



Annual Report

FY19 (July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019)

Updated 11/8/2019

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About Answerland

Answerland (answerland.org) is a statewide collaborative information service that connects Oregon residents with library information professionals 24/7. It has two goals:

- To provide quality online reference service to all Oregonians.
- To provide workers in Oregon libraries the skills and tools to deliver online reference service.

It is operated by the State Library of Oregon, and supported with Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) as well as the contributions of staff at partner libraries. Leadership for the program is bolstered by an advisory committee comprised of information professionals from around Oregon.

Answerland lets anyone connect to a librarian by live chat, email or text messaging. Live chat is available 24/7 in partnership with OCLC's 24/7 Reference Cooperative, which employs librarians from all over the world (though primarily in the U.S.) to deliver continuous service to people all over the world.

Oregon libraries work together to provide the service to everyone who lives, works or goes to school in Oregon. Answerland librarians will answer almost anything, but typical topics include homework, using the library, finding a great book to read, and anything that patrons are interested in finding out more about. For people outside of Oregon, Answerland librarians are happy to answer questions about Oregon, including local history.



Activities

Advisory Committee

The Answerland Advisory Committee met three times and discussed software, quality improvements, and the Oregon Reference Summit. They also implemented an [Outstanding Service Award](#). Members, minutes, and more can be viewed on the [State Library's website](#).

Infrastructure Updates

- The software vendor updated the chat interface for library staff. It is no longer based in Flash and includes enhancements such as automatic spellcheck, emoji's, and searchable scripts.
- The [answerland.org](#) homepage was updated to be more mobile-friendly and usable.
- The Answerland Advisory Committee agreed to discontinue Answerland's texting service, due to low usage. The service ended June 30.

New Software Research

Per the recommendations of the previous year's assessment project, a subgroup of the Advisory Committee, which included the Answerland Coordinator, was formed to explore new software options. The subgroup solicited input from partner libraries, researched products, drew up a list of requirements, and issued a Request for Information (RFI) to obtain more information from potential vendors.

The subgroup decided the next step was to pursue a Request for Proposals (RFP) in the fall of 2019. However, in late May it was announced that Answerland's current software vendor had entered into an agreement to sell all subscriptions to a new company. This announcement means Answerland will be moved to a new software platform automatically in 2020. Therefore, the Coordinator decided to put the RFP on hold until Answerland has had at least a year to use and assess the new software.



Quality Team

The four members of the Quality Team continued to work on improving the [mentoring program](#), and figuring out a process for getting nominations for quality transcripts. They also published the best practices and presented on them at the [North American Virtual Reference Conference](#) and [Oregon Reference Summit](#).

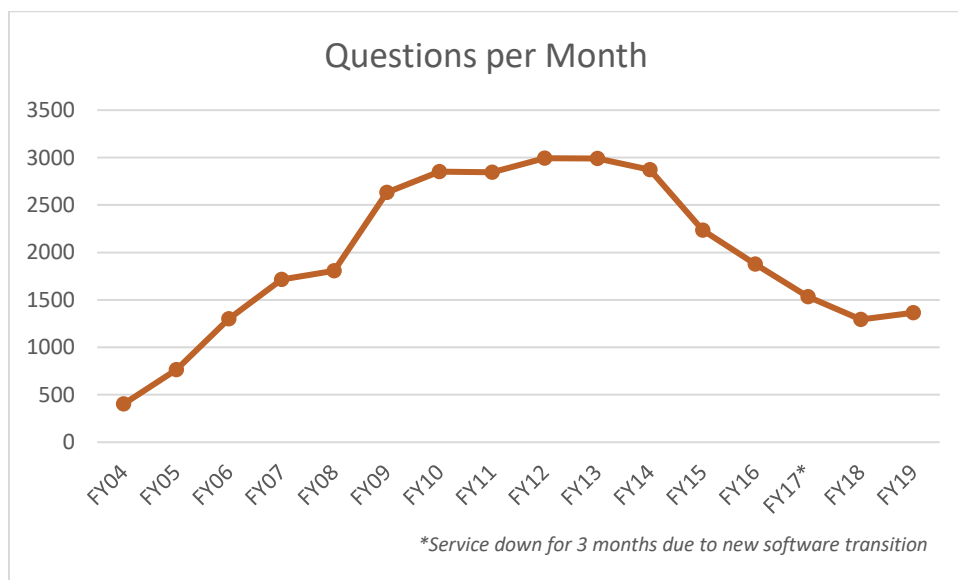
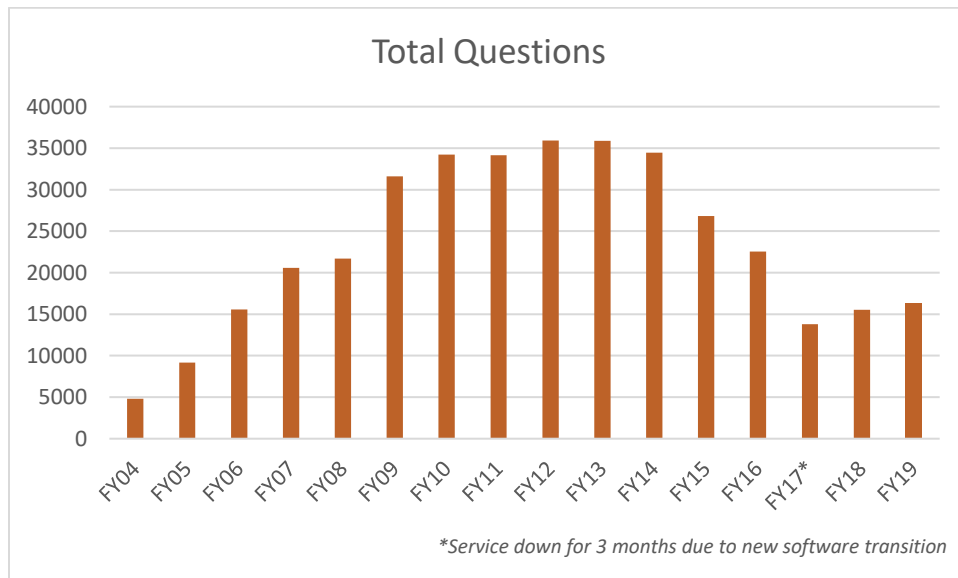
Training & Support

- The Coordinator created a new [staff toolkit](#) with software documentation, best practices, useful reference resources, and training information. Included in the toolkit are two new training tutorials - one for new staff and one for volunteers.
- The Coordinator issued quarterly newsletters ("[Answerland Goings-On](#)") to keep the Answerland community informed of developments.
- For the second year in a row, Answerland was one of the sponsors of the [Oregon Reference Summit](#). Around 90 library staff from around the state attended and provided a lot of positive feedback.
- The Coordinator served on the planning committee for the [North American Virtual Reference Conference](#). This professional development opportunity drew over 750 people from around the world, including around 30 from Oregon.



Usage

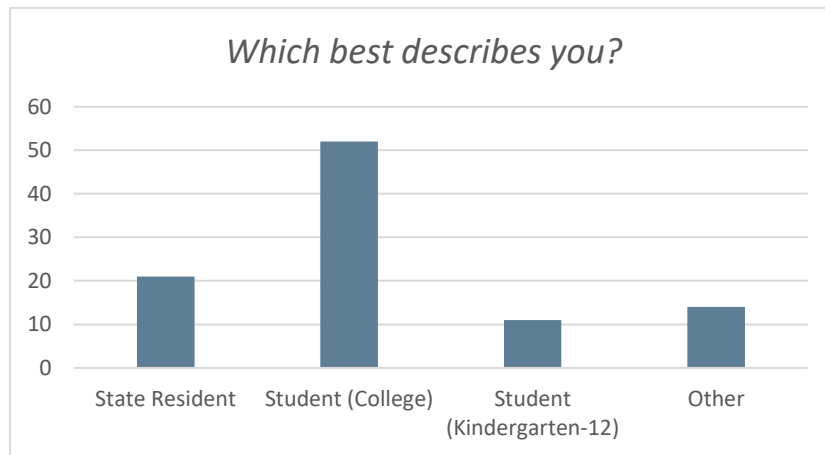
The number of questions from patrons increased 5% from the previous year, and the questions per month started once again to rise. Possible factors include software and administration stability, in addition to increased promotion of the service to libraries.





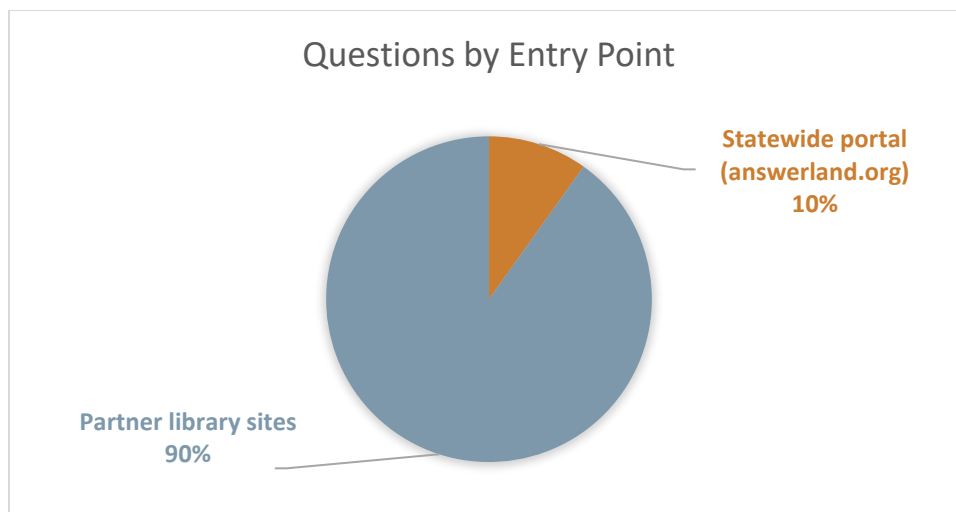
Who uses Answerland

According to feedback from the optional survey given at the end of a chat session or email response (which comprised <1% of questions), most Answerland patrons are college students.



How patrons get to Answerland

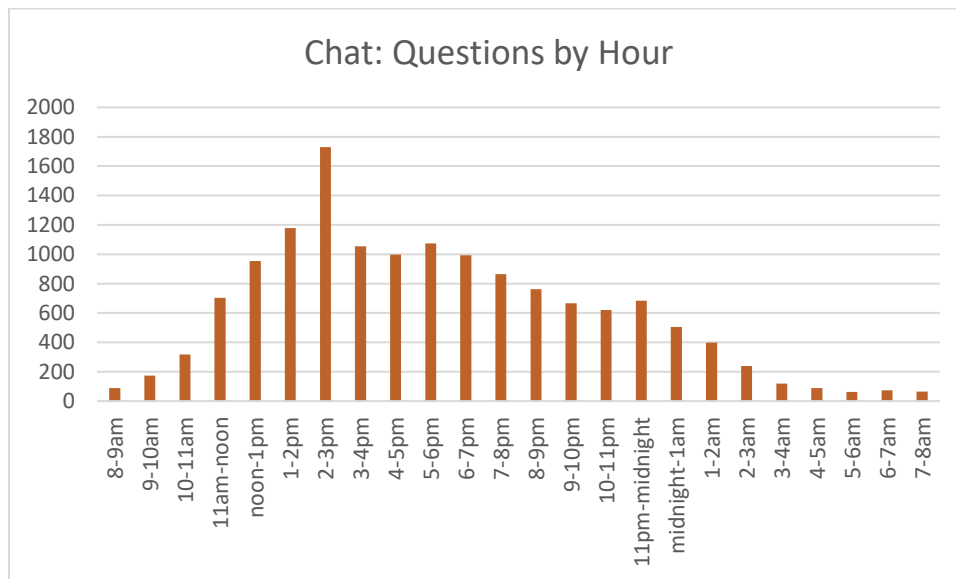
Patrons can get to Answerland through the statewide portal (answerland.org) – which is linked from numerous websites, such as OSLIS, and library websites – as well as through local options set up by partner libraries. While the answerland.org site only gets a small portion the overall Answerland traffic, having a statewide portal is vital to serving under- and unserved populations, including K-12.





When patrons use Answerland

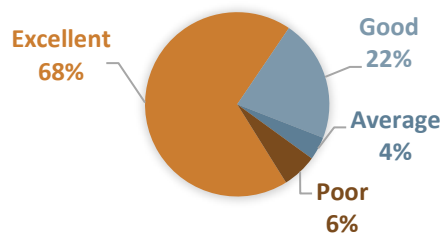
Chat is available 24/7/365 due to our participation in the QuestionPoint 24/7 Reference Cooperative. Librarians from Oregon are generally staffing chat between 8am and 8pm PT Monday through Thursday, and limited hours on Fridays and weekends. 87% of people who responded to the optional survey given at the end of a session said they were satisfied with the hours of service. As seen below, Oregon patrons take advantage of round-the-clock service.



Patron satisfaction with Answerland

Satisfaction with the service remains high. 79% of people who responded to the optional survey given at the end of a session said they were satisfied with the answer to their question, and 72% said they would use the service again.

The quality of library staff service in answering this request was...





Staffing

There were over 250 librarians contributing over 65 hours per week of their time to Answerland. Answerland librarians answer questions from 24/7 Reference Cooperative as well as from Oregon patrons.

Volunteers

Answerland had 8 volunteers staffing the statewide portal. Together they staffed 14% of chat shifts and responded to over 1,300 patron questions.

Partner Libraries

This year, Answerland had 34 partner libraries – 17 academic libraries, 13 public libraries, and 4 special libraries. 20 partner libraries were full partners, which means their staff participate in the live chat service. The rest of the partner libraries were referral partners, which means their staff respond to questions sent to them via email. The partner libraries responded to over 9,000 questions this year.





Patron Questions by Library

Public Libraries

Patron's library is identified either from the queue, or, for questions entered via the statewide portal, from the chat/email form or from within the transcript.

Albany Public Library	4
Aloha Community Library	4
Astoria Public Library	3
Baker County Public Library	3
Beaverton City Library	57
Canby Public Library	2
Cedar Mill Community Library	23
Chemeketa Cooperative Regional Library Service	3
Chetco Community Public Library	1
Clatskanie Library District	1
Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Library	1
Coos County Library Service District	5
Corvallis-Benton County Public Library	11
Cottage Grove Public Library	5
Creswell Library	1
Curry Public Library	14
Dallas Public Library	3
Deschutes Public Library	299
Driftwood Public Library	2
Estacada Public Library	1
Eugene Public Library	1146
Fern Ridge Public Library	2
Forest Grove City Library	1
Garden Home Community Library	3
Happy Valley Library	1
Harney County Library	2
Hermiston Public Library	2
Hillsboro Public Library	37
Hood River County Library	1
Independence Public Library	1
Jackson County Library System	29
Jefferson County Library District	2



Josephine County Library System	8
Klamath County Library	9
Lebanon Public Library	1
Ledding Library	1
Lyons Public Library	1
McMinnville Public Library	7
Monmouth Public Library	1
Mount Angel Public Library	1
Multnomah Couty Library	8514
Newberg Public Library	81
Newport Public Library	1
Oregon City Public Library	1
Oregon Trail Library District	3
Pendleton Public Library	2
Roseburg Public Library	2
Salem Public Library	83
Sandy Public Library	2
Scappoose Public Library	2
Seaside Public Library	5
Sherwood Public Librar	2
Silver Falls Library District	9
Siuslaw Public Library District	5
Springfield Public Library	15
Stayton Public Library	1
Sweet Home Public Library	1
The Dalles-Wasco County Library	1
Tigard Public Library	15
Tillamook County Library	1
Tualatin Public Library	4
Umatilla Public Library	1
Warrenton Community Library	1
Washington County Cooperative Library Services	12
West Linn Public Library	8
West Slope Community Library	1
Wilsonville Public Library	3
Winston Library	1
Woodburn Public Library	2



Academic Libraries

Patron's library is identified either from the queue, or, for questions entered via the statewide portal, from the chat/email form or from within the transcript.

Birthingway College of Midwifery	3
Blue Mountain Community College	10
Central Oregon Community College	150
Chemeketa Community College	866
Columbia Gorge Community College	57
Concordia University - Portland	874
Klamath Community College	7
Lane Community College	1
Linn-Benton Community College	49
Oregon Institute of Technology	105
Oregon State University	67
Pioneer Pacific College	16
Portland Community College	335
Portland State University	1354
Treasure Valley Community College	19
University of Oregon	149
University of Portland	535
Western Oregon University	8

Schools (K-12)

This data is from questions coming in via the statewide portal. K-12 affiliation is identified within the session transcript or from the patron's email address.

Beaverton	212	North Wasco	2
Bend-La Pine	7	Oregon City	1
Corvallis	2	Oregon Trail	2
Eugene	32	Portland	70
Hillsboro	5	Roseburg	3
Jackson	3	Salem-Keizer	4
Jefferson	53	Silver Falls	34
Josephine	2	South Lane	1
Klamath County	10	Tigard-Tualatin	2
Lincoln County	2	Washington County	10
Newberg	5	West Linn-Wilsonville	3