

**BOARD OF EDUCATION GENERAL MEETING**  
**Thursday, May 15, 2008**

**Hawaii State Public Library System's New "e-Reference" Service**

Good afternoon Chair Ikeda and Members of the Board. My name is Patrick McNally and I am the Head Librarian in the Hawaii & Pacific Section at the Hawaii State Library. I am here today to tell you briefly about the Hawaii State Public Library System's (HSPLS) new electronic reference service: e-Reference.

e-Reference is another way that HSPLS is attempting to provide increased access to information twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Patrons in Hawaii and across the nation and world can submit questions via our website ([www.librarieshawaii.org](http://www.librarieshawaii.org)) and our goal is to answer them within two working days of the receipt of the question. This service was first offered beginning in November 2007. Due, we think, to the busy holiday season and the "visibility" of the service on the public library system's website, this new service got very little use in the first few weeks after its introduction.

As a part of the State Librarian's requested redesign of the HSPLS website in early 2008, the e-Reference or "Ask A Librarian" service was featured more prominently. Since that time, requests for e-Reference service have steadily increased. Please see the statistics below for general information characterizing this service. Weekly statistics compiled in a uniform format began with e-Reference activity for the week of February 18 – 23. Thus, the statistics below begin from that time and run through the most recent weekly report available (the week of April 28 – May 3).

I think it is fair to say that we were surprised initially at how many e-Reference questions concerned procedural information or an individual library user's account status. The service was conceived and structured to offer an additional, online means by which informational questions could be posed and answered. While these reference questions account for a significant proportion of the queries we receive, at least half of the questions still involve library users' accounts in some way. Please see the sample questions included below.

As with other public services provided by HSPLS, e-Reference is being monitored, evaluated, and adapted in order to make it an effective and efficient library service. In addition to revising the appearance and accessibility of the initial e-Reference web pages as described above, a newly created bookmark will help us promote this service to library users (see the attached exhibit).

Selected e-Reference statistics:

(For the most recent 11 weeks compiled and reported: 2/18/08 – 5/3/08)

- Total e-Reference questions submitted .....233
- Weekly average..... 21
- Total handled by Telephone Reference Unit (TRIN)...,139 (\* see descriptive note below)
- Percent of total..... 60%

- Total handled by Hawaii & Pacific Section ..... 40
- Percent of total..... 17%
- Total answered within 48 hours ..... 183
- Percent of total.....78.5%

\* "Again this week, TRIN answered 65 percent of the questions with the remaining 35 percent forwarded to other sections. The types of questions answered by TRIN can be categorized as procedural, account-related, or circulation-related. The four questions forwarded to H&P involved information about Hawaii-related books and statistics. Each of the questions forwarded to other sections were actual ready-reference questions involving the availability of a book or information on specific persons or events." [from notes for the week of 4/14/08]

Sample e-Reference questions:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aloha! I am looking for an obit: Harold M. XXXXX, Died on 11 April 1998, in Honolulu, HI My address is: Gail XXXXXXXX, 1970 S xxxxxxxx St, Lakewood, CO. 80228 Is there a fee? Thank you</li> </ul>	<p>Searching the public library system's online newspaper index (<a href="http://www.librarieshawaii.org">www.librarieshawaii.org</a> &gt; catalogs &amp; databases &gt; Hawaii newspaper index) shows that the requested obituary was published in the Honolulu Advertiser, 5/14/98, page B2. For a fee of \$1.25 we can mail you a copy of the obituary, postpaid.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I am from USA and belong to an organization that plans for High School reunions. We want to make T-shirts to wear during the parade/peprally. I am trying to translate "Don't you wish your girlfriend was hot like me?" in Hawaaian. Can you help?</i> Rachele XXXXXXXX</li> </ul>	<p>The colloquial phrase you provided does not lend itself to translation into the Hawaiian language. The library can only look up single words or simple terms in our Hawaiian dictionaries. You can try contacting the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, which has a volunteer who attempts to do translations. Their phone number is (808) 594-1888, sorry no email address. There is also a Hawaiian Dictionary available online at: <a href="http://wehewehe.org/gsd12.5/cgi-bin/hdict?l=en">http://wehewehe.org/gsd12.5/cgi-bin/hdict?l=en</a>.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I live in California and have a 5 year library card I use when visiting Kauai each year. I did not visit last year but am coming this summer. Can you tell me if my library card is still valid? The bar code number is 00XXXXXXXX. Thank you!</li> </ul>	<p>Your nonresident library card is still valid and will continue to be when you visit this summer. The expiration date is 7/5/09.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I just requested the book The Glass Castle by Jeannette Wells. I thought I clicked on Waialua as the library pick-up location, but when I pressed "request", the confirmation showed Waianae. Is there any way to correct this?</li> </ul>	<p>The book was already in transit when we received your email, so it was too late for us to change the location. Call Waianae Public Library at 697-7868 and inform them of your situation. They should be able to re-route the item to Waialua Public Library for you.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Requestor recommends 5 specific titles on Second Life [an online virtual reality game] for library acquisition.</li></ul>	Your book recommendations have been forwarded to a collection development librarian in the Art, Music and Recreation Section of Hawaii State Library for review and further action.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I read that the 1875 Rocky Mountain Locust swarm (aka "Albert's Swarm") is listed as the "Greatest Concentration of Animals" in the Guinness Book of World Records. Can you tell me which version this was from so I can cite this info?</li></ul>	We found the information to which you referred in the 1994 and 1995 editions of the Guinness Book of Records. Unfortunately, our collection has large gaps, so we cannot vouch for its appearance in other editions. In the 1994 ed., it occurs on page 61. In the 1995 ed., it occurs on page 43. Both occur under the heading Animal Kingdom, General Records, Greatest Concentration. The 1987 edition cites, under "Largest Concentration of Animal Life," an "enormous swarm of krill" off Antarctica in March 1981 (p. 38).

The new e-Reference service is designed to extend the library system's interactive information services into the Internet's electronic environment. The usage statistics and sample questions demonstrate that this service is providing an additional and convenient means of access to HSPLS resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this information with you. I would be happy to provide additional information in answer to any questions, if I can.