Reference is Neither Here Nor There: Connecting Through SMS

Amy E. Vecchione  
Boise State University

Margie Ruppel  
Boise State University
Reference Is Neither Here Nor There
A New Point of Need for Libraries

Amy Vecchione, Assistant Professor/Librarian, Boise State University
Margie Ruppel, Assistant Professor/Librarian, Boise State University
Amy Vecchione  
Assistant Professor/Librarian  
Boise State University  
@librarythinking  
amyvecchione@boisestate.edu

Margie Ruppel  
Assistant Professor/Librarian  
Boise State University  
@BSULibrary  
Margieruppel@boisestate.edu
Texting by American adults has increased substantially over the past year, but still does not approach the magnitude of text messages exchanged by adolescents. Some 72% of adult cell phone users send and receive text messages now, up from 65% in September 2009. Fully 87% of teen cell users text. Teens text 50 messages a day on average, five times more than the typical 10 text messages sent and received by adults per day.
Texting by American adults has increased dramatically over the past year, but still does not approach the magnitude of text messages exchanged by adolescents. Some 72% of adult cell phone users send and receive text messages now, up from 65% in September 2009. Fully 87% of teen cell phone users text. Teens text 50 messages a day on average, five times more than the typical 10 text messages sent and received by adults per day.
“SMS services are an opportunity to reach new users; reference is neither here nor there”
Always texting

It’s easy

Libraries do it better
Competitors

Google Answers 466453

ChaCha 242242

KGB 542542 (fee)
Google Answers

How many slices of bacon are in a package?
Google Answers

How many slices of bacon are in a package?

Sorry, “how many slices o…” did not return any results
KGB

$0.99 per question asked
KGB

$0.99 per question asked

Cha Cha

Not available for all plans
Human powered answers
Flawed answers
Does your library offer SMS reference?
Percentage of Respondents

N=231

Offering SMS Reference 43%

Not offering SMS Reference 43%

Not now, but plan to soon 13%
What are they asking?
Why are freshmen required to take a library orientation?
Why are freshmen required to take a library orientation?

To help acquaint students with the resources available at an academic library which is different than public or high school libraries.
on average how many slices of bacon are in a package...
on average how many slices of bacon are in a package...

Cooks Illustrated says that regular sliced 1/16th of an inch usually contains 18-22 slices per pck per lb, & thick-cut aka country has 12-16 slices per pck per lb. Thick cut is 1/8 inch slices.

How late is the library open? [BSU Broncos]
How late is the library open? [BSU Broncos]

until midnight! woot!
Do you have any books about constructing poems?
Do you have any books about constructing poems?

Lots! 3rd floor PN1042-PN1064.
Who was the first U.S. President to meet the Pope?
Who was the first U.S. President to meet the Pope?

The first U.S. president to visit the Vatican was Woodrow Wilson, who met with Pope Benedict XV in 1919 after WWI.
If u get fitted for a bra and it fels to tight or uncomfortable, should you overlok the fitters advice?
If u get fitted for a bra and it fels to tight or uncomfortable, should you overlok the fitters advice?

I certainly would.
Privacy
If you offer SMS Reference which tool do you use?
Top Tools

- Mosio
- Google Voice
- LibraryH3lp
- LibAnswers
Welcome to My Info Quest!

On the go and need an answer? Text your question to an My Info Quest librarian and have the answer delivered to your phone within minutes!

- Text 66746 and enter your library's keyword (see list of library keywords below)
- Text your question
- Our goal is for a librarian to text an expert answer within 10 minutes during the hours of service
- It's easy and accurate!

My Info Quest is brought to you by your library and other participating libraries across the U.S.!

If you are a library that would like to join, we are accepting new members. Please contact Lori Bell or Mary-Carol Lindbloom.

Hours of Service

Central Time Monday - Thursday 8:00 A.M. - 10:00 P.M.
Friday 8:00 A.M. - 6:00 P.M.
Saturday 9:00 A.M. - 6:00 P.M.
Sunday 2:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.
http://www.myinfoquest.info

- It's easy and accurate!

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Friday 8:00 A.M. - 6:00 P.M.
Saturday 9:00 A.M. - 6:00 P.M.
Sunday 2:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.
+14062050477: Hi there. What's the capital of Idaho? - amyvecchione@boisestate.edu 1:06 PM
Me: It's Boise. 1:06 PM
+14062050477: What is the capital of the United States? - amyvecchione@boisestate.edu 1:07 PM
Me: It's Washington, D.C. 1:07 PM
+14062050477: Do you have any books on Boise or Washington D.C.? - amyvecchione@boisestate.edu
Does the library have computers with scanners?

We have two computers with digital microforms scanners on the 1st floor and two multimedia creation stations with flatbed scanners on the 2nd floor.
CHAT. Chat with a librarian. Available 24/7. (The person assisting you may not be located at Albertsons Library.)

EMAIL. Ask a question and you'll receive a response by email (responses take longer on weekends and University holidays).

PHONE. Call (208) 426-3301 to speak to someone at the Reference Desk during hours that the reference desk is staffed (7am-10pm M-F, 10am-7pm Sat, 10am-10pm Sun during the semester; limited hours during intersession).

Library Hours

IN PERSON. Visit the Library Reference Desk. Campus Map

CONTACT YOUR LIBRARIAN. Get in touch with the librarian who specializes in resources in your subject.

SCHEDULE A RESEARCH APPOINTMENT WITH A LIBRARIAN. Get individualized help with your research project.

TEXT A LIBRARIAN. Send a text message to us at (208) 546-9382 and a librarian will get back to you as soon as possible. We staff this service during hours that the reference desk is staffed (7am-10pm M-F, 10am-7pm Sat, 10am-10pm Sun during the semester; limited hours during intersession).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS. View questions and answers or ask your own question.
Participants

- 49% Freshman
- 27% Sophomores
- 11% Juniors
- 12% Seniors
- 1% Post-Baccalaureate Undergrads
Participants

n=732

402 females (55%) + 323 males (44%) + 7 not specified (1%) = U106
• Completed survey
• U106 students

35

• Had previously used SMS reference

14%

• Say they would use it again

91%
How much did you like using the SMS Reference service?

- **91% Positive**
  - 8 loved it
  - 12 liked it a lot
  - 12 liked it

- **6% Neutral**
  - 2

- **3% Negative**
  - 1 disliked it
  - 1 disliked it a lot
  - 0 hated it
Rate the quality of the help you got from the librarian.

94% Positive
- 10 loved it
- 12 liked it a lot
- 10 liked it

6% Neutral
- 2

0% Negative
- 0 disliked it
- 0 disliked it a lot
- 0 hated it
When you use Text Messaging Reference, do you want library staff to tell you about both print and online sources or just online sources?
When you use Text Messaging Reference, do you want library staff to tell you about both print and online sources or just online sources?

77%  
Print

23%  
Online only
29% Frequently ask for help at Ref. desks

58% Rarely ask or never ask for help at Ref. desks

1 frequently
9 somewhat frequently

9 somewhat rarely
10 rarely
1 never
20%

- Desk person does not look like they will know the answer
- 23% = SMS problem
20%
- Desk person does not look like they will know the answer
- 23% = SMS problem

49%
- Do not want to get up from their computer
- 6% = SMS problem
20%  
- Desk person does not look like they will know the answer
- 23% = SMS problem

49%  
- Do not want to get up from their computer
- 6% = SMS problem

51%  
- Feel stupid for not already knowing
- 9% = SMS problem
20% • Desk person does not look like they will know the answer
• 23% = SMS problem

49% • Do not want to get up from their computer
• 6% = SMS problem

51% • Feel stupid for not already knowing
• 9% = SMS problem

54% • Do not want to bother going to the library building
• 9% = SMS problem
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>57%</td>
<td>Desk person does n’t look like they want to help or they look too busy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Now that you've used Text Messaging Reference, do you think you will increase or decrease the number of questions you will ask at the traditional reference desk?

- 57% will increase
- 20% will decrease
- 23% will not change
“..can help students who rely heavily on their cell phone usage.”

“If you feel like your question is silly, it doesn't matter because the texting makes it confidential in a way.”

“..don't have to worry about situational factors, like is that person looking at me, do i smell ok, did I word that question correctly, etc.”

“Don't have to wait for help.”
“Sometimes it's easier for the librarian to physically show me where something is.”

“Limited answers. The answers are short and to the point, no elaboration of suggestions.”

“might be hard to explain exactly what you need”

“there really isn't any.”

SMS Disadvantages
“I have had people make me feel dumb before and now will not ask. So for me there is no advantage.”

“They can show you books.”

“Social interaction, more elaboration on answers and suggestions, no wait time.”

“You can get better details.”
“there could be long lines, the librarian may not be competent.”

“Sometimes I don't trust their knowledge or expertise or it is hard to tell if someone is a worker, or a credible enough worker, to offer advice.”

“I feel dumb and like I am bothering them.”

“none”
73% conducted training
Unsure... (14%)
Just started (12.5%)
10 or less (40%)
10-100 (28%)
Over 100 (6.3%)
Attract a new user base and make us attractive to those who use SMS as their primary communication tool.
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Convenience to the patron, using technology most students prefer.
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It’s another form of reference.

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It’s another form of reference.

It is easily implemented.
Attract a new user base and make us attractive to those who use SMS as their primary communication tool. Provide patrons with as many ways to reach us as we can. It’s another form of reference. Convenience to the patron, using technology most students prefer. It is easily implemented.
Attract a new user base and make us attractive to those who use SMS as their primary communication tool.

Provide patrons with as many ways to reach us as we can.

It’s another form of reference.

Easy way to provide quick answers.

Convenience to the patron, using technology most students prefer.

It is easily implemented.
Afraid of technology
Afraid of technology

We don’t even use the word reference anymore
Afraid of technology

Not enough time or staff

We don’t even use the word reference anymore
We don’t offer text messaging reference because we are behind the times.
Why not?

No staff

No time

Why?

Decrease library anxiety

Provide many points of reference

It’s cutting edge and innovative

Reach users with technology they use
CHAT. Chat with a librarian. Available 24/7. Note: You may not be located at Albertsons Library.

EMAIL. Ask a question and you'll receive a response within 24 hours (responses take longer on weekends and University holidays).

PHONE. Call (208) 426-3301 to speak with a reference librarian. The Reference Desk is staffed (7am-10pm M-F, 10am-7pm Sat, 10am-10pm Sun during the semester; limited hours during intersession). Library Hours

IN PERSON. Visit and speak directly with a reference librarian. Campus Map

CONTACT YOU. We'll contact you to touch with the librarian who specializes in resources in your subject.

SCHEDULE A RESEARCH APPOINTMENT WITH A LIBRARIAN. Get individualized help with your research project.

TEXT A LIBRARIAN. Send a text message to us at (208) 546-9982 and a librarian will get back to you as soon as possible. We staff this service during hours that the reference desk is staffed (7am-10pm M-F, 10am-7pm Sat, 10am-10pm Sun during the semester; limited hours during intersession).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS. View questions and answers or ask your own question.
Ask A Librarian Day

In Florida the statewide texting consortium held an Ask A Librarian day where participating libraries coordinated blogposts, cookies, cakes, and question booths like this one.
Q and A NJ

They have put together a checklist for marketing virtual reference:
http://www.qandanj.org/description/marketing_ideas.pdf
Know It Now Ohio

From bookmarks to posters to power point presentations in the schools – this consortium has a comprehensive list of marketing materials on their website:  http://provider.knowitnow.org/content/marketing-materials
QR Codes

Scan the QR code to text a librarian a question. Put QR codes with posters on your bus system, or coffee shops. Any advertisement for SMS reference is an advertisement for the whole library.
Lightweight for summer comfort or winter layering, our Men's Organic T-shirt is one of our most popular fine tees. It's what to wear when you care about having 100% organically-grown cotton next to your skin. The next best thing to nothing, naturally.

**CafePress**

Mugs, t-shirts, polo shirts...
Lesson Plan

Introducing Students to Ohio's Statewide Online Reference Service

Notes to Teachers

This outline can be used alone or in conjunction with the PowerPoint "Introduction to KnowItNow24x7" available at the following address:
http://provider.knowitnow.org/KINdocs/marketing/KnowItNow24x7_Lesson_Plan.ppt

Entire classes logging into KnowItNow24x7 can quickly overwhelm librarians staffing the service. Please choose one or two students at most to access the service during a class demonstration and allow other students to watch their interaction. This will provide a much better experience for both the students and librarians. Encourage students to access the service during other times in school, at home, or in their school library or local public library. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Instruction

Use SMS reference when talking to any class you are teaching. Check out the lesson plan for Know it Now Ohio:
http://provider.knowitnow.org/KINdocs/marketing/KnowItNow24x7_Lesson_Plan.pdf
Instruction

Teaching students to communicate with librarians will engage them in the classroom and beyond!
Ask Away!

Need help finding a book?
Want to know the library hours?
Need to look up a journal article?

Text us!
208.546.9982

You can also
- call us: 208.426.3301
- visit us: 1st floor reference desk
- chat with us 24/7
  http://library.boisestate.edu
- use our mobile web site:
  http://library.boisestate.edu/m
- email us:
  refdesk@boisestate.edu
Questions
Contact Information

Margie Ruppel
• @bsulibrary
• margieruppel@boisestate.edu

Amy Vecchione
• @librarythinking
• amyvecchione@boisestate.edu