Case Study No 12

Reasons and Tips for implementing LibAnswers - Birmingham City University

Why?

- To provide a seamless virtual enquiry service incorporating email, online chat and SMS enquiries
- Offers users the opportunity to search a knowledgebase for quick answers to frequently asked questions
- The knowledgebase can also be utilised for library staff training and to assist on the Help Desk.
- Brings together all of the online enquiry functions that were previously separate such as email and online chat.
- Improved functionality for online chat including canned messages and operator login statuses.
- More succinct recording of statistics

Preparation

- Research other institutions use of LibAnswers
- Decide on a name for the service
- Set up accounts for operators
- Set up an email account for notifications
- Create the Question Form
- Customise the chat widget
- Develop the front page branding, layout & content
- Create / identify questions to add to the Knowledgebase
- Embed the chat widget
- Staff training
- Publicise the service
IT Preparation

- There is an option for a ‘custom domain name’ (for example, we use libanswers.bcu.ac.uk even though the service is hosted remotely at springshare.com). If any institution wishes to use its own domain, there is a little setup work required which will need IT support. Springshare provide full instructions, but it is worth dealing with this early on to avoid delays.

Requirements

- eLibrary team support
- Library staff buy-in to operate chat service
- Key staff to answer email referrals

Issues

- Statistics functionality does not match previous statistics recordings i.e. initial chat response times not available.
- Referring enquiries is not as simple as previous software, now have to create tickets for chat enquiries and email enquiries need to be referred to users with an account in order to allow for replies to come through the system.
- No option for feedback on email enquiries other than adding an external widget/ link.

Outcomes

- LibAnswers provides a much more succinct system for enquiries allowing email, SMS and chat to be answered in one place.
- The statistics functionality is far more sophisticated and allows for the easy collation of reports.
- The development of the FAQ functionality has allowed for more independent learning for users
- The query spy facility enables the team to decipher the types of enquiries asked out of hours via the FAQ function which we can then action through the development of improved services.

http://libanswers.bcu.ac.uk

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