

# Ask a Librarian Regional User Group Meeting 2007

## Notes from Meetings

### 1- Update on Ask a Librarian

- Statistics. Averaging over 3,000 live chat sessions a month. Over 1,000 email. Only 1/3 of libraries use email, so this is actually very higher than it appears at first glance. Feel Busy, it's because we are!!
- Academic Desk  
More on at #2. Academic Desk Taskforce recommended a pilot project breaking AaL into two service desks- Collaborative and Academic. The academic desk would be from 10-4 M-F. If it's closed, users will go to collaborative desk.
- Associate Partners  
Pilot Project created to help build a relationship between Ask a Librarian and the K12 community. Kids are using us. Teachers are recommending us, this will help us get into a school district – have a point of contact to assist with explaining the service (only 2-6 librarians on at a time please don't have the whole class login at the same time), promote the service, and help us resolve issues with problem users.
- Participants

### 2- Academic Desk Pilot Program -Implementation Details

After last years' regional meetings, an Academic Taskforce was formed to evaluate the need for an Academic Desk within Ask a Librarian. They decided there was enough need and interest for an academic desk. They recommended a Pilot Project with a re-evaluation in 6 months. Their desk is scheduled to open in September 2007.

#### How will it work?

If a patron is identified as coming from an academic institution (either through self-id or if they clicked on an AaL from an academic library), the software will follow the following path:

Is my LOCAL library available?

→ If yes, they will be connected to their local operator

→ If no, is an ACADEMIC LIBRARIAN available?

- If yes, they will be connected to an academic librarian
- If no, they will be connected to the main collaborative desk.

AaL staff will closely monitor queues for the collaborative and the academic desks, to ensure all users are getting quick, and good service.

Jennifer is working on a schedule, so you should here from her soon, though she can tell already, she will need some additional hours from academic institutions. She will have additional training in the Fall to help librarians become involved.

### Questions/Comments

Are these the time we need the desk? What about Nights and Weekends?

### 3- Marketing



-Facebook,  
The focus of Facebook is continually changing. We do have a page: In earlier regional meetings, it was reported we were going to place flyer ads. However, Facebook has been very difficult to work with and we will not be advertising at this time (though may re-visit this in the future).



-MySpace,  
[www.myspace.com/askalibrarianfl](http://www.myspace.com/askalibrarianfl)  
Free and successful campaign. We are making friends with users, librarians and libraries. We post "Question of the Week" and try and keep the page fresh. The page has helped AaL make the news and we are seeing use from the page. We plan to continue with this page.

## -Back to School

We are planning a traditional back to school campaign targeting college and high school students. The campaign will have posters, bookmarks and lanyards. These will be sent to the school media center at every high school in Florida and to all participating libraries.

## -AaL Day,

In October, we plan a second heavy campaign with outreach by us, and participating libraries along with a press release. The details are still developing but our goals are:

- Demo/Canned Presentations created for participating libraries to use for local promotion.
- A debut of a 'YouTube' commercial contest for high school students.
- Dispersing additional marketing materials

## -Business Community

A long neglected group. We are going to focus on them in several ways:

- Business oriented flyers distributed to libraries for display
- Re-designing our entry form to be more adult-friendly. Right now adults are an 'other' on the form.
- Mailing Business Flyer to small business organizations

## Comments:

Promotion- National Library Week?? ALA.org for dates...however not on Nat'l Library Worker Day.

Ideas for promotion:

- Glow in the dark rubber rings (jewelry).

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Need training on MyFlorida

Business Flyers to the Public Libraries! They have small business centers.

Focus on Teens/Kids Homework Help capabilities

Mouse Pads (with middle area with pocket for libraries to add Internet Policies or other PR materials)

Promote compatible with blackberries

In form, push more to choose a local library

Back to school – mid to end of August  
Post Flash Demo of Ask a Librarian so more accessible. Place in college's courseware. URL would be best.  
IPod- prize idea for YouTube competition.

#### 4- Scheduling

- We are still having issues with 'no-shows'. Please report to us if either of these situations occurs.
  - The desk is not fully staffed when you are online. If according to WhentoWork, there should be additional staff.
  - Names are logged into the software, but they are not communicating with other librarians nor are they picking up users.

#### Comments:

Wednesday 1-3 is very busy with HS kids.

#### 5- Issues on the Collaborative Desk

##### Picking up Patrons

- Making Sure staffing appropriate desks. When you login confirm, you are staffing the Collaborative Desk and not your local desk. As we move to Academic, Local and Collaborative desks this will become more vital.
- Make sure patrons are not waiting unless there is a queue.

##### Referrals

##### -Chat to Email Follow-up

At the end of a chat session, on the pop-up you have the option to click the button 'transfer' instead of 'done'. This will allow you to transfer questions to a local library for follow-up. If the patron is not time rushed, this is a great option- just collect the information the library will need during the chat session and choose the library from the drop down menu.

##### -UNMONITORED v. Monitored Referrals

We are very concerned about the amount of unmonitored referrals. An unmonitored referral is when the librarian tells the user, 'they need to contact their local library', but does not provide contact

information or direction for the user. The user, therefore, feels dismissed and not helped! Even if local help is what the patron needs, there are options.

1. Yes, if they have their card, you can help them place a hold or renew an item. They came to us because they could not do this on their own.
2. With the knowledge base, you can let them know the steps to re-setting their pin for their institution. Or, you can forward the question by email OR provide them with the phone number of the department that can do this for them.
3. Too local, you can help the user by talking about electronic resources the librarians can show them in the library, give them a phone number, and help them locate their local library either on the campus or in their community.

Remember, it's not necessarily the right answer – it's the feeling that the user remembers. You don't want to feel dismissed when you call the phone company, the same thing holds true here.

Need to send out instructions to the lists/and stress more in training.

### Problem Users and IPs

AaL has become much more proactive in 'redirecting' problem IP addresses. An identified problem IP is not banned; instead it is redirected to a page, asking them to call to discuss issues with this IP address. So far, four addresses have been redirected. We are also keeping track of IP address issues on our troubleshooting section of the Toolbox. We are working hard not to block schools and other shared IP addresses.

If you have an inappropriate user, either warn or disconnect from the user (trust us- they know why) and let the other librarians on duty know what happened. Report the address to [askalibrarian@tblc.org](mailto:askalibrarian@tblc.org).

However, remember millennial (teens especially) like to test the system before they need it. They often login without a true question to find out if AaL will be there when they need it.

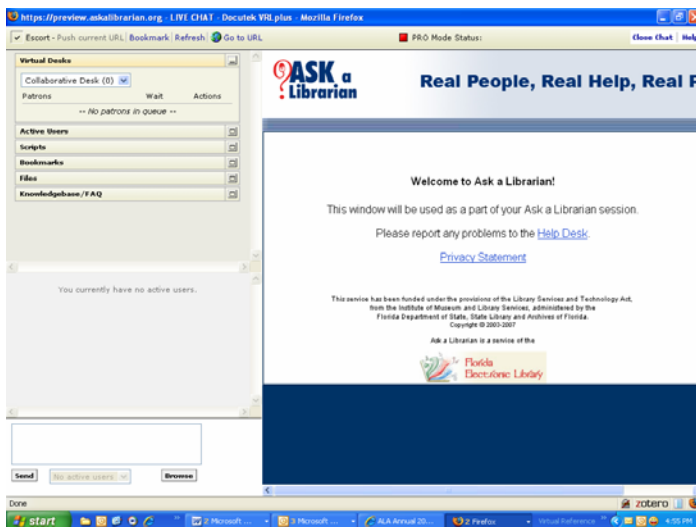
Actually, I don't blame them, would you want to rely on a service being available when you're in desperate need to find out its not helpful, or check it out ahead of time. Often answering there basic question and talking about the service in general is helpful.

### Comments:

- Blackboard has timed tests, which might account for some of our truly in a hurry test takers.
- Kids have figured out they can use AaL to get around the school filters for MySpace.
- Create a script for kids w/o questions telling them about the service. Just in general – scripts a good idea about the service.

### 6- Software Issues

- Problem: New Patron window not appearing or Save Question window not appearing. Cause: Multiple Pop-up blockers on Librarian side. While many people, remember to disable one pop-up blocker, a computer typically has several running (IE, Google Toolbar, Yahoo Toolbar, and security centers all have their own).



Librarian in Classic Mode: Please contact: [askalibrarian@tblc.org](mailto:askalibrarian@tblc.org) if your screen looks like this, never fully load or have a blank screen on the right when you don't have a customer.

Patron in Classic Mode: If they are in classic from the moment they are accepted, they are probably on a Mac, or they are using a non-IE browser.

When you click 'configure co-browse' and the loading takes long then enters the user into Classic, this issue is as follows. When you click this button, you are actually testing the user's configuration to see if they can co-browse and sometimes they can not – due to firewalls, high security settings, no java and other issues beyond our control.

## Comments

At every session, lots of comments about the inability to co-browse, machines freezing when the librarian attempts to 'configure to cobrowse'. When this happens, please let us know immediately.

Cobrowse taking too long to configure.

Software freezing- looks like a barcode when typing

Co-browsing delayed – very slowly.

New Patron Pop-up very distracting. It's pulling cursor out of text book.

New Patron Pop-up used to disappear once user was picked up, not doing this anymore.

Issues with Vista?

## Retrieving Statistics

- There are numerous statistical reports available, if you have a particular statistics, you need please contact us.

## Customizations

- IM Option. If you offering IM from your library or another service you want to advertise on AaL (it's a great page to promote all reference services in one place), please let us know.
- Customizations: Remember you can customize through out AaL:
  - the email and local chat forms
  - the text on the right side of the entry screen, &the buttons
  - Your personal greeting and optionally an avatar or picture.

## Refreshing the page

- We are working on a new front page- for the most part the same with better language, and more information.
- Further, we are working on co-branding the patron's end page, to allow users the option to return to their library's home page.
- We are going to refresh the Chat Form at the same time, so it is more 'adult' friendly.
- New entry page – requires zip and demographic information. Will issue report on use by county based upon zip codes

## Enhancement Ideas/Comments:

- Google Toolbar inside the cobrowse window.

- The pop-up alert for new users is very annoying when dealing with a busy desk. Could there be another option?
- On refresh page – Don't like the word 'Whom' what about "Who will answer my question?"
- On refresh page, can we stress picking a library some how.
- Promote email over chat.
- FEL is very hard to navigate- leads to too much that is not full-text with the meta-search.
- Overall software is A LOT better than it has been in the past.
- Pop-up for new patrons not appearing note *probably a pop-up blocker*
- Received error message, "Patron already accepted by (librarian name)" when they are trying to work with the patron.
- With refresh, activities in cobrowse window – 2 choices – one fun, one research – maybe tic-tac-toe or the like.
- Need Statistics by Institution
  - Ability to limit sessions by entry point so librarians can see their customers
  - Ability to sort question status by institution
- Knowledge base search by 'and' not 'or'
- Knowledge base needs a back button or links to open in new page.
- Publish more places- why your user is in classic information
- Love to see 'user is typing', 'librarian is typing'
- Library next to librarian's name in software
- co-brand co-browse screen
- Eliminate tab 'Queue' and place queue in the Active Users tab so everything in one place.
- Demographic Information does not include 'home schoolers'
- Have lots of classic users
- Some sort of indication if the user is entering with a mobile device.

## 7- Other

### Quality Assurance/Exemplary Reference Awards

Winning! Nominations! They have their privileges. The Ask a Librarian service has over 3,000 sessions a month and over 1,000 librarians on its mailing list. Having the best transaction really does mean something – so please nominate yourself, or a co-worker.

Further, we encourage you to read transcripts, you'll learn something every time – we have brilliant librarians staffing this service. AaL staff and the QA team do randomly read transcripts, but with so many its easy to miss the exceptional or the problem sessions. However, if you see a session where you are concerned about the level of service, please notify Jennifer Sullivan immediately.

We are working on integrating the nomination process further into the Docutek software, but this is not as easy as it appears – but Doug is hard at work.

### Comments

Good Idea- read sessions before you login for the previous hours, will help you prepare and find themes the day may be having.

### Utilizing Local Desks

- Local Desks can be used at anytime. If you have a non-traditional idea for your desk – please let us know. We can separate it from the collaborative; you have two distinct URLs so you can have a local service run con-currently.
  - We are in the beginning steps of evaluating two other specialized desks:
    - o Spanish
    - o Genealogy
- If your library is interested in either, please let me know.

### Comments:

Word to administrators – “We need X many hours to make this work from you”

### 8- Open Forum

#### Comments

WhentoWork- need to redirect emails (Alachua)

More PRACTICE – implemented immediately....First Tuesday of every month, Jennifer will be online to practice.

AaL should develop a second training class, “Refresher”; ½ day?

Cyber tutorials

To login to toolbox, have cursor default to being in login box.

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**URLS to remember:**

<http://www.tbtc.org/askalibrarianblog>

<http://info.askalibrarian.org>

**My Contact Details:**

Diana Sachs-Silveira

800.622.8252 ext 234

[sachsd@tbtc.org](mailto:sachsd@tbtc.org)

YahooIM: diverdee987

**Troubleshooting email:**

[askalibrarian@tbtc.org](mailto:askalibrarian@tbtc.org)

**Scheduling and Training:**

Jennifer Sullivan

[sullivj@tbtc.org](mailto:sullivj@tbtc.org)

800.622-8252 ext 233