How to Boost Your Traffic

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Agenda

- This session is intended to encourage discussion on various ways to look at your service and leverage patron behavior and activity.
What would encourage patrons to try a chat service?

- A trusted librarian, teacher, or friend’s recommendation
- Better marketing and publicity by service providers
- Extended hours of service
- Access to electronic information
- Interact with friendly librarians
- Relationships with librarians

Approximately 76% of all requests came from three pages: home page (38%), catalog page (22%), and database page (18%). The varied pages helped because users were asking questions based on the page they were currently viewing. Further suggestions to improve the service included expanded hours, links on relevant course pages (for faculty endorsement), and links from products such as Ebsco-Host, ProQuest, and other databases.

The data doesn’t lie

- Track your traffic
  - Days of the week
  - Hours in the day
- Track the types of questions your patrons are asking
  - Descriptive Codes
- Track where they are coming from to ask a question
  - Referrer url, form field info
- Track surveys for comments direct from patrons
  - This can lead to great insights!
Promoting AskMN... got us in trouble

- Fall/Winter 2009/2010
  - Full swing promotion of service to educators
  - Webinars and presentations
  - Brochures
- She told two friends, and they told two friends, and so on, and so on...
- Chats spiked dramatically
Number of chat sessions from MN patrons

Promotion to K-12
The research by Mu, Dimitroff, Jordan and Burclaff supports the word-of-mouth marketing option:

- ...the more effective means of marketing VRS are word-of-mouth, collaboration with other departments and website placement of services. Website placement includes where the chat service is on the screen and the text associated with it. Other marketing strategies include visibility of the service, highlighting convenience and confidentiality, and having trusted adults recommend the service.
Multiple options for access and levels of cooperative service

• Integrate library tools in popular sites
• Offer multiple service modes
• Offer help at time of need
  • Website
  • Catalog
  • E-Resources
  • Multiple locations on website can increase traffic
### Stats from AskMN qwidget use

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<th>October 2012</th>
<th></th>
<th>October 2013</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chat:</td>
<td>234</td>
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<td>Chats:</td>
<td>79</td>
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<td></td>
<td>108</td>
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<td>234</td>
<td>108</td>
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<td></td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>Qwidget: Undefined</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>342</td>
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<td></td>
<td>79</td>
<td>167</td>
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<td></td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>68%</td>
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QP’s Chatting Levels

- QP Cooperative, aka 24/7 Reference
  - Global queue – required for “AskMN” shifts
- AskMN – statewide queue
  - Required for “AskMN” shifts
  - Can monitor outside “AskMN” shifts just for own patrons
- Institution-level queue
  - Only see your patrons
  - Monitoring this queue is extra from “AskMN” shifts
QP’s Chatting Options

- 24/7 Chat form
  - Available at these levels: Institution; AskMN (statewide); 24/7 Reference (Global)
- Chat Qwidget
  - Available at these levels: Institution; AskMN (statewide); 24/7 Reference (Global)? Maybe...
- Text messaging
  - Added service
  - Fee
  - Available at the Institution level
Recommendations to attract potential users

- Introduce & demonstrate online alternatives during in-person reference sessions, library use instruction classes & library programs
- Create tutorial of “how to use” chat
Instead of the traditionally passive method of waiting for users to seek help, we proposed a “May I help you” style design using an automatic pop-up window to allow reference librarians to promptly approach patrons.

Virtual reference literature often takes the viewpoint that by improving quality, VRS will offer better service, which in turn will increase usage.
Based on the study findings, there is no significant difference in users’ opinions of a VRS or their willingness to use it that is caused by the design of the interface, provided the link meets two conditions: users are aware of its existence (it is easily seen), and the link is clearly labeled with its function (i.e., the text “Ask a Librarian” as opposed to a text-free image). If a user does not want to use the service, he is not going to—it does not matter what the interface looks like.
Resources


- Seeking synchronicity: http://www.oclc.org/reports/synchronicity

Help & Resources

• Handouts
  ▪ Reports Quick Reference
  ▪ Review Your Transcripts Online Quick Reference
  ▪ Review Your Transcripts Offline Quick Reference

• Online Help
  • Documents:
    http://www.oclc.org/support/services/questionpoint/documentation.en.html
  • Training:
    http://www.oclc.org/support/services/questionpoint/training.en.html
Community Resources

- QuestionPoint blog:  
  [http://questionpoint.blogs.com](http://questionpoint.blogs.com)

- QuestionPoint wiki:  
  [http://wiki.questionpoint.org](http://wiki.questionpoint.org)
Thank you!

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