



AskAway Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, June 25, 2026

1:00pm – 2:30pm (PT)

Virtual Meeting

Committee Members in Attendance:

Trish Rosseel, Douglas College, *Urban Colleges* (Chair)

Doug Bringham, *University of British Columbia*

Gregg Currie, Selkirk College, *Rural Colleges*

Aline Goncalves, Yukon University, *Teaching Universities and Technical Institutions*

Shannon Moist, Douglas College, *Member-at-Large*

Chloe Riley, *Simon Fraser University* (Alternate)

Nicoletta Romano, University Canada West, *Small Universities*

Melissa Svendsen, Thompson Rivers University, *Member-at-Large*

AskAway Administrative Centre:

Kyla McCallum (Recorder)

Sunni Nishimura, BC ELN Executive Director

Cristen Polley, AskAway Coordinator (Moderator)

Regrets:

Deirdre Grace, BCIT, *Member-at-Large*

Abeer Siddiqui, *Simon Fraser University*

1. Welcome and Adoption of Agenda

T. Rosseel welcomed committee members and shared a territorial acknowledgement. The agenda was adopted as presented.

2. BC ELN Administrative Transition

S. Nishimura presented on the BC ELN administrative transition. Currently, BC ELN is administratively hosted at Simon Fraser University (SFU). However, the Provincial Government has recently provided direction to transition BC ELN—along with BCCampus, EducationPlannerBC, and the BC Council on Admissions & Transfer (BCCAT)—to a new public sector organization. The proposed implementation date is April 2027, pending necessary processes and approvals.

This transition is in its early stages, and no disruptions to services are currently anticipated. S. Nishimura emphasized that a foundational priority of the transition is continuity for services and BC ELN staff and noted that the transition is expected to provide a stronger foundation for innovation and collaboration among the sector organizations moving forward. In terms of technical infrastructure, AskAway is minimally impacted because LibraryH3lp is not hosted by SFU.

BC ELN's Steering Committee and service area governance committees, including the AskAway Advisory Committee, will be kept informed as the transition progresses.

S. Nishimura responded to questions about the new public sector organization's relationship to BC Net, governance structure, and continuity for staff.

3. Service Update

C. Polley presented a service update.

The week-by-week volunteer coverage for July-August was very quickly filled by participating institutions and their service providers. This scheduling approach was adopted because it has been previously successful for AskAway.

The Admin Centre made progress in implementing the Emerging Technologies Working Group recommendations, approved by the Advisory Committee in February.

- Use of the LibraryH3lp conference room, in lieu of Campfire, began in May; response has been positive.
- The chat router trial is being conducted May-August, with feedback gathered through a survey. The Advisory Committee will receive a report on survey responses in the fall, which will be used to inform next steps and long-term decisions on the chat router feature.

Following up on feedback received through a water cooler session in fall 2025, the AskAway and WriteAway Admin Centres collaboratively developed a "rural promotion package," a folder of ready-to-use materials to promote learning services in remote contexts and across satellite campuses. The materials are intended to inform potential users of the low-barrier, free service, leading to greater usage from rural institutions.

C. Polley provided an update on AskAway usage statistics. Highlights included:

- 2025 saw an overall 35% decrease in usage from the previous year. Across tiers, this ranged from a 17% decrease (Tier 5) to a 34% decrease (Tier 2). A small number of libraries saw an increase in usage or minimal change.

- The service remains highly collaborative, with 87% of chats on average answered by service providers at other institutions. This is consistent year over year, for the past three years.
- Contributing factors to the change in usage could include declining domestic and international student enrolment (FTE), decreased course load, and artificial intelligence (AI) use.

In response to questions, C. Polley stated that usage in the first two terms of 2026 has decreased compared to 2025. She also reminded members that feedback from AskAway users is collected through exit surveys, and the Admin Centre does not currently collect information from people who have not used the service.

When asked what information or data the committee would find most useful for future conversations about usage, members expressed interest in learning more about:

- How the types of questions asked by AskAway users have changed over time
- The impact of the rural promotional package on institutions' usage statistics
- The impact of changes to the library user interface, through database or discovery layer updates, on traffic to the AskAway service.

Members hypothesized that AskAway usage may be impacted by AI use contributing to a decrease in directional or citation-related inquiries, and by instructors placing a greater emphasis on in-class and oral assessments.

C. Polley provided an update about the use of guest logins by AskAway service providers. As libraries are embedded in an increasingly complex security and authentication environment, AskAway guest logins—which allow service providers to access password-protected resources at a given library—are becoming more vulnerable and challenging to implement. Currently, libraries are working with IT departments to find workarounds to privacy protections like multifactor authentication. However, these workarounds slow down service providers' ability to access library resources, and guest logins may become more difficult for libraries to offer in the future.

Drawing on her experience as a service provider, M. Svendsen affirmed that guest logins can be difficult and time-consuming to use, especially while providing service to multiple users at once.

Members suggested:

- Surveying service providers
 - N. Romano mentioned that the experience of using guest logins is difficult to remember after a shift. She questioned whether a survey can be

developed that would allow service providers to respond while still in the LibraryH3lp interface.

- Learning more about how other library consortia are adapting to these challenges
- Exploring one-time multi-factor authentication at the inception of an AskAway shift that is applicable for all libraries
- Gathering information from IT colleagues at individual institutions to understand the context of these privacy and security challenges

4. New Commitment Model Update

T. Rosseel reminded the group that the new AskAway commitment model was approved at the prior Advisory Committee meeting and endorsed by the BC ELN Steering Committee. Moreover, one-time transition funding from the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills will mitigate the fee increases during the transition to the new model.

C. Polley thanked the Recommendations Implementation Team for their work developing the model and recognized the contributions of participating libraries, many of which attended engagement sessions and completed surveys to ensure the model was informed by the AskAway community's input.

In May, libraries were asked to confirm their participation in the 2027-28 service year, when the new model takes effect. Of 27 participating libraries, 26 confirmed their participation in 2027-28. Approximately 7-10 libraries will use the Evening/weekend Offset Contribution to fulfill some or all of their evening/weekend hours. The Admin Centre will be following up with individual libraries to gather further information, build new schedules based on survey responses collected in the fall, and develop a more detailed budget for the 2027-28 year. The changes to service hours will be communicated to AskAway users in the new year.

C. Riley asked that the Admin Centre prepare institutional coordinators prior to making announcements. This will ensure that coordinators have the necessary context to answer service providers' questions about how changes to the service will affect work.

In response to a question, C. Polley noted that the Admin Centre does not yet have a timeline for when institutions will commit to the Evening/weekend Offset Contribution, and this timeline will be developed based on feedback from participating libraries.

5. Best Practices for Handling GenAI Questions

C. Polley presented the Best Practices for Handling GenAI questions, which were developed together with Ana Diab (Collections, Reference, and Instruction Librarian at

Emily Carr University of Art + Design). Meant to help service providers feel prepared to answer questions from students, the practices are informed by a review of AskAway chat transcripts that identified common question types and trends. Moreover, the document:

- Integrates a literature scan and feedback from institutional coordinators
- Refers to existing resources, including policy pages and local AI subject guides
- Incorporates reference practices already familiar to librarians
- Offers practical guidelines while providing flexibility, recognizing the importance of agency in identifying an approach that aligns with institutional policy and individual needs
- Includes practices that are generally applicable across inquiries, such as using the reference interview, as well as suggested responses to specific AI-related questions that have been identified on AskAway via the “AI Literacy” tag
- Includes a list of recommended AI guides and resources, similar to the list in the Citation Best Practices Appendix

C. Polley also noted that the document should be revisited regularly to ensure practices are keeping pace with rapid changes in technology.

M. Svendsen supported the limited number of recommended guides and suggested that future guidelines follow this trend of brevity in the appendix.

MOTION: To endorse the Best Practices for Handling GenAI Questions, as presented.

Moved: S. Moist

Seconded: N. Romano

The motion carried unanimously.

The Best Practices for Handling GenAI Questions will be implemented on the website and in future training sessions.

6. New Business

S. Nishimura thanked T. Rosseel for her service as Chair of the AskAway Advisory Committee.

7. Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place in fall 2026.