

**GLA Reference Interest Group
Business Meeting and Conference session
GACOMO Conference,
Macon, Georgia
Thursday, Oct. 4th, 2012**

Wesley Stewart, Chair of the Reference Services Interest Group, facilitated the meeting. Present, Sandra Riggs, Vice-Chair Chair-Elect, Joan Taylor, Secretary.

Business Meeting

The meeting was called to order at approximately 3pm by Wesley Stewart. He started out the meeting welcoming everyone to the meeting and thanking the current officers for their service during the present term. Wesley introduced the nominees for 2013. The floor was opened for a vote. After a unanimous vote the three following officers were elected for the 2013 term.

- Sandra Riggs, University of Georgia, Miller Learning Center will serve as Chair of RSIG.
- Jean Cook, University of West Georgia, will serve as Vice-Chair, Chair-Elect of RSIG.
- Rita J. Spisak, Kennesaw State University, will serve as Secretary of RSIG.

COMO Session

Session 3:30 pm-4:20 pm : *(GLA Reference Services IG) Assessment "Macon" Reference Services Assessment Meaningful: How Do We Assess Quality and Effectiveness?*

Location: Centreplex, Room 308

"Panelists and participants share approaches for both quantitative and qualitative assessment of reference services."

Presenters:

Julie Higbee (North Georgia College & State University)- "Apply statistics for decisions about training for librarians and paraprofessionals."

- a) Combined service desk has recently been implemented at North Georgia.
- b) LibQUAL is done every two years at North Georgia.
- c) GoogleDocs is the interface used by North Georgia to capture statistics
- d) GOAL: to capture and improve the use and details of reference statistics.

Casey Long (Agnes Scott College)- Using stats to make a variety of decisions.

- a) ZoHo is the interface used to capture statistics at Agnes Scott.
- b) They also record the types of questions.
- c) Used their recent compilation of statistics to show that librarians were not needed after 9pm in the evening.

Paula Adams (Columbus State University) had set statistical objectives correlating specifically to RPG (Retention and graduation rates)

- a) Quantitative analysis to address areas: such as patron type, question type, peak times of need for reference services, staffing needs, trends, midterm, final exams.

- b) Use Google Docs to collect statistics and she likes the “Summary Report” feature offered through GoogleDocs.

Jean Cook (University of West Georgia) “Marketing-Using stats to make the elevator pitch” to other areas such as administration and other areas of campus.

- a) History: started collecting quantitative statistics in 2008
- b) Now uses Lib Stats and also uses Excel” Pivot tables.
- c) Uses the snapshot features of statistics to always be ready to provide concrete information to appropriate individuals on an “as needed” basis.
- d) Dilemma for UWG- How to collect accurate statistics from numerous student assistants who may be answering questions as they check out books to students?? Yet these statistics are not always recorded as they should be, even when they receive instruction to record their count of questions.
- e) Since the work desk is a combined work desk area, counting the questions accurately becomes increasingly challenging.

Discussion, comments, and questions followed the panelists’ initial overview comments about their respective institutional libraries and issues with statistical data collection.

List of attendees who signed a sheet at this session, as provided by Wesley Stewart:

- Ana Guimaraes aguimar1@kennesaw.edu, Kennesaw
- Bette Finn bette.finn@library.gatech.edu, Georgia Tech
- Casey Long clong@agnesscott.edu, Agnes Scott
- Cheryl Stiles cstiles@kennesaw.edu, Kennesaw
- David Minchew dminchew@ggc.edu, Georgia Gwinnett
- Jackie Werner jwerner3@gsu.edu, Georgia State
- Jean Cook jcook@westga.edu, University of West Georgia
- Joan Taylor joantaylor@clayton.edu, Clayton State
- Judith Garrison judith.garrison@armstrong.edu, Armstrong
- Julie Higbee jahigbee@northgeorgia.edu, North Georgia
- Lisa Smith lsmith@georgiasouthern.edu, Georgia Southern
- Michael Luther mluther@auctr.edu, Robert W. Woodruff Library at the Atlanta University Center
- Patricia Kenly patricia.kenly@library.gatech.edu, Georgia Tech
- Paula Adams adams_paula@columbusstate.edu, Columbus State
- Rita Spisak rspisak@kennesaw.edu, Kennesaw
- Tom Ganzevoort ganzevoort_thomas@columbusstate.edu, Columbus State
- Wesley Stewart wesley.stewart@gpc.edu Georgia Perimeter College
- Amy Elizabeth Bursi amy.bursi@gpc.edu, Georgia Perimeter College
- Claudia Shorr crshorr@gmail.com, (formerly Georgia Perimeter College)
- Diana Hartle dhartle@uga.edu, University of Georgia
- Sandra Riggs sriggs@uga.edu, University of Georgia

Following is a summary of the 2012 COMO RSIG Blogposts for prepared by Casey Long.

Reference Services User Group -- Summary of Statistics Discussion

DISCUSSION LEADER INTRODUCTIONS

Four Reference Service User Group members spoke briefly about their experience gathering and using reference statistics in their library and offered ideas for larger group discussion. Audience members were then encouraged to share their own experiences, ask questions of the panelists, or pose questions to the larger group on similar issues.

The discussion leaders included:

- **Julie Higbee from North Georgia College**

She described the type of stats collected at North Georgia College using a Google Doc. These included: time of day, question type (directional, reference, etc), and modality (in-person, chat, email, phone). The level of detail they capture is not very granular; for example, there is no ranking or categorizing reference questions by subject, department, or level of difficulty/length of time in responding. Potentially adding the subject, level of student (year undergrad, grad, etc), and length of answering time could be helpful data to track, since it could help with reference training and staffing.

Julie is most interested in how to capture what types of learning take place at the reference desk and which approaches help facilitate learning most effectively. This might mean developing some type of brief survey or asking specific questions at the end of a reference transaction. One study that might be worth considering building upon would be the one described in the following article: Gremmels, G. S. & Lehmann, K. S. (2007). Assessment of student learning from reference service. *College & Research Libraries*, 68(6), 488-502. Open access at <http://crl.acrl.org/content/68/6.toc>

- **Casey Long from Agnes Scott College**

Agnes Scott uses a form created in Zoho that was modified from a template provided by Elyssa Kroski in an Online Education Database post in 2007 <<http://oedb.org/blogs/ilibrarian/2007/reference-statistics-with-zoho-creator/>>. The data from these stats has enabled McCain Library at Agnes Scott to make decisions about service hours. Agnes Scott College chose not to continue with text references as a result of usage data and decided to reduce the evening shift by one hour. Casey emphasized that there is much more that could be done with the data collected such as improving the library website to make it easier to find information, increase library signage, and enhance collection development, but there is not enough time to comb through the data to utilize it in this fashion. She is interested in learning more about how statistics have been applied towards making helping users be more independent.

- **Paula Adams at Columbus State University**

Columbus State also uses Google Docs to track statistics. The data from Google docs can be exported in to informative graphics. She is most concerned with identifying whether students are actually learning from the interactions at the Reference Desk and how the services provided by the library are impacting RPG.

- **Jean Cook from West Georgia University**

At University of West Georgia they use a tool called Libstats which is a free form that is easy to edit to capture the type of data the library wants to track. Data can be exported into excel to analyze the data using pivot tables. The data is used internally, but more importantly they have dedicated themselves to using the data to promote the library. For instance, the library recognized that many of the questions they received were technical questions about the computers that the Information Technology unit supported in the library. The Library used the data to ask for funding for student positions that would be trained by the library to answer basic information reference question in addition to the technology questions. The IT department agreed. The staff is also prepared to use the data in short elevator speeches when they encounter faculty or administrator at the coffee shop or elsewhere on campus.

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION FROM THE AUDIENCE

During the discussion session the following issues were raised.

- Combined service points
 - Should Circ and Reference Stats be combined together?
 - Should librarians be checking out books?
 - What to do about staff members answering reference questions
- Tracking who is asking the question.
- How to assess quality of a reference interaction
- Innovative uses of stats

Combined Service Points

Gathering Circ & Ref Stats: Even if service points are separate it is valuable to capture all the questions that are being asked at each service point. Patrons ask questions where they think they will receive help, so the Circulation Desk often will get reference questions that are easy for the Circulation Desk to answer rather than refer the individual to the Reference desk. This kind of stat is important to capture. Stats need to reflect different locations. Stats need to cover how long a question takes so libraries can show how they are using their time.

Librarians Performing Circ Duties: There is much debate about whether librarians should perform basic Circulation functions. Some feel that it is not a valuable use of a librarian's time since they are paid a higher salary to perform more challenging duties. Other feel it is confusing to the patron to have a staff member at the desk who is unable to help them. No answer to this question was provided during the session. This may be an area for further discussion.

Staff Answering Reference Questions: Paraprofessionals and student workers have a lot of knowledge to share with students and patrons needing assistance. Often, however, the assistance they provide may not be the same quality that a trained librarian provides. This discussion focused on whether there needs to be greater training of students and paraprofessionals to know when to refer a question.

Track Who Asks the Question

One library represented in the discussion found the type of questions asked by graduate students and undergraduate students were dramatically different. Using this data they went to the administration to demonstrate that they need to consider the impact of adding new graduate programs on the library.

Assessing the Quality of the Reference Interaction

Many libraries discussed assessment measures that determined how satisfied the patron was with the reference interaction. This included nationally issued surveys sent to the campus, such as LibQual and MISO. Also, point of contact follow up surveys, such as the survey Columbus State has students complete after reference consultation that asks students: What class their research assignment is it for?; Subject matter of the research assignment?; and Was the research consultation helpful?

The problem with these measures is that students may not be able to assess the quality of the information provided. "Students don't know what they don't know." One person suggested that they never close the interaction without asking if they need anything else or does this leave you in a good spot. Another suggestion was hiring secret shoppers, which is something Valdosta State does. Finally, there was discussion about working with professors of classes that issue library assignments to do a citation analysis to the student work and see if the students are using the library resources.

Innovative Uses of Stats

- See connections between library research sessions and Retention, Progression, and Graduation (RPG). There is an important role for libraries to play in RPG. Use stats to show those who use the library are more likely to be retained.
- Analyze stats to improve the library website. Though libraries have web designers, there are many content developers in the library and there are many services that are exploding the size of library websites. Is there a way to address the questions being asked at service points through the library website? If the information is already on the website, how findable is it? Should the library website be streamlined to make information easier to find?
- Analyze stats to see if there are areas of the collection that need to be developed.
- Would signage help reduce the number of questions received at the reference desk about technical and directional issues?
- What data are we collecting shows a need for more resources? Who can we share this data with to get what we need?
- Use gate count to compare with how often students go to the library verse another venue linked athletic events. Last month we had x number of students, that's x visits per student each day.

Submitted by Joan Taylor, RSIG Secretary 12/3/12