

L-Net Services Team Report

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The Services team worked on the following recommendations as part of its charge:

- *Evaluation, Recommendation 5:* Explore appropriate roles for academic, public and school libraries and whether a tiered reference system is needed. (Pages 22-23)
- *Evaluation, Recommendation 6:* Among participating libraries determine librarians and collections that can provide specialized knowledge. (Pages 24-26)
- *Evaluation, Recommendation 9:* Create a process for categorizing e-mail and chat content to provide clues as to what the current user-base looks like. Include categorization of subjects of questions. This can also be the first step in describing the subject specialties for which experts and special collections need to be identified. (Page 29)

The following is a report of our findings and recommendations.

L-net Transcript and RefTracker Evaluations

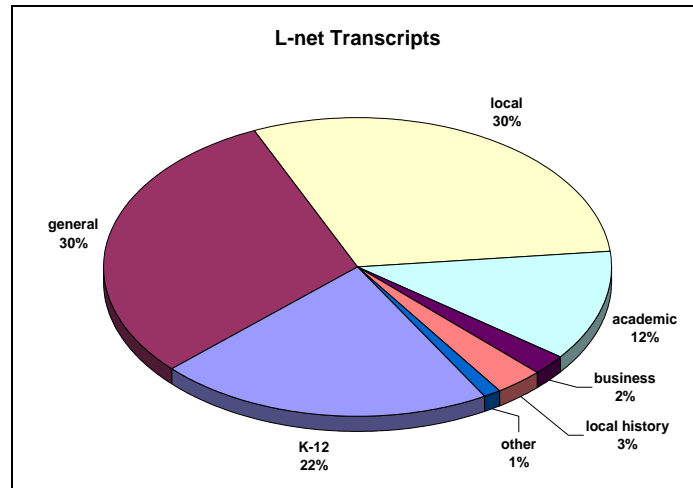
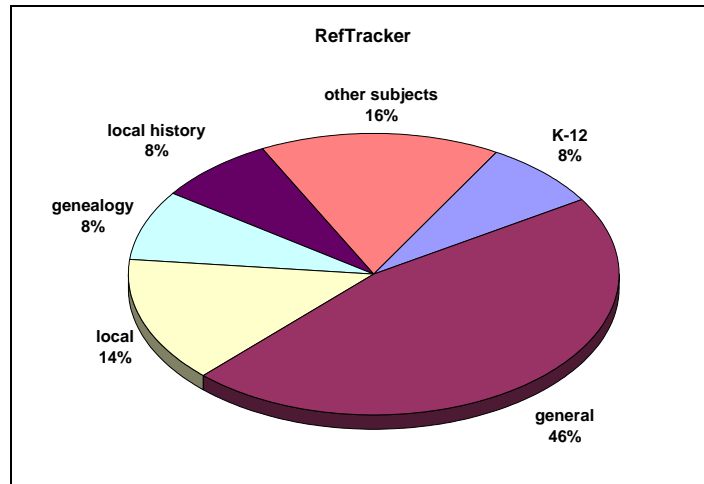
(see attached charts)

A total of 100 questions from both L-net live chat transactions and RefTracker (RT) email questions from a two-week period in March 2005 were chosen to be analyzed. Due to several factors (primarily lost calls and repeat questions) these total numbers were reduced to 76 RefTracker and 93 L-net transcripts.

RefTracker	
K-12	6
general	35
local	11
genealogy	6
local history	6
other subjects	12
Total	76

L-net	
K-12	20
general	28
local	28
academic	11
business	2
local history	3
other	1
Total	93

The charts below illustrate these findings visually, and include percentages:



Some of the results observed:

- There were many K-12 questions in L-net (22%), fewer than General type (30%) but more than Academic (12%). In RefTracker only 8% were identifiable as K-12 questions, and those identifiable as Academic questions were negligible.
- There is a high percentage of local library questions in both L-net (30%) and RefTracker (14%)
- We do not know time-of-day patterns or weekend behavior. Tracking this behavior may make it possible to focus service more specifically.
- Questions are often complicated and specific although do not generally need specialists. No significant need for subject specific queues was revealed in this analysis with the exception of local library information.
- Most L-net users indicated they had already done some internet searching before coming to L-net.
- Certain questions received via L-net seem better suited to email but are not always transferred to that format.

Local library questions

A significant number of questions received (particularly in L-net chat) deal with the local policies of a particular library or library system. Users often assume they are talking with a local librarian when they come into L-net and ask these questions. L-net staff often have a difficult time finding answers for these users because 1) not all information needed is on library websites, 2) not all libraries even have websites or 3) it is difficult to find the information due to the design of the website. Due to the collaborative nature of L-net scheduling, a local librarian is seldom online when such questions come in so online referral is impossible in the great majority of cases.

Our recommendations to accommodate these problems are:

- Refer local questions through RT if staff cannot find answer online.
- Offer more training in locating local library information. (recommendation to Training Team)
- More information on local policies should be placed on library websites and into the L-net Collective Policy Manual.

K-12 Questions

Due to the large number and challenging nature of these interactions, and the fact that they are a large percentage of our users, special attention should be given to K-12 student services in L-net. This is largely unnecessary in RefTracker due to a lower percentage of identified K-12 use, although asking for individual libraries to identify themselves as specialists in youth services for referral purposes would be helpful.

Other suggestions and recommendations include:

- Offer training to all L-net librarians on dealing with children and teenagers online.
- Create a special queue for K-12 questioners. Provide buttons on the linking page to allow patrons to route their questions to the kind of service they need, because not all schools may be utilizing the school link and students often come in through their public library webpage (we may wish to model this after AskColorado's web page-- <http://www.askcolorado.org/> -- which provides this option).
- Staff L-net with a youth services specialist during times of greatest K-12 use. Run a report of K-12 patrons against time of day to give a better idea of when specialists and/or double staffing would be most useful.
- Train staff to make better use of referral options for questions that seem better suited to email.
- Recommend that the Marketing Team investigate ways to highlight school services to Oregon schools.

Academic Users

There are several indications that a separate academic queue might be useful in L-net. Informal indications are that an academic queue may be more likely to be promoted by academic libraries, and promoted to students by faculty. Resources are also different between academic and public libraries; there are many shared resources due to Orbis-Cascades consortial purchases. Many academic librarians are untrained in

dealing with younger patrons and feel a high level of anxiety. This needs further discussions among academic libraries.

There have been meetings between three of the largest academic libraries (UO, OSU and PSU) and it seems obvious that these institutions, while interested to a greater or lesser extent, are not yet ready to form an academic queue. OSU is continuing with its own OSU-community service within the L-net service, PSU is doing a pilot during Summer 2005 to test out their own service, and UO ran a pilot and has dropped plans for a UO queue within L-net for the present and is investigating using IM with their students. These investigations may in the future lead to a separate academic queue, but currently these and other academic institutions are continuing to participate in L-net as they have in the past.

In the meantime, however, some of the concerns of the academic institutions can be met by the following:

- Move academic librarians to shifts with fewer K-12 users.
- Offer training to academic libraries in dealing with younger users.

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Valery King and the Services Team