



ASKAWAY

Actions &
Achievements

2016



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MESSAGE

Ten years ago, the idea of a provincial collaborative chat reference service took root. After much hard work and anticipation, the Ministry of Advanced Education and the Ministry of Education jointly launched AskAway on October 17th, 2006 with 19 post-secondary libraries on board and 10,000 questions answered in the first year. Over the past decade, AskAway has grown into an award-winning service at 30 post-secondary libraries across BC, bringing over 230 staff hours per week of chat reference to 20,000 highly satisfied students and researchers each year.

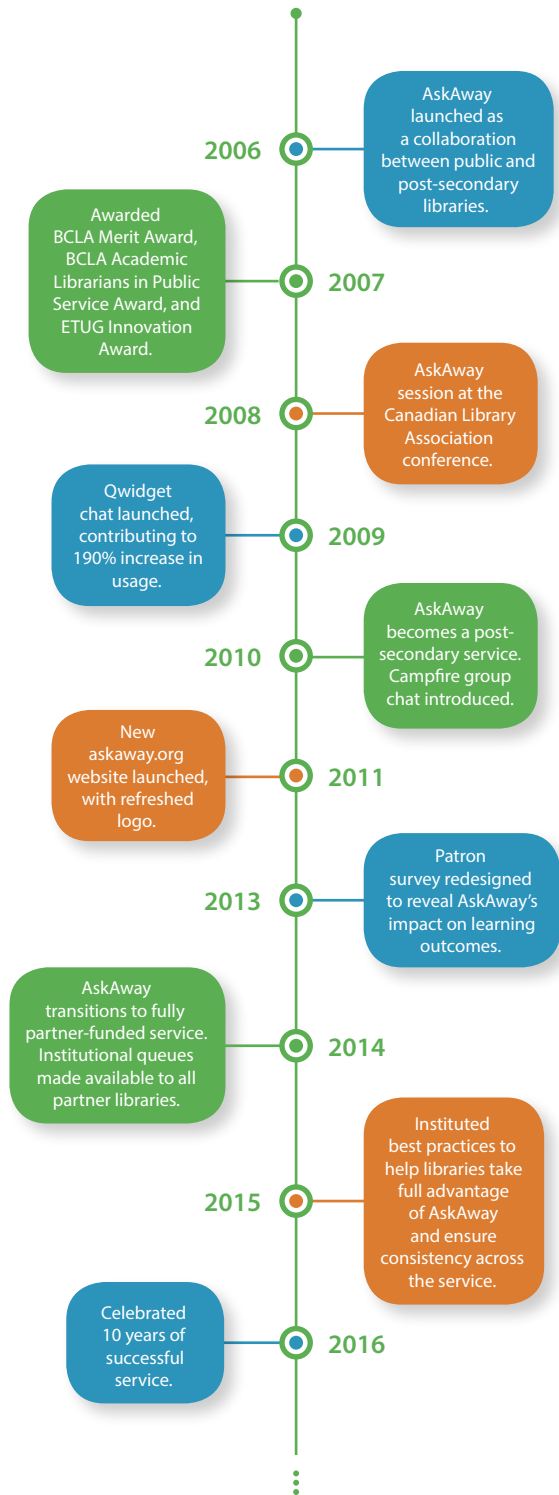
Through its growth, AskAway has weathered its share of storms. In 2010, the public library service ended after funding was withdrawn. AskAway persisted as a post-secondary service with support from BCcampus, but this funding steadily declined and was removed entirely in 2014. Partner libraries stepped up to cover the loss by increasing their contributions through funding and staff time, and AskAway soon became self-sustaining. This commitment to keeping the service alive attests to how much libraries across the province truly value AskAway.

This year, AskAwayers came together to celebrate 10 years of service at the BC Library Conference and shared the festivities with party packs sent to partner libraries outside the Lower Mainland. As AskAway reaches this milestone, the service is humming along and continues to grow in new ways.

In this year's *Actions & Achievements*, we travel through time to celebrate 10 years of AskAway, check-in with the service in 2016, and look to the future.



Elaine Fairey
AskAway Advisory Committee Chair
Simon Fraser University



ASKAWAY THEN ...

In 2006, the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Advanced Education jointly launched AskAway, capturing media attention across BC.



"September 25th, 2006 found us ready for a soft launch. Our first day got us off to a roaring start with 86 questions, and librarians from partner libraries continued to answer questions at a steady rate of 40-50 per day, 300-400 per week.

Our numbers got a boost after the official media launch on October 17th at the Libraries in Dialogue with Government Symposium in Victoria. The Minister of Advanced Education and Minister of Education were on hand to announce AskAway as a joint public and post-secondary service.

The launch generated lots of media attention, with spots in the provincial newspapers, on TV and CBC radio. Questions to AskAway spiked to 120 per day for a few days after the launch, settling back down to 60-80 questions per day for the remainder of the term."

Sunni Nishimura, BC ELN Connect, December 2006

"This information age has created a more focused, competitive world for post-secondary learners. To thrive, our students need fast access to the real research and high quality information that AskAway librarians can provide, whether they are in Fort St. John or Vancouver."

**MURRAY COELL
MINISTER OF ADVANCED EDUCATION
OCTOBER 17, 2006**



From solo to consortial chat reference

"In 2003, Douglas College started using QuestionPoint to provide chat reference service. We were only able to staff it a few hours a day – 10 hours a week with no evenings or weekends. In 2005, a provincial committee comprised of both public and post-secondary libraries formed a service we called AskAway.

The benefit of this collaborative service for Douglas College is substantial. Our students now have access to virtual reference for 67 hours a week, including weekends.

One of my favourite survey comments demonstrates that the beauty of AskAway is that a service provider from another institution can make us all look good:

"My chat name was NeedSomeHelp. When the librarian finished helping me, my name turned to DouglasCollegelsTheBest. I just wanted to thank the librarian that was helping me. You were the best."



... ASKAWAY 10 YEARS LATER

AskAwayers from across the province came together to celebrate 10 years of chat reference with cake, haikus, and tributes to this thriving service.

To honour the contributions of partner libraries and service providers over the decade, the AskAway Advisory Committee hosted a celebration at the 2016 BC Library Conference. From new AskAwayers to dedicated service providers who have been with AskAway since its inception, people came together to toast 10 years of AskAway!

Elaine Fairey, Chair of the AskAway Advisory Committee, gave a speech that reflected on the struggles and successes of the service over the years and paid tribute to the past and ongoing work of all those who make AskAway possible. AskAwayers showed their fondness for the service by signing a card and channeled their creativity by writing AskAway haikus.

Colorful party packs with AskAway swag, a gift certificate for cake, and a message from the Chair were mailed out to include more remote sites in the celebration.

“Ten years of continuing collaboration is a real achievement – both for the service itself and the people on the front lines who are able to use their considerable skills to help patrons from one another’s institutions.

And it does require tremendous skill to work with so many different kinds of patrons with different information needs, all coming from different places, often simultaneously, and still provide a level of service that constantly leaves patrons happier and more knowledgeable than when they started their chats.”

**ELAINE FAIREY
ASKAWAY ADVISORY COMMITTEE CHAIR**



**Have questions? Need help?
AskAway librarians...
Real People! Real Help!**

OCLC QUESTIONPOINT STAFF

**Citation question
High up in a tangled nest
Hear the Purdue OWL.**

ASKAWAY ADMIN CENTRE STAFF

**Away, you ask
Close, we respond
Another bridge crossed.**

YUKON COLLEGE ASKAWAYER



FOCUSING ON VALUE

AskAway delivers value to post-secondary libraries, library staff, and learners, educators, and researchers across BC...

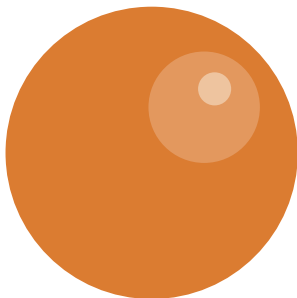


\$161,085

saved by collaboratively licensing chat reference software

200+ ASKAWAYERS

benefit from centralised expertise and active support from the Admin Centre as well as knowledge-sharing with a provincial community of service providers



In exchange for 3 to 34 hours per week of staffing, libraries provide their learning community with 234 hours of expert chat reference help

“I love this service. It is very handy. Instead of looking around on my own I have a real person I can ask for advice and bounce back ideas. I learned a lot more about the online library using AskAway.”

DOUGLAS COLLEGE UNDERGRAD STUDENT

Why did learners choose AskAway?



61% at home or off-campus



43% searching for online resources



32% prefer online services

“I LOVE THIS SERVICE!!!! I am a distance student and needed to figure out how to access a database and the librarian was able to send me a direct link. When I asked how to find it on my own the next time, I was provided another link with the best path. LOVE IT.”

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA GRAD STUDENT

92% LEARNERS

very likely or likely to return to AskAway for expert research help

What did patrons learn during their session?

where to look for information

how the library can help

how to search

The higher the number of learning outcomes, the more satisfied learners are with their chat session!

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

From in-depth reference to citation questions, AskAway connects students and faculty with friendly and skilled research help. The Administrative Centre supports and enhances the service on behalf of institutions and their staff.

Service Sustainability

- Celebrated AskAway's 10th anniversary with an in-person event at the BC Library Conference and sent party packs to partner libraries outside the Lower Mainland
- Provided training to 38 AskAway service providers via seven in-person and online sessions
- Managed AskAway's busiest summer, with 17% more questions than the previous summer

Service Enhancements

- Developed and released AskAway Advisory Committee Member Best Practices, outlining representative roles and duties
- Championed support for the AskAway Qwidget in Summon Discovery Layer search results
- Streamlined service provider accounts on the AskAway staff website, providing local coordinators more independence and keeping mailing lists current

"It is great to be able to get help with research on a Sunday evening."

Just in time help to find the materials I need for research is very important to me. The help I received tonight will save me time tomorrow, which is important when trying to keep up with research while maintaining a heavy teaching load. Thanks for the service."

THOMPSON RIVERS UNIVERSITY FACULTY

30,612 QUESTIONS
on everything from research to citations answered on AskAway

91% PATRONS
very satisfied or satisfied with their AskAway experience

38 SERVICE PROVIDERS
received training on AskAway software and best practices

"Thank you so much. I am a really nervous/anxious student when it comes to face-to-face conversing, so an online alternative helped me a lot."

**SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
UNDERGRAD STUDENT**

"My librarian was a master at APA and saved me a lot of time trying to search for the proper way to document a less common source. Thank you!"

**JUSTICE INSTITUTE OF BC
UNDERGRAD STUDENT**

GOVERNANCE & COLLABORATION

AskAway Advisory Committee

The AskAway Advisory Committee meets at a minimum once per term and reports to the BC ELN Steering Committee. Composed of representatives from a cross-section of AskAway participating institutions, the Advisory Committee reflects the diversity of BC's post-secondary libraries.

Members oversee policy development, represent the interests of their regions and institution types, carry out research to make recommendations in support of the service, and communicate regularly with colleagues on the aims and progress of AskAway.



This year, AskAway released Best Practices for Advisory Committee Members.

[Click to read the best practices on the AskAway website.](#)

AskAway Administrative Centre

AskAway runs smoothly as a collaborative service due in large part to centralised coordination and support through the Administrative Centre.

The Administrative Centre coordinates scheduling, training, marketing, and communication, supports networking among partner libraries and stakeholders, negotiates software licenses at a fair rate, provides technical support, and evaluates the service on a regular basis to anticipate and respond to trends in service usage.

“Very useful especially for international students like us who sometimes hesitate to ask a librarian in-person. The librarian helped me so well and kindly. Good luck and keep it up.”

LANGARA COLLEGE UNDERGRAD STUDENT

Advisory Committee (as of December 2016)

Elaine Fairey

Simon Fraser University
Chair

Anita Cocchia

BC ELN Executive Director

Lin Brander

BC Institute of Technology
Member at Large

Greg Currie

Selkirk College
Rural Colleges

Cameron Hoffman-McGaw

Vancouver Island University
Member at Large

Scott Marsden

Alexander College
Member at Large

Brenda Mathenia

Thompson Rivers University
Small Universities

Lisa Petrachenko

University of Victoria

James Rout

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

Debbie Schachter

Douglas College
Urban Colleges

Lea Starr

University of British Columbia

Administrative Centre

Anita Cocchia
Brandon Weigel

ON THE HORIZON



Action Planning for the Future

BC ELN's Strategic Plan 2016-21 was endorsed by the BC ELN Steering Committee in December and released to the broader community soon after. As a next step, the AskAway Advisory Committee will develop and prioritize actions to support and enhance the service in the coming year. In developing these actions, the Advisory Committee will consider AskAway's value and challenges as well as trends affecting post-secondary reference services to envision an even better AskAway.



Refreshing AskAway Coordination

After four stable years of AskAway coordination, the service is running smoothly, and now is an ideal time to transition Administrative Centre responsibilities. The transition will diversify AskAway expertise in the BC ELN office, align skills with the actions developed through strategic planning, and introduce a fresh perspective to the service.



Reviewing Communications & Technical Infrastructure

Looking to the future through strategic action planning presents a timely opportunity to review the technical and communications infrastructure that drives AskAway and its Administrative Centre. Turning attention to AskAway's website, software, and communications strategy will ensure the ongoing health and relevance of the service.

FINANCIALS

		2016/17 Projected
AskAway is funded by the BC Electronic Library Network and participating libraries.		Revenue
	Partner Library Support	84,765
	BC ELN Support	15,000
	Miscellaneous Revenue (contract hours, marketing, carryforward, etc.)	14,549
	Total	\$114,314
		Expenses
	Service Support	75,234
	10th Anniversary Event & Party Packs	4,080
	Administration / Communication / Governance	2,224
	Technical Infrastructure (platform, etc.)	23,665
Extenuating Circumstances Fund	585	
Total	\$105,788	
Revenue - Expenses		8,526

Pure white snowflakes fall
upon Burnaby Mountain
Log into Campfire.

ASKAWAY ADMIN CENTRE STAFF

Happier I am.
Now that found you I have.
Yoda AskAway.

ANONYMOUS ASKAWAYER

Cubicle solitude
broken by ringing bell
from enquiring mind.

ANONYMOUS ASKAWAYER

A first assignment
Never used the library
You may AskAway.

ASKAWAY ADMIN CENTRE STAFF

Hours pass, no response
Found the perfect article
Do you still need help?

ANONYMOUS ASKAWAYER

Bottomless black lake
This is deep business research:
Subject librarian.

ASKAWAY ADMIN CENTRE STAFF

APA format
Sorry, can't do it for you
Teaching them to fish.

ANONYMOUS ASKAWAYER

In the West or North
By sea or in wilderness
AskAway today.

OCLC QUESTIONPOINT STAFF

 askaway.org

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 778.782.7001

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