

AskMN: The Librarian Is In!

FY08 Report

AskMN: The Librarian Is In! goals are to:

- Create a cooperative network for libraries to more easily contribute and participate in an online reference service for the benefit of its communities.
- Provide a cooperative statewide digital reference service that is of benefit to all Minnesota residents allowing 24/7 access to resources and informational assistance by trained and experienced librarians.

This report summarizes who is asking questions, who is answering them, what time of day questions are being asked, the reach of our libraries to Minnesota residents, and how satisfied patrons were with AskMN: The Librarian Is In!, Minnesota's statewide digital reference service.

In FY08 - 09, we welcomed 5 libraries to AskMN: University of Minnesota – Twin Cities, Macalester College's DeWitt Library, Dakota County Library, Saint Paul Public Library, and Washington County Library. See Map 1 for a full list of participating libraries.

Lake Agassiz Regional Library joined AskMN in July 2009. We expect to see high usage from its patrons in FY10.

Libraries can chose not to participate in staffing AskMN but may still opt to have AskMN.org links on their websites thus providing Minnesota residents with another reference service at their time and place of need.

Who Asked Questions?

From the beginning of the service in April 2008 – June 2009, AskMN accepted a total of 8109 questions. Table 1 shows a breakdown of these questions. Of the 8109 total questions received, 5184 (64%) questions were from Minnesota patrons, and 2925 (36%) were questions from non-Minnesota patrons that Minnesota library staff answered for the QuestionPoint 24/7 Reference Cooperative.

AskMN participates in the 24/7 Reference Cooperative. This means that questions submitted by Minnesota residents at times when our service is not staffed by Minnesota library staff are picked up and answered by the 24/7 service. The 24/7 coverage of AskMN benefits Minnesota patrons at their point and time of need, giving them access to reference services when their libraries are typically closed. Similarly, our participating libraries answer questions for other members of the 24/7 Reference Cooperative. In subscribing to the 24/7 Reference Cooperative, we are obligated to provide reciprocal service to the Cooperative.

Table 1

Total Questions Received, April 1, 2008 – June 30, 2008

Questions received from MN patrons	455	100%
Questions received from non-MN patrons	0	0%
Total questions received from all patrons (MN and non-MN)	455	100%

Table 2 and Graph 1 show the total number of requests Minnesota patrons sent via AskMN.org and participating Minnesota libraries by queue (5184). In AskMN, patron requests are directed to one of two queues: an academic queue and a public queue.

Each participating library is given a unique online form specific to their institution type: academic or public. These two queues were created to best manage requests by experienced academic and public library staff.

There is also a statewide portal, <http://www.askmn.org/>, to assist Minnesota residents not affiliated with a participating library.

It is evident from the academic queue in Graph 1 that the majority of questions are submitted during the school year.

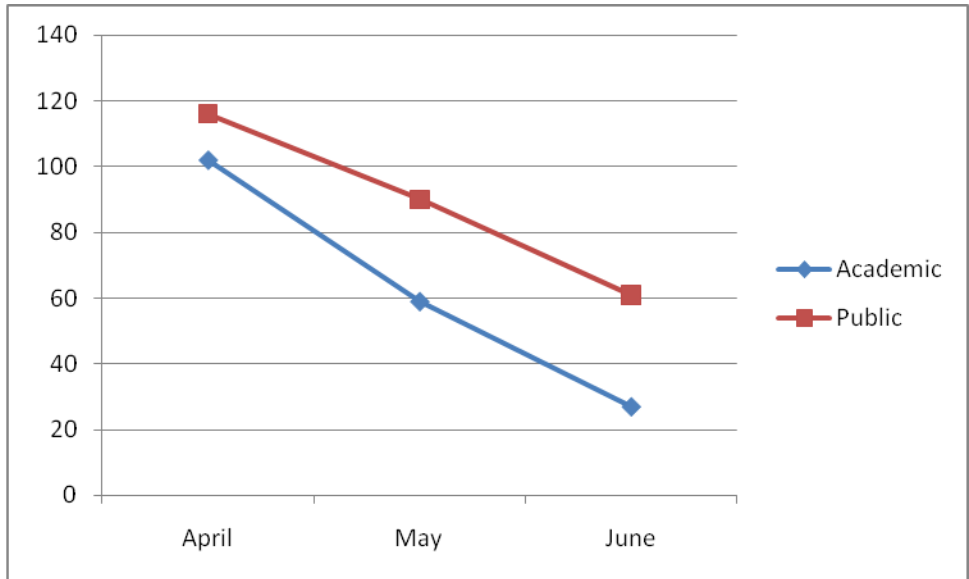
Table 2

Questions from Minnesota Patrons

MN Patron Requests	April	May	June	Total	% Total
Academic	102	59	27	188	41%
Public	116	90	61	267	59%
Total	218	149	88	455	100%

Graph 1

Questions from Minnesota Patrons



Part of our agreement with the 24/7 Reference Cooperative requires AskMN to accept questions from non-Minnesota patrons. Our participation in the 24/7 Cooperative began December 15, 2008. Therefore there is nothing to report in this section for FY08.

Questions from Non-Minnesota Patrons

None

When Did Patrons Ask Questions?

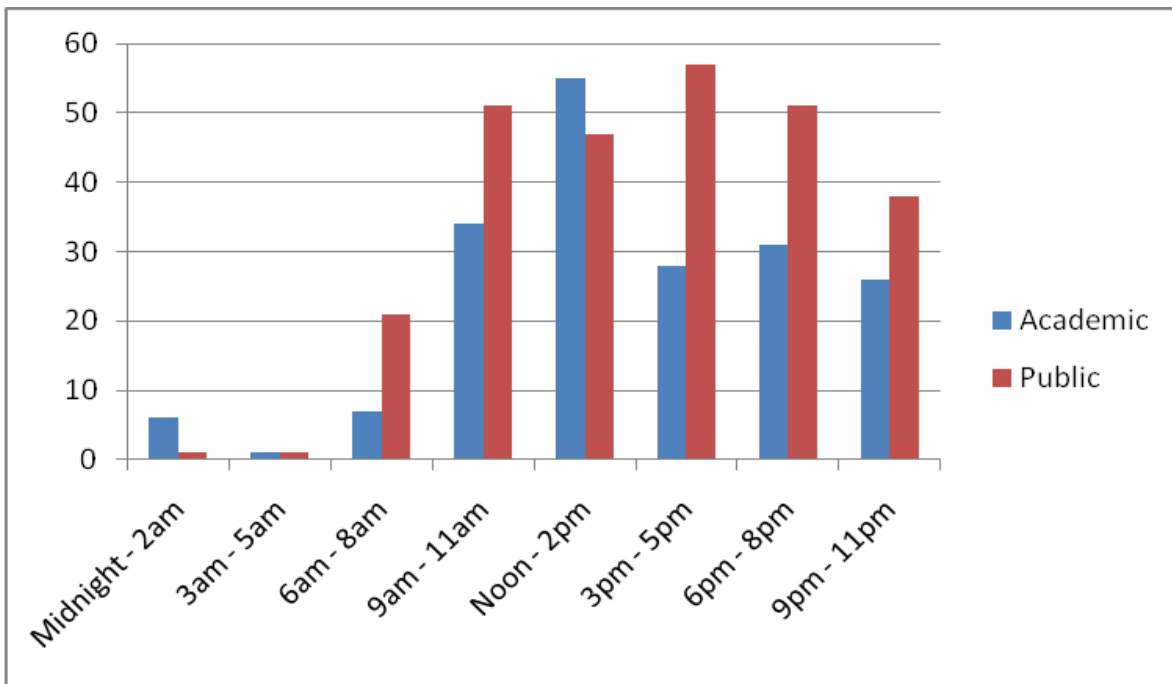
Graph 2 shows the times of day questions are submitted to AskMN by Minnesota patrons.

The highest times of use in the academic queue come between 9am – 11pm; requests peak between 6pm – 8pm. The public queue shows a similar pattern. The majority of requests come between 9am – 8pm; midday between 9am – 2pm has the most activity.

Typically, AskMN librarians staff the service between 9am – 5pm Monday through Friday. After hours coverage of 5pm – 9am weekdays and weekends are handled by the 24/7 Reference Cooperative.

Graph 2

Sessions by hour of the day



Who Answered Questions?

Table 3 shows the breakdown of who answered the 455 questions from Minnesota patrons during this period.

Questions are answered by either staff of participating Minnesota libraries or by staff of the OCLC QuestionPoint 24/7 Reference Cooperative in which AskMN participates. Minnesota library staff answered 1016 (20%) and the 24/7 Reference Cooperative answered 4168 (80%) of the questions from Minnesota patrons. AskMN is meeting its contractual obligation to OCLC and the Cooperative.

Table 3

Questions Answered for Minnesota Patrons

Answered by MN library staff	127	28%
Answered by QP 24/7 Reference Cooperative	328	72%
Total questions received from MN patrons	455	100%

Table 4 and Graph 3 show which Minnesota queue, academic or public, handled the 1016 questions received from Minnesota patrons. It is not surprising that the academic queue handled more questions from Minnesota patrons; academic libraries teach students, staff, and faculty to use the service.

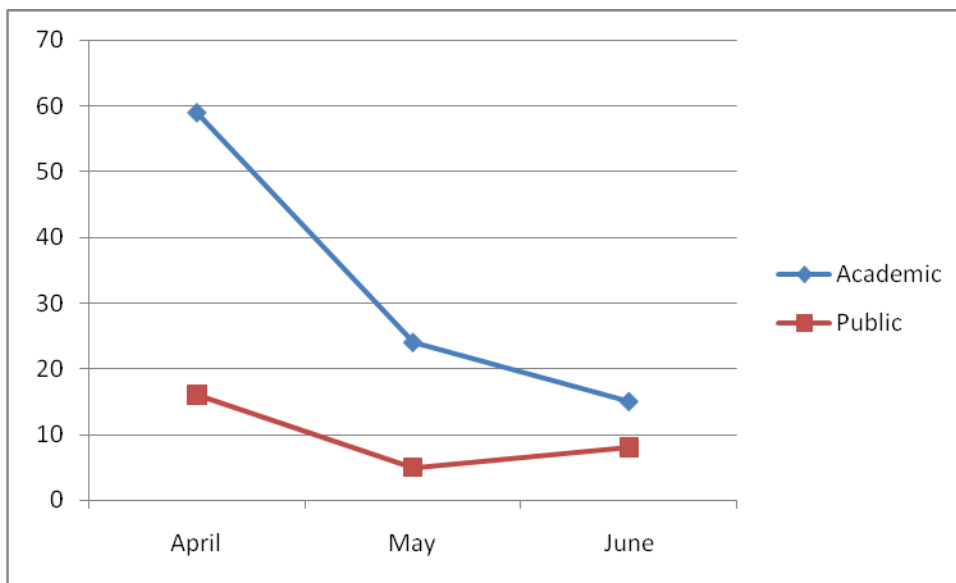
Table 4

Minnesota Questions Answered by Minnesota Library Staff

MN Questions Answered by MN Library Staff	April	May	June	Total	% Total
Academic	59	24	15	98	77%
Public	16	5	8	29	23%
Total	75	29	23	127	100%

Graph 3

Minnesota Questions Answered by Minnesota Library Staff



While 20% of questions from Minnesota patrons are answered by Minnesota library staff, Table 5 and Graph 4 show when the 24/7 Reference Cooperative stepped in and answered the other 80% (4168) of

questions from Minnesota patrons. This illustrates the vital importance of participating in the 24/7 Reference Collaborative.

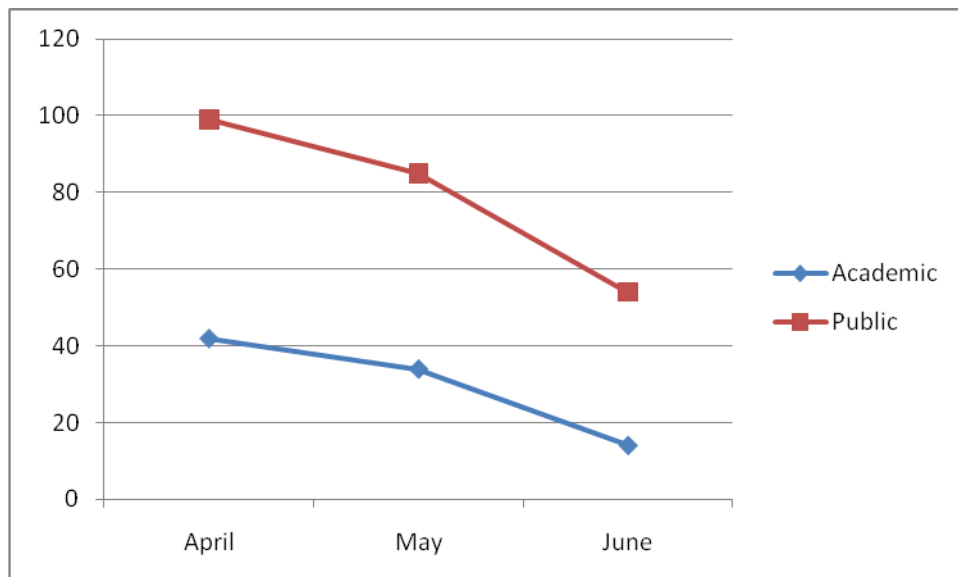
Table 5

Minnesota Questions Answered by 24/7 Reference Cooperative

MN Questions Answered by 24/7 Reference Cooperative	April	May	June	Total	% Total
Academic	42	34	14	90	27%
Public	99	85	54	238	73%
Total	141	119	68	328	100%

Graph 4

Minnesota Questions Answered by 24/7 Reference Cooperative



AskMN Activity by Queue

Tables 6 and 7 summarize the activity of the academic and public queues. 17% of Minnesota patrons who submitted questions to the academic queue were assisted by Minnesota library staff contrasted with 7% in the public queue. Furthermore, 14%, or approximately 4/5ths, were assisted by the patron's *affiliated academic library* whereas only 2%, or under a third, of questions in the public queue were answered by the patron's *own library*.

Table 6

Activity by Academic Queue

Questions received		
From MN patrons	188	100%
From non-MN patrons (24/7 Cooperative)	0	
Total questions from all patrons	188	100%
How are Minnesota patrons being assisted?		
By patron's library	77	41%
By another MN library	21	11%
By 24/7 Reference Cooperative	90	48%
Total responses provided	188	100%
How are all patrons being assisted?		
By patron's library	77	41%
By another MN library	21	11%
From/By 24/7 Reference Cooperative	90	48%
Total responses provided	188	100%

Table 7

Activity by Public Queue

Questions received		
From MN patrons	267	44%
From non-MN patrons (24/7 Cooperative)	0	56%
Total questions from all patrons	267	100%
How are Minnesota patrons being assisted?		
By patron's library	15	6%
By another MN library	14	5%
By 24/7 Reference Cooperative	238	89%
Total responses provided	267	100%
How are all patrons being assisted?		
By patron's library	15	6%
By another MN library	14	5%
From/By 24/7 Reference Cooperative	238	89%
Total responses provided	267	100%

Activity by Academic Queue

Questions received	FY10 Total		FY09 Total		FY08	
From MN patrons	7046	86%	3344	80%	188	100%
From non-MN patrons (24/7 Cooperative)	1116	14%	825	20%	0	
Total questions from all patrons	8162	100%	4169	100%	188	100%
How are Minnesota patrons being assisted?						
By patron's library	1996	25%	496	12%	77	41%
By another MN library	376	4%	156	4%	21	11%
By 24/7 Reference Cooperative	4674	57%	2692	64%	90	48%
Total responses provided	7046	86%	3344	80%	188	100%
How are all patrons being assisted?						
By patron's library	1996	25%	496	12%	77	41%
By another MN library	1492	18%	981	24%	21	11%
By 24/7 Reference Cooperative	4674	57%	2692	64%	90	48%
Total responses provided	8162	100%	4169	100%	188	100%

Activity by Public Queue

Questions received	FY10 Total		FY09 Total		FY08 Total	
From MN patrons	6174	59%	1385	40%	267	44%
From non-MN patrons (24/7 Cooperative)	4365	41%	2100	60%	0	56%
Total questions from all patrons	10539	100%	3485	100%	267	100%
How are Minnesota patrons being assisted?						
By patron's library	1040	10%	111	3%	15	6%
By another MN library	840	8%	126	4%	14	5%
By 24/7 Reference Cooperative	4294	41%	1148	33%	238	89%
Total responses provided	6174	59%	1385	40%	267	100%
How are all patrons being assisted?						
By patron's library	1040	10%	111	3%	15	6%
By another MN library	5205	49%	2226	64%	14	5%
By 24/7 Reference Cooperative	4294	41%	1148	33%	238	89%
Total responses provided	10539	100%	3485	100%	267	100%

Patron satisfaction

At the conclusion of each transaction (question/answer), Minnesota patrons are invited to complete a brief survey. Of the 455 total questions received from Minnesota patrons, 20 (4%) responded. Table 8 shows that approximately 1/3 of the responding patrons have used the AskMN service on multiple occasions. An overwhelming 80% indicated that they would use AskMN again. 75% thought the librarian was helpful although only 65% were satisfied with the answer to the question asked. There could be many reasons why this response was lower; however, patrons were not asked to provide additional comments.

Table 8

Patron Satisfaction Survey FY10

First time using service?	Yes	9	45%
	No	3	15%
	N/A	8	40%
Would you use this service again?	Yes	16	80%
	No	0	0%
	N/A	4	20%
Was the librarian helpful?	Yes	15	75%
	No	1	5%
	N/A	4	20%
Were you satisfied with the answer to your question?	Yes	13	65%
	No	2	10%
	N/A	5	25%

Patron Satisfaction Survey

	FY10 Total			FY09 Total			FY08 Total		
First time using service?	Yes	526	61%	Yes	284	70%	Yes	9	45%
	No	282	36%	No	93	23%	No	3	15%
	N/A	21	3%	N/A	29	7%	N/A	8	40%
Would you use this service again?	Yes	752	92%	Yes	364	90%	Yes	16	80%
	No	24	3%	No	10	2%	No	0	0%
	N/A	53	5%	N/A	32	8%	N/A	4	20%
Was the librarian helpful?	Yes	682	84%	Yes	344	85%	Yes	15	75%
	No	67	7%	No	23	6%	No	1	5%
	N/A	80	9%	N/A	39	9%	N/A	4	20%

Were you satisfied with the answer to your question?	Yes	619	76%	Yes	299	74%	Yes	13	65%
	No	92	11%	No	43	10%	No	2	10%
	N/A	118	13%	N/A	64	16%	N/A	5	25%

Where did questions originate within Minnesota?

Map 1, Questions from Minnesota Patrons by County, illustrates the numbers of questions submitted to AskMN by county. Those counties with libraries or library systems participating in AskMN show dramatically higher usage than do those not participating.

These numbers reflect correct/identifiable zip codes submitted via the AskMN chat form.

Contact Information

For more information about AskMN: The Librarian Is In!, please contact:

William DeJohn, Director
Minitex
University of Minnesota
15 Andersen Library
222 21st Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55455-0439
Phone: 612-624-2839
Toll-Free: 800-462-5348
Email: w-dejo@umn.edu

Carla Steinberg Pfahl, AskMN Coordinator
Minitex
University of Minnesota
15 Andersen Library
222 21st Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55455-0439
Phone: 612-626-6845
Toll-Free: 800-462-5348
Email: pfahl001@umn.edu

