



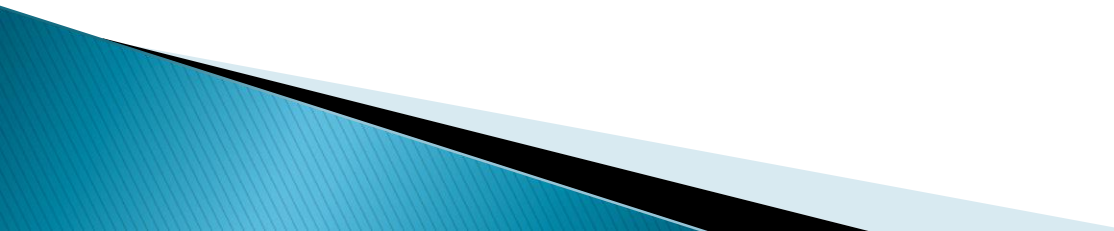
# **Chasing the Sun:** an international out-of-hours virtual reference service for health professionals

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# What is Chasing the Sun?

- ▶ Chasing the Sun out-of-hours virtual reference service (CTS) is a co-operative, free virtual reference service between health libraries.
  - ▶ Its aim is to put health practitioners in contact with a qualified health Librarian for out-of-hours reference help via chat software. Since the service is offered out-of hours, the target user group has been identified as mainly nurses and junior doctors working at night.
  - ▶ Libraries participating in the CTS service share common subject themes, are of equal professional standards and use similar information resources.
  - ▶ The service takes advantage of the time differences between participating countries.
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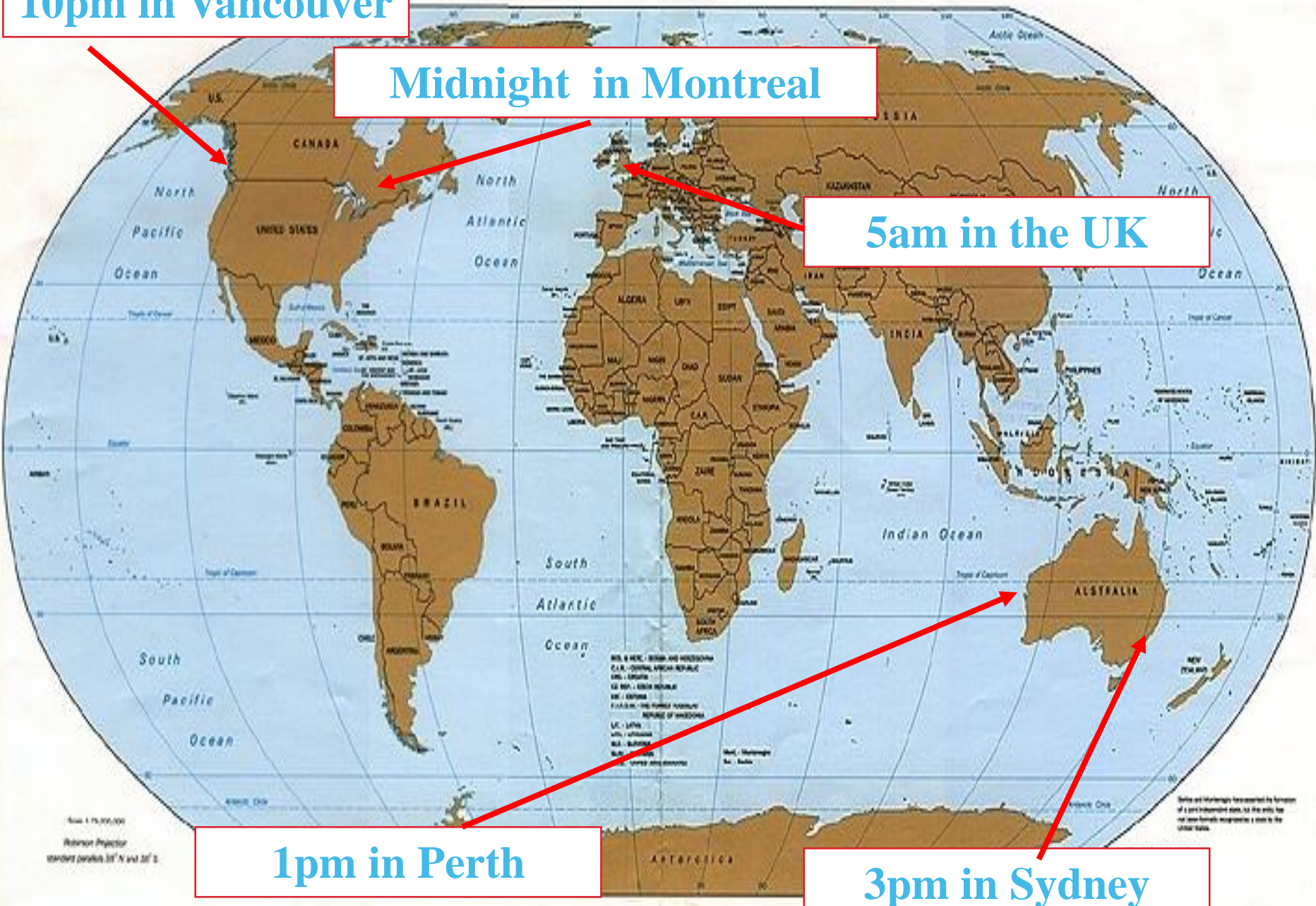
10pm in Vancouver

Midnight in Montreal

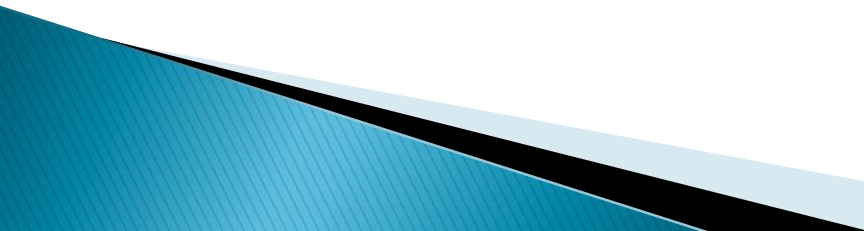
5am in the UK

1pm in Perth

3pm in Sydney



# What CTS is NOT for

- ▶ Chasing the Sun is a reference service, so it does not offer help with general IT problems or computer connectivity – i.e. database crashes, password difficulties or material unique to the other institutions' intranets.
  - ▶ Because most of the information resources are purchased and subject to licence restrictions, access is not provided to each others' resources. Rather, the reference interview is used via chat to discover a user's need, and help is offered appropriate to that need – e.g. subject heading or search strategy suggestions.
  - ▶ Document delivery is not part of the service – users are referred back to their own library, and if necessary, copyright issues are explained.
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# History of CTS



- ▶ Initial contact with Australia made by the UK National Health Service Southwest Division library services late 2001
- ▶ Service parameters for a potential co-operative reference service agreed during 2002 and the logo was created by the UK.
- ▶ Comprehensive evaluation of VR softwares undertaken during 2002–3 in Australia, culminating in identification of OCLC’s QuestionPoint as the most likely solution.
- ▶ Detailed evaluation of QuestionPoint was done during 2003 in Australia; project proposal delivered to the UK in December 2003.
- ▶ The UK NHS Southwest Division library service agreed to fund two QP licences for one year to enable the service to be set up.
- ▶ Soft launch of the Chasing the Sun service November 2004
- ▶ Paper was delivered 2004 London Information Online conference.
- ▶ The Chasing the Sun service expanded in UK and Australia from 2004: now includes participating libraries in most Australian States and and in several NHS regions in the UK.
- ▶ New Zealand has expressed interest in joining the service in 2009, and presentations are scheduled for NHS Scotland for July 2009

# Awards

- ▶ Swets Professional Envoy Award (Aus) 2004
- ▶ International Information Industry Awards, London 2004 – Best Team in the Public Sector




# CTS administration

- ▶ Each participating country has an administrator to represent their group of librarians.
- ▶ The CTS administrator liaises with the other administrators from other countries
- ▶ The administrators' duties include:
  - ensure Chat sessions are taken up and that Librarians are logged on each day
  - schedule training for librarians
  - activate each librarian's logon
  - customise country's global scripted messages
  - organise branding (Logo) of group
  - generate usage reports (statistics)
  - assist with set-up of new member libraries
  - Liaise with OCLC on technical developments etc

# How does CTS work for librarians? FAQs.

- ▶ *Are librarians rostered on to CTS?* No. Participating librarians log on each morning and minimise the chat screen. When a question arrives, an alert is received by all CTS librarians. All librarians can see when a question has been 'taken'.
- ▶ *Can I see other librarians?* Yes – you can see all the librarians logged onto the CTS service. You can therefore easily transfer a question to a colleague if it proves to be more in their area of expertise.
- ▶ *Is it time-consuming?* No. Very few questions are received as CTS is an out-of-hours service.
- ▶ *Can my patrons use the service?* Of course! Questions asked by your patrons will be answered by librarians who are logged on in other time zones.
- ▶ *How can I set up the service for my patrons?* A link to the chat service is added to the library's intranet page. It's not available for members of the public.

# Outcomes

- ▶ The Chasing the Sun out-of-hours virtual reference service provides improved opportunities to support evidence-based decision-making by medical / health staff. Electronic access to information resources 24x7 has largely overcome issues of having to have physical after hours access to the library. Chasing the Sun adds to the value of these resources by providing health professionals with reference help out-of-hours at little cost to participating libraries.
  - ▶ As an out-of-hours service, CTS isn't heavily used. However, when it is used, help is usually needed to answer an urgent question. The CTS service is like a fire extinguisher – its use isn't measured by the number of times that it's used, but rather that it's there!
  - ▶ A platform for co-operative ventures has been established by the CTS service – gives good political mileage for librarians and adds an interesting new side to our work.
  - ▶ Chasing the Sun has shown itself to be a valuable service and all health libraries are warmly invited to consider participating!
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# Further information:

- ▶ *Contact:* Mary Peterson – [mary.peterson@imvs.sa.gov.au](mailto:mary.peterson@imvs.sa.gov.au)
- ▶ *Read:*
- ▶ Rockliff S, Peterson M, Martin K, Curtis D. Chasing the Sun: a virtual reference service between SAHSLC (SA) and SWICE (UK). *Health Information and Libraries Journal* 2005; 22: 117-123.
- ▶ *Website:*
- ▶ <http://www.salus.sa.gov.au/cts/ctsmain.htm>