Taming the Beast: Adopting a Collaborative Email Inbox
Columbia University Libraries

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Problems: Workflow & Tools

- The E-Resource department at Columbia University was awash in email. We found everyone in the department was monitoring everything at all times contributing to stagnation.
- The focus of this analysis is on the **e-problem alias**, which is generated from a publicly facing e-problem report form. E-Problems are among 1 of 4 group aliases monitored departmentally.
- Staff are assigned to monitor each alias one day a week. Work on resolutions routinely stretch over several days.

For FY16, 1377 e-problems were reported and 8104 emails came to our departmental alias.

The Response/Tool: Google Collaborative Inbox

- In October 2017, the department began using a Google Collaborative Inbox.
- **Goals** in switching to GCI:
  - To provide **better customer service** through quicker turnaround times and better follow-through
  - To **free up time** to move from reactive (fixing incorrect holdings, fixing broken links) to active customer service.

Ideas for Improvement

- Greater collaboration is needed
  - An integrated Library-wide ticketing system
  - Improve customer service through centralized problem/reference/tech help
- Greater integration of Data & Tools
  - Possible for one point of data management rather than multiple KBs?
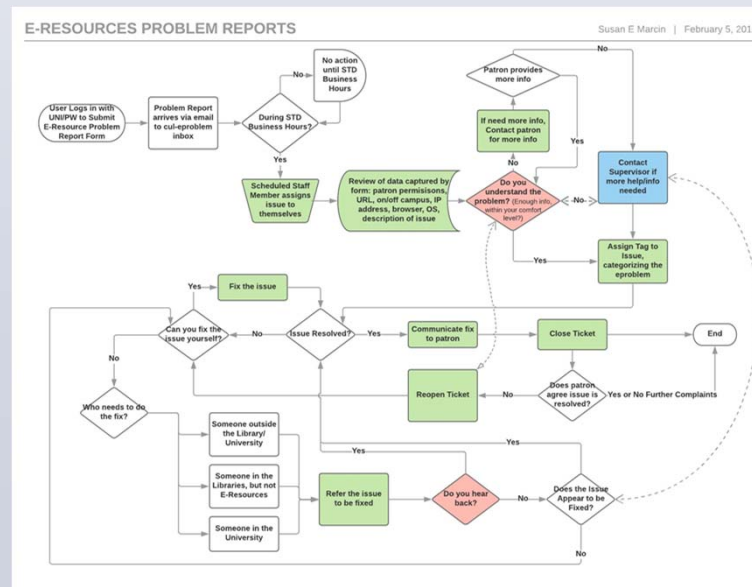 - Ticketing integrated with data from ILS, payments, Callisto, etc.

Key Findings about E-Problems: Data Period Oct, Nov, Dec 2017

- More than half, 52%, of e-problems are referred to vendors or other library/university departments to fix. Of this:
  - 20% referred to other Columbia U & Library Departments
  - 32% referred to Vendors
- Knowledge Base maintenance would assist in preventing 17% of e-problems

The data reinforces our assumptions.

Categories of E-Problems: Oct, Nov, Dec 2017

Topic & Post Activity: Oct, Nov, Dec 2017
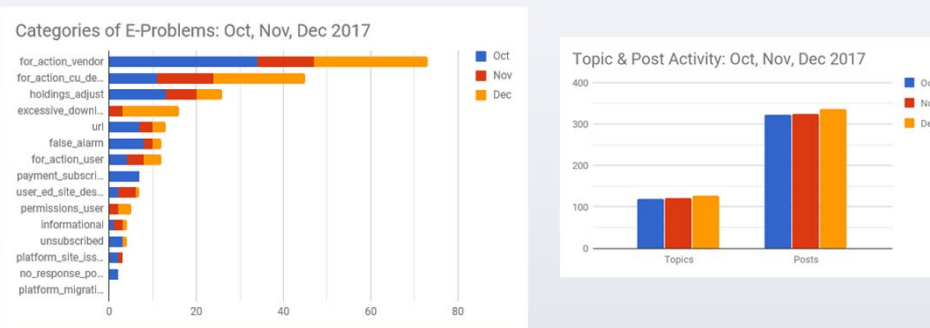
Focus on E-Problems: The Workflow

E-RESOURCES PROBLEM REPORTS — Susan E Marcin | February 5, 2018

Google Collaborative Inbox: Lacking Functional

Attached Files, Searching & Viewing

- While Gmail allows one to easily search for text in many types of attachments, such as Excel and Word files, Google Collaborative Inbox does no
- Previewing attachments in the browser can be glitchy. One may have to download attachment to view.

Responding to emails

- One can reply to a conversation from an email alias, "Post on behalf of…," but one cannot forward a conversation from an alias.
- Email signatures are not automatically included on sent messages. These must be saved as canned responses.
- Google Collaborative Inbox does not allow for shared/departmental canned responses. Each user must create their own.
- There is no ability to save messages as drafts while working on them.

Google Collaborative Inbox: Added Functionali

Management

- Staff can "take" an email or assign it to others, tag it in a predefined category, and mark it as closed.
- A stable historical archive.

Organization

- Categorize problems for ease of retrieval and to allow for some level of **data analysis**

Retrieval

- The extensive filters allow for looking at what is specifically assigned to whom and the item status (open/closed).

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