

Avoiding the Runaround: Implementing DeskStats to Improve User Experience

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A PROBLEM DEFINED

Students were sent from service point to service point to have a simple question answered.

OUR HYPOTHESIS

The majority of questions that were referred to the reference desk were not research questions, but were directional or technical in nature and could be answered by a well-trained customer service staff instead of a reference librarian.

OUR GOAL

Examine our reference desk model and implement appropriate changes.

WHY USE DESKSTATS?

We chose the Altarama Information Systems product **DeskStats** after a trial because it:

- Is easy to use;
- Requires no learning curve;
- Is an online product accessible to multiple locations and users at once;
- Is easy to customize; and
- Has usable report functions.

METHODOLOGY

- Polled librarians for the most common types of questions they received.
- Polled access services staff for the most common questions they received.
- Created a matrix in DeskStats that built upon identified sample questions.
- Gathered statistics using the matrix.
- Evaluated statistics after three months to identify patterns.

WHAT DID WE NEED TO KNOW?

- *Where* were customers asking questions?
- *What* questions were being asked?
- *When* were the questions being asked?
- *Who* answered the questions?

WHAT DID WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

Our Main Priority was to improve **Customer Service!**

Secondary concerns:

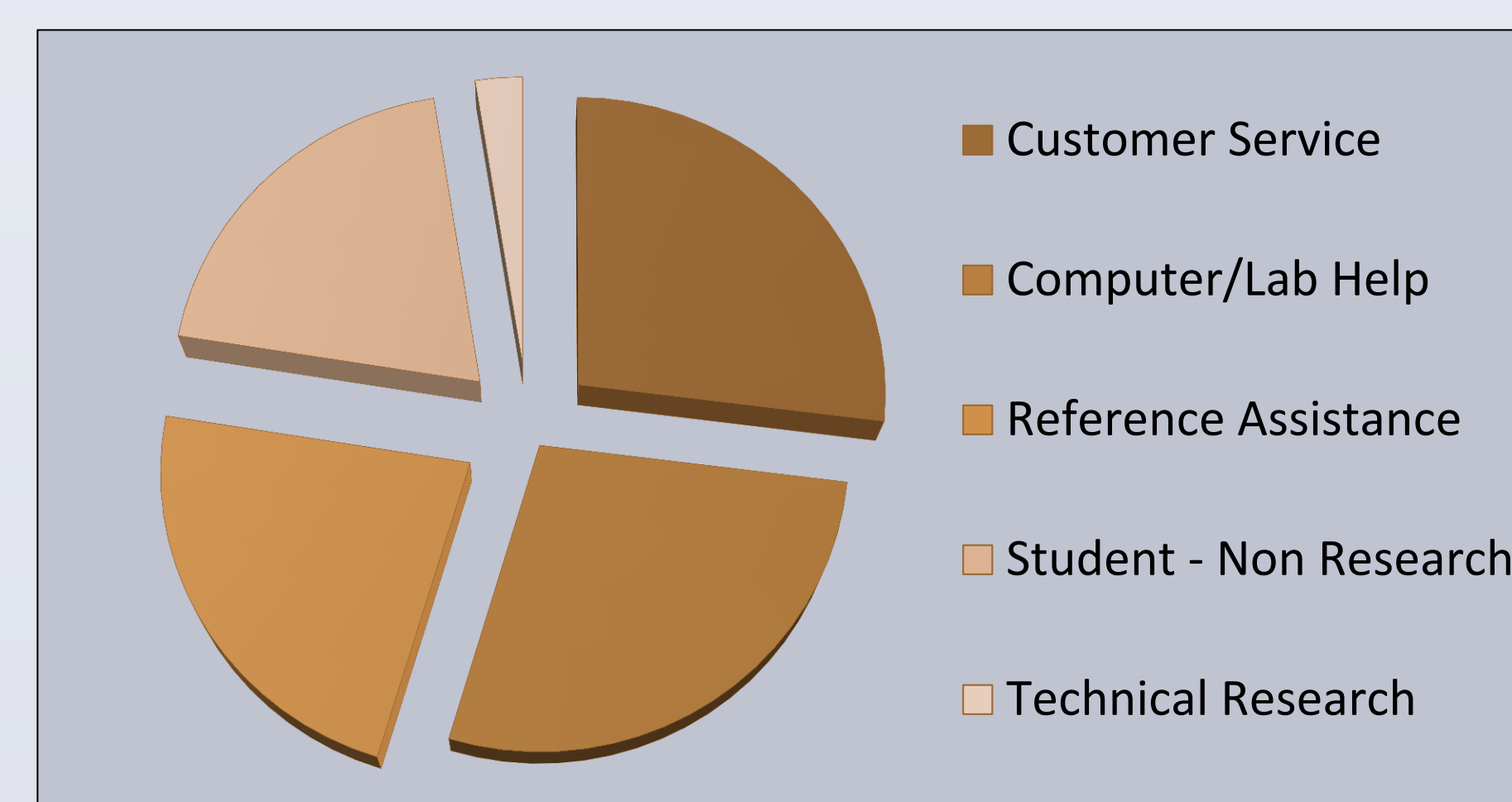
- Provide service to customers at the point of need
- Untether librarians from the reference desk
- Direct staffing resources more appropriately

ROADBLOCKS WE FACED

- I don't have time to do this!
- I will probably forget about it.
- That's not my job.
- How is this going to improve anything?

WHAT DID WE FIND?

Fall 2011 "Reference" Transactions

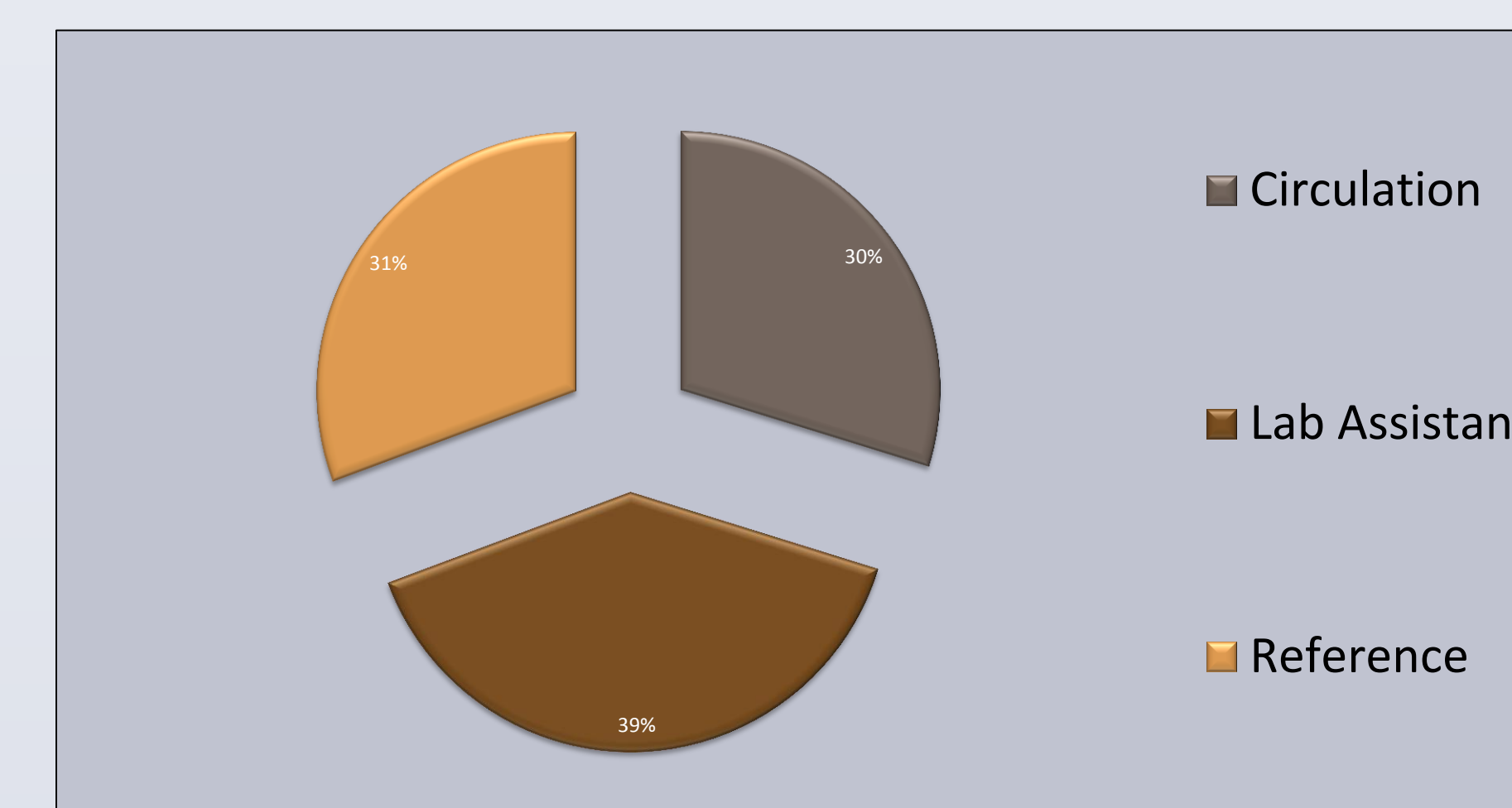


All questions except "Customer Service" questions were handled exclusively by the reference librarians.

This included more popular questions such as:

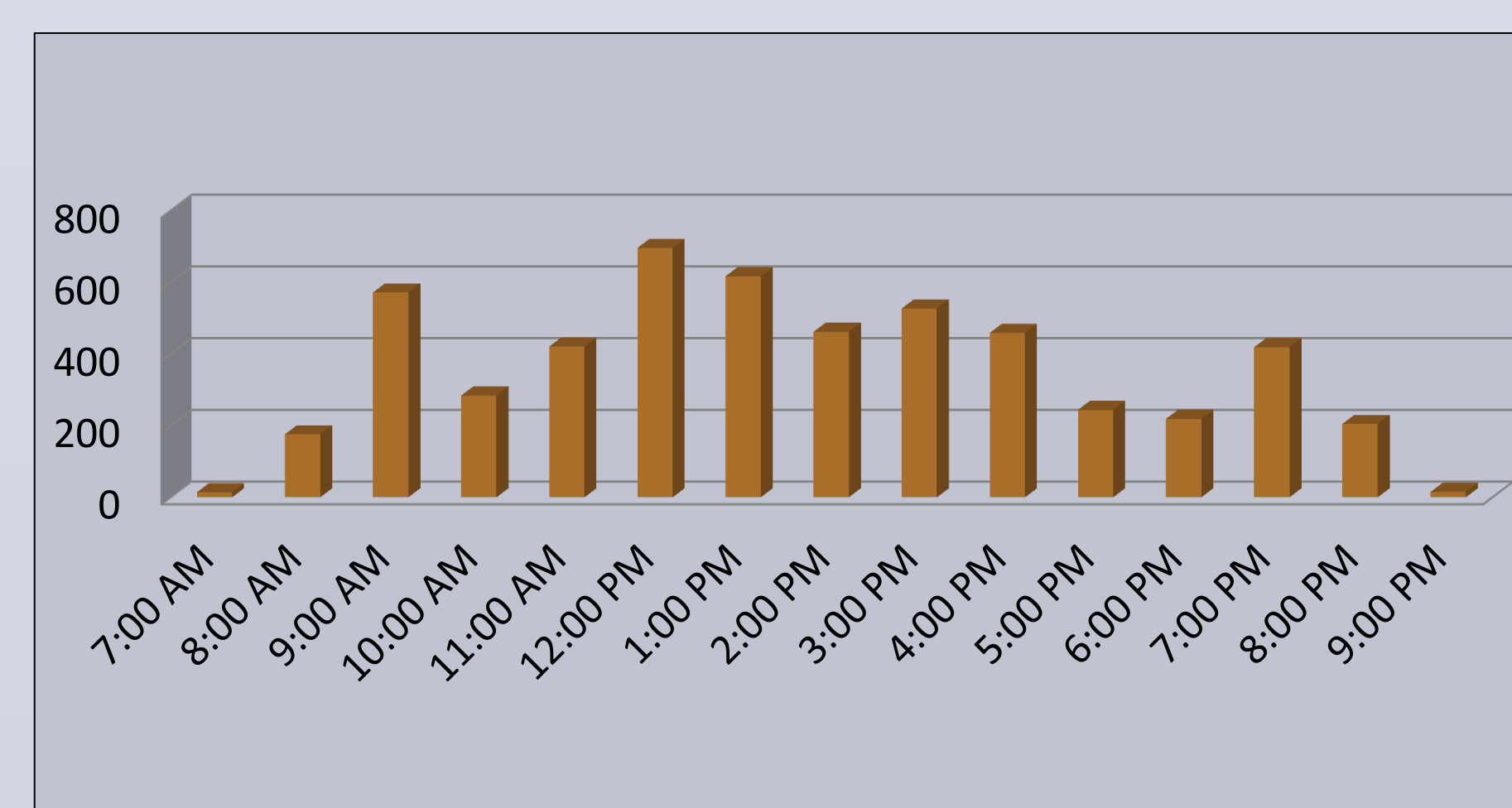
- How do I look up a book by title?
- How do I check out a book?
- What is my computer log in?
- How do I find a word count in Word?
- Do you have a color printer?

Spring 2012 "Customer" Transactions



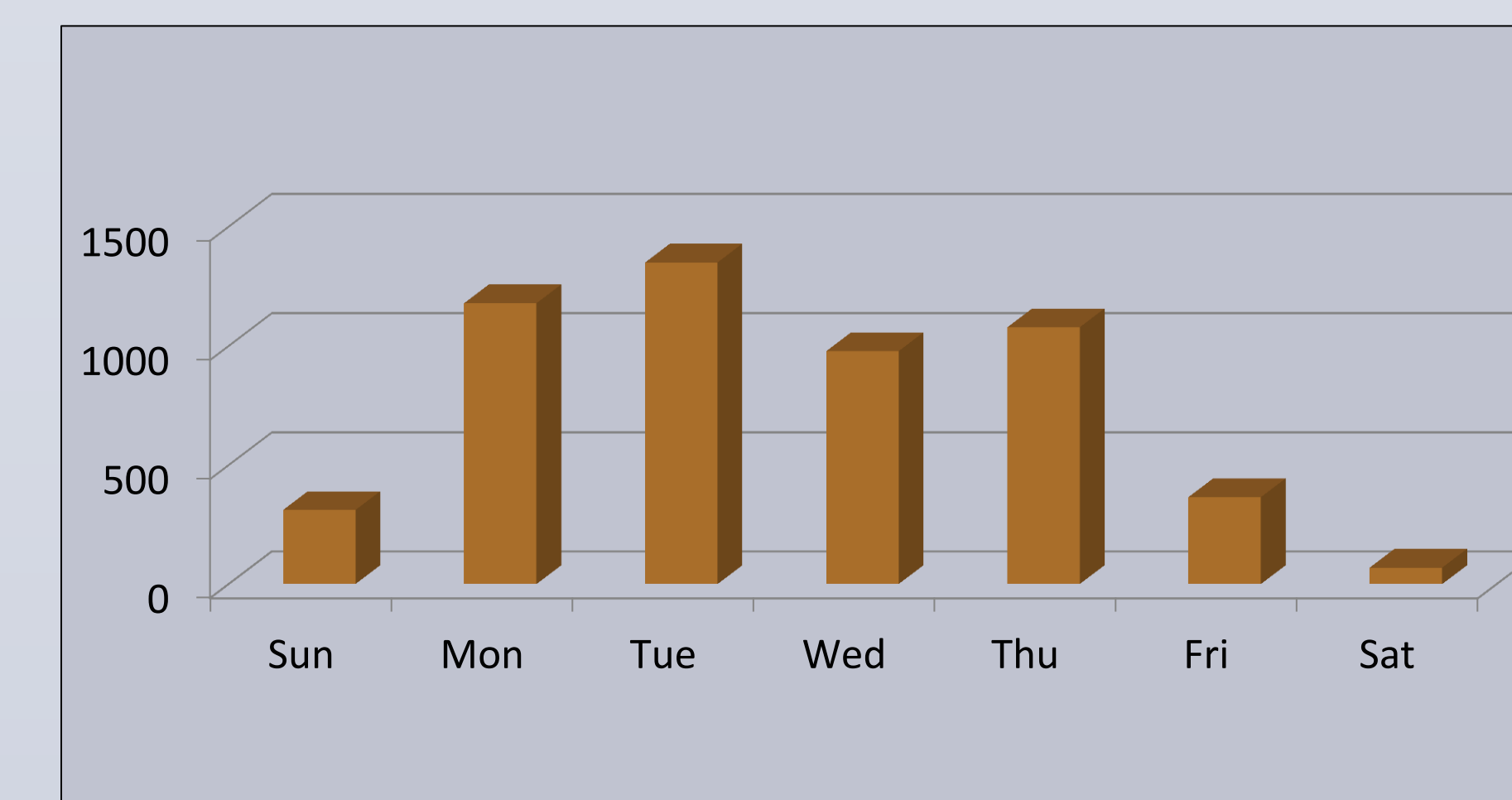
In the spring we cross trained access services staff. "Reference" transactions were then equally divided among the customer services, computer lab, and reference staff, freeing up the reference librarians to focus on additional duties.

Spring 2012 Transactions by Hour



Using the data from transactions by day and hour, we decided to staff the reference desk only between 12:00 pm and 5:00 pm Monday - Thursday. Transactions before noon are handled by notifying an on call librarian. Transactions after 5:00 pm are handled by a highly trained reference associate. On Fridays we use a strictly on call schedule.

Spring 2012 Transactions by Day



WHAT DID WE DO WITH THE RESULTS?

- Cross trained customer service staff to answer basic catalog and computer questions.
- Hired additional staff in customer service, including a highly trained adult computer lab assistant.
- Revised the reference desk schedule to staff it only during documented busy times.
- Documented the need for additional equipment such as a color copier and a color printer.

WHERE ARE WE TAKING DESKSTATS?

- Track statistics in all departments, including Archives, Government Documents, and Curriculum Center.
- Track statistics in library instruction and in faculty outreach and response.
- Track individual reference appointments, both in person and by phone.
- Track requests for specific class assignments so relevant LibGuides can be created.
- Track attendance at library sponsored events.
- Document the need for additional equipment.
- Evaluate the need for continued extended library hours.
- Document the need for more study rooms by keeping track of turn aways.
- Keep track of SACS data.
- Evaluate the need for additional training or staffing.

Contact Us!

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