

Due Feb 1 11:59pm

5 points possible

27 Replies

Evaluation of Virtual Reference Services

Select at least 2 libraries to ask virtual reference questions of, each with a different technology solution, e.g. one library may use LibraryH3lp, another may use LibAnswers/LibChat, or one may use Skype, etc. Provide an evaluation of their services and your impressions of their libraries as a result including:

- the question you asked
- how long they took to respond
- were they helpful?
- did they provide you with the answer you were looking for?
- did they leave you with a good impression of their library?

• LibAnswers/LibChat from Springshare (formerly OCLC's QuestionPoint)

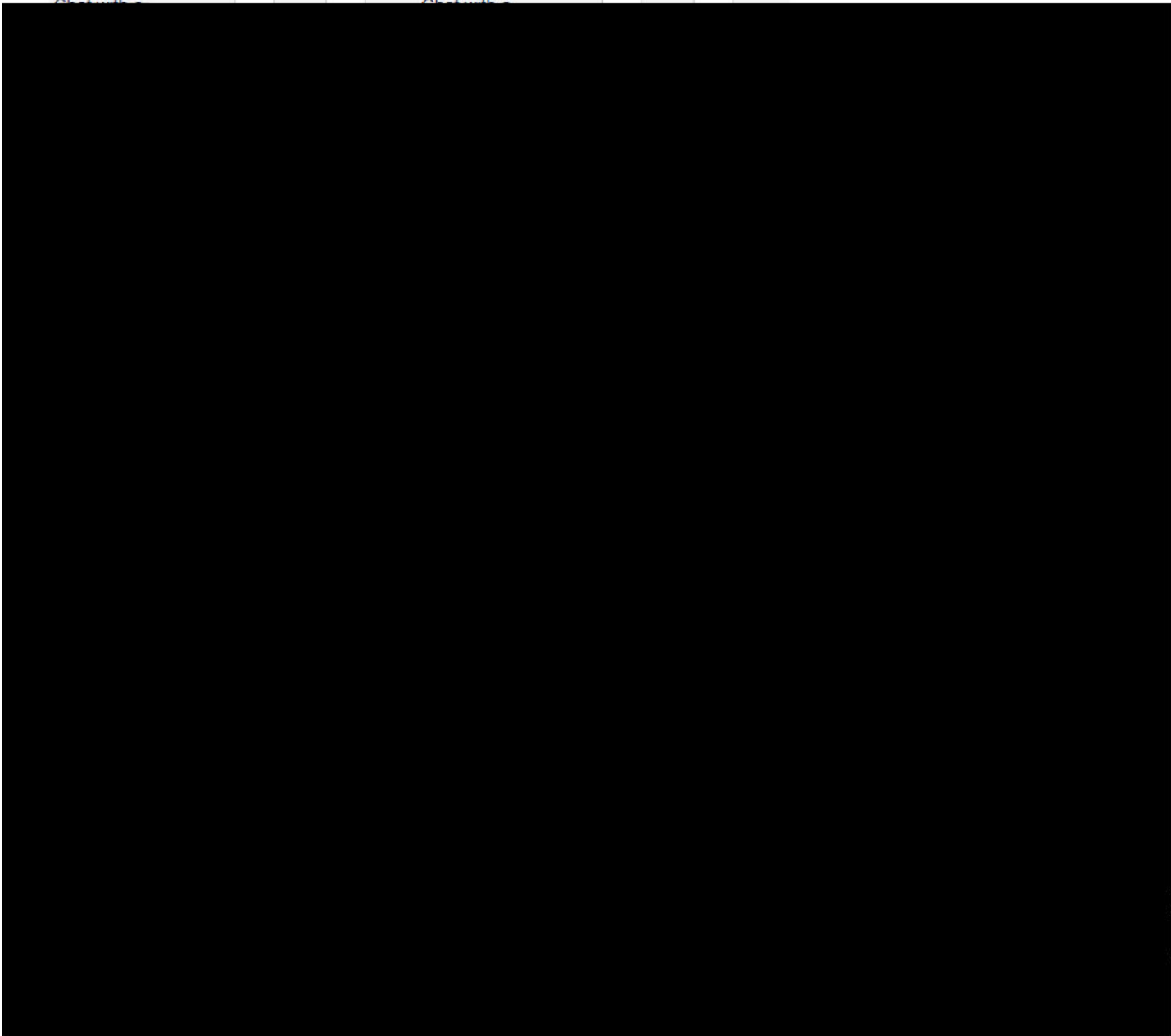
- [Denver Public Libraries](#) ↗
- [Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library](#) ↗
- [Brooklyn Public Library](#) ↗
- [University of Georgia Libraries](#) ↗
- [NYPL](#) ↗
- [Finger Lakes Community College](#) ↗
- [Library of Congress](#) ↗
- [University of Virginia Libraries](#) ↗
- [IUPUI Library](#) ↗
- [Jacksonville FL](#) ↗
- [Cornell University](#) ↗

Libraryh3lp

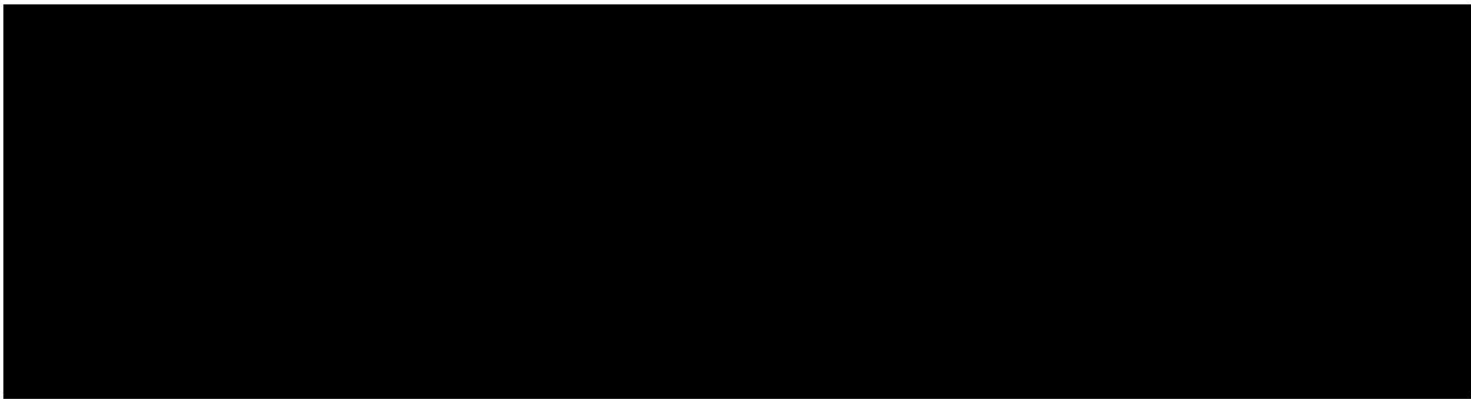
- [Loyola University Chicago](#) ↗
- [Orange County Public Libraries](#) ↗
- [Columbia University Libraries](#) ↗
- [Knox County Tennessee Public Library](#) ↗

How can you tell what IM tool a library is using? Look in the url when you are in the chat with them. It will say libraryh3lp or libanswers, etc. in the url string!

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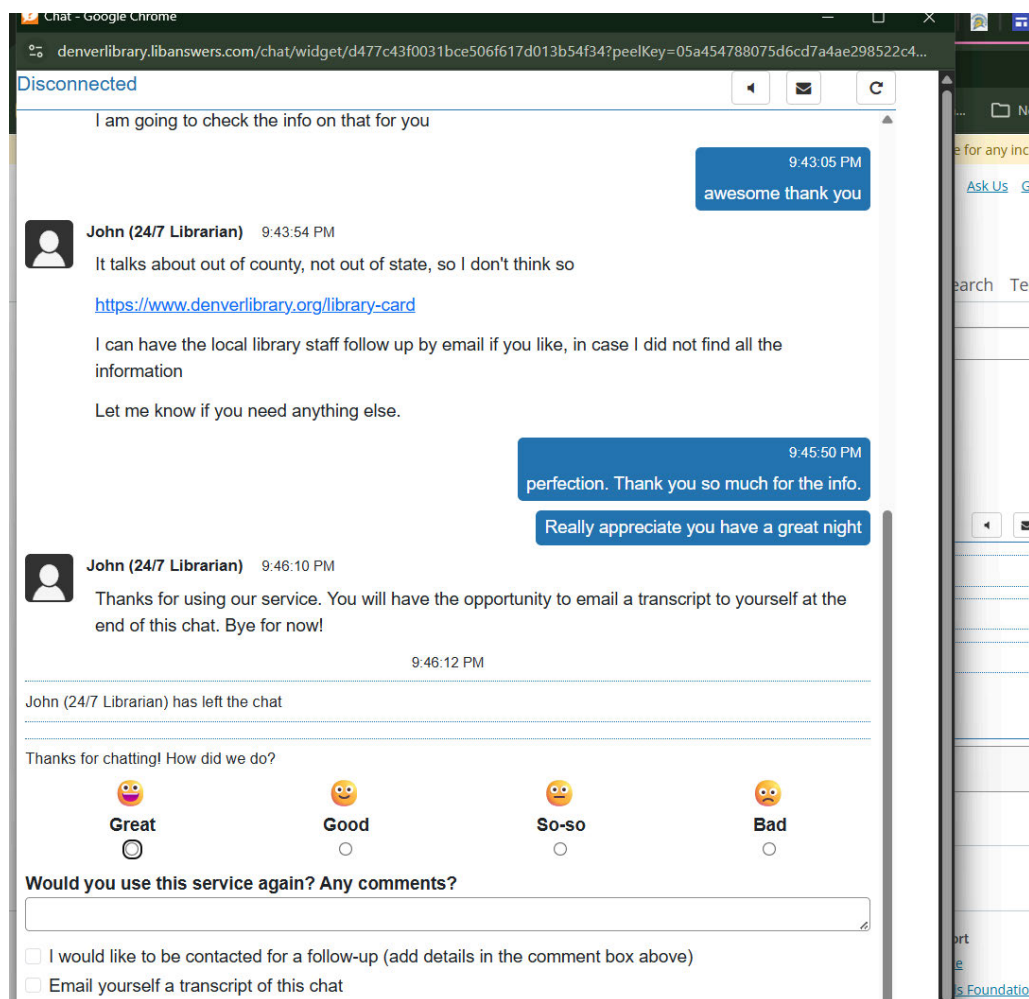


Jan 31 10:17pm

Evaluation of Virtual Reference Services

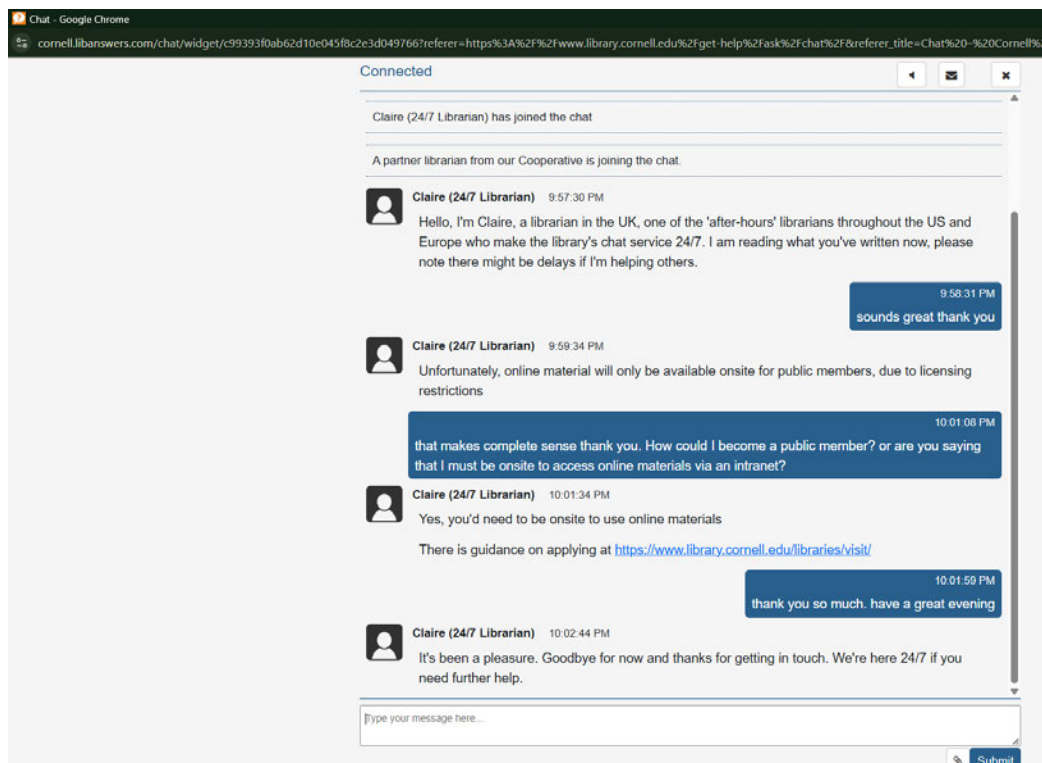
For this evaluation, I contacted two libraries using live virtual reference services and asked the same question at each to reduce variables: whether members of the public can access digital resources remotely without being local residents.

Denver Public Library (LibAnswers/LibChat)



I asked whether non-local users could access digital resources remotely. A librarian responded within approximately two minutes and asked clarifying questions about my location before providing an answer. The librarian explained that access policies differ for out-of-county versus out-of-state users and provided a direct link to the library card policy page. Although the answer ultimately confirmed that remote access was limited for non-residents, the response was clear, polite, and supported with documentation. The librarian also offered to have local staff follow up by email, which left a positive impression of attentiveness and customer service.

Cornell University Library (LibAnswers/LibChat)

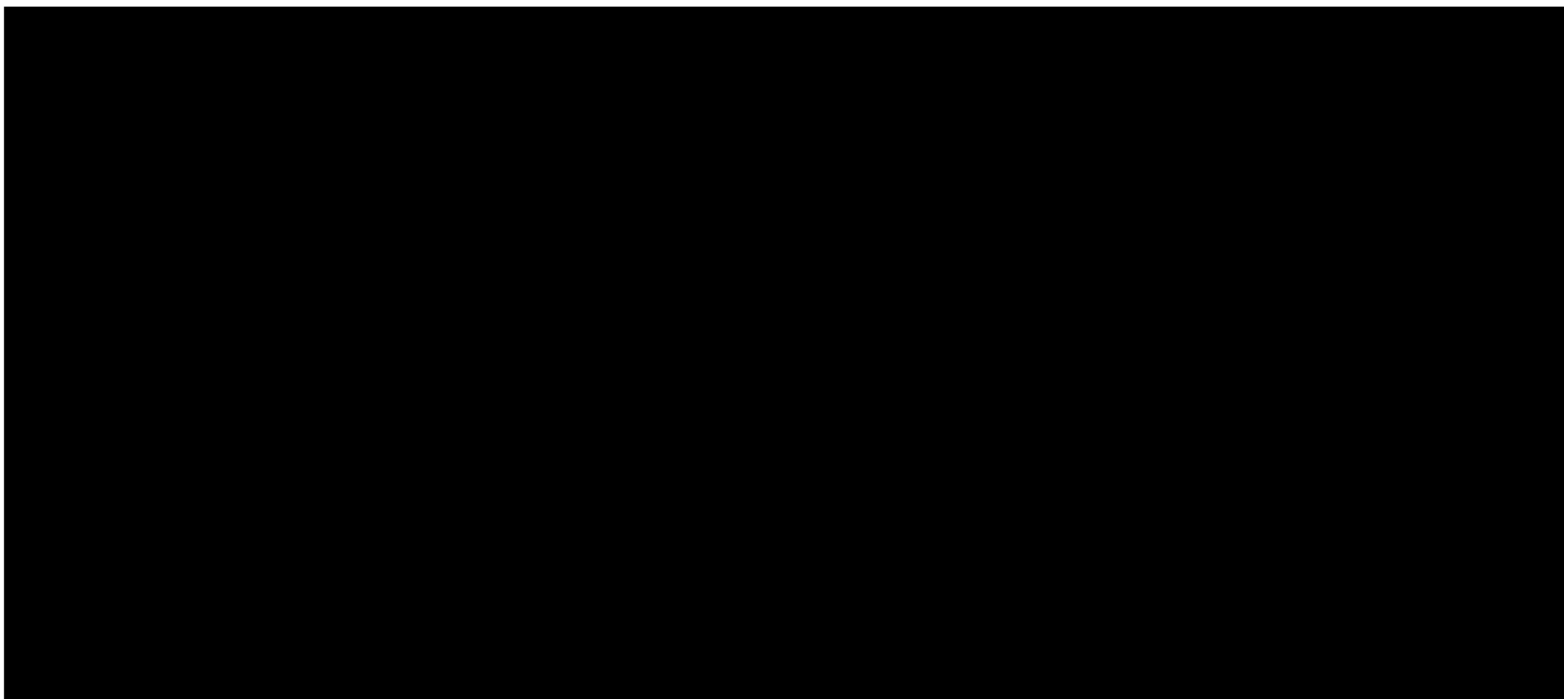
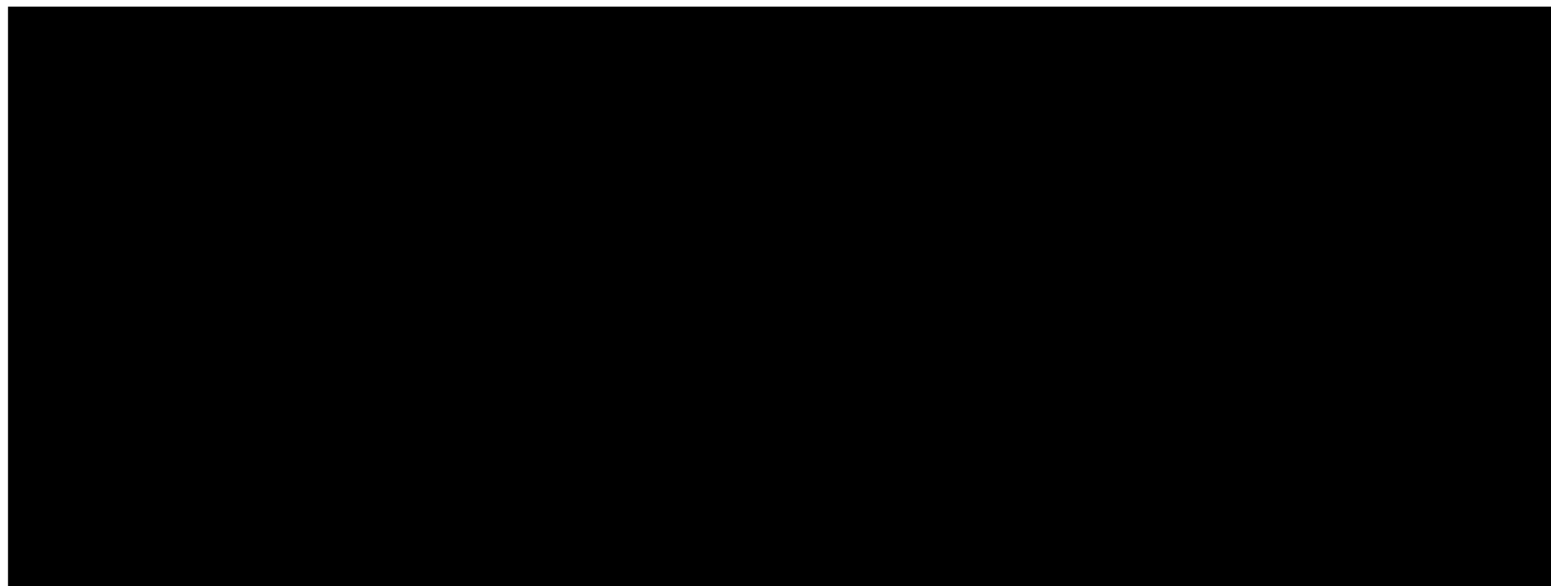


Cornell's chat connected me to a librarian within a few minutes, despite it being after hours, through a cooperative 24/7 service. The librarian explained that due to licensing restrictions, public users must be onsite to access most online resources and provided a link with guidance for public visitors. While

the answer was brief, it was direct and transparent. The interaction felt professional and efficient, though more formal than Denver's.

Overall, both services were helpful and responsive. Denver's service felt more conversational and supportive, while Cornell's emphasized policy clarity. Both libraries used LibAnswers/LibChat, as evidenced by the "libanswers.com" URL visible in the chat window during each interaction. Together, these interactions highlighted how virtual reference services effectively communicate access limitations while maintaining positive impressions of their libraries.

← [libanswers.com](#)



Jan 30 4:24pm | Last reply Jan 31 10:26pm

Evaluation of Virtual Reference Services

1. Orange County Public Library (LibraryH3lp)

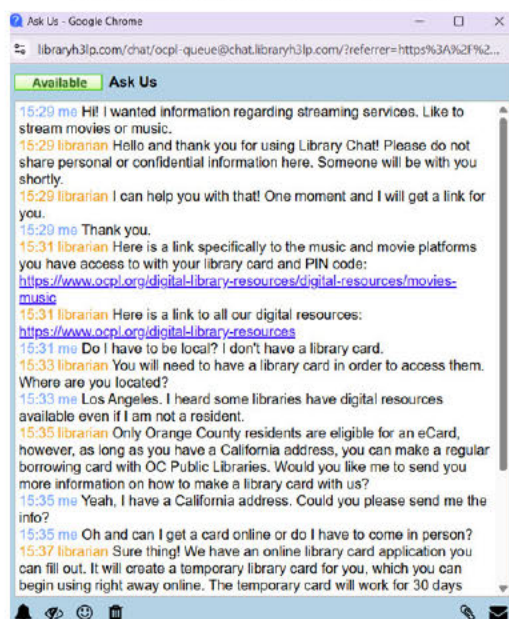
A. **Question:** Needed information regarding streaming services (Movies/Music)

B. **Time for Response:** Once I asked my question, it took about a minute and a half to receive an answer. Follow-up questions were answered immediately.

C. **Helpfulness:** Very helpful. Although I did not get the answer I was hoping for, the process itself went very well.

D. **Provided answer:** They responded to my initial question and all follow-up questions.

E. **Impression:** This library left a very good impression on me. I felt like they tried very hard to make sure I was pointed towards the correct answers and asked pointed follow-up questions.



1. USC Library (LibAnswers)

A. **Question:** Is your library available for anyone to use or only for students?

B. **Time for Response:** Similarly to the OC Library, the initial response took about a minute to address, then I waited a minute or two for each response.

C. **Helpfulness:** Again, this library was very helpful. However, a quick note, unlike the first library I contacted, this library did not have a visual or audio indicator that the librarian had answered in the chat. I did not realize how intuitive it was to submit my questions, do something else, and just wait for an answer to come in in the background.

D. **Provided answer:** They responded to my initial question and all follow-up questions.

E. **Impression:** Overall good impression; however, once I thanked them, I did not receive any type of follow-up response. As a matter of common courtesy, I would have expected a "Thank you for contacting us" message, or something along those lines.

Chat - Google Chrome

libanswers.usc.edu/chat/widget/c1c0ce60c4c1214a7d419920cb800506?referer=http%3A%2F%2Flibanswers.usc.edu...

Connected

I'm local to the area. Is your library available for anyone to use or only for students? 3:43:49 PM

3:43:49 PM

Please wait... we will connect shortly!

You are now chatting with Online Reference Department.

Shannon Robinson has joined the chat.

 Shannon Robinson 3:44:27 PM

Hi, most of our library spaces are available to the public to use, with photo ID.

Here's info for visitors: <https://libraries.usc.edu/visiting-usc-libraries>

Can I borrow items? 3:45:17 PM

 Shannon Robinson 3:48:05 PM

You can borrow items if you become a "friend of the library"

<https://libraries.usc.edu/borrowing-privileges#visiting-scholars-and-non-usc-visitors> or may use items in-house.

Is there a particular item you are considering using?

Well, I wanted to come in and check it out. I was also curious about digital content (movies/music), if available. 3:47:13 PM

Hide 1 Reply Reply Mark as Unread



[Jax Skorich \(They/Them\)](#)

Jan 31 10:26pm

Hi [REDACTED]

I found your comparison between LibAnswers and LibraryH3lp really helpful, especially your attention to how interface design shaped your experience. Your point about the lack of a visual or audio notification in the LibAnswers chat stood out to me because it highlights how usability features can influence patrons' confidence while waiting for a response.

I also appreciated your reflection on Orange County Public Library's LibraryH3lp service, particularly your observation that the interaction felt more utilitarian than expected. Your comments about whether a chat interface functions more like a search tool or a true reference interaction raised an important question about how libraries balance efficiency with personalization in virtual reference services.

kindly,

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