



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 28, 2010

During the last couple of years there have been many developments in the virtual reference arena. More online communication options are available to our patrons than ever before, including Instant Messaging (IM), IM widget boxes, texting, and SMS. Our diverse populations use all of these communication options. *To better meet the needs of Colorado library patrons, AskColorado is changing to new software!*

INSTANTSERVICE SOFTWARE

On February 1, Colorado's statewide virtual reference collaborative, AskColorado, will begin using software from InstantService (IS). The AskColorado Software Selection Subcommittee, comprised of representatives from public and academic libraries from across the state, as well as the Steering Committee, selected InstantService (IS) after reviewing many vendors, both library and commercial. IS is a commercial (non-library) vendor based out of Seattle. They provide live help services for businesses such as *H&R Block*, *FedEx*, and *REI*. They also provide the software for Florida's AskALibrarian virtual reference service, which has 102 participating libraries representing libraries of all types. Florida has been using IS for about a year and rave about the technology.

The IS software allows live chat with a librarian as well as the integration of email, which patrons can use if the service is busy or closed for a holiday (24/7 service will still be provided, major holidays excepted.) The IS software is also fully integrated, which will allow libraries to offer these different communication options to their patrons and only staff at one service point. The software is entirely web-based and is compatible with more operating systems and browser platforms than the software currently in use from Tutor.com. IS works on both PCs and Macs. In the spring, text messaging will be added as an option so that patrons can communicate using a handheld device such as a cell phone. The selection of IS as the next software solution for AskColorado will soon allow participating AskColorado libraries to add an embedded IM widget box, similar to Meebo, into their web pages. (Embedded widgets get patrons to the service more quickly.)

DISCONTINUATION OF SPANISH QUEUE

To coincide with the move to the new software AskColorado will be discontinuing its Spanish virtual reference queue. This is only partly related to the IS software change however. Primarily, it is due to low usage of the queue and minimal interest from the Colorado library community towards promoting the queue at a local level.



MOVING FORWARD

It is an exciting time for the AskColorado and we look forward to giving our patrons more ways to interact with our libraries through our service. People in Colorado continue to receive top-notch 24/7 virtual reference service because of the commitment and dedication of libraries supporting the AskColorado collaborative. This year several new libraries joined the service and our residents benefit with access to professional reference for their information needs. Last year the AskColorado collaborative answered more than 37,000 questions! Now that's amazing! Only together can we make this happen.

If you have any questions, or would like further information about joining and supporting the AskColorado Collaborative, please feel free to contact a member of the Steering Committee.

Sincerely,

The AskColorado Steering Committee

- Susie Whiteford, Chair - Denver Public Library, swhitefo@denverlibrary.org
- Kathleen Jones, Chair Elect - Remington College, Kathleen.Jones@remingtoncollege.edu
- Sarah Landeryou, Secretary - Wilkinson Public Library (Telluride), slanderyou@telluridelibrary.org
- Elizabeth Brodak - Mesa State College, ebrodak@mesastate.edu
- Dan Cordova - Colorado Supreme Court Law Library, daniel.cordova@judicial.state.co.us
- James Duncan - Colorado State Library, Director of Networking and Resource Sharing, Duncan_J@cde.state.co.us
- Valerie Horton - Colorado Library Consortium (CLiC), vhorton@clicweb.org
- Cindy Phillips - Jefferson County Libraries, Cindy.Phillips@jeffcolibrary.org
- Laurie Van Court - Douglas County Libraries, lvancourt@dclibraries.org
- Kris Johnson, AskColorado Coordinator (de facto), johnson_k@cde.state.co.us