Work Plan Items

3c. Develop plan for reference desk redesign. A redesign plan was created and approved in fall 2017. Furniture was selected, purchased, and installed in spring 2018.

Program Data & Accomplishments

Data in Context

The following definitions are useful in interpreting this report:

- **Level I queries** are simple/directional questions which:
  a. Don’t require specialized knowledge, but
  b. May involve directing the patron to a webpage, handout, location, or other resource.

- **Level II queries** are basic/skill-based questions that require:
  a. A basic level of knowledge of library resources and technology,
  b. Introductory user instruction, and/or
  c. A minimal amount of troubleshooting, and
  d. Unusually complex Level I questions.

- **Level III queries** are moderate/strategy-based questions that require:
  a. A moderate level of knowledge of library resources and technology,
  b. Intermediate user instruction, and/or
  c. More involved troubleshooting and
  d. Unusually complex Level II questions.

- **Level IV queries** are specialized, consultative questions that require:
  a. Specialized knowledge of library resources and technology,
  b. Advanced user instruction, and/or
  c. Extensive troubleshooting, and
  d. Unusually complex Level III questions.
Total Queries

There was a 26% decrease of reference queries from AY1617 to AY1718 and a decrease of 41% since AY1314. It is not surprising that the number of queries decreased, as enrollment has dropped significantly the past few years, causing fewer students to be available to ask reference questions. In addition, AY1718 staff turnover caused the need for increased on-call and open hours, decreasing the face-to-face chances for students to ask questions.
As usual, the library received the largest number of reference queries in the fall semester. Although summer and fall 2017 semesters averaged 33% decreases since AY1617, spring 2018 only saw a 3% decrease. In addition to the one-year decreases, the five-year data shows decreases in all semesters, with an average decrease of 38%. However, as previously discussed, these decreases likely stem from falling enrollment and staff turnover.
**Extended Hours**

## Extended Hours Queries 5 Year Trend

![Extended Hours Queries 5 Year Trend](image)

Fall 2017 extended hours were in place from November 27th through December 7th. Spring 2018 extended hours were in place from April 30th through May 10th. The library held extended hours for 8 days or 16 hours this year.

Unlike most previous years, there were more extended hour queries in the spring than in the fall. The number of queries in fall held a 75% decrease from AY1617 but a 40% decrease from AY1314. On the other hand, spring saw an increase of 33% since AY1617 but a decrease of 80% since AY1314. As the five-year decrease is part of an overall declining number of reference queries, it is probably also influenced by falling enrollment numbers and staff turnover.

Unlike in previous years, the majority of queries during extended hours were Level III and Level IV, which is a reflection of the overall increases in upper level queries.
At the beginning of the fall semester, August and September reference queries counts are expectedly high. During this time the librarians field a lot of questions from new students about how to login to their email and Blackboard, how to obtain their course schedule, and how to navigate the university system in general. Many students also ask us to see if the library has their textbook available for checkout. The high number of queries in August 2017 (368 queries) and September 2017 (335 queries), as well as February 2018 (244 queries) reflects this. A relatively high number of queries is also to be expected at the end of the semester, as finals approach, which are reflected in the number of queries in November 2017 and April 2018, with 290 and 253 queries respectively. The librarians also field many questions around mid-terms in October and March, with 284 and 192 queries respectively.

Although most months in AY1718 experienced significant decreases, February and May actually saw respectable increases, with 21% and 42% increases respectively. In addition, several months only saw slight decreases, namely January (7%) and April (10%). On the other hand, most one-year and five-year comparisons saw significant decreases. Most notably December averaged a queries decrease of 58% since AY1617 and AY1314. This sharp decrease can likely be attributed to the aforementioned decreases in enrollment and staff turnover.
Queries by Level

Level II queries continue to comprise the majority of the reference queries, followed by Level I queries and Level III queries.

The one-year differences reveal double digit percentage decreases for the first three query levels. Level I, Level II, and Level III queries have decreased by 26%, 30%, and 42% respectively. These decreases are probably related to the one vacant librarian positions from May to August and the vacant Instructional Services Assistant position from June to July. Level IV queries, on the other hand, have increased by 50% since last year, which is primarily due to the continued implementation of LibCal’s My Scheduler, allowing students to quickly and easily schedule one-on-one research consultations with their liaison librarians.

Five-year differences show both sharp increases and modest decreases. Most notably, Level IV queries have increased by 532% since AY1314. However, Level I, II, and III queries have decreased over the past five years by 38%, 53%, and 35% respectively.
Queries by Hour and Level

Unlike AY1617, the busiest hour for reference queries in AY1718 was 3:00-4:00 p.m. This hour was followed by 2:00-3:00 p.m. and 4:00-5:00 p.m. Like AY1617, the busiest hour for Level I queries were 3:00-4:00 p.m. For Level II queries, the busiest hours were 2:00-3:00 p.m., 4:00-5:00 p.m., and 3:00-4:00 p.m. For Level III queries, the busiest hours were 3:00-4:00 p.m., 10:00-11:00 a.m., and 11:00-12:00 a.m. The busiest hours for Level IV queries are 4:00-5:00 p.m., and 3:00-4:00 p.m. The slowest hours were the first hour of the day, during which the desk was left unstaffed for most of the year, and during extended hours.
Walk-in reference queries remain the largest category of reference interactions by large margins. Walk-in queries have shown a 30% decrease from AY1617 and a 49% decrease since AY1314.

As the second-highest category, email queries have experienced large increases in both one and five year comparisons, with a 41% increase since AY1617 and a 559% increase since AY1314. These increases are due mainly to the overall increases in Level IV queries, as many research consultations are done through the individual liaison librarian’s email.

Phone queries have decreased modestly since AY1617 (34%) and since AY1314 (44%). The cause of the decrease may in part stem from the overall decrease in reference queries.

In its third year after implementation, chat reference queries has continued to decreases since its strong first year in AY1516, but unlike the sharp decline in AY1617, AY1718 only saw a 3% decrease.

As mentioned previously, the library implemented LibCal’s My Scheduler in August 2016, so there is only a small amount of comparison data. Although the 57 LibCal reference interactions is a drop of 32% since AY1617, it has still contributed to the increase in the number of Level IV queries in AY1718.
Queries by Day

There was roughly the same number of queries on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays during AY1718. Unlike in AY1617, Tuesdays were slightly busier than any other day with 24% of the total number of queries, but Mondays and Wednesdays closely followed behind, with 23% and 22% respectively. Thursdays held only 16% of the total number of queries. In addition, Fridays and Sundays had significantly fewer queries than any other days of the week, each with 7% of the total number of queries, but this difference is almost certainly due to the shortened number of Reference Desk hours offered during those days.
Queries by College/School

With the highest number of queries, the College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences had a total of 617 queries or 43% of the total number of queries. This is due mainly to the high numbers of queries from departments of English & Languages and Human Resources.

With 338 queries or 23% of the total number of queries, the College of Health & Sciences had the second highest number of queries, with 118 of the queries coming from the Nursing Department alone.

The College of Education & Psychology had the third highest number of queries with 251 queries or 17% of the total number of queries. This is mainly due to the Education Department’s 147 total queries in AY1718.

The School of Business closely followed the College of Education and Psychology with 204 queries or 14% of the total number of queries, with 153 of the queries coming from the Business Administration Department alone.
Frequently Asked Questions

In AY1516, the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) knowledge base was transferred from a LibGuide to a LibAnswers’ form. Many of the benefits of this transfer involve a greater ease of use on both the patron and internal view. The FAQs are now searchable by keyword, allowing patrons to easily find a previous FAQ which matches their own inquiry. The reference department can also use the unanswered patron questions, tracked in LibAnswers, to create new FAQs which match patron interest. The FAQs are also connected to RefAnalytics, into which all reference desk queries are inputted, allowing librarians to quickly and easily keep the FAQs up-to-date.

The FAQs had 315 hits for AY1718. September had the most hits at 62, while March held the least at 6. All the other months averaged around 26 hits.
Faculty/student consultations are research appointments generally conducted outside of Reference Desk duty. These consultations are, however, also counted as Level IV reference queries. As with past years, the heaviest users of research consultation service were patrons in the College of Liberal Arts & Social Science, who requested 117 consultation or 44% of the total number of consultations, but this college did see a slight dip of 6% in consultations since AY1617. Patrons in the College of Health & Sciences were the second heaviest users with 64 consultations and 24% of the total number of consultations. This college saw 205% more consultations than in AY1617. As the third heaviest users of consultations, the School of Business requested 47 consultations or 18% of the total number of consultations, with an 88% increase in consultations since AY1617. Consultations have also increased in the College of Education & Psychology by 60% since AY1617, with 32 consultations or 12% of the total consultations. As mentioned elsewhere with regard to the increase in Level IV questions, this increase is most likely related to the implementation of the LibCal's My Scheduler in AY1617, which allowed patrons to quickly and easily make appointments for research consultations with their liaison librarian. Data for AY1314 is unavailable.
Reference Desk Staffing

As the second year of the new Reference Staffing model, which was implemented in October 2016, AY1718 saw Peer Reference Assistants (PRAs) working a total of 1026 hours at the Reference Desk, 27% of the total hours. While the librarians still worked weekly desk shifts, 21% of the available hours, on-call hours were increased dramatically in AY1718, culminating in a spike of 168 on-call hours in January. Staff members from other library departments continued to be recruited to work at the Reference Desk on an as needed basis, taking 5% of the desk hours and 9% of the on-call hours. The staffing shortages, which occurred in AY1718 with the
resignation of one librarian and the Instructional Services Assistant, caused this shift to PRAs at the Reference Desk and an increase in librarian on-call shifts became invaluable to the effective functioning of reference services.
Patron Requests the Library Was Unable to Fulfill

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patron Request</th>
<th>Number of Requests</th>
<th>Referred to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the library have my textbook?</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Bookstore/Academic Advising/Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you know algebra?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tutoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have any graphing calculators to check out?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Wolframalpha.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you help me with my taxes?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bursar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have any envelopes?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Post Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As with past years, the top request which the library couldn’t fulfill was for textbooks. The number of questions about textbooks decreased from 10 in AY1617 to 8 in AY1718. Students asking if the library had the textbook for their class were referred to the bookstore or instructed to contact their professor to see if one could be borrowed.

With a single question each, students also asked for assistance with algebra and taxes, as well as for specific supplies, such as graphing calculators and envelopes.
In AY1718, the library opened 3 new group study rooms for student use, bringing the total number of group study rooms to 4. The large increases in total number of bookings (1,092) and total hours booked (2,033) in AY1718 reflects this expansion of study rooms.
As would be expected, the group study room reservations are quite low during the summer, with only 6 total bookings. Reservations are also predictably relatively low during the first and last couple of weeks of the fall and spring semesters, but increased dramatically during the rest of the semester. In particular, November and April displayed remarkable spikes, with 159 and 210 bookings respectively. Overall, the group study rooms increased in both bookings and total hours booked since AY1617, with 191% and 268% increases respectively.

The Group Study Room reservation system procedures dictate that each time slot be either cancelled (when the group doesn’t show up) or marked “showed up” in the system. Unfortunately, neither action was taken for 78 time slots in AY1617, which is up from 12 in AY1617. It is unknown whether the groups who booked these slots actually showed up for their reservation or not. Fortunately, this lapse only occurred in 7% of the total number of bookings.

Bookings and time slots booked have shown remarkable increases since AY1314, with 144% and 174% increases respectively. As mentioned above, this is mainly due to the increase of available group study rooms from 1 in AY1617 to 4 in AY1718.
Unlike in past years, Monday was by far the busiest day for the group study rooms, with 264 bookings. Sundays and Wednesdays were the second and third busiest days, with 224 and 223 bookings respectively. Tuesdays had slightly fewer bookings (200), with Fridays trailing by quite a bit more (101). Thursdays had the fewest number of bookings with 80.
Unlike reference queries, the busiest hours for Group Study Room reservations were generally in the evening between 5:00 and 9:00 p.m., with 6:00-7:00 p.m. holding the highest number of bookings of any timeslot with 147 bookings. Given varying student class schedules, the evening is the most convenient time for students to get together to study. However, mid-afternoon was also a popular time with 103 bookings between 2:00-3:00 p.m. and 89 bookings between 3:00-4:00 p.m. The least popular timeslots were during the morning, particularly from 8:00-9:00 a.m., and last evening, particularly 9:00 p.m. and 12:00 a.m.
Group Study Rooms Bookings by Department

The decreases in the following statistics is a direct result of the transition in AY1718 from counting timeslots to counting bookings by college/school. As one booking can take anywhere from 1 to 4 timeslots, it makes sense that there will always be fewer bookings than timeslots.

With 440 bookings, the College of Health & Sciences is by far the heaviest user of the group study rooms, with 40% of the total number of bookings. Within the College of Health & Sciences, 46% of the bookings were made by patrons affiliated with the nursing department (204).

The Unknown/Other category accounted for the second heaviest users of the group study rooms, with around 27% of the time slots. Patrons may have intentionally selected “other” in the departmental affiliation field for various reasons. For instance, a group may have consisted of several students working independently on projects for classes in different departments who just wanted to be able to chat together during study breaks. There would be no one departmental affiliation in this case. Students studying for a general education course may not know the departmental affiliation of the course. Finally, it’s possible that students simply misunderstand the question.

With 213 bookings, the School of Business is the third heaviest user of the group study rooms, with 19% of the time slots. Within the School of Business, patrons affiliated with Business Administration made the largest number of bookings in AY1718, with 172 bookings or 81% of
the total number of bookings for the School of Business. However, Accounting still made a respectable number of bookings (41) in AY1718.

The other colleges and school each accounted for about 7% or less of the total bookings. Although it is possible that students in these areas simply don’t have group assignments, it would beneficial to consider whether additional marketing to these disciplines might increase their number of bookings.
As previously mentioned, the library gained 3 new group study rooms in September 2017. These were Bengal Group Study Room, Siberian Group Study Room, and Sumatran Group Study Room.

Despite the technological advantages of the 3 new group study rooms, the Tiger Group Study Room remained the most popular space with 392 bookings or 36% of the total number of bookings. This could be due to being the sole group study room between June and August, as well as being the most visible space (i.e. being located on the main floor).

With 282 bookings or 26% of the total number of bookings, the Bengal Group Study Room was the second most popular space. The Siberian Group Study Room closely with 244 bookings or 22% of the total number of bookings, and the Sumatran Group Study Room was the least popular space with 174 bookings or 16% of the total number of bookings.
Departmental Projects

AY1718 was the first year of the 2017-2020 Information Services Plan. The major Reference Departmental projects that were completed are as follows:

- Create and implement a Reference Desk redesign proposal.
- Create the Reference Standards and Best Practices.
- Revise the Reference Evaluation Plan to include Peer Reference Assistants and on-call components.
- Revise the Reference Peer Evaluation Form.

Personnel

- Personnel changes –
  - Gabriel Piper started as Instructional Services Assistant in August, 2017.
  - Gabriel Piper finished 25 hours towards his bachelor’s degree. He is expected to graduate in 2022.
  - Gabriel Piper ended employment as Instructional Services Assistant in May, 2018.
- Major presentations –
  - Tillotson, Calantha, and Baumann, Patrick. Librarians as Architects: Building Information Literacy Scaffolding into Liaison Departments. *Oklahoma Library Association’s Annual Conference, Tulsa, OK, April 25, 2018.*
  - Tillotson, Calantha. What Reference Means to Me. *Recorded for Dr. Ellen Rubenstein, University of Oklahoma’s School of Library and Information Science instructor, Norman, OK, January 5, 2018.*
  - Tillotson, Calantha, Mahan, Natalie, Vitale, Whitney, Austin, Chuck, and Garde, Shannon. Training Students to be the Face of the Library. *Presented at Oklahoma Library Association’s annual conference in Norman, Oklahoma, April 25, 2017.*

Summation

AY1718 strengths and accomplishments include an increase in Level IV reference queries by 50%, an increase in the number of reference consultations by 28%, an increase of 41% in email consultations, the addition of 3 new group study rooms, and the implementation of the Reference Desk redesign proposal. The primary weakness for the year was an overall decrease in reference queries. Priorities for AY1819 and continuing discussion center on the implementation of the new Reference Evaluation Plan, specifically initiating the evaluation of Peer Reference Assistants, and the revision of reference training procedures, specifically the
updating of the Peer Reference Assistant Manual and the creating of continuous training activities for all reference personnel.