askON Student Opportunity

Organization: askON, Ontario College Library Services (OCLS)
Location: Virtual
Province: Ontario
Category: Library (Academic)
Job Type: Volunteer
Duration: January – April 2027
Date Posted: November 16th, 2026
Application Deadline: November 27th, 2026

Description and Duties:

Are you a passionate library student eager to apply your skills in a real-world setting? Volunteer with askON, a dynamic virtual reference service run by the Ontario Colleges Library Service (OCLS), and make a meaningful impact while gaining invaluable experience!

askON provides real-time chat and text reference services for 13 of Ontario's college libraries. We are seeking enthusiastic first or second-year LIT(A)/MLIS/MI candidates, as well as recent graduates (within a year of graduation), to volunteer as student operators.

Under the guidance of the askON service lead and experienced library staff, you will develop and hone your virtual reference skills in a supportive and collaborative environment.

This volunteer opportunity runs from January to April 2027. Commit to just 1-2 one-hour shifts per week, with flexible scheduling to accommodate your school, work, and personal commitments. askON shifts can be completed from anywhere with a reliable internet connection.

Take advantage of this unique opportunity to enhance your professional growth, expand your network, and make a difference in the lives of students and faculty across Ontario. Join us and be part of a dedicated team that values continuous learning and excellence in library service.

What you'll gain from volunteering with askON:

Collaborative Learning & Networking Opportunities: Work alongside fellow library students and experienced staff across institutions, gaining collaboration skills, mentorship, and valuable professional connections, all within a supportive environment.

1. **Virtual Reference Expertise:** Receive training and hands-on experience with best practices and policies unique to virtual reference services.
2. **Flexible, Practical Experience:** Commit 1-2 hours per week, balancing meaningful library experience with your studies and schedule.
3. **Enhanced Communication & Customer Service Skills:** Strengthen your ability to communicate clearly and empathetically in writing, adapt your approach to diverse users, and explain complex information in a simple, accessible way.
4. **Digital Literacy Skills:** Gain proficiency with online research resources and digital tools - including the LibraryH3lp platform used to deliver askON.
5. **Problem-Solving Skills & Adaptability:** Sharpen critical thinking as you analyze questions, manage ambiguity, and guide users to effective solutions in real time.
6. **Time Management and Organizational Skills:** Develop your ability to prioritize tasks, manage your time efficiently, and stay organized under pressure when handling multiple chats.

In addition to these benefits, student operators will receive a certificate of completion at the end of their volunteering and a letter of reference from OCLS testifying to their training and engagement with askON.

Preferred Qualities:

- LIT/MLIS/MI candidate or recent graduate, with an interest, coursework, and/or experience in reference service.
- Strong communication and customer service skills.
- Self-directed, motivated, and reliable.
- Familiarity with a wide range of databases, eResources, and publicly available internet resources.
- Fast typing speed: 60 wpm+, comfort with real-time chat conversation.
- Computer and high-speed internet connection required.

Commitments:

- Participate in a 30-minute virtual interview.
- Complete a half-day virtual training session prior to volunteering in the live environment. Note: additional training sessions will be offered throughout the year to support continued development.
- Commit to covering 1-2 one-hour shifts per week on the askON service during the Winter semesters (January - April 2027). Shifts will be scheduled in the evenings and during weekends.
- Sign a privacy & confidentiality agreement.
- Complete training on AODA standards.

Volunteer Recognition:

This is a volunteer position. Participants will receive a certificate of completion and a letter of reference from OCLS testifying to their training and engagement with askON.

How to Apply:

If you are interested in applying, send your resume as an electronic file (PDF or Microsoft Word with a file name convention of LastNameFirstName_askON) by email to Lauren Rupert at askON@ocls.ca by November 27th, 2026, at 12 p.m. Please mention your anticipated graduation date, or indicate that you are a recent graduate, in your application.

We are committed to equity and inclusion, and strongly encourage candidates from diverse backgrounds to apply, including those from equity-deserving communities. As an equal opportunity organization, we provide barrier-free recruitment and accommodate applicants throughout the selection process.

Only candidates selected for an interview will be contacted. We thank everyone for their interest.

To learn more about askON, please visit us at: https://www.ocls.ca/services/askon-virtual-reference/