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## They Sought Our Help: A Survey of One-on-One Research Assistance at The University of Tennessee Lupton Library

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# They Sought Our Help

## A Survey of One-on-One Research Assistance at The University of Tennessee Lupton Library

Sarla Murgai

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### Introduction

*Give a man food and you feed him for a day. Teach him to sow seeds and he will feed himself for ever.*

This Indian proverb has often been used by educators who believe in encouraging students to become self-confident and self-reliant in finding information for and by themselves. Rather than providing ready answers to their questions, librarians try to use one-on-one moments of contact with the patron as teaching experiences. Most academic reference librarians believe in this philosophy and endeavor to train their patrons how to find the appropriate information for themselves. Helping patrons to understand the research process and use the library collection and other resources efficiently and effectively is the most common form of instruction that reference librarians provide. Academic librarians strive to give students as much instruction as they need at the reference desk, in library instruction classes, while roaming around the public computers, and, perhaps most thoroughly, while conducting one-on-one research consultations. So embedded is the idea of teaching in the psyche of librarians, that they even provide instruction during those briefer encounters when they field questions by phone, IM, and through Web queries. Samuel Green (1876) visualized instruction as individualized and personalized reference service. Recently, Tyckoson (2003) summarized Greens' four core functions of reference librarians as:

- Instructing the reader in the ways of the library
- Assisting the reader with his queries
- Aiding the reader in the selection of good works
- Promoting the library within the community

Tyckoson argues that although a century has passed and there have been many changes and improvements in reference service, these four founding functions have remained unchanged (p.13). Duncan & Gerard (2011) endorse Tyckoson's role of reference. RUSA/RSS (Reference and User Services Association) Evaluation of Reference and User Services Committee has adopted the following definition of reference by Saxon & Richardson (2002): "**Reference Transactions** are information consultations in which library staff recommend, interpret, evaluate, and/or use information resources to help others to meet particular information needs." The one-on-one instruction that a patron receives from a librarian may be the most effective form of instruction. Hinchliffe & Woodard state it eloquently "When reference librarians approach a reference question with an instructional philosophy, not only do they provide the information that users need, they also capitalize on the opportunity to utilize the experience as a teaching moment" (2001, 182). Even after the patron has left, a reference librarian is often thinking of the question, reflecting on it, and if the opportunity arises, contacts the patron with

further information. The author is reminded of Dr. S. R. Ranganathan's (1961) statement that a reference librarian eats and sleeps with reference questions.

Providing research assistance on an individual basis to patrons has long been a standard service in the panoply of services at many academic libraries. The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC) Lupton Library describes its one-on-one research service as follows: "if you are new to using the library resources, can't find the right source for your paper or need a demonstration of a database, need help in tracking an obscure article, or have any

other questions that require a little extra help, Lupton Library offers one-on-one research help to students and faculty. You may request a research appointment online or if you want to work with a specific librarian, you can contact him or her directly" (spring Newsletter, 2011).

About five years ago the reference librarians at UTC started keeping statistics of how many students and faculty use the one-on-one service and how much time was being devoted to that service. A form was devised which collects the following information:

### **One-On-One Research Appointment Statistics**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time Spent w/Patron: \_\_\_\_\_ (Faculty/Student)

Librarian: \_\_\_\_\_ Patron's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Course #: \_\_\_\_\_

Project: \_\_\_\_\_

(Yes/No) \_\_\_\_\_ Will you be willing to participate in a follow-up survey? The data may be used for research purposes, but your name will remain anonymous.

As Table 1 indicates, during the 2009-2010 school year, there were a total of 121 one-on-one meetings, which totaled 113 hours of librarian time. Of the 121 patrons, four were faculty and the rest were students. This help was provided in a wide variety of subjects at all levels of courses including anthropology, business, criminal justice, education, English, health and human performance, geography, history, nursing,

philosophy, political science, social work, sociology, and more.

**Table 1**

## 2010 One-on-One Statistics Course Specific

Date	Course	Course Level	Date	Course	Course Level
1/15/2010	ENGL	800(Faculty)	4/1/2010	ENGL	122
1/15/2010	SOCW	800(Faculty)	4/5/2010	ENGL	201
1/27/2010	ENGL	500	4/8/2010	EDUC	201
1/28/2010	SOCW	376	4/12/2010	POLS	203
1/29/2010	ENGL	800 (Faculty)	4/12/2010	CNJ	211
2/1/2010	ENGL	122	4/14/2010	ENGL	122
2/1/2010	ENGL	122	8/27/2010	SOC	151
2/1/2010	ENGL	300	9/10/2010	SOC	151
2/4/2010	HHP	201	9/13/2010	ENGL	519
2/4/2010	HHP	201	9/13/2010	ENGL	110
2/5/2010	ENGL	201	9/13/2010	EDD	600
2/8/2010	ENGL	122	9/14/2010	ENGM	596
2/8/2010	ENGL	122	9/15/2010	EDD	600
2/9/2010	ENGL	122	9/17/2010	POLS	500
2/9/2010	ENGL	122	9/21/2010	ENGL	210
2/9/2010	EDU	500	9/24/2010	SOCW	407
2/12/2010	ENGL	122	9/28/2010	ENGL	465
2/16/2010	ENGL	122	9/29/2010	ENGL	110
2/16/2010	EDUC	500	9/29/2010	ENGL	465
2/17/2010	UHON	102	10/6/2010	EDUC	502
2/17/2010	ENGL	122	10/8/2010	ENGL	280
2/17/2010	ENGL	500	10/19/2010	ENGR	211
2/18/2010	ENGL	122	10/20/2010	EDD	600
2/19/2010	ENGL	122	10/28/2010	POLS	520
2/19/2010	ENGL	122	10/29/2010	HIST	310
2/19/2010	ENGL	122	11/3/2010	ENGL	110
2/22/2010	ENGL	122	11/4/2010	POLS	422
2/23/2010	ENGL	122	11/8/2010	ENGL	110
2/23/2010	ENGL	122	11/8/2010	ENGL	110
2/23/2010	ENGL	122	11/10/2010	ENGL	210
2/23/2010	ENGL	122	11/11/2010	SPAN	300

2/24/2010	ENGL	122	11/11/2010	ANTH	340
2/24/2010	ENGL	122	11/12/2010	ENGL	110
2/25/2010	ENGL	122	11/12/2010	PHIL	122
2/26/2010	ENGL	122	11/12/2010	PHIL	122
2/26/2010	ENGL	122	11/15/2010	ENGL	110
3/2/2010	ENGL	122	11/15/2010	ENGL	110
3/2/2010	ENGL	122	11/15/2010	PHIL	122
3/3/2010	ENGL	410	11/15/2010	ANTH	152
3/4/2010	ENGL	122	11/15/2010	PHIL	152
3/4/2010	EDUC	570	11/16/2010	ENGL	110
3/5/2010	BACC	500	11/16/2010	ENGL	122
3/5/2010	BACC	500	11/16/2010	PHIL	122
3/5/2010	ENGL	500	11/17/2010	PHIL	122
3/15/2010	ENGL	122	11/18/2010	PHIL	122
3/15/2010	ENGL	122	11/18/2010	ANTH	152
3/15/2010	ENGL	122	11/18/2010	POLS	422
3/19/2010	ENGL	278	11/19/2010	PHIL	122
3/22/2010	ENGL	278	11/19/2010	HUM	115
3/23/2010	ENGL	122	11/22/2010	ENGL	110
3/23/2010	ENGL	122	11/22/2010	PHIL	122
3/24/2010	ENGL	122	11/22/2010	PHIL	122
3/25/2010	ENGL	122	11/23/2010	PHIL	122
3/25/2010	HIST	301	11/29/2010	PHIL	122
3/25/2010	ENGL	361	11/29/2010	PHIL	122
3/25/2010	ENGL	500	11/29/2010	PHIL	122
3/29/2010	GNSC	800(Faculty)	11/30/2010	PSY	412
3/29/2010	ENGL	278	12/6/2010	PHIL	113
3/29/2010	ENGL	361	12/8/2010	HHP	407
3/30/2010	ENGL	361	12/8/2010	HHP	407
3/31/2010	ENGL	122			

In 2011, the UTC reference librarians conducted a survey to determine whether our patrons perceive our one-on-one research service to be effective and to solicit feedback on any needed changes or improvements to this service.

### Literature Search

The revised RUSA guidelines outline approachability, interest, listening, search, and follow up, as the behavioral

performance objectives for information service providers (2004). In all forms of reference service, the success is measured not only by the information conveyed, but by the impact of the patron/librarian interaction on the learning outcome. Courtesy, interest, and helpfulness of librarians have a major influence on the successful performance of reference service. While all these criteria play an important role, an added advantage of the one-on-one research help is an opportunity of

establishing a more individual relationship with the patron.

Kuhlthau (2004) writes that a twenty-first century library calls for services and systems that enable users to find meaning, interpret information, and promote an understanding of facts within the increasing amount of resources. The author provides a theoretical framework for a process approach to library and information services. Along with providing physical access to information, librarians should facilitate problem solving, promote understanding, and help the patron with the decision making process. Reference services are differentiated by the author into five levels of mediation: organizer, locator, identifier, advisor, and counselor. Instruction services are also differentiated in five levels of education: organizer, lecturer, instructor, tutor, and counselor. During the performance of reference service, a reference librarian plays two roles, that of a mediator and an educator, especially during these one-on-one sessions.

Marcum (2003) visualizes that by 2012 librarians will be using multi-media, art exhibits, video displays, content management tools, and science and technology to help the user explore the topic of their research. These meetings afford an opportunity to “stretch” the learning capabilities of the student through virtual reality. By using zoom atlases a librarian can whisk the reader from place to place and to enact a dialogue with people from other times and places. A librarian can assist a student in creating an individualized information portfolio.

Ross, Nilsen, and Dewdney (2002) contend that to succeed in a reference interview, a librarian has to be a good communicator. The librarian can help the user develop a

more accurate mental model of the library system by including them in the dialogue while formulating a search strategy. Engaging them in such discussion helps the student understand his or her topic better, and enables them to narrow it down to a manageable size. The user and librarian are partners in the research. The librarian is the expert on the library system, the organization, and retrieval of information. Students want to be involved in the process and are most satisfied with the experience when the librarian engages them as active partners in understanding how the catalog, indexes, and bibliographic tools work. The basic skills for a successful one-on-one interview are nonverbal communication, acknowledgement, encouragement, and listening. The authors advise that while conducting a reference interview, guide the student through the process, provide instruction in stages, and leave the user in control.

An article by Campbell and Fyfe (2002) describes the ten best practices for a successful one-on-one reference instruction. They include the following: ensure that the student is ready to learn, do not teach them what they already know, respect their personal space and preferences, allow time for independent discovery, explain each step so that they learn the process and will be able to replicate it, check for comprehension, reassure learners that instruction is necessary and that they have the ability to learn, use humor, respect the learner’s stress level, and know when to let the learner explore on his or her own.

Beck and Turner suggest that the librarian should let the students take more responsibility for their work (2001). During a one-on-one meeting, the librarian can co-browse and watch the student perform the tasks, enter appropriate search terms, and evaluate the results. The librarian acts as a

facilitator and a guide to the students and allows them to figure out the steps. The authors advise librarians to use this opportunity to teach the student the process of finding information. This hands-on experience builds students' confidence that they can do it on their own when the next assignment rolls around. Working with the student also gives the librarian a better understanding of the level of research skills and expertise of the student, and provides a road map on how to steer him/her in the formation of the best search strategy and its implementation.

Eisenberg and Berkowitz (1990) advocate six big skills to information problem solving: task definition, information teaching strategy, location and access, use of information, synthesis, and evaluation. Task definition includes stating the parameters of the problem from an information needs perspective. Information seeking strategies include a full range of text and human sources. The criteria for selecting these sources should be accuracy, reliability, ease of use, availability, comprehensibility, and authority. Most library instruction programs teach the students the location, availability, and how to access and use information sources efficiently and effectively. Synthesis involves the task of combining the retrieved information from various sources and producing a paper, a report, or a project. Evaluation is the assessment of how well the task was carried out.

Finkel (2000) contends that informal questioning prompts the student to describe the problem and helps the librarian assess the student's knowledge of the subject. While listening intently and posing a sequence of questions (Socratic Method) the librarian/teacher encourages the students to talk about the topic, thus developing their cognitive skills. Such self-verbalization provides them with a sense of direction

without providing direct answers to their questions. "The inquiry teaches because the process of inquiring induces one to learn (p.58)." The teacher's work is to help the student develop necessary skills to pursue the topic. In the course of using the library or the lab for their research, they learn the techniques of using them efficiently. The librarian acts as a teacher or a facilitator in their learning.

A more recent trend in teaching is to encourage the students to think critically about the subject of their research. A majority of these one-on-one requests for help convey a desperate message from a student whose paper is due but who has not been able to find anything on the topic. Engaging them in a dialogue (Beck & Turner, 2011) as to why are they doing this research and what do they expect to learn from this experience, opens a whole host of questions that inspires students to think deeply about their topic, it's social, religious, historical, and environmental ramifications, etc. This sort of self-verbalization (Finkel, 2000) is a useful strategy. It becomes a personal challenge for them to think critically and derive pleasure out of the research experience. By encouraging them to explore, exploit, and discover the most relevant information out of the vast amount of information at their fingertips the librarian has hit the mark. Kissane and Mollner (1993, 448) describe it as putting the student in control of the research process.

As librarians, we are taught to find answers to questions. As teachers, we need to learn how to ask questions rather than supply answers. A reference interview is usually an informal invitation to the student to describe the problem, and it helps the librarian assess the knowledge of the student about the topic and the level of research skills he/she possesses. The following types of questions

encourage the student to talk about their topic and to help the librarian assess what they know about it.

- Please tell me about your topic
- What have you already found?
- What are the specific requirements of this assignment?
- Do you need to find a minimum number of sources?
- What types of sources?
- Is there a time period for which the information is needed?
- Do you need current or historical information?

While resisting the urge to provide a direct answer to their questions, the librarian guides the student to explore the topic and find answers to his/her questions through a literature search. Basic structure questions are designed to focus on the topic, examine its relationship with other similar topics, or see it as part of a whole. The process questions help the librarian to know where to start if the student needs help in searching techniques, picking terms from the thesaurus or finding full text and peer reviewed articles. Challenge questions encourage the student to think outside the box and take a different approach. Reflective teaching leads to effective learning. It is an ongoing challenge that moves one towards instructional excellence. “When we cultivate stronger, more grounded relationship to teaching and learning, we sharpen our ability to advocate as well as to educate.” (Booth, 2011, p.151; Ellis, 2004, Appendix).

### **One-on-One Process at UTC**

The UTC library website provides a form for students to give librarians the topic of their research and a convenient time when they can meet a librarian. Some advance information about the subject of search and

the difficulties they are facing helps librarians prepare for the meeting in advance. The students can also call, tweet, or email a request for an appointment with the librarian of their choice.

The next step is the meeting between the librarian and the student. It can be in the office or at the two consultation computers at the back of the reference desk. Some librarians prefer to meet the student at the back of the reference desk, while others choose to meet them in their offices. Since there are two computers, at the back of the reference desk the librarians can guide the student in performing the search hands on while exploring the scope of the subject, resources, availability, and other techniques.

During a one-on-one research appointment, all of the elements of RUSA guidelines (approachability, interest, listening, inquiring, searching and follow-up) play an important role. The librarian assumes the role of a mediator and a teacher by helping the student understand the topic, organization of the collection, location of the sources, and identification of appropriate resources for the subject of research as well as to train them to think critically.

At the initial meeting the librarian greets the student and engages him/her in a relaxed conversation about the topic. It puts the student at ease and, together they articulate a common understanding of the goal for the meeting. The goal of the first ACRL (American College and Research Libraries, 2000) Information Literacy standard is to “determine the nature and extent of the information needed.” Dewdney and Ross (1994) found that if taken at face value the user’s questions are extremely misleading and confounding. The first step is to help the student understand the problem clearly and perceptively (Howze & Unaeez, 1997).



By asking about the who, what, where, why, when and how of their research topic, the librarian and the student are able to comprehend the problem fully (Ellis, 2004; Finkel, 2000; Eisenberg & Berkowitz, 1990). Sometimes this discussion prompts the patron to focus on one or two aspects of a broad topic and, at other times they choose to expand the topic. For example, after such discussion, he/she may decide to tackle an aspect of a multifaceted subject like cancer by narrowly dealing with brain or skin cancer. The patrons tend to feel they are confused and uncertain, but the librarian assures them that this is quite normal in any type of new learning/research experience. Such an assurance relieves the patron of some of the anxiety they may be feeling (Ellis, 2004). After this discussion, the student is able to define the problem, formulate questions based on the need, and identify the key concepts. They also become aware of a variety of sources and formats through which they can find the needed information, like multimedia, databases, websites, audio-visual, and book resources. Some of these resources may be at other locations and may have to be obtained through interlibrary loan.

Most students today are self-directed and self-motivated learners. They often search for sources of information on the Internet via Google and other websites. They are more confident in online searching skills and versatile in finding online information. Reference librarians make use of their skills and motivation and, rather than discourage them from using the internet, introduce them to content-rich library resources which can yield much better results in less time and at no cost. By guiding them to select the most appropriate method(s) of accessing and retrieving the desired information, the reference librarian helps them in making sense of the ever-changing world of

information. By identifying the key words from the controlled vocabulary of a specific discipline, they are able to retrieve pertinent information. A demonstration of Boolean operators, truncation, internal organization of indexes, and different command languages and protocols helps them understand the complexities of access, retrieval, and evaluation of retrieved information. The criteria for evaluation like: accuracy, reliability, currency, and the authority responsible for the information retrieved, are also explained and discussed with the student during this one-on-one meeting.

If the patron is looking for books, they begin by searching for books in the online catalog. The librarian tells them that they can search the catalog by the author, title or subject or keyword, and demonstrates to the patron the efficient methods of searching the online catalog. Also, the librarian explains to the student the difference between a simple basic search and an advanced search and the advantage of using one or the other. At this stage, the librarian can allow the student to select search terms from the subject listings in the online catalog. The librarian then prompts the student to interpret the results of the search. Often, the librarian has to explain the Library of Congress classification system and how books are arranged by subjects on the stacks. The librarian takes this opportunity to explain to them the basic layout of the library and its collections. All the circulating books are on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, all journals are on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, and all the reference books and audio-visuals are on the first floor. They are specially advised to pay attention to the availability of the selected book(s) which is also indicated on the screen. If the book is checked out the librarians teach them how to request or place a hold for the book in the system. For some students, librarians have

to accompany them to the stacks to show them how to find a book and how to check it out. The complexity of this learning process in extended searching is not limited to just identifying sources but it is also in interpreting the retrieved information and feeling at ease with the process. At this stage the librarian also shows them a link to the subject guide(s), (giving them a list of major references in their subject), that has been prepared by a librarian and explains to them its content and its online availability. During the last few years the library has purchased quite a few reference and circulating books online. Students are made aware of the accessibility of these books through the E-library link in the catalog and of the availability of the downloaded books on Kindles, which they can check out. By being able to access the needed information effectively and efficiently and by being able to evaluate the selected information, the student meets the second and third criteria of ACRL Literacy standards.

The next step for the librarian is to teach them how to find articles on their topic. Depending on the need, the librarian introduces them to the general and/or subject database(s) and explains the difference between them, so that the students can decide for themselves which resource will be suitable for their topic. Multidisciplinary topics may require searching more than one database. The student is encouraged to take control of the research process and is assisted in formulating a research strategy. Having made the selection of the database, the librarian introduces them to the thesaurus of terms and helps them select the most pertinent terms for their topic. Displaying the index of terms from the database helps the student narrow or expand the topic, pick pertinent vocabulary, and formulate a search statement. The librarian shows them the difference between an

advanced search and a basic search and explains the advantage of using one or the other. The librarian draws their attention to the left side bar if they need to further focus their search on a sub topic. The tabs indicate if the information has been retrieved from academic journals, magazines, newspapers, books, or multimedia. Most databases display related subject headings for consideration of the researcher. A brief abstract is included to help with the evaluation of the content. Students are engaged by the librarian in a discussion of how to apply the criteria of validity, accuracy, authority, timeliness, reliability, and point of view or bias for evaluating the retrieved information. Once they find some suitable results, the librarian shows them how to find full text or peer reviewed articles. The librarian shows them how they can use the tabs and symbols on the screen to save, email, print or send/ store the information to endnotes, RSS feeds, etc.. If an article is not available in full text, the librarian shows them the function of the “Get-It” link the UTC’s link-resolver. If that link indicates that the article has to be requested on interlibrary loan the librarian shows them the location of the form and how to fill out a request, and explains how that function works. Thus the librarian provides tips on a search strategy as well as provides instructions on how to navigate through a search process. “Instruction at this level is embedded in the process and educates users to identify, interpret and evaluate information as a search progresses.” (Kahlthau, 2004, p.119).

Usually this one-on-one session results in the student being able to use these techniques with other research assignments as indicated by the survey results. For many who call for citation help for their papers, the librarian directs them to the library’s online style guides that are available on the

library web page, and helps them find answers to specific questions. These guides deal with the APA (American Psychological Association), MLA (Modern Language Association), Chicago/Turabian, and some special subject styles like ACS (American Chemical Society), ASA (American Sociological Society), AAA (American Anthropological Society), and BLUEBOOK (Harvard Law Review Association). Special workshops are also offered by the library covering such subjects as plagiarism (ACRL standard 5), Endnote, digital media use, citation help, and other topics of the patron's choice to further strengthen their literacy skills. These types of sessions help students develop an understanding of the privacy and security issues, free- and fee-based information, copyright laws and fair use of information, netiquette, and help them develop respect for institutional policies.

Some of the students who come for repeat appointments need extensive help either on the same topic or on a new topic that they have started researching. A lot of these requests are multidisciplinary and requires multiple databases to be searched, ranging from history, economics, technology, policy, to business and beyond. Very often the search extends to Google Scholar and other web/online and statistical sources. These web pages and their URLs are saved and delivered as references to the patron at the end of the one-on-one session along with other notes that could prove helpful to the patron in later searches. This escorting of the patron through an elaborate search is a crucial pedagogical role of reference service. It is a gratifying experience that you have helped a student in their need, taught them how to think critically, made them aware of the steps needed to plan and execute a literature search. "Education is not filling a bucket but lighting a fire" says W.B. Yeats.

The usual resistance from the budding scholars and some of the professors is "why do I have to go through the thesauri and restrict myself to their terms?" "Why can't I perform a free text search like Google?" "Why can't you give me a few relevant articles instead of making me learn new ways of searching the subject databases or new software?" The simple explanation that each discipline has its own terminology and to find quality articles you have to search in that language sometimes does not sit well with them. Almost all of them are however thankful at the end of a one-on-one session.

Most freshmen in college need help with almost all aspects of the research process. As they mature they are more expressive about the topic and the difficulty they are having. They have also discovered an oasis of help available to them in the library. Students in their senior year usually ask for one-on-one consultation to find information on their thesis or final research paper, where they have not been able to find pertinent information or when the angle of approach to the subject is unique or has not yet been explored. The reference librarian has to dig deeper and prepare for such meetings in advance and sometimes perform follow-up searches and get back in touch with them. Faculty consultations usually involve learning about new databases, new search strategies, verifying references for their books or papers that they are writing, assisting with endnotes, statistics, and how often they have been cited by others.

Information competency is a part of life-long learning which encourages scholarship, career success, and responsible citizenship. Librarians involved with such deep research projects with faculty and students experience a lot of self-satisfaction, professional growth, and personal fulfillment. Since 80.9% of the students

who were surveyed indicate that these one-on-one research sessions improved their grade and 93.6% were able to use the skills for subsequent assignments, we can safely conclude that the students were able to effectively use information to accomplish their specific purpose of research.

## The Survey

The department formulated the following six questions in the form of an anonymous, web-based survey to gather feedback from 117 students who had used the one-on-one service during 2009-2010. The initial date of emailing the survey was April 14, 2011. It was followed by three more weekly reminders. Ultimately by May 10, we had 47 (40%) responses.

## Questionnaire

We are contacting you because during 2009-2011 you had a one-on-one research appointment with a librarian at UTC. In order to improve our performance we would appreciate your answers to the following questions. (Results will be anonymous.)

- 1) **How did you hear about this service (the one-on-one research appointment)? (Please select all that apply).**
  - a) Library instruction class
  - b) Library advertisement
  - c) Library website
  - d) Professor referral
  - e) Classmate
  - f) Other, please comment
  
- 2) **What research help did you need? (Please select all that apply).**
  - a) Finding sources
  - b) Citing sources
  - c) Using software
  - d) Thinking of keywords
  - e) Other, please comment
  
- 3) **Do you think that the research appointment improved the grade on your final product?**

Yes  
No  
If you did not receive a grade, please comment.

**4) Were you able to apply what you learned to other assignments?**

Yes  
No  
Comments

**5) Would you use this service again?**

Yes  
No  
Comments

**6) Is there anything else that you can add to help us improve our service?**

**Survey Results**

**Q 1.** Of the 117 students contacted by email, 47 students responded. Of those, 42.6% heard about the service during the instruction classes and 38.3 % learned about it from their professors. 10.6% heard about the service from their classmates, followed by 8.5% from library advertisements, and 6.4% from library website. One of them sought us out on her own.

**Q 2.** 89.4% wanted help with finding sources and 23.4% needed help with the use of software. 14.9% needed help with keywords and 12.8% needed help with citing sources. Of the comments made: one sought help in the structuring of resources and another needed help with finding, and citing sources, using software and thinking of keywords.

**Q 3.** 80.9% think the research appointment improved their grade or the final product. One of the comments was “I needed it just to assure myself that I knew where I was going in my research.” Another one said it helped very much. Another patron was helped with research on her/his dissertation.

**Q4.** 93.6% were able to apply the search skills learned during this meeting to other assignments.

**Q 5.** 93.6% would use this service again. Of the four students who will not seek our help again, one indicated they graduated, which may explain why they responded in the negative.

**Q 6.** Free text comments were:

- I think it's fine the way it is. It's great!
- It was great, thanks!
- Before the appointment actually do some researching and pull some information together for help, don't just show the student how to search the databases.
- it was great!!!
- I called and asked if librarians would revise apa style research papers and the request was denied. However I feel that this should become offered because students who are social science majors are in need of this service due to lack of help with apa from the writing center. This service

would really help improve students grades!

- The librarian was very helpfull and patient. I enjoyed working with her and look forward to the next time I need librarary services. Thank You!!!
- Library personnel are always extremely helpful and anxious to support my work. Thanks!
- They are always enthusiastic to help.
- She was really nice and helpful.

## Conclusion

One can safely conclude that one-on-one service is having a positive effect on the research efforts of the students at the Lupton Library. The one person who needed help with writing the paper was directed to the writing center by the librarian. Also, the faculty member in-charge of student retention was contacted to find out where such students could get more help. The student, who commented that just showing them how to search the databases was not enough, evidently needed more help in actually interpreting the retrieved information and how to relate it to the topic of the research. This remark would prompt the librarians in future to discuss in detail the needs and see if all of the goals have been satisfied before letting the student leave.

This survey has been helpful in assessing our performance as librarians. Follow up discussions among librarians about the personal touch, search strategies, questioning techniques and methods of instruction used by them can further help improve our one-on-one instruction skills.

In order to improve the services and justify the costs of such services, evaluation and assessment of services is one of the most important issues facing reference departments. One-on-one research service is just one of the many services provided by the reference department, but it is the best opportunity to establish an individual relationship with the patron. Some of these encounters develop into life-long friendships or co-author/co-researcher roles. Through their approachability, listening skills, interest in the research process, research skills, and professional knowledge of the resources, the reference librarians help the patrons find meaning in their research endeavors. As teachers and/or mediators, reference librarians develop the critical thinking skills of students; make them more self-confident, self-dependent, life-long learners, and curious researchers. Such one-on-one sessions challenge the reference librarians to keep up with new technologies, sharpen their search techniques, and improve their communicating skills to provide the best reference service to the patrons. After all, both the patron and the librarian are members of the same community of learners.

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