Virtual Reference Policy
Ask-A-Librarian @ McKillop Library, Salve Regina University

About
The Ask-A-Librarian virtual reference service at McKillop Library offers virtual help to patrons through chat, email, and text options, in addition to phone and in-person assistance. This service was introduced in September 2010.

The McKillop Library at Salve Regina University uses the Zoho instant messaging client to provide online research and information assistance through a chat interface. Users have the choice of chatting via an embedded widget from library web pages or through a personal account with a chat service to username “salvelibrarian” (Yahoo, MSN/Windows Live, Google Talk, AIM). Users may also send a text message to the library’s text phone number at (401) 324-9542. Other virtual options include sending an email to the information desk at salvelibrarian@salve.edu, or filling out a contact form from the Ask-A-Librarian web page.

Audience
Virtual reference services are provided for the Salve Regina University Community (e.g. students, faculty, and staff). Patrons not affiliated with the University may be redirected to email or phone the Information desk at the discretion of the librarian or assistant on duty. Patrons may be asked for their Salve ID# to confirm they are a member of the Salve community.

Please also refer to the library’s Reference Services policy.

Hours
Current availability to answer chat and text questions during the school semester are as follows:

Sundays: 12 PM to 10 PM
Monday-Thursday: 10 AM to 12 AM (midnight)
Friday: 10 AM to 8 PM
Saturday: 12 PM to 5 PM

Users may also come into the library for assistance or call the Information desk at (401) 341-2289 until 10 PM Sundays thru Thursdays or 5 PM on Fridays (on Saturdays, please call the Circulation desk at (401) 341-2291 until 6 PM). Distance students can call toll-free at 1-800-388-6139. E-mail may also be sent to the Information desk at salvelibrarian@salve.edu (please allow 2 business days for a response).

Service
The level of service offered through virtual reference will be at the same level as offered in-person at the information desk in the library. The librarian on-duty will determine the amount of time spent online with a patron and may refer the user to follow-up via email or phone, or offer in-depth research consultations as needed. Messages are answered in the order in which they are received. Patrons who visit the library in person are given priority.
Rules & Etiquette
All users must comply with University policies on computer & Internet use:
http://www.salve.edu/offices/it/policies.cfm
http://www.salve.edu/offices/it/resguide/internet.cfm

Tips:
- Please be patient; messages will be answered in the order in which they are received. A librarian will acknowledge your question as soon as possible. Please keep in mind that the librarian on-duty may also be helping other patrons at the information desk, over the phone, or via virtual reference services. If a response is not received, try calling the information desk.
- Communicate in short sentences.
- Do not type in all capital letters, which is often interpreted as YELLING.
- Common courtesies are expected and appreciated. Inappropriate behavior is prohibited and will not be tolerated.

Disclaimer
McKillop Library staff will not cooperate with requests for illegal or illicit material. For answers to personal medical or legal questions, please consult a qualified physician or attorney.

McKillop Library is not responsible for information lost due to user error or software or service outages or interruptions.

Phone and/or text charges may apply. The library is not responsible for fees incurred while using the text or chat service. Check with your phone provider for limitation and fees.

Privacy
The McKillop Library virtual reference service (including chat, text, and email) reserves the right to retain transcripts of transactions which will be used for assessment and evaluation purposes only. We will not disclose any personal data we may collect to any other party in a manner that would identify the user, except where required by law, or in order to fulfill a service request.

We hope that you find the Ask-A-Librarian service helpful.

Feedback is encouraged. Please feel free to send comments about the service to:

Lori Barile
Learning Commons Librarian
lori.barile@salve.edu

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