STUDENT DESK ASSISTANTS VS. PROFESSIONAL LIBRARIANS

How Do Their Chat Transcripts Compare?

WHO ARE WE?

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RESEARCH & INFORMATION DESK

OUR CHAT REFERENCE SERVICE

- We staff our chat service (LibraryH3lp) at the Research & Information Desk all hours that our desk is open, by Librarians & Student IDAs. IDAs are primary chat responders.

- Regular Semester Hours:
  M - TH. 8-11, F. 8-7, Sat. 1-7, Sun. 1-11

Chat Questions

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
# of Chat Questions	2095	2141	1815	1982	1955
% of Total Questions	10.5%	11.4%	9.3%	10.3%	11.8%

PROJECT INSPIRATION

- BGSU Librarians Workshop, January, 2012,– Chat Transcript Evaluation.
  - *User Experience as Professional Development: Transforming Services through Collaborative Assessment*, Elizabeth Beers, Deborah Gaspar, and Sarah Palacios-Wilhelm, ACRL, March 30 – April 2, 2011, Philadelphia. http://bit.ly/vFemAZ

- Statistics: Chat transactions are higher % reference questions than In-Person transactions.
  - Approx. 50% of Total Questions (all formats) are Reference Questions
  - Approx. 90% of Chat Questions are Reference Questions

- Fewer Librarians: How do we best utilize our librarians and student desk assistants?

TRANSCRIPT ANALYSIS: HOW?

Evaluation Rubric adapted from:

- *User Experience as Professional Development: Transforming Services through Collaborative Assessment*, Elizabeth Beers, Deborah Gaspar, and Sarah Palacios-Wilhelm, ACRL, March 30 – April 2, 2011, Philadelphia. http://bit.ly/vFemAZ

- Lili Luo. (2008). Chat reference evaluation: A framework of perspectives and measures. *Reference Services Review, 36*(1), 71-85. doi:10.1108/00907320810852041

- KIN24x7 QuACK Transcript Evaluation Form
  - http://askusnow.info/staff/sites/default/files/Public%20Library%20QuACK%20Evaluation.DOC

TRANSCRIPT EVALUATION FORM

We decided on 13 Questions: 2 Raters

Evaluation Rubric for Transcript Analysis

Transaction #: _____
Staff: IDA   OR   Librarian

1. **Transaction Type:**

   A.   **Directional (& Quick Referral)**
   B.   **Known Item Search**
   C.   **Ready Reference/Specific Search**
   D.   **Research Question**
   E.   **Library Policy or Service**
   F.   **Questions about technical problems**

TRANSCRIPT ANALYSIS: HOW?

Which Transcripts?

- Librarians & Student IDAs – Eliminate all others.
- Eliminated Problem Chats (dropped, pranks, complaints)

How Many?

- Shooting for 400, but completed 267 Transcripts (118 Librarians & 149 Student Info Desk Assistants)

RESULTS

What did our data tell us?

THE RESULTS ARE IN AND...

Librarians Win!

Librarians score better than student desk assistants, but the students aren't too far behind!
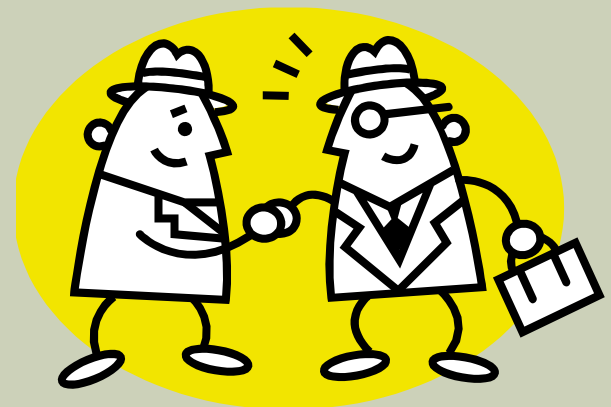
FINDINGS: QUESTION #1

1. Transaction Type:	IDA		Librarian	
	Totals	%	Totals	%
A. Directional (& Quick Referral)	22	15%	16	14%
B. Known Item Search	32	21%	17	14%
C. Ready Reference/Specific Search	44	30%	34	29%
D. Research Question	24	16%	25	21%
E. Library Policy or Service	18	12%	18	15%
F. Questions about technical problems	9	6%	8	7%
	149		118	

2. Presence or absence of greeting:	IDA		Librarian	
	Totals	%	Totals	%
A. No greeting	50	34%	35	30%
B. Greeting	99	**66%**	83	**70%**
	149		118	

We definitely think greetings are generally a best practice, but there really isn't always a need for one!

3. Presence or absence of reference interview/question negotiation:	IDA		Librarian	
	Totals	%	Totals	%
A. Not applicable/needed	80	54%	55	47%
B. No interview	29	19%	12	10%
C. Yes, Interview present	40	27%	51	43%
	149		118	

Librarians were significantly more likely to perform some level of a reference interview than Student IDAs.

4. Keeps patron informed of actions (i.e. explains item being sent, follow-up)	IDA		Librarian	
	Totals	%	Totals	%
A. Not applicable/needed	73	49%	42	36%
B. No evidence & it would have improved transaction	10	7%	2	2%
C. **Yes**	<u>66</u>	**44%**	<u>74</u>	**63%**
	149		118	
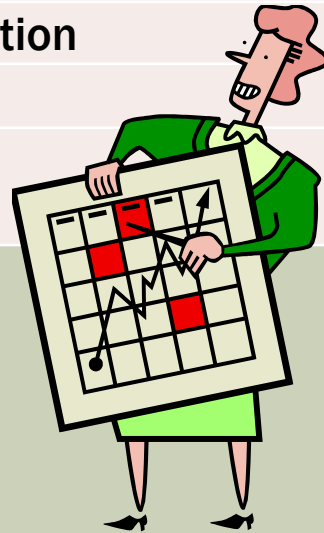
5. Strived toward building rapport.		IDA		Librarian	
Positive tone/attitude.		Totals	%	Totals	%
A. No evidence		62	42%	35	30%
B. Minimal effort made		58	39%	52	44%
C. Yes, definite effort made		29	19%	31	26%
		149		118	

IDAs tended to be more straight & to the point.
Librarians tended to be lengthier in their responses.

FINDINGS: QUESTION #6

	IDA		Librarian	
6. If referral given, was it appropriate?	Totals	%	Totals	%
A. Referral not given/necessary	93	62%	77	65%
B. No, referral was inappropriate	5	3%	0	0%
C. Yes, referral was appropriate	51	**34%**	41	**35%**
	149		118	

Why so many referrals? Many of these were not just a straightforward, immediate referral, but we do get a fair number of questions for our Circulation Desk and Learning Commons.

FINDINGS: QUESTION #7

7. Presence or absence of instructional techniques.	IDA		Librarian	
	Totals	%	Totals	%
A. Not applicable/needed	82	55%	69	58%
B. No instructional techniques used.	44	30%	13	11%
C. Instruction techniques used	23	15%	36	31%
	149		118	

Librarians were twice as likely to offer some level of instruction to the chat patron. While we believe instruction is valuable and a best practice, is it a negative if not given? Do the patrons care?
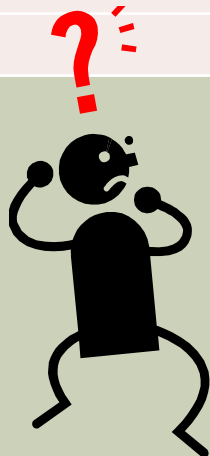
FINDINGS: QUESTION #8

8. Appropriateness of Resources Used:	IDA		Librarian	
	Totals	%	Totals	%
A. Not applicable/needed	35	23%	36	31%
B. Cannot discern	20	13%	9	8%
C. Yes, appropriate. Meets patron need.	88	59%	71	60%
D. No, not appropriate. Does not really meet patron's need.	6	4%	2	2%

This question didn't really work for us in practice & doesn't offer very meaningful information.

9. Completeness of Answer	IDA		Librarian	
	Totals	%	Totals	%
A. Yes, complete	115	77%	101	86%
B. No, not complete	34	23%	17	14%
	149		118	

We rated librarians 9% more likely to complete a transaction, but we also question the usefulness of this rating.

10. Correctness of Answer	IDA		Librarian	
	Totals	%	Totals	%
A. Cannot discern	16	11%	12	10%
B. Yes, answer was correct	123	83%	104	88%
C. No, answer was incorrect	10	7%	2	2%
	149		118	

Student IDAs were 5% more likely to clearly answer a question incorrectly.

11. Presence or absence of a closing statement:	IDA		Librarian	
	Totals	%	Totals	%
A. No closing	49	33%	33	28%
B. Basic closing	73	49%	63	53%
C. Closing with confirmation that question has been answered or with offer to return if needed.	27	18%	22	19%
	149		118	

Student IDAs are nearly as good offering a closing statement as librarians.

12. Patron expressed positive reaction to session.	IDA		Librarian	
	Totals	%	Totals	%
A. Yes, positive comment expressed	34	23%	38	32%
B. A simple thank you expressed	77	52%	57	48%
C. Neutral. No reaction expressed	38	26%	23	19%
D. No, patron expressed negative reaction.	0	0%	0	0%
	149		118	

IDAs: 75% received a thanks or more
Librarians: 80% received a thanks or more.

FINDINGS: QUESTION #13

13. Rater's Overall impression:	IDA		Librarian	
	Totals	%	Totals	%
A. Poor	8	5%	0	0%
B. Below Average	16	11%	7	6%
C. OK/Average	49	33%	37	31%
D. Good	47	32%	49	42%
E. Excellent	29	19%	25	21%
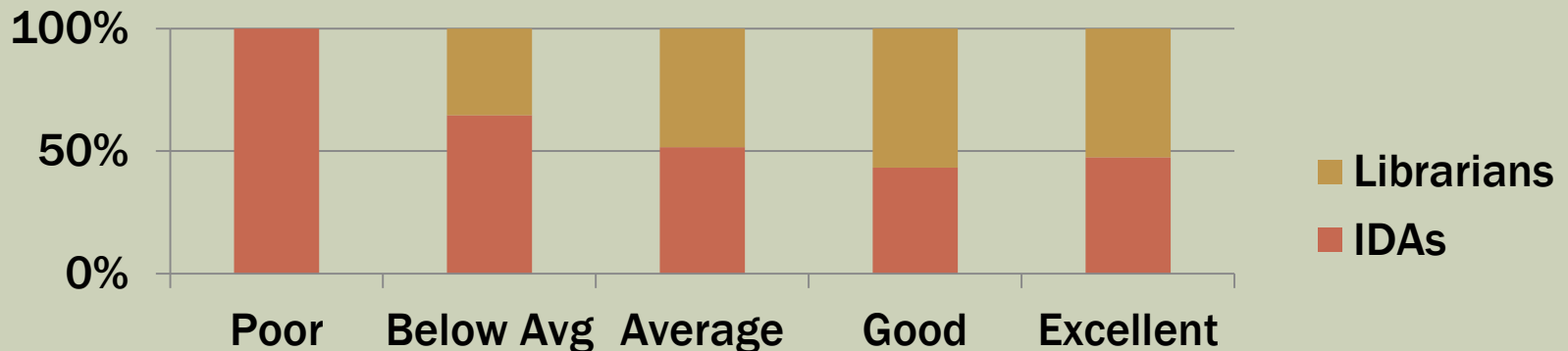
STUDENT TRAINING

- Information Desk Assistant Philosophy
  - This is a great job & you will be awesome at it! IDAs rarely leave before they graduate.
  - TONS to learn -- scary at first & you won't know answers & that's ok! Constantly learning & improving.
  - We're a team. We'll work together at the desk. Shared training with all librarians.
  - There's a base level you must know before being on the desk on your own.

- Chat Reference Training
  - After they've completed basic IDA desk training.
  - Best Practices. Review many transcripts. Complete exercises. Role play. Turn loose!
  - Keep a close eye on their transactions when they first begin. Not just me!

WHERE ARE WE HEADED WITH WHAT WE'VE LEARNED?

No final solution yet, but we're working on it!

- We still need to change our Research & Information Desk model at the Jerome Library.

  GOAL: Provide the best reference assistance we can (virtually & in person) with current staffing.

  > Current Pilot
  > New thoughts

- We need to make adjustments to our IDA training & supervision.
  > More practice & role playing
  > It's so easy to monitor IDA chats and use them as a teaching tool! We need to be more intentional about it.

QUESTIONS?

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