

## QuestionPoint ASSISTs students

*The University of Wolverhampton serves around 24,000 students over four campuses, each with its own learning centre. Supported by 130 staff, the learning centres combine traditional library services with hi-tech facilities to offer a wide range of accessible materials that focus on supporting the ways individual students want to study.*

### AT A GLANCE

Serving 24,000 students, of which 18,000 are active borrowers; diverse student body, including 10,000 part-time students and 3,500 from overseas

Learning centres at four campuses—City (Wolverhampton), Walsall, Telford and Compton Park, and also at Queen’s Hospital, Burton-upon-Trent

QuestionPoint chosen to provide an online librarian support service extending Learning Centre services

***“Very helpful service particularly when I’m sat an hour away at home at 8.30pm in the evening! Thank you!”***

**—ASSIST user**

### Situation

The University’s learning centres offer a wide range of online services available both on and off campus. These include an extensive online catalogue with a reservation service and renewal facilities, online reading lists, e-mail renewal reminders and an e-mail-based reference service. Access is provided to over 8,000 full-text electronic journals and 100 databases.

In line with the University’s mission to increase support to students working off campus and promote the use of electronic resources, the learning centres instigated a project to look at providing students with a real-time, on-line librarian support service.

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**Solution** | After an assessment of the solutions available on the market the University of Wolverhampton selected OCLC's QuestionPoint to provide its online librarian support service. QuestionPoint is a virtual reference management service that enables libraries to respond to enquires in real-time using online chat and co-browsing. QuestionPoint is a hosted solution that requires no additional hardware or software from the library and just the use of a Web browser from the user.

The service, named ASSIST, went live in November 2006. Staffed by learning centre teams at the four campuses on a rota basis, the service operates from 11 am – 10.30 pm Monday to Thursday, 11 am – 6 pm on Friday, and 1.30 pm – 5.15 pm on Saturday and Sunday. Additional librarians were recruited to support the evening service whilst existing library staff support the daily and weekend service.

Wendy Haynes, Resources Librarian, Virtual Reference Project at the University explains: “We made a conscious decision to ‘soft launch’ the service during November so that we could assess the level of usage and enable staff to further familiarise themselves with supporting the service in a live environment. Initial online enquires were in the region of 10 a week during this time. In February 2008 we carried out a full promotional campaign which included advertising the service on plasma screens around each of the campuses, e-mails to all students, ASSIST display areas in the learning centres, posters and information leaflets included within all new student induction packs. We also used the Student Enabling Centre and the Student Union to disseminate information to their members.”

**Result** | Wendy explains, “We are extremely pleased at how smooth the implementation of QuestionPoint was and how easy it has been to embed ASSIST into our range of on-line Learning Centre services. We are receiving on average 30–40 enquires a week and at very busy times such as new student intake this can rise to as many as 50–60. Whilst the introduction of the service initially met with a mixed reaction from our library staff, who were concerned about additional demands on their time, they have found the QuestionPoint software straightforward to use, and see chat as a successful tool managing enquiries. From a user perspective the service has been very well-received—students find the chat service quick, convenient and easy-to-use. QuestionPoint enables us to give friendly, on-the-spot assistance with anything from renewals to referencing, databases to dissertations.”

One of the next steps for ASSIST is to investigate the use of Knowledgebase, a feature of QuestionPoint that offers a central database from which libraries can share, store and capture queries from any media in one central place. It offers access to 16,000 questions and answers in a searchable global knowledgebase as well as a local knowledgebase that enables libraries to save locally created questions and answers that they can customise to their own needs.

For more information on QuestionPoint e-mail [uk@oclc.org](mailto:uk@oclc.org).