



AskAway Action Planning Sessions: Outcomes

August 2023

In May and June 2023, representatives from AskAway member libraries participated in two online, facilitated action planning sessions.¹ The purpose was to confirm AskAway's value, develop a five-year service vision, and set priorities for the next two to three years. Prior to the sessions, three surveys were conducted: two to gather input from participating libraries and one to compare similar services in a Canadian context.² The survey results were shared via reports with all session attendees to familiarize them with AskAway's current context, include the perspectives of all members libraries, and inform the session discussions and outcomes.

This document presents the outcomes of the two sessions, informed by the survey results. As next steps, the AskAway Advisory Committee will develop AskAway's Action Planning Framework based on the Outcomes document and prioritize service activities. The finalized Action Planning Framework will be posted on the BC ELN website and shared with the AskAway community.

AskAway: Service Value

In the first session (May), attendees confirmed the value of AskAway for participating institutions, student users, library employees, and the post-secondary sector³:

Expanded Access to Research Help

- Together, libraries provide research support beyond what one library can offer alone
- Research support to students is expanded beyond local library walls, hours, and staff commitments

Convenient, Low-Barrier, Online

- Students can connect to a low-barrier, real-time, and online service when they need it
- Students receive approachable, immediate, and expert help regardless of their location
- Libraries stay connected to students studying remotely and at a distance

Skilled and Connected Community

- Service providers and local coordinators build communities of practice
- Service providers hone their skills by answering questions from a diverse range of students and navigating new resources at participating libraries
- Working together, colleagues from participating institutions collectively improve reference services across the sector

Local and Provincial Cost-savings

- Individual institutions and the post-secondary sector realize cost-savings by being part of the same service

¹ See Appendix A: Action Planning Session Attendees for a list of participants at each session.

² Survey reports are linked from meeting agenda pages ([May 17](#) and [June 5](#)) under Essential Resources.

³ See Appendix B: Confirming Value Exercise.

AskAway: 5-Year Service Vision

These vision elements were developed by the AskAway community through a consensus workshop in the first session (May).

In five years, we will see an AskAway service that:

- Delivers high quality reference and excellent information literacy instruction
- Demonstrates value to stakeholders
- Effectively responds to student/patron needs
- Engages and meets users at point of need
- Ensures accessibility for all
- Fosters collaboration among participating institutions and service providers
- Leverages technology to enhance the service
- Maintains or grows service levels

Top Four Priority Vision Elements

At the second session (June), attendees ranked the five-year vision elements, listed above, to determine where to focus energy in the next two to three years⁴. The top four priorities that emerged are:

- Fostering collaboration among participating institutions and service providers
- Ensuring accessibility for all
- Leveraging technology to enhance the service
- Maintaining or growing service levels

AskAway: Service Priorities and Activities

Attendees at the second session worked in groups to generate lists of practical activities that could advance AskAway in these four areas and to identify the group that might be responsible for each activity. Attendees then “voted” with dots on which activities they wished to prioritize and that would have the most impact.⁵

Attendees were also asked to indicate with a star symbol if they were excited about the activity and an up-arrow if they were interested in contributing and had capacity to do so.⁶

⁴ See Appendix C: Ranking Service Vision Elements Exercise.

⁵ See Appendix D: Full List of Suggested Activities and Voting Outcomes.

⁶ See Appendix E: Suggested Activities with Star and Up-Arrow Voting.

Top four priorities, with top voted activities and potential group responsible⁷:

Priority	Activity	Potential Group Responsible
Fostering collaboration among participating institutions and service providers	Highlight chat transcripts for quality assurance and to build supportive relationships in the community. For example, showcase transcripts that demonstrate excellence or areas of concern to inform training, professional development, mentoring, etc.; add a tag or exit survey for service providers to support transcript review and self-evaluation (e.g., “Were you able to help the user? Yes/No”). (9 stars)	Volunteer local coordinators and/or service providers with support from the Admin Centre (4 up-arrows)
	Set up a place where institutions will post high impact assignments and frequently asked questions. (2 stars)	Local coordinators with AskAway Admin Centre (4 up-arrows)
Ensuring accessibility for all	Develop asynchronous training for service providers to chat with screen reader users. (2 stars)	AskAway Admin Centre in collaboration with volunteer service providers and potentially National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS) / CAPER-BC (0 up-arrows)
Maintaining or growing service levels	Collaboratively design a survey tool for institutions to use at their libraries to easily capture diverse perspectives from their learners, including users and non-users, in a standardized way. (5 stars)	Local coordinator/service provider task group for survey/focus group design; Local coordinators for dissemination (5 up-arrows)
	Advocate at the provincial level for more funding for AskAway, both for service providers and Admin Centre support. (0 stars)	BC ELN Executive Director and participating library directors (2 up-arrows)
Leveraging technology to enhance the service	Explore possibilities of screen-sharing with LibraryH3lp or other 3rd party integration. (12 stars)	Led by AskAway Admin Centre (1 up-arrow)
	Implement a queuing system for users and automate ‘swamped’ messaging to service providers when needed. (4 stars)	Local coordinators with AskAway Admin Centre (0 up-arrows)

⁷ Some sections were edited for clarity, in consultation with attendees, after the sessions.

Appendices

Appendix A: Action Planning Session Attendees

Session One (May 17)

Two library staff members from each participating institution were invited to attend, with library directors being asked to join the value and vision discussion.

Attendees:

Alexander College: David Gill, Steve Roe
BC Institute of Technology: Elizabeth Padilla
Camosun College: Gwenda Bryan, Jackie McFarlan
Capilano University: Jen Goerzen
College of New Caledonia: Ignacio Albarracin, James Lovitt
College of the Rockies: Shaun Longstreet, Suzanne Morin
Columbia College: Joe Haigh, Faith Jones
Douglas College: Shannon Moist, Trish Rosseel
Emily Carr University of Art + Design: Vanessa Kam, Hillary Webb
Justice Institute of British Columbia: April Haddad, Darcy Lovsin
Kwantlen Polytechnic University: Todd Mundle
Langara College: Suzanne Rackover, Dan Slessor
North Island College: Lynette Gallant
Northern Lights College: Dawna Turcotte
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology: David Leggett
Okanagan College: Eva Gavaris, Roen Janyk
Simon Fraser University: Ania Dymarz, Ebony Magnus
Thompson Rivers University: Tania Gottschalk, Elizabeth Rennie
Trinity Western University: Darcy Gullacher, Elizabeth Kreiter
University of British Columbia: Aleteia Greenwood
University Canada West: Nicoletta Romano, Elizabeth Fernandes
University of Northern British Columbia: Kealin McCabe
University of the Fraser Valley: Selena Karli, Shawna Kristin
University of Victoria: Karen Munro
Vancouver Community College: Mari Paz Vera
Yukon University: Aline Goncalves, Derek Yap

AskAway Administrative Centre:

Sydney Brogden, Anita Cocchia, Cristen Polley

Facilitators:

Leah Hopton, BC Electronic Library Network
Mike Beebe, Leadership for Change

Regrets:

Alison Nussbaumer (BCIT), Mike Rauschenberger (Coast Mountain College), Karen Meijer-Kline (KPU), Rita Cavaliere (NVIT), Gregg Currie (Selkirk College), Doug Brigham (UBC)

Session Two (June 5)

Two library staff members from each participating institution were invited to attend.

Attendees:

Alexander College: David Gill, Emily Gunn
BC Institute of Technology: Elizabeth Padilla
Camosun College: Gwenda Bryan, Jackie McFarlan
Capilano University: Jen Goerzen
College of New Caledonia: Jennifer Sauve
College of the Rockies: Jody Mendenhall
Columbia College: Aubrey Geyer, Joe Haigh
Douglas College: Shannon Moist, Trish Rosseel
Emily Carr University of Art + Design: Hillary Webb
Justice Institute of British Columbia: Darcy Lovsin
Langara College: Suzanne Rackover, Dan Slessor
North Island College: Jennifer Evans
Northern Lights College: Dawna Turcotte
Okanagan College: Eva Gavaris, Roen Janyk
Simon Fraser University: Ania Dymarz
Thompson Rivers University: Tania Gottschalk, Elizabeth Rennie
Trinity Western University: Elizabeth Kreiter
University of British Columbia: Aleteia Greenwood
University Canada West: Elizabeth Fernandes
University of Northern British Columbia: Kealin McCabe
University of the Fraser Valley: Selena Karli, Shawna Kristin
University of Victoria: Karen Munro
Vancouver Community College: Mari Paz Vera
Yukon University: Aline Goncalves, Derek Yap

AskAway Administrative Centre:

Sydney Brogden, Anita Cocchia, Cristen Polley

Facilitators:

Leah Hopton, BC ELN
Mike Beebe, Leadership for Change

Regrets:

Mike Rauschenberger (Coast Mountain College), Todd Mundle (KPU), Rita Cavaliere and David Leggett (NVIT), Gregg Currie (Selkirk College), Ebony Magnus (SFU), Alex Kuskowski (UBC)

Appendix B: Confirming Value Exercise

What value does AskAway bring to your institution?

Responses collected on the second AskAway Action Planning Survey:

- The library **extends service hours** (17 respondents)
- The library offers **online service, anywhere, anytime** (14 respondents)
- The library offers service on **evenings, weekends, and/or after hours** when library staff are unavailable (10 respondents)
- Students have access to **convenient, point-of-need support** (9 respondents)
- Library **staff develop skills, knowledge, and build community** (8 respondents)
- Students have **low-barrier and accessible help** available (8 respondents)
- Students have access to **expert research help** (8 respondents)
- A small library and/or a library with dispersed campuses can **fill a service gap** (5 respondents)
- The library **engages and enhances the wider university** and/or provincial community (3 respondents)

Other values mentioned by one or two respondents:

Familiar service for students, point of contact in subject guides and databases, flexible service model, no need to individually license software.

It's a great tool to connect students with home library

Provides assistance to distance students

Cost savings for institutions

Flexibility for staffing (ability to work evenings/remotely)

Allows students a chance to learn how to ask questions/ask for help

Human! There are real people on the other end

Offers confidentiality and privacy to students

Anonymity - and people!

cost savings - also that it is free for students when education in general is getting so expensive

Appendix C: Ranking Service Vision Elements Exercise

At the June 5 session, attendees mapped responses to “C. Areas of Focus” from the [AskAway Action Planning Survey Part Two](#) to the five-year vision elements to see where to focus energy in the next 2-3 years.

AskAway Action Planning Survey Part Two: “The purpose of this question is to learn how participating institutions would like to see AskAway focus its energy in the next two to three years...”

<p>Delivers high quality reference and excellent information literacy instruction</p> <p>32</p>	<p>Engages and meets users at point of need</p> <p>30</p>	<p>Effectively responds to student/patron needs</p> <p>43</p>	<p>Demonstrates value to stakeholders</p> <p>17</p>
<p>Fosters collaboration among participating institutions & service providers</p> <p>55</p>	<p>Ensures accessibility for all</p> <p>55</p>	<p>Maintains or grows service levels</p> <p>44</p>	<p>Leverages technology to enhance the service</p> <p>46</p>

Emerging Technologies (19)
Guest Authentication (13)
Best Practices (12)
Additional Language Service (9)
Learning Opportunities (8)
Quantitative Reports (7)
Qualitative Research (6)
Commitment Models (4)
Streamline Collaborative Chatting (3)
External Review (2)
Communications (2)

Appendix D: Full List of Suggested Activities and Voting Outcomes

1. Fostering collaboration among participating institutions and service providers

1. Fosters collaboration among participating institutions & service providers

<p>Activity: Offer extra cross institutional one-on-one training with new service providers to work with a "mentor" AA provider as they begin.</p> <p>Group Responsible: Volunteer AA coordinators</p>	<p>Activity: Sharing "tips & tricks" could be recorded Zoom session where AskAway providers demo successes</p> <p>Group Responsible: Volunteer AA coordinators/service providers</p>	<p>Activity: Is there an education piece for the users of the service?... fun! Conversation about an education piece for users of AskAway (provide foundation for expectations & how to query) +1</p> <p>Group Responsible: Starts with Institutional Coordinators</p>	<p>Activity: Set up a place where institutions will post high impact assignments/frequently asked questions</p> <p>Group Responsible: members</p>	<p>Activity: Qualitative research potential through transcript examination. Looking for examples of excellence and for examples of concern that could inform PD/mentoring/support</p> <p>Exit survey question/tag for service providers for questions they struggle to answer:</p> <p>+1 Self-evaluation: Were you able to help the user - range between yes & no. What further skills would you need? (tags to support transcript review)</p> <p>Group Responsible: BCELN</p>
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Activity: Qualitative research potential through transcript examination. Looking for examples of excellence and for examples of concern that could inform PD/mentoring/support
Exit survey question/tag for service providers for questions they struggle to answer:
Self-evaluation: Were you able to help the user - range between yes & no. What further skills would you need? (tags to support transcript review)
Group Responsible: BCELN
(20 Votes)

Activity: Set up a place where institutions will post high impact assignments/frequently asked questions
Group Responsible: members
(12 Votes)

Activity: Offer extra cross institutional one-on-one training with new service providers to work with a "mentor" AA provider as they begin.
Group Responsible: Volunteer AA coordinators
(8 Votes)

Activity: Is there an education piece for the users of the service?... fun! Conversation about an education piece for users of AskAway (provide foundation for expectations & how to query)
Group Responsible: Starts with Institutional Coordinators
(4 Votes)

Activity: Sharing "tips & tricks" could be recorded Zoom session where AskAway providers demo successes
Group Responsible: Volunteer AA coordinators/service providers
(3 Votes)

Activity: every couple of months institution talks about themselves, their students, assignments
Group Responsible: members
(2 Votes)

2. Ensuring accessibility for all

2. Ensures accessibility for all

Activity: Investigate screen reader experience (JAWS and NVDA).

Group Responsible: AskAway service providers (volunteers) collaborating with NNELS/CAPER BC

Output: Improvements for accessibility (maybe to a specific standard)

+1 ●●●●●

Activity: Develop asynchronous training for service providers to chat with screen reader users

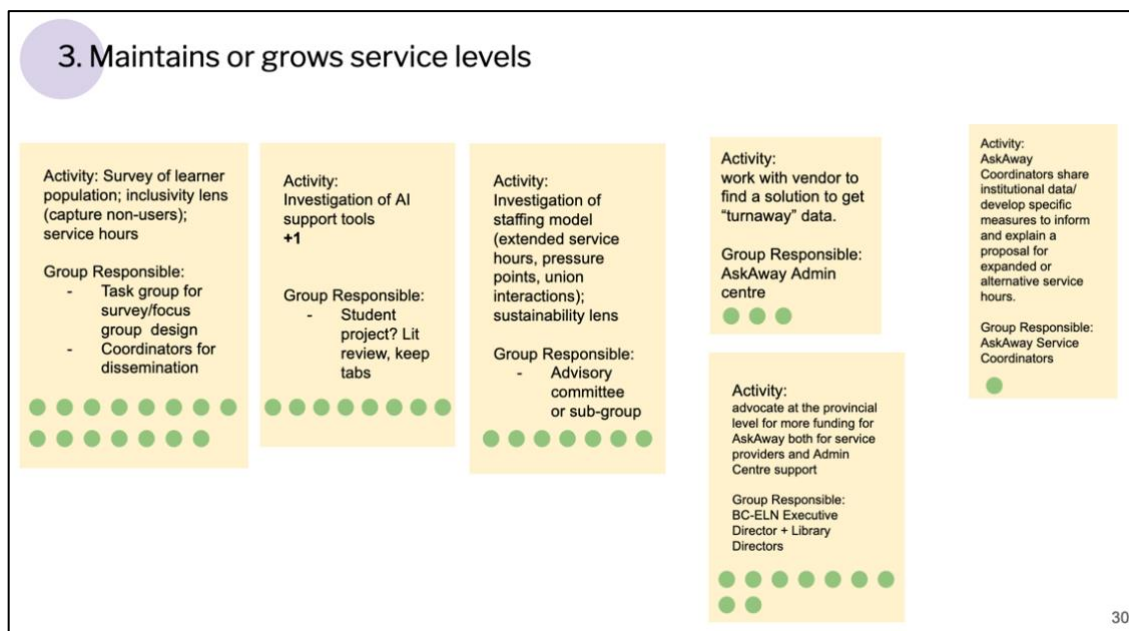
Group Responsible: Admin centre in collaboration with volunteer service providers and potentially NNELS/CAPER BC

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Activity: Develop asynchronous training for service providers to chat with screen reader users
Group Responsible: Admin centre in collaboration with volunteer service providers and potentially NNELS/CAPER BC
(20 Votes)

Activity: Investigate screen reader experience (JAWS and NVDA).
Group Responsible: AskAway service providers (volunteers) collaborating with NNELS/CAPER BC
Output: Improvements for accessibility (maybe to a specific standard)
(6 Votes)

3. Maintaining or growing service levels



Activity: Survey of learner population; inclusivity lens (capture non-users); service hours
 Group Responsible: Task group for survey/focus group design; Coordinators for dissemination
 (15 Votes)

Activity: Investigation of AI support tools
 Group Responsible: Student project? Lit review, keep tabs
 (9 Votes)

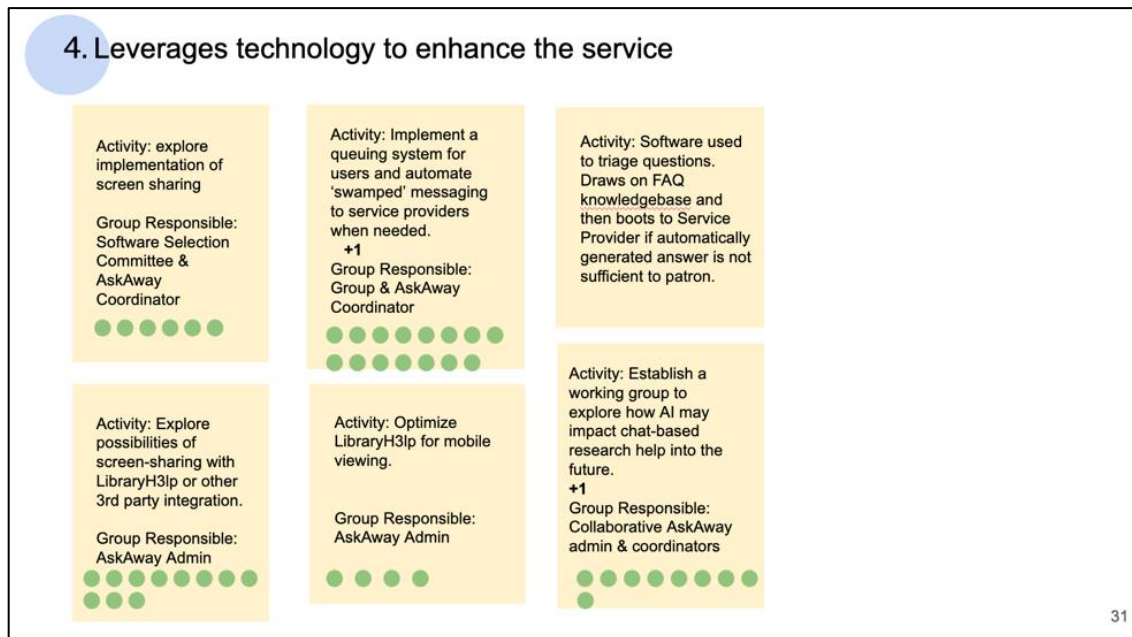
Activity: advocate at the provincial level for more funding for AskAway both for service providers and Admin Centre support
 Group Responsible: BC-ELN Executive Director + Library Directors
 (9 Votes)

Activity: Investigation of staffing model (extended service hours, pressure points, union interactions); sustainability lens
 Group Responsible: Advisory committee or sub-group
 (7 Votes)

Activity: work with vendor to find a solution to get "turnaway" data.
 Group Responsible: AskAway Admin centre
 (3 Votes)

Activity: AskAway Coordinators share institutional data/ develop specific measures to inform and explain a proposal for expanded or alternative service hours.
 Group Responsible: AskAway Service Coordinators
 (1 Vote)

4. Leveraging technology to enhance the service



Activity: Implement a queuing system for users and automate 'swamped' messaging to service providers when needed.

Group Responsible: Group & AskAway Coordinator
(16 Votes)

Activity: Explore possibilities of screen-sharing with LibraryH3lp or other 3rd party integration.

Group Responsible: AskAway Admin
(11 Votes)

Activity: Establish a working group to explore how AI may impact chat-based research help into the future.

Group Responsible: Collaborative AskAway admin & coordinators
(10 Votes)

Activity: explore implementation of screen sharing

Group Responsible: Software Selection Committee & AskAway Coordinator
(6 Votes)



Activity: Optimize LibraryH3lp for mobile viewing.

Group Responsible: AskAway Admin
(4 Votes)

Activity: Software used to triage questions. Draws on FAQ knowledgebase and then boots to Service Provider if automatically generated answer is not sufficient to patron.

(0 Votes)

Appendix E: Suggested Activities with Star and Up-Arrow Voting

<p>1. Fosters collaboration among participating institutions & service providers</p> <p>Activity: Qualitative research potential through transcript examination. Looking for examples of excellence and for examples of concern that could inform PD/mentoring/support</p> <p>Exit survey question/tag for service providers for questions they struggle to answer:</p> <p>Self-evaluation: Were you able to help the user - range between yes & no. What further skills would you need? (tags to support transcript review)</p> <p>Group Responsible: BCELN</p> 	<p>Activity: Set up a place where institutions will post high impact assignments/frequently asked questions</p> <p>Group Responsible: members</p> 	<p>2. Ensures accessibility for all</p> <p>Activity: Develop asynchronous training for service providers to chat with screen reader users</p> <p>Group Responsible: Admin centre in collaboration with volunteer service providers and potentially NNELS/CAPER BC</p> 	
<p>3. Maintains or grows service levels</p> <p>Activity: Survey of learner population; inclusivity lens (capture non-users); service hours</p> <p>Group Responsible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Task group for survey/focus group design - Coordinators for dissemination 	<p>Activity: advocate at the provincial level for more funding for AskAway both for service providers and Admin Centre support</p> <p>Group Responsible: BC-ELN Executive Director + Library Directors</p> 	<p>4. Leverages technology to enhance the service</p> <p>Activity: Explore possibilities of screen-sharing with LibraryH3lp or other 3rd party integration.</p> <p>Group Responsible: AskAway Admin</p> 	<p>Activity: Implement a queuing system for users and automate 'swamped' messaging to service providers when needed.</p> <p>Group Responsible: Group & AskAway Coordinator</p> 