



AskAway Chat Reference

ACTIONS & ACHIEVEMENTS 2022

Message from the Chair

AskAway continued to see much higher traffic levels in 2022 than in pre-pandemic years. Service providers responded to over 47,000 questions, a 34% increase in volume over 2019. To meet this pressing need for online student support, AskAway received one-time bridge funding from the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills. These funds enabled AskAway to bolster the service with additional provider support during peak times.

AskAway's value is evident in the consistently high levels of satisfaction reported by students. Through exit surveys, students express their deep appreciation for the assistance they receive. The positive feedback not only underscores the quality of the AskAway experience but also emphasizes the crucial role played by library staff in delivering exceptional support to students.

Thank you to AskAway participating libraries and library staff who work so hard to help students and contribute to our highly successful collaborative service.



Suzanne Rackover
Director, Library Services and Learning Commons, Langara College
AskAway Advisory Committee Chair

"The service provider was friendly and helpful. I didn't feel rushed and they took time to make sure I understood the answer to my question."

- Langara College Student

"I think this chat is perfect for real time help and I don't think anything should be changed. The person I talked to was really helpful and nice."

- Northern Lights College Student

"The library staff member that helped me did an amazing job in clarifying what I needed to know! I absolutely LOVED IT and I'm surely going to use AskAway again!!"

- Thompson Rivers University Student

"I was pleasantly surprised that an AskAway [service provider] was available on the Sunday afternoon of a long weekend. This is when we are working on our projects and it's ideal to have support available during these times. Many thanks!"

- SFU Grad Student

Who's Using AskAway?

- 46%** 1st/2nd Year Students
- 20%** Graduate/Post-Grad Students
- 14%** 3rd/4th Year Students
- 12%** Alumni/Other
- 8%** Faculty Members

Based on AskAway users that completed an exit survey.



2022 Achievements

Expanded Proactive Chat

Following on a successful pilot year of proactive chat (embedding a timed widget on library webpages that pops-up and invites visitors to chat), AskAway made proactive chat available to additional interested institutions. A total of nine institutions implemented the feature in 2022. The AskAway Administrative Centre provided support and developed Best Practices for proactive chat implementation.

Bolstered Service with Funding

AskAway received \$30,000 in bridge funding from the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills to bolster the service for the next two years. This funding comes at a crucial time as AskAway responds to increased student usage due to the COVID-19 pandemic and prevalence of online programs and classes. With the funding, AskAway was able to hire a dedicated student librarian from the UBC iSchool to staff the service at peak times and provide operational support to the Administrative Centre.

Improved Processes and Tools

AskAway implemented a number of member-focused improvements and enhancements in 2022:

- Service provider training was redeveloped in response to feedback from AskAway participants: a new asynchronous module was created to accompany live online training sessions
- With the go-ahead from local coordinators, all participating libraries were upgraded to the next generation LibraryH3lp chat box
- A self-serve model for retrieving usage statistics and session data was launched to increase transparency and enable libraries to collect the data that best suits their needs
- New promotional materials were created to help libraries raise awareness of AskAway on campus and on social media
- A small group of dedicated librarians reviewed and refreshed AskAway's Citation Best Practices, a tool used by service providers to assist students

Prepared for Action Planning

AskAway initiated an action planning process to confirm AskAway's values and set collaborative service priorities for the next two to three years. Work included conducting a collaboratively-developed environmental scan of similar Canadian collaborative chat reference services and surveying participating libraries to understand their needs and expectations for the service.

Facts & Figures

47,706

questions responded to by AskAway service providers in 2022. This is a 34% increase in traffic over the last pre-pandemic year (2019).

311

service providers from around British Columbia and the Yukon assisted AskAway users in 2022.

12 (43%)

institutions are now using proactive chat to meet their students at point of need.

95%

of AskAway users* are satisfied with their experience.

97%

of AskAway users* are likely to return to AskAway.

*Based on AskAway users that completed an exit survey.



AskAway Financials

Thanks to collaborative software licensing, staffing, administration, and governance, AskAway helped B.C. and the Yukon's post-secondary sectors avoid \$2.15 million in costs in 2022.

	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Projected
	Revenue	Revenue
Partner Library Support (Service Support Fee and Flexible Contribution)	97,873	96,113
BC ELN Contribution	10,000	10,000
Ministry Bridge Funding - Year One	n/a	15,000
Miscellaneous (Carryforward, marketing, etc.)	3,833	416
Total	111,706	121,529
	Expenses	Expenses
Staffing and Coordination Infrastructure	95,250	103,386
Administration/Communication/Governance/Marketing	595	839
Software and Technical Infrastructure	15,778	13,597
Total	111,623	117,822
Revenue - Expenses (Carryforward)	83	3,707

A Look Ahead to 2023

- AskAway will undergo a collaborative Action Planning process in 2023. Drawing on participant input through surveys, AskAway will host two facilitated action planning sessions open to participating library staff to surface key priorities for the service in the coming years.
- AskAway Advisory Committee Terms of Reference will be updated to ensure alignment with service host BC ELN and BC ELN's other service areas.
- Service support fee invoicing will be moved to ConsortiaManager to streamline processes and increase transparency.

"The service provider who helped me went above and beyond to help me out of a research rut! So amazing."

- Camosun College Student

