

AskColorado Customer Satisfaction High as Usage Continues to Increase

ED3/110.10/No. 255

December 6, 2007

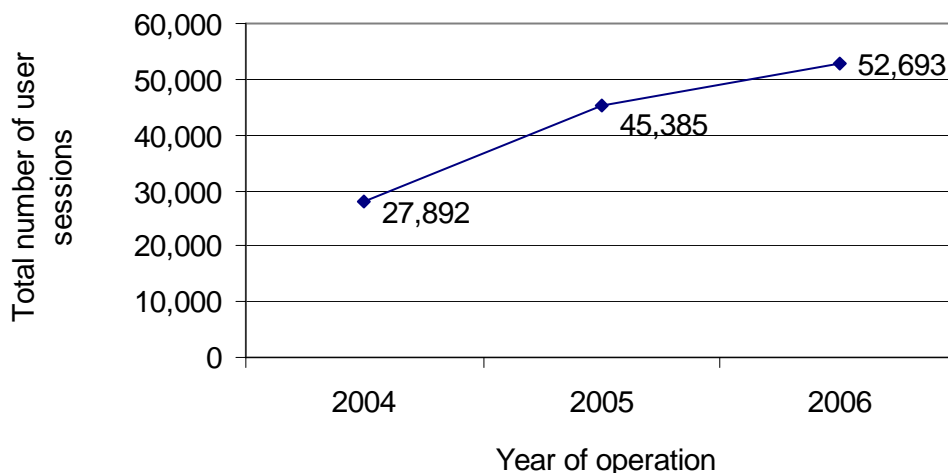
AskColorado, the statewide 24/7 free virtual reference service that started in September 2003, is a collaborative project among libraries of all types throughout the state. Through the efforts of over 350 librarians from public, academic, school and special libraries, the service provides online answers to Coloradans—any age, anywhere, anytime. Since its inception, AskColorado has steadily increased both in number of user sessions and customer satisfaction levels.

According to AskColorado usage statistics, the number of user sessions increased substantially during the first three full years of service (see Chart 1). In 2006, AskColorado librarians answered questions during more than 52,000 online reference sessions – almost twice the number of sessions as in 2004 (27,892).

When asked about the growth of the service, Kris Johnson, the AskColorado coordinator, commented, “Usage continues to grow, this is clear. This may be due to more people knowing about the service, or the fact that we now have more librarians available online at any given time to take calls, or both.”

Chart 1

AskColorado User Sessions 2004-2006



Note: 2004 was AskColorado's first full year of operation.



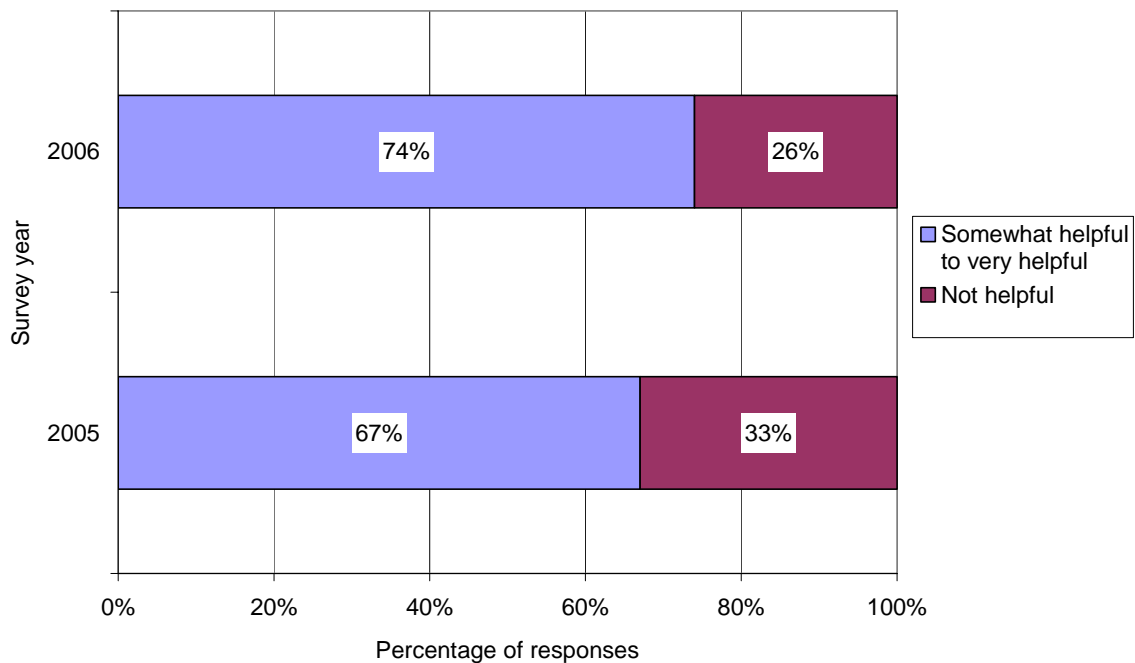
Customer Satisfaction

Findings from both the 2005 and 2006 surveys indicate a majority of respondents found the virtual librarian helpful and were satisfied with the answers to their questions (see Chart 2 and Chart 3). In 2006, 3 out of 4 respondents (74%) found the virtual librarian to be helpful, and a similar proportion expressed satisfaction (72%) with the answers they received from the AskColorado librarians. This represents a significant increase from 2005 to 2006 in the customer satisfaction with the service.

The reason for the increased satisfaction is undoubtedly due to a combination of factors. According to Kris Johnson, "We're getting better about communicating online, we're becoming better searchers, our patrons are having a more realistic understanding of what our service can provide." Johnson continues, "Perhaps our patrons are having a more difficult time finding information on their own and turn to us. After all, librarians are known as information experts. Any or all of these reasons could apply."

Chart 2

AskColorado Customer Satisfaction Survey
 Helpfulness of Virtual Librarian, All Responses



More About the AskColorado Surveys

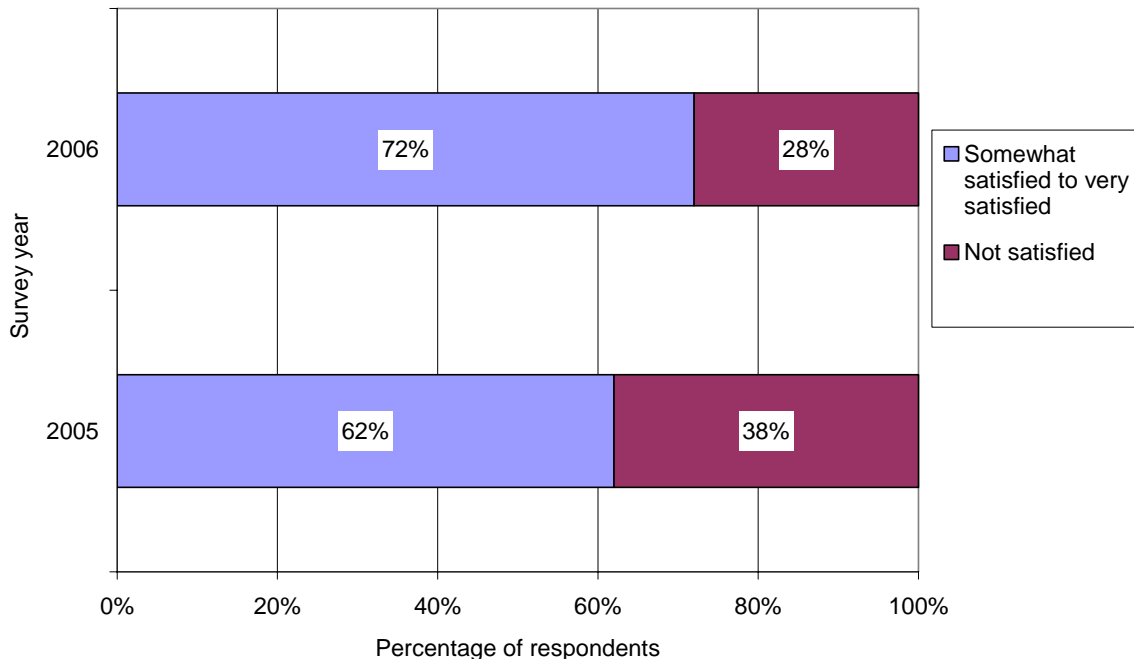
To measure AskColorado's success serving its patrons, an annual customer service and outcome based evaluation survey was created to ask a sample of users for their reaction to the service. In 2004, following the first year of service, two surveys were administered to users of the service; a pop-up customer satisfaction survey and an outcome survey e-mailed to those who agreed to take this follow up survey. The outcome survey also contained demographic questions. The two surveys were revised and condensed in 2005 to create one pop-up exit survey. Therefore, the data comparisons in this Fast Facts contain only 2005 and 2006 information.

"I am very impressed. As an IT specialist, I understand how difficult it can be to implement a sophisticated system such as this. It worked like a charm. I was quickly connected with a local librarian who helped me research my topic. I had been Googling for hours to no avail, but your librarian found a relevant link in under 5 minutes. Great job!"

-AskColorado User

Chart 3

AskColorado Customer Satisfaction Survey
Respondent Satisfaction with Answer to Their Question, All Responses



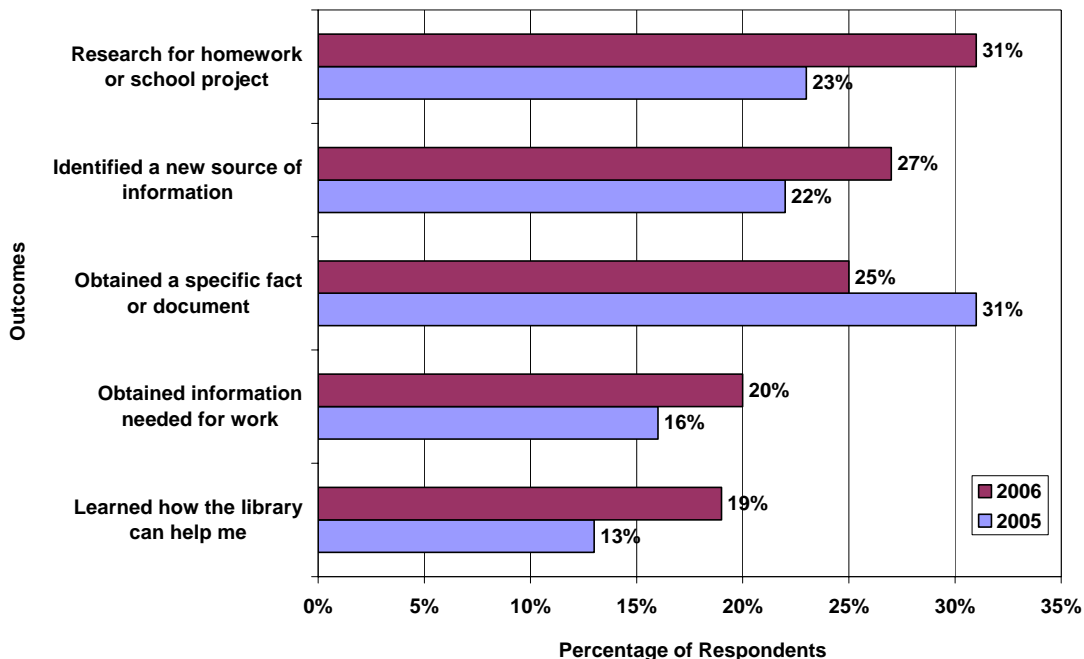
"Sometimes I need a quick answer to a question about finding where and in what form I will find a source for research in my history classes. Your service and your librarians, who often are an encyclopedia in and of themselves, have helped me 'learn' how and where to find information while I am completing my project. The library is a complicated place for those of us just learning and technology seems to change constantly. It is hard sometimes to keep up. Thank you for your help and especially at being there at hours when the main library is closed."

-AskColorado User

Customer Outcomes

In both the 2005 and 2006 survey respondents were asked to indicate the outcome(s) of their visit to AskColorado (see Table 1). The same five outcomes top the list each year, with research for homework or a school project having the strongest showing overall (ranking first in 2006 and second in 2005). Similarly, identifying a new source of information rose from 2005 to 2006. Obtaining a specific fact or document was the number one outcome in 2005 and fell to third in 2006. Obtaining information for work and learning how the library can help respondents were the fourth and fifth most popular outcomes, respectively, both years.

Chart 4
AskColorado Customer Satisfaction Survey
Respondent Outcomes



Respondents were told to choose all outcomes that applied. Therefore respondents could choose more than one answer.



"This is the best site! I have always found what I needed at this site and the people who helped me were great!! This site is a life saver thanks again!!!!"

-AskColorado User

Between 2005 and 2006 survey respondents were increasingly using the AskColorado virtual reference service in order to conduct research for homework and school projects, as well as other traditional reference services. The increase in usage of the service, as well as a rise in customer service ratings, indicates that AskColorado is growing in both popularity and customer satisfaction.

"Thank you. You guys so helped me and helped me stay up on my grades thank you I will be coming to this site more often when I need help!!!!"

-AskColorado User

Source:

French, J. (2007) *2006 AskColorado Customer Satisfaction & Outcome Survey*. Library Research Service Colorado State Library.

AskColorado Usage 2004 – 2006. <http://www.aclin.org/reference/stats.html>

CONTACT ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Author: Jennifer French, Research Analyst
 Library Research Service • 201 East Colfax Avenue, Suite 309 • Denver, Colorado 80203-1799
 Phone 303.866.6900 • E-mail: LRS@LRS.org • Web site: www.LRS.org

Fast Facts – Recent Statistics from the Library Research Service

Colorado State Library • Colorado Department of Education
 Library & Information Science Program Morgridge College of Education • University of Denver
 © 2007 • Permission granted to reproduce for nonprofit purposes

