Annual Report 2008-2009

ASK a Librarian

About

Ask a Librarian is a free online service that allows Floridians to chat live with a librarian for immediate assistance using authoritative sources. A trained information professional can guide you to the answers you need in minutes rather than your wasting hours navigating hundreds of unhelpful and irrelevant web sites. 103 libraries statewide collaborate to provide this service to their users and the users of other participating libraries. Ask a Librarian is managed by the Tampa Bay Library Consortium and is funded as part of the Florida Electronic Library by a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant.

Overview of 08-09

2008-2009 was a year of transition and continued growth for Ask a Librarian. On October 1, 2008, we changed software platforms from SirsiDynix's Docutek to InstantService. The new software platform offers several advantages, including: scalability, flexibility and a feature rich software that will help Florida remain on the forefront of virtual reference

Use increased 14% from 46,244 questions in 2007-08 via email and chat to 52,729 in 2008-09; five percent higher than originally anticipated. This includes 38,365 questions via live chat and 14,364 via email. Since 2002, Ask a Librarian has answered 204,212 questions for Florida residents, 143,154 via live chat.

At a glance:
Live Chat & Email Sessions 2008-09: 52,729
Live Chat: 38,365
Email: 14,364
Total Live Chat & E-mail Sessions: 204,212
Total Participating Libraries: 103
Total Trained Face to Face: 189 in 24 sessions
Total Trained Online: 196 trained in 36 classes
Hours: Sun. - Thurs. 10am- Midnight; Fri. & Sat. 10a.m.-5p.m. EST

Last year, several libraries joined Ask a Librarian including Florida A&M University, Hernando County Public Library, High Tech Institute, Marion County Public Library System, Monroe County Public Library and North Palm Beach Public Library. Moffitt Cancer Center, Morton Plant Mease Medical Library, Shriners Hospital and the medical librarian at St Petersburg College are joining Ask a Librarian as TABAMLN (Tampa Bay Medical Library Network), a specialized desk focusing on email referrals for health related questions from their users and other libraries.

Promoting Ask a Librarian

Marketing is a central focus of Ask a Librarian and is essential to our success. Without constant marketing, Florida residents would not be aware of the great service they have available at their fingertips. Ask a Librarian conducted several unique marketing campaigns focusing on different audience segments.

- We offer free marketing materials at: http://info.askalibrarian.org/ for participating libraries. These materials include bookmarks, posters, lanyards, post-its and other collateral.
- A new PSA was made available to libraries in early September. It is viewable, downloadable and can be embedded on any web site from: http://vimeo.com/6483805
- On February 20, 2009, librarians all over Florida celebrated the first ever Ask a Librarian Day, an event which kicked off a longer word-of-mouth marketing (WOMM) campaign.   Librarians donned t-shirts (donated by Gale), and distributed stickers and Ask a Librarian business cards to colleagues and customers with the Ask a Librarian name and logo to start a conversation about Ask a Librarian.
  http://info.askalibrarian.org/aal_day.asp
- For the second year, Ask a Librarian held **The Director's Chair**, a contest in which Florida high school students created their own 30-second Ask a Librarian commercials. We received 28 entries and over 1,200 Floridians voted for their favorite video to determine the winner. Year 3 is currently underway.
  www.askalibrarian.org/directorschair for details.

Widgets and Beyond

Ask a Librarian actively worked with libraries to get the Ask a Librarian logo a more prominent location on their web sites. Experience has shown that links on front pages of websites, in catalogs, and databases directly correlate with higher use. Custom widgets are available for libraries using Ask a Librarian. Widgets can vary from embedded buttons to Meebo-like chat boxes embedded within a web page to dynamic buttons. For examples of widgets and more information on how to get one for your library, visit http://info.askalibrarian.org/toolbox/widgets.asp.

WOMM Campaign: What everyone in your library should know about Ask a Librarian:

- If you ever need help when you're not in our library, visit askalibrarian.org (or find the link on our library's website).
- Ask a Librarian is a website where you can go to get your questions answered by a real librarian.
- Ask a Librarian is open until midnight Sunday through Thursday and until 5 p.m. Friday and Saturday.
- You can use Ask a Librarian for free.
- If Ask a Librarian isn't open for chat, you can always email your question to us, and we'll get back to you within 24 hours.

Provide roving reference on your website with Ask a Librarian's InstantInvite feature. In 2009-10, libraries will be able to add proactive chat to their web pages. With criteria set up by each library, an invitation to chat will appear for the user. InstantInvite is a great addition to login pages, resources pages and other parts of your web page where users need assistance.

Mentoring

Launched in October 2009, the new mentoring program matches those new to Ask a Librarian with seasoned virtual librarians. Mentors help newcomers in applying their knowledge and skills in a myriad of ways, from live, one-on-one guidance during actual patron chats to anytime-emails of reassurance or feedback and support. Email Traci Avet, avett@tblc.org for more information on the program.

Training

Ask a Librarian has more training options than ever before. We offer full-day face to face training for those new to Ask a Librarian. Supplemental online training on the service's options and the skills needed to be a successful digital librarian are regularly offered. Trainings are posted to the AskRef list and listed at, www.tblc.org/training.   Additionally, online tutorials are available in the Ask a Librarian Toolbox and a bi-weekly newsletter, TGIF is available to all participants through the AskRef list.

Quality Assurance Workgroup and the Exemplary Reference Awards

The Quality Assurance Workgroup is an integral part of our success. This workgroup, made up of members from participating libraries, works with the Virtual Reference Manager and Virtual Reference Coordinator to ensure the highest level of customer service and to award monthly 'Exemplary Reference Awards' in three categories: Brief Chat, Detailed Chat and Teaching Chat. The Detailed Chat Award is accompanied by a $20 gift card to Amazon.com. These awards turn the evaluation into a good natured competition and the exemplary sessions are used as training tools.

The workgroup members are Pat Barbier, St. Petersburg College Library (Co-Chair) · Joyce Ward, Winter Park Public Library (Co-Chair) · Cindy Dorfeld Bruckman, Alachua County Library District · Pamela Herring, Osceola Library System · Laurie Hime, Miami Dade College · Courtney Moore, Winter Park Public Library · George Pearson, Florida International University · Meredith Semones, University of Central Florida · Marcia Stepanek, Citrus County Library System · Andy Todd, BCC/UCF Joint Use library in Cocoa.

Exemplary Award Winners: Detailed Chat Awards: Katie Tyler, Winter Park Public Library · Laura Cifelli, Lee County Public Library · Brian Crowell, Goldstein Library (FSU) · Mindy Rose, Palm Beach County Libraries · Anne Robert, Jacksonville Public Library · Lynn McNeal, Citrus County Libraries · Regina Seguin, Valencia Community College · Debra Bogart, Keiser University · Paul Wetmore, Tampa Hillsborough Public Library System · Jennifer Kepple, Ft. Walton Public Beach Public Library · Kira Smith, Intern · Brief Chat Awards: Susan Smith, Hodges University · Nola Pettit, University of Central Florida · Shelly Mudgett, Tallahassee Community College · Melinda Gottesman, University of Central Florida · Jose Baca, University of Florida · Lori Hansen, Lee County Library System · Ellen Book, Miami Dade Public Library System · Jaime Goldman, Intern · Geraldine Collins, Florida Gulf Coast University · Charlyn Hill, Citrus County Public Library · Matthew Moyer, Jacksonville Public Library · Teaching Chat Awards: Susan Livingston, South Florida Community College · Ana Lopez, Pasco Hernando Community College · Merrie Davidson, University of Florida · Margaret Wells, Goldstein Library (FSU) · Donna Kelly, St. Petersburg College · Monica Haddad, Nova Southeastern University · Courtney Moore, Winter Park Public Library · Laurie Bates, Sarasota County · Stacy Allsop, Nova Southeastern University · Lora Glass, Niceville Public Library · Katie Tyler, Winter Park Public Library.

Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee consists of representatives from different size, location and types of libraries. The Committee met via phone and email during the year.   The Advisory Committee worked with AAL staff this year to update and revise the Policies and Procedures Manual. The 2008-09 members are: Sally Bissell, Lee County Library System · John D. "Danny" Hales, Jr., Florida Library Network Council · Representative/Suwannee River Regional Library · Lucy Harrison, College Center for Library Automation · Dan Lhotka, State Library Liaison · Dani Lichtenberg, Palm Beach County Library System · Juan Lopez, Lake County Library System · Chad Mairn, St. Petersburg College · Tina Peak, Lake Wales Public Library · Jana Ronan, University of Florida · Tina Russo, Tampa Hillsborough Public Library System · Michael Austin Shell, Jacksonville Public Library · Jill Simser, Brevard Community College · Suzette D. Spencer, Broward College · Ken Venet, Barry University · Joyce Ward, Winter Park Public Library · Susan Weiss, Florida International University.

Top 10 Academic Libraries
University Of Central Florida
University Of Florida
St Petersburg College
Nova Southeastern University
Miami Dade College
Florida Community College- Jacksonville
Valencia Community College
Palm Beach Community College
State College of Fl, Manatee-Sarasota
Edison Community College

Top 10 Public and Special Libraries
Broward County Library
Tampa-Hillsborough County Public
Miami-Dade Public Library
Sarasota County Library System
Jacksonville Public Library
State Library Of Florida
Volusia County Public Library
Lee County Library System
West Palm Beach Public Library
Collier County Public Library

Top 10 in Growth from 07-08 to 08-09
University Of Central Florida
Sanibel Public Library
Keiser University
Hialeah Public Libraries
University Of Florida
Saint Leo University
Hodges University
Sarasota County Library System
Fort Walton Beach Library
Palm Beach County School District

Don't see your library on any of these lists?

LINK LOCATION MATTERS! Obvious links (especially our widget or logo) on your homepage and throughout your website directly correlate with higher use in live sessions and email use.

What's next for Ask a Librarian?

In 2009-2010, Ask a Librarian plans on expanding even further with the following enhancements:
- InstantInvite, or proactive chat will give you the ability to offer roving reference on your website.
- Integrated SMS (text messaging) for users to ask questions via their cell phone
- Spanish interface for email services.

ASK a Librarian

Your Library's participation and support are vital! As we continue to grow and serve more customers from each library, staff time provided by each library becomes more important. The hours given to the statewide service by make the collaborative service possible. Because of the hours your library contributes, we are able to give offer 84 hours of service throughout the year.

Keep up with Ask a Librarian at: http://www.tblc.org/askalibrarianblog or our electronic mailing list	Mark your calendars! The Ask a Librarian User Group Meeting is April 7th @ 1:30 at the Annual FLA Conference	Questions or Comments contact: Diana Silveira, Virtual Reference Manager 813-622-8252 ext 234 · sachsd@tblc.org

Alachua County Library District · American InterContinental University · Barry University · Bartow Public Library · Bay County Public Library/Northwest Regional · Bethune Cookman · Brevard Community College · Brevard County Libraries · Broward College · Broward County Library · Bruton Memorial Library (Plant City) · Central Florida Community College · Charlotte County Library System · Chipola College · Citrus County Library System · Collier County Public Library · Daytona State College · Delray Beach Public Library · Dunedin Public Library · East Lake Community Library · Edison State College · Everest University · Everglades University · Florida A&M University · Florida State College at Jacksonville · Florida Gulf Coast University Library · Florida International University · Florida Keys Community College · Florida Memorial University · Florida Virtual School · Fort Walton Beach Library · Goldstein Library (FSU) · Gulf Coast Community College · Gulfport Public Library · Hernando County Public Library · Hialeah Public Libraries · High Tech Institute · Hillsborough Community College · Hodges University · Indian River State College · Jacksonville Public Library · John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art · Keiser University Library · Lake City Community College · Lake County Library System · Lake Sumter Community College · Lake Wales Public Library · Lake Worth Public Library · Largo Library · Lee County Library System · Leroy Collins Leon County Public Library · Maitland Public Library · Manatee County Public Library · Marion County Public Library System · Martin County Library System · Miami Dade College · Miami Dade Public Library · Moffitt Cancer Center · Monroe County Public Library · Morton Plant Mease Medical Library · Nassau County Public Library System · Niceville Public Library · North Florida Community College · North Miami Public Library · North Palm Beach Public Library · Northwest Florida State College · Nova Southeastern University · Orange County Public Library · Osceola Library System · Palm Beach Atlantic University · Palm Beach Community College · Palm Beach County Library System · Palm Harbor Library · Parkland Library · Pasco - Hernando Community College · Pasco County Library System · Pensacola Junior College · Pinellas Park Public Library · Polk State College · Saint Leo University, Cannon Memorial Library · Sanibel Public Library · Santa Fe College · Sarasota County Library System · School District of Palm Beach County · Seminole State College of Florida · Shriners Hospital for Children Professional Library · South Florida Community College · Southeastern University · St Johns County Public Library System · St Johns River Community College · St Lucie County Library System · St Petersburg College · St Petersburg Public Library · State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota · State Library of Florida · Suwannee River Regional Library · Tallahassee Community College · Tampa Hillsborough Public Library · University of Central Florida · University of Florida, George A Smathers Libraries · University of Tampa, McDonald Kelce Library · Valencia Community College · Volusia County Public Library · Warner University · West Palm Beach Public Library · Wilderness Coast Public Libraries · Winter Park Public Library