They Came, They Saw, but Did They Actually Get Help?: Using Simple and Effective Mechanisms to Go Beyond Usage Data and Gather User Feedback to Assess the Value of Research Services

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Introduction

GW Libraries & Academic Innovation (GWLAI) has always collected usage data on our research consultation services. While this data provides useful insight into *demand*, it does not adequately capture the *value* provided by our services. GWLAI recognized this limitation and sought to identify ways to obtain data on user experience and perceived value. Certain methods for getting feedback from the university community, such as focus groups or annual surveys, are generally not feasible due to the resources needed and other impediments. Instead, GWLAI implemented a simple, automated mechanism embedded in our research consultation booking system that easily and regularly obtains valuable user feedback. As a result, our organization has gone beyond usage statistics to better understand user experience and the value of our research consultation services.

GWLAI Consultation Services

GWLAI provides a variety of consultation services to our community. Faculty and students can meet one-on-one with a subject matter expert to get help with library research in all disciplines, coding, data analysis and visualization, GIS, digital storytelling and multimedia, and more. The consultation services are popular; GWLAI currently provides over **2,000 consultations** a year.

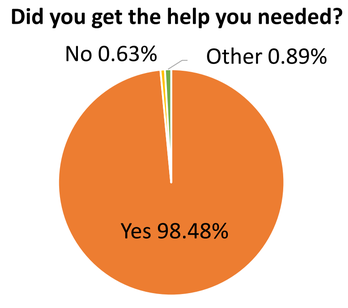
Calendly Post-Consultation Surveys

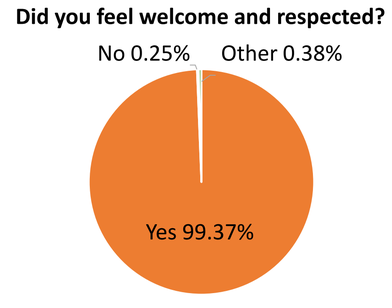
GWLAI uses the scheduling automation platform Calendly to make it easy for our users to schedule a consultation. Calendly has a "follow-up email" feature that automatically sends a message to users requesting feedback shortly after their consultation.

The user survey asks two primary questions: **(1) Did you get the help you needed today and (2) Did you feel welcome and respected during your consultation?** There is also a field for comments. Responses are anonymous unless the user chooses to self-identify.

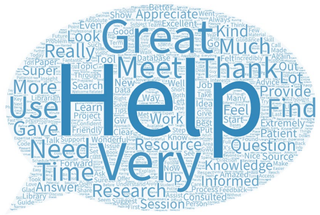
Survey Results

Automated messages with surveys were activated in March 2021 for most teams providing consultation services. As of September 2022, GWLAI has received over 780 responses. The **response rate is 31%**. The feedback is **almost 100% positive**.





Most users include written comments, and these comments provide valuable insight into user experience and satisfaction. The small number of critical comments have been useful and led to improved service.



Word cloud representing user's written comments in the feedback survey

The written comments not only showed that GWLAI staff were providing the help users needed, but also that users found staff to be patient, kind, and caring. The latter is incredibly important given that users are coming to us when they are vulnerable and in need of support.

> ***"She was absolutely incredible. Kind, patient, interested, and knowledgeable, she helped me find exactly what I was looking for and made me feel supported."***

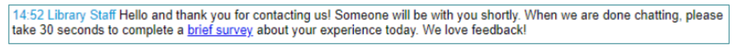
Benefits

- Evidence of significant value and high level of service
- Demonstration of care for students and dedication to their success
- High ROI resulting from almost entirely automated process

- Service enhancements resulting from user suggestions
- Availability of data to support decision making about services
- Increased staff morale from very positive feedback

Virtual Reference

GWLAI also sought simple ways to obtain user feedback on our virtual reference services (email/chat). A link to a survey is embedded into the reference email signature and a welcome message in our chat system.



The response rate has not been as high as for consultations, but GWLAI has realized similar benefits. For chat, users indicate that chat is highly valued among the various options for getting help, so the survey has provided useful data to inform conversations about continuing the service.

Share Your Experience

Please visit this poster session's Jamboard to share your ideas for gathering data to assess the value of library services!

https://bit.ly/3g5p2Po

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