

## Mobile Options for AskAway Virtual Reference

While AskAway services are already designed to provide online reference services, the ability to expand and promote AskAway on mobile devices increases both the reach of the service and convenience for the patron. This report outlines the mobile methods of delivering AskAway services that are currently being offered at BC's post-secondary libraries.

### 1. AskAway Qwidget embedded on a simplified webpage

Libraries are providing mobile AskAway services by embedding a Qwidget on a simplified and mobile-optimized webpage.

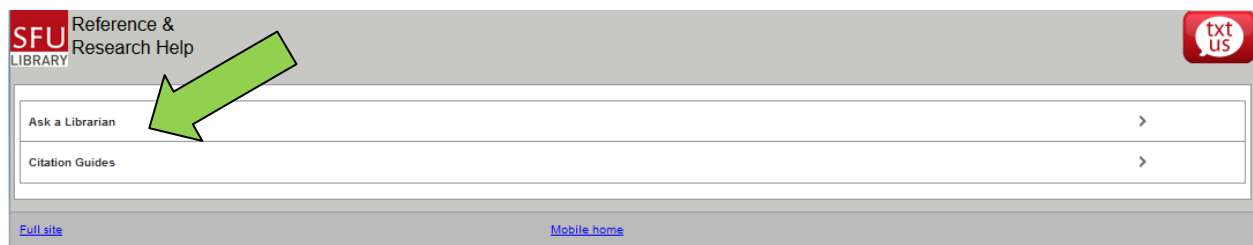
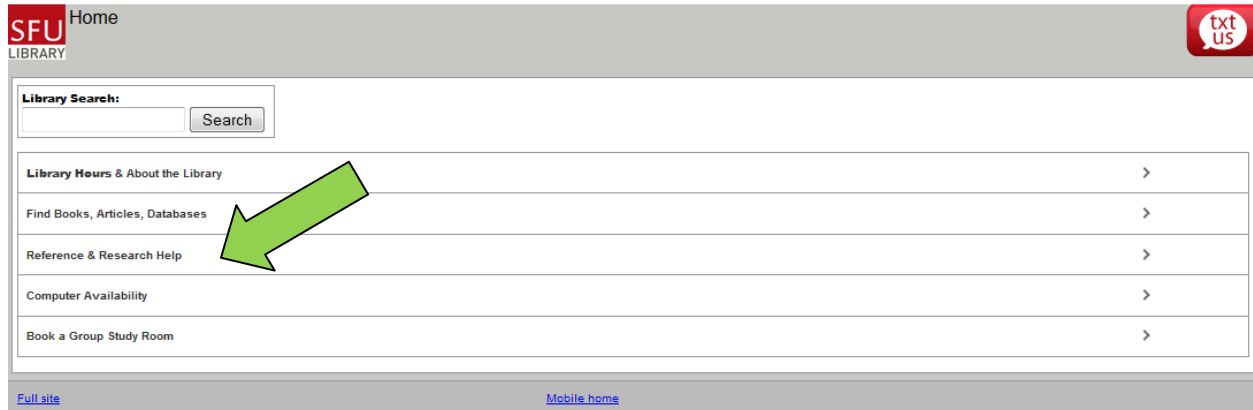
These libraries typically offer this interface as one of several mobile library services. Below is a series of screenshots from SFU Library that shows the path that one needs to follow to access the mobile AskAway interface. This path is generally similar at each of the libraries that use this method: links first direct users to the mobile site, then to AskAway services from there.

a) A link to the mobile version of the website is provided on the library homepage:

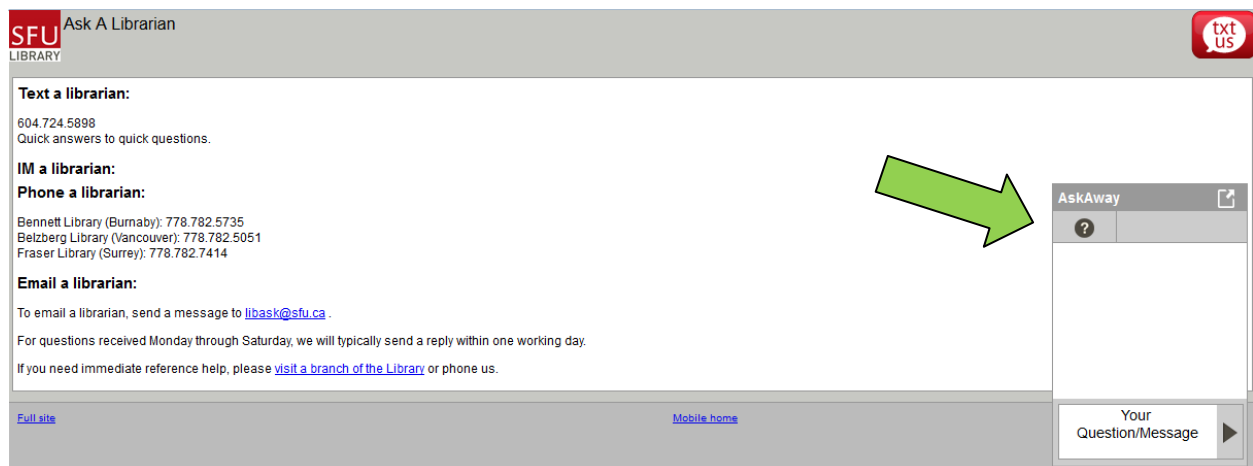
The screenshot shows the SFU Library homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'SFU SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY LIBRARY' and links for 'SFU.CA', 'Burnaby | Surrey | Vancouver', 'SFU Online | A-Z Links | SFU Search'. Below this is a search bar with 'LIBRARY SEARCH', 'FAST SEARCH', and 'CATALOGUE' buttons. The main content area includes 'SFU Library Txt Us' with a 'Text Us' button, 'NEWS & EVENTS' with various announcements, and 'HOURS' for different libraries. A footer contains 'ABOUT', 'MY LIBRARY', 'HELP', and 'FIND' sections. A green arrow points to a red circle around the 'Library Mobile Site' link in the footer.



b) AskAway is available by clicking the appropriate links:



c) The links ultimately lead to a simplified webpage with an embedded AskAway Qwidget. This works with the newest version of the Qwidget code, and the older version of the code also continues to work. SFU's example can be found at <http://www.lib.sfu.ca/m/ask:>





The four libraries that currently offer this option are:

- College of the Rockies  
<http://m.cotr.ca/lr/library.asp>
- Langara College  
<http://www2.langara.bc.ca/library/m/>
- Simon Fraser University  
<http://www.lib.sfu.ca/m?device=mobile>
- Vancouver Community College  
<http://m.vcc.ca/library/>

## 2. The AskAway fullscreen interface

Libraries are also providing mobile AskAway services by using the normal fullscreen AskAway interface, linked from the mobile-optimized webpage. Currently, Kwantlen University is the only institution offering mobile AskAway service with this method.

Patrons access this service in a similar manner as described above, through following links on the library's mobile site. Users are lead to the fullscreen chat instead of the Qwidget, as shown below:

a) The fullscreen AskAway interface, as provided via Kwantlen University Library's mobile site, (at <http://libguides.kwantlen.ca/mobile/4289>), by clicking the “Contact Us”, then “Chat with a Librarian”:

**Hours:**

Mon	10am-9pm
Tue	10am-9pm
Wed	10am-9pm
Thu	10am-9pm
Fri	11am-5pm
Sat	11am-5pm
Sun	10am-9pm

Closed statutory holidays and during exam periods.

Key service dates for this term:

- Service opens for the term Monday, Sept 16, 2013
- Closed Monday, Oct 14
- Closed Monday, Nov 11
- Closed Friday, Dec 6
- Service closes for the term Friday, Dec 6, 2013

Welcome to AskAway! This service is designed to help college and university students in British Columbia and Yukon with their research for term papers, assignments and other academic projects. Library staff are available to chat in real-time and help you

- find library and online resources on your topic
- answer questions about your library
- suggest research strategies

To get started, fill out the form on the right and click **Connect**. A library staff person will be with you shortly.

• [About AskAway](#)

• [Participating Libraries](#)

AskAway is coordinated by the

Funding support for AskAway is provided by

and by BC post-secondary libraries.

askaway..

**AskAway is open with the following hours:**

Sunday&Thursday 10am&9pm  
Friday & Saturday 11am&5 pm  
Closed Holidays

Please use our [other ways](#) to reach a librarian by phone, email, or in person.  
You may also find your answer on our [FAQ's](#).

Exit

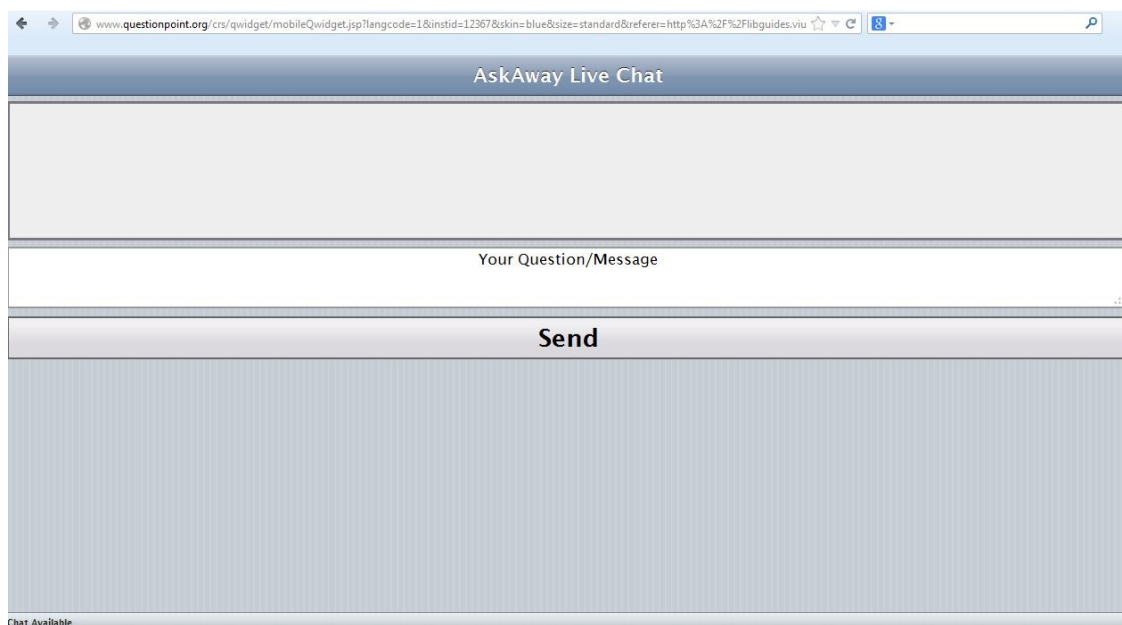


### 3. A mobile-optimized AskAway interface

Libraries can also provide mobile AskAway services by using an interface specifically meant for mobile chat. Currently, Vancouver Island University is the only institution offering this option.

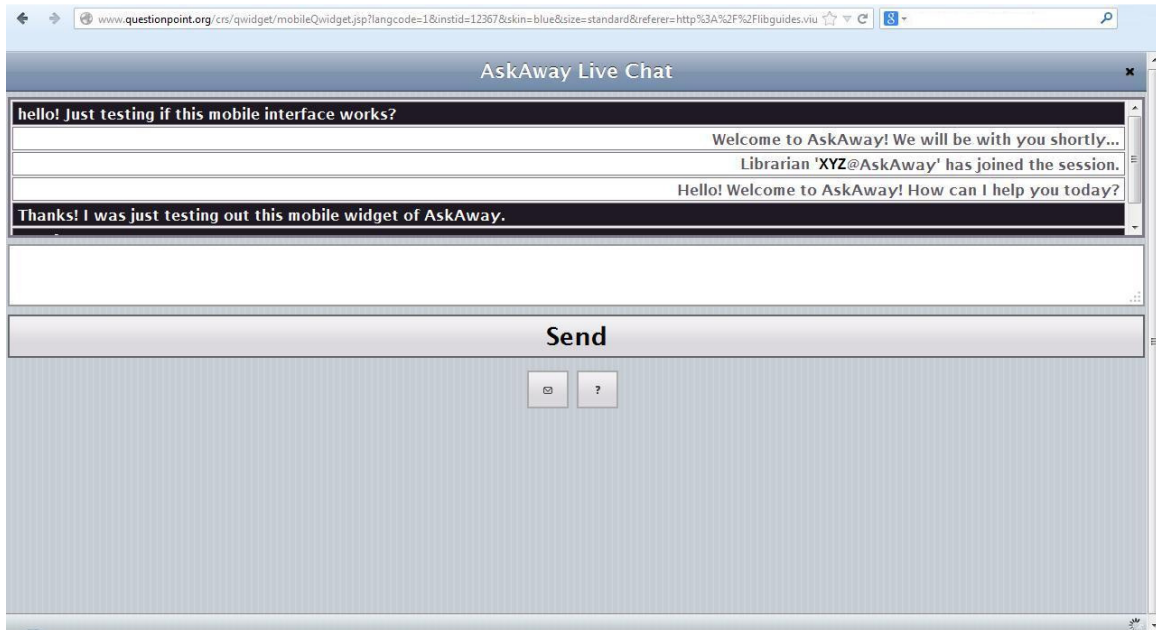
Patrons access this service in a similar manner as the other methods described above, through following links on the library's mobile site. This interface can be accessed from VIU's mobile library site at <http://libguides.viu.ca/mobile/3515>, then clicking "AskAway Chat Research Help". Users are lead to the interface shown below:

a) VIU Library's mobile AskAway interface is full-screen by default, and is distinct in appearance when compared to the regular Qwidget interface. The direct link to the interface is found at [http://www.questionpoint.org/crs/qwidget/mobileQwidget.jsp?langcode=1&instid=12367&skin=blue&size=standard&referer=http%3A%2F%2Flibguides.viu.ca%2Fcontent\\_mobile.php%3Faction%3D%26pid%3D174156](http://www.questionpoint.org/crs/qwidget/mobileQwidget.jsp?langcode=1&instid=12367&skin=blue&size=standard&referer=http%3A%2F%2Flibguides.viu.ca%2Fcontent_mobile.php%3Faction%3D%26pid%3D174156):

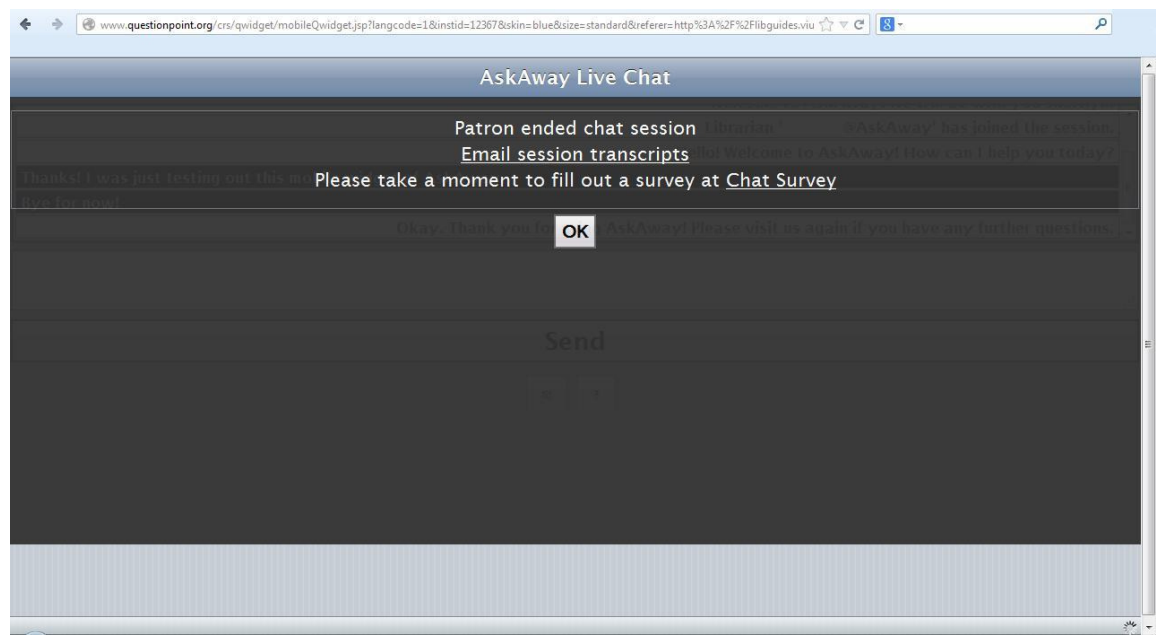




b) Each chatter's text is highlighted differently, and justified to opposite sides of the screen:



c) A screenshot of the end of the session. The patron still has the option to request a transcript or fill out the survey:



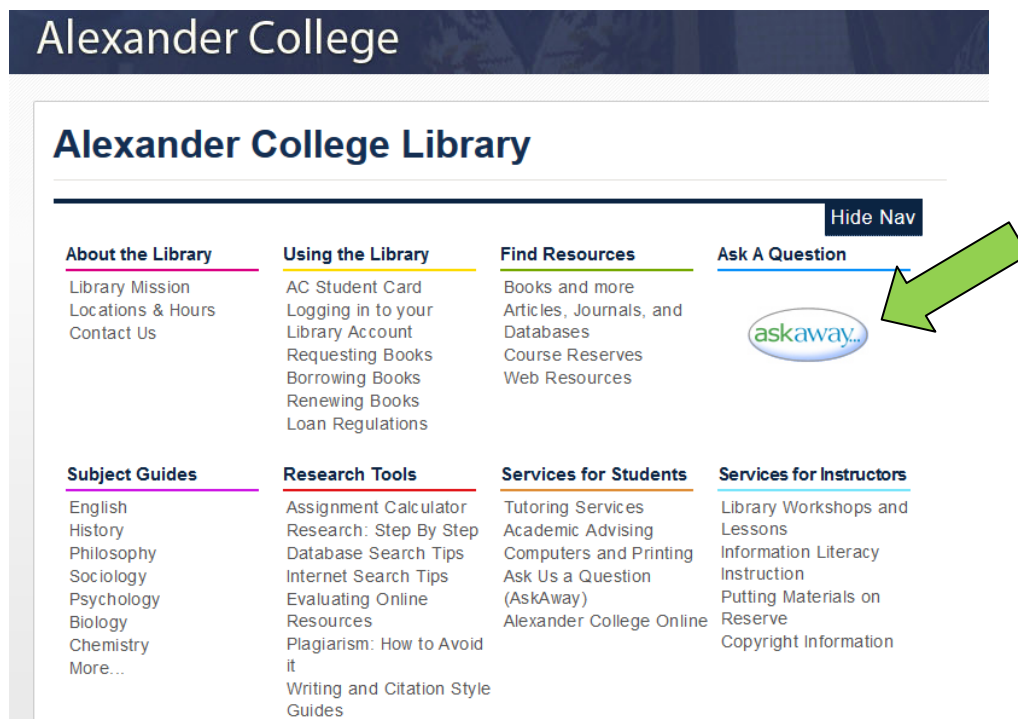


#### 4. A pop-out version of the AskAway Qwidget

Another way that libraries can provide mobile AskAway access is via a pop-out version of the Qwidget that opens in a standalone window. Currently, Alexander College is the only institution offering this option. Users access this pop-out window via a link on the library website (found at <http://www.alexandercollege.ca/library/>).

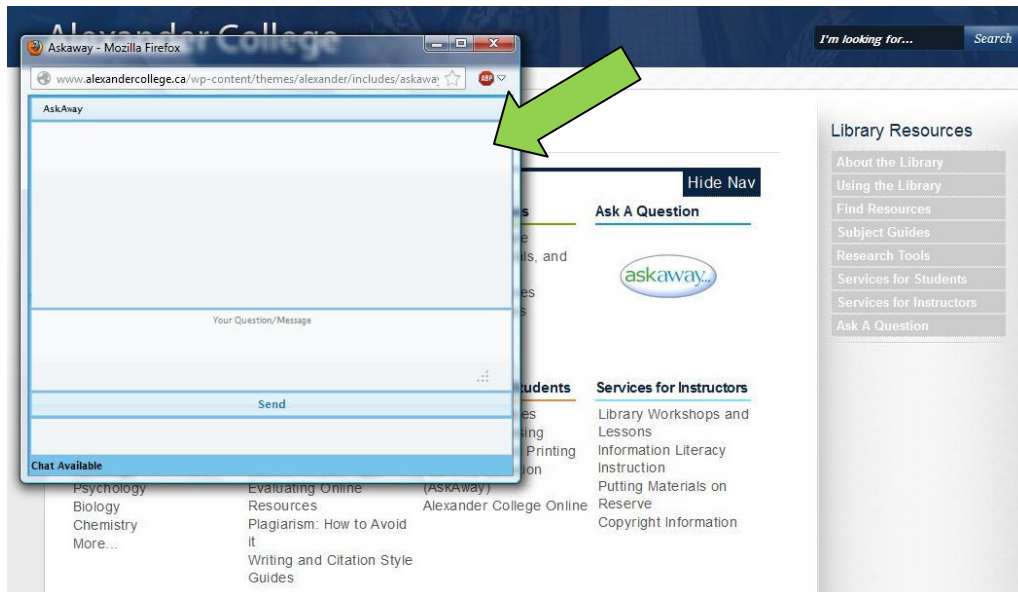
As shown in the screenshots below, the interface is identical to the Qwidget in appearance, except for its size and its pop-out nature (in this case, the older version of the Qwidget is currently being used). This interface is not specifically promoted as a mobile option on the website, but it is mentioned here since this set-up should work on a mobile device.

a) The AskAway link as shown on the Alexander College Library homepage:





b) The AskAway Qwidget appears in a pop-out, as opposed to embedded in a webpage:



## References

Screenshots were captured via the following library websites, October-December 2013:

Alexander College Library: <http://www.alexandercollege.ca/library/>.

Kwantlen Polytechnic University Library: <http://www.kpu.ca/library>.

Simon Fraser University Library: <http://www.lib.sfu.ca/>.

Vancouver Island University Library: <http://www.viu.ca/library/>.