Helping Libraries Count
Collecting Reference Statistics for Meaningful Use

Abstract
After trading our traditional paper system for point-of-service online counters, reference statistics started to speak more clearly.

Data are still collected hourly, but now they go into a database generating reports that are immediately available. Librarians can track their individual activity as well as the activity of the reference and information services unit overall.

Why Bother?
Constant Change!

Population
• More full-time students
• More traditional students (18-22 years)
• More students with busier schedules

Academic Environment
• Growth in distance learning
• New programs & degrees
• Emphasis on information literacy
• Competition for resources

Delivery Options
• Face-to-face
• Telephone
• E-mail reference
• Mobile reference
• Instant messaging
• Course management connections
• Student Learning Commons model

Outcomes
• Shows importance of liaison-librarian’s subject specialization by
• Accurately reporting of research consultations provided to faculty
• Quantifying service provided to graduate students and upper level undergraduates
• Tracks activity of new delivery options, e.g., mobile reference, instant messaging reference
• Provides means for analyzing reference trends within disciplines

Pointers
• Plan collection system to reflect your library’s model of reference and information services
• Collect data that supports library’s planning process
• Collect only essential data—plan reports as well as data to collect
• Consult, collaborate, communicate constantly—many folks need data for a variety of purposes

Technical Notes
Web Manager Kevin Fredrick created our statistical counters in the Helmke Library computing environment using software already owned by the library. Desktop utilities were created using Microsoft .Net 2.0 (VB.Net)- Microsoft Visual Studio 2005 and the data collected are stored in a MySQL v4.1.12 database via ODBC connection. Reports are generated by PHP 4.3.4, PHP Base Library and Big Faceless Java Report Generator.

Question:
How do graduate programs impact research consulting services?

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