BRYAN WILDENTHAL MEMORIAL
SR | LIBRARY

Reference Data Collection: A Guide
Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library

> "The data we collect represents what we value about ourselves
> and determines how others will judge us. Given the data we
> currently collect, are we prepared to live with that?"
>
> – Megan Oakleaf

How to log in to LibApps

Access **LibAnswers** through SpringShare's LibApps home page by clicking the "Staff Log-In" link in the footer of our website. Note that Sul Ross Library utilizes many SpringShare apps for data collection and dissemination.

We enter reference stats through Ref. Analytics. Every time we're on call (in your office or on desk), it is helpful to have the **Add Transaction** window open. This is where we enter reference interaction data. To find it, click **Ref. Analytics** and then click **Add Transaction**.
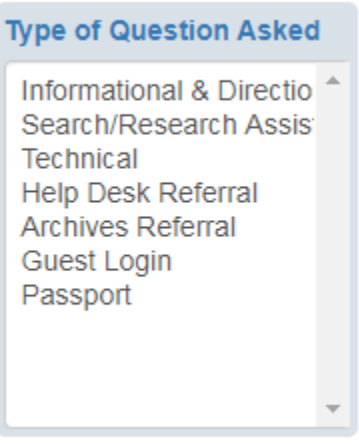
About Ref. Analytics

Currently, Ref. Analytics is broken into three datasets:

- **Librarians:** used by librarians + staff supporting our night and weekend hours
- **Circulation Desk:** used by student circulation workers
- **Archives of the Big Bend:** not currently used

Portions of the **Librarians** and **Circulation Desk** datasets are imported into our Library FY stats every month for reporting internally and externally.

Definitions

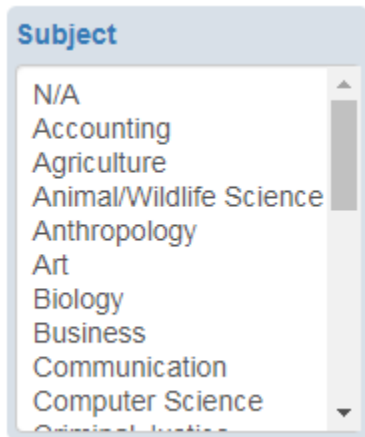Definitions for the data collection categories from the Librarians dataset follow.

Type of Question Asked

Informational & Directio
Search/Research Assist
Technical
Help Desk Referral
Archives Referral
Guest Login
Passport

Type of Question Asked is pretty self-explanatory, though our personal definitions of the available fields have varied. See below.

Informational & Directional	- Basic/classic ready reference about the building and/or website - Often maps to learning outcome of **library familiarity**
Search/Research Assistance	- Keyword conversations - Use of All Library Search - Use of any other database or catalog - Might map to **info need**, **types of info/sources**, or **effective search strategy** learning outcomes
Technical	- Often we refer these interactions to circ students - Anything related to broken tech/computers/printers - might map to **library familiarity**
Help Desk Referral	- Specifically tech questions or "lost my password" questions that are referred to LTAC/x8888
Archives Referral	- Any interaction referred to the Archives - Might map to **library familiarity** or **info need**
Guest Login	- This is an outdated selection but may be used if you refer a guest to a student worker for guest log-in o (typically students catch the guests first and will record the stats on their own)
Passport	- Passport-related reference, whether answering questions or processing applications - Might map to **library familiarity**

How Was It Asked

How Was It Asked

In Person
Chat
Telephone
Text Message
Email
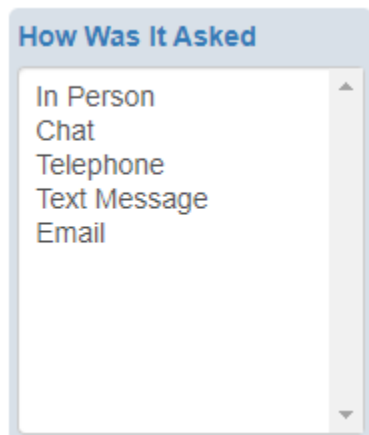
How Was It Asked is also straight forward. See below for some updates on outdated reference methods, however.

In Person	- Human person in front of you / at the desk / in the stacks / at Porter's, etc.
Chat	- **Note:** Librarians decided to end use of the chat feature effective September 2019/ Please do not use this field.
Telephone	- Human person on the telephone
Text Message	- **Note:** Librarians decided to end advertisement of the text message phone number effective September 2019 - You may use this field if you provide reference via text message, but it is less likely (and was never very popular)
Email	- Please try to remember to record reference interactions taking place in your email. Not *every* email that librarians receive is reference-related, but when you are helping someone with research or info about the library, stat it! It's our expertise and our valuable time. - Email often maps to **personal office (off shift)** and collecting data about when we provide reference service is useful

Subject

Subject
N/A
Accounting
Agriculture
Animal/Wildlife Science
Anthropology
Art
Biology
Business
Communication
Computer Science

Subject has not been tracked reliably previously and the librarians are ultimately undecided on this category's utility.

How Long Did It Take

How Long Did It Take
1 Minute
2-10 Minutes
11-30 Minutes
30-60 Minutes
60+ Minutes

How Long Did It Take → helps us to differentiate between short and long interactions. Give it your best estimate.

Library Learning Outcome?

Library Familiarity
Information Need
Types of Information/So
Effective Search Strateg
Ethical Use of Informati

Library Learning Outcome?
Just as with assessment in the classroom setting, librarians can work from a set of **defined objectives** to make an educated (i.e., professional) decision as to whether learning took place during a reference interaction. Objectives correspond to one of five defined Library Learning Outcomes.

Note: This field should only be used when learning can be assessed. You might establish the interaction led to learning by:
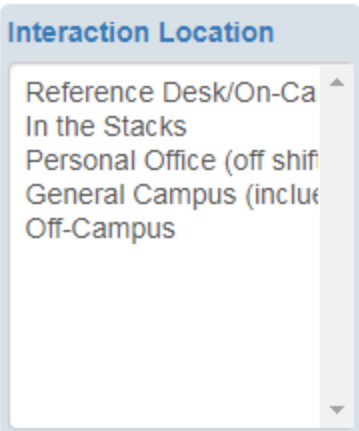
- The person repeating what you have told them to emphasize they synthesized the interaction
- Seeing the person demo their new skill

Library Familiarity	- Learning where X is located in the library - Understanding/using call numbers to find books after explanation/instruction from a librarian
Information Need	- In a reference interview, the student explains requirements of an assignment in order to identify an initial question or problem to be researched [and a librarian reinforces this behavior by continuing the reference interview and asking probing questions]
Types of Information/Sources	- After a conversation with a librarian, a student demonstrates their ability to locate and digest peer-reviewed, academic journal articles or to even understand the difference between popular and scholarly works - librarians explain and students understand that just because they want a "physical book" that they might find valuable information in another source
Effective Search Strategy	- In a reference interview a student explains what they have already tried as part of a search and a librarian reinforces the important of using preexisting knowledge and reference/background information in the research process
Ethical Use of Information	- Some kind of question/response exchange involving proper citation or a citation style for a specific discipline

Who Asked the Question

Student
Faculty/Staff
Community Borrower
Guest
Unknown status

Who Asked the Question gives us an idea of who we are helping the most. Choose which field fits best while trying to respect and maintain the privacy of the patron.

Interaction Location

Reference Desk/On-Ca
In the Stacks
Personal Office (off shift
General Campus (includ
Off-Campus

Interaction Location: The librarians feel that much reference takes place even when we are not on the desk or even at work. Try to enter reference interactions even when you're not on call (though most of the interactions you enter will be **Reference Desk/On-Call**, we hope).

Reference Desk/On-Call	- Your reference shifts
In the Stacks	- When you're not on call but still answer a question or provide customer service while in the stacks - Often maps to **In Person** (How Was It Asked)
Personal Office (off shift)	- When you're not on call but still answer a question or provide customer service while in your office - Often maps to **email** (How Was It Asked)
General Campus (includes MRGC if applicable)	- When you're not on call but still answer a question or provide customer service while somewhere on campus - Often maps to **In Person** (How Was It Asked)
Off-Campus	- When you're not on call but still answer a question or provide customer service while off campus

Follow-up Interaction
Quality?

Positive or Neutral
Negative

Follow-up Interaction Quality: Much like the Library Learning Outcome category, only enter data for this category when a follow-up interaction takes place. This means:

- You help a patron in person/on phone/over email (anywhere)
- That patron leaves your area (first interaction ends)
- That patron returns and specifically follows up
    - o "Thank you for your help"
    - o "You know, you were really wrong about the help you gave me"
    - o "Wow, I've used that database so much since you told me about it."