# Oregonians' reference needs - feedback from the library community

*2013 Oregon State Library Task Force on Collaborative Reference*
Compiled by Caleb Tucker-Raymond 6/18/2013

## *Introduction*

The Task force has been charged with identifying and prioritizing the needs of Oregonians regarding reference and information services. Without time to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment, library leaders are in the best position to speak on their community's needs regarding reference and information services.

Below is a summary of feedback from the Oregon library community. Each heading summarizes a major theme, and lists a few quotes from participants to demonstrate that theme.

At the end of this document, minor themes and other topics mentioned are listed.

## *Major Themes*

### Raise awareness of library services

Especially regarding:

- reference
- statewide reference
- databases
- to Spanish-speakers
- local services

"In the case of an academic library, its non-users are those students, staff and faculty who haven't realized the potential usefulness of their library, and are not familiar with its resources and services." (Academic)

"I think it's a marketing issue in many cases. For example, I believe the Auto Repair Reference Center database is one of our "best kept secrets." How can we advertise it to non-library users?" (Public)

"Effective marketing inside and outside the library, resources that work well and are consistently operating." (School)

"Frequently Spanish-speakers are not library users because they have no knowledge of the public library and its services, so I think they should be invited to participate at the very least." (Public)

## Increase partnerships with campus departments, community organizations and business

"More training of Info 211 staff about public and law library information strengths and services." (Law)

"Librarians involved with service groups as part of their position descriptions, being willing to speak of services to offer groups, businesses, and the community in these smaller settings. If they have a need for something, we tell them how to fill that need at the library, physically in it or linking through technology from the outside without spending much more than pocket change (i.e. for copies)." (unknown library type)

"Every class that has a research component that does not include a library presence is a missed opportunity. Every student that chooses google over the library is a missed opportunity." (Academic)

"I wish we were able to offer more research/resource support to the legislature and to the legislative committees. We have also been asked (many times) if we could provide the same support to local governments/county staff as we do to state employees. State employees who switch positions and go to work for county/city government agencies miss the support they recieved while working for the state." (Special)

## Access to electronic resources

Such as:

- courses
- databases
- develop local/cultural history resources
- government documents

"Continued access to a quality statewide database collection. An addition of a comprehensive historical newspaper collection to statewide offering. An example, would be the Oregonian that Multnomah County offers. A continuation of statewide online reference service featuring Oregon librarian who are better versed in addressing the reference questions from Oregonian about Oregon government, etc…. " (Academic)

"A Lynda.com subscription – like what the NYPL has." (Public)

"Oregon Citizens usually need access to state agency produced materials (maps, flyers, reports, web pages, etc)" (Special)

"Official legal forms!" (Law)

## Continue and improve statewide chat reference service

"Although they wanted better services for customers with academic questions, they all said that they would hate to see LNET go away." (Academic)

"Also, I would explain the types of questions that we can answer. There's a difference between "We can answer your questions" and "We can find you X service." (Public)

"Clarification: We want to clarify that public schools would probably be better served on the public side, and that the academic side's population would be colleges and universities." (Academic)

"Continue to provide these services, ESPECIALLY for the smaller schools and districts that would have nothing were it not for the state provided services." (Schools)

## Adult programming

"Adults: I feel like when it comes to educating our patrons-- whether it be English classes or financial classes or resume classes-- they tend to show interest in the classes but have a hard time actually showing up. Perhaps the timing doesn't work out, and sometimes people are disappointed that we don't offer childcare. I don't want to just assume that people are lazy. I have seen little follow-through, though." (Public)

"Programs that lean toward DIY stuff, like how to use your digital camera, learn to use software (Microsoft Office, etc.), canning/cooking/gardening programs. Fax machine!" (Public)

"In addition to what I've already mentioned, we have classes in technology that patrons want to know how to use." (Unknown library type)

## Schools

"Oregon schools are losing a lot of school librarians. We get a lot of students needing help in L-net so without the service, I feel like there would be very little chance of those students becoming library users in the future." (Public)

"School librarians. I believe L-net helps to serve a small part of that need. For senior citizens, L-net is less than useful because many either do not use technology or use it in a limited way." (Unknown)

"Students need support for common core requirements in the areas of research and inquiry, predominately for school-related research, but also for information in areas of personal interest. Fewer and fewer reference books are being purchased at schools, so

more and more students will need to find information online and they don't always know how to navigate." (Schools)

## Access to Subject Specialists

"mostly just need someone to answer questions in Spanish, otherwise there is a range, some needs are typical information for newcomers or immigrants-how schools work, how to find jobs, how to find social service type information" (Public)

"Legal reference; Legal advice (from general public)" (Special)

"An easier way to find and contact experts and specialists. Use a collaborative service to make it easier to locate and talk, professional to professional—make it easier for us to find someone at another library in Oregon who has the skills and knowledge we need to tap, and for them to find us too." (Academic)

"Information and referrals for finding solutions to unique legal problems (criminal, traffic, consumer, estate/probate, etc.)" (Law)

## Technical Infrastructure

"I think the use of chat reference by Washington County residents is pretty high. Without L-net we would lose a major service that is well-used by our patrons, since due to our IT restrictions we're unable (at this time and for the foreseeable future) to offer a chat service locally. We also have a pretty high number of librarians in Washington County who staff the service, so loss of statewide reference would mean that this great resource is not being utilized." (Public)

"I think creating web based resources that can be accessed from any wi-fi connection and on portable devices, is extremely timely and necessary to many people that might never step foot in a library. Also mobile versions of full websites – how to effectively/graphically communicate on a tiny screen!" (School)

"The local chat service that L-Net provides is the most important." (Academic)

## *Minor themes*

24/7 service
Access to the library
Funding
Incentives
Information literacy
Local History
Mobile Devices
Organizational Challenges
Service to the community
Services

## *Also mentioned*

Basic needs
Collaboration
Cultural History
Distane education
Small size of libraries
Technology skills
Usability and library websites