Questions and Answers for Presenters from the Chat

University of Surrey

Q: How does no. enquiries compare to normal circumstances pre- COVID?

A: Very different types of enquiries so hard to say! When COVID announcements have been made by the government, we tend to see a flurry of enquiries. We had about the same number of enquiries over Easter and Christmas (during university closure days) that we have seen during previous years

Q: Seeing their typing is very interesting as a feature! Are the users aware that their draft messages can be seen?

A: In terms of the draft messages - no, they don't! It is useful for staff, however, as sometimes students don't always convey exactly what they want to ask. In person you get a lot of cues and can read situations based on body language, so we like to see this as a virtual aid!

Other responses:

The chat at the OU works in a similar way - we can also see pre-typing

On our chat, we can see when a patron is typing but don't see it until they press send.

Q: Who staffs it?

Q: how do you handle complex, subject related questions over the chat? Do you have an easy way to pass them to Subject Librarians?

Q: how many staff are assigned to answering queries on it each day?

Q are staff timetabled to cover chat at the same time each week? is there a rota? how long are chat shifts? an hour at a time or longer?

Q: Did you require additional resourcing to cover chat as a new enquiry point or did manage from current resourcing and if from current resourcing how did you manage workloads to add a new task?

 A: Customer Services - Library and Learning Support Advisors are trained to handle first line enquiries. Usually, three or four Learning Support Advisors working at home will be allocated a one hour shift covering chat and phone services on their own – two or three times a day.

Advisors know the most appropriate method of triaging. Sometimes this is directing students to online resources, or it may be booking an appointment on behalf of a student, for example with our

Academic Skills Team/Subject Librarians. We do our best to ensure students are not bounced around as much as possible.

Q: Do you have and Chat Standards - e.g. answer within a set time?

A: We don't have an SLA for chat as such. At the moment, we're tending to respond within about 1.5 minutes to any incoming chats...and using this as an informal measure on a weekly basis.

Q Do you use a proactive pop-up invite in addition to static invite?

Q. How do users access the chat service? Does a pop out option appear on your website?

A: No - we don't use a pop-up invite. You can choose to switch it on, but in line with other departments, we all agreed to switch it off for the time being and review. Chat box appears bottom right corner of various webpages.

Q: Do students mind being on video call? Or is it just the staff that are on video?

A: Students and staff are both on video but we have never had an actual video call!!! Only successful test calls amongst staff.

Q: Did you say that you are able to answer multiple chats at once? How does this work out?

Up to three chats simultaneously has been known but quite rare. Similar to handling multiple queries at a live front desk… politely explain, ask to hold… by time student has typed responses usually not a problem.

Q: Is that recognition automated i.e.does it recognise university email addresses?

A: No. One of the first things we normally ask is for the student or staff number. If needed, we are also able to cross-check details provided via our ALMA library database. It is normally quite clear from this whether or not we are speaking to a University member, or member of the public. Having two monitor screens when working from home really helps to quickly cross reference information.

Q: How widely publicised is your service? Do you promote the service at particular times of the academic year?

A: The chat service is publicised via University accounts and also on our social media platforms/webpages

Q: We answer questions from the public, not sure why you wouldn't. We often have multiple chats on got and offer support for complex referencing and research report. We have dealt with 8,500 chats so far this academic year at Portsmouth

A: This is due to data protection issues, as Click4Assistance cannot be used by people who have not already consented via the Student Privacy policy. It is a University-wide policy to not answer questions from the public via chat, but we are able to via email/phone.

Q: Do you also have another system for dealing with enquiries - ie we have a Unidesk help system as well as LibChat

A: Just Click4Assistance for live chat enquiries. We also have an enquiry management system (ISM) to deal with any incoming emails and phone software for telephone enquiries (rerouted from the Library building to those working from home).

OU/Springshare

Q: Do the partner librarians have access to library management systems?

A: No, usually libraries are unable to provide us any access to systems containing personal data.

Q: What is the most popular time for students to make enquiries out of hours?

A: This does vary depending on deadlines, time of year and geographical location. The 8-9AM slot for UK libraries can be quite busy, both from UK patrons and night owls in the US.

Q: Is it clear and intuitive which library or university an enquirer is contacting you from when staffing the 24-7 co-op?

A: Yes, we can see the referring URL, which is the page a patron is viewing when they entered the chat, and the LibAnswers system links to that particular library's guidance and FAQs that they created for the out-of-hours service.

Q: Were staff worried about answering queries for other libraries?

A: We do all receive training on how to respond to enquiries from other libraries, and libraries do provide us guidance in the form of FAQs, and their website. If there is any doubt, we can refer the chat transcript through to home library staff who can follow this up by email. We call this a ticket.

Q: What proportion of the time is their service answered by partner libraries? and how much time do they need to contribute to answering questions for the cooperative?

A: This varies across each library. Some libraries do have 24/7 chat access, so usually outside of regular working times (based on a 9:00-17:00 working day) the chat falls back to the cooperative between 17:00 and 9:00. Some libraries have agreements with Springshare where they don't contribute to the cooperative chat, so every library is different.

Q: How is your 2 to 4 hour service administered? Is it all self serve? How quickly is the turnaround of a book, for talking sake borrowed for 3 hours? What are the fines accrued on late returns

A: We don't have a collection like this at the Open University Library. At Springshare, looking at various library policies this varies a lot.

Q: How do you match co-op librarians to universities in out of hours service?

A: The service doesn't work on a matching basis. There is a central schedule where cooperative staff are allocated times, and when they are on duty they will cover all out-of-hours library chats. This is why it's so important to have access to each library's guidance and FAQs.

Q: If we could do one thing to help out 24/7 co-op colleagues, what would it be?

A: Announcements are a big help – anything urgent, like a major outage, or changes to booking systems, etc. can be listed as an announcement at the top of the policy page to catch the eye.

Q: Does Springshare have plans for a Chatbot currently lie. One of my colleagues is of the understanding they are currently developing one.

A: We are in the early stages of developing chatbot functionality, and hope to have updates in 8-12 months.