New Mobile App for Washington's Virtual Reference Service

Local News

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Olympia, WA - Smart phone users can now install a new app featuring the Washington State Library’s Ask-WA virtual reference service.

“This is the first app of its kind in America in terms of ‘mobile-izing’ an entire statewide virtual reference service,” said Ahniwa Ferrari, the Washington State Library’s online resources consultant for library development.

“We’re excited and pleased to be the first state library in the nation to have an app for an online reference service,” Ferrari said. “We know that more and more of our patrons use ‘smart phones’ and other technology utilizing apps, so it’s great to have an app that showcases the great service that we provide through Ask-WA.”

“Ask-WA provides useful answers to your questions, based on credible sources, from the best information experts around,” Ferrari said. The Ask-WA app, the first one offered by the State Library, is available for both Android and iDevice (iPhone, iPad, iPod touch) users.

People can check out and download the new Ask-WA app for Android at: http://www.androidpit.com/en/android/ ... p/gov.wa.sos.askwa/Ask-WA. To download the app for iDevices, go to: http://itunes.apple.com/app/ask-wa/id384143749.

“I am incredibly proud of having another ‘first-in-the-nation’ product from the State Library,” said Washington State Librarian Jan Walsh. “We keep striving to provide cutting-edge and first-rate service to the public, and this new app clearly reflects that. Ask-WA is a great online reference tool, and I’m pleased that we can make it more accessible via this new app.”

Ask-WA provides access to a live librarian, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. More than 60 libraries and hundreds of librarians across Washington participate in Ask-WA, while an even larger, national cooperative of librarians provides backup and after-hours service.

Ask-WA continues to be available for patrons who don’t use “smart phones,” and can be found at http://ask.wa.gov. It’s projected that Washington library users will use Ask-WA to ask more than 100,000 questions in 2010, a number that continues to grow from year to year. “More libraries are participating, and more people are asking questions. It’s a great service,” says Ferrari.

For more information about the Ask-WA app, or the online service, contact Ferrari at (360) 570-5587 or ahniwa.ferrari@sos.wa.gov.

Ask-WA is made possible through the participation of local public and college libraries. Funding for Ask-WA is provided by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) through the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA).

The Ask-WA app is the second created by Office of Secretary of State. This spring, the Corporations

Division launched an Android app for corporation services, making Washington the first state to do so.