AskAway grow by contributing knowledge and sharing costs. This year AskAway welcomed its newest partner institution and has supported its launch of the service.



Langara College AskAway user

Technology

- **Provided Effective Assessment of Service Value:** AskAway software supports the collection of vital evaluative information, allowing institutions to effectively assess the value of the AskAway service for their users. As one example, in 2011 AskAway developed new descriptive codes, which allow libraries to better understand the types of questions their users are asking.
- **Updated Tools to Better Support Service Providers:** Software support tools strengthen AskAway infrastructure and ensure that our service providers have the necessary support to manage increasing use of the service. For example, the updated “Swamped” tool has allowed service providers to quickly send an email to the listserv for backup assistance when AskAway is extremely busy.

Shared Services and Collaborative Programs

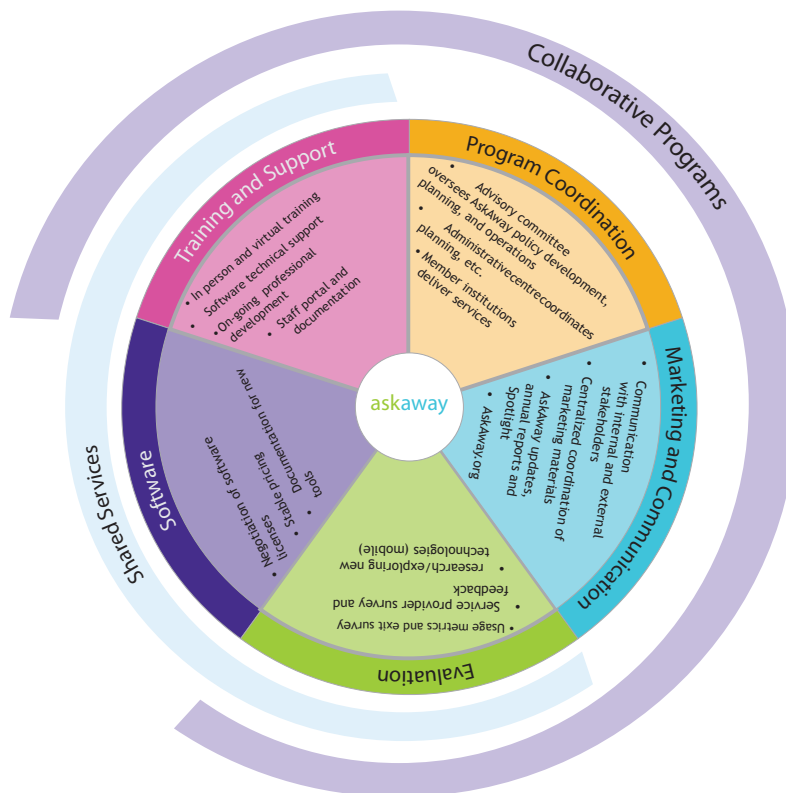
AskAway meets BCcampus criteria as both a Shared Service and a Collaborative Program.

Collaborative Program

Collaborative programs supported by BCcampus enable post-secondary institutions to combine infrastructure and expertise so that systemic inefficiencies are reduced and services are maximized. As a Collaborative Program, AskAway truly embodies this “strength in numbers” philosophy. By facilitating the sharing of system-wide resources, expertise, and educational technology, AskAway enables collaborating institutions to offer far greater online support for students than each could as individual institutions. AskAway further benefits institutions by reducing costs and eliminating redundancies across the system via centrally coordinated software licensing, training, support, marketing, and evaluation.

BCcampus’s mission has been to achieve synergies through collaborative, multi-institutional activities that benefit students, institutions, instructors and staff across the British Columbia post-secondary system.

*BCcampus Strategic Plan
2012-2015*



AskAway Mission

Combining the power of libraries, people and technology to connect British Columbia’s post-secondary learners, educators and researchers to the information they need anytime, anywhere.

Shared Service

As a Shared Service, AskAway pools resources and negotiates on behalf of institutions to secure system-wide licensing for the QuestionPoint software. As a result, licensing, provisioning, and support costs are greatly reduced for each institution. With support from BCcampus, AskAway investigated and licensed the virtual reference software used in the provision of service, and continues to support this technology through training and logistical maintenance. AskAway further monitors this shared service via ongoing evaluation both of the current software being used, and of additional reference technologies that could augment the AskAway service.

Funding Request

BCcampus funding ensures that AskAway operates from a neutral position; for this reason, AskAway is able to address issues from a system perspective, which benefits all institutions.

For 2012/2013, BC ELN is requesting \$60,000 through BCcampus Shared Services and Collaborative Programs to support AskAway coordination, technical infrastructure and service costs.

AskAway - Online Help at Point of Need

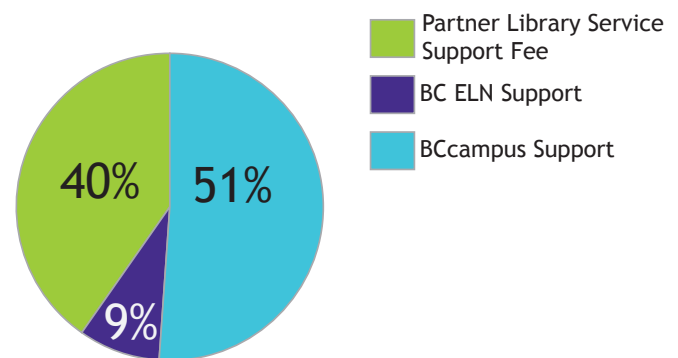
	2012/2013 Proposed \$	
	Revenue	Expenses
BCcampus Support	60,000	
BC ELN Support	10,000	
Partner Library Service Support Fee	47,000	
Total	117,000	
Service Support		91,000
Governance / Technical Infrastructure		26,000
Total		117,000
REVENUE - EXPENSES		-

AskAway Vision

Province-wide collaborative virtual reference will:

- Facilitate equitable access to quality information for all post-secondary learners.
- Extend chat reference service to all British Columbia post-secondary libraries.
- Provide post-secondary learners with reference assistance online at point of need.
- Provide convenient, timely access to province-wide reference resources, beyond the restrictions of library buildings and opening hours.
- Facilitate collaborative reference and referral.

AskAway Financial Support



New Doors to Open

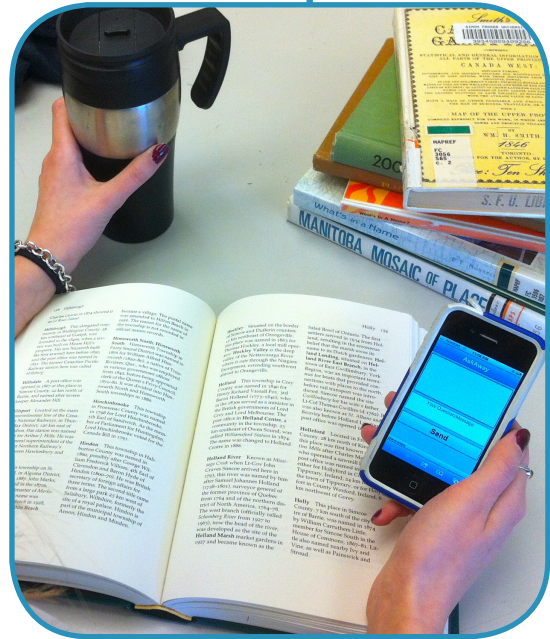
Thanks in large part to the internal work that has taken place in 2011, AskAway is able to look to the future from a position of strength and stability. Moving forward, AskAway will continue to anticipate technological changes and take action to meet the needs of post-secondary learners, educators, and researchers. In addition to maintaining high standards as a shared service and collaborative program, AskAway will endeavor to open new doors on learning through the exploration of novel technological services. Of particular interest will be opening doors on potential partnerships with synergetic learning services.

Evaluating AskAway Software: According to best practice, it is critical to perform ongoing evaluation of software to ensure that it continues to support institutional needs and demands. A process to evaluate the current reference software for best fit will commence in 2012. A software selection committee comprised of representatives from participating libraries will spearhead this evaluative process.

Strengthening Infrastructure: Building on the internal work that was completed in 2011, AskAway will next address the Library Commitment and Cost-sharing models for the summer term. This work will further strengthen the AskAway service infrastructure.

Partnering with other collaborative learning support services: As a highly successful example of a collaborative learning support service, AskAway will provide a model and expertise for proposed services such as WriteAway. AskAway has the potential to build synergies with other online learning services, thus supporting the entire framework of online learning in BC's post-secondary system.

BCcampus support is essential to the continued growth and development of AskAway. The ability to expand the service to meet user needs is dependent on stable support from our partners. The AskAway team looks forward to our ongoing collaboration with BCcampus as we nourish and grow this valuable service for BC post-secondary learners, educators, and researchers.



Mobile AskAway user

Such an awesome service. I am definitely recommending it. The librarian was so friendly and helpful!

- BC Institute of Technology learner

I think that this is a fantastic service and I really appreciate being able to access help (even from home), so thank you!

- University of Northern BC learner



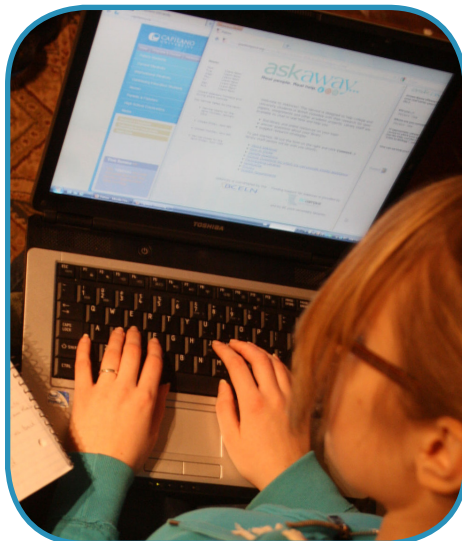
Appendices

It is a great service! I have used it once before, I find that sometimes it can take a long time to find material on my own and this way I save tons of time and I know the info is accurate! Please don't take it away!! ;)"

- Vancouver Community College Learner

This service has proven to be invaluable to this 'Mature Adult' student!! It is an excellent and instantly responsive resource and I am very appreciative of their assistance and instructions. Thank You!!!

- University of BC graduate learner



Capilano University AskAway user

I think AskAway is amazing! This is only my second time using it. I have just recently figured out about it. Especially since it helps on weekends! It's awesome. . . .I am amazed with how much they can help.

- Langara College learner

AskAway Patron Usage Over Time by Institution Fall 2007 - Fall 2011

Institution Name	Fall 2007	Winter 2008	Summer 2008	Fall 2008	Winter 2009	Summer 2009	Fall 2009	Winter 2010	Summer 2010	Fall 2010	Winter 2011	Summer 2011	Fall 2011
Alexander College	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	12	18	21	24	32	59
BC Institute of Technology	88	99	54	147	218	105	130	117	60	141	169	56	147
Camosun College	62	40	14	78	219	114	620	553	145	644	490	179	722
Capilano University	17	15	3	13	105	33	143	105	23	188	179	92	387
College of New Caledonia	36	16	2	7	10	8	17	15	2	7	5	1	6
College of the Rockies	29	20	6	51	26	0	32	10	17	62	24	15	67
Columbia Bible College	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1
Douglas College	249	243	110	585	597	256	651	783	368	913	828	342	909
Emily Carr University of Art + Design	9	8	1	6	7	7	33	37	40	100	105	17	87
Justice Institute of BC	5	11	4	3	8	8	0	3	10	16	19	9	25
Kwantlen Polytechnic University	122	95	52	105	642	331	543	557	455	687	555	485	992
Langara College	107	110	33	148	150	70	161	177	98	278	338	119	347
North Island College	95	42	6	98	107	38	105	71	26	160	116	32	167
Northern Lights College	20	16	7	25	29	5	9	31	10	22	31	5	27
Northwest Community College	34	10	0	42	37	50	77	29	11	12	11	2	4
Okanagan College	93	74	15	127	165	84	296	252	75	207	194	35	288
Quest University Canada	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	6	8	6	7	4	33
Royal Roads University	43	23	26	44	54	53	37	77	30	46	37	10	0
Selkirk College	11	10	4	25	19	24	52	23	6	38	5	6	48
Simon Fraser University	1048	1006	665	1112	1436	901	1694	1389	1095	1639	1992	1147	2233
Thompson Rivers University	49	23	14	51	96	111	260	220	67	173	147	71	133
Trinity Western University	47	45	14	22	18	99	49	9	4	12	8	6	26
University of BC	740	650	267	567	1295	627	1472	1211	674	1687	1279	682	1478
University of Northern BC	53	26	6	36	31	165	339	360	77	372	293	72	314
University of the Fraser Valley	76	101	31	130	514	137	491	378	156	577	384	162	647
University of Victoria	342	255	118	290	365	269	453	545	255	530	633	423	852
Vancouver Community College	78	107	15	24	28	13	54	39	18	86	56	14	142
Vancouver Island University	119	67	19	157	216	67	418	419	85	457	95	13	161
Yukon College	5	2	0	7	8	2	19	22	4	9	6	0	13
TOTALS	3577	3114	1486	3900	6400	3577	8155	7450	3837	9090	8029	4031	10,315

AskAway Sessions per FTE 2011

The following sessions per 1000 FTE table gives a sense of AskAway use at each institution based on population, instead of total number of questions.

Sessions per 1000 FTE in 2011

