Responding to Patrons Online:
The Technology, People, Problems, & Possibilities.

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How Are People Seeking Help?

• Chat has surpassed phone and email as the most popular way for consumers to interact with retailers. (PR Newswire 11/16/2016)

• Customer-service calls declined 17% from 2015 to 2017
  – Being replaced by chat, bots, and self-service options.
  – Phone calls with actual humans are now just 54% of all customer-service interactions. (Wall Street Journal, 8/28/2017)
PSU Virtual Reference Service

Overview & History

• First Began in 2002 with limited hours & staff

• Expanded and began a new service model in 2013
  • 20+ Penn State Campuses
  • 100+ Library Employees

• Approx. 63,000 chat/email questions answered (2013-2018)
  • About 6,000 – 7,000 per semester
What we’re going to Cover

• Technology
• People
• Problems & Challenges
• Possibilities for Future Improvements
The Technology

• What are we using?
• How does it work?
I am looking for a copy of the song "Don't Go Down in the Mine, Daddy." I was supposed to have appeared in the United Mine Workers Journal on

Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count

Do you, by any chance, have any information on a local boxer, Jack Mckeever, who fought at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th.

recommend a book

get it! Penn State function from Web of Science

some questions about how to use peer review for chem 501 online course.
Guest24558765
Participants: Alan Mays
Coming from: Penn State University

Chat
Patron Information

Alan Mays 11:40:44 AM
Hello, I need scholarly articles and research on prison work programs.

Guest24558765 11:41:20 AM
Hi, how can I help you today?

Patron Chats

- Guest24558765 is chatting with Alan Mays 11:40 am
-@psu.edu is chatting with Heidi Abbey Moyer 11:38 am
- Lisa is chatting with Alan Mays 11:41 am

Internal Chat

Departments

- InterLibrary Loan
- University Libraries

Operators

- All Staff
- Tom Reinsfelder (you)
- Alan Mays 9:59 am
- Heidi Abbey Moyer 10:00 am
- Tracie (interlibrary loan) Wickersham 11:30 am
Research Consultation Request

Students, faculty, and staff may schedule an appointment with a librarian for one-on-one assistance with projects. A research consultation may include guidance on how to use the University Libraries' resources, in person, by phone, or by web conference.

Your Info

Name *

Email *

I would like to work with a librarian from: *

Select One

Scheduling Your Meeting

How would you prefer to meet with a librarian? *

Select One

Please list 2-3 dates and times you are able to meet with a librarian *

How Can We Help With Your Project or Research?

Question

Contact Copyright, Publishing, and Open Access

Contact Information

Name *

Email *

Course Name (if applicable)

Status *

Select One

Question

My Question is about *

Select One

General copyright questions
Training request
Course-related questions
Publishing & Open Access
Penn State policy

Receive an email confirmation of your submission.

Copyright Links
Hypersynchronicity in the default mode-like network in a neurodevelopmental animal model with relevance for schizophrenia
Missault, Stephan, Anckaerts, Cynthia, Ahmadian, Soumaya, Blockx, Ines; Barbier, Michaël; et al.

Nrf2 activator, sulforaphane ameliorates autism-like symptoms through suppression of Th17 related signaling and rectification of oxidant-antioxidant imbalance in periphery and brain of BTBR T+tf/J mice
Nadeem, Ahmed; Ahmad, Sheik; Al-Harbi, Naif; Attia, Sabry M; Bakheet, Saleh A; et al.

Autism is a neurodevelopmental disease which is characterized by its core... including autism. In the current work, we used sulforaphane in asocial BTBR mice... and brain in BTBR mice. These mechanisms lead to improvement in autism-like...

Prediction of causal genes and gene expression analysis of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder in the different brain region, a comprehensive integrative analysis of ADHD
Fahira, Aamir, Li, Zhiqiang, Liu, Ning; Shi, Yongyong.

Abnormal empathy-like pro-social behaviour in the valproic acid model of autism spectrum disorder
Customer Service
Current Problems in Diagnostic Radiology, 2014, Volume 44, Issue 1
Journal Article - Full Text Online

Managing customer service
by Paget, Zoe
Veterinary Record, 02/2015, Volume 176, Issue 9
Zoe Paget is the customer services manager at YourVets. Her role includes managing the company's call centre, social media marketing, working with the marketing...
Journal Article - Full Text Online

Middle-range theorizing on logistics customer service
by dellathy, Daniel A., Joo, Hyunwook, Mullen, Joseph, A. More...
International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management, 02/2018, Volume 48, Issue 1
... knowledge on logistics customer service (LCS) in a number of critical areas. Design/methodology/approach The paper applies Stank et al.'s (2017)...
Journal Article - Full Text Online

Special issue editorial: logistics customer service revisited
by Hazen, ET; Ellinger, AE
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PHYSICAL DISTRIBUTION & LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT, 02/2019, Volume 43, Issue 1

**Pop-Up Widget Usability Study**

- Tested before implementation (2015)
- Conducted with Katie Garcia and Nina Clements
- 30 students/3 Penn State campuses

**Online**
- Different Task
- Surprise Widget

**Word Cloud**
- 100 words
- Randomly mixed

**Survey**
- Past experience
- Likeliness to use
- Wait times
The widget entered the screen at 18 seconds, was this timing too soon, too late, or would you prefer not to see the widget at all. Please place a mark at the point you would prefer to see the widget, or circle one of the choices at the end of the timeline.
The People

• Who asks questions?

• Who answers the questions?
What kinds of questions do we answer?

1. I'm looking for a specific book or article and can't find it. Here's the title. Can you help?

2. I'm looking for information about __________. Can you help?

3. This page or link or database is not working as it should. Can you help?

4. I have a question about a library policy or service - circulation, ILL, alumni library, lost and found, hours, etc.
Response Times

• Chats
  Average wait time: 17 seconds  (Jan-Apr 2019)

• Emails
  (Fall 2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Main Queue</th>
<th>ILL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 10 min</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 60 min</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 12 hours</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 24 hours</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 3 days</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feedback from Users

• [Librarian] was a life saver. Your staff is fantastic. It's nice to know that doing this online masters I have direct connect to a librarian.

• Tremendous help and time saving to say the least

• Fantastic! Wonderful Support

• This online chat is really really useful!!!

• I've chatted several times with questions and have always gotten quick responses. This is a wonderful service!
• [Librarian] was amazingly helpful. I don’t know what she did but she truly saved me a lot of trouble. I cannot thank her enough!

• Very useful! Its 12 AM, someone actually helping me!

• As usual, PSU Librarians ROCK!

• I have been at Penn State 46 years, and Library people such as you have been constant bright spots.
Some Problems / Challenges

1. Staffing Challenges
2. Training / Consistency / Quality
3. Prank Calls & Patrons in Crisis
4. Needs to be a priority of the organization
5. Coordinating with Other Services at Your Library
Future Improvements – Possible User Studies

• Pop Up Chat Widgets
  – Do users need the proactive prompt? Are they likely to use the stagnant Ask a Librarian button on other pages or do they need that moving visual?

• Do the times patrons are willing to wait for online or email contact hold up in real world experience?

• Which web pages would be the best for pop-up widgets?
Possible User Studies

• How are people using the FAQ database? How can we improve it? (QuerySpy)
• Can/Should we increase marketing? If so, how?
• Is 24/7 coverage necessary?
• Do users want added video/voice chat?
• Usefulness of Chat bots?
• Internal user studies. What kind of data/stats do we need to be collecting, and how?
Other areas for improvement

- Increased evening & weekend coverage
- New staffing model
- Enhanced Training
- Improved assessment / data collection
- A dedicated coordinator for online reference services
- Exploring potential of video/voice chat (Zoom)
- Chat bots?
Chat Bots for Libraries?

• Nearly 4 out of 10 consumers (39 percent) say they're willing to have automated conversations with chatbots.

• Nearly one in 10 millennials (9 percent) prefers to always interact with a robot instead of a human.

(Pr Newswire, 11/14/16)
Questions & Audience Comments

• What are your experiences with responding to patrons online?

Further Reading