



DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. LIBRARY

A collaboration between the City of San José and San José State University

News Release

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San Jose Libraries Invite You to “Text 4 Info”

Popularity of Text Messaging Prompts Pilot of New Reference Service

SAN JOSE, Calif. – Starting today, people who seek an answer to a simple question have the option to send their query to a San Jose librarian via text messaging. Librarians will respond between the hours of 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, although questions may be sent whenever the impulse strikes. The process is ultra simple. Just send a text message to **66746** and start your question with “AskSJ;” e.g. “AskSJ What’s the current exchange rate for the Euro?”

“We’re anticipating that there will be situations where this method of query represents the best option available,” says Sarah Houghton-Jan, digital futures librarian for San José Public Library. “For example, the customer may be in an environment where use of cell phones for calling is not permitted. And for those age 25 and under, it may very well be their preferred method of contacting the library.”

Teens and twenty-somethings [are] by far the largest users of texting ...with teens at 94% and 20-somethings at 87%, but usage [has] also increased for older age groups. (The Vlingo Consumer Mobile Messaging Habits Report, May 20, 2009).

Also interesting to note:

- Americans sent 1 trillion SMS text messages in 2008 ([CTIA’s Semi-Annual Wireless Industry Survey](#))

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P2

- On average, Americans send and receive twice as many text messages as phone calls per month. ([Nielsen Mobile](#))
- U.S. Teens (ages 13-17) sent and received an average of 1,742 text messages per month in Q2 2008 ([Nielsen Mobile](#))

San Jose libraries join a growing trend, nationwide, to offer this method of requesting reference help. However, they cannot predict the volume, nor commit to a specific response time initially.

“We honestly don’t know what to expect,” says King Library Reference co-manager Joan Bowlby, “but trying new ways of providing services that people want is what keeps our staff fresh and engaged. You prepare the best that you can and learn by doing.” Having worked at the uniquely co-managed Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library since it opened in 2003, Bowlby has a lot of experience working in that mode.

Unlike commercially advertised services that require payment for services, the library will provide the requested information, free of charge, although standard message rates for the user’s mobile service will apply.

All the other means of requesting reference help are still available, including email and live chat reference. For more information, visit [SJLibrary.org](#) and click on “Ask a Librarian” or call King Library Reference Help at (408) 808-2100.

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