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Improving Reference Statistics Gathering Across the Library

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Comments

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Improving Reference Statistics Gathering Across the Library
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CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY | Leatherby Libraries

ABSTRACT

Reference statistics gathering at the Leatherby Libraries was revised to streamline the reporting of reference statistics. A form was developed and included locally designed predefined questions and fields such as location and question type. All public-facing departments were added to the reference gathering.

Staff and librarians were provided with a rubric that included each predefined question, what question type(s) correlated with each predefined question, and examples of transactions that would be entered with the predefined question. A separate document included the RUSA definition of reference to ensure that the staff would correctly quantify a question as "reference."

Assessment on the data revealed that the predefined questions led to confusion about how to categorize transactions as reference questions. The predefined questions will be removed, and questions will be entered in a free text box. Librarians and staff will be retrained on the reference definition in order to focus on categorizing questions correctly. Other libraries can learn from this assessment to make statistics gathering simple and efficient.

INTRODUCTION

The methods of entering, tracking, and reporting of reference transactions had varied over the years at the Leatherby Libraries.

The purpose of the revision of the reference statistics gathering was to:
- Streamline the entering of reference transactions with all public-facing departments through the use of predefined questions and fields in Libanswers.
- Clearly define which questions qualified as "reference" questions to enable correct reporting of reference questions in external and internal documents.
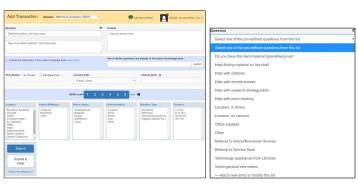
METHODS

Part One: Data Analysis
A random sample of the reference transactions pulled from Libanswers between 2014 - 2019 was analyzed to determine if the transactions were entered correctly as reference questions, and if new predefined questions should be developed to allow for easier entering of data.

As many of the questions from the analysis were not entered correctly as reference questions and others were entered as "blank" transactions with no questions, new predefined questions and fields were developed.

Librarians and other staff from public-facing departments, including Special Collections & Archives, and Circulation, were trained on the new data entering methods. A rubric and a procedure document with the RUSA definition of reference were provided.

New LibAnswers Form and Predefined Questions

Part Two: Review of New Methods
After a year of testing the new predefined questions and fields, the reference transactions were compiled and analyzed. The analysis revealed:
- The use of only predefined questions (with no free text entering) seemed more confusing as some transactions were entered with incorrect predefined questions and some free text questions were entered.
- There was still confusion about what type of transaction qualified as a reference transaction.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Due to the confusion with the new predefined questions, a decision was made to remove the predefined questions and leave a free text box for entering transactions. This should help with faster data entering and sorting of transactions into the correct categories.

The new method did allow for all public-facing departments to enter reference transactions, which allowed for better reporting of reference questions on internal and external documents. Also, there is now a method for assessing LibAnswers reference transactions at the Leatherby Libraries.

FURTHER PLANS

Data analysis on the new data entering method with the use of only free text questions will be conducted at the end of the next year.

Training on how to define a reference transaction and how to enter the data will be conducted periodically with librarians and library staff.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS