

ASKCOLORADO USE CONTINUES TO GROW IN SECOND YEAR

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AskColorado, a statewide virtual reference service which recently completed its second year of helping Coloradans, continues to gain momentum and receive positive feedback from its users. The 24/7 reference service, staffed by over 200 library personnel from all types of libraries throughout the state, significantly increased its number of users between its first and second years. . During the first ten months of its existence (September 2003 through June 2004), the librarians were involved in an average of 2,000 reference transactions per month. In its second year (July 2004 through June 2005), that number rose to an average of over 3,500 transactions in each month. In February 2005 alone AskColorado librarians were involved with 6,483 reference transactions. Note: a reference transaction is defined as a discrete online reference session with one or more users which may include one or more questions and answers.

A pop-up survey, in English or Spanish as appropriate, was presented to users of the AskColorado following each virtual reference transaction. Between November 2004 and June 2005, 3,828 responses were received – 3,679 in English and 59 in Spanish. During this time frame, there were 34,988 English-language reference transactions, and 582 reference transactions completed in Spanish, meaning 10.5% of English-speaking users and 10.1% of Spanish-speaking users responded to the pop-up survey. As in its first year, AskColorado once again received high marks from its users.

Of all respondents:

- Over two-thirds (68%) found the virtual librarian to be helpful or very helpful, with over half (53%) perceiving the librarian as very helpful. (See Chart 1.)
- Sixty-two percent were satisfied or very satisfied with their answer, with 43 percent being very satisfied. (See Chart 2.)
- Three-quarters (75%) stated that they were likely or very likely to use the service again, with 60 percent being very likely to return. (See Chart 3.)
- Nearly one-third (31%) of the respondents used AskColorado to obtain a specific fact or document. Almost one-quarter (23%) of them used it to do research for homework or a school project, and another 22% identified a new source of information to search. Additionally, 16% found information needed for work, and 13% learned how the library can help them. (See Chart 4.)

"This was my first visit to this site, and I am very impressed! Excellent response time and relevant information. I'll bookmark this one!"

- AskColorado User



Chart 1
How helpful was the virtual librarian?

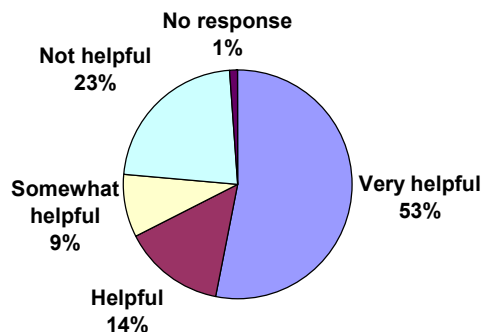
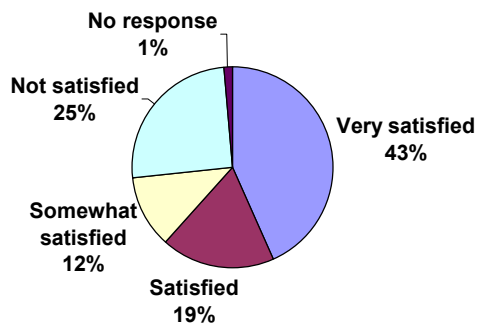


Chart 2
Did you get your question answered to your satisfaction?



"Thank you so much for this service, it is quite refreshing to know there is a kind person out there willing to help me find something that I find important to me."

- AskColorado User



Chart 3
How likely is it that you will use the AskColorado virtual reference service again?

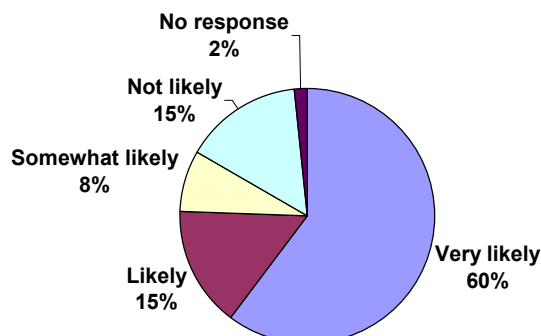
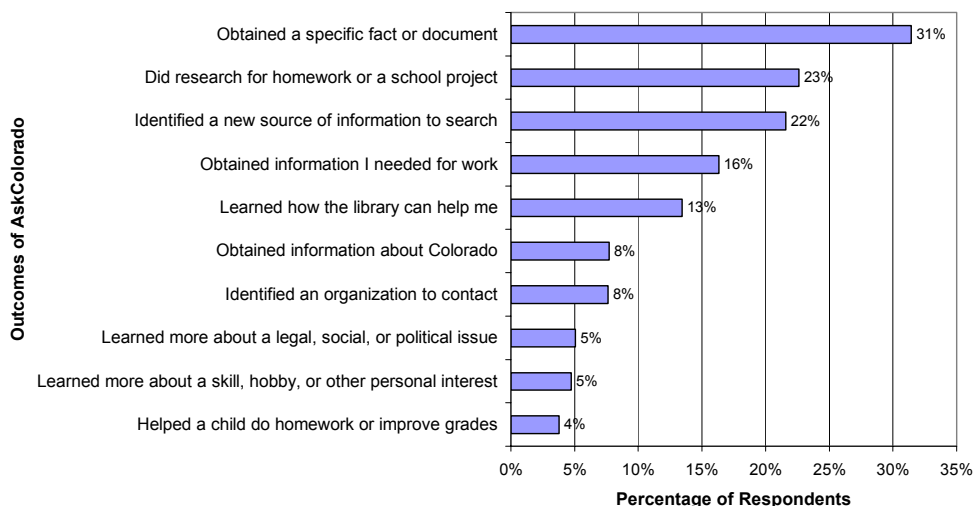


Chart 4
What did you achieve today by using the AskColorado reference service?



The pop-up survey also included an array of demographic questions. Interesting findings about the respondents to the survey included that twice as many women as men responded to the survey, nearly half of the respondents (49%) were under 18 years old,

"Your site is wonderful! It is absolutely one of the best sources on the internet. All the librarians are professional and friendly."

- AskColorado User



and every Colorado county was represented in the respondents, with the sole exception of Sedgwick.

Cross-tabulations of outcomes reported by AskColorado users with gender, age, current student status, and educational attainment were examined. Findings include:

Gender:

- Over a third of male respondents (36%) and nearly as many female respondents (32%) used AskColorado to obtain a specific fact or document. (See Chart 5.)
- Male respondents were more likely than female respondents to cite using AskColorado to obtain information needed for work; learn more about a legal, social, or political issue; help a child do homework or improve grades; learning more about a skill or hobby; and/or obtaining information about Colorado. (See Chart 5.)

Age:

- Compared to respondents in other age groups, those in the younger age groups were more likely to use AskColorado to do research for homework or a school project. Over one-third of respondents under eighteen (34%) and more than one-quarter of those between 18-24 (28%) cited this as a reason for using the service. (See Chart 6.)
- Compared to respondents in highest and oldest age groups (those under 25 and over 59 years old), respondents between these ages were more likely to cite using AskColorado to identify a new source of information to search and/or to learn how their libraries can help them. (See Chart 6.)
- Older respondents, those over 24 years of age, were more likely than younger respondents to use AskColorado to identify an organization to contact or to obtain information about Colorado. (See Chart 6.)

"This site is awesome and I recommend it to many people. I know the Internet has a wealth of information on it but so often it is hard to find. Your site takes so much of the frustration out of research. Thank You! Thank You!"

- AskColorado User

Educational attainment:

- Respondents with lower levels of educational attainment were more likely than those with higher levels to use AskColorado to do research for homework or a school project, suggesting that they will be raising their educational attainment level. (See Chart 7.)
- Respondents with higher levels of educational attainment were more likely than those with lower levels to use AskColorado to identify a new source of



information to search; obtain information needed for work; identify an organization to contact; and/or obtain information about Colorado. (See Chart 7.)

Chart 5
Percentage of Respondents Reporting Selected Outcomes of AskColorado Use by Gender

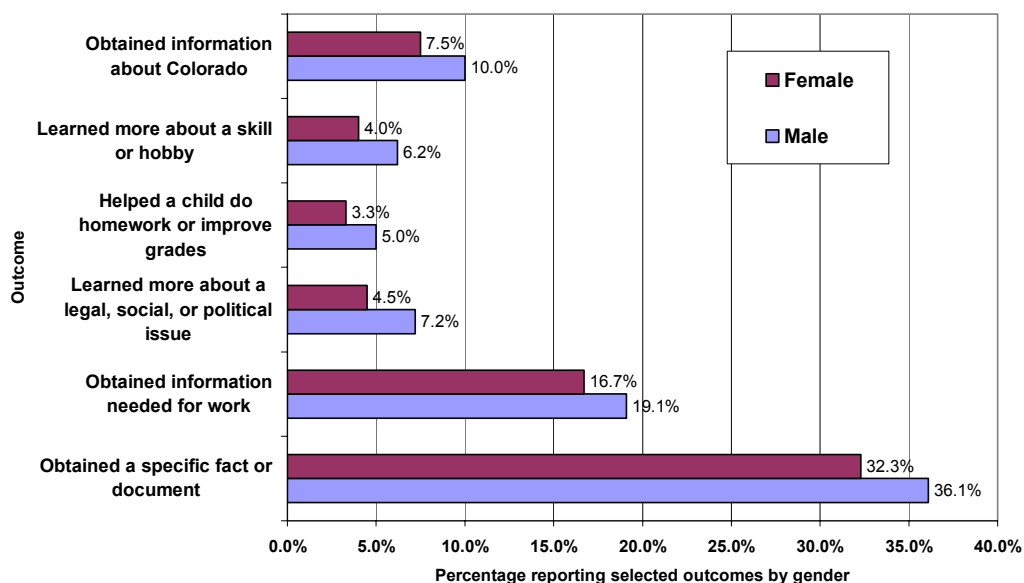


Chart 6
Percentage of Respondents Reporting Selected Outcomes of AskColorado Use by Age Group

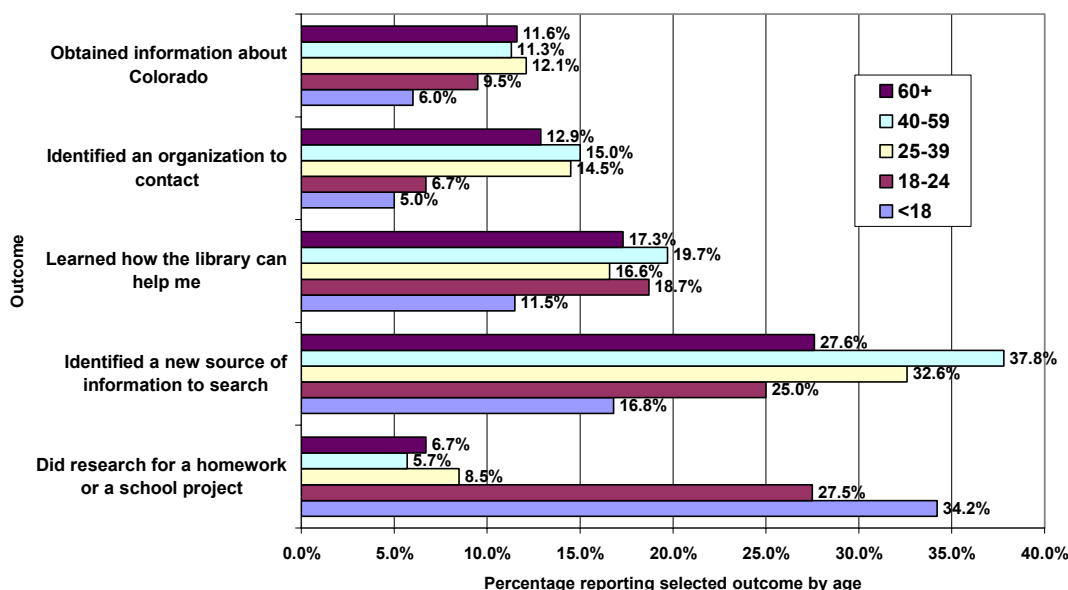
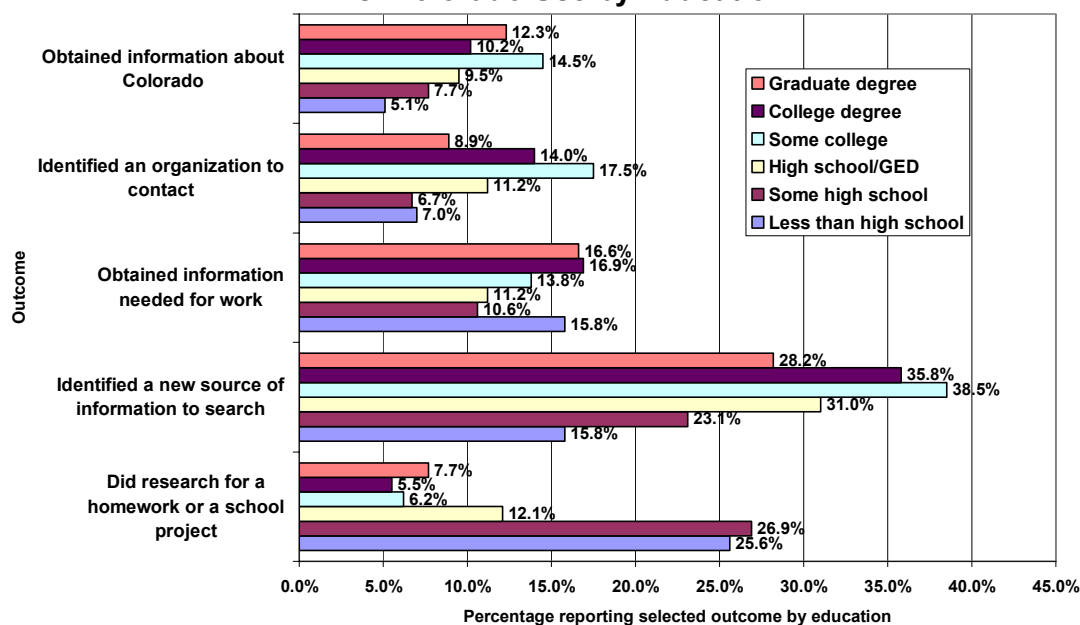


Chart 7
Percentage of Respondents Reporting Selected Outcomes of AskColorado Use by Education



In its first year, AskColorado hit the ground running, and it only picked up speed during its second year. Use of the service continues to rise, in its second year it fielded over 3,500 reference transactions per month, and answered more than 6,000 in February. Additionally, users of the service continue to suggest that they are pleased with the service that the librarians are giving them. Continued dedication to evaluating the efforts of AskColorado, such as pop-up surveys like this one, will go a long way toward ensuring that AskColorado's users continue to receive great service.

"I stumbled onto this resource while researching for a project. I have been stumped for weeks trying to find information for this project and now a fog has been lifted. This was SO helpful I am jumping for joy."

- AskColorado User

Visit AskColorado online at
<http://www.askcolorado.org>.

CONTACT ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Zeth Lietzau • Senior Research Analyst

Library Research Service • 201 East Colfax Avenue, Suite 309 • Denver, Colorado 80203-1799

Phone 303.866.6900 • E-mail: lietzau_z@cde.state.co.us • Web site: www.LRS.org

Layout and production by Fabian R. Maes • Phone: 303.866.6906 • E-mail: Maes_F@cde.state.co.us

Fast Facts – Recent Statistics from the Library Research Service

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