

AskMN: The Librarian Is In!

FY10 Report

(July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010)

Carla Steinberg Pfahl
Dana Kocienda

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 FY10 (July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010) 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 FY10, Lake Agassiz Regional Library became a participating member of the AskMN public queue providing 24/7 online reference service to seven counties in the northwest section of Minnesota. In FY08/09 (April 2008 – June 2009), AskMN received 9 questions from users with verified zip codes in three of the seven counties. In contrast, AskMN received 63 requests from six of the seven counties in FY10. In all, AskMN was used by residents in 82 counties in FY10, up from 66 counties in FY08/09. (Minnesota has 87 counties.)

FY10 also saw AskMN receive and surpass its 10,000th question. Requests from FY10 were 131% higher than in FY08/09. Minnesota librarians answered 76% more questions from Minnesota patrons in FY10. Patron satisfaction of the service also grew from 73% to 76%, and, 36% of patrons were repeat users, up from 22% in FY08/09.

Libraries can choose 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 point of need.

Who Asked Questions?

AskMN accepted a total of 18,701 questions in FY10. Table 1 and Chart 1 show the total number of requests by fiscal year. Of the 18,701 total questions received in FY10, 13,220 (71%) questions were

from Minnesota patrons. That is up from 5,184 in FY08/09, a 155% increase in questions from Minnesota patrons. AskMN accepted 5,481 (29%) questions from non-Minnesota patrons that Minnesota library staff answered on behalf of the QuestionPoint 24/7 Reference Cooperative in FY10.

While questions from MN Patrons have been accepted and answered by 24/7, AskMN did not begin accepting and answering questions from non-Minnesota patrons in the 24/7 Reference Cooperative until December 2008. 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 by Fiscal Year

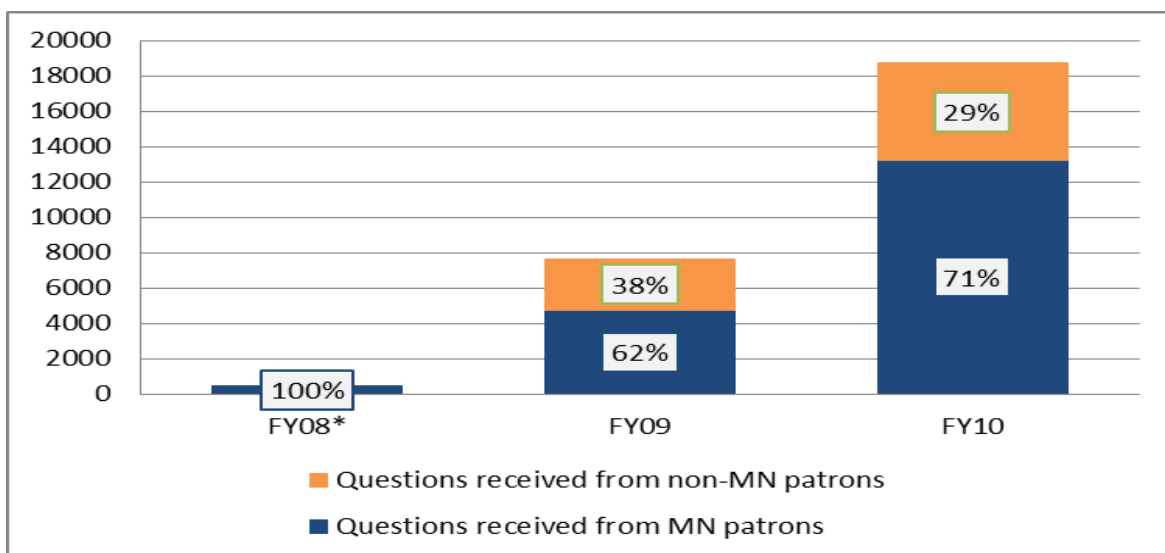
	FY08*		FY09		FY10	
Questions received from MN patrons	455	100%	4,729	62%	13,220	71%
Questions received from non-MN patrons	0**	0%	2,925	38%	5,481	29%
Total questions received from all patrons (MN and non-Minnesota)	455	100%	7,654	100%	18,701	100%

*Partial year data, April – June 2009

**AskMn did not begin accepting questions from non-Minnesota patrons until December 2008

Chart 1

Total Questions Received by Fiscal Year



***Partial year data, April – June 2009**

Table 2 and Graph 1 show the total number of requests Minnesota patrons sent via AskMN.org and participating Minnesota libraries by queue (13,220) in FY10. For AskMN, patron requests are directed into 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.

For the academic queue, the highest activity period is the second quarter, October – December 2009. This coincides with the return of students. For the public queue, the highest activity period is the third quarter, January – March 2010. This is reflected by the promotion of AskMN to the K12 community in the Fall and Winter (2009-2010) and student History Day projects.

Table 2

Questions from Minnesota Patrons, FY10

MN Patron Requests	Jul - Sep 09	Oct - Dec 09	Jan - Mar 10	Apr - Jun 10	Total	% Total
Academic	1,107	2,834	1,818	1,287	7,046	53%
Public	475	818	2,902	1,979	6,174	47%
Total	1,582	3,652	4,720	3,266	13,220	100%

Graph 1

Questions from Minnesota Patrons, FY10

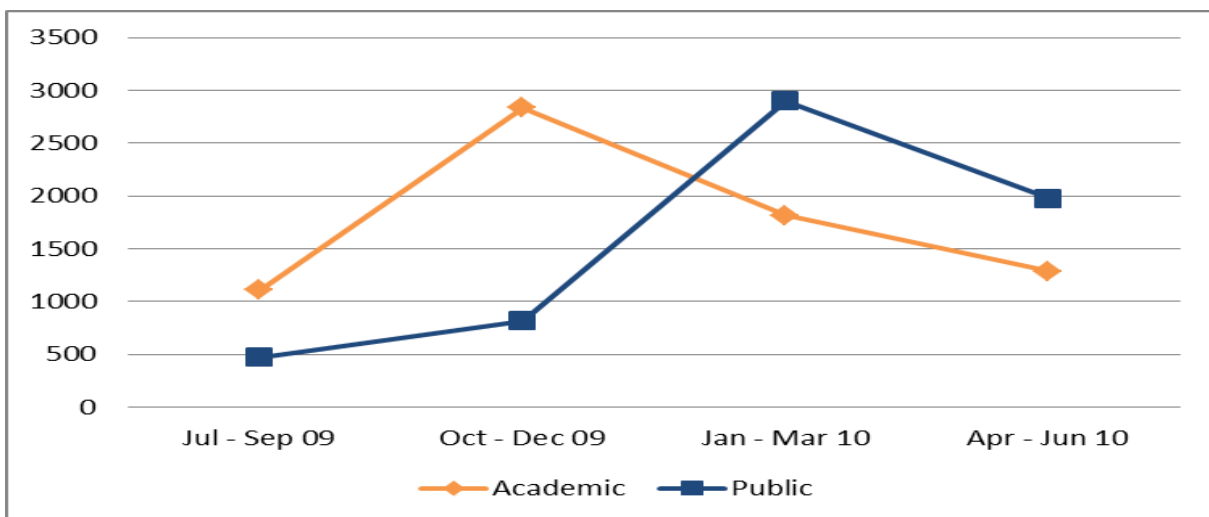
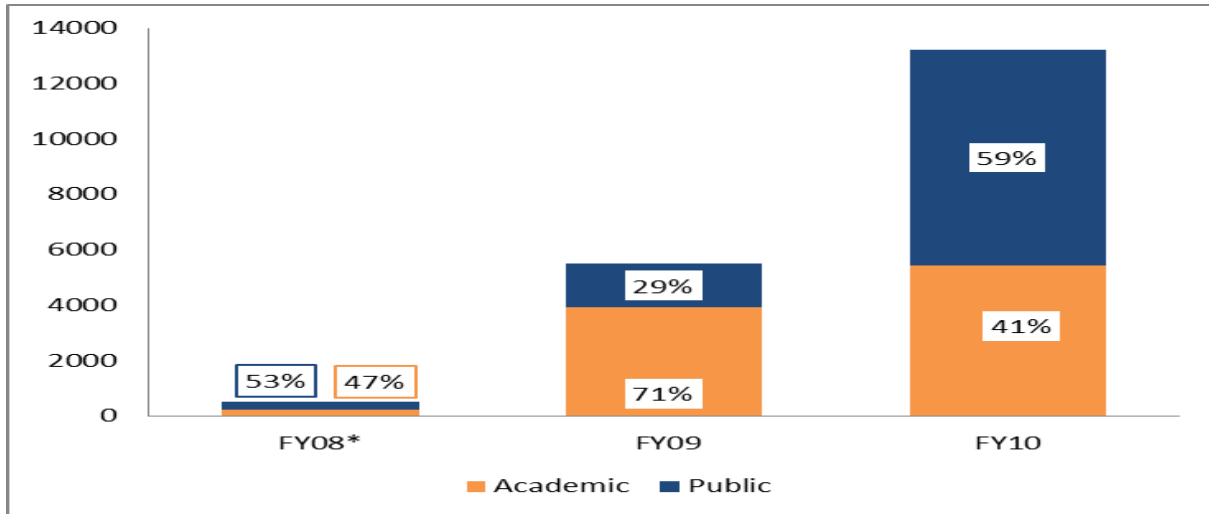


Chart 2 shows the total number of requests per fiscal year. Public libraries saw the most growth in patron requests in FY10.

Chart 2

Questions from Minnesota Patrons by Fiscal Year



*Partial year data, April – June 2009

Part of our agreement with the 24/7 Reference Cooperative requires AskMN to accept questions from non-Minnesota patrons. Table 3 and Graph 3 show the number of questions Minnesota librarians accepted from patrons in the United States as well as the United Kingdom in FY10, contributing to the overall activity of the 24/7 Reference Cooperative and fulfilling our contractual requirement. Questions are directed into one of the two AskMN queues, academic or public.

Table 3

Questions from Non-Minnesota Patrons, FY10

Non-MN Patron Requests	Jul - Sep 09	Oct - Dec 09	Jan - Mar 10	Apr - Jun 10	Total	% Total
Academic	339	293	266	218	1,116	20%
Public	853	1,216	1,207	1,089	4,365	80%
Total	1,192	1,509	1,473	1,307	5,481	100%

Graph 2

Questions from Non-Minnesota Patrons, FY10

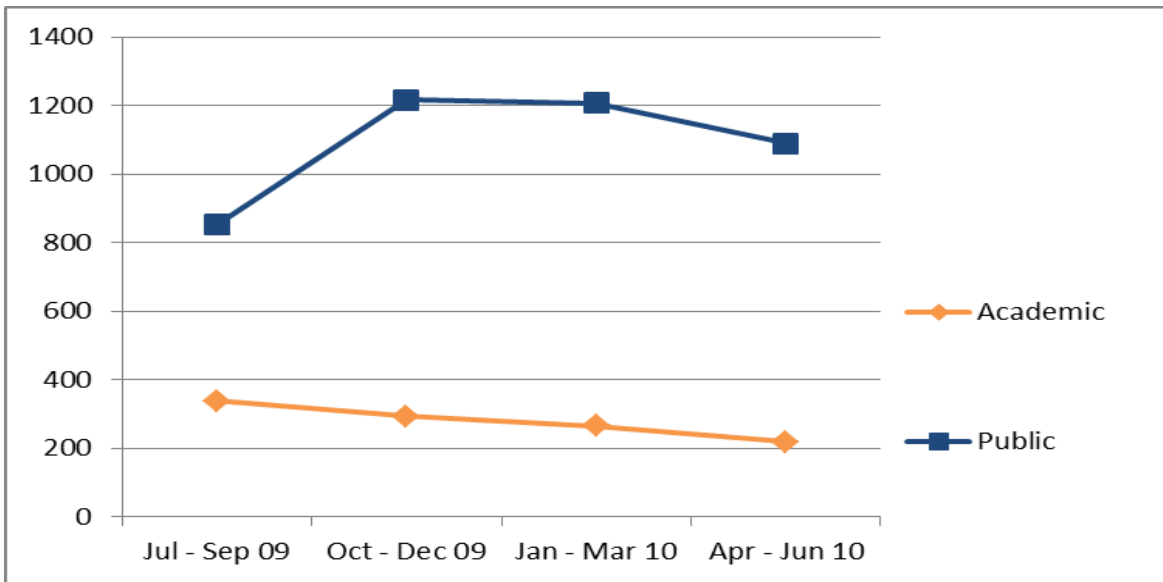
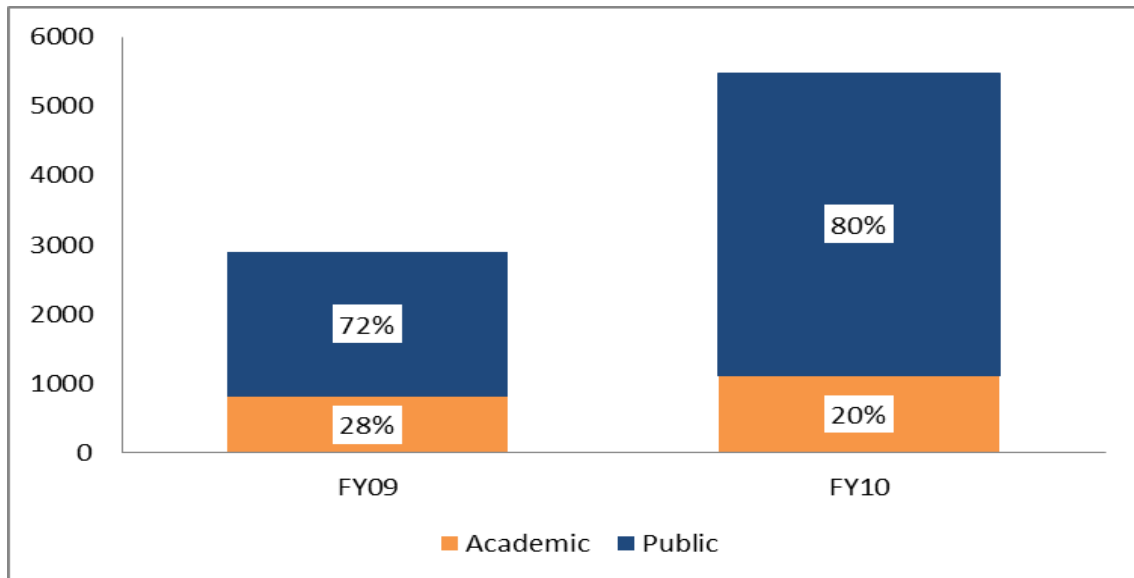


Chart 3 shows the total number of requests per fiscal year. The public queue saw a higher number of requests accepted by Minnesota librarians than the academic queue. The public queue saw an 8% increase in questions from non-Minnesota patrons in FY10. FY08 is not included as AskMN did not begin responding to requests outside MN through the 24/7 Reference Cooperative until December 2008 (FY09).

Chart 3

Questions from Non-Minnesota Patrons by Fiscal Year



When Did Patrons Ask Questions?

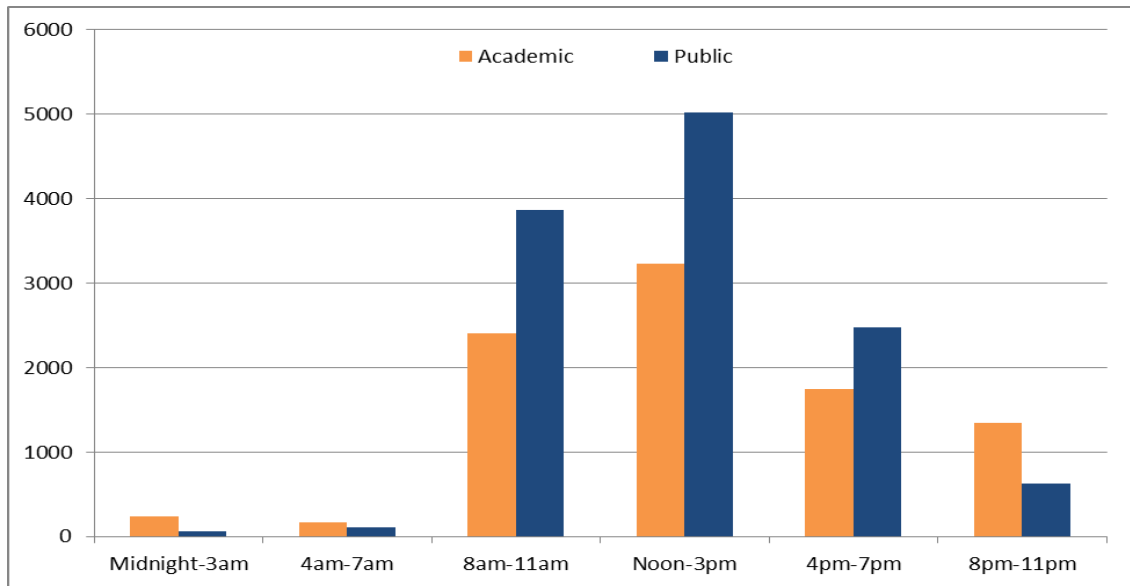
Graph 3 shows the times of day questions were submitted to AskMN by Minnesota patrons in FY10.

The highest times of use for both academic and public queues came between Noon and 3 PM. For each, the morning time of 8 AM – 11 AM was the second busiest time. While the daytime hours saw heavier traffic for the public queue, the academic queue remained fairly active after 8 PM.

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

Graph 3

Sessions by hour of the day, FY10



Who Answered Questions?

Table 4 shows the breakdown of who answered the 13,220 questions from Minnesota patrons in FY10.

Questions are answered either by staff of participating Minnesota libraries or by staff of the 24/7 Reference Cooperative. Minnesota library staff answered 4,252 (32%) and the 24/7 Reference Cooperative answered 8,968 (68%) of the questions from Minnesota patrons. This is an improvement from FY08-09 where our answering percentage was 19% by Minnesota librarians and 81% by the 24/7 Reference Cooperative.

Table 4

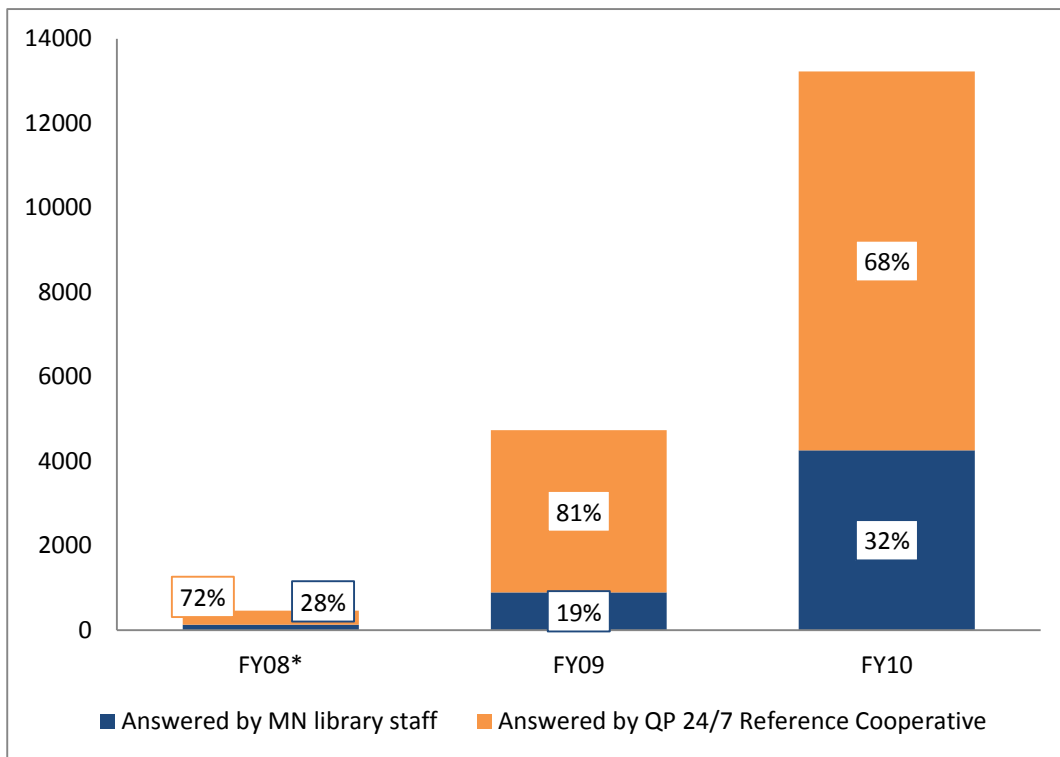
Questions Answered for Minnesota Patrons, FY10

Answered by MN library staff	4,252	32%
Answered by QP 24/7 Reference Cooperative	8,968	68%
Total questions received from MN patrons	13,220	100%

Chart 4 shows the total number of requests per fiscal year. While the 24/7 Reference Cooperative answered a larger portion of Minnesota patron requests in FY09, Minnesota library staff were able to increase the amount of requests answered from 889 (19% of 4,729) in FY09 to 4,252 (32% of 13,220) in FY10.

Chart 4

Questions Answered for Minnesota Patrons by Fiscal Year



*Partial year data, April – June 2009

Table 5 and Graph 4 show which Minnesota queue, academic or public, handled the 4,252 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 5

Minnesota Questions Answered by Minnesota Library Staff, FY10

MN Questions Answered by MN Library Staff	Jul - Sep 09	Oct - Dec 09	Jan - Mar 10	Apr - Jun 10	Total	% Total
Academic	397	1,170	453	352	2,372	56%
Public	109	113	625	1,033	1,880	44%
Total	506	1,283	1,078	1,385	4,252	100%

Graph 4

Minnesota Questions Answered by Minnesota Library Staff, FY10

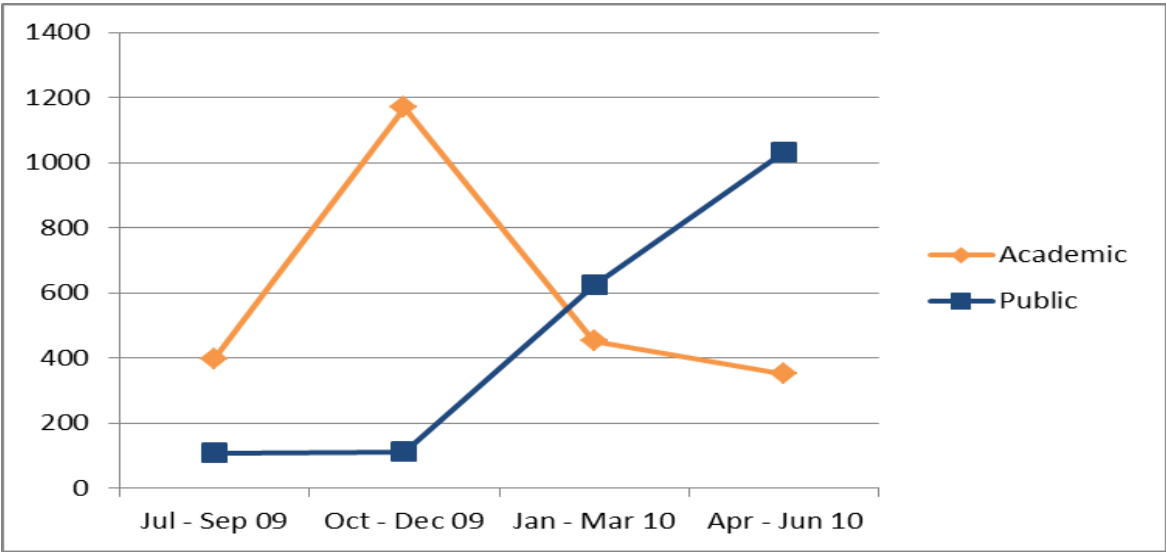
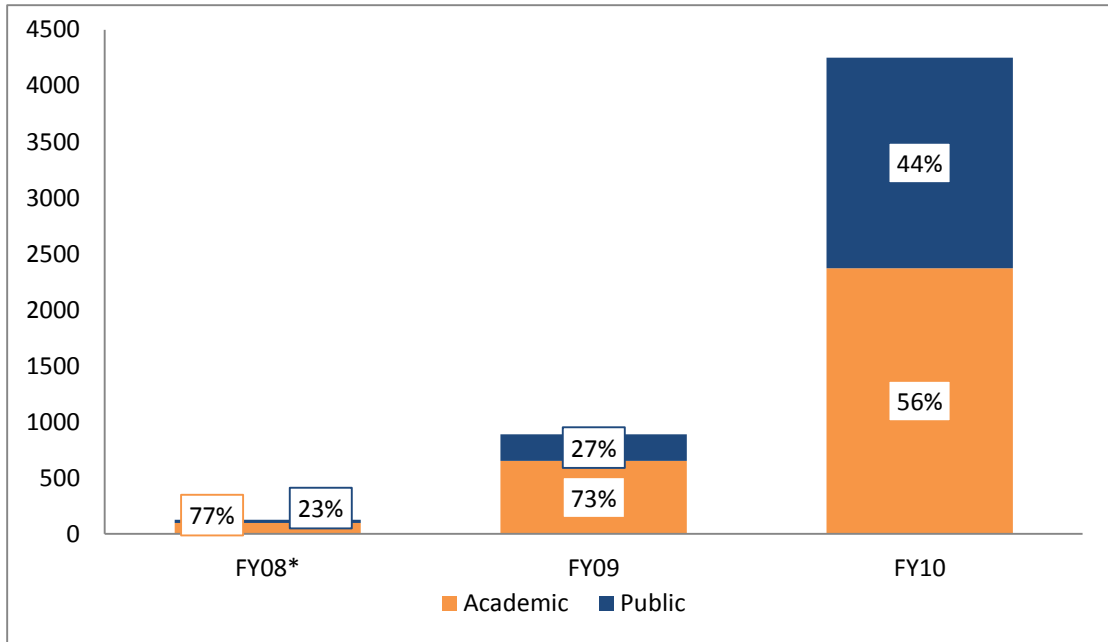


Chart 5 shows the total number of requests per fiscal year. Both academic and public queues saw a dramatic increase in requests by Minnesota patrons answered by Minnesota library staff in FY10.

Chart 5

Minnesota Questions Answered by Minnesota Library Staff by Fiscal Year



*Partial year data, April – June 2009

While 32% of questions from Minnesota patrons are answered by Minnesota library staff, Table 6 and Graph 5 show when the 24/7 Reference Cooperative stepped in and answered the other 68% (8,968) of questions from Minnesota patrons in FY10. This illustrates the vital importance of participating in the 24/7 Reference Collaborative.

Table 6

Minnesota Questions Answered by 24/7 Reference Cooperative, FY10

MN Questions Answered by 24/7 Reference Cooperative	Jul - Sep 09	Oct - Dec 09	Jan - Mar 10	Apr - Jun 10	Total	% Total
Academic	710	1,664	1,365	935	4,674	52%
Public	366	705	2,277	946	4,294	48%
Total	1,076	2,369	3,642	1,881	8,968	100%

Graph 5

Minnesota Questions Answered by 24/7 Reference Cooperative, FY10

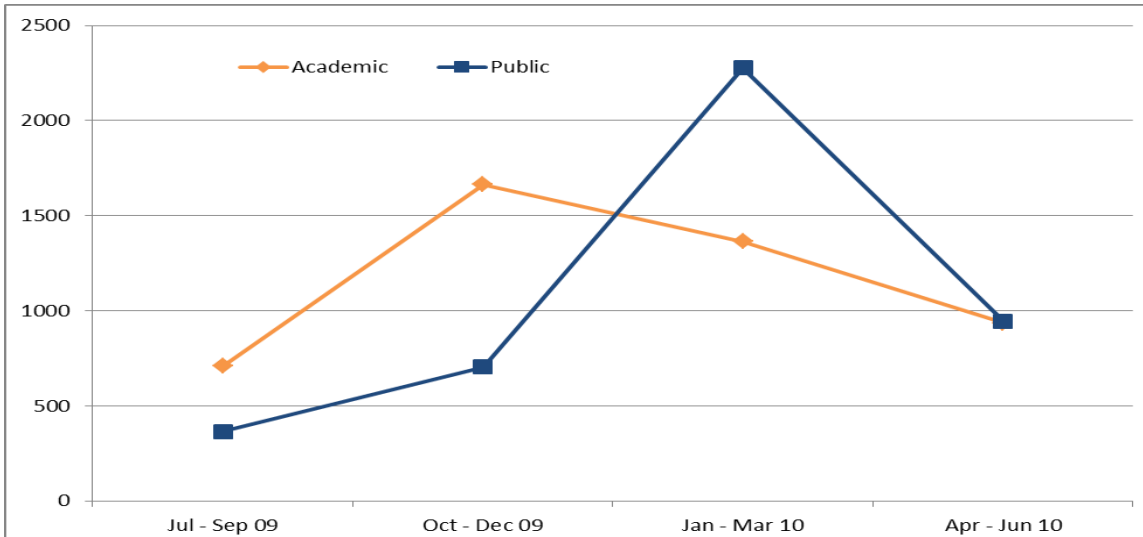
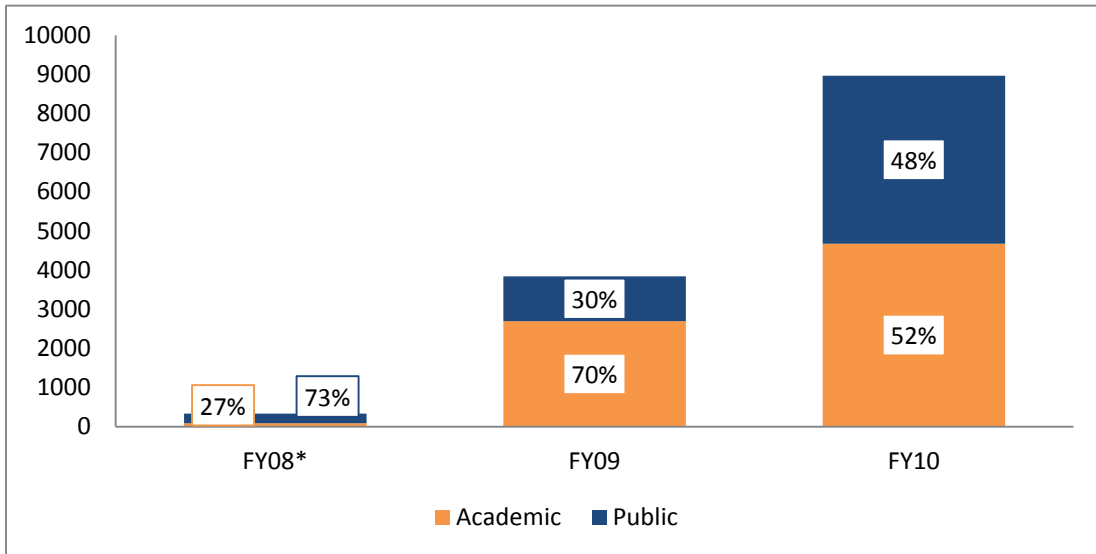


Chart 6 shows the total number of requests per fiscal year. This chart shows the answering percentage of Minnesota library staff in the academic queue; from 2,692 of 3,840 questions in FY09, the number increased from 4,674 of 8,968 in FY10. While we answered more questions for our Minnesota patrons in FY10 than FY09, there were still many instances where patrons received assistance when a Minnesota librarian was not available.

Chart 6

Minnesota Questions Answered by 24/7 Reference Cooperative by Fiscal Year



*Partial year data, April – June 2009

AskMN Activity by Queue

Tables 7 and 8 and Charts 7 and 8 summarize the activity of the academic and public queues. In FY10, Table 7 shows that 29% of Minnesota patrons who submitted questions via the academic queue were assisted by Minnesota library staff. This is up from FY09 where 16% of Minnesota patrons who submitted questions to the academic queue were assisted by Minnesota library staff. The increase was also seen for the public queue (Table 8) with 18% of Minnesota patrons were assisted by Minnesota library staff in FY10 where as 7% of Minnesota patrons were assisted by Minnesota library staff in FY09.

Both academic and public queues also saw an increase in the percentage of Minnesota patrons being assisted by the patron's affiliated library with 25% for the academic queue, up from 12% in FY09, and 10% in the public queue, up from 3% in FY09. Two factors are contributed to the increase in patrons being assisted by their affiliated library. In FY10 AskMN libraries adjusted their schedules to staff the service at higher Minnesota traffic hours. Also, some academic libraries staff more hours than their minimum requirement so that they are available to answer more questions from their patrons. This is why the number of questions from Minnesota patrons answered by the same library was higher for the academic queue than the public queue.

Table 7

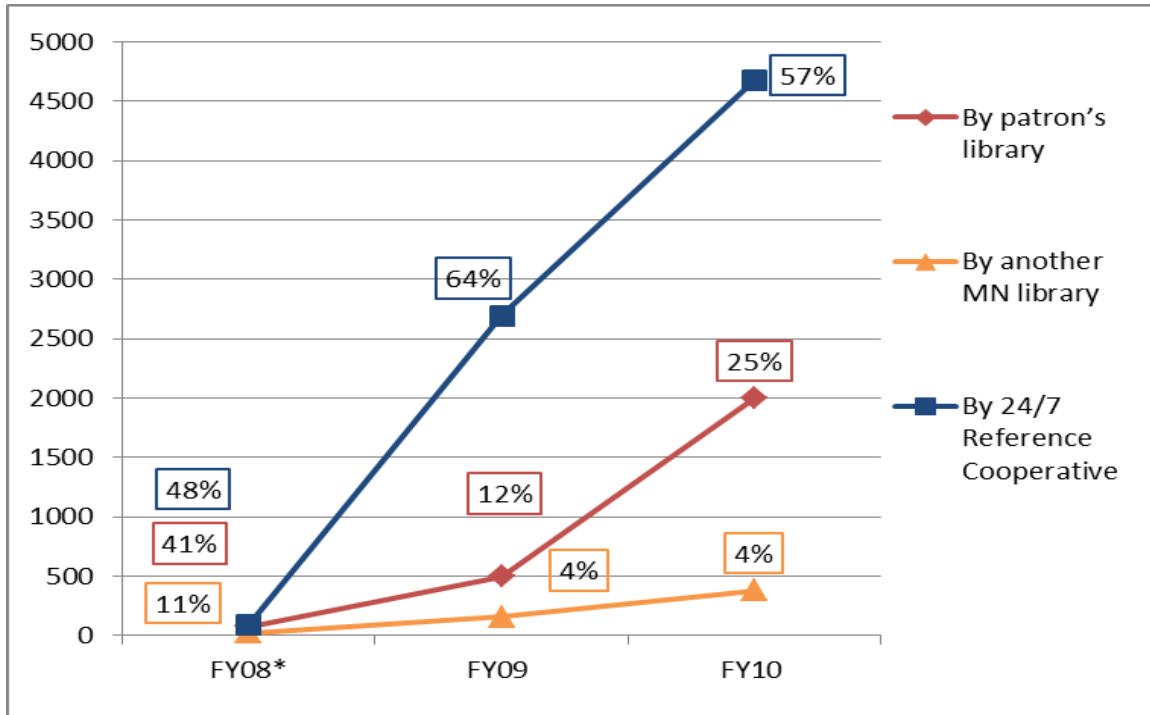
Activity by Academic Queue by Fiscal Year

Questions received	FY08		FY09		FY10	
From MN patrons	188	100%	3,344	80%	7,046	86%
From non-Minnesota patrons (24/7 Cooperative)	0	0%	825	20%	1,116	14%
Total questions from all patrons	188	100%	4,169	100%	8,162	100%
How are Minnesota patrons being assisted?						
By patron's library	77	41%	496	12%	1,996	25%
By another MN library	21	11%	156	4%	376	4%
By 24/7 Reference Cooperative	90	48%	2,692	64%	4,674	57%
Total responses provided	188	100%	3,344	80%	7,046	86%
How are all patrons being assisted?						
By patron's library	77	41%	496	12%	1,996	25%
By another MN library	21	11%	981	24%	1,492	18%
By 24/7 Reference Cooperative	90	48%	2,692	64%	4,674	57%
Total responses provided	188	100%	4,169	100%	8,162	100%

*Partial year data, April – June 2009

Chart 7

Activity by Academic Queue by Fiscal Year



*Partial year data, April – June 2009

Table 8

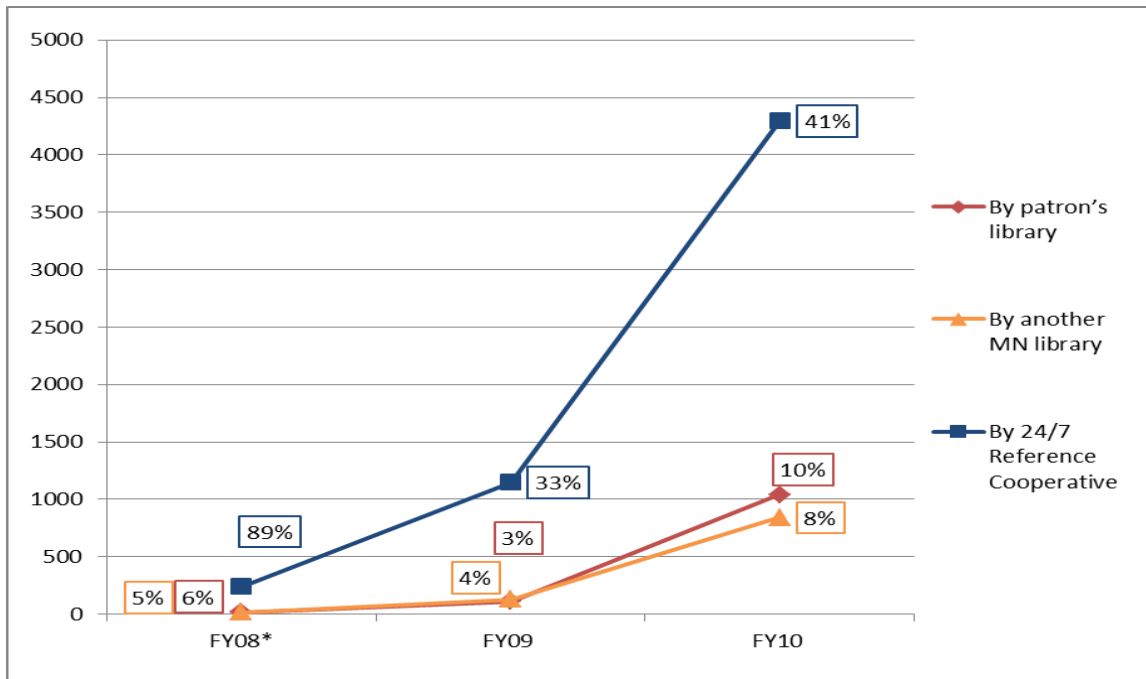
Activity by Public Queue by Fiscal Year

Questions received	FY08		FY09		FY10	
From MN patrons	267	100%	1,385	40%	6,174	59%
From non-Minnesota patrons (24/7 Cooperative)	0	0%	2,100	60%	4,365	41%
Total questions from all patrons	267	100%	3,485	100%	10,539	100%
How are Minnesota patrons being assisted?						
By patron's library	15	6%	111	3%	1,040	10%
By another MN library	14	5%	126	4%	840	8%
By 24/7 Reference Cooperative	238	89%	1,148	33%	4,294	41%
Total responses provided	267	59%	1,385	40%	6,174	59%
How are all patrons being assisted?						
By patron's library	15	6%	111	3%	1,040	10%
By another MN library	14	5%	2,226	64%	5,205	49%
By 24/7 Reference Cooperative	238	89%	1,148	33%	4,294	41%
Total responses provided	267	59%	3,485	100%	10,539	100%

*Partial year data, April – June 2009

Chart 8

Activity by Public Queue by Fiscal Year



*Partial year data, April – June 2009

Patron satisfaction

At the conclusion of each transaction (question/answer), Minnesota patrons are invited to complete a brief survey. Of the 13,220 total questions received from Minnesota patrons, 426 (8.2%) responded. Table 9 shows that 36% of the responding patrons have used the AskMN service on multiple occasions. An overwhelming 92% indicated that they would use AskMN again. That was up from 90% in FY09. 84% thought the librarian was helpful, and 76% were satisfied with the response to their question, a 2% increase over FY09.

Table 9

Patron Satisfaction Survey by Fiscal Year

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

	No	1	5%	No	23	6%	No	67	7%
	N/A	4	20%	N/A	39	9%	N/A	80	9%
Were you satisfied with the answer to your question?									
	Yes	13	65%	Yes	299	74%	Yes	619	76%
	No	2	10%	No	43	10%	No	92	11%
	N/A	5	25%	N/A	64	16%	N/A	118	13%

Among the optional comments received some said AskMN was easy to use, others cited the convenience of being able to ask their question at any time of day, and others still commented on the friendliness of the librarian helping them. Table 10 shows some of the comments received in FY10.

Table 10

Selected Survey Comments, FY10

Always a pleasure to use this wonderful service.
Amber was absolutely wonderful and I really do hope to talk to her again through AskMN. This is a great site to go to for research or anything else!
How totally amazing! I'm a high school librarian that can need a hand sometimes with research strategies. Great support for professionals, too.
I have used this service a few times in the last few days, and my daughter is using it daily. I am hooked! Thanks for such an important service and doing such an incredible job providing wonderful resources.
I heard about your service on MPR
I've used this service several times and it's absolutely awesome!! Thanks so much for having it available to us. All the librarians I've worked with have been exceptionally pleasant and very helpful. Keep up the great work!
Jonathan did a great job and I will definitely use this again!!! :) Very helpful!!
Leslie was very helpful and found exactly the kind of information I was looking for. She followed up to make sure that I had everything that I wanted. This is truly a wonderful service. Thank you!
My librarian was very helpful and I got lots of new quotes for my History Day project.
SUPER helpful and personable love it.
The librarian was very helpful and knowledgeable. I'm going to share this service with others. Thank you
This service is the greatest and I love that your librarians are always so friendly and helpful ... and they give the most complete answers they can. Thanks.
This tool is great. My question received prompt attention and the library staff person was professional, courteous and knowledgeable.
Very helpful and informative...it's VERY refreshing to have real time questions to your answers. Ann at Hennepin CL was very knowledgeable and courteous. Thank you!
Very helpful tool. Thanks for the assistance. I'd highly recommend.
We linked to this from our son's grade school webpage in MN, and ARE SO IMPRESSED with the level of service and its usefulness for finding answers appropriate for kids. This is our main issue -- it's easy to find online info for adults, but less so for children under 10. We would recommend this service to all our friends with kids!
What a great service!! Megan was very helpful and she gave me an answer almost immediately. Thank you so much!!!
Andrew was very helpful and I was very thankful to have help at 1 am!!!!!!
Dave at Macalester Library was great! He was able to narrow down two indexes that will prove to be

invaluable and also linked to an article that was applicable to my research. A very nice service with quick responses.
Elizabeth was very helpful and helped me to get the ball rolling. I will definitely use this service again!
Every time I use this service - I get an enormous amount of help. Thanks.
Fast and efficient. It is 5:20am and Raul helped me immediately. Thank you. I have been searching for this site on my own for a few minutes and could not find it. Raul found it immediately.
Great service. Reassuring info to get after library is closed, helpful to chat with someone who can provide an answer to a question that is needed right away.
Helpful. I like that this service is 24/7.
I have found that using this service I save a lot of time. I can ask them a question and they know and can access the information much quicker than myself. I HIGHLY recommend this service!!!
I love the chat services provided by the library. It is very convenient. The response is always quick. I have received chat services from three librarians and they are all very helpful. Thanks a lot!
I was very impressed with the speed and effectiveness of the service. The librarian was very polite and cordial. Thank you.
It was really cool to be able to talk with a librarian without having to travel to the library. I will definitely use this again.
It was very nice to get live help after 10 pm my time, and the librarian was very efficient and friendly, which I appreciated (since I am in a time crunch!) Very nice experience.
Mary was very patient, and walked me through what I needed help on...excellent service!
Terrific service! I work fulltime and it was so helpful to have someone available in the off hours.
Thanks to Deborah for flooding me with ideas and actual leads...I am chasing them now....Thanks. I was getting frustrated doing it myself and not getting anywhere with it.
THANKS! Instead of having to first figure out where to find helpful resources, this service allows me to get right into my research.
The chat service has helped me twice. As a student/mom who does homework while my toddler is napping, the silence of an online chat is quite valuable! Both librarians have been very helpful!
The person I talked to was very nice and helpful (and very patient with me)!
This is my first use of the chat service and I found the help to be both quick and friendly. I would recommend this service to other library patrons.
This service is absolutely FANTASTIC and helpful!
This service is great! I received the help I needed very quickly. I really appreciate that the chat is available on weekends. Thanks so much!!
This was quick and completely helpful. It even felt personal, which was a very welcome touch. Terrific service (because at your end there are clearly terrific people). Thanks!

Where did questions originate within Minnesota?

Map 1, *Questions from Minnesota Patrons by County*, illustrates the numbers of questions submitted to AskMN by county in FY10. With the exception of Fillmore 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. The map shows that 10,449 out of 13,220 (80%) questions were from residents of 82 counties in Minnesota.

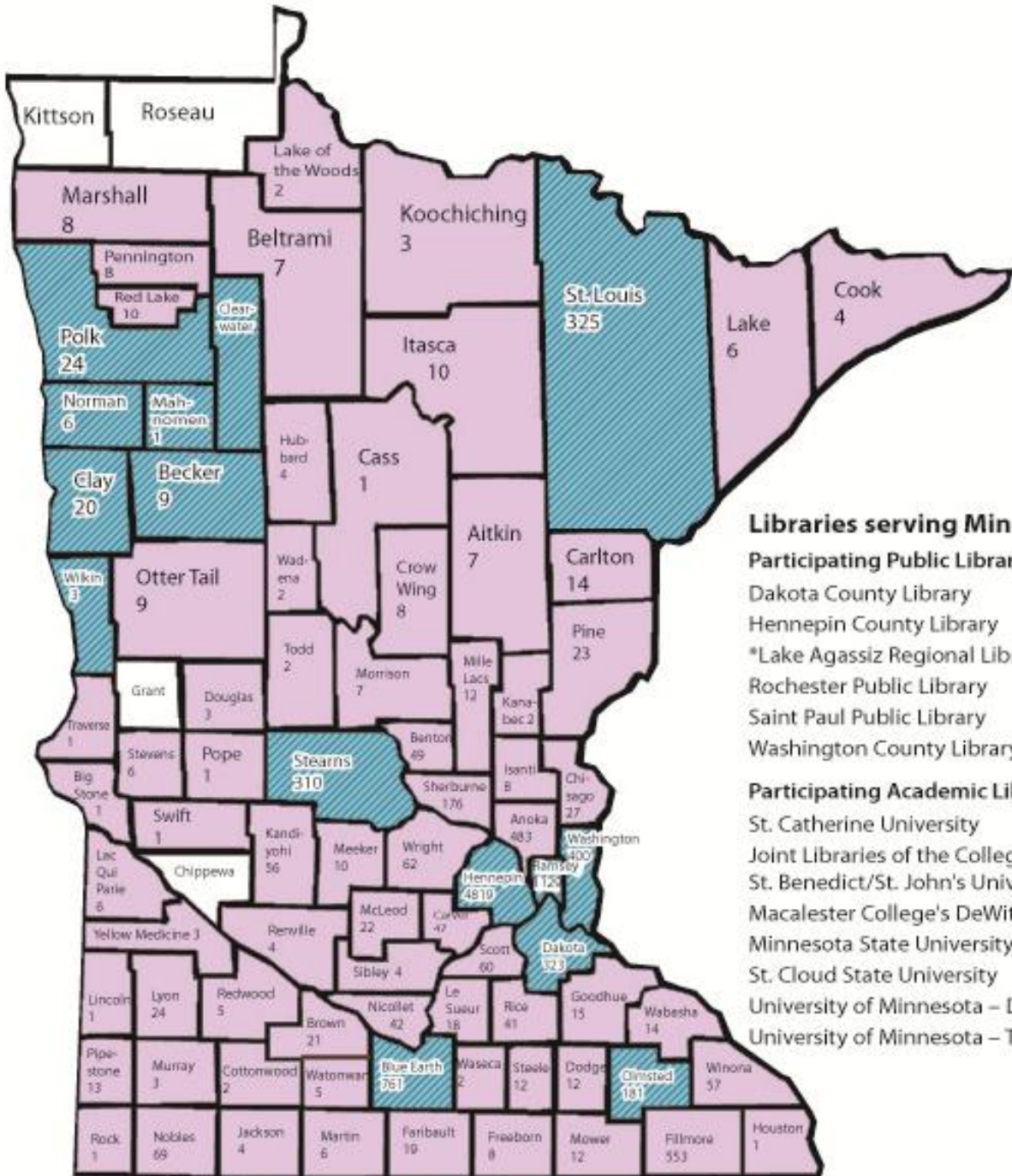
Contact Information

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

Map 1
July 2009 – June 2010
Questions from Minnesota Patrons by County



Libraries serving Minnesota

Participating Public Libraries

- Dakota County Library
- Hennepin County Library
- *Lake Agassiz Regional Library
- Rochester Public Library
- Saint Paul Public Library
- Washington County Library

Participating Academic Libraries

- St. Catherine University
- Joint Libraries of the College of St. Benedict/St. John's University
- Macalester College's DeWitt Library
- Minnesota State University, Mankato
- St. Cloud State University
- University of Minnesota – Duluth
- University of Minnesota – Twin Cities

Counties asking questions via AskMN
 Counties with participating library or libraries

*New participating libraries in FY10