

AskAway is an online, chat reference service that UBC Library participates in – along with over 20 other post-secondary institutions across BC & the Yukon.

Chat reference sounds like something you'd do over the phone or in person – but it's not. AskAway is actually an instant-messaging service. You and a library staff member communicate by typing your questions and responses into an AskAway widget just like the one you see here.

So, what kinds of questions can you ask?

Well, you can ask anything that you'd typically ask at the research help desk at your branch. Here are some examples of the kinds of questions that AskAway staff members help out with every day.

You can also get some quick answers to general library questions relating to our services for you.

There are some things to avoid on AskAway.

The chat transcripts are stored on US servers so we're not allowed to collect any personal information from you. So, don't use AskAway if you need to know something personal Library account – like if you have fines or if your I.L.L request has come in. In fact, you shouldn't provide your real name, email address or any other identifying information during your chat session.

The nature of instant messaging means that it's most effective for fairly quick questions. You might not want to spend a lot of time typing back and forth so if you think you've got a complex research question or a long series of questions you may be better off dropping by a research help desk; emailing a subject librarian or giving us a phone call.

One final note, AskAway is not a 24/7 service. It's closed between terms and first thing in a new term; the early and late hours of the day and on statutory holidays. If it is closed the AskAway widget will list all this information for you.

So, where can you find AskAway help?

You'll find the widget on the search results page of Ebsco & Proquest databases like these and if you're on the Library homepage you can find the AskAway widget by clicking either Research Help or Ask an Expert. Don't forget: the Ask an Expert link also has links to the contact information for all the subject librarians at UB C and all our branch hours.