Let’s Chat: Assessing Virtual Reference Service for Optimal User Experience

Heidi Gauder
University of Dayton, hgauder1@udayton.edu

Margaret Barkley
University of Dayton, mbarkley1@udayton.edu

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**PROBLEM STATEMENT**
With librarians and student employees staffing our virtual reference service, making sure that our clients receive consistent and quality service is important. In Fall 2014 we evaluated transcript samples against a number of criteria on a 3-point scale. Criteria included communication, reference interview & search strategy, plus sources & session outcome.

**METHODS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Size x Question Type</th>
<th>FA2014</th>
<th>FA2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Directional/Policy</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference/Research</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample size</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of chats</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RESULTS**

**Chat Interaction Quality**
![Bar chart showing chat interaction quality from 2013 to 2015]

- **Q10 score results, Fall 2014**
  - 1 score: 25%
  - 2 score: 50%
  - 3 score: 25%

- **Q10 score results, Fall 2015**
  - 1 score: 32%
  - 2 score: 40%
  - 3 score: 28%

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**
Robyn Case developed the scale; Carol Williamson conducted the analyses; Carol and Joan Plungis developed training recommendations.

**DISCUSSION**

**CHANGES MADE**
1. Reviewed analysis with Reference Librarians.
2. Additional hands-on training with Student Employees.
4. Added “canned responses” for certain questions.

**FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS**
1. Chat times potentially affected by texting service, may need to consider guidelines for texting separately.
2. Possible coordinated training with the circulation desk, which now does chat. More broadly, consider additional training when new staffing lines are added.
3. Review relevance of all criteria statements, possibly collapse number from 16 to 13.

**TAKEAWAYS**
1. Scale is easy to use.
2. Sampling is recommended.
3. Be prepared to spend some time on analysis.

See the libguide for assessment scale and value descriptions: [Libguides.udayton.edu/chat](http://Libguides.udayton.edu/chat)