

AskMN: The Librarian Is In!

FY14 Report

(July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014)

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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.

AskMN FY14 Highlights

The 2014 AskMN Fiscal Year End Report is a highlight of usage patterns from Minnesota patrons indicating confidence in the service and ability for time and point of need assistance.

- 31,911 questions were answered.
- The public library queue answered 22,148 reference questions, and the academic library queue answered 9,763.
- 27,311 questions were from Minnesota patrons; 4,600 were from non-Minnesota patrons.

This FY14 (July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014) 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 FY14, AskMN welcomed seven academic and public libraries. Minnesota Historical Society and Scott County Library joined as participants of the Public Library queue. Carleton College, Century College, Dakota County Technical College, St. Olaf College, and St. Paul College joined as participants of the Academic Library Queue. The libraries joined at different times of the fiscal year and are at different stages of participation from in training to fully participating by the end of this fiscal year.

A trend we continue to see from the statistics is the increasing percentage of Minnesota patron questions being handled by the same library. One factor that has played a role in seeing this number increase is QuestionPoint's creation of the institution-level queue for participating libraries. The institution-level queue is an opt-in option that allows a participating library the ability to monitor chat reference for their own patrons outside of the required minimum hours per week contribution to the AskMN 24/7 statewide digital reference cooperative. While participating libraries were monitoring for their own patrons before this installation they needed to do so in the AskMN queue where they would see their own patrons mixed in with all other Minnesota patrons. The institution-level queue will help participating libraries define their service in more appropriate ways to meet the needs of their patrons.

Who Asked Questions?

Table 1 and Chart 1 show that AskMN accepted a total of 31,911 questions in FY14. Of the 31,911 total questions received in FY14, 27,311 (86%) questions were from Minnesota patrons.

While questions from Minnesota patrons have been accepted and answered by 24/7 from the inception, 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

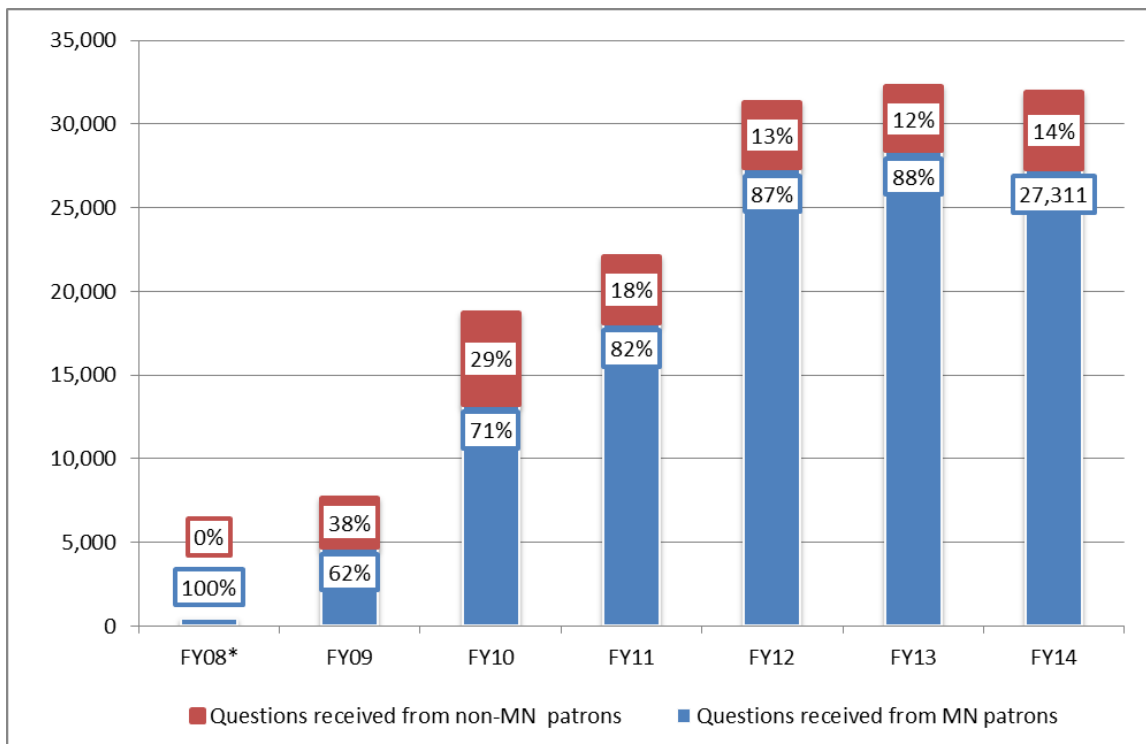
	FY08*		FY09		FY10		FY11		FY12		FY13		FY14	
Questions received from MN patrons	455	100%	4,729	62%	13,220	71%	18,115	82%	27,352	87%	28,396	88%	27,311	86%
Questions received from non-MN patrons	0**	0%	2,925	38%	5,481	29%	3,941	18%	3,977	13%	3,835	12%	4,600	14%
Total Questions Received by Fiscal Year	455	100%	7,654	100%	18,701	100%	22,056	100%	31,329	100%	32,231	100%	31,911	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 (27,311) in FY14. 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. One difference between a participating library and non-participating library is each participating library provides information specific to their institution that allows other participating libraries to better assist each others' patrons.

For the academic queue, the highest activity period is, as it has been in previous fiscal years, the second quarter, October – December 2013. This coincides with the return of students. For the public queue, the highest activity period is the third quarter, January – March 2014. There are many from the K12 community that use AskMN for their research, and we see a correlation between History Day research, the gathering information phase, and AskMN usage statistics.

Table 2

Questions from Minnesota Patrons, FY14

MN Patron Requests	Jul - Sep 13	Oct - Dec 13	Jan - Mar 14	Apr - Jun 14	Total	% Total
Academic	1,641	2,466	2,320	1,568	7,995	29%
Public	3,675	4,775	6,250	4,616	19,316	71%
Total	5,316	7,241	8,570	6,184	27,311	100%

Graph 1

Questions from Minnesota Patrons, FY14

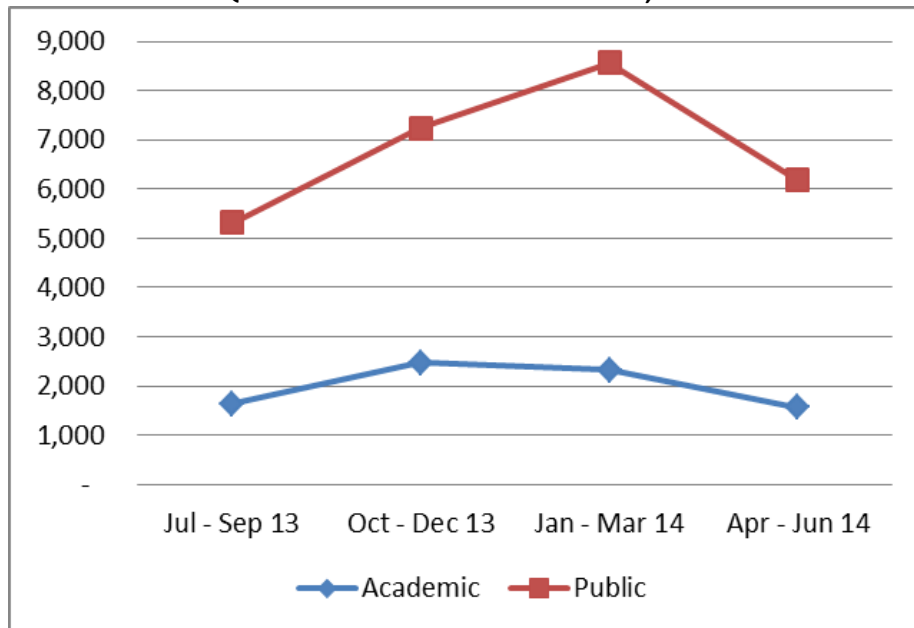
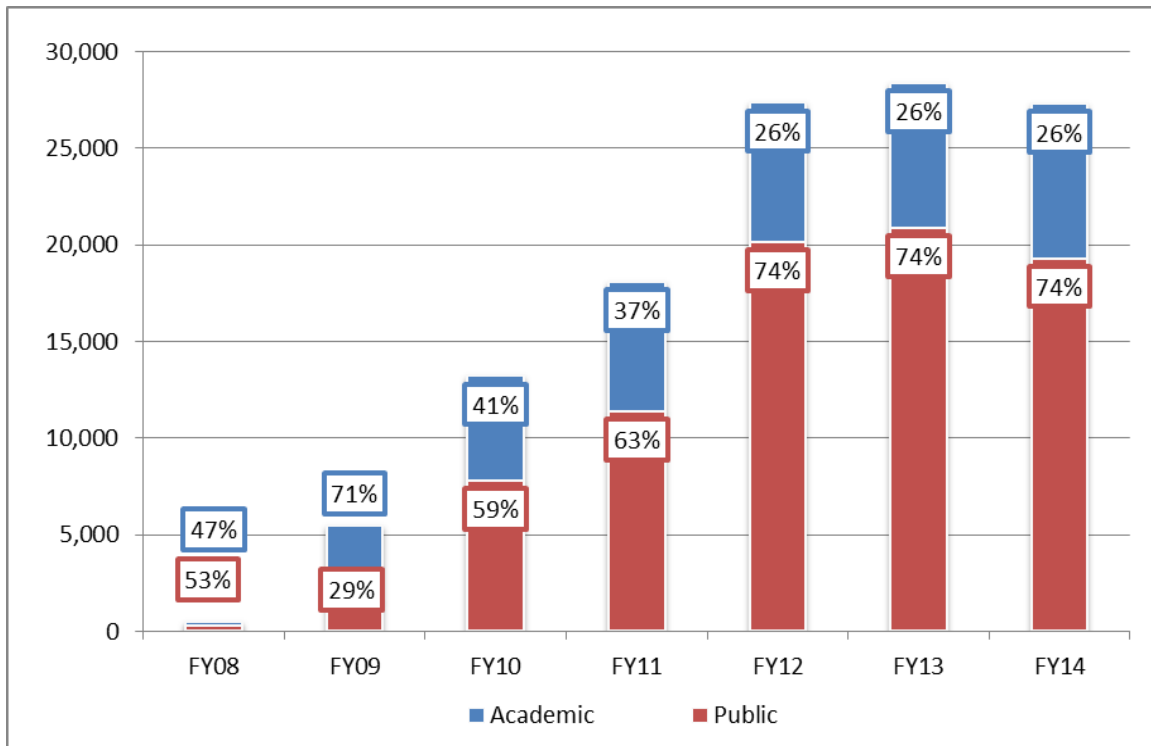


Chart 2 shows the total number of Minnesota patron requests by fiscal year. Since FY10, we see more questions coming into the public queue than the academic queue. As mentioned above, this may be due to the increased use of AskMN by the K12 community especially in regards to History Day projects. K-12 students use the public queue to ask their questions. Another point that can attest to this trend is that most academic patrons who use AskMN use it via their participating library – very few academic questions come in via the statewide portal askmn.org. The statewide portal has seen the largest increase in usage throughout the fiscal years through the public queue.

Chart 2

Questions from Minnesota Patrons by Fiscal Year



*Partial year data, April – June 2009

Questions from Non-Minnesota Patrons, FY14

Part of our agreement with the 24/7 Reference Cooperative requires AskMN to accept questions from non-Minnesota patrons. Table 3 and Graph 2 show the number of questions Minnesota librarians accepted from patrons in the United States as well as the United Kingdom in FY14, contributing to the overall activity of the 24/7 Reference Cooperative and fulfilling our contractual requirement.

Table 3

Questions from Non-Minnesota Patrons, FY14

	Jul - Sep 13	Oct - Dec 13	Jan - Mar 14	Apr - Jun 14	Total	% Total
Academic	246	561	521	440	1,768	38%
Public	649	620	711	852	2,832	62%
Total	895	1,181	1,232	1,292	4,600	100%

Graph 2

Questions from Non-Minnesota Patrons, FY14

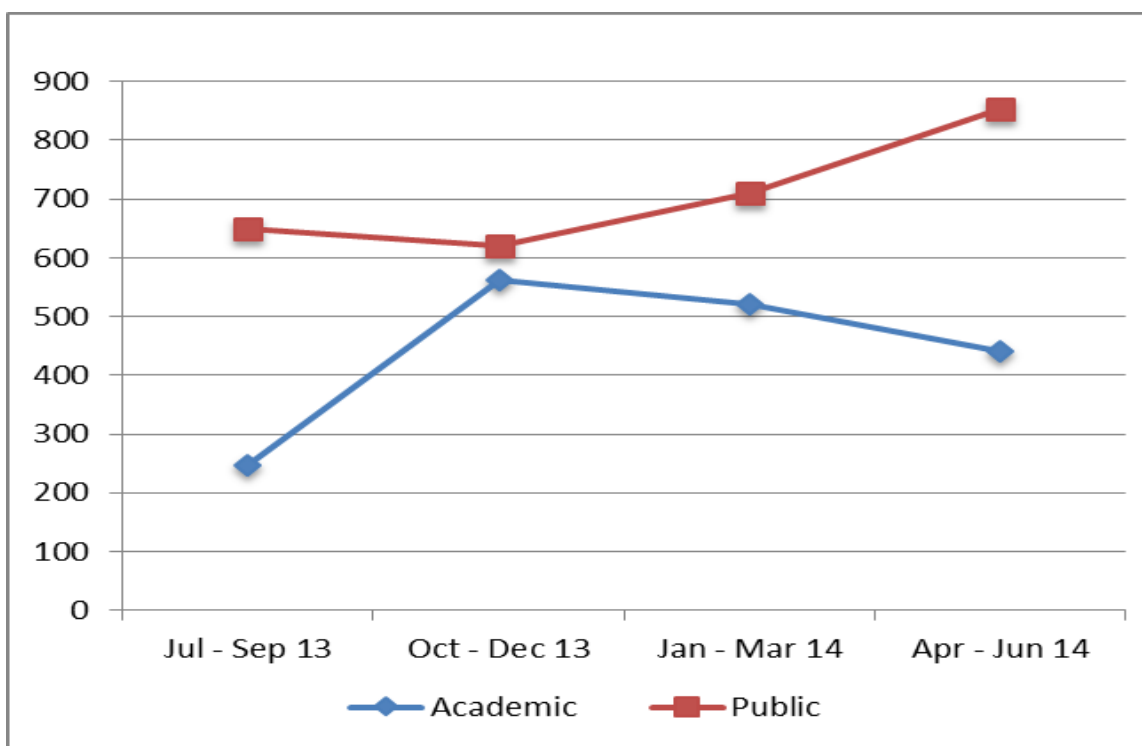
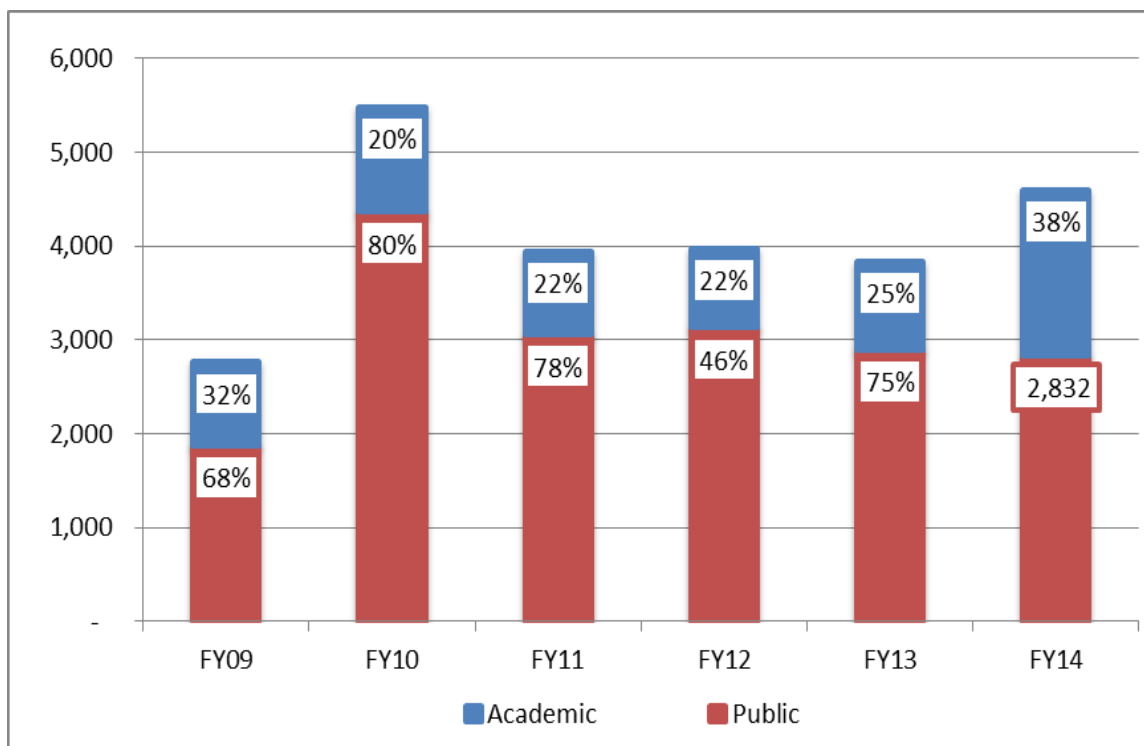


Chart 3 shows the total number of requests from non-Minnesota patrons by fiscal year. While AskMN answered 4,600 questions from non-Minnesota patrons it continues to meet its required minimum contribution to the 24/7 Reference Cooperative. FY08 is not included as AskMN did not begin responding to requests outside MN through the 24/7 Reference Cooperative until December 2008 (FY09). While FY10 shows the highest percentage of Minnesota librarians picking up non-Minnesota patrons, the number of Minnesota patrons asking questions has grown since FY10. This has allowed Minnesota librarians more opportunity to converse with a Minnesota patrons.

Chart 3

Questions from Non-Minnesota Patrons by Fiscal Year



When Did Patrons Ask Questions?

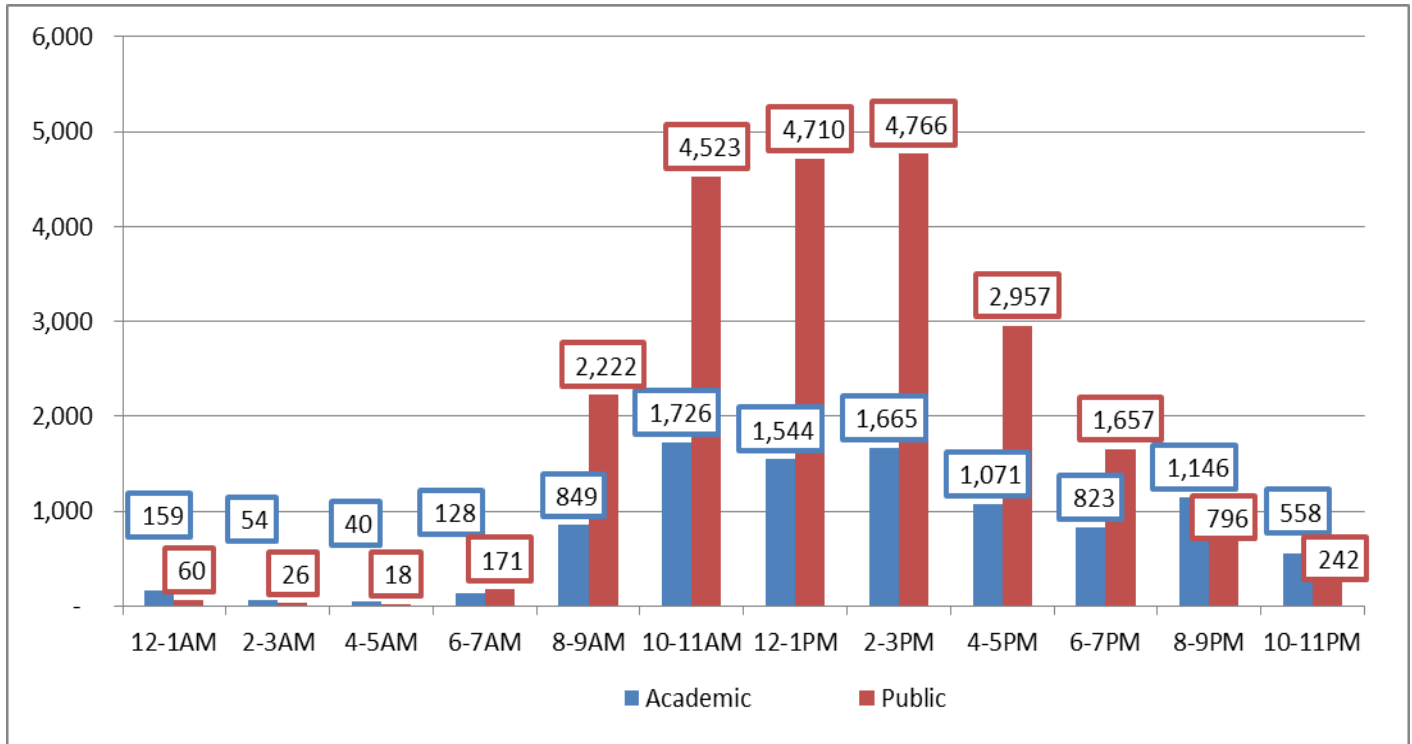
Graph 3 shows the times of day questions were submitted to AskMN by Minnesota patrons in FY14.

The highest times of use for both academic and public queues came between 10 am and 4 pm. For each, the afternoon time of 4 pm – 6 pm was the second busiest time. While the public queue saw more activity during day hours, the academic queue saw more activity than public queue after 8 pm throughout the course of the evening hours.

Typically, AskMN librarians staff the service between 9 am – 6 pm Monday through Friday. Most after-hours coverage of 6 pm – 9 am weekdays and all day and night on weekends is handled by the 24/7 Reference Cooperative. However, some libraries staff the service beyond 6 pm to chat with more patrons from their own institution.

Graph 3

Sessions by Hour of the Day, FY14



Who Answered Questions?

Table 4 shows the breakdown of who answered the 27,311 questions from Minnesota patrons in FY14.

Questions are answered either by staff of participating Minnesota libraries or by staff of the 24/7 Reference Cooperative. Minnesota library staff answered 18,726 (69%) and the 24/7 Reference Cooperative answered 8,585 (31%) of the questions from Minnesota patrons. AskMN continued its trend of accepting more Minnesota patrons than patrons from the 24/7 Reference Cooperative which is of benefit to AskMN and the 24/7 Reference Cooperative. AskMN works to align more Minnesota librarians at the point and time of need of Minnesota patrons while still fulfilling its agreement with the 24/7 Reference Cooperative.

Table 4

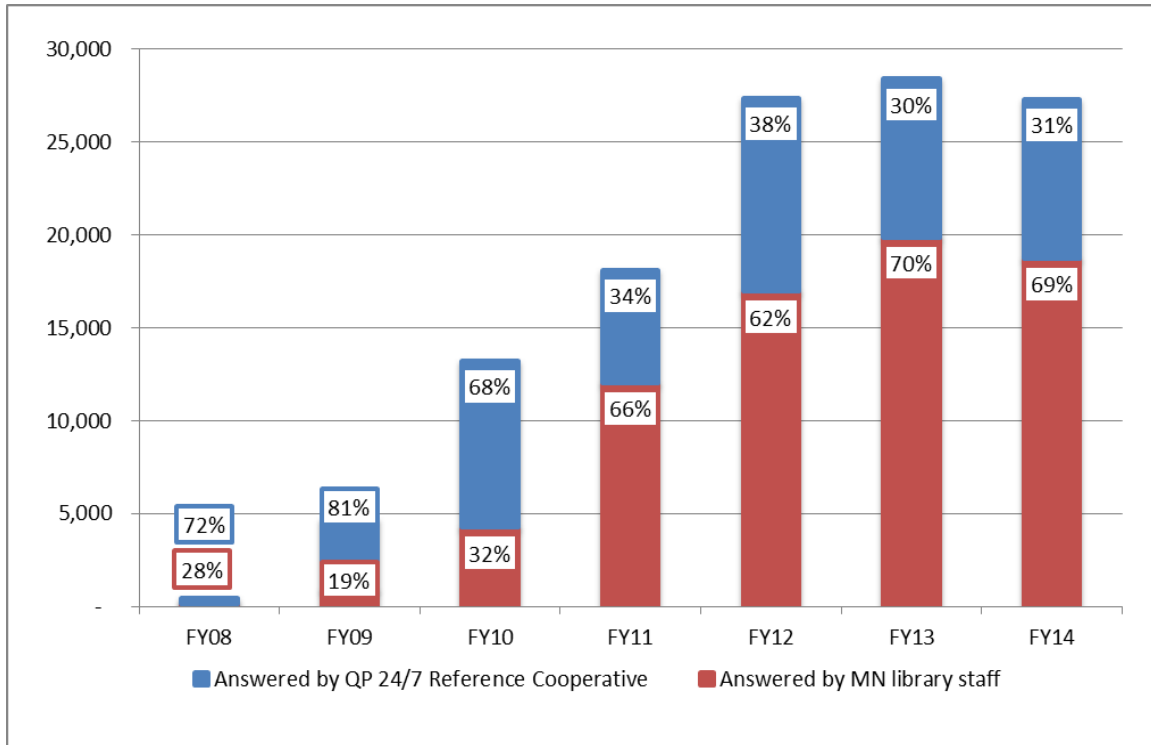
Questions Answered for Minnesota Patrons, FY14

Answered by MN library staff	18,726	69%
Answered by QP 24/7 Reference Cooperative	8,585	31%
Total questions received from MN patrons	27,311	100%

Chart 4 shows the total number of requests from Minnesota patrons by fiscal year and who picked them up.

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 18,726 questions answered by Minnesota library staff.

Table 5

Minnesota Questions Answered by Minnesota Library Staff, FY14

MN Questions Answered by MN Library Staff	Jul - Sep 13	Oct - Dec 13	Jan - Mar 14	Apr - Jun 14	Total	% Total
Academic	823	1,352	1,258	879	4,312	23%
Public	3,192	3,242	4,354	3,626	14,414	77%
Total	4,015	4,594	5,612	4,505	18,726	100

Graph 4

Minnesota Questions Answered by Minnesota Library Staff, FY14

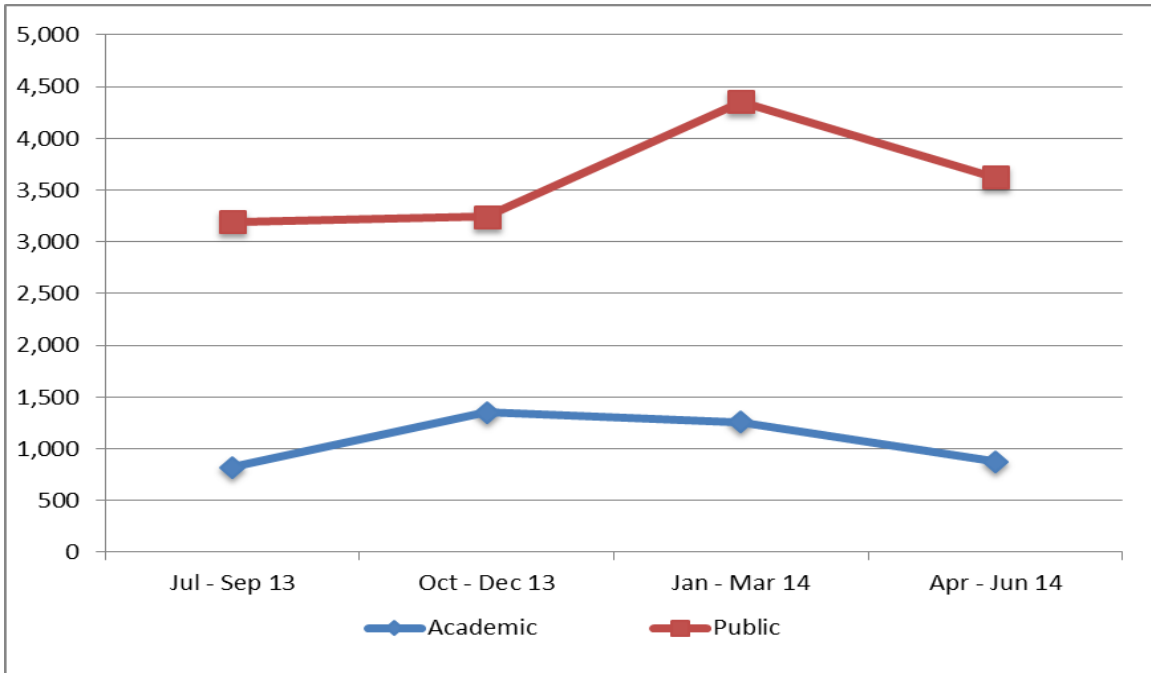
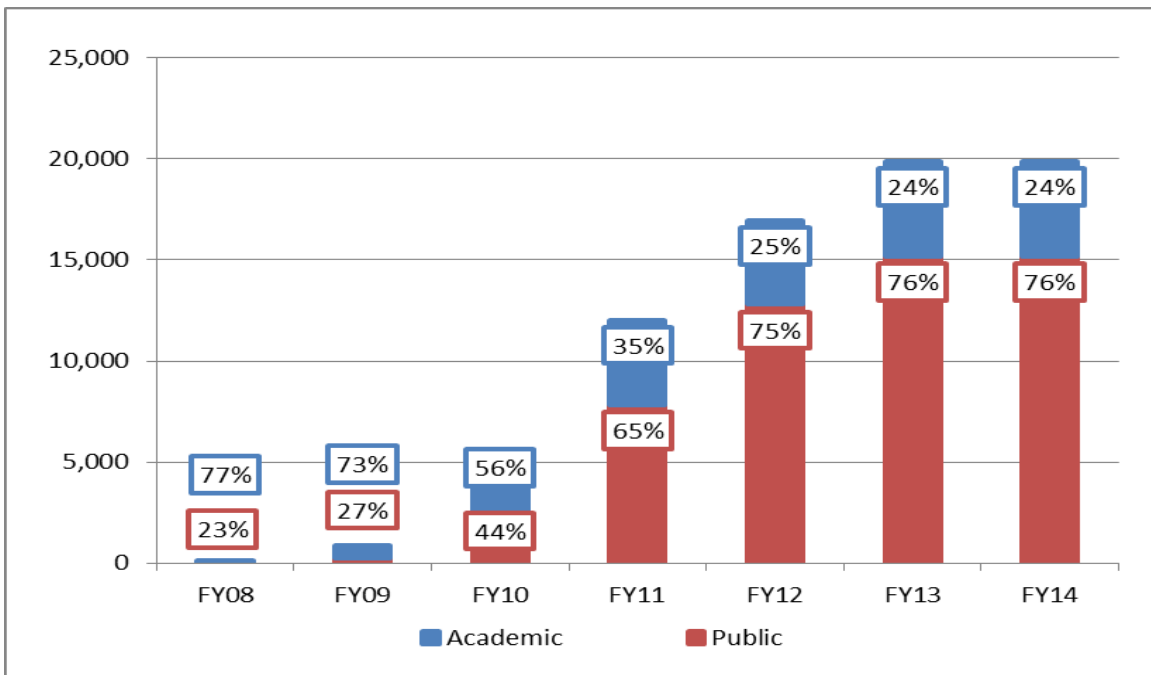


Chart 5 shows the total number of requests by fiscal year. Both academic and public queues saw increases in requests by Minnesota patrons answered by Minnesota library staff in FY14.

Chart 5

Minnesota Questions Answered by Minnesota Library Staff by Fiscal Year



*Partial year data, April – June 2009

While 69% (18,726) of questions from Minnesota patrons are answered by Minnesota library staff (Table 4, Chart 4), Table 6 and Graph 5 show when the 24/7 Reference Cooperative stepped in and answered the other 31% (8,585) of questions from Minnesota patrons in FY14. This illustrates the vital importance of participating in the 24/7 Reference Collaborative. Graph 5, especially, illustrates this issue with the spike in questions coming from the K-12 community in the third quarter, corresponding with the research phase of History Day.

Table 6

Minnesota Questions Answered by 24/7 Reference Cooperative, FY14

MN Questions Answered by 24/7 Reference Cooperative	Jul - Sep 13	Oct - Dec 13	Jan - Mar 14	Apr - Jun 14	Total	% Total
Academic	818	1,114	1,062	689	3,683	43%
Public	483	1,533	1,896	990	4,902	57%
Total	1,301	2,647	2,958	1,679	8,585	100%

Graph 5

Minnesota Questions Answered by 24/7 Reference Cooperative, FY14

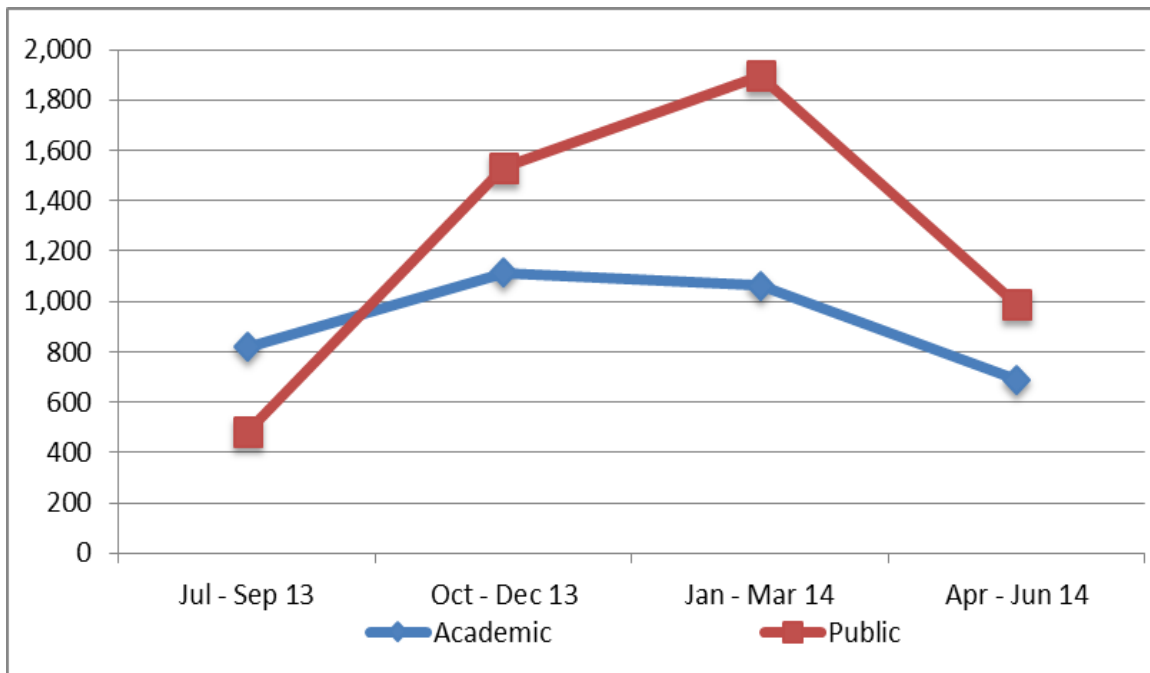
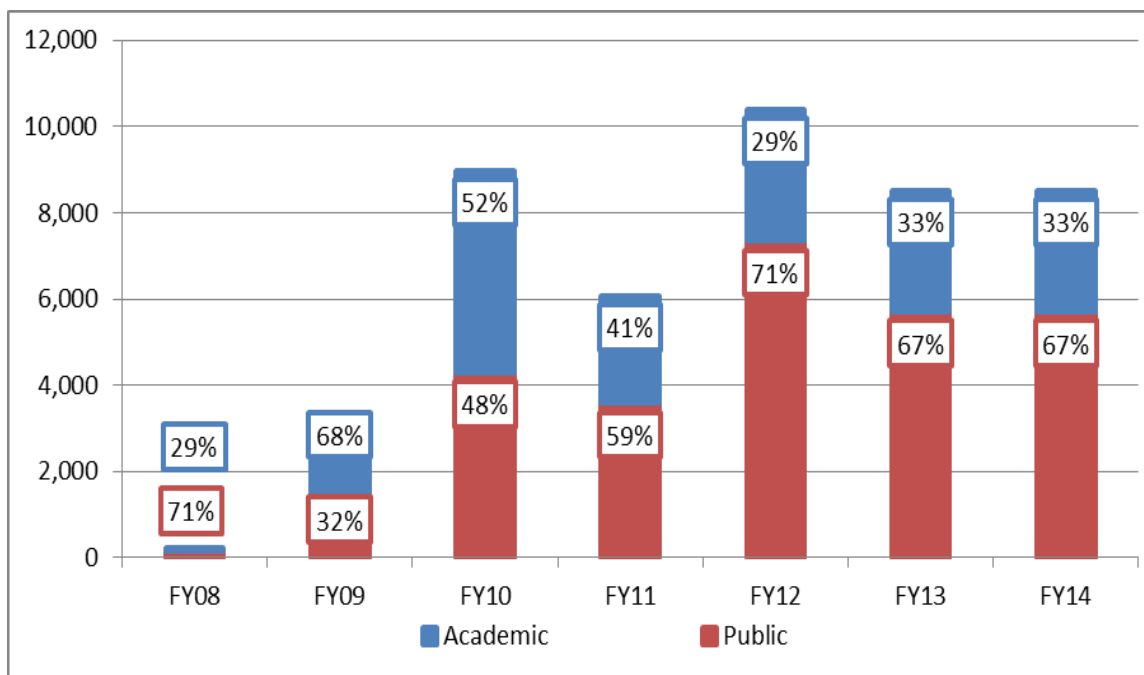


Chart 6 shows the total number of Minnesota requests answered by the 24/7 Reference Cooperative by fiscal year from 3,840 of 4,729 questions in FY09 to 8,585 of 27,311 questions in FY14. Each question is directed into either the academic or public queue. Chart 6 reflects the continued support of giving Minnesota librarians more opportunities to work with Minnesota patrons at their point and time of need.

Chart 6

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



*Partial year data, April – June 2009

Where did questions originate within Minnesota?

There were 7,543 questions (28%) out of a total 27,311 from Minnesota patrons that could be mapped to Minnesota counties based on zip codes supplied by patrons. The zip codes provided by Minnesota patrons for the other 19,768 questions (72%) were incomplete, could not be matched to a valid Minnesota zip code or came into the service via the increasingly popular, intuitive, and easy-to-use chat widget that does not ask for zip code information when asking a question.

Appendix 1, Questions from Minnesota Patrons by County, illustrates the numbers of questions submitted to AskMN by county in FY14. The map shows the expanding areas where Minnesota patrons, both from participating and non-participating libraries, have come from.

AskMN Activity by Queue

Tables 7 and 8 and Charts 7 and 8 summarizes the activity of the academic and public queues. In FY14, Table 7 shows that 49% of Minnesota patrons who submitted questions via the academic queue were assisted by a librarian from the patron’s affiliated library and 54% of all Minnesota academic patrons were assisted by Minnesota library staff.

For the public queue (Table 8), 61% of Minnesota patrons were assisted by a librarian from the patron’s affiliated public library and 75% of all Minnesota public patrons were assisted by Minnesota library staff. Minnesota libraries have the opportunity of using an institution-level queue that can be used to connect with an institutions with their own patrons before entering the cooperative queues.

Table 7

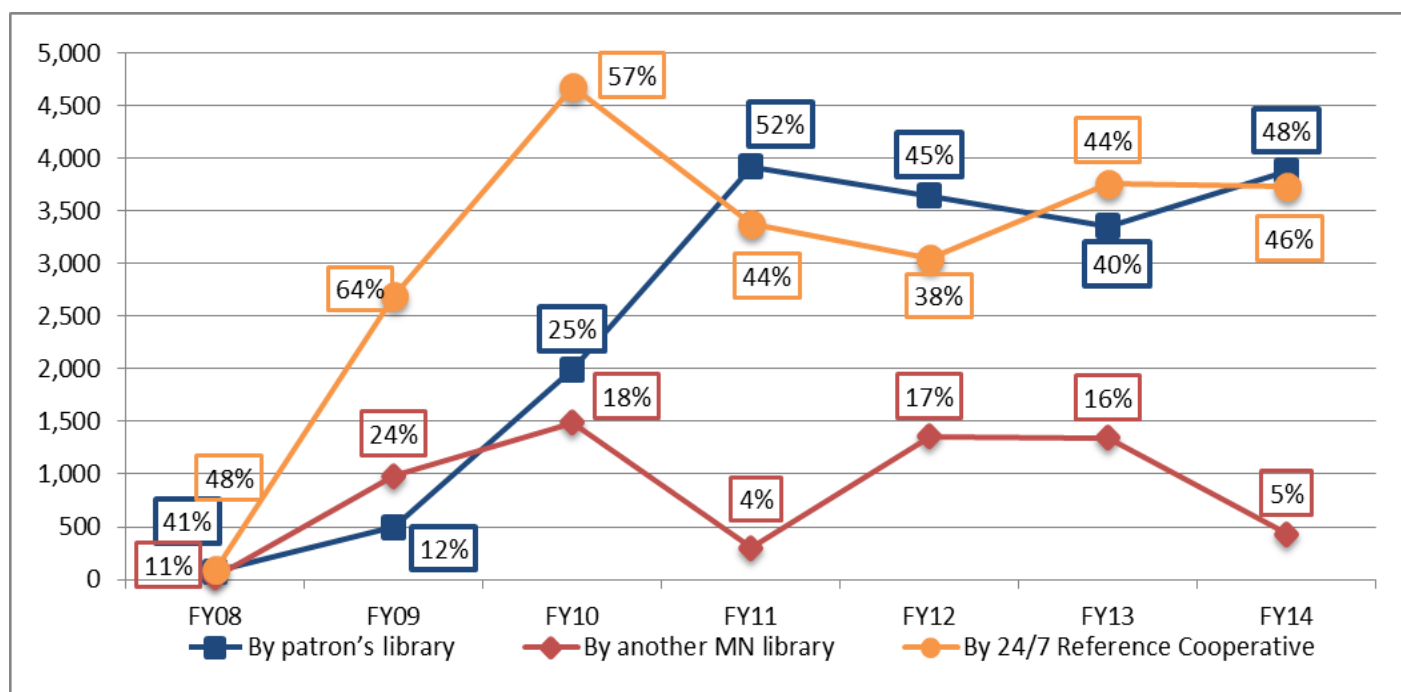
Activity by Academic Queue by Fiscal Year

Questions received														
	FY08		FY09		FY10		FY11		FY12		FY13		FY14	
From MN patrons	188	100%	3,344	80%	7,046	86%	6,715	88%	7,209	89%	7,524	89%	7,995	82%
From non-MN patrons (24/7 Cooperative)	0	0%	825	20%	1,116	14%	884	12%	848	11%	940	11%	1,768	18%
Total questions from all patrons	188	100%	4,169	100%	8,162	100%	7,599	100%	8,057	100%	8,464	100%	9,763	100%
How are Minnesota patrons being assisted?														
	FY08		FY09		FY10		FY11		FY12		FY13		FY14	
By patron's library	77	41%	496	12%	1,996	25%	3,921	52%	3,647	51%	3,358	45%	3,879	49%
By another MN library	21	11%	156	4%	376	4%	297	4%	510	7%	1,345	18%	433	5%
By 24/7 Reference Cooperative	90	48%	2,692	64%	4,674	57%	2,497	32%	3,052	42%	2,821	37%	3,683	46%
Total responses provided	188	100%	3,344	80%	7,046	86%	6,715	88%	7,209	100%	7,524	100%	7,995	100%
How are all patrons being assisted?														
	FY08		FY09		FY10		FY11		FY12		FY13		FY14	
By patron's library	77	41%	496	12%	1,996	25%	3,921	52%	3,647	45%	3,358	40%	3,879	40%
By another MN library	21	11%	981	24%	1,492	18%	297	4%	1,358	17%	1,345	16%	433	4%
By 24/7 Reference Cooperative	90	48%	2,692	64%	4,674	57%	3,381	44%	3,052	38%	3,761	44%	5,451	56%
Total responses provided	188	100%	4,169	100%	8,162	100%	7,599	100%	8,057	100%	8,464	100%	9,763	100%

*Partial year data, April – June 2009

Chart 7

Activity by Academic Queue by Fiscal Year



*Partial year data, April – June 2009

Table 8

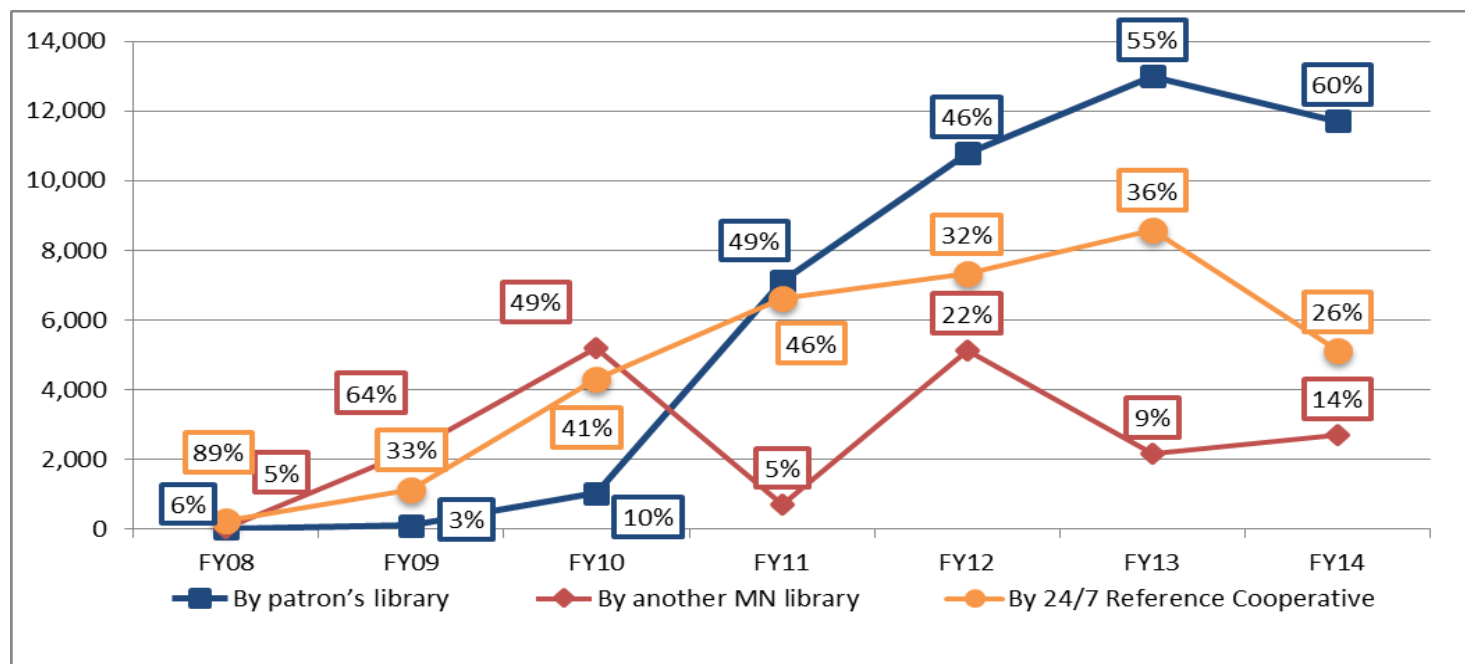
Activity by Public Queue by Fiscal Year

Questions received														
	FY08		FY09		FY10		FY11		FY12		FY13		FY14	
From MN patrons	267	100%	1,385	40%	6,174	59%	11,400	79%	20,143	87%	20,872	88%	19,316	87%
From non-MN patrons (24/7 Cooperative)	0	0%	2100	60%	4,365	41%	3057	21%	3129	13%	2895	12%	2,832	13%
Total questions from all patrons	267	100%	3,485	100%	10,539	100%	14,457	100%	23,272	100%	23,767	100%	22,148	100%
How are Minnesota patrons being assisted?														
	FY08		FY09		FY10		FY11		FY12		FY13		FY14	
By patron's library	15	6%	111	3%	1,040	10%	7,108	49%	10,789	54%	12,998	62%	11,718	61%
By another MN library	14	5%	126	4%	840	8%	715	5%	2011	10%	2175	10%	2,696	14%
By 24/7 Reference Cooperative	238	89%	1,148	33%	4,294	41%	3,577	25%	7,343	36%	5,699	27%	4,902	25%
Total responses provided	267	100%	1,385	40%	6,174	59%	11,400	79%	20,143	100%	20,872	100%	19,316	100%
How are all patrons being assisted?														
	FY08		FY09		FY10		FY11		FY12		FY13		FY14	
By patron's library	15	6%	111	3%	1,040	10%	7,108	49%	10,789	46%	12,998	55%	11,718	53%
By another MN library	14	5%	2226	64%	5,205	49%	715	5%	5,140	22%	2,175	9%	2,696	12%
By 24/7 Reference Cooperative	238	89%	1,148	33%	4,294	41%	6,634	46%	7,343	32%	8,594	36%	7,734	35%
Total responses provided	267	100%	3,485	100%	10,539	100%	14,457	100%	23,272	100%	23,767	100%	22,148	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 27,311 total questions received from Minnesota patrons, 615 (2%) responded to the survey. Table 9 shows that through each fiscal year we continue to see good return rates on our surveys with an overwhelming number of responses indicating they thought the librarian was helpful, they received a quality response to their inquiry, and that they would use the service again.

Table 9

Patron Satisfaction Survey by Fiscal Year

		FY08		FY09		FY10		FY11		FY12		FY13		FY14	
		20		406		829		749		3081		654		615	
This was the first time I used this service:	Yes	9	45%	284	70%	526	61%	444	58%	1,039	34%	361	63%	341	55%
	No	3	15%	93	23%	282	36%	294	38%	132	4%	257	26%	228	37%
	N/A	8	40%	29	7%	21	3%	31	4%	1,910	62%	27	11%	16	3%
The librarian was helpful.	Yes	15	75%	344	85%	682	84%	304	76%	291	9%	539	81%	472	77%
	No	1	5%	23	6%	67	7%	46	12%	442	14%	54	11%	67	11%
	N/A	4	20%	39	9%	80	9%	49	12%	2,348	76%	61	8%	76	12%
Were you satisfied with the answer to your question?	Yes	13	65%	299	74%	619	76%	271	69%	400	13%	481	80%	461	75%
	No	2	10%	43	10%	92	11%	69	18%	438	14%	66	8%	64	10%
	N/A	5	25%	64	16%	118	13%	54	14%	2,243	73%	98	12%	60	10%
Would you use this service again?	Yes	16	80%	364	90%	752	92%	654	88%	251	8%	569	80%	541	88%
	No	-	0%	10	2%	24	3%	41	5%	192	6%	27	2%	27	4%
	N/A	4	20%	32	8%	53	5%	51	7%	2,681	86%	58	18%	47	8%

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. People highlighted how useful AskMN was in helping find resources and that it was an asset to have in Minnesota. Appendix 2 shows some of the comments received in FY14.

List of Participating Libraries

Appendix 3 shows the list of participating libraries as of June 30, 2014. While the number of libraries grew from 38 libraries and regional systems in FY13 to 44 libraries and regional systems in FY14 it should be noted that some of the new libraries were still in a training mode and had not begun service for their institution by the end of the fiscal year. Their contribution to the AskMN 24/7 statewide digital reference cooperative service will be measured in FY14.

Acknowledgement

Many thanks to Dana Kocienda, Minitex Support Staff, for her assistance in creating the figures and map.

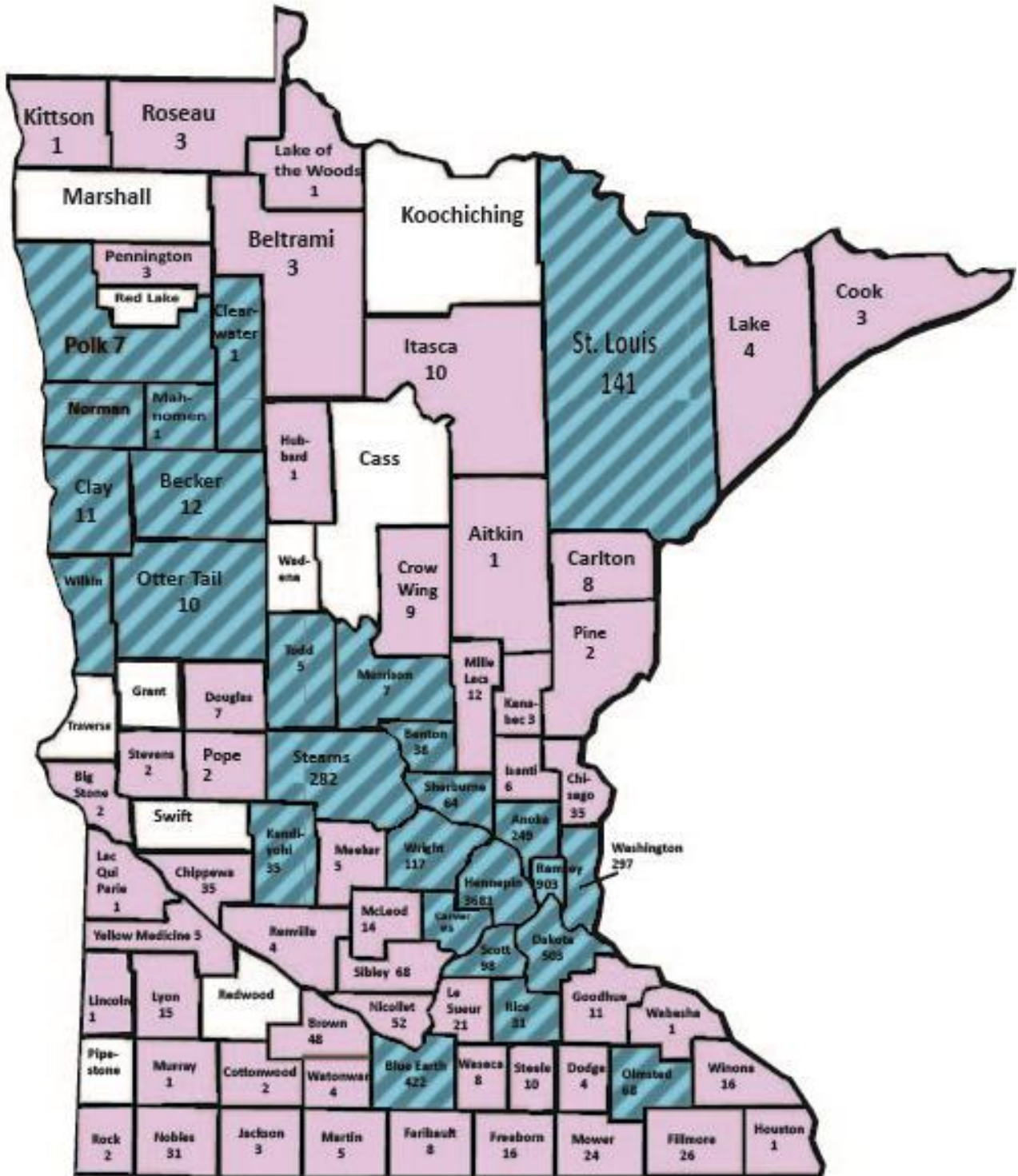
Contact Information

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

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Appendix 1
 July 2013 – June 2014
 Questions from Minnesota Patrons by County



Counties asking questions via AskMN

Counties with participating library or libraries

Appendix 2

Selected Survey Comments, FY14

- This was extremely helpful!! The librarian answered my question completely and quickly. It saved me so much time!
- It's a very helpful tool for us. The Librarian is very responsive
- Thanks--super helpful!
- Good chat experience. pleasant librarian to chat with
- My citation question was answered completely.
- Eli@University was the "Ask the Librarian" who helped me. He was great, very patient, and helpful and I learned while talking to him. He answered all of my questions more than adequately and I would definitely recommend this service to others. Eli was very easy to work with and ask questions of. Thank you!!
- The person who assisted me did so in a matter of minutes. S/he gave me not only an answer but the details needed to access what I need. Excellent service.
- This is a lifesaver for me! Thanks so much, my only other option was to buy the article online!
- I didn't get the answer I wanted - but Marilyn assured me I was on the right track in this search. I'm very pleased this resource is available to public library users. Many, many thanks
- I will definitely use this again and tell others about it! Super easy and a great resource!!!! Thank you!
- I've never used this service before, but he gave me a lot of different ideas to ease my search.
- I am very happy this service is available and I really enjoyed my chat with the librarian. He answered my question quickly and with good research.
- Kathleen rocks it as a resource!
- So helpful! Sometimes it is so difficult to cross the river to get to the library because of time constraints. I got exactly what I needed in a matter of minutes--a copy of an article only available in print format. Probably saved me about an hour and a half of travel and search time. Thanks again!
- Thanks again for this great service!
- Thank you, thank you, thank you for having people available. It keeps me from tearing my hair out sometimes!
- very prompt service and a good resource
- Very quick reply, much appreciated
- I am a visiting student from the University Of Kansas School Of Medicine. Today I spoke to Mark via your online chat service about using your facilities to study for board exams. He was very professional and also quite helpful. He answered all of my questions and was quite friendly. Thank you, Mark.
- Very helpful. Thank you.
- Was very helpful.
- Good service

Appendix 3

AskMN Participating Libraries

Participating Academic Libraries	Participation Begin Date
Anoka Technical College	May, 2013 (FY13)
Augsburg University	June, 2011 (FY11)
Bethany Lutheran College	October, 2012 (FY13)
Bethel University	January, 2012 (FY12)
Carleton College	June, 2014 (FY14)
Century College	October, 2013 (FY14)
College of St. Scholastica	February, 2012 (FY12)
Concordia University – St. Paul	June, 2012 (FY12)
Dakota County Technical College	July, 2013 (FY14)
Hamline University	November, 2010 (FY11)
Hennepin Technical College	May, 2013 (FY13)
Inver Hills Community College	May, 2013 (FY13)
Lake Superior College	February, 2012 (FY12)
Macalester College	January, 2009 (FY09)
McNally Smith College of Music	April, 2012 (FY12)
Minnesota State University, Mankato	March, 2008 (FY08)
Normandale Community College	October, 2011 (FY12)
North Central University	June, 2013 (FY13)
North Hennepin Community College	May, 2013 (FY13)
Ridgewater College	May, 2013 (FY13)
St. Catherine University	March, 2008 (FY08)
St. Cloud State University	March, 2008 (FY08)
St. Olaf College	February, 2014 (FY14)
St. Paul College	March, 2014 (FY14)
University of Minnesota, Duluth	March, 2008 (FY08)
University of Minnesota, Morris	December, 2011 (FY12)
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities	April, 2008 (FY08)
University of Northwestern, St. Paul	June, 2012 (FY12)
University of St. Thomas	January, 2012 (FY12)
Sub Total	29
Participating Public Libraries	Participation Begin Date
Anoka County Library	January, 2013 (FY13)
Carver County Library	November, 2011 (FY12)
Cloquet Public Library	April, 2012 (FY12)
Dakota County Library	April, 2009 (FY09)
Duluth Public Library	June, 2012 (FY12)
Fergus Falls Public Library	July, 2012 (FY13)
Great River Regional Library	June, 2012 (FY12)
Hennepin County Library System	March, 2008 (FY08)
Lake Agassiz Regional Library	July, 2009 (FY10)
Minitex	March, 2008 (FY08)
Minnesota Historical Society	July, 2013 (FY14)
Saint Paul Public Library	December, 2008 (FY09)
Scott County Library	March, 2014 (FY14)
Washington County Library	January, 2009 (FY09)
Willmar Public Library	May, 2013 (FY13)
Sub Total	15
Grand Total	44