



AskAway Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, July 28, 2020

3:00pm – 4:30pm

Virtual meeting

In Attendance:

Michel Castagné, Capilano University, *Member-at-Large*

Gregg Currie, Selkirk College, *Rural Colleges*

Lynette Gallant, North Island College, *Member-at-Large*

Aleteia Greenwood, *University of British Columbia*

Sybil Harrison, Camosun College, *Urban Colleges*

Ebony Magnus, *Simon Fraser University (Alternate)*

Lisa Petrachenko, *University of Victoria*

Suzanne Rackover, Emily Carr University of Art + Design, *Small Universities*

Chris Reimer, University Canada West, *Member-at-Large*

Debbie Schachter, Capilano University, *Chair / Regional Universities & Institutes*

Administrative Centre:

Anita Cocchia

Reba Ouimet (Recorder)

Cristen Polley

Regrets:

Ania Dymarz, *Simon Fraser University*

1. Adoption of Agenda

Adopted as approved.

2. Service Update

D. Schachter provided an AskAway Service update:

- AskAway opened for the summer on May 19th and proactively increased staffing capacity in the collaborative schedule to meet expected increases in demand:
 - This keeps the service provider to student ratio manageable, reduces stress for service providers, and ensures students continue to receive high quality, in-depth support
 - In Section 3, over two thirds of institutions volunteered 77 additional weekly hours; those who could not were given first chance to pick up extra

shifts in Section 4, and in Section 4, many institutions stepped up and contributed an additional 46 hours per week

- The service has seen sustained increase in usage throughout the first summer term, with a 90% increase over 2019
- Since mid-March, the AskAway Administrative Centre has been offering additional training with 20 new service providers completing training during the summer
- Starting in mid-March, some libraries began staffing their institutional queues in addition to service-wide staffing commitments; institutional queues are only available during service hours and staffing is completely voluntary
- Generally, feedback from participating libraries and AskAway users is that real-time, online support is greatly appreciated at this time
- The Admin Centre recently hosted the first meeting with Canadian collaborative chat reference services colleagues (specifically OCLS, OCUL, and Novanet) to share plans for the Fall term; in future, this group plans to meet on a regular basis to learn from one another, with a common focus on LibraryH3lp software

A suggestion was made to communicate more broadly about AskAway's success during the COVID-19 related transition to online instruction and library services.

3. Service Needs August to September 2020

D. Schachter reviewed AskAway service needs for the August to September semester break period.

While AskAway is typically closed from mid-August to mid-September (August 15th to September 20th in 2020), some libraries informally expressed an interest in either keeping the service open during this period or opening earlier when classes begin.

A survey was conducted to provide formal feedback, asking libraries to rank their preferences for service during this time.

C. Polley provided an overview of the survey results and a recommendation based on the results:

- All but one participating library completed the survey with the overwhelming majority indicating a desire for some sort of opening during this period
- The most popular first choice was to close the service in August and open two weeks early on Sept. 8th with regular service hours
- Based on these results, the recommendation is to close AskAway from Aug. 15th to Sept. 7th and open early on Sept. 8th, with regular service hours
 - This allows library staff a few weeks break before the Fall term, gives the Admin Centre/local coordinators time to schedule and train staff, and will assist students both new and returning to the online environment

After discussion, there was agreement to move forward with the recommendation.

MOTION: To approve the recommendation to close AskAway from Aug. 15th to Sept. 7th and open on Sept. 8th with regular service hours.

Moved: A. Greenwood

Seconded: S. Rackover

Motion carried unanimously.

As next steps, the decision will be shared with all participating libraries. The Admin Centre will work with local coordinators to set-up the schedule, offer training, and spread the word to students in time for the September 8th opening.

4. Staffing Commitments Section 1 (Sep-Dec) 2020

A. Cocchia outlined the need for a structured approach to increased staffing commitments for Section 1 (Fall 2020), noting that the goal is to provide a model that is both sustainable and equitable.

- Although it is challenging to estimate usage for the upcoming Section 1 term, Fall is the busiest AskAway term and the expectation is that usage will continue at the 90% increase seen during the summer
- To meet this demand, the goal for this term is to proactively increase capacity and add approximately 70 additional hours of staffing each week
- A voluntary approach to contributed hours was successful for the summer Sections but a more structured approach is needed for the Fall

C. Polley outlined the proposal for participating libraries' Base Staffing Commitments in Section 1 (Sep-Dec) 2020. The proposal provides a simple tiered approach that in total will add 68 hours per week to the collaborative schedule, to accommodate the expected increase in demand:

- Proposed Base Staffing Commitments Section 1 (2020):
 - Tiers 1 and 2: Two additional hours per week on top of Base Commitments
 - Tiers 3, 4, and 5: Three additional hours per week on top of Base Commitments
 - For all Tiers, one of the additional hours must be an evening or weekend hour (resulting in 31 of 68 hours being evening or weekend)
 - Evening and weekend hours are especially important because fewer libraries are staffing institutional queues at these times and Swamped calls are answered by fewer staff

- Flexible Support Contributions are not impacted by changes to the Base Staffing Commitments
- Libraries are welcome to contribute more on a volunteer basis if there is a need

During discussion, several members voiced appreciation for the structured approach.

It was also noted that the proposal is intended only for the Fall 2020 term, with assessment and re-evaluation happening on a continuous basis as needed.

It was clarified that the role of the Advisory Committee is to set service commitments that provide the best possible chat reference support to students, educators, and researchers across the system. Individual institutions may review and bring forward any institutional concerns.

MOTION (revised): For Section 1 Fall 2020 to increase AskAway participating libraries Base Staffing commitments based on the existing tiered structure with additional hours as discussed at the meeting, with at least one of the additional hours being evening or weekend.

Moved: C. Reimer

Seconded: M. Castagné

Motion carried unanimously.

As next steps, this information will be shared with participating library directors and local coordinators and building the schedule for the Fall term with the additional staffing in place will begin.

5. New Business

No new business

6. Wrap Up

A reminder was given that the new term for committee membership is coming up on October 1st and to look for an email from the Admin Centre. The next meeting will likely take place at the end of October, with the exact date to be determined. The Admin Centre will send out a Doodle poll to pick a date.