

# AskMN: The Librarian Is In!

## FY16 Report

July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016



AskMN: The Librarian Is In! is Minnesota's 24/7 statewide digital reference service. AskMN has been in service since March, 2008, and in those 8 years has grown from 8 libraries to 45 libraries across Minnesota.

Each year one area of focus stands out. In previous years we have focused on adding more participating libraries, assessing the quality of the service, and reaching out to the K12 community. This year the area of focus has been on increasing the range of access points for patrons to get help and improving the overall visibility of the service. We have accomplished that by adding a proactive chat widget to many of the ELM databases, creating a new logo, and updating the statewide portal, askmn.org.

### Overall Activity

To offer 24/7 coverage of the service we partner with the QuestionPoint 24/7 Reference Cooperative, made up of libraries from the United States and United Kingdom. When a Minnesota librarian is not available to assist a Minnesota patron a Cooperative librarian will step in and help that patron. AskMN libraries provide the same assistance to other Cooperative libraries. In FY16 AskMN librarians answered a total of 36,750 questions. Of those, 30,972 questions were from Minnesota patrons and 5,778 questions were from non-Minnesota patrons. While the overall number of questions declined slightly from 37,813 in FY15 to 36,750 in FY16, the academic queue saw a 25% increase in traffic from 7,528 questions in FY15 to 9,359 questions in FY16.

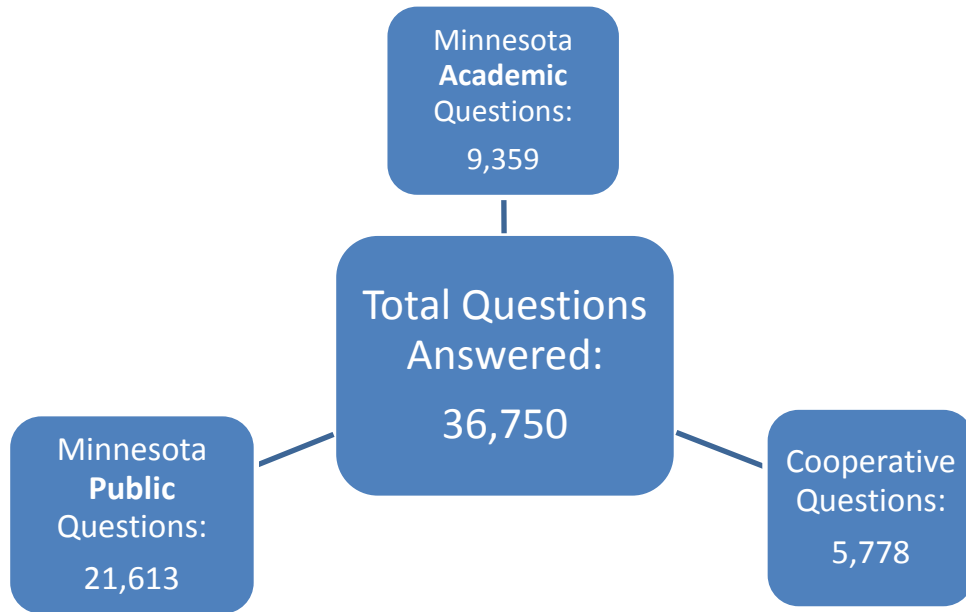
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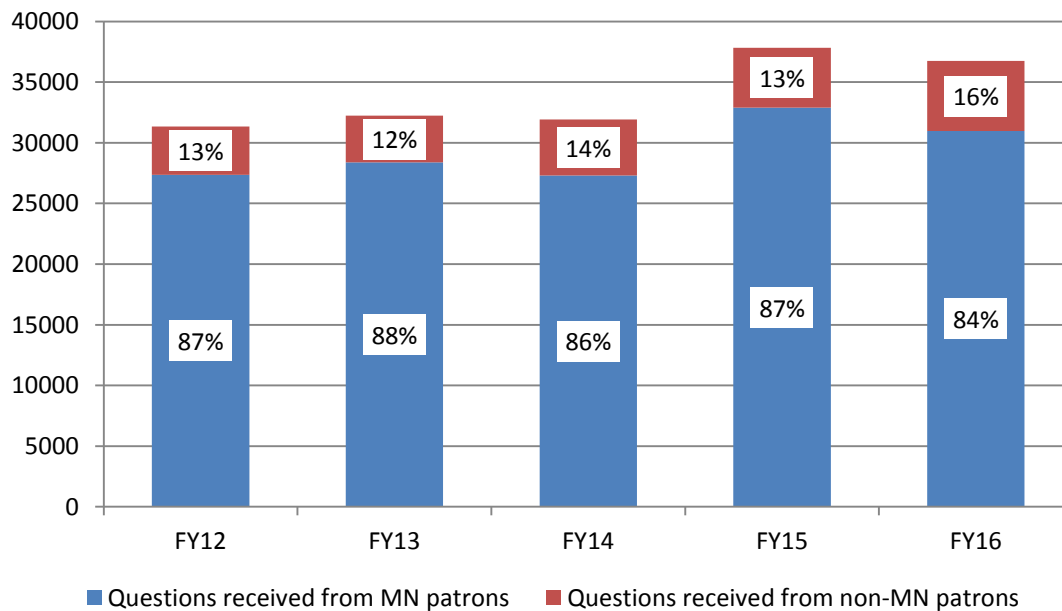
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### Total Questions Received, FY16



### Total Questions Received by Fiscal Year



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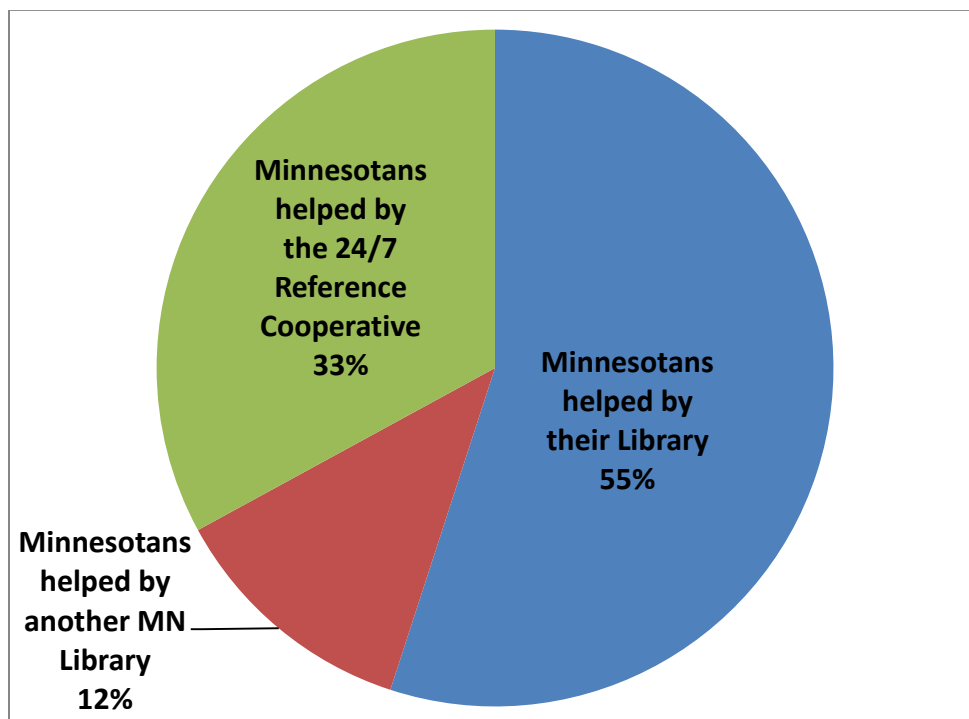
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### How were Minnesota Patrons helped?

AskMN allows libraries to provide a tiered-service level giving each library the first opportunity to connect with their own patrons. When a librarian from a patron’s library is not available to pick up their patron’s question, that question becomes available to other AskMN librarians. If an AskMN librarian is not available, the question goes to the 24/7 Reference Cooperative for assistance. In FY16, AskMN libraries were able to assist their own patron 55% of the time.

#### Minnesota Patron questions answered by type of library



### When Did Patrons Ask Questions?

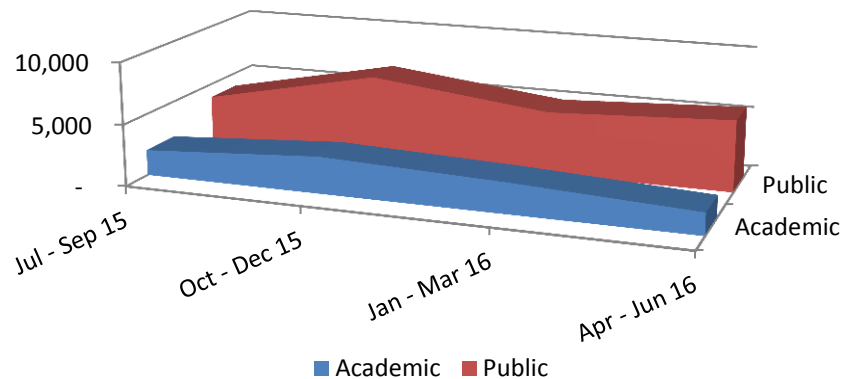
Traffic from Minnesota patrons tends to follow closely with the beginning and end of the school year, with summer seeing less activity. History Day research has also played a role in activity for the Minnesota public library queue. In past years we have seen the research phase of History Day projects fall between January and February. However, this past year it was observed that the research phase started earlier, between November and December. One reason for this is that the students need more time with the information they have gathered to properly analyze it and connect it into their projects.

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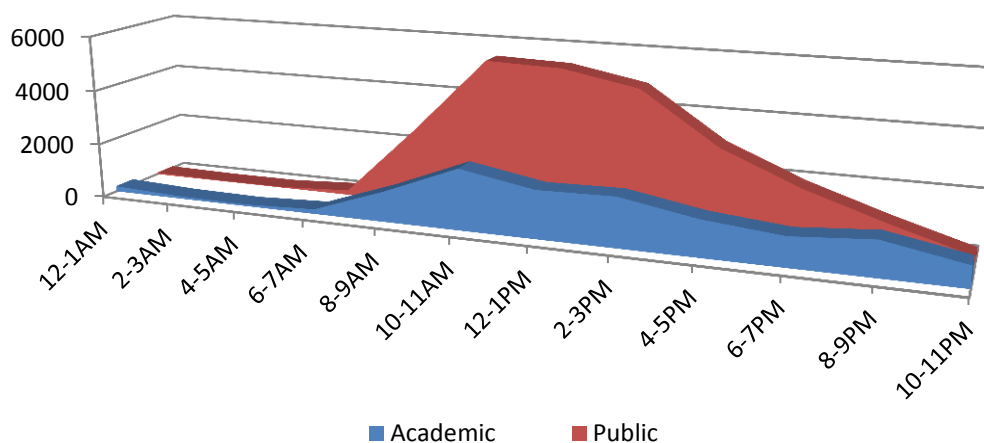


## Questions from Minnesota Patrons, FY16



Traffic patterns for the time of day patrons are coming to the service to ask their questions is tracked to better staff the service to meet more Minnesota patrons at their time of need by Minnesota library staff. While there are more questions coming from the public library queue than the academic library queue, we consistently see a switch in the evening hours where more questions start originating from the academic library queue. Around the 8 PM mark there is a usual switch-over in activity with academic questions rising and public questions falling. This is a great example of the need for the after-hours service, when information and reference desks in libraries are typically closed.

## Questions Asked by hour of day



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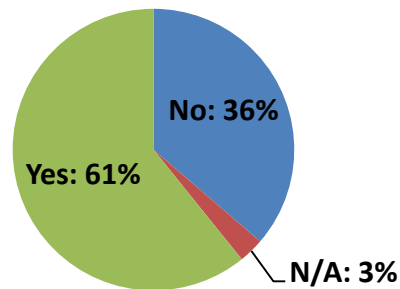
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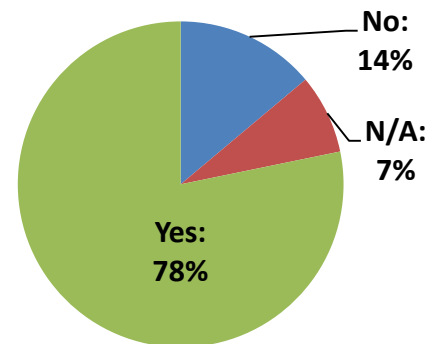
### Patron Feedback

Patron satisfaction also helps gauge the quality of the service. Of the 45 libraries participating in AskMN, 13 libraries use patron feedback forms after a chat session has ended. From those feedback forms we have received 935 responses for FY16, a total of 3% of all 30,972 questions from Minnesota patrons. Here are the responses to the questions from those surveys:

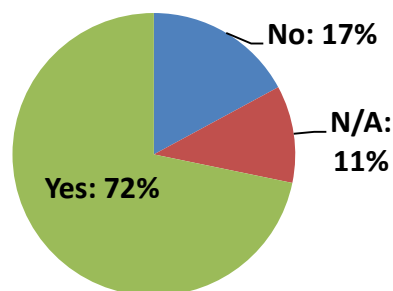
**This was the first time I used this service:**



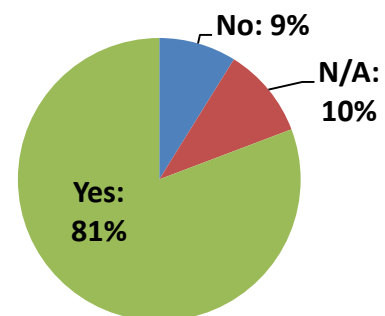
**The librarian was helpful:**



**Were you satisfied with the answer to your question?**



**Would you use this service again?**



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This is a word cloud generated from patron comments received from FY16 surveys:



## List of Participating Libraries

Appendix 1 shows the list of participating libraries as of June 30, 2016.

## Acknowledgements

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

A heartfelt thank you goes out to all the participating libraries for their work in shaping the AskMN service!

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## Contact Information

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### Appendix 1 - -AskMN Participating Libraries

#### Participating Academic Libraries

Anoka Technical College  
Augsburg University  
Bethany Lutheran College  
Bethel University  
Carleton College  
Century College  
College of St. Scholastica  
Concordia University – St. Paul  
Dakota County Technical College  
Hamline University  
Hennepin Technical College  
Inver Hills Community College  
Lake Superior College  
Macalester College's Wallace DeWitt Library  
McNally Smith College of Music  
Metro State University  
Minnesota State University – Mankato  
Normandale Community College  
North Central University  
North Hennepin Community College  
Ridgewater College  
St. Catherine University  
St. Cloud State University  
St. Olaf College  
St. Paul College  
University of Minnesota – Duluth  
University of Minnesota - Morris  
University of Minnesota – Twin Cities  
University of Northwestern, St. Paul  
University of St. Thomas

#### Participating Public Libraries

Anoka County Library  
Carver County Library  
Dakota County Library  
Duluth Public Library  
East Central Regional Library  
Great River Regional Library  
Hennepin County Library System  
Lake Agassiz Regional Library  
Minitex  
Minnesota Historical Society  
Saint Paul Public Library  
Scott County Library  
Washington County Library  
Willmar Public Library