

Purpose

To capture reference, information, and complex circulation queries at service desks. Queries are broken into the mode the question was received, the type of question it is, and the action performed by the staff in order to inform future planning for staffing levels and training needs at library service desks.

Two Modes

- In person
- Phone

Note: Service Desks in Hayden will also have a third “mode” choice: Phone – Ask Us Central. This will be chosen when phone queries are received on the Ask Us Central phone number.

Five Categories:

- Reference Basic
- Reference Complex
- Technical
- Circulation Complex
- Other

Three Actions:

- Answered
- Partially Answered/Referred
- Referred

Note: Service Desks in Hayden will also have a fourth field to fill-in: Subject [see below]

Category Definitions

Reference

Answering any question that involves knowledge, use, recommendation, interpretation, or instruction in the use of one or more information sources, including the Libraries' web site. Information sources include print and non-print material, databases, the library's own catalog and other research tools, other libraries and institutions through communication or referral, people both inside and outside the Libraries. When a staff member uses information gained from previous use of information sources to answer a question, the transaction is recorded as a reference question even if the source is not consulted again.

- **Basic**
 - Giving quick (2 minutes or less) instruction on Library resources and services. User needs very little drawing out to determine what they are after. Help is easily offered. Enough information is known about the question so that the answer can be provided easily and definitively, usually by searching Barton, Vera, the Libraries' web site, or other easily available information sources.
 - Examples
 - Showing the user the difference between Barton and Vera.
 - How do I log into Your Account?
 - Getting to and using ILB/RSC forms.
 - Applying for BLC or Harvard borrowing privileges.
 - Where are the Proceedings of the IEEE?
 - Where can I find Vannevar Bush's thesis?
 - I need an article from the Architectural Research Quarterly.
 - Do the Libraries own Crainic, Teodor Gabriel (Universite de Montreal); Roy, Jacques Source: Transportation Science, v 26, n 4, Nov, 1992, p 280-295 ISSN: 0041-1655?

- How can I get an electronic copy of an article in the New York Times?
- Directing the user to a publication types web page like for conferences, corporate reports, government information, patents, standards, technical reports, maps, etc.
- My professor wants a pdf of a thesis that is in the Digital Thesis Library. How much will it cost?
- Does MIT have subscriptions to online books?
- Showing a user a course web page that lists resources for a particular assignment.
- An undergraduate needs books about space medicine for a class paper.
- **Complex**
 - Involved discussion may be required to understand the needs of the user. Even if the question is well defined, the answer is not easily ascertained. Questions may require knowledge of subject specific resources; includes instructing users in the use of specific resources or services. Usually takes a few minutes or more.
 - Examples
 - Complicated conference proceeding citations.
 - Determining when to find a journal under a transliterated title.
 - Tracing title changes in order to find an item
 - Showing how to search in INSPEC, Web of Science, patent databases, business databases, etc.
 - Showing advanced features of Barton, Vera, Worldcat, etc.
 - Showing how to use a specific print reference resource.
 - How can I use Barton to browse call numbers starting from CT1 in the Humanities Reference Collection?
 - I'm looking for articles on the effects of alcohol on depression. What databases should I use?
 - I'm trying to get a book entitled Quantum Sensing from the Barker Library Stacks, call number TA165.Q36 2003, but I see a status Receiv/Not Aval - does that mean I can not get the book? Can I request it from another university library?
- **Counting**
 - Count each topical question separately. Additional questions on the original topic should be considered as part of the original question for counting purposes, e.g., "and now that we've identified a relevant article, how do I get the article since MIT doesn't have it?"

Technical

Questions that are about the use of equipment/hardware or standard software, e.g., web browsers, Adobe Acrobat, are considered "technical."

- **Examples**
 - How do I use the microform reader/printer?
 - How do I print out an article?
 - Can you help me with the copy card machine?
 - How do I get a certificate?
- **Counting**
 - Count each topical question separately.

Other

Questions that are not reference are considered "other". Included in this category are directional questions and other basic questions that facilitate the logistical use of the library.

- **Examples**
 - Where is the bathroom?
 - Where can I find HD327?

- Where are the theses?
- May I borrow a stapler?
- How do I get a copy card?
- How long do books circulate for?
- **Counting**
 - Count each topical question separately.

Circulation Complex

A complex circulation question/activity typically involves each of the following elements: 1) an understanding of circulation policy, 2) following the correct procedural steps in Aleph, SAP or MITSIS, and 3) generally lasts two minutes or longer per transaction.

- **Examples**
 - Patron registration or updating a patron's record
 - Processing library fines
 - Providing overrides
 - Re-setting Your Account
 - Checking in "lost books"
 - Laptop checkout
 - Order status of reserve requests
- **Counting**
 - Count each activity separately.

Action Definitions

- **Answered**
 - The user's need was met at the point of request; no referral is necessary.
- **Partially Answered/Referred**
 - The user was provided with some information that helps fulfill their need, but a referral was necessary to answer the request.
- **Referred**
 - The user is referred to another person to meet their need. No information specific to the user's request is provided except whom to contact for help.

Subject Choice [Note: this choice will only be available at Service Desks in Hayden]

To help determine what kinds of staff are needed to answer our users' questions in Hayden, there will be check boxes on the statistics form labeled:

- **Hum/SS**
- **Sc/Eng**
- **N/A** [i.e. non-applicable]

Check N/A for subject when the question falls into the categories of technical, circulation complex, or other. For reference questions indicate the subject matter of the question, NOT which library you work in or the department of the person asking the question. When issuing borrowing cards (BLC, Harvard, Countway) or answering ILB inquiries, check "N/A".

- **Examples**
 - I need to find articles on how depression affects minority women. *This is a psychology question dealing with behavioral study. Check the Hum/SS box.*
 - I want to know how brain patterns change when using drugs. *This is a brain and cognitive sciences question, dealing with medical research. Check the Sci/Eng box.*
 - Can I have a Harvard card? *Check N/A.*
 - Do you subscribe to Cell? *This is a science question. Check the Sci/Eng box.*
 - I'm looking for a history of the atomic bomb. *This is a history question. Check the Hum/SS box.*