

AskMN: The Librarian Is In!

FY15 Report

(July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015)

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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 FY15 Highlights

The AskMN 2015 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.

- 37,813 questions were answered.
- The public library queue answered 28,406 reference questions, and the academic library queue answered 9,407.
- 32,900 questions were from Minnesota patrons; 4,913 were from non-Minnesota patrons.
- The service saw an overall growth of 18.5% from the previous fiscal year.

This FY15 (July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015) 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 FY15, AskMN welcomed four academic and public libraries. East Central Regional Library and Scott County Library joined as participants of the Public Library queue. Carleton College and Metropolitan State University 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.

AskMN has been live since 2008 and each reporting year has included data since the start of the service. However, with this Fiscal Year report we are only including data on the most recent five years. We will no longer show data back to 2008.

A change that took place in FY15 was the decision to discontinue collecting zip code data as we updated the chat intake forms for the service. More information is available in the section **Where did questions originate within Minnesota?**

Who Asked Questions?

Table 1 and Chart 1 show that AskMN accepted a total of 37,813 questions in FY15. Of the 37,813 total questions received in FY15, 32,900 (87%) questions were from Minnesota patrons.

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 Reference Cooperative 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.

***Start showing data in tables and charts for the most recent 5 FY's instead of to the beginning**

Table 1

		Total Questions Received by Fiscal Year									
		FY11		FY12		FY13		FY14		FY15	
Questions received from MN patrons		18,115	82%	27,352	87%	28,396	88%	27,311	86%	32,900	87%
Questions received from non-MN patrons		3,941	18%	3,977	13%	3,835	12%	4,600	14%	4,913	13%
Total Questions Received by Fiscal Year		22,056	100%	31,329	100%	32,231	100%	31,911	100%	37,813	100%

Chart 1

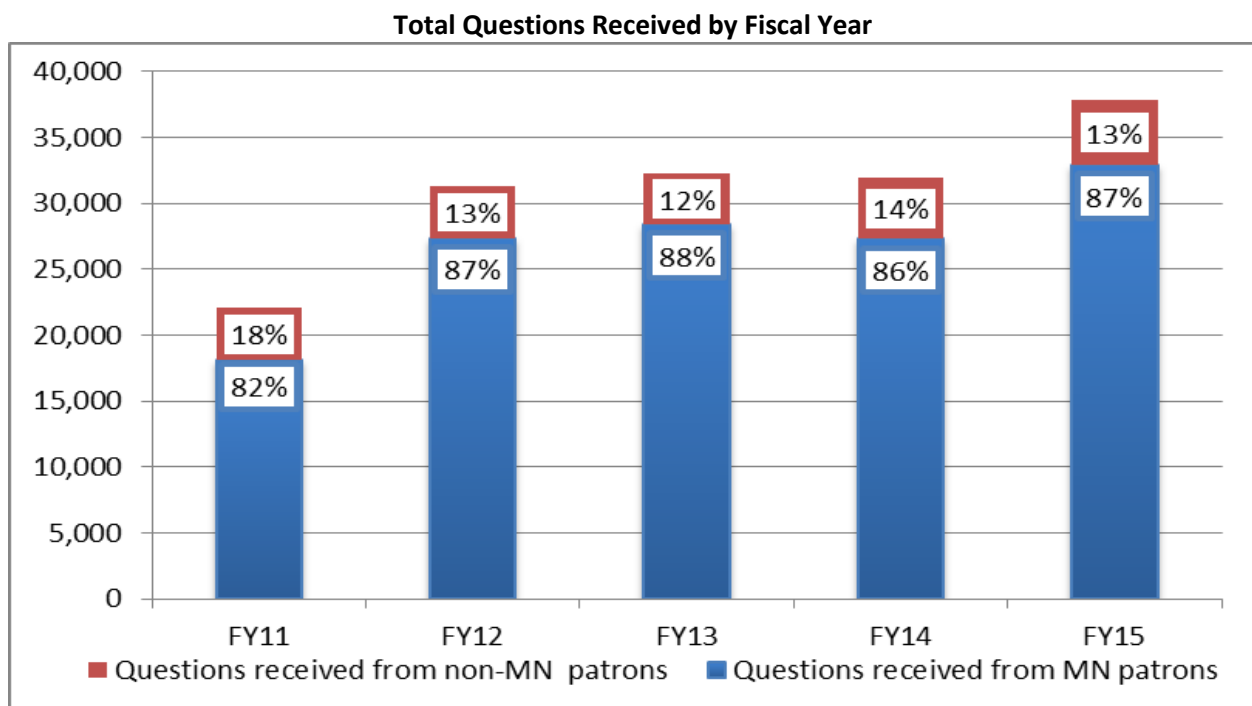


Table 2 and **Graph 1** show the total number of requests Minnesota patrons sent via AskMN.org and participating Minnesota libraries by queue (32,900) in FY15. For AskMN, patron requests are directed into one of two queues: an academic queue and a public queue.

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 other's patrons.

For the academic queue, the highest activity period is, as it has been in previous fiscal years, the second quarter, October – December 2014. This coincides with the return of students. For the public queue, the highest activity period is the third quarter, January – March 2015. 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, FY15

MN Patron Requests	Jul - Sep 14	Oct - Dec 14	Jan - Mar 15	Apr - Jun 15	Total	% Total
Academic	1,497	2,338	2,010	1,683	7,528	23%
Public	4,340	7,582	7,642	5,808	25,372	77%
Total	5,837	9,920	9,652	7,491	32,900	100%

Graph 1

Questions from Minnesota Patrons, FY15

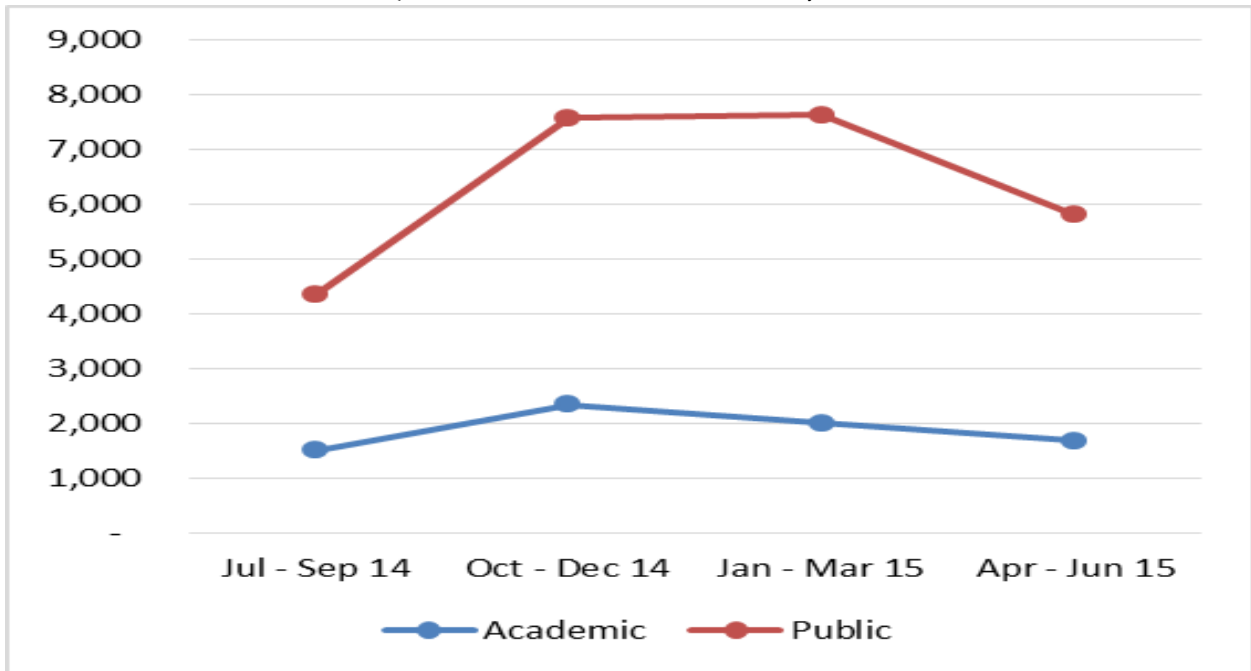
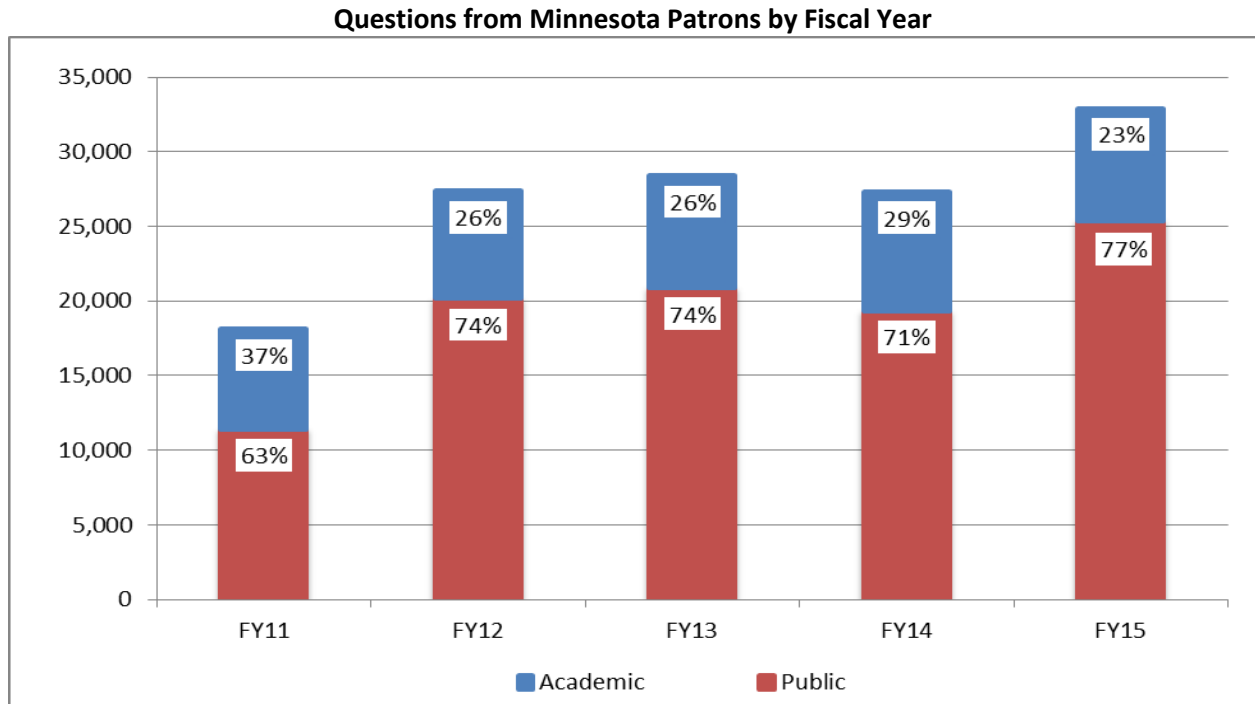


Chart 2 shows the total number of Minnesota patron requests by fiscal year. Since FY11, we see more questions coming into the public queue than the academic queue. As mentioned above, this may be due to the increased use of AskMN by the K12 community especially in regards to History Day projects. K-12 students use the public queue to ask their questions. Since the AskMN chat widget is on the ELM portal, <http://www.elm4you.org/>, and in several of the ELM databases patrons are finding help through those chat widgets. 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 Non-Minnesota Patrons, FY15

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 FY15, contributing to the overall activity of the 24/7 Reference Cooperative and fulfilling our contractual requirement.

Table 3

Questions from Non-Minnesota Patrons, FY15

Questions from Non-MN Patron	Jul - Sep 14	Oct - Dec 14	Jan - Mar 15	Apr - Jun 15	Total	% Total
Academic	375	603	465	436	1,879	38%
Public	728	796	792	718	3,034	62%
Total	1,103	1,399	1,257	1,154	4,913	100%

Graph 2

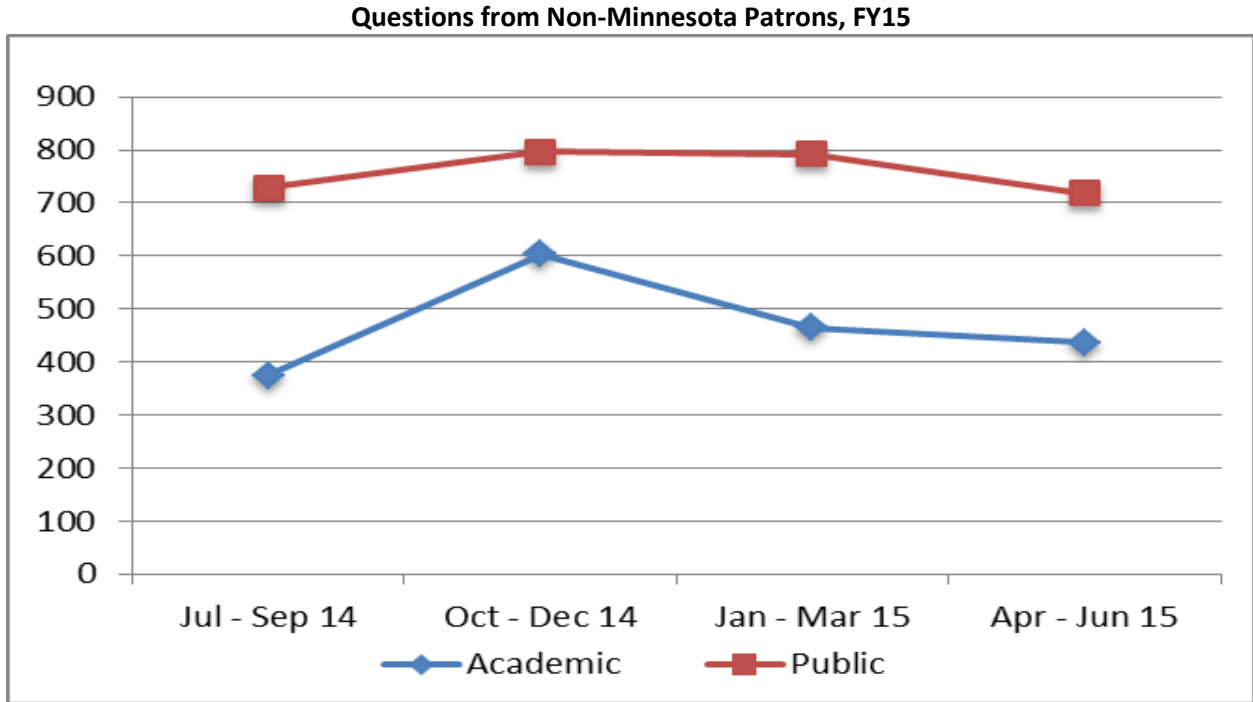
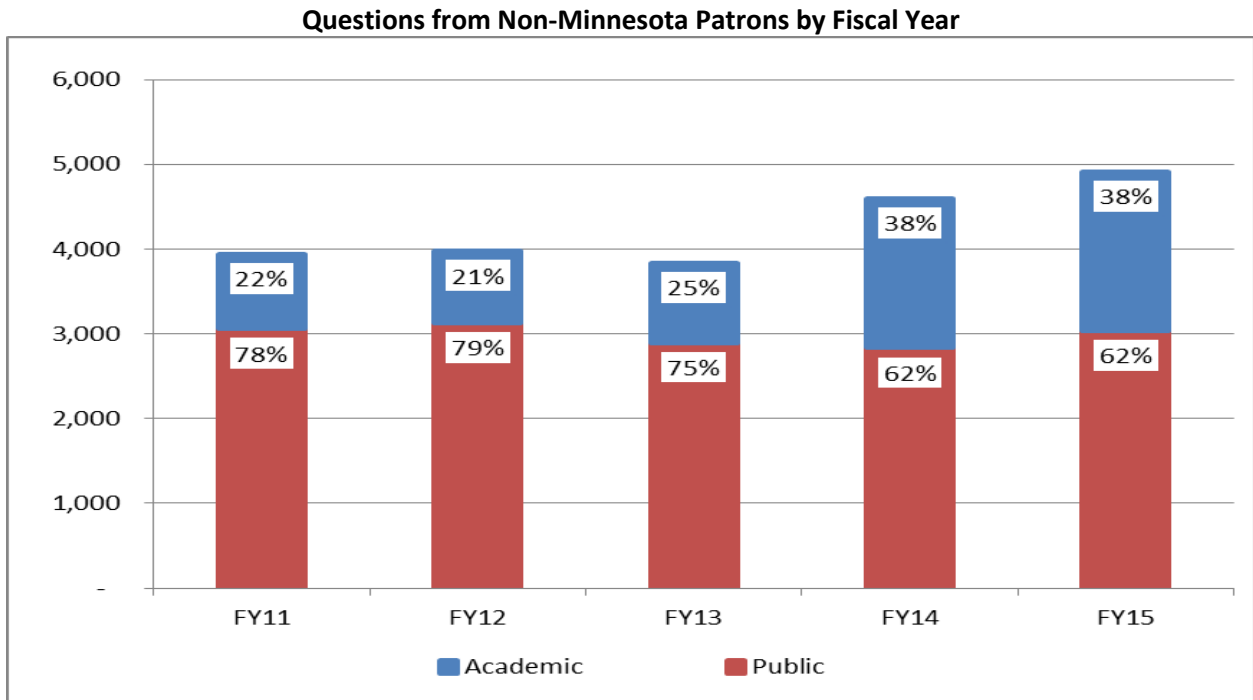


Chart 3 shows the total number of requests from non-Minnesota patrons by fiscal year. While AskMN answered 4,913 questions from non-Minnesota patrons it continues to meet its required minimum contribution to the 24/7 Reference Cooperative.

Chart 3



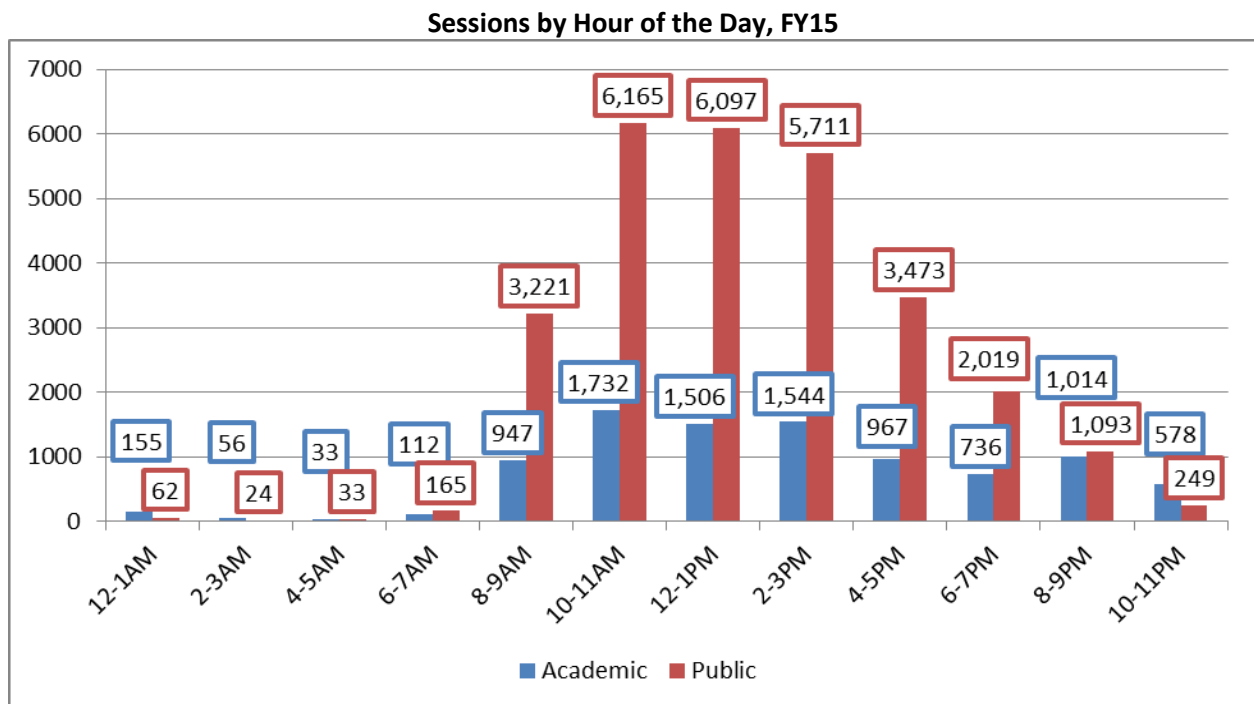
When Did Patrons Ask Questions?

Graph 3 shows the times of day questions were submitted to AskMN by Minnesota patrons in FY15.

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 9 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



Who Answered Questions?

Table 4 shows the breakdown of who answered the 32,900 questions from Minnesota patrons in FY15.

Questions are answered either by staff of participating Minnesota libraries or by staff of the 24/7 Reference Cooperative. Minnesota library staff answered 23,476 (71%) and the 24/7 Reference Cooperative answered 9,424 (29%) 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, FY15

Answered by MN library staff	23,476	71%
Answered by QP 24/7 Reference Cooperative	9,424	29%
Total questions received from MN patrons	32,900	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

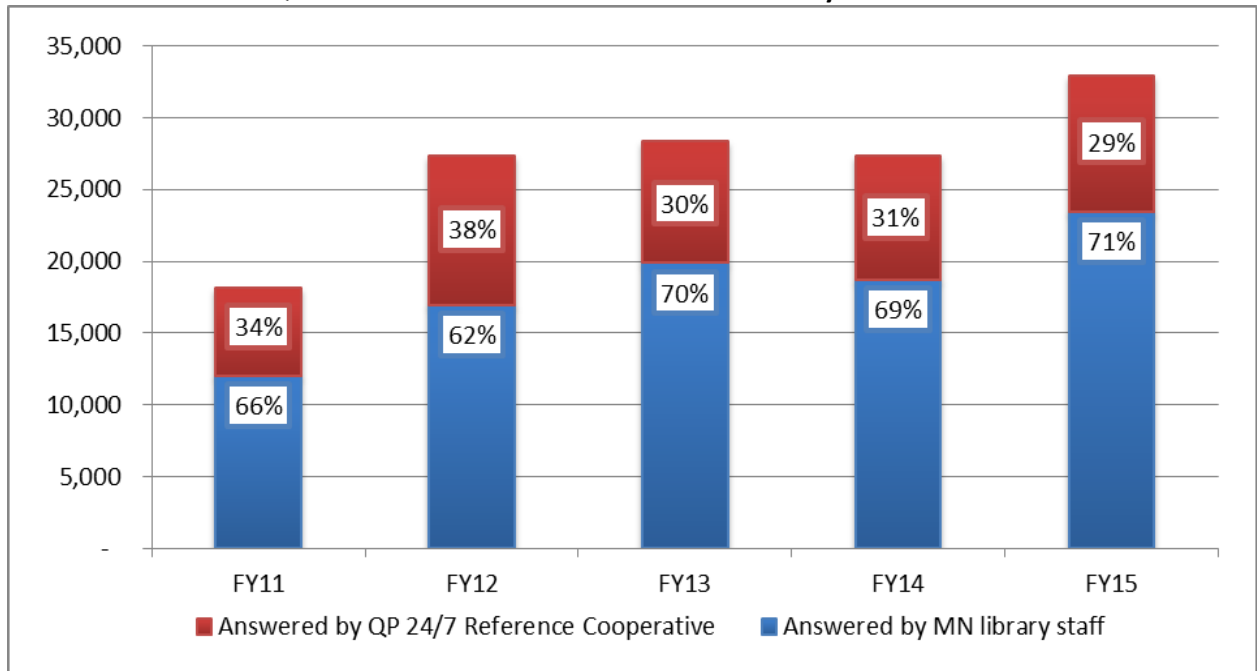


Table 5 and Graph 4 show which Minnesota queue, academic or public, handled the 23,476 questions answered by Minnesota library staff.

Table 5

Minnesota Questions Answered by Minnesota Library Staff, FY15

MN Questions Answered by MN Library Staff	Jul - Sep 14	Oct - Dec 14	Jan - Mar 15	Apr - Jun 15	Total	% Total
Academic	888	1,234	1,125	779	4,026	17%
Public	3,538	5,766	5,653	4,493	19,450	83%
Total	4,426	7,000	6,778	5,272	23,476	100

Graph 4

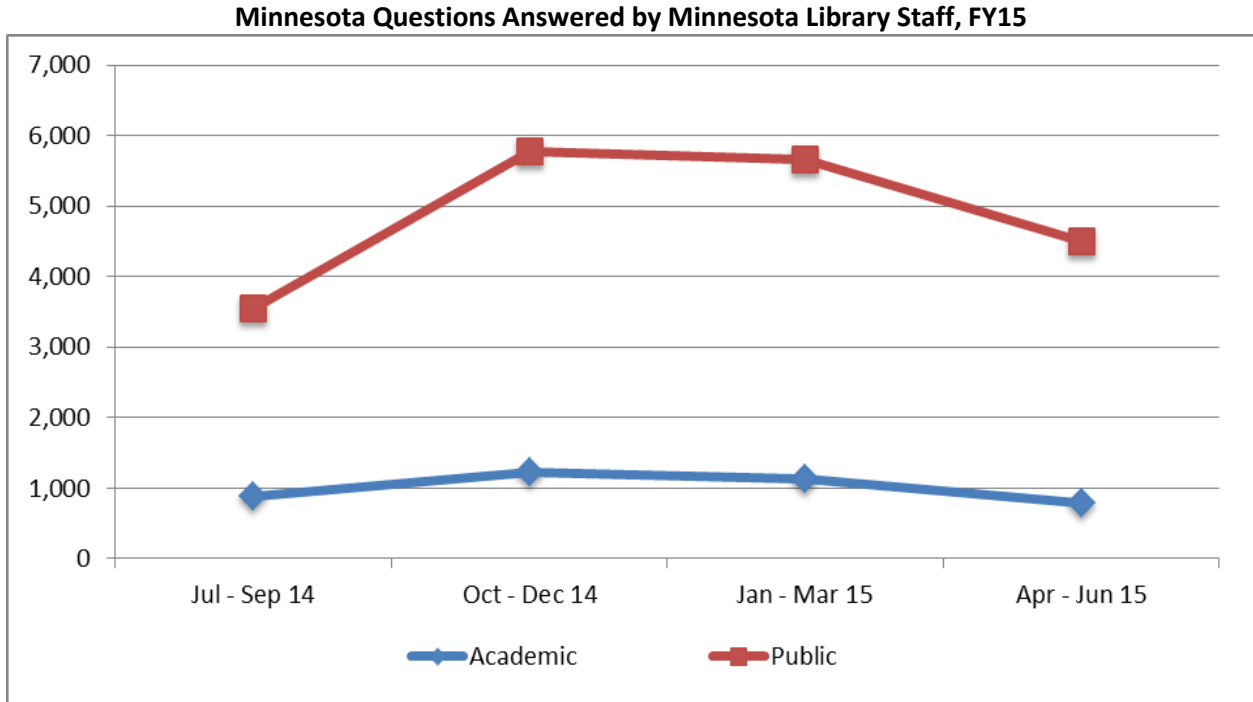
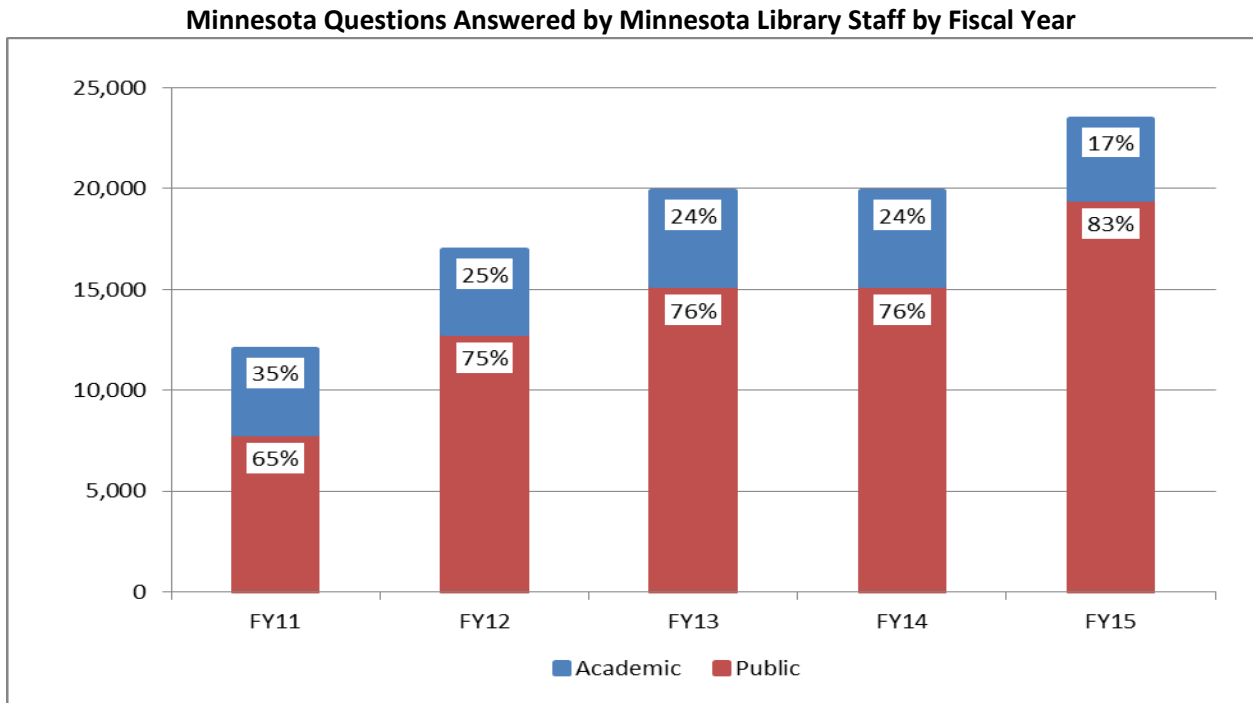


Chart 5 shows the total number of requests by fiscal year. The public queues saw an increase in requests by Minnesota patrons answered by Minnesota library staff in FY15 while the academic queue saw a slight decrease.

Chart 5



While 71% (23,476) 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 29% (9,424) of questions from Minnesota patrons in FY15. This illustrates the vital importance of participating in

the 24/7 Reference Collaborative. Graph 5, especially, illustrates this issue with the increase in questions coming from the K-12 community in the second and third quarter, corresponding with the research phase of History Day.

Table 6

Minnesota Questions Answered by 24/7 Reference Cooperative, FY15

MN Questions Answered by 24/7 Reference Cooperative	Jul - Sep 14	Oct - Dec 14	Jan - Mar 15	Apr - Jun 15	Total	% Total
Academic	609	1,104	885	904	3,502	37%
Public	802	1,816	1,989	1,315	5,922	63%
Total	1,411	2,920	2,874	2,219	9,424	100%

Graph 5

Minnesota Questions Answered by 24/7 Reference Cooperative, FY15

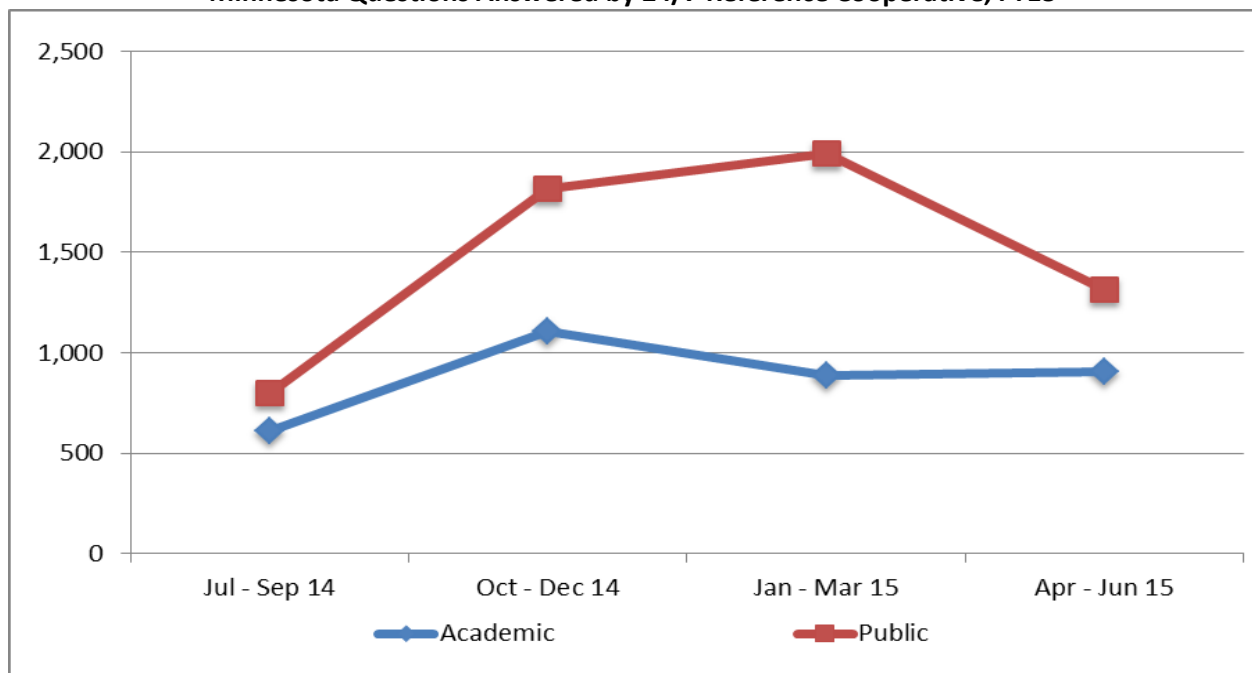
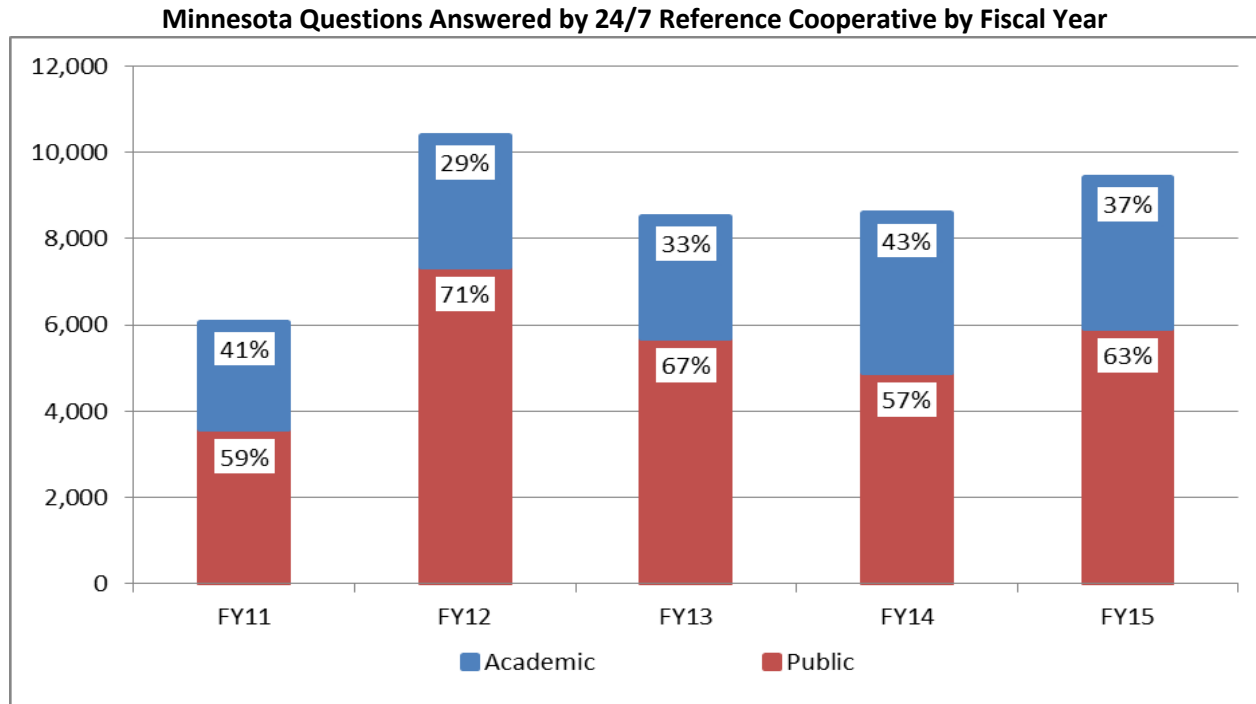


Chart 6 shows the total number of Minnesota requests answered by the 24/7 Reference Cooperative by fiscal year from 6,074 of 15,115 questions in FY11 to 9,424 of 32,900 questions in FY15. Each question is directed into either the academic or public queue. Chart 6 reflects the continued support of giving Minnesota librarians more opportunities to work with Minnesota patrons at their point and time of need.

Chart 6



Where did questions originate within Minnesota?

A change that took place in FY15 was the decision to discontinue collecting zip code data. In previous years this data was used to represent the reach of the service in Minnesota through the Minnesota county map graphic displayed in the appendices of the Fiscal Year End Reports. The reason for this was because the data was being pulled from the chat intake form. The intake form is a stand-alone form that can be linked to from any library webpage taking the patron away from their point of need. More libraries have been migrating to the chat widget which allows libraries to have a chat window on any library webpage and integrated into other library resources. This keeps the patron at their point of need. It is also more intuitive to use.

While the chat intake form was collecting the zip code data used for the Minnesota map information the chat widget does not ask for this information. In practice, the chat intake form was being used less and less by patrons. In FY14 only 28% of chat sessions captured the zip code data while in FY13 58% of chat sessions captured the zip code data. It was decided to retire the chat intake form to allow for more versatile use of the chat widget and to upgrade the statewide portal, askmn.org.

AskMN Activity by Queue

Tables 7 and 8 and Charts 7 and 8 summarize the activity of the academic and public queues. In previous years, Charts 7 and 8 reflected data from section 3 of Tables 7 and 8 – How are all patrons being assisted. For this fiscal year, and moving forward, the Minnesota activity from section 2 will be used for the charts – How are Minnesota patrons being assisted. In FY15, Table 7 shows that 47% 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), 65% 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 an institution with their own patrons before entering the cooperative queues.

Table 7

Activity by Academic Queue by Fiscal Year

Questions received	FY11		FY12		FY13		FY14		FY15	
From MN patrons	6,715	88%	7,209	89%	7,524	89%	7,995	82%	7,528	80%
From non-Minnesota patrons (24/7 Cooperative)	884	12%	848	11%	940	11%	1,768	18%	1,879	20%
Total questions from all patrons	7,599	100%	8,057	100%	8,464	100%	9,763	100%	9,407	100%
How are Minnesota patrons being assisted?	FY11		FY12		FY13		FY14		FY15	
By patron's library	3,921	58%	3,647	51%	3,358	45%	3,879	49%	3,531	47%
By another MN library	297	4%	510	7%	1,345	18%	433	5%	495	7%
By 24/7 Reference Cooperative	2,497	37%	3,052	42%	2,821	37%	3,683	46%	3,502	46%
Total responses provided	6,715	88%	7,209	100%	7,524	100%	7,995	100%	7,528	100%
How are all patrons being assisted?	FY11		FY12		FY13		FY14		FY15	
By patron's library	3,921	52%	3,647	45%	3,358	40%	3,879	40%	3,531	38%
By another MN library	297	4%	1,358	17%	1,345	16%	433	4%	495	5%
By 24/7 Reference Cooperative	3,381	44%	3,052	38%	3,761	44%	5,451	56%	5,381	57%
Total responses provided	7,599	100%	8,057	100%	8,464	100%	9,763	100%	9,407	100%

Chart 7

Activity by Academic Queue by Fiscal Year

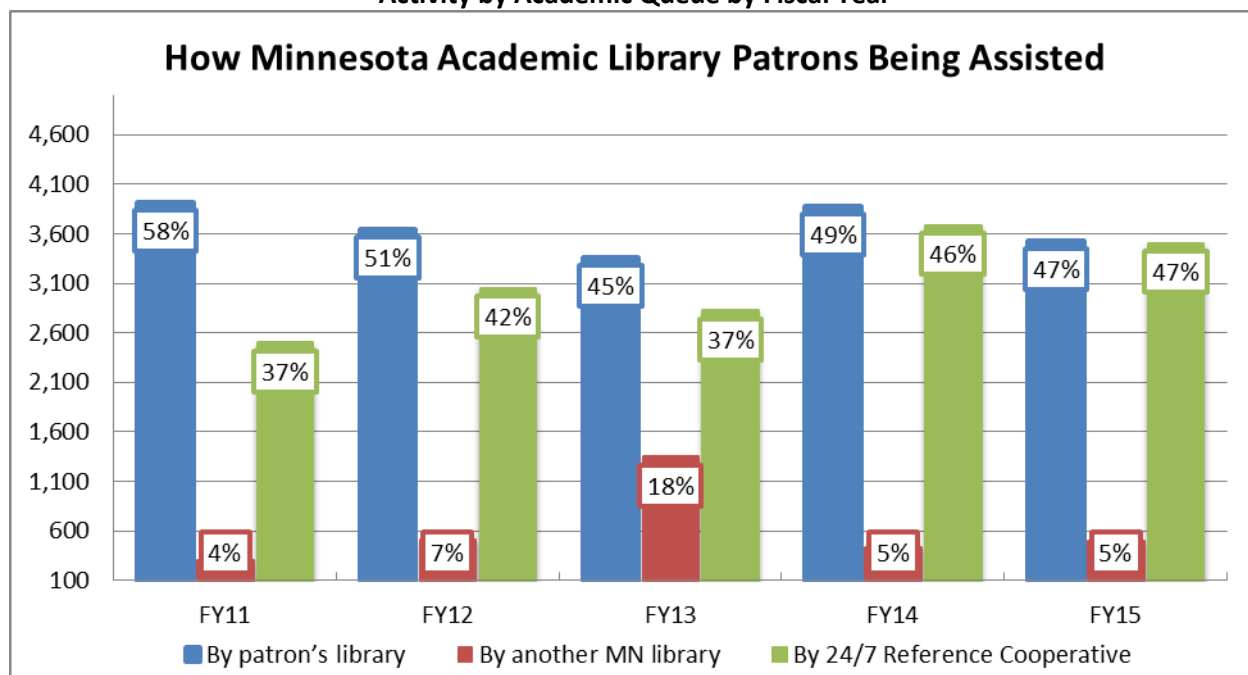


Table 8

Activity by Public Queue by Fiscal Year

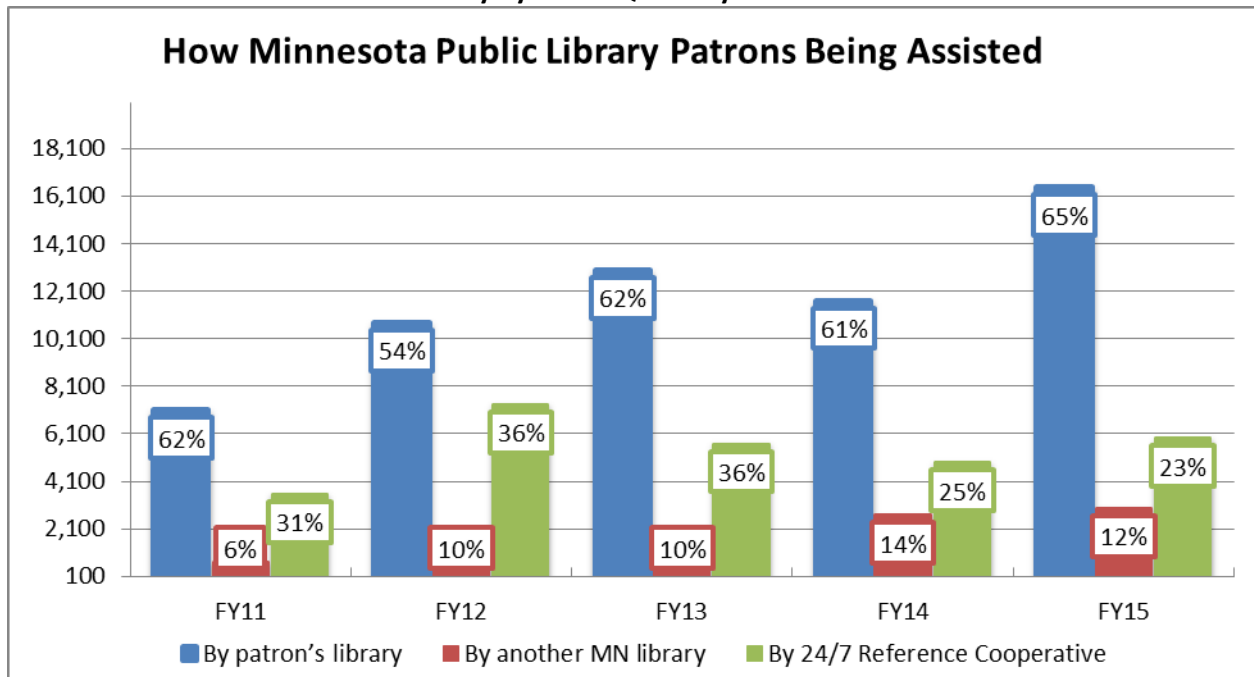
Questions received	FY11		FY12		FY13		FY14		FY15	
From MN patrons	11,400	79%	20,143	87%	20,872	88%	19,316	87%	25,372	89%
From non-Minnesota patrons (24/7 Cooperative)	3057	21%	3129	13%	2,895	12%	2,832	13%	3,034	11%
Total questions from all patrons	14,457	100%	23,272	100%	23,767	100%	22,148	100%	28,406	100%

How are Minnesota patrons being assisted?	FY11		FY12		FY13		FY14		FY15	
By patron's library	7,108	62%	10,789	54%	12,998	62%	11,718	61%	16,474	65%
By another MN library	715	6%	2011	10%	2,175	10%	2,696	14%	2,976	12%
By 24/7 Reference Cooperative	3,577	31%	7,343	36%	5,699	27%	4,902	25%	5,922	23%
Total responses provided	11,400	100%	20,143	100%	20,872	100%	19,316	100%	25,372	100%

How are all patrons being assisted?	FY11		FY12		FY13		FY14		FY15	
By patron's library	7,108	49%	10,789	46%	12,998	55%	11,718	53%	16,474	58%
By another MN library	715	5%	5,140	22%	2,175	9%	2,696	12%	2,976	10%
By 24/7 Reference Cooperative	6,634	46%	7,343	32%	8,594	36%	7,734	35%	8,956	32%
Total responses provided	14,457	100%	23,272	100%	23,767	100%	22,148	100%	28,406	100%

Chart 8

Activity by Public Queue by Fiscal Year



Patron satisfaction

At the conclusion of each transaction (question/answer), Minnesota patrons are invited to complete a brief survey. Of the 32,900 total questions received from Minnesota patrons, 663 (2%) responded to most survey questions. Each institution may create their own survey so all questions may not completely reflect information

captured below. Table 9 shows number of responses to most asked survey questions 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

This was the first time I used this service:	Negative or No	126	40%
	Neutral or N/A	12	4%
	Positive or Yes	170	54%
	Not Submitted	5	2%
The librarian was helpful.	Negative or No	55	8%
	Neutral or N/A	28	4%
	Positive or Yes	290	44%
	Not Submitted	290	44%
Were you satisfied with the answer to your question?	Negative or No	90	14%
	Neutral or N/A	68	11%
	Positive or Yes	454	73%
	Not Submitted	12	2%
Would you use this service again?	Negative or No	53	8%
	Neutral or Maybe	57	9%
	Positive or Yes	547	83%
	Not Submitted	6	1%

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 1 shows some of the comments received in FY15.

List of Participating Libraries

Appendix 2 shows the list of participating libraries as of June 30, 2015.

Acknowledgement

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

Contact Information

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Appendix 1

Selected Survey Comments, FY15

- A very positive experience. Sometime you learn as much from the information that is NOT available as you do from what is. Kay was very nice and helpful.
- Amber was great and diligent about finding the answers I needed.
- Andrea was very helpful, fast and thorough! I will definitely use this service again!!
- AWESOME service....Librarian who helped me went above and beyond to make sure I got what I needed :-)
- Chat is so much better than trying to call because, among other things, it's so hard to find relevant phone numbers, much less to get someone.
- Excellent and friendly service. Really helpful =]
- Fast and helpful. Thanks. Better than a phone call.
- Highly recommended if having trouble finding what you want
- I am glad that I was able to reach out to someone who could help me with my homework. No one who had had the same assignment was available, and my teacher is, of course, not at school, since it is late. She sent me a helpful video that gave me the proper information that I had needed. Thank you very much for this!
- I appreciated this help so much! Fast, accurate, efficient and friendly.
- I can't believe how easy it was. Great idea!
- I had been so focused, I didn't realize about the resources right in front of me. It took a second pair of eyes to help.
- I have used this site multiple times and I always feel as though they helped me thoroughly! Great help.
- I love how easy it is to ask a quick question when something comes up I'm having trouble with. The librarians are great at pointing me in the right direction when I'm not sure where to start looking or if I'm having trouble finding a specific resource. Thank you!
- I LOVE THIS SERVICE!
- I loved using online chat! It was very easy to use, I had a librarian helping me within minutes after I asked my question, and she was very patient with me for how confused I was in the beginning. I also loved that it was on Saturday in the afternoon and I still got all my questions answered and I didn't have to wait until Monday.
- I was pleasantly surprised to find someone available at this time. Good resource to be able to communicate with someone when few are around.
- I was really confused going into the chat but I learned a lot! Sheryl was incredibly helpful and was really good at finding exactly what I needed help with.
- It's great to have librarians from around the country help out with my questions even in the late evening. What a great service!
- Just thank you sooo much.
- Justine was really helpful with me and my topic
- Kaia was great. She was really responsive and got me set up quickly.
- Librarian was great. She found the publication I could not find on my own, Thanks again.
- pleased to have the chat available 24/7! AMAZING. Thank you.
- Patty was friendly and very helpful. What I especially liked was that she didn't leave me guessing if I should wait. I always knew what was happening -- very important in an online chat. I really appreciated receiving a transcript of our chat immediately in an email. I'm delighted with this service. Thank you very much!
- Quick and efficient use of my time. The staff member was helpful, prompt, and courteous.
- Sandy really was helpful and I have to commend her to think she was typing really fast and helped me come up with a thesis and find new sources I would do this again in a heartbeat if only things in life are this easy
- Shea was very helpful and knowledgeable. Although we were many miles apart, she was great. Thanks Shea
- Thank you so much. I was able to renew my 2 books on-line though I had never done this before and when I contacted the "Ask a librarian" I did not realize it was someone who was not at my local library. The librarian who responded gave me the website to get to my library and I followed the directions. It saved me a trip to the library and I would try the on-line renewal again. Thank you.
- Thanks! It is great to be able to contact the library at 11:00 pm from my home.

- The gentleman that chatted with me was very helpful. I truly appreciate the advice he gave me. This tool for helping students 24/7 needs more people like him! Best experience I've had so far!
- The librarians were very helpful, and the sources for my paper that they gave me were superb.
- The service (provided by Wanda, Jeff, and Lydia) was amazing. Thank you!
- This helped me so much! I am so thankful for this service, and wish I had known about it sooner.
- this is only my second time I have learned a lot and the librarians are just so sweet to take time to do this so out of ten on a scale I would give this service a ten and the librarians a 11
- This service saves my grades!!! I love that the librarians show you where to look after giving fabulous resources.
- This system helped me so much. I was so glad when I found it. The online world needs more of helpful systems like these.
- This was a great service!! I wish I would have used it before my third year of college! I will now rave about it to all of my peers (and I am very sincere when I say that) Thank you!
- This was a very helpful service--I would use it again.
- This was awesome. Has to be a favorite going forward. Thanks for the awesome help with a difficult search question.
- This was wonderful -- I got what I needed in a timely way and it helped ease my frustration with trying to get it for myself.
- Very helpful, looked very hard for articles related to my topic and then showed me how to find them myself.
- Very quick and helpful.
- Very thorough and helpful. Offered different options when answering my questions. Fast and polite service.
- Wonderful! The librarian was so fast, polite and helpful. I just couldn't believe I had access to a great service like this!
- Wow! What a great service! I didn't know it existed but just stumbled on to it while on the site. So happy to have this to assist with questions and needs. Well done whoever came up with the idea and implemented it. My librarian (Amy) was awesome!

Appendix 2 - -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	August, 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)
Metro State University	February, 2015 (FY15)
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	30
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)
East Central Regional Library	September, 2014 (FY15)
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	August, 2014 (FY15)
Washington County Library	January, 2009 (FY09)
Willmar Public Library	May, 2013 (FY13)
Sub Total	15
Grand Total	45