



## Roving Reference: Getting out in the Wild

Joy Painter, Physics & Astronomy Librarian, Caltech

### Introduction

For four months I recorded and categorized my interactions with people during my 4 hours of weekly reference. Half of my time was spent roving while the other half I spent sitting at the reference desk. I assigned a READ scale value to each transaction. These interactions showed that the majority of questions asked during my time at the reference desk could be answered by circulation staff. The interactions I had with people while roving were very fruitful and I learned quite a bit about how people at Caltech interact with our collections.

### How?

- I used this sign when I roved
- No other librarians participated
- Roved with my laptop
- Spent most roving time with physics collection

**Caltech Library**

**The librarian on call is:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Hours:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please contact your librarian at:**

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

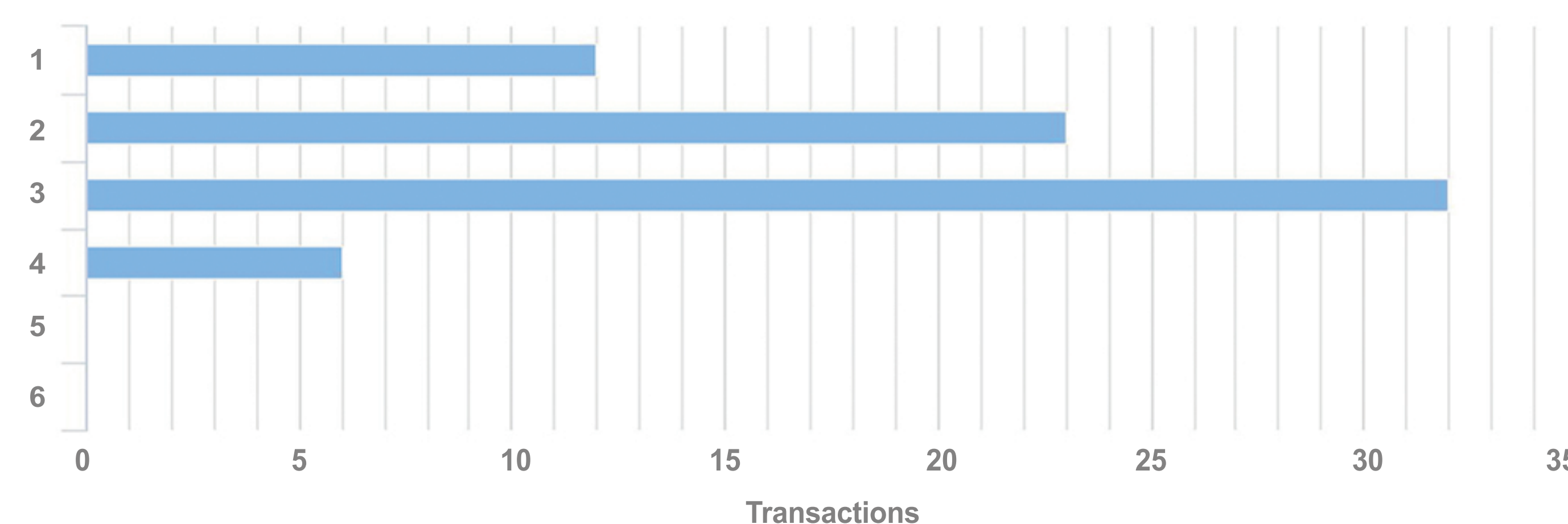
**E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_

For basic information (printing help, check-outs, reserves, directions), please ask at the circulation desk (near front door).

### READ Scale

- 1 = directions, hours, printing
- 2 = item locations, library policies
- 3 = instructions on databases, use of reference resources, online searching, more complex technical issues
- 4 = more in depth questions requiring time
- 5 = requires reference and subject knowledge. Includes access issues and consultation may take considerable time

### READ Scale Statistics



### Roving 75% READ Scale $\geq 3$

**“** I don't use reserves. Those books are online. I come to the library to get the books my advisor used when he was a student **”**

**“** André Joyal, "Free bicomplete categories", Math. Rep., Acad. Sci. Canada, Vol. XVII, No. 5, October 1995, p. 219-225 **”**

**“** How do I access e-journals from off campus? **”**

**“** I don't like searching with these iPads. Topology of Fiber Bundles is impossible to find in the new catalog **”**

**“** Has Physics Reports been cancelled? What journals have been cancelled? **”**

**“** The ebooks on your website don't work. It looks like I can download PDFs but then I can't **”**

**“** There are no books with this call number on the shelf? **”**

**“** Is there an ebook of CCD Astronomy that's not ebrary? **”**

### Reference Desk 57% READ Scale $\leq 2$

**“** Where are the bathrooms? **”**

**“** Where is the 3D printing class? **”**

**“** Can I use your computer? **”**

**“** Can you order a book? I have the ebook and I need to see the print. **”**

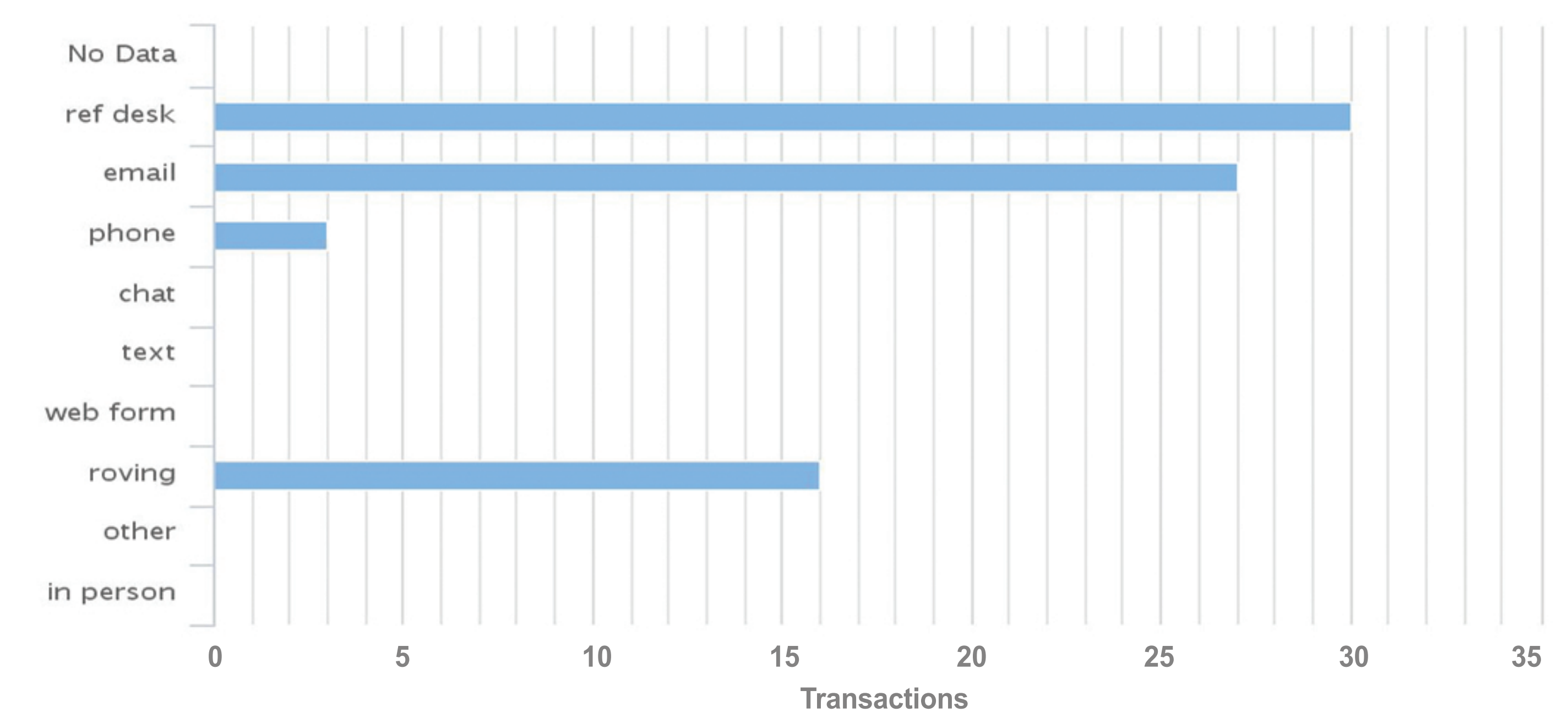
**“** Where are the staplers? **”**

**“** The flat bed scanner isn't connected to the workstation. **”**

**“** I need to order Abu-Mostafa's Learning from Data textbook. Where can I get it? **”**

**“** Can I get my wife a library card? **”**

### How Asked? Statistics



### Conclusions

- Roving reference is viable as long as referrals are made from the circ desk.
- A combined service point makes a lot of sense for my library
- Reference desk gets general questions. Move into a subject collection and you'll get subject questions.
- I initiated most of the interactions and transactions
- I was able to register new library patrons in TIND, our circulation system, with my laptop
- Most of the true reference questions I answer come from emails
- When I was roving at the physics collection I answered a lot of questions from people in physics, especially students
- Some people are not going to ask at the reference desk and are happier to be approached in the collection, away from the formality of the desk
- Wearing ID and identifying yourself is a must

References: Gerlich, Bella K. "READ Scale Research." READ Scale Research. Web. 02 June 2016. <http://readscale.org/read-scale.html>