

AskMN: The Librarian Is In! FY19 Report

July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019



AskMN: The Librarian Is In! is Minnesota's 24/7 statewide digital reference service. AskMN has been in service since March 2008, with 40 libraries and library systems participating from across Minnesota.



FY19 marked AskMN's 11th year in service. AskMN began in 2008 with eight libraries willing to try something new – be part of a cooperative of libraries helping each other answer patron questions 24/7. Since then more libraries have joined and patrons caught on quickly to the fact that they could get help whenever they needed it. AskMN has grown steadily through the years and since 2008, AskMN participating libraries have answered and followed up with over 300,000 patron questions!

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 the 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 FY19 AskMN librarians answered a total of 34,854 questions. Of those, 30,468 questions were from Minnesota patrons and 4,386 questions were from non-Minnesota patrons. The overall number of questions decreased 7% from 37,257 in FY18 to 34,854 in FY19. Minnesota academic libraries continued to see large increases in usage. This was the second year in a row with a double-digit increase. The academic queue increase 20% from the 12,220 questions in FY18 to 14,743 questions in FY19.

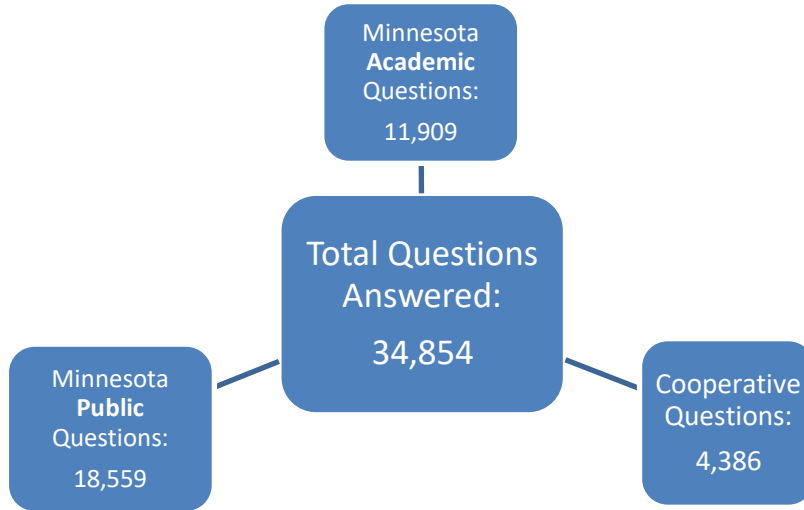
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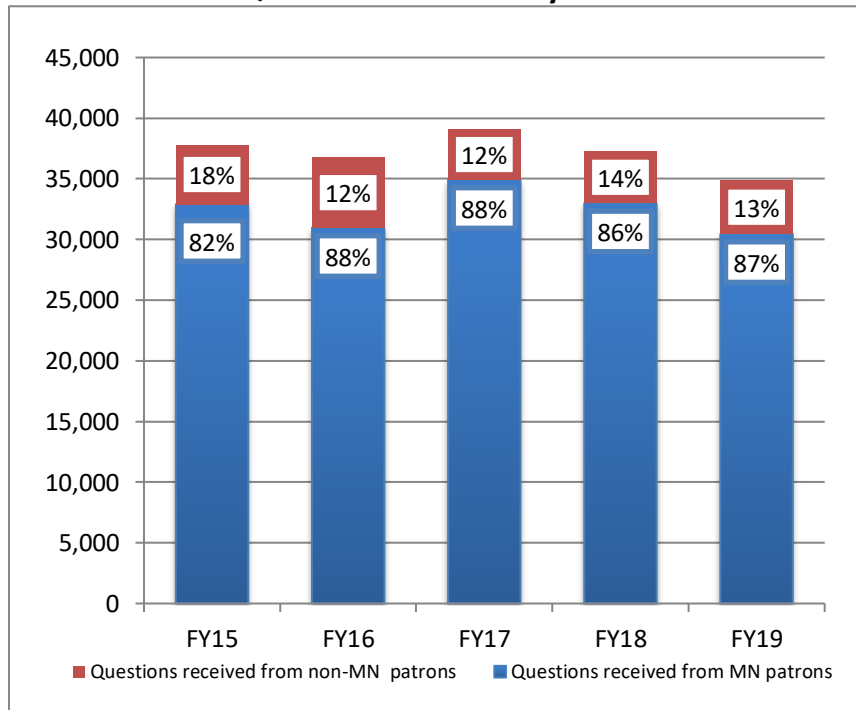
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Total Questions Received, FY19



Total Questions Received by Fiscal Year



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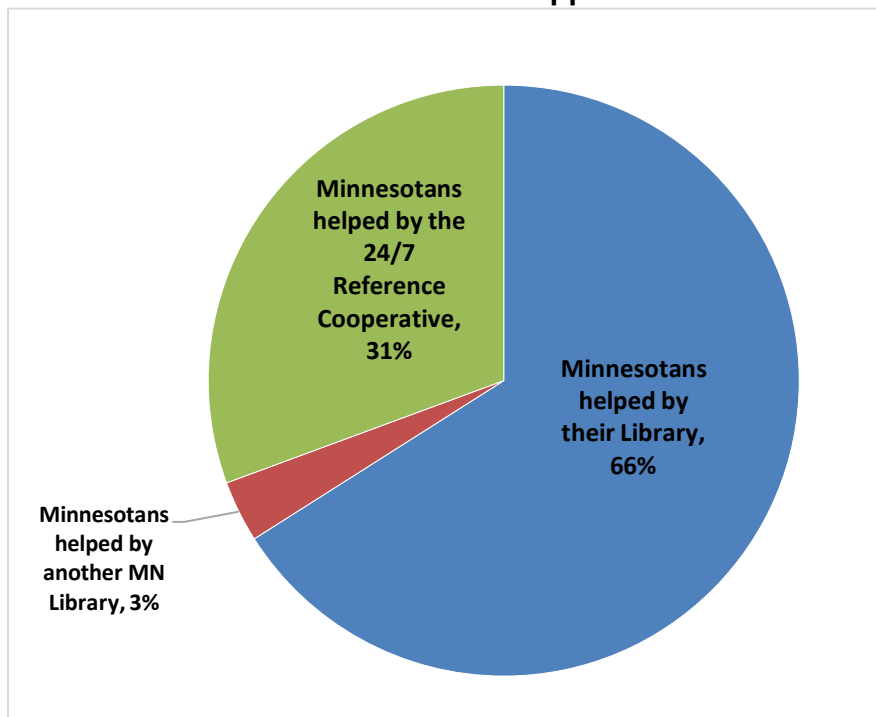
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How were Minnesota Patrons helped?

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 or the 24/7 Reference Cooperative for assistance. In FY19, AskMN libraries were able to assist their own patron 66% of the time. The 24/7 Reference Cooperative helped pick up just under one third of the overall questions from Minnesota patrons.

Minnesota Patron AskMN support network



When Did Patrons Ask Questions?

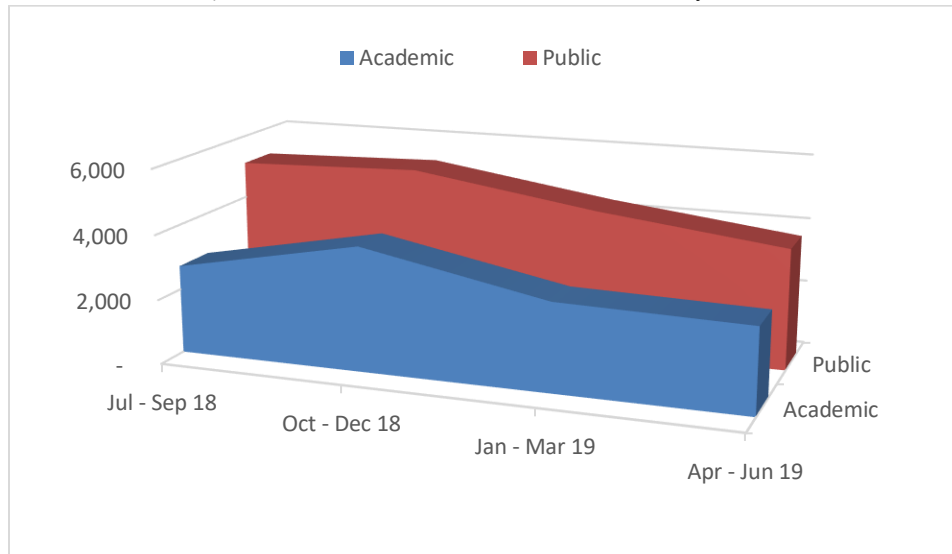
Traffic from Minnesota patrons tends to follow closely with the beginning and end of the school year, with summer seeing less activity. We see an increase in October through December for the academic queue, which would follow with the beginning of mid-terms running through the end of the Fall semester. History Day research has also played a role in activity for the Minnesota public library queue. We have seen, in previous years, the research phase of History Day (K12) projects fall between December and February. However, this past year, we saw that most schools started the research phase sooner. Coinciding with Minitex ROI History Day instruction, we see a bump from October – December for the AskMN service. Chat sessions, on average, take about twenty minutes in length.

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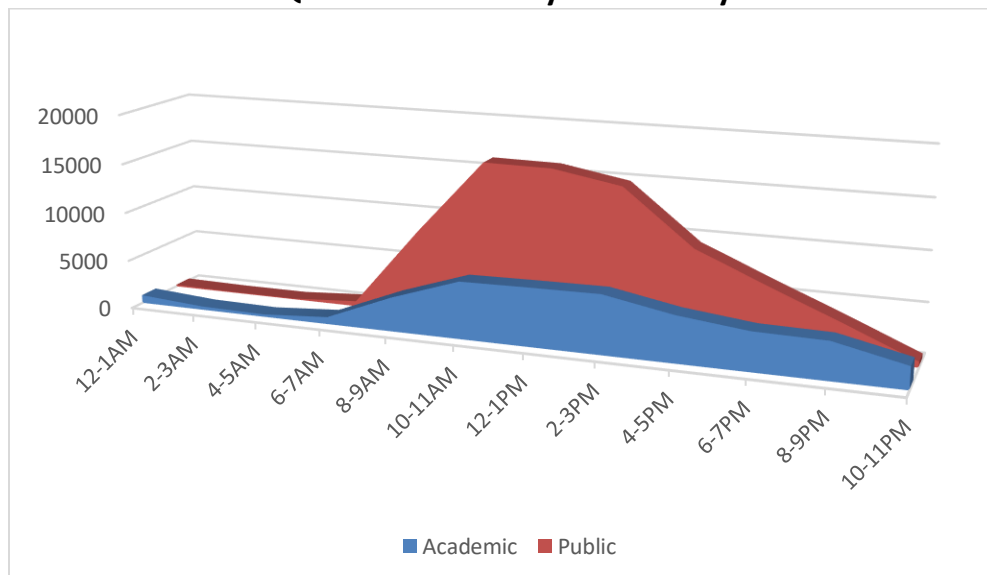


Questions from Minnesota Patrons, FY19



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 switch-over in activity with academic questions rising and public questions declining. This is a great example of the need for the after-hours service, when information and reference desks in libraries are typically closed. For the public queue, we see K12 students typically enter the service during school hours of 10am – 2pm.

Questions Asked by hour of day



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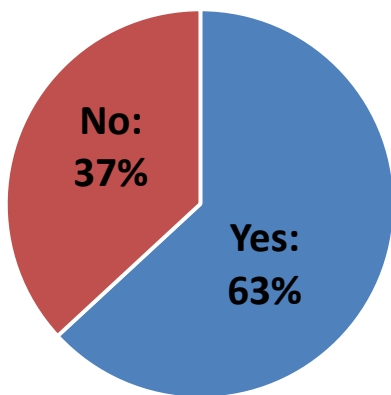
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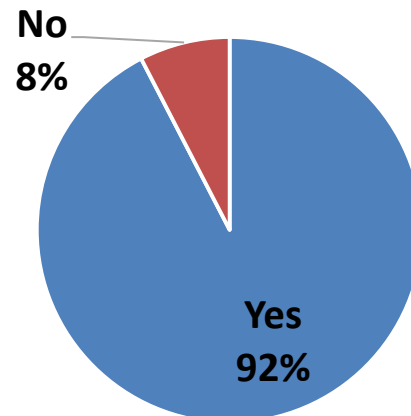
Patron Feedback

Patron satisfaction also helps gauge the quality of the service. Of the 40 libraries participating in AskMN, 13 libraries use the QuestionPoint patron feedback forms after a chat session has ended. From those feedback forms we have received 880 responses for FY19, a total of 3% of all 30,468 questions from Minnesota patrons. Here are the responses to the questions from those surveys:

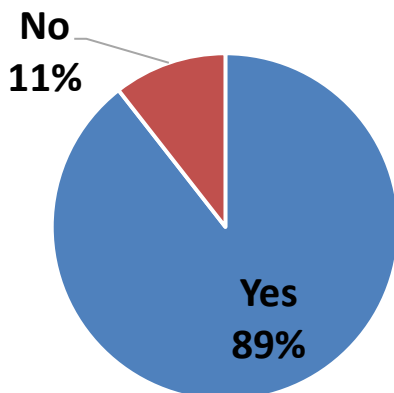
This was the first time I used this service:



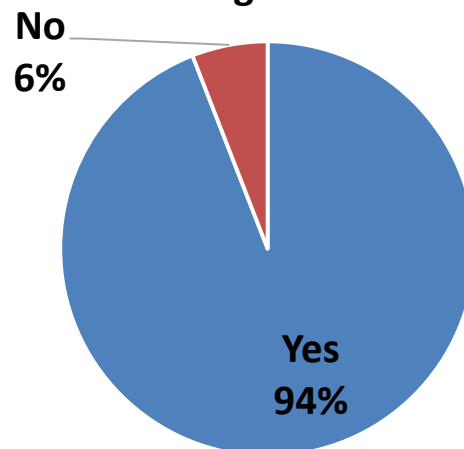
The librarian was helpful:



Were you satisfied with the answer to your question:



Would you use this service again:



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List of Participating Libraries

Appendix 1 shows the list of participating libraries for FY19.

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 for the past 11 years!

Contact Information

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Appendix 1 - -AskMN Participating Libraries

Participating Academic Libraries

Augsburg University
Bethany Lutheran College
Bethel University
Carleton College
Century College
Concordia University – St. Paul
Dakota County Technical College
Hamline University
Hennepin Technical College
Inver Hills Community College
Lake Superior College
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
Cloquet Public Library
Dakota County Library
East Central Regional Library
Great River Regional Library
Hennepin County Library System
Lake Agassiz Regional Library
Minitex
Saint Paul Public Library
Scott County Library
Washington County Library
Willmar Public Library