



MINUTES OF THE ASKAWAY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, June 3rd, 2014

SFU Harbour Centre
Rm 3100
515 West Hastings Street
Vancouver, BC

Tuesday, June 3rd
10:00 AM - 12:30 PM

Committee Members:

Attending In Person	Attending by Teleconference
Anita Cocchia, BC ELN	Lynette Gallant, NIC/Member-at-large
Ken Cooley, UVIC (alternate)	Kathy Gaynor, TRU/Member-at-large (alternate)
Janis McKenzie, SFU	Marjory Jardine, JIBC/Member-at-large
Simon Neame, UBC	James Rout, ECUAD/Small Universities
David Pepper, BCIT/Regional Universities	Ross Tyner, OC/Urban Colleges
Brandon Weigel, BC ELN (Recorder)	
Melanie Wilke, NWCC/Rural Colleges/Chair	

Regrets: Leva Lee, BCcampus; Caron Rollins, UVic; Christina Nilsen, TRU

Meeting Minutes

1. Adoption of agenda

Items to add: None
New business: None

Motion to adopt: R. Tyner
Second: J. McKenzie

Motion carried.

2. Sustainability Plan Discussion

Background

B. Weigel gave a summary of how the Advisory Committee handled the initial round of BCcampus funding cuts for the 2014/15 fiscal year. The proposal to recover the lost funds through a fee increase with the option to offset with staff hours met with general approval from library directors and affirmations of support for AskAway and the value that the service provides.

Additional support for 2014/15 broke down as follows:

- \$14,260 in additional service support fees
- 14/30 institutions contributed hours:
 - A total of 46 section-hours, valued at \$11,500
- 13 institutions volunteered hours:
 - 55 section-hours total
 - 44 hours carried forward from 2013/14
 - 11 new hours above last year's contribution
 - Total value of volunteer hours: \$13,750
- Auxiliary staffing expense reduced by \$17,350
- \$25,000 in transition funds received from BCcampus

2015/16 Budget

A. Cocchia presented a draft Expenditure Plan (appended) showing 2014/15 at present, and the shortfall for 2015/16. She framed the 2015/16 plan as follows:

- Assumptions:
 - Fee and staffing increases from 2014/15 continue into future years
 - Volunteer hours will also carry forward
 - Annual inflation increases will continue being applied (not shown in draft expenditure plan)
- BCcampus transition funding ends after this year
 - Admin Centre will approach them for additional support - may be willing to pay software costs
 - Will also approach BCNet
- Approx. \$20,000 shortfall in 2015/16

DISCUSSION: Sustainability planning: 2015/16

A discussion was held to determine how this final shortfall will be accounted for, and what a sustainable service will look like in the future.

The Committee established the following ideals:

- Emphasis on long-term sustainability: establishing consistent and adequate funding model now, to avoid future funding crises
- Strong agreement on the value and power of a membership-funded service:
 - Sustainability comes from institutions covering AskAway's full cost
 - Preference to avoid uncertainty and risks of external funding
 - If external funds are made available, they will be accepted - with the understanding that such funding is unstable
- A preference to sustain the service as-is:
 - No cuts to hours or staffing
 - No plans to expand
- That participating libraries should be asked for one final increase to cover the loss of external funding, while accounting for the burden this may place on some institutions
 - Including provisions for accommodating institutions facing extenuating circumstances that prevent them from contributing
- One final fee/staffing increase would establish sustainable funding with no further foreseeable increase requests

DISCUSSION: What funding model should be pursued?

The Committee supported the same model used to address the 2014/15 shortfall, in which institutions were given a fee increase which could be offset by staffing evening and weekend shifts. This model allows most institutions to contribute in ways that match their resources.

To address the shortfall in 2015/16, fee increases would be requested from each institution according to tier. The following numbers are approximate:

- Tier 1: \$350
- Tier 2: \$585
- Tier 3: \$820
- Tier 4: \$1,870
- Tier 5: \$3,970

As in the 2014/15 model, these fees could be offset by evening and weekend staff hours replacing auxiliary staff shifts. One hour in any section would reduce the fee increase by \$250.

QUESTION: Where could we look for additional funding?

The Admin Centre will continue to pursue funding requests with BCcampus, BCNet, and AVED. Software falls within the purview of BCcampus and BCNet, so the shared QuestionPoint software may be a good candidate for funding support.

An alternative revenue source was suggested: to invite advertisers to place banner ads in chat windows.

The idea of student volunteers was raised again, with the suggestion that AskAway could be part of a practicum project. However, the Committee agreed that the additional expense of regular training and supervision would make the plan impractical.

The Committee agreed that the most sustainable approach would be for participating institutions to fully fund AskAway, but additional external funds would make the transition easier.

QUESTION: How expensive will AskAway be in the future?

The Committee agreed that there are no plans to grow the service. The fee increases only came about as a response to the loss of funding from BCcampus, and with the last of these funds being phased out, AskAway will be fully funded by its participating institutions.

After this final increase for 2015/16, no further increases will be requested in the foreseeable future, aside from routine inflation adjustments.

The Committee's goal for the future is to maintain AskAway sustainably at its current service levels.

DISCUSSION: How to accommodate institutions facing budget/staffing difficulties?

The Committee acknowledged that some participating libraries might have difficulty handling an increase in funds, hours, or a combination of the two. If fees are too high, some institutions may no longer see the financial benefit of participating in AskAway. Additionally, the Committee acknowledged the budgetary constraints faced by many libraries, and that an increase of a few hundred dollars at a small institution is proportionally quite significant.

It was proposed that institutions facing these constraints might be granted a grace period through which they could transition gradually into their full commitments. The committee decided that individual accommodations would be preferable to large-scale changes to the service.

The Committee laid out the following plan:

- Institutions that are unable to meet the increased commitment may be given a grace period in which to make the transition.
- The terms of these grace periods would be determined case by case.

NEXT STEPS:

Members of the Advisory Committee will bring a summary of this discussion to their constituency groups to gather feedback about the feasibility of these fee increases, preferably before the end of June.

The Committee will review the feedback and prepare a recommendation, which will be sent to participating library directors.

ACTION ITEMS:

- **ADVISORY COMMITTEE:** Send message to constituents.
- Collect feedback from constituents - if possible, before June 30.
- **ADMIN CENTRE:** Pursue funding from BCcampus, BCNet, and Ministry.

3. Admin Centre Update

B. Weigel provided an update from the Admin Centre:

- ShiftPlanning was rolled out to set the Fall 2014 schedule. The software is not yet ideal for AskAway's purposes, but the vendor is making our requested changes. Thus far, transition management and training aside, the software has saved significant time.
- The thank-you cards to service providers have been produced, with thanks to BCIT for handling design and printing, and Elena Underhill in particular for contributing her artwork. The cards will be sent out over the summer.
- A report on the Citation Knowledgebase will be released this summer. It clearly indicates a desire for collaborative work on citation tools. Not only AskAway will benefit from the project, so BC ELN will form a committee to move it forward.
- The Visibility Report, which takes an in-depth look at the correlation between AskAway visibility and usage, will be released this summer. Case studies will be available. For those who are interested, the Admin Centre can provide specific analysis your institution's visibility and usage patterns. The draft Visibility Report will be sent to the committee for review. Once it is endorsed, it will be sent out more broadly.

ACTION ITEMS:

- **ADMIN CENTRE:** Send thank-you cards to AskAway service providers.
- **M. WILKE:** Write a thank-you email on behalf of the Committee to Elena Underhill for designing and printing the thank-you cards.
- **ADMIN CENTRE:** Send draft Visibility Report to the Advisory Committee.

- ADMIN CENTRE: Send citation survey report to participating libraries.

4. Next Meeting: September 2014

The next meeting will take place in mid-September, before Advisory Committee membership terms expire. The Admin Centre will send out a Doodle poll.

ACTION ITEMS:

- ADMIN CENTRE: Send a Doodle poll to confirm the meeting in mid-September - by June 30.
- ADMIN CENTRE: Send reminder email to Committee members whose terms are ending - August 15.