

# Offsite reference services at the State Library

## Presentation to CRIG

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# Today's presentation

Three aspects of Library's service to offsite clients

- Email reference service
- RefSupport for public libraries
- AskNow! chat reference



# Email reference service

- Began in 1999
- Single email address:  
[info@slv.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@slv.vic.gov.au)
- Web form on SLV website

# Email reference service

State Library of Victoria: Ask a Librarian Email reference service - Microsoft Internet Explorer


File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Back Forward Stop Home Search Favorites History Print W

Address [http://www.statelibrary.vic.gov.au/slv/inquiry\\_service/email.htm](http://www.statelibrary.vic.gov.au/slv/inquiry_service/email.htm) Go Links

## Ask-A-Librarian

Email reference service



When contacting us by email please include:


- **Your phone number** - for a speedy response, or if we need more detail to answer your inquiry
- **Your postal address** - we may need to post information to you
- **The purpose of your inquiry** - e.g. journal article, your thesis, your own research
- **What you have looked at already** - e.g. books, journals etc.

All text boxes marked with a \* must be completed.

Title

\* **First name:**

\* **Surname:**



Start My Computer A:\ Microsoft Po... State Libra... Internet 2:25

# Email reference service

- All web feedback and tech. problems forms all feed into [info@slv.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@slv.vic.gov.au)
- Mailbox checked 2 or 3 times per day by rostered librarians
- Ready ref inquiries acquitted at that point



# Email reference service

- Specialist/extended inquiries routed to subject specialists or appropriate collections staff
- Inquiries automatically sent to inquiry registration and tracking database



# Email reference service

- 10 working day turnaround
- 2 hours maximum research per enquiry
- Referral to Express Information if required

# Email reference service

- 2,600 inquiries by email in 2003-2004
- 25% acquitted immediately
- 75% deferred
- Compared with 33,436 telephone inquiries





# RefSupport

- Extended reference inquiry service for Victorian public libraries
- Replaced the VISION service from July 2003
- Follow-up inquiries that are beyond the referring library's resources



# RefSupport

- Inquiries received via Web form or fax
- Web form on Victoria's Virtual Libraries  
[www.libraries.vic.gov.au](http://www.libraries.vic.gov.au)
- 5 working day turnaround
- 2 hours maximum research per inquiry
- 2/3 inquiries spent up to 1 hour



# RefSupport

- Up to 20 pages of information provided
- Diverse range of topics
- Popular topics 2003-2004:
  - 35% Australiana
  - 29% humanities
  - 14% science/technology



# AskNow!

What is AskNow! ?

- AskNow! is a collaborative chat reference service
- Participating libraries – State, National & Territory libraries
- In Victoria – SLV & public library partners



# AskNow!

- SLV partners

Yarra Melbourne Regional Library

Yarra Plenty Regional Library

Monash Public Library Service

# AskNow!

## Features

- Uses web contact software
- Online chat conversation
- Ability to “push” web pages
- Co-browsing
- Transcript of session sent automatically to client’s email at end session



# AskNow!

- Initiative of Council of Australian State Libraries
- Pilot service “live” August 2002
- Recently approved business plan to June 2006




Ask-A-Librarian - Microsoft Internet Explorer

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# Ask-A-Librarian



State Library  
of Victoria

## Information and research service options

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**Ask Now!**  
Talk to a librarian  
Try our live, online information service - Answers from librarians Australia wide 9am to 7pm Monday to Friday.

**Email** your questions  
Ask a reference or research question using our Webform.

**Phone** your questions  
Call us for quick advice on 8664 7002 during Library [opening hours](#).

**Write** your questions  
Address your questions to: Information Services Division, State Library of Victoria, 328 Swanston Street, Melbourne, 3000

Done Internet

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# AskNow!

<http://www.asknow.gov.au>



State Library  
of Victoria

Customer Entry - Microsoft Internet Explorer provided by National Library Australia

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help Links »

A pilot project of the national, state and territory libraries of Australia

**About AskNow!**

**Contact Us**

**Privacy**

**Ask Now!**  
online answers Australia-wide

an online interactive library visit

an online interactive library visit

Who will answer your question?

When is the service available?

How does it work?

Who can use the service?

Do we keep any information about you?

How can you help us?



**Welcome to AskNow!**  
Enter the following and click on Connect

Name (compulsory)

Email Address

PostCode

Question:(compulsory)

Connect  Exit 

Don't try to print, bookmark or refresh your screen during the session or your connection will be lost. Click on the Exit X when you've finished your session

Applet started

Unknown Zone (Mixed)



# AskNow!

- Weekdays 9am to 7pm AEST by 3 “virtual” librarians
- 35,390 inquiries in 2003-2004
- Over 4,000 quns p. mth in peak (approx. 200 per day)
- Estimated SLV and public library partners contribution 5,900



# AskNow!

- SLV+ contribution 24 hours per wk
- Ready reference (46%)
- Complex reference (41%)
- 58% responses provided answers from Internet



# AskNow!

## Online exit survey

- 7 in 10 clients rate service as excellent or very good
- 9 in 10 clients indicate would use service again



# AskNow!

## Client profile

- Most users likely to be:
  - under 24 (49%)
  - from NSW (36%) or Vic (22%)
  - from Sydney & Melbourne, followed  
by regional NSW



# AskNow!

- 70% from metropolitan areas
- 30% from regional areas

# AskNow!

## Observations/challenges

- Confusion over shared nature of service
- Defining the real need – reference interview
- Consistency / standards





# AskNow!

## Observations/challenges cont.

- Lack of chat etiquette in some cases
- Students heavy users of the service
- Managing expectations



# AskNow!

## Observations/challenges cont.

- Software / Web technology sometimes lets us down



# AskNow!

## Feedback

- This is a great tool, especially if you live in regional areas (16-24)
- The person who helped me (X) was very polite and helped a lot. I think she should get a pay rise or a bigger computer or something (16-24)

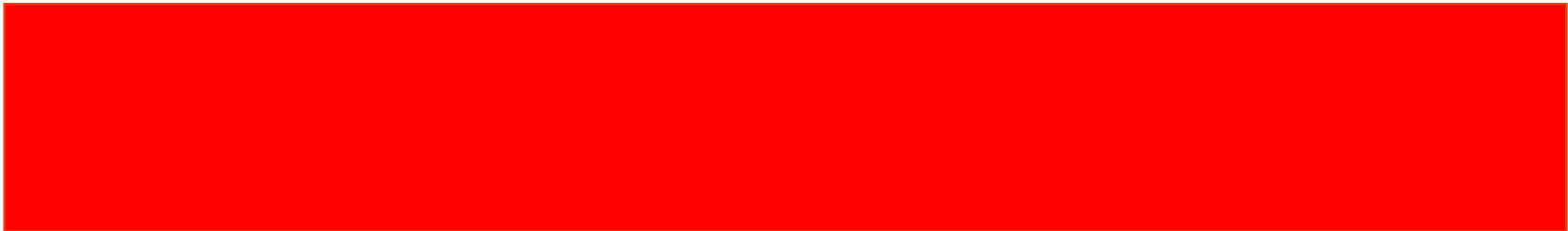


# AskNow!

## Feedback

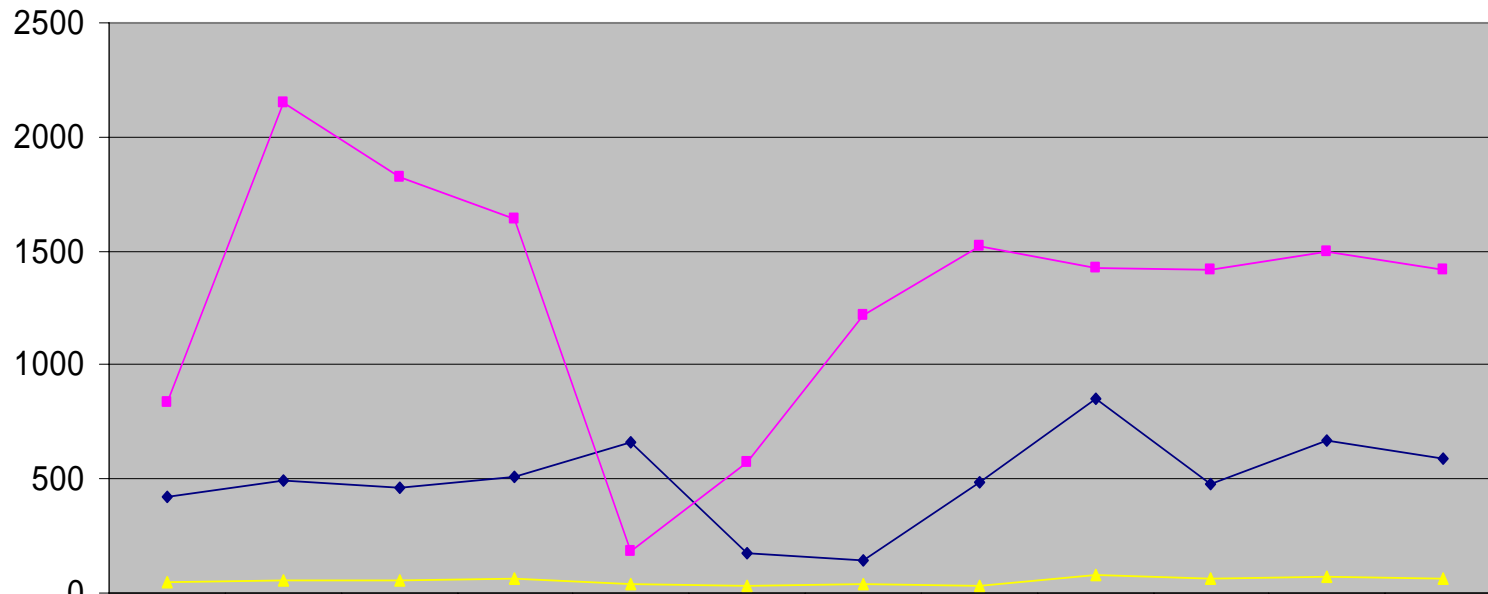
- I GOT NO ANSWERS (U16)





### Immediate Inquiries 2003/2004

◆ AskNow!    ■ Telephone    ▲ Email



	July	August	Sept	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
◆ AskNow!	423	490	459	511	662	173	140	484	850	481	666	589
■ Telephone	834	2146	1826	1639	185	572	1215	1517	1428	1420	1495	1421
▲ Email	51	54	53	65	41	29	38	34	76	61	75	65

