

University of Idaho

From the Selected Works of Rick A Stoddart

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Learning at the Reference Desk

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Available at: https://works.bepress.com/richard_stoddart/68/

Learning at the Reference Desk

A Pilot Project to Align Reference Transactions
with Learning Outcomes

Beth Hendrix and Rick Stoddart

Capturing Information Literacy at the Reference Desk

Reference desk interactions are rich with opportunities for student learning. Libraries often gather quantitative data about these interactions, but these traditional measures do little to connect to the learning aspect that may or may not occur during these reference encounters. Without proper evidence, it is difficult for libraries to say that reference encounters allow patrons to practice critical thinking skills or build information literacy competencies.

This session will describe a pilot project at the University of Idaho Library to redesign the reference assessment instrument to highlight learning activities not captured by traditional means, such as how to evaluate resources, correctly cite materials, or other information literacy-related skills. Learning activities were then mapped to university and national learning goals such as problem-solving, communication, and critical thinking. The assessment instrument now allows reference services to gather evidence to support statements about the time and effort they contribute to information literacy building skills.

The session will present a case for using community or national learning outcomes to better assess the value of reference services and to articulate more fully the library's impact to their educational partners and stakeholders.

What works or doesn't work about
your reference statistics?

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DISCUSSION

PILOT PROJECT

How can we better capture what
we do at the reference desk?

- Background
 - The learning narrative
 - Measuring the learning narrative

THINK - PAIR - SHARE

Statistics often fail to reflect the educational activities that happen during reference transactions.

1. What are some typical reference transactions in your library?
 2. What kinds of educational activities are involved in these typical reference transactions that might not be captured via statistics?
-

Reference Transaction Activities...

Audience Reference Actions

- **Find a book**
- **ILL request**
- **Catalog orientation**
- **Search strategies**
- **Directional questions**
- **Computer help**
- **Building**

Pilot Project Reference Actions


LC Overview
Catalog / Database Demo
Refine Research Topic
Develop Search Strategy
Suggest Keywords
ILL Overview

Reference Form Redesign

- Methodology
 - Preliminary study
 - Intake form redesign

Action (with Reference Question Level)	AACU VALUE Rubric	University of Idaho <i>Learning Matters</i> Learning outcomes	ACRL Information Literacy Competencies
Navigate Building/Website (Basic)	Directional Question	Directional Question	Directional Question
Known Item Search (Basic)	1. Access Needed Information (Information Literacy) 2. Evidence (Critical Thinking)	Sources and Evidence to Accomplish a Specific Purpose (Communicate)	Access (Standard 1)
Clarify Information Need/Source (Intermediate)	Determine Info Need (Information Literacy)	Sources and Evidence to Accomplish a Specific Purpose (Communicate)	Determine Info Need (Standard 2)
Suggest Keywords (Intermediate / Advanced)	Define Problem (Problem-Solving)	Define Problem (Think and Create)	Access (Standard 1)
Refine Research Topic (Intermediate / Advanced)	1. Topic Selection (Inquiry & Analysis) 2. Define Problem (Problem-Solving)	Define Problem (Think and Create)	Access (Standard 1)
LC Call Number Overview (Basic)	1. Access Needed Information (Information Literacy) 2. Transfer (Integrated Learning)	Transfer <i>Adopts and applies skills...</i> (Learning and Integrate)	Access (Standard 1)
Database/Catalog Demo (Intermediate / Advanced)	1. Access Needed Information (Information Literacy) 2. Transfer (Integrated Learning)	Transfer <i>Adopts and applies skills...</i> (Learning and Integrate)	Access (Standard 1)
Summit / ILL Process (Basic)	1. Access Needed Information (Information Literacy) 2. Transfer (Integrated Learning)	Transfer <i>Adopts and applies skills...</i> (Learning and Integrate)	Access (Standard 1)
Evaluated Resources (Advanced)	1. Evaluating Information (Information Literacy) 2. Evidence (Critical Thinking) 3. Existing Knowledge (Inquiry/Analysis)	1. Evidence (Think and Create) 2. Sources and Evidence to Accomplish a Specific Purpose (Communicate)	Evaluates (Standard 3)
Citation / Copyright Info (Advanced)	Access Ethically/Legally (Information Literacy)	Application of Ethical Perspectives and Concepts (Practice Citizenship)	Ethically & Legally (Standard 5)

Q



A

☐ **Include this transaction in the public knowledge base.** [What is this?](#)

See if similar questions are already in the public knowledge base?:

Time Stamp:

☒ **Current** ☐ **Edit Date/Time**

Answered By:

Internal Note: [help](#)

Location

Reference Desk
Office
On Call
Satellite Desk
Remote

Patron Type

Student
Faculty
Staff
Community
Unknown
Other

Question Format

In-Person
Phone
Email
IM
Text

Question Type

Reference
Directional
Advanced Reference
Follow-Up
Circulation

Time Spent

0-2 minutes
3-9 minutes
10-19 minutes
20+ minutes

Primary Action with Patron

Navigate Building/Website
Known Item Search
Clarify Info Need/Source
Suggest Keywords
Develop Search Strategy
Refine Research Topic
LC Call Number Overview
Database/Catalog Demo
Summit ILL Process
Evaluate Resources

Secondary Action with Patron

Navigate Building/Website
Known Item Search
Clarify Info Need/Source
Suggest Keywords
Develop Search Strategy
Refine Research Topic
LC Call Number Overview
Database/Catalog Demo
Summit ILL Process
Evaluate Resources

Third Action with Patron

Navigate Building/Website
Known Item Search
Clarify Info Need/Source
Suggest Keywords
Develop Search Strategy
Refine Research Topic
LC Call Number Overview
Database/Catalog Demo
Summit ILL Process
Evaluate Resources

Question Level

Basic
Intermediate
Advanced

Submit

Submit & Clear

[What's the difference?](#)

THINK - PAIR - SHARE

What outcomes are your library trying to accomplish?

List the outcomes/impacts your library is trying to achieve with the community it serves.

What were some outcomes you came up with...

Audience Outcomes

- **Connected community (Digital Lit)**
- **GED / workplace success**
- **Lifelong Learning**
- **Early Literacy**
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Pilot Project Outcomes

Information Literacy
Critical Thinking
Problem Solving
Communication

Pilot Project: Mapping reference transactions to outcomes.

Actions:

LC Overview
Catalog / Database Demo
Refine Research Topic
Develop Search Strategy
Suggest Keywords
ILL Overview

Outcomes:

Information Literacy
Critical Thinking
Problem Solving
Communication

Analysis of Pilot Project

Data:

- Time Period: 10 weeks
- Questions: 1125
 - 428 associated with new learning outcomes (38%)
 - 344 associated with learning outcomes and students (31%)

Data

Reference Interaction	Primary	Secondary	Third	Total
Known Item Search	173	10	1	184
Clarify Information Need / Source	80	10	3	93
Suggest Keywords	40	19	4	63
Develop Research Strategy	31	32	7	70
Database / Catalog Demo	27	57	21	105
LC Call Number Overview	25	25	20	70
Summit / ILL Borrowing Process	22	38	13	73
Evaluate Resources	14	6	14	34
Refine Research Topic	10	11	11	32
Citation / Copyright Info	6	1	1	8
Total Learning Outcomes	428	209	95	732

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Evidence-Based Statements

Library level:

“Suggest a Keyword and Refine Research Topic are mapped to the University of Idaho critical thinking learning outcome of Define Problem. With data from this new form, the library can say that University of Idaho librarians had 113 student interactions that supported the campus--wide learning outcome of Define Problem.”

Evidence-Based Statements

Librarian level:

117 research related reference questions with students from Pilot Project. Based on the data provided from this pilot project, 66% of these students interactions were associated the Transfer competency found in the Think and Create outcome of University of Idaho *Learning Matters* learning outcomes. An additional 40% of my student reference interactions were associated with the Communicate/Sources and Evidence to Accomplish a Specific Purpose outcome. At the reference desk, I worked with students 7% of the time to help refine their research topic and suggest associated keywords. These encounters allow students to work on building the competency of Defining the Problem under the Think and Create university learning goal. Finally, 4% of these student reference encounters supported the learning outcome competency of the Application of Ethical Perspectives.(Note, these percentages do not add up to 100% because often multiple learning outcomes were being addressed during each student interaction.)

Activity: Mapping reference transactions to outcomes.

Actions

LC Overview

Catalog / Database Demo

Refine Research Topic

Develop Search Strategy

Suggest Keywords

ILL Overview:

Outcomes:

Conclusion

Re-envisioning
reference service

Articulating your
library's narrative

Questions?
Comments?
Suggestions?

1. Introductions (3 minutes)
2. Questions Ref Statistics- Quick discussion about reference practices (5 minutes)
3. Background of study - based on above discussion discuss background and what inspired us for this study (learning narrative and feeling not capturing true learning at desk) (**Rick** / 7 minutes)
4. Activity (reference activities) (5 minutes)
5. Reference form redesign (**Beth** / 5 minutes)
6. Activity Outcomes (Rick)
7. Show how we mapped
8. Activity - Map Actions and Outcomes
9. Share