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

State Library of Victoria

Email reference service

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

Email reference service

Email reference service

- All web feedback and tech. problems forms all feed into 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

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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

- 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

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AskNow!

- SLV partners

    Yarra Melbourne Regional Library

    Yarra Plenty Regional Library

    Monash Public Library Service

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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

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AskNow!

- Initiative of Council of Australian State Libraries

- Pilot service "live" August 2002

- Recently approved business plan to June 2006

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AskNow!

http://www.asknow.gov.au

File   Edit   View   Favorites   Tools   Help

Links »

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

Welcome to AskNow!
Enter the following and click on Connect

About AskNow!

Contact Us

Privacy

Ask Now!
online answers Australia-wide

an online interactive library visit

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?

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

Name *(compulsory)*

Email Address

PostCode

Question:*(compulsory)*

Connect →   Exit **X**

Applet started

Unknown Zone (Mixed)

State Library of Victoria

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

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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

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- 70% from metropolitan areas

- 30% from regional areas

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<u>Observations/challenges</u>

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

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<u>Observations/challenges cont.</u>

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

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Observations/challenges cont.

- Software / Web technology sometimes lets us down

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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)
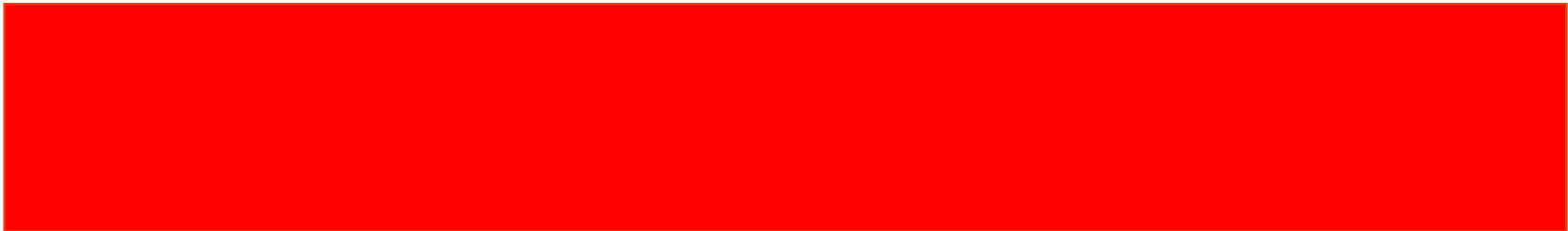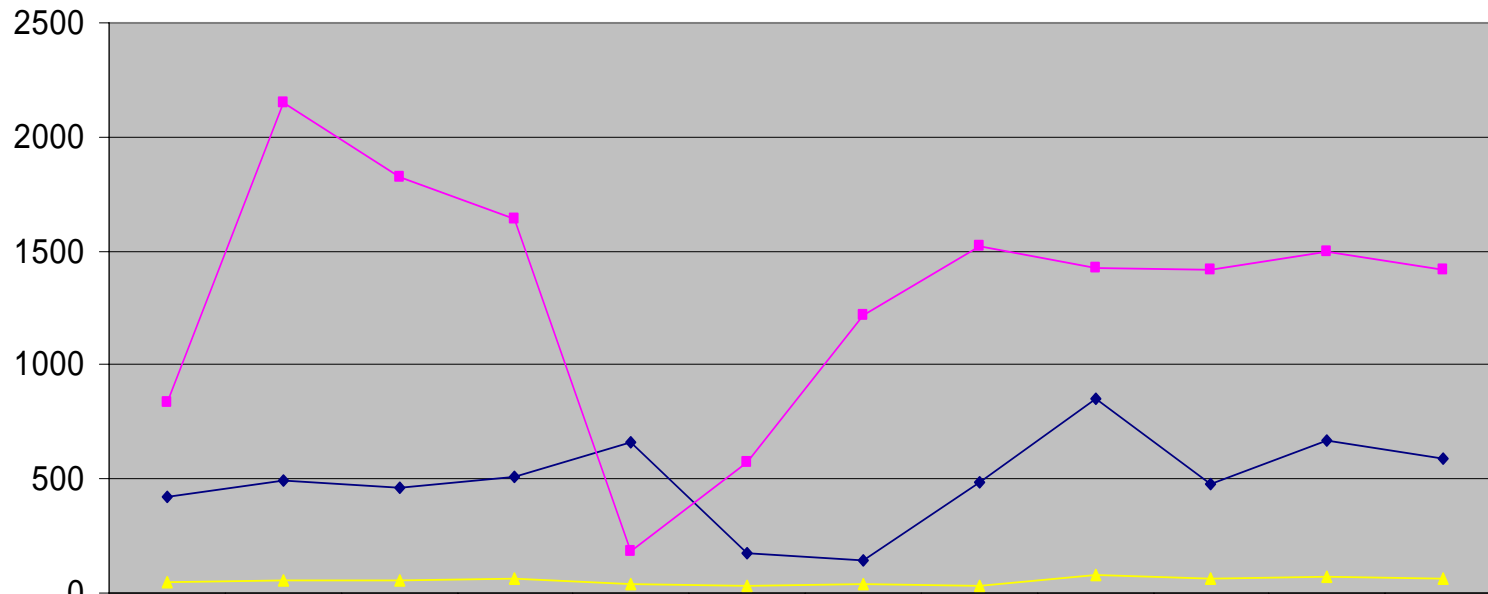
AskNow!

Feedback

- I GOT NO ANSWERS (U16)

Immediate Inquiries
2003/2004

	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