

Library is the cool place to be in summer

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Special to the Independent

Maryland AskUsNow! reaches 300,000th benchmark

Charles County Public Library joins with libraries all over Maryland in July to recognize the value of the Maryland AskUsNow! service.

Beginning more than 5 years ago, Maryland AskUsNow! staff have answered 300,000 questions from children, students, families and businesses.

Maryland AskUsNow! brings together the experience and resources of the state's public, academic and special libraries.

None of the participating libraries could offer this service alone, but through cooperation they can.

As part of a national network, the librarians share night and weekend coverage with libraries from around the world.

In addition to the live chat service, subject specialists are available to respond by e-mail to questions requiring more extensive investigation.

These often include topics requiring business research, the law, hard to find statistics, or historical questions such as those involving genealogy.

Maryland was one of the first states to implement the 24 hour online answer service.

Librarians from Maryland libraries including public libraries, university and community college libraries, provide some of the coverage for the 24 hours.

Maryland AskUsNow! is funded by the institute for Museum and Library Services, through the Library Services and Technology Act Grant.

The Division of Library Development and Services at the Maryland State Department of Education provides local oversight.

The writer is the executive director of the Charles County Public Library.



Submitted photo- Edward Landa, left, is the 300,000th customer for Maryland AskUsNow! Maryland state librarian Irene Padilla speaks with Landa prior to the ceremony. Landa's 300,000th question was, "What is the ERA?"



Submitted photo- At the state event celebrating questions answered via the AskUsNow! service, Alison Sherwell, left, and Julie Strange celebrate that 300,000 questions have been answered 24/7 from children, students, families and businesses. Sherwell is the reference supervisor at the Potomac branch who coordinates the service for Charles County Public Library. Strange coordinates the service for the 39 library partners across Maryland.