IN YOUR FACE:
OUR EXPERIENCE WITH PROACTIVE CHAT REFERENCE
REFERENCE OF THE PAST

- PATRONS TO SEEK OUT HELP
- REFERENCE ENCOUNTERS SUFFERED A STEADY DECLINE
- “ROVING REFERENCE”
- SATELLITE REFERENCE LOCATIONS
CSULB WAS NO EXCEPTION!

*Total Reference Encounters*

*In-person, telephone, email, and QuestionPoint. LibChat introduced in 2015.*
Previous Chat Format

- LIBRARY HOMEPAGE
- SELECTED RESEARCH GUIDES
- EVERY LIBANSWERS PAGE
- EBSCO DATABASES
PROACTIVE CHAT WIDGET

• *NOT* ON HOMEPAGE
• EVERY CATALOG PAGE
• EVERY LIBCAL PAGE
• EVERY LIBANSWERS PAGE
• LIBGUIDES A-Z
• DATABASES LIST
Number of Chats: Passive versus Proactive

The First 900 Days

699 Chats

The Next 338 Days

3,948 Chats

Equals 20 chat reference encounters
CURRENT CONFIGURATION

• NOT ON HOMEPAGE
• EVERY CATALOG PAGE
• EVERY LIBANSWERS PAGE
• EVERY LIBCAL PAGE
• A-Z DATABASES LIST
• SELECTED RESEARCH GUIDES
• EBSCO DATABASES
COMPARISON OF THREE CHAT CONFIGURATIONS
CHAT EVOLUTION

[Graph showing chat evolution over time]
THREE FALL SEMESTERS

Chats Over Three Semesters: Three Configurations

Note: Pop up chat only activated (i.e. popped up) when a CSULB librarian was monitoring the queue; thus the disparity between 2017 QP and 2017 LibChat.
QUALITATIVE CHANGES
Change from ‘old chat’ to ‘pop up chat’ statistically significant at $p=0.01$; LibChat data only, this analysis excludes Questionpoint data.
Change from 'old chat' to 'pop up chat' statistically significant at $p=0.003$; LibChat data only, this analysis excludes Questionpoint data.
Change from ‘old chat’ to ‘pop up chat’ statistically significant at $p<0.00$; LibChat data only, this analysis excludes Questionpoint data.
LIBRARIAN WORKLOAD CONCERNS

“Sending them a link does not teach them the process.”

“Chat requires more patience.”

“More chances to help off-campus students.”

“It is impossible to carry on multiple chats and help in-person.”
LIBRARIAN RESPONSE TO CHANGES

“I prefer the reference desk now … but I feel chat should be a separate task …. allowing for one encounter at a time without distraction.”

“Clicking on the proactive chat was too easy. There wasn’t enough thought given before asking for help.”

“Even though I prefer a slower pace, I am concerned that students are now less aware of chat as an option.”

“I feel less rushed – last fall we were doing 2 or 3 chats at the same time… this semester, I’m spending more time with each chat, and providing a better quality of service.”
FURTHER READING SUGGESTIONS


Any Questions?

Thanks for listening!

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