



Desk Statistics Under a Microscope = Improved Library Services

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Meeting:

203 — Empowering library users to solve problems: our stories — Social Science Libraries with Law Libraries and Government Libraries

Abstract:

This presentation offers a case study of how one library's assessment of data gathered from its public service desk led to changes and improvements in service. The William H. Hannon Library at Loyola Marymount University (LMU) recorded all of the questions and answers asked at its Information Desk from Fall 2009 to the present using the Gimlet (<http://gimlet.us>) electronic question tracking system. A content analysis was performed on the data that led to advancements in signage and a new knowledge base of FAQ's. In addition, new services were implemented related to technology and research that addressed user needs.

Introduction

It is important for libraries to systematically evaluate and monitor their services to insure that they respond to the changing needs and demands of users. One way to do this is through the recording of day-to-day transactions at a public service desk. RUSA (2008) states that "simple tallies of reference transactions, collected daily or sampled, can be interpreted to describe patterns of use and demand for reference services."

Historically, reference questions have been used to determine appropriate hours of reference service and appropriate staffing at the reference desk during specific hours of the day (RUSA, 2008). In addition, "libraries are creating frequently asked

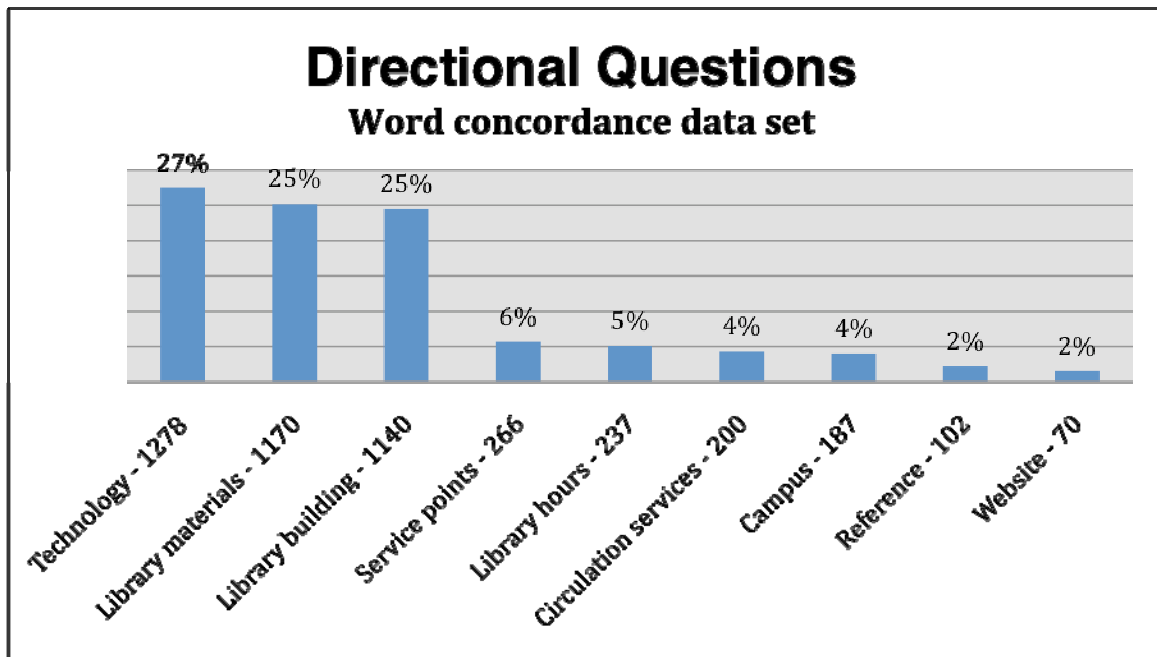
questions (FAQ) databases on the basis of their history of reference questions” (Covey, 86). Data collection is less difficult and time-consuming with the advent of online data collection and analysis tools like Gimlet. Electronic question tracking systems allow for automatic recording of many inputs such as date and time of day, and sophisticated reporting options make analysis of the data easier. Todorinova, Huse, Lewis, & Torrence (2011) noted that “many libraries are still learning the value and effectiveness of recording statistics electronically (p. 37).

Using data to affect change should be part of the mission of any evidence-based library; in particular the “...needs of patrons are important measures of the quality and impact of reference services” (RUSA, 2008). Measuring patron behavior is more direct than measuring perceived satisfaction or perceived gaps in service. It leads to the uncovering of frequent or unexpected patron questions and patterns. The data gathering process can ultimately lead to proactive changes in services or resources that answer the needs of the users.

This presentation offers a case study of examples from one library’s information desk “Question and Answer” analyses resulting in changes or improvements in service. Loyola Marymount University’s (LMU) William H. Hannon Library, located in Los Angeles, CA, records all of the questions and answers asked at its Information Desk using the Gimlet (<http://gimlet.us>) question tracking system. Gimlet is a web-based tool we license for a monthly fee of \$10 that offers unlimited staff user accounts and a searchable knowledge base of our data.

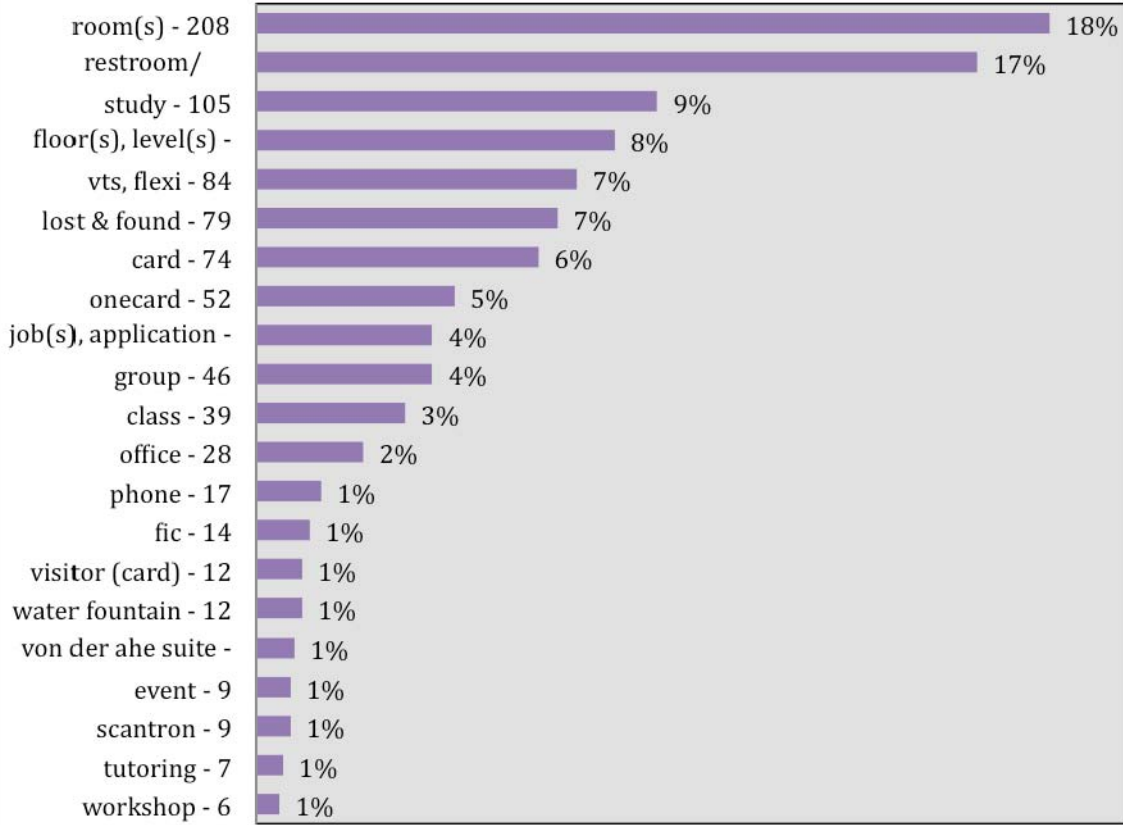
Each academic year, the desk activity recorded in Gimlet is reviewed and a content analysis is performed on selected data. Some of the data featured in this presentation was obtained by using the Simple Concordance Program (<http://textworld.eu/scp>) open source software to get word counts on all question/answers within a broader category. Other data featured was obtained through a random sample analyzed in the Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for frequencies, relationships, and standardized residuals. In two cases, we followed up on the data by soliciting additional user input through a survey and through usability testing. This presentation illustrates how one library used data from its users to drive change; these examples can inspire similar kinds of analysis at other libraries.

Directional Signage



A content analysis was run on directional questions asked at the Information Desk during the 2009/2010 academic year and subsequent years.

Library Building

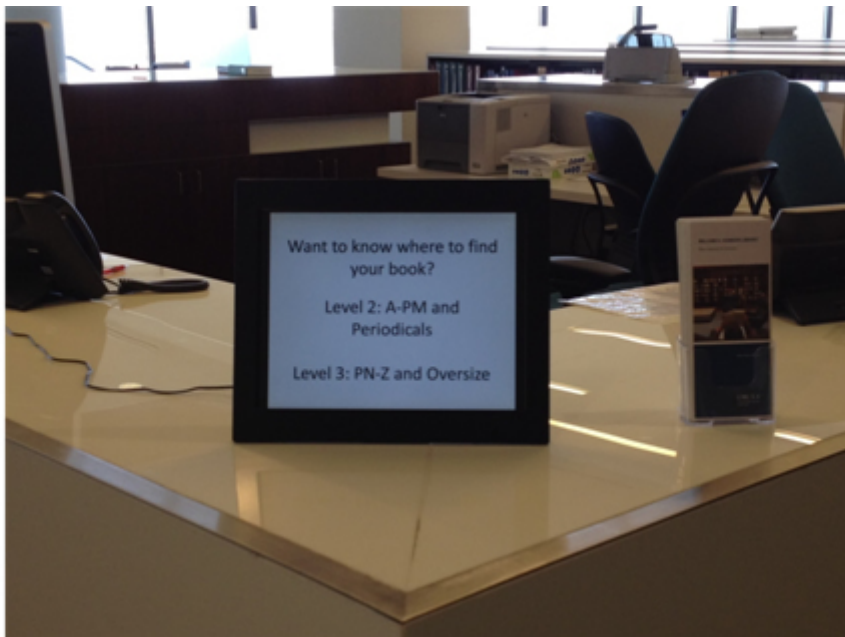


Within each broad category, such as "Library Building," we broke it down by word frequency.

RESTROOMS

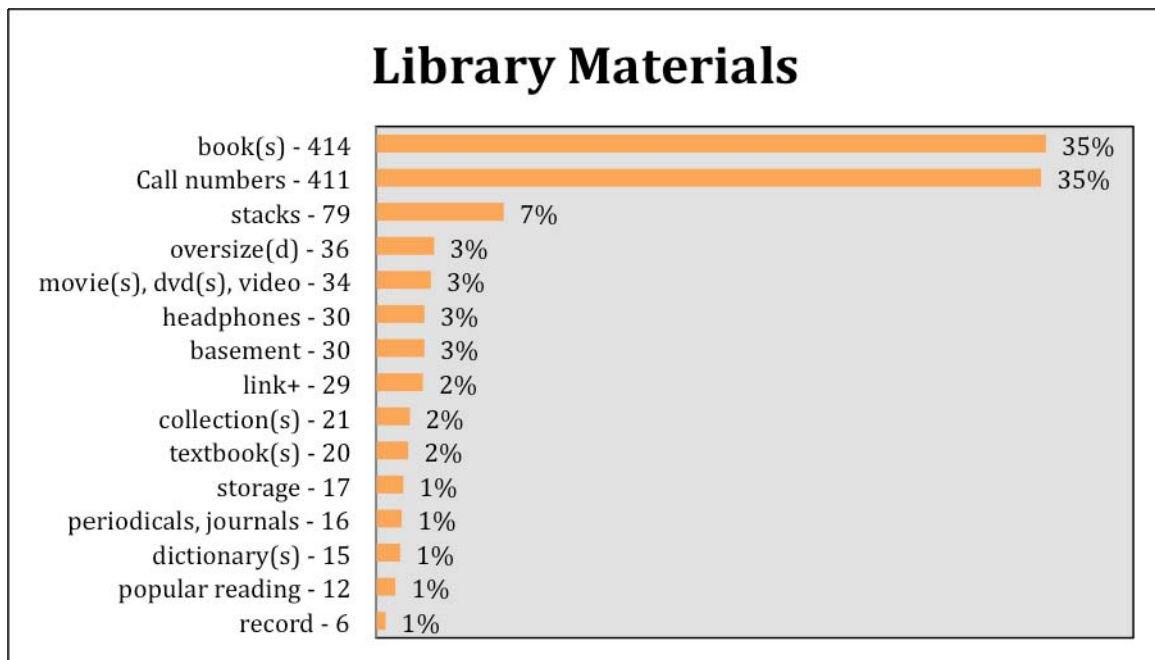


We created PowerPoint slides for the frequent directional queries and saved as a jpeg file on a flash drive.



The flash drive was placed in a Nix X15A - 15" digital photo frame at several public service desks. Each frame features a backlit LCD screen that plays a rotating slideshow, with the option to add music or video. You can edit the slides as patron needs change.

Building a New FAQ Knowledge Base



We continued to isolate word frequencies for each category of questions to create a FAQ list.

Loyola Marymount University **LMU|LA** WELCOME TO THE WILLIAM H. HANNON LIBRARY Search LINUS Catalog

William H. Hannon Library Homepage » LibAnswers Admin Sign In

LibAnswers - Your place for answers about the William H. Hannon Library

Type your question, e.g. "How do I renew a book?" **Ask Us**

106 Answered Questions | [Browse All](#) | Change Topic [View All Topics](#) RSS

Most Popular Answers | Most Recent Answers

How do I connect to the wireless network?
Asked on May 19, 2010. | Topics: Wireless | Views: 382

How do I add value to the Flexi account on my OneCard or visitor card?
Asked on Oct 06, 2010. | Topics: Printing, Photocopier | Views: 270

How do I set up wireless printing?
Asked on Oct 18, 2010. | Topics: Printing, Wireless | Views: 163

What is Roving Reference?
Asked on Jan 30, 2012. | Topics: Research Help, Campus | Views: 147

How can I reserve a Group Study room, Presentation room, or Media Viewing/Listening room?
Asked on May 19, 2010. | Topics: Group Study Rooms | Views: 146

Do you have the textbooks for my course?
Asked on May 20, 2010. | Topics: Borrowing, Research Help, Reserves | Views: 110

Are there public lockers I can use?
Asked on May 19, 2010. | Topics: Equipment, Library Building | Views: 106

How do I connect to library databases from home?

Live Chat

Available | Ask an LMU Librarian

**Click to chat now
with an LMU librarian**

Topics (View All Topics)

About The Library – Articles –
Borrowing – Campus – Computers
 – Dissertations and Theses – **Equipment** –
 Events – Faculty and Staff – Group Study
 Rooms – **Library Building** – Library
 Policy – Multimedia – Photocopier – Printing –
Research Help – Reserves –
 Software – Wireless

We entered the FAQ Questions and Answers into LibAnswers (a subscription product from Springshare) to build an online knowledge base.

▶ ABOUT THE LIBRARY

▶ SERVICES

▶ COLLECTIONS

▶ RESEARCH

> William H. Hannon Library Homepage > Get Help

Get Help

Frequently asked questions about the library
Enter a question to search our knowledgebase:

 Ask Us

Available Ask an LMU Librarian

Click to chat now
with an LMU librarian

GET RESEARCH HELP

- Visit our [Information Desk](#) during our [service hours](#) or call 310.338.2790
- [Chat with a librarian](#) - 24/7
- [Text us](#) at 424.570.3228
- [LibGuides](#): research guides on many subjects
- [Make a research consultation appointment](#)
- [Roving reference](#): where are we on campus today?

LIBRARY BUILDING

- [About the library](#)
- [Building directory](#)
- [Reserve a group study room](#)
- [Make a suggestion or complaint](#)

TECHNOLOGY

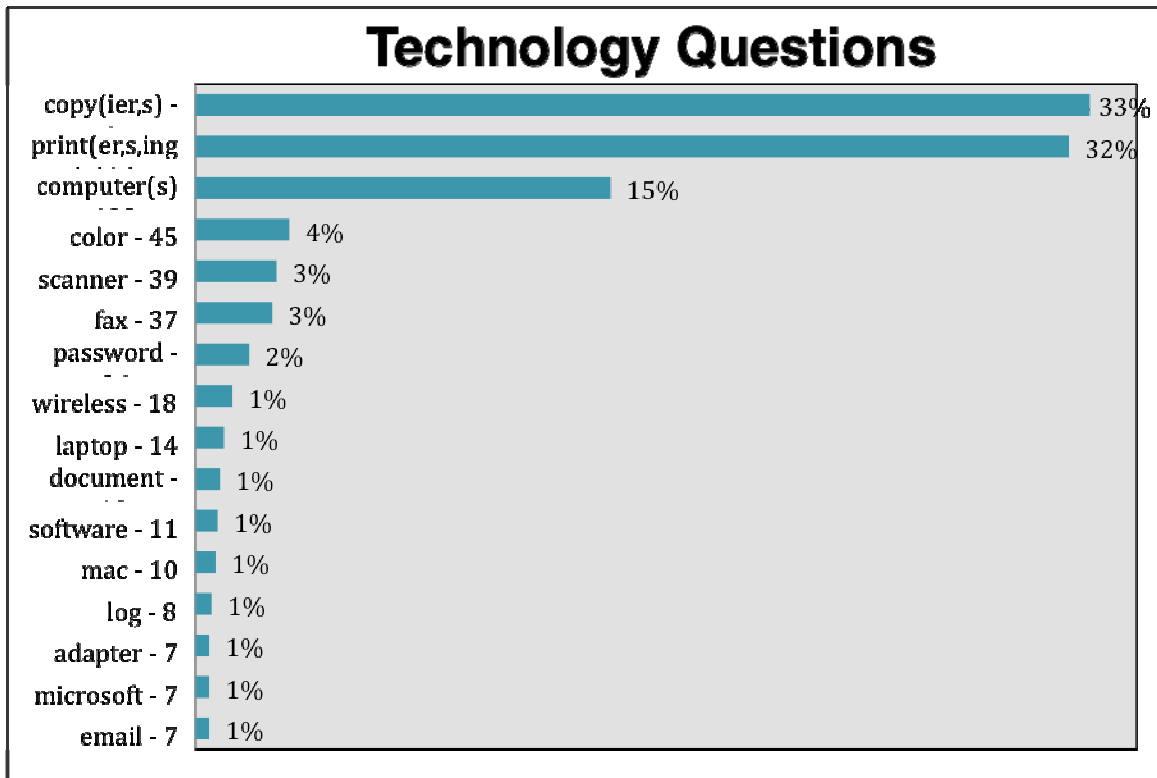
- [Connect to library databases from off-campus](#)
- Get wireless access:
[Students, faculty, staff](#) (MyLMU login required)
Visitors: please inquire at the Information Desk
- [Photocopying in the library](#)
- [Printing in the library](#)
- [About the computers in the library](#)

BORROWING

- [View and manage my library record](#)
- [Check out materials](#)
- [Get materials from basement storage](#)
- [Get materials not owned by LMU](#)

Usability testing revealed some problems with the LibAnswers page, so we integrated it into our “Get Help” page as a front-end search widget.

New Technical Services



Technology questions were broken out by word frequency. It was discovered that there was demand for a scanner and a color printer; and frequent questions about computer availability.

A voluntary survey on scanning preferences was opened to all LMU students. 87 students participated.

Help the Library Choose a Scanner

LMU students: are you a scanning novice, or a super scanner? What scanner features are important to you? What kind of scanning would you anticipate wanting to do in the library?

The William H. Hannon Library is looking into providing a scanner for your use. To help us make the right choice, we'd like to get your input. Please take a moment to answer our brief survey, which will be open until 5:00 on Friday, December 3.

Please share this link with other LMU students, too. We want to hear from you!

Scanner Survey

http://mylmu.qualtrics.com//SE/?SID=SV_eRQE2sV0Fx9at80





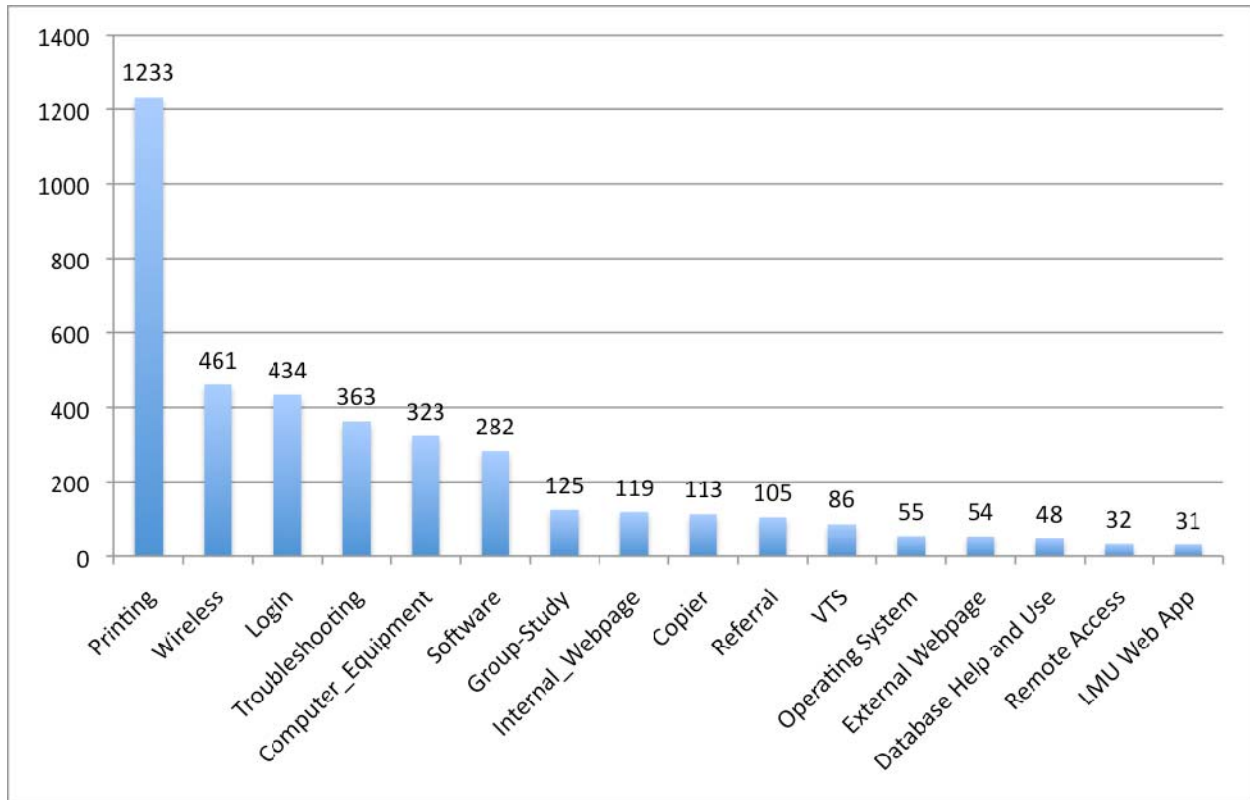
The survey results revealed that most students wanted to scan documents rather than books. They wanted color scanning, a document sheet feeder, and ease of use. To meet these needs, we purchased the EpsonGT-2500 with one-touch scanning and placed it at the Information Desk.



We also purchased a Ricoh color printer and placed it in the Information Commons.



Our Information Technology Specialist for the Library, Burney Wong, created an online computer availability map to display at the Information Desk. She used Wix.com to create and host the web page because its editor is flexible enough to drag and drop components to any space of the page. The LabMap itself was created from our LabStats program, which tracks the computer usage for any space. LabStats, from Computer Solutions, allows you to create maps based on the computers managed by the system. The map editor runs on SilverLight.



A more recent analysis of the 2011-2012 academic year technical question tags revealed that students asked about how to access software that we already owned; how to switch operating systems to get to the Windows side; and how to recover lost work.



Burney Wong, IT Specialist for the Library, created a new desktop image for all of the computers that raises awareness about the danger of losing work. The image also explains how to get to software on both the Mac and Windows dual-boot platforms and how to switch between operating systems.

New Reference Services

Colleges Higher Difficulty Level (Above "3")

College	Times
Business	63
Communication & Fine Arts	27
Education	14
Film & Television	6
Liberal Arts	148
Science	14

Reference question cross tab analysis led us to discover that Business students asked longer and more difficult questions than students from other areas.

More Business Questions On Monday and Tuesday

Day of Week	Number of Questions
Sunday	7
Monday	23
Tuesday	18
Wednesday	15
Thursday	8
Friday	10
Saturday	6

Patrons asked the questions mostly on Mondays and Tuesdays.

Roving Reference is a service offered by the William H. Hannon Library during which reference librarians leave the library and answer questions in other academic buildings.



Image ©United Media, used with permission

The Library roves in the following locations:

Business Librarian (Laurel Burks): Hilton Lobby, Tuesdays, 5:00-7:00pm (not on days when Hilton events occur)

Theology Librarian (Tony Amodeo): Theology Department Lobby (3700), University Hall, Mondays, 3:00-5:45pm.

Education Librarians (Silvia Gutierrez and Jennifer Masunaga, alternating): University Hall Atrium, Tuesdays, 3:00-5:00pm.

You can also follow certain librarians on Twitter and be instantly updated when a reference librarian is roving.

Education Librarian: @LMUlibrarianEDU

Business Librarian: @LMUlibrarianBUS

Theology Librarian: @LMUTheoPhilos

In response, the Business Librarian began piloting a satellite roving reference service at the School of Business on Tuesdays and staffing the Information Desk on Mondays.



All of the roving librarians also began “checking into” their roving location through Foursquare and a synced Twitter account. The Foursquare check-in announcements get published or “pushed” to all Subject LibGuides and the Library’s “Get Help” page via twitter feeds.

Exact Source: Database Help & Use (Used More than 5 times)

Database	Times Used
JSTOR	47
Academic Search Complete	45
Proquest	45
PsycINFO	33
Business Source Complete	28
Lexis Nexis	23
Ebsco	21
MLA Intl Bibliography	18
ERIC	17
ATLA	14
Bibloi	14
ABI Inform	13
Mergent	13
CQ Researcher	12

OneSearch	12
WorldCAT	12
Business & Co. R.C.	10
GVRL	9
Lit. Resource Cntr	9
Euromonitor	8
Lit. Criticism Online	8
Soc. Abstracts	8
Science Direct	7
Biography in Context	6
CMMC	6
Opposing Viewpts	6
Proquest Dissert.	6
Sage Jnls Online	6

Finally, an analysis of the most frequent subject areas and databases represented at the Information Desk will lead to new, targeted workshops on several databases.

Fall Library Workshops

These workshops are mainly for faculty, staff and student-workers (although all are welcome). The courtesy of an RSVP is requested as we have limited space in our library classrooms. If demand exceeds space, we will schedule additional dates. Note that the average time for these workshops is approximately one hour, but the librarian hosting the workshop will be available for another 30 minutes for those who wish to practice what they just learned and ask questions.

Read on for more details, and [click here to RSVP](#).



Coming Soon:

JSTOR

PsycINFO

Conclusion

Analyzing Gimlet data from our information desk transactions helped LMU's William H. Hannon Library uncover the real story behind recurring directional, technical, and reference user needs. Our data gathering led to advancements and more informed decision-making applied to the following new services or resources:

- digital signage with rotating PowerPoint slides to aid directional queries
- a new FAQ knowledge base through the LibAnswers subscription service
- a new color printer, scanner, and online computer availability map
- a new desktop image for the computers
- a new targeted satellite roving reference service
- plans for research workshops on the most heavily used databases

This paper adds to the growing body of literature citing examples of the impact of user data and how the data can be used to make improvements in services. Recording transactions from a public service desk is easier with the advent of electronic tracking systems such as Gimlet. Once basic information about whom is asking what kinds of questions and how and when they are answered is recorded, the data can be analyzed on a continuing basis to assess user behavior and demands over time. Our case study is intended to encourage other libraries to undertake similar kinds of analyses, leading them to make more user-driven decisions.

Acknowledgements

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