

1 2 3 4 5 6

THE READ SCALE©

The READ Scale is a six-point scale designed to identify qualitative statistics based on the skills, knowledge, techniques, and tools used by librarians during reference transactions. In this project, the analysis was designed to:

- document the skills, knowledge, techniques, and tools used by reference staff during a reference transaction;
- provide a more complete narrative of reference assistance; and
- facilitate effective professional development.

From: Gerlich, B.A., & Berard, G. L. (2010). Testing the validity of the READ scale (Reference Effort Assessment Data)©: Qualitative statistics for academic reference services. *College & Research Libraries*, 71(2), 116-137.

METHODOLOGY

For two weeks during spring semester 2011, Reference Desk staff used the READ Scale to assess reference questions via our main reference service points: Information Center Reference Desk, telephone questions, email, chat, and liaison office.

HIGHLIGHTS

Total transactions are detailed in Table 1. Highlights of the data include the following:

- The majority of questions were received in-person (78.9%), followed by phone (12.6%), chat (5.8%) and email (2.8%) detailed in Table 2.
- Questions at all levels tended to peak in the afternoon from 3-6:00pm (Chart 1).
- While Scale 1 questions included the distribution of barcodes for the public computers, 44.6% of the questions were at Scales 2-6 and required varying levels of value-added expertise (Table 3).
- Email and chat were 8.6% of the total questions received but represented 33% of the Scale 5-6 questions and 21% of the Scale 2-4 questions (Charts 2 and 3).
- This two-week tally is comparable to the total tally of queries at the Information Center Reference Desk in 2009 and 2010.

Table 1. Total transactions of READ Scale© Reference Desk analysis.

Location	Transactions	Percentage
Total Transactions	1,231	100.0%
Reference Desk	1,134	92.1%
Liaison Offices	97	7.9%

Do You READ? Qualitative Reference Analysis

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- This project was designed to understand reference and research interactions with patrons to more effectively document the needed skills and knowledge of Information Center Reference Desk employees. It was not designed to evaluate staffing.
- This was a preliminary trial of data collection using a new model. In debriefing, inconsistencies in data collection were identified, and it was determined that this small sample is not adequate for decision making.
- It is recommended that this type of data collection be conducted periodically throughout the year to establish consistent data gathering methodology and to build a solid body of data that effectively establishes a basis for reviewing the quality of reference transactions.

Table 2. Transactions by type of transactions.

Type of Transaction	Transaction	Percentage
Walk-up Directional	518	42.1%
Walk-up Reference	453	36.8%
Phone Directional	61	5.0%
Phone Reference	94	7.6%
Chat	71	5.8%
Email	34	2.8%
Total	1,231	100.0%

Table 3. Transactions by READ Scale©.

READ Scale©	Transactions	Percentage
Scale 1	682	55.4%
Scale 2	260	21.2%
Scale 3	168	13.6%
Scale 4	85	7.0%
Scale 5	22	1.8%
Scale 6	14	1.1%
Total	1,231	100.0%

Chart 1. Transactions by time of day.

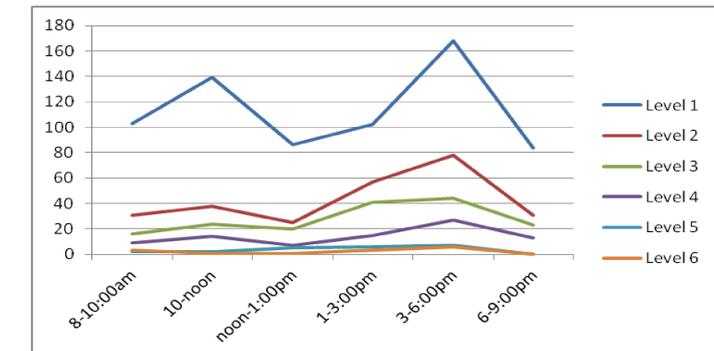


Chart 2. READ Scale© level 1 transactions by type of transaction.

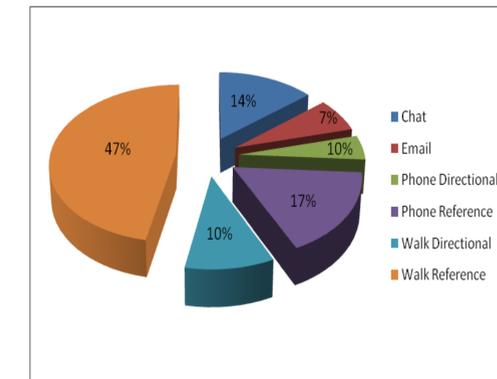
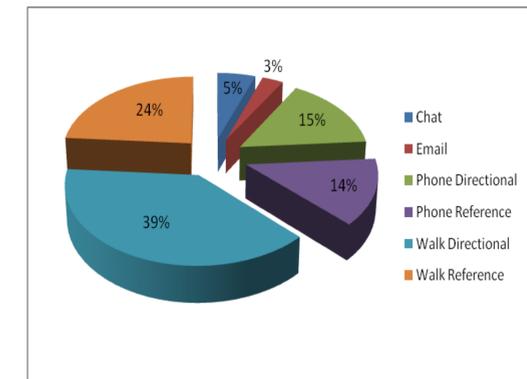


Chart 3. READ Scale© levels 2-4 transactions by type of transaction.

Chart 4. READ Scale© levels 5-6 transactions by type of transaction.

