



L-net statistics

Quarterly report, July 1- Sep 30, 2004.

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November 1, 2004

Data collection

When a patron connects to L-net, they fill out a form that includes their name, e-mail address, library, Zip Code, level of information and question (see right).

For the question “What level of information are your looking for”, the patron is allowed to choose *General Interest*, *College/Research*, *Elementary/Middle School (K-8)*, *High School (9-12)*, or *Professional*.

The patron’s name, Zip Code, level of information and question are required.

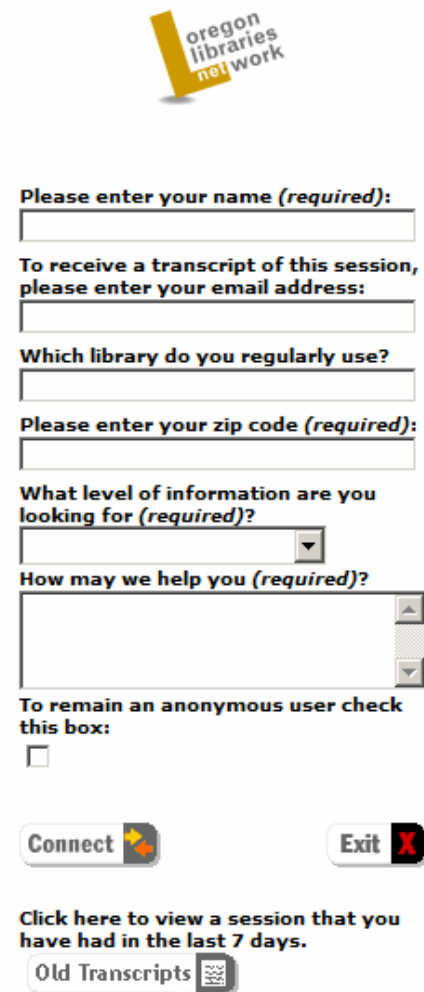
This information is used by the librarian to quickly determine where their home library is, and how best to serve them. We also export this data from our chat reference system and run reports.

E-mail reference questions on L-net are initiated with a web form that collects this same information, but unfortunately, we cannot export the data and run the same reports as we do for chat reference sessions.

Chat reference is counted in *sessions*. A chat session may contain more than one question, or it may contain none. A future study of a sample of chat reference questions could help determine a general ratio of reference questions per session.

E-mail reference is counted in *questions*, with the assumption that each question submitted is unique, even though several e-mails may be exchanged between the librarian and patron to answer it.

We refer to them as e-mail reference because the answer is sent to the patron over e-mail.



The screenshot shows a web form for L-net registration. At the top right is the Oregon Libraries Network logo. The form contains the following fields and labels:

- Please enter your name (required):** [Text input field]
- To receive a transcript of this session, please enter your email address:** [Text input field]
- Which library do you regularly use?** [Text input field]
- Please enter your zip code (required):** [Text input field]
- What level of information are you looking for (required)?** [Dropdown menu]
- How may we help you (required)?** [Text area]
- To remain an anonymous user check this box:** [Checkbox]
- Connect** [Button with right arrow]
- Exit** [Button with red X]
- Click here to view a session that you have had in the last 7 days.** [Text link]
- Old Transcripts** [Button with document icon]

Note on this quarter's data

Tutor.com, our chat reference software provider, regularly deletes our patrons' personal information, including e-mail address, name, and IP Address after 7 days. This process is consistent with our privacy policy, posted at www.oregonlibraries.net/privacy.shtml.

Near the beginning of July, they updated this process and inadvertently began deleting our non-personal data as well, including patron's Zip Code, library and level of response. Consequently, we lost track of demographic data for 177 sessions before this problem was caught and corrected.

Overall usage

2004	Chat Sessions	E-mail questions	Total
July	140	116	256
Aug	133	99	232
Sep	181	93	275
Total	454	308	763

Chat calls by Response Level

Our e-mail software, RefTracker keeps track of response level, but cannot report them. We hope to report this data at a later date.

Level	Number	Percent (of known)
College/Research	32	11.6%
High School	35	12.6%
Elementary/Middle (K-8)	37	13.4%
General Interest	126	45.5%
Professional	47	17.0%
Unknown	177	
Total	454	
Schools combined		26.0%

Comments: It is likely that the percentage of school-level users would be lower if we had not lost the data for July and the first half of August, when few students were using the service.

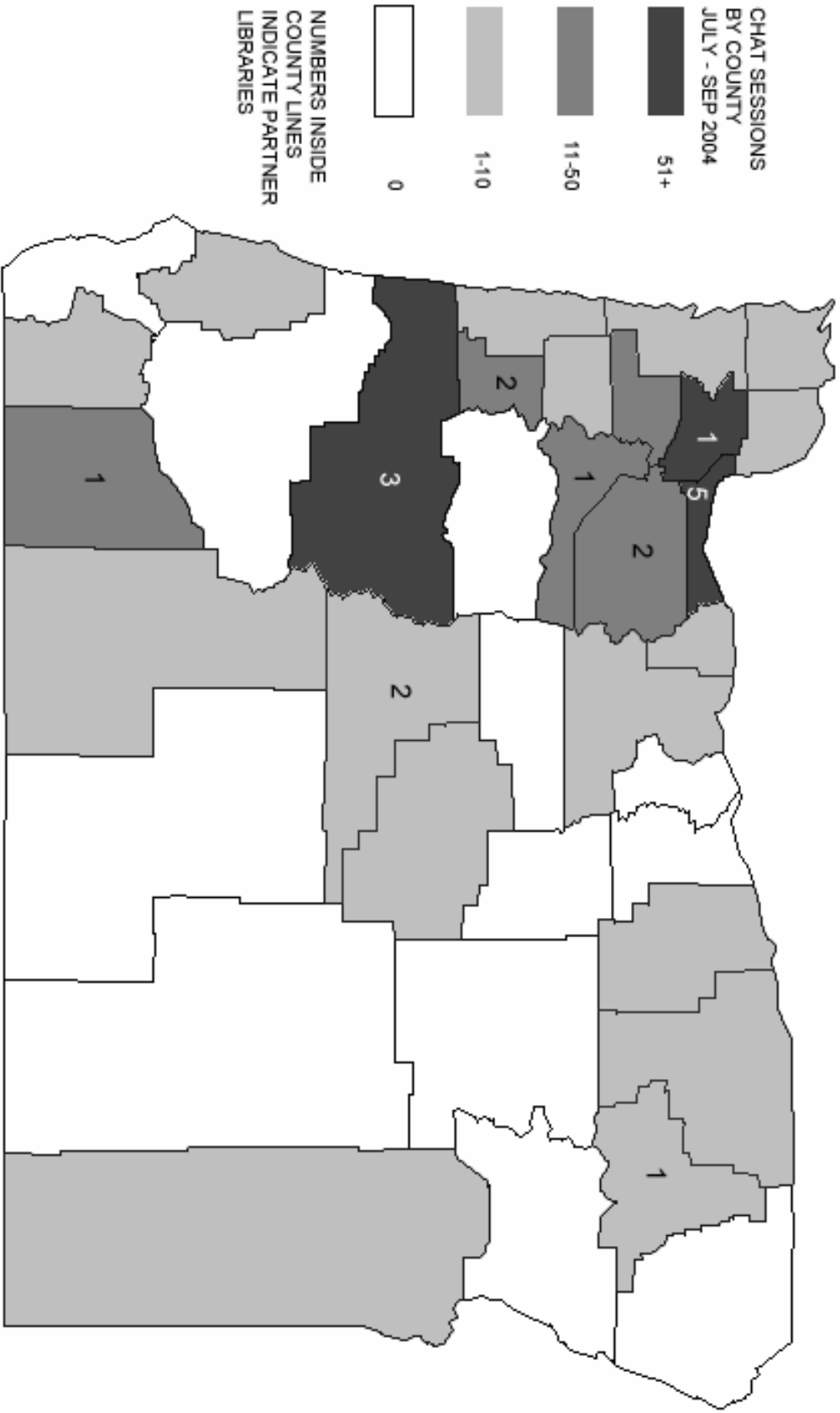
Chat sessions by county

County	This Quarter (7/1/04 – 9/30/04)	Total (4/16/03- 9/30/04)
Baker	0	2
Benton	17	178
Clackamas	14	184
Clatsop	1	6
Columbia	1	7
Coos	1	24
Crook	2	18
Curry	0	7
Deschutes	6	133
Douglas	0	28
Gilliam	0	110
Grant	0	5
Harney	0	4
Hood River	2	9
Jackson	14	488
Jefferson	0	12
Josephine	2	58
Klamath	1	45
Lake	0	2
Lane	54	858
Lincoln	1	34
Linn	0	17
Malheur	2	18
Marion	10	157
Morrow	1	6
Multnomah	66	902
Polk	1	20
Sherman	0	2
Tillamook	2	7
Umatilla	1	39
Union	1	47
Wallowa	0	1
Wasco	2	27
Washington	58	494
Wheeler	0	26
Yamhill	11	46
Unknown	183	196
Totals	454	4215

Comments:

This data was summarized by assigning each Zip Code in Oregon to a single county.

The attached map shows this activity geographically. Numbers on the map indicate partner libraries in each county. The map shows that L-net sessions are distributed geographically in areas where partner libraries already have a presence.



Staffing

Library	Chat sessions	E-mail questions	Total sessions/questions	Chat Service Hours	Average Time in Chat Session
Project Manager	10	8	18	2	0:35:28
Central Oregon Community College	2	0	2	4	0:40:47
Corvallis-Benton County Library	8	51	59	10	0:15:12
Deschutes County Public Library	22	33	55	28	0:11:01
Eastern Oregon University	n/a	4	4	0	n/a
Eugene Public Library	23	25	48	28	0:19:48
Jackson County Library Services	17	29	46	28	0:11:33
Lake Oswego Public Library	31	0	31	28	0:14:28
Multnomah County Library	188	87	275	302	0:16:39
Oregon Health Sciences University	n/a	5	5	0	n/a
Oregon Institute of Technology-Portland	28	0	28	20	0:16:48
Oregon State University	25	10	35	26	0:15:48
Portland Community College	8	2	10	4	0:12:36
Portland State University	16	2	18	32	0:13:21
Salem Public Library	31	6	37	40	1:08:44
University of Oregon	12	24	36	22	0:15:49
Washington County Cooperative Library Services	7	22	29	10	0:21:16
West Linn Public Library	26	0	26	22	0:16:42
Total / Average	454	308	762	606	0:19:58

Comments:

Total staffing statistics for Multnomah County Library include coverage by temporary staff to cover L-net during our off-peak hours, 20 hours a week. These staff accounted for 238 hours of chat service coverage, 126 chat sessions, and 34 e-mail questions.

This chart shows Salem Public Library to be spending an average of over an hour on each of 31 calls. Reports show seven calls close to three hours long, likely indicating a technical problem. Only two of the other 24 sessions that Salem worked on were over 20 minutes.

What's happening

Extending 24/7

Successful collaborative services around the country cite 24/7 coverage as crucial to marketing the service. We have extended our trial with Tutor.com's *Librarians by Request* service to make our chat reference desk open all the time.

The extension of the free trial will give us the chance to fully evaluate its success, including measuring user response, evaluating librarian performance and discovering what hours are the most important for us to cover.

VRD

This year's Virtual Reference Desk conference is November 7-10, in Cincinnati, Ohio. I will be attending in order to keep current, meet people, get ideas, and bring them back to make L-net a better service.

Answerland interim project manager Eva Miller will be the keynote speaker at VRD, and a team from OSU is giving a presentation on their pilot of a local service using the L-net software. I am excited that innovative librarians and our state's libraries are getting some national exposure and recognition in the field of virtual reference.

Teams

Our summer evaluation by D.L. Cohen Information Services recommended that we nurture a number of teams to help make our service a success. These are the assessment team, marketing team, services team, training team and service agreement team. The assessment and training teams have been active off and on in the last year, but a better structure will make them more effective. Look for announcements and charges for these teams in the coming month.

Directing traffic

L-net's e-mail reference system works by allowing each new question to be assigned to the next available library. This creates two traffic problems: First, local policy questions usually end up being redirected to the appropriate library, creating extra work. Second, when a reference question requires a specialist or strong collection in a given subject, staffing librarians don't always know where to route it.

We are planning on installing and using a new version of RefTracker, our e-mail reference software. The new software will help us direct local library policy and service questions directly to the appropriate library without human intervention.

We are also building a "Collective policy manual" that librarians can use as a quick reference to look up partner libraries' policies to help live patrons and each library's collection strengths. The process will be far from automatic, but it's a step in the right direction.