



Ask a Librarian Academic Desk Questions and Answers

1. What is an Academic Desk?

The Academic Desk is an academic queue that will be staffed by academic librarians within Ask a Librarian. As Ask a Librarian has grown, the one queue system has become too busy to staff efficiently. With the academic queue, questions from college students will enter the software from their library's entry point and enter a separate queue creating two more manageable queues for librarians staffing the desk.

2. Did Ask a Librarian need an Academic Desk?

After the Regional Meetings in 2006, we heard from our participants – “we want an Academic Queue.” In 2006, we formed an Academic Taskforce to evaluate the need and feasibility of a separate queue. The taskforce felt strongly that Ask a Librarian needed a separate queue and it was feasible; therefore, they recommended an Academic Desk begin in the Fall as a pilot project. The desk will officially open on September 4 (The Tuesday after Labor Day).

3. What hours will it be open?

The desk will be open from 10am-4pm EST Monday-Friday starting September 4th. When the academic desk is closed, users will be directed to the general collaborative queue. There are academic libraries staffing the Collaborative Desk during these closed hours.

4. How will users find the desk?

Users will not have to make any conscious decisions about who will help them. The software will route users to the Academic Desk automatically when they enter through their academic institution's custom portal, unless the institution is currently staffing their local desk or the academic desk is closed. If a local desk is being staffed, users will go to a local queue and if the academic desk is closed, users will go to the collaborative desk.

5. How will staffing work?

Jennifer has created two desk schedules- one for the Collaborative Desk and one for the Academic Desk. These schedules can be viewed within the When to Work software. Using the Display option on the right hand part of the screen, you can view the librarians staffing either the Academic or Collaborative Desk. If you need your login, please contact Jennifer.

6. How do I login to staff the Academic Desk?

The academic desk option will only appear to libraries registered as academic institutions in the software. All colleges, universities and community colleges will be automatically registered. When an academic institution logs in, there will be a new check box 'Ask a Librarian Academic Desk'. Just check this desk and 'Enter Live Chat'. It is not recommended to staff more than one desk at a time – especially Collaborative and Academic.

7. Cooperation between the Collaborative Desk and the Academic Desk.

Cooperation between libraries is what makes Ask a Librarian a successful program and even with two desks, this needs to continue. Libraries can chat and transfer users between desks using the drop-down menu for 'Operators by Virtual Desk' under the Academic Users tab. Please help with desks when asked – if one is exceptionally busy and the other slow – taking a user would be a great help. Remember to always ask before transferring a user to another librarian. Most important to the success of Ask a Librarian is our customer service and helping users find the best answer possible.

Thank you for all of your efforts to make this expansion of services a success- because of your flexibility with the schedule and your willingness to take extra hours, we are confident the Academic Desk will be a success. If you have questions or concerns, please contact us immediately.