



# Letter of Agreement for **Full Partnership** in Answerland

## Purpose of this Document

This is an agreement between an Oregon library (“Partner Library”) and the State Library of Oregon (“State Library”) for **Full Partnership** in the virtual reference service known as Answerland. This document is not intended to create binding or legal obligations on either party.

## About Partnerships

Answerland relies on partner libraries working together to provide service. While all Oregon libraries are welcome to connect their library to Answerland, partner libraries reap additional benefits in return for their contributions to the service.

There are two types of partnership:

- Full Partners: Staff participate in the live chat service, and help answer general reference questions.
- Referral Partners: Staff respond to questions sent to them via email, and help answer general reference questions.

## Benefits of Becoming a Full Partner Library

### Enhance Your Library’s Reference Service

- Expanded reference service beyond the limitations of library building hours and traditional hours of service.
- Risk avoidance: in the event of a disaster, access to reference service is continued even if local service is compromised.
- Librarians can enhance their skills through training and by participating in a collaborative environment that facilitates sharing of expertise, virtual reference trends, and best practices.

### Get Access to the Software

In return for staffing the statewide chat service, your library is able to use the Answerland chat software tools for free to help your patrons. Full partners get:

- Access to the State Library’s software subscription.
- A unique patron entry point identifying users as yours.
- Training on the service and software.

- Technical assistance on the software.
- Detailed usage statistics based upon entry point usage.
- 24/7 backup from the 24/7 Reference Cooperative.<sup>1</sup>

### **Save Time and Money**

- Cost-savings in staff time: shared staffing means each library staffs only a few hours per week in return for 24/7/365 reference service.
- Cost-savings through group purchase of software and marketing materials.
- Many hours of staff time saved by eliminating the need for each library to schedule, train, market, and coordinate their own virtual reference service. The State Library provides administrative coordination of the service; promotional materials; training; a website to facilitate communication and provide support; and a listserv for communications.

## **Full Partner Library Responsibilities**

1. Appoint a project liaison to facilitate communication between the Answerland service and the library. Duties of the liaison include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Joining and participating in the Answerland email discussion list.
  - b. Identifying staff to provide service and having them participate in necessary training.
  - c. Coordinating staff scheduling at the local level.
  - d. Coordinating the library's schedule with the Answerland coordinator.
  - e. Maintaining currency of the library's software account.
  - f. Reporting local needs to the Answerland Coordinator.
2. Provide statewide reference service. This includes:
  - a. Staffing the statewide chat queue on a regular basis. The number of hours contributed will be negotiated between the liaison and Answerland Coordinator, taking into account the library's staff availability and institution size; the minimum is two hours per week. Alternative contributions are possible if needed.
  - b. Responding to questions from your library's patrons in a timely manner.
  - c. Helping to answer general reference questions.
  - d. Helping to cover unfilled shifts
  - e. Contributing to the 24/7 Reference Cooperative<sup>2</sup> at least 2 hours per week. This can be staffed at the same time as the statewide queue.
3. Assist with promotion and assessment of Answerland by:
  - a. Making the service visible on the library's website. This may be accomplished by posting the Answerland logo and providing a link to the service. If the library's

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<sup>1</sup> The 24/7 Reference Cooperative is an around-the-clock reference service staffed by participating libraries and back-up staff. It is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, including holidays.

<sup>2</sup> As part of the 24/7 Reference Cooperative, Answerland is required to spend at least 40 hours per week to answering chat questions from the Cooperative queues.

branding is required for local virtual reference service, there must at least be written acknowledgement that the service is provided in partnership with Answerland.

- b. Providing input and feedback to continually improve the Answerland service.

## State Library Responsibilities

1. Provide:
  - a. Virtual reference software, both for the statewide service and for local use by the partner library.
  - b. Training on the service and software.
  - c. Technical assistance on the software.
  - d. Administrative coordination of the service and software.
  - e. Promotional materials.
  - f. A website to facilitate communication and provide support.
  - g. A listserv for communications.
2. Communicate with partner libraries about virtual reference trends, best practices, quality issues, and changes to the service.
3. Assist with librarian-led projects such as mentoring, Quality Team, and the Oregon Virtual Reference Summit.

## Partnership Changes

This agreement is at-will and may be modified by mutual consent of the Partner Library or State Library.

Libraries wishing to make changes to their participation in Answerland shall contact the Answerland Coordinator at least 30 days in advance of the change. Libraries are responsible for all scheduled chat shifts.

If this agreement is terminated by either party, the Answerland Coordinator shall delete the Partner Library's software account and remove their librarians from the listserv.

## Signatures

This agreement shall become effective upon signature by the authorized officials from the Partner Library and the State Library. If changes are made to the participation arrangement, or new persons are appointed to any of these roles, this agreement will have to be resigned to ensure all parties are aware of and agree to their respective responsibilities.

**Name of Library** \_\_\_\_\_

**Our library has:** (please select one)

- 4 or more reference professionals on staff
- 3 or fewer reference professionals on staff

**Enrollment/Population Served** (in numbers) \_\_\_\_\_

**Participation Arrangement:** The Partner Library will staff the statewide chat queue \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week, and the 24/7 Reference Cooperative queue \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week. Other notes about the arrangement, including alternate contributions:

**Library Liaison Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Library Liaison Email** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone** \_\_\_\_\_

**Library Director Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Library Liaison Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_  
(if same as director, enter "N/A")

**Answerland Coordinator Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**State Librarian Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please mail or email the completed form to the Answerland Coordinator:**

Tamara Ottum  
State Library of Oregon  
250 Winter St. NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301  
[tamara.ottum@state.or.us](mailto:tamara.ottum@state.or.us)