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This study compared searches in a federated search tool and a single database based on ease of use, perceived relevancy of results, and user preferences. Two sections of college English students completed work sheets designed to elicit information on the above. Fifteen of the 31 student searches reported that both tools were easy to use and many students were satisfied with their results. These reports suggest that librarians consider teaching students to search in both environments.


A 10-year longitudinal study tracked information about a library’s Research Assistance Program (RAP), in areas such as usage patterns, investment of librarians’ time, and types of assignments and sources involved in RAP sessions. Data was extracted from the forms completed by students for each session. Academic libraries considering instituting a consultation service, or wanting to benchmark an existing service, will find the data on user demographics (e.g., gender and academic discipline) useful.


An examination of responses to virtual reference questions over three semesters in a university library was conducted to test the legitimacy of developing an embedded virtual reference (VR) service. The investigators gathered data using LibStats, an Open Source product. Their analysis showed that embedding Meebo increased usage of VR services, particularly requests for assistance with research. Librarians and staff surveyed on Meebo reacted positively. The findings support the use of free software as a viable alternative to commercial products.


Librarians at Illinois Wesleyan University collaborated with marketing classes to investigate how best to promote reference services to students. The classes, working closely with the library’s marketing team, designed surveys on student knowledge/use of reference services and student research habits. The results of this survey inspired the library to reconfigure the information desk and to offer IM reference. The authors also emphasized that librarians should seek student input for any conversation about (re)designing and promoting library services.


As libraries face budget cuts and look to show return on investment, there is an increased need for tools to analyze the costs of services. This study created a model of the costs to individual librarians of collaborative virtual reference services accommodating various modeling types, as well as many of the relevant contributing costs to the overall budget. Costs can be determined for a start-up service or a service that has already been implemented.


Colorado State University Libraries designed a statistics database to track referrals from an information desk created to replace the reference desk. The input form and the data recording guidelines were provided. Results indicate a very small percentage of information desk questions are referred, much lower than in previous studies. The librarians plan to use the data to assess the referral model of reference and to provide information on popular research topics and busy periods of the semester.


A sampling of librarians was administered an online survey asking them to react to statements on instruction in virtual reference (VR) transactions. Cross tabulation of responses did not support the hypotheses that attitudes toward complex transactions would relate negatively to VR or that regular use of IM would relate positively to VR. Although limited in reach, the study opens the door to examining broader implications such as how VR shifts the control over a transaction away from the librarian.


The usability of mobile devices for finding information was examined by documenting the searches of three undergraduate students throughout a semester. The students received Wikipedia iPods programmed to record the search queries and titles of articles found. Logs were downloaded and analyzed. Two of the students completed Internet-based surveys (copy included) reporting their opinions on factors such as efficiency, use of information, and satisfaction with search results and the device. The study provides a model for future research.


Perceptions of faculty on the use of full-text articles retrieved from print vs online sources were compared to reports from their students on the sources used using a survey designed for both faculty and students. Responses to a student survey (not included) showed whether students used
print or online sources most. Faculty were asked to what degree they use online sources and were asked to report on the citing of online sources in their students' papers.


This paper described a research study at the University of Windsor (Canada) exploring the use of academic libraries and services by Chinese graduate students. The authors employed qualitative research methods involving twelve graduate students who had completed their initial or subsequent degrees in Chinese universities but are now studying at this Canadian university. A number of common themes were described which could be extremely useful in reference services, especially with the upsurge in Chinese students in Canada and the United States.


Luo examined which training techniques are effective for chat reference. 286 chat reference providers responded to a survey rating the effectiveness of different techniques. The questions asked in the survey were included. Contextual information, such as length of experience with chat reference, was also gathered, to correlate effective training techniques with these variables. Results show the most effective training techniques for chat reference.


Lyons made a good argument for librarians to create user guides to community information for users. He checked websites of 70 business schools ranked highly by the *Wall Street Journal* and *U.S. News and World Report*. After examining schools for local resources guides, he then analyzed the guides using criteria such as numbers of links, inclusion of local, state and national resources, and categories of the resources found. Since the use of library guides seems only to be increasing with the use of such software as LibGuides, this article is important for pointing out a possible gap in reference guides.


http://www.rusq.org/This study examined whether librarians who adhere to the RUSA guidelines for behavioral performance when dealing with patrons mitigate rude or inappropriate behavior. Chat transcripts were analyzed and coded to determine whether the librarians observed the RUSA guidelines or not, and the analysis then focused on the patron behavior. The study found a low level of adherence to RUSA guidelines and suggested that the development of specific behavior guidelines for reference librarians may be necessary.


Familiarity with citation management software among faculty and their evaluation of citations in student papers were the focus of this study. Using a survey and descriptive statistics, the author found that respondents (9.6 percent of faculty) were not familiar with computer-generated bibliographic tools, and they count errors in bibliographic citations against a student's grade. Understanding how faculty evaluate bibliographies helps librarians teaching research skills, and programs that automate the compilation of bibliographies are part of that teaching responsibility.


The authors examined the type of sources used in 100 English composition research essays. In addition to replicating previous studies, the authors examined sources used as they relate to timeliness, authority, and bias. The article also presented the results of focus groups with faculty and students. While students seemed to be most comfortable with the concept of timeliness, there is a need for assistance in understanding the concepts of authority and bias.


The authors studied the quality of consortia chat reference services at the University of Alberta Libraries. The investigators compared the quality of service provided by local librarians versus consortia staff, through analysis of whether the response met reference standards, and whether the question was answered in real time. The study found that local librarians performed better than the consortia staff, but the authors suggest that consortia staff performance could be improved through provision of better information about the Alberta library and campus.


http://www.rusq.org/This study looked at how to best classify patron transactions in order to better provide reference services. Staff at each service point in the library collected and categorized data using a form developed for the study based on the Warner Model for classifying reference questions. The study concluded that this was an effective method for collecting statistics, evaluating the effectiveness of services, and can allow the library to make better decisions regarding staffing levels.


To test whether a reference librarian’s discipline (or MLS) affects performance in various services, 75 librarians from 33 branches of the Islamic Azad Universities completed surveys. Using chi square analyses, the authors found differences in service delivery between librarians with an LIS degree and those with a non-LIS degree. In the Iranian model of reference, indexing, abstracting, and document delivery are included as reference services, so these findings are particular to that definition of reference.

In an effort to develop an optimal digital reference desk (DRD) for the National Library of Iran, the content features of DRDs available on the Internet in English representing 33 national libraries were analyzed. The features extracted from the content analysis were cross-referenced with features identified as important to a DRD by a group of Iranian specialists. Agreement between the specialists and the DRD content analysis was less than 50 percent. The findings accentuate the need for user-centered design in DRD development. Tables include lists of all content features.


Librarians examined library use patterns of students, faculty, and staff affiliated with their university's intercultural/international student centers. An online survey presented questions on research behavior and interest in outreach services, such as library instruction at the student centers and foreign-language library materials. The instrument (not included) was patterned after the Scott Walter survey used at the University of Washington. The study validated Walter's survey as a method for gathering data on information-seeking behavior in minority students.


http://www.uic.edu/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2716/2385]The author examined search engine usage by faculty and students for research and study purposes. The various testing methods looked for differences and similarities in search engine usage levels and usage types. The study methods found high levels of satisfaction and usage of search engines among faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates. Variance occurred in usage types between faculty and graduate students and undergraduate students. The study allowed for an examination of user preferences and planning and design for future systems.


The authors sought to develop a structured vocabulary and assessment methods for building common quantitative models for analyzing and discussing research about the reference transaction. Models in five disciplines were analyzed, and a rubric of characteristics of good and bad models developed. Nine qualitative terminological attributes of good models were then applied to three models of reference transaction analysis. The article presents useful criteria and methodology for choosing, developing, and assessing standardized models for reference research.


This study defined and characterized independent undergraduate research, as distinct from course-related undergraduate research. The author also offers a case study of one library's involvement in undergraduate research on its campus, and provides recommendations for other libraries interested in engaging with this part of their community.


The authors analyzed reference assistance web sites for a variety of ARL libraries to determine common characteristics, and specifically how different modes of reference service are promoted through these sites. The study examined 111 of 123 ARL member libraries' web sites, and documented which of seven types of information were present on each site. In particular, the authors focused on whether online modes of reference are promoted more frequently than walk-up services. The research is a useful examination of how libraries present and conceptualize their reference services online, and has useful implications for reference service marketing.


In this article, the author compared search results of Google Scholar and of 11 bibliographic databases in the field of later-life migration focusing on their recall and precision. Using 155 known articles, the author evaluated the tools on recall--how well the databases retrieved relevant articles and precision--how well relevant articles were located and irrelevant articles excluded. For the subject of later-life migration, Google Scholar had the highest recall but lower precision than several of the databases.


A content analysis of a random sampling of chat transcripts from a two-year period at a university library revealed that subject experts are rarely needed to field questions (only 10 percent of chat questions); co-browsing is important (used in 38 percent of sampled chats); and that peak usage of chat sessions was consistent across time. The study identified major variables related to the management of virtual reference services and a method for measuring those variables.


The credibility of Wikipedia as a reference tool was tested through a critical evaluation of 106 randomly-selected articles. Articles were rated using a 7-point scale applied to five factors: accuracy, completeness, objectivity, presentation, and overall quality. No factor received a score below 4, however, the raters concluded that inconsistency in quality and coverage is the main drawback of Wikipedia. The article gives librarians concise guidelines for judging any article in Wikipedia.


The authors in this study attempted to determine what types of Web 2.0 applications were being used in academic libraries and for what purposes; they also presented a "conceptual model" of academic library use of Web 2.0 applications. They checked the websites of 81 library websites at institutions in New York state to determine what types of Web 2.0 applications were being used and for what purposes. They then analyzed what applications were being used most often and what applications were being used in conjunction with other Web 2.0 applications. Based on the results of this study, the authors presented their model of Web 2.0 use. Since many of these applications center around reference services, and since librarians are being challenged to implement services that will attract our younger users, this article is helpful in informing librarians to use these technologies to improve our services.