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Virtual Academic Library Environment

2009 VALE Reference Services Survey Report

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Introduction

The following report is based on results of the Reference Survey, created and distributed by the VALE Reference Services Committee to assess the state of reference in New Jersey academic libraries. With increased access to electronic databases and Web2.0 technologies, the traditional model of reference, involving a reference desk and routinely scheduled librarian, is not the only way to provide services to library users. In response, many libraries have begun to explore different models to address the changing role of reference, in order to best meet the needs of our communities. Through these explorations, a number of alternate models, such as the Information Commons and the Brandeis Model, have emerged and gained popularity. Until now, though, little has been known about the use of these models in New Jersey's academic libraries.

During the 2009 VALE Users' Conference, the VALE Reference Services Committee sponsored a panel discussion ("Beyond the Reference Desk") to discuss some of these alternatives. The models identified in the presentation were based on the book "The Desk and Beyond: Next Generation Reference Services", by Steiner and Madden (2008), and introduced a number of non-traditional methods for offering reference services. The response by attendees and the inquiries that followed indicated that there was significant interest in exploring this topic further.

Therefore, the VALE Reference Services Committee began development of a brief survey to assess the current state of reference services in the state's academic institutions, based on its charge to:

...explore the role of traditional reference services and the use of technology at the point of service; either in person to users, on-line to users or through other modes of providing reference services.

Divided into six sections, the survey gathered a variety of information on responding libraries, ranging from institution size and library staffing to the reference models and virtual technologies used. In order to gain the broadest understanding of reference models use in New Jersey libraries, the survey was distributed to *all* institutions of higher education. Following revisions, the intent is to build upon the results of this first distribution with follow-up surveys in order to identify emerging trends, over time.

Scope & Method

Scope

In order to create as complete a picture of academic reference services as possible, the committee chose to expand the scope of the survey beyond just VALE members, to *all* academic libraries in New Jersey. Therefore, recipients of the survey were comprised of libraries at private and state institutions, community and county colleges, as well as other institution types, including special collections and archives. Institutions were identified from a variety of sources, including the *VALE Member Institutions* page (http://valenj.org/members/member_institution/all) and the *State of New Jersey Commission on Higher Education* website (<http://www.state.nj.us/highereducation/>).

Additionally, it was recognized that not all institutions operate a single library, but may contain multiple libraries. In some cases, individual libraries will even focus on specialized collection areas, and may provide services that other institutional libraries do not. These differences can be further defined when institutions span more than one campus, each with its own unique culture. Therefore, it was decided that the survey be sent to all institutional libraries (including unit libraries and/or branch libraries). Each institution was asked to submit one completed survey for each library building, identifying a single respondent to fill out the online form, to avoid unnecessary duplication.

Question Development

Initial question development and survey design began during the 2008-2009 term of the VALE Reference Services Committee and was conducted through a series of working meetings and online collaboration between committee members. Questions were created based on clarity, validity, and relevance to the survey's goal of assessing reference services. As each question was reviewed, the committee questioned whether or not it was appropriate to the survey, in addition to whether or not it contained any ambiguities that would make it difficult for respondents and/or later data analysis.

Through this process, a series of 44 survey items was developed, across six sections, consisting mainly of multiple choice and Likert-type questions. Each section focused on different institutional and library-specific information, and included: *Contact Information, Your Institution/Organization, Your Library, Reference Desk, Reference Services Models, and Additional Comments*.

The following individually describes the six sections, as well as the nature of the questions provided in each. For a full copy of the survey, visit <http://www.valenj.org/committees/reports/545>.

Section 1: Contact Information:

The purpose of Section 1 was to identify the specific library and institution represented in the survey responses. By recording institution name, library name, and address, it was possible to determine whether more than one campus or library was represented for a given institution. In addition, optional fields were provided for individual respondents at each library to identify themselves, providing personal contact information, should there be interest in receiving comments and questions regarding the survey.

Section 2: Your Institution/Organization:

Section 2 identified the type of institution (*State University/College, Private University/College, Community College (2 year), Special Collection/Archive, and Other*), its approximate size, and the number of libraries it possessed. In addition, this section asked whether library services were offered to persons outside of the institution, as an indication of service to a broader community of users.

Section 3: Your Library:

Questions in Section 3 focused on the library itself, including prominent subject areas (such as Music or Science) as well as librarian staffing. Not only did this section look at the number of full- and part-time librarians employed by each library, but it also asked whether or not non-librarians (staff, interns/students, etc.) are used in providing reference services to patrons.

Section 4: Reference Desk:

Section 4 focused on the presence and staffing of a traditional reference service point, asking whether or not a physical reference desk was present. If still in use, respondents were asked to indicate hours of operation, staffing by non-librarians, whether the desk is staffed by more than one person, and if the library is ever open during hours when the reference desk is not staffed. This information, while not immediately useful in analysis, will help to determine staffing trends, with future survey releases.

Section 5: Reference Service Models:

Section 5 comprised the largest portion of the survey and was based on reference models presented by Steiner and Madden (2008). Eight models were used, including: the *Traditional Model*, the *Brandeis Model*, the *Roving Librarian*, the *Information Commons*, the *Field Librarian*, the *My Librarian*, the *Research Consultation Model*, and *Virtual Reference Services*. In addition to exploring New Jersey academic libraries' experiences with these various models, respondents were asked to indicate how successful each was perceived to be, as well as level of interest in implementing or continuing a particular model.

Descriptions of models were given prior to model-specific questions, in order to ensure a common definition for each. This was an important feature, especially for those models that may have multiple meanings or subtle interpretations, such as the *Information Commons*. Definitions were also useful as introductions to those respondents who may have been unfamiliar with a particular model.

With the exception of the *Traditional Model* sub-section, libraries were asked to answer the same three questions about each model:

- What is your experience with this reference model?
- How successful (quality of service, volume of service, effectiveness, etc.) do you feel this service has been?
- If currently using this model, do you plan to continue this service?

The first (What is your experience with this reference model?) was used in determining current usage and interest in a given model. Using a Likert-scale, respondents were asked to choose the most relevant response for their library, ranging from *Not Planning to Use* to *Currently Using* (see below).

What is your experience with this reference model? (choose most relevant response)				
Not Planning to Use	Tried Previously	Considering	Planning to Use	Currently Using
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The second question (How successful do you feel this service has been?) identified libraries' perceived success in using the reference model. Results were also collected using a Likert-scale (see below), and provided an N/A option for those libraries that have not yet used a particular model.

How successful (quality of service, volume of service, effectiveness, etc.) do you feel this service has been?				
Not Successful	Somewhat Successful	Very Successful	N	/ A
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

And the final question (If currently using this model, do you plan to continue using this service?) followed up on the first two, asking those libraries that currently use a given model whether or not they would continue to use it in the future (see below).

If currently using this model, do you plan to continue this service?
--

- Yes
- No
- N/A

Based on usage and effectiveness, the responses to these three questions were intended to give a sense of current and continued interest with a given model.

Similarly, the questions utilized for the Traditional Model sub-section were also designed to assess the current usage, effectiveness and projected usage of that model, with one change. Because it is assumed that all academic libraries have used, or are currently using, a reference desk-based *Traditional Model*, the first question for this sub-section simply asks what the status of this model is, at the respondent's library (see below).

Are you still using the traditional model of reference services at your library (either alone, or in combination with another model)?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

As mentioned above, questions used to evaluate the *Virtual Reference Services* model also differed from the majority of other models in Section 5. While the first three questions remained the same, two additional questions were included, to gather more information about the technologies being used. The first included a list of technologies that have been, or could be, used in supporting reference services in a virtual setting. This list was compiled by the Reference Services Committee, and grouped into general categories, rather than individually listing specific virtual tools. Respondents were asked to indicate all of the technologies that are currently being used, through a series of checkboxes (see below).

Please indicate any Virtual Reference services that your library is currently using: (check all that apply)

- e-mail
- Q & A NJ
- Chat/Instant Messaging (other than Q & A NJ)
- Text Messaging (Text-a-Librarian, etc.)
- Knowledge Bases/FAQs
- Through a Course Management System (Blackboard, WebCT, etc.)
- Blogs
- Wikis
- Social Networking Sites (Facebook, MySpace, etc.)
- SecondLife
- Other, please specify

This section was not intended to be a comprehensive breakdown of tools and their individual effectiveness in online academic reference, but rather an indication of which tools are most commonly being used. In combination with the remaining questions in this sub-section, an overall sense of the *Virtual Reference Services* model's perceived effectiveness could be determined. The decision not to focus on individual tools was made primarily on the basis of keeping the survey relatively short. In addition, a more comprehensive assessment of these technologies can be conducted at a later date, focusing more specifically on the tools that are most used or show the highest level of interest by respondents.

One final question added to the *Virtual Reference Services* sub-section was an 'additional comments' field, with which to gather anecdotal notes regarding the technologies being discussed. Respondents were encouraged to provide information that could highlight particular issues, successes or considerations that were made when choosing a particular tool.

Section 6: Additional Comments:

This final section was provided for respondents to include any other relevant information that was not specifically requested in the survey. Because reference services at each library are unique, this open-ended text field allowed for the inclusion of anecdotal accounts, thoughts and suggestions for future survey questions. In addition, respondents were asked if they would be interested in learning more about any of the models presented. Both of these questions will serve to revise future surveys as well as in the development of committee workshops and conference sessions.

Survey Approval and Administration

Upon the completion of the question development phase, a draft version of the survey was pilot tested by members of the Reference Services Committee, at their respective libraries. Based on feedback, corrections and modifications were made and a final draft was submitted to the VALE Executive Committee. Following suggested changes, the survey was approved and converted to an online format using the Zoomerang (www.zoomerang.com) survey tool, for distribution.

Because it was unclear how many libraries and archives/special collections were contained in the numerous academic institutions across the state, a broad emailing was sent to the main library of each college and university in late November 2009. This included a brief introduction, statement of purpose, and direct hyperlink to the online survey. Two reminder emails were also sent over the next two weeks, both to the original recipients and through the VALE Directors' listserv.

Results

The results of the Reference Services Survey provided a snapshot showing how academic libraries in New Jersey provide reference to their constituents. As a static view, though, no real trends can be readily gleaned, although redistribution of this, or similar, surveys will allow for the tracking and prediction of future changes to academic reference, over time.

Below is an overview of the results collected from this first release of the survey. While most results reflect responses from 51 of the 53 respondents, some answers have been omitted throughout this analysis due to discrepancies or ambiguity of responses. When appropriate, these omissions have been noted in the following review.

Respondents

Survey responses were distributed relatively even across most institutional types, with the majority of results coming from community, state, and private colleges and universities (*Figure 1*). The 53 responding libraries represent 36 institutions, with 19 (36%) state, 17 (32%) private, and 15 (28%) community colleges. One response each was received from a special collection/archive and an institution classifying itself as 'other'. In order to maintain the confidentiality of these institutions, their responses have been omitted from much of the analysis.

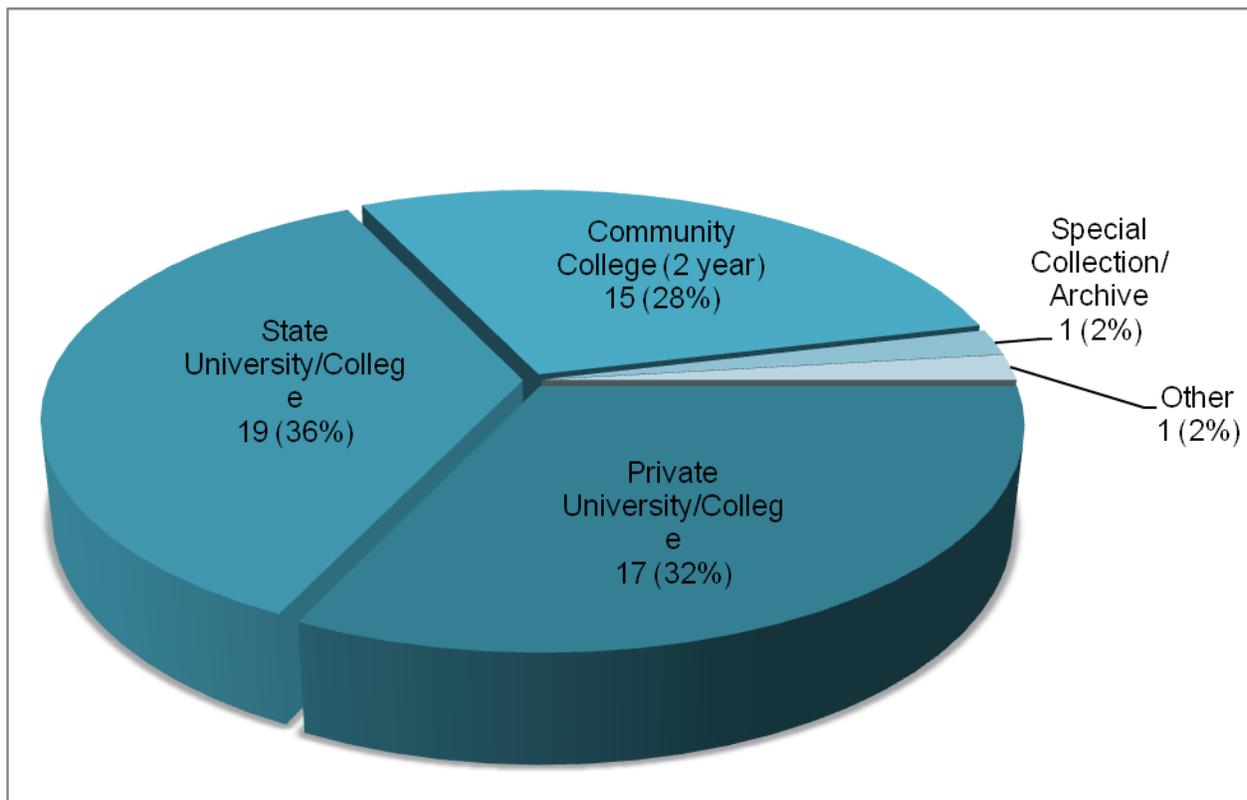


Figure 1: Survey respondents, by institution type

Institution/Organization

In reviewing the data from this section, it was determined that institution size and number of libraries, while not immediately useful, could provide valuable information for future comparisons. No further analysis of these responses was done at this time.

Related to institution size was the question of services to individuals from the public and other institutions, though. A broad look at this information showed that 46 of the 53 responding libraries *do* provide reference and/or other services to the public, including 12 of the 17 private institutions. Thus, academic libraries do not simply support their students, staff and faculty, but also have a larger role in the state, regardless of institution type.

Staffing

Results regarding staffing, while important in describing the overall status of a library, were also important in determining the resources available to provide reference services, which will be more thoroughly examined below

Library staffing results were collected using dropdown menus with standardized numerical ranges, rather than open text fields. This procedure was selected to reduce errors, ensure consistency, and simplify the analysis of results. And, while this provided an overview of the number of full- and part-time librarians at each library, it did not facilitate direct comparisons.

Regardless, results showed that *all* responding libraries employ at least one full-time librarian, while more than half (53%) have greater than six on staff. This is a promising result, showing that professional librarians are still valued resources in New Jersey's academic libraries, regardless of budgetary constraints. In addition, part-time librarians play a major role as well, with 73% of academic libraries employing part-time librarians, four of which actually have more part-time staff than full-time.

Figure 2 shows a breakdown of part-time librarian hiring, omitting special collections/archives and 'other' institution types.

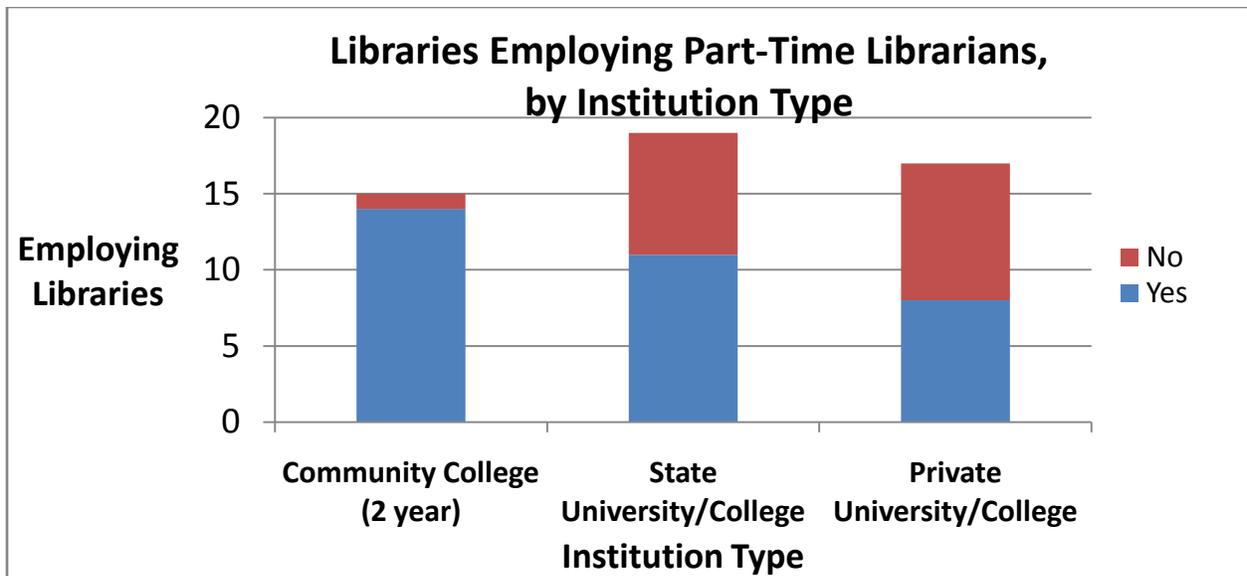


Figure 2: Part-time librarians, by institution type

Based on these numbers we can see that, of the 51 remaining libraries, community colleges appear more likely to employ part-time librarians than either four-year colleges or universities. There is no clear reason for this reflected in the responses, although it may be worth exploring in future surveys.

Reference Desk

The survey also investigated the presence and staffing of a physical reference desk, as an indication of more ‘traditional’ reference services. With increased access to more online resources and a growing number of dispersed users, some libraries have begun to explore alternate modes of reference services, some of which do not include a desk.

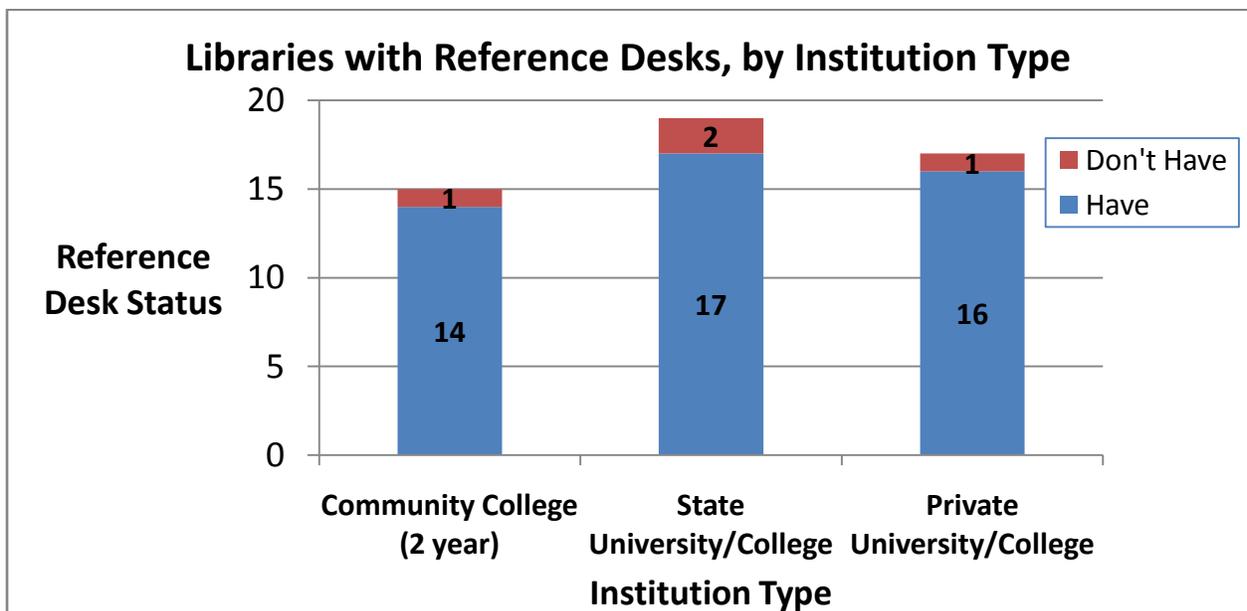


Figure 3: Libraries still using a traditional reference desk

Survey results showed that only a small number of responding libraries (4 of 51) have moved away from more traditional reference services, and are no longer using a traditional reference desk (*Figure 3*). Of these, two provided further explanation for this change. One has chosen to move to a more mobile model (Roving Librarian), while the other has indicated the volume of questions asked is simply too low to continuously staff this service point.

In addition rather than doing away with it altogether, some comments suggest that other reference models are being explored, in conjunction with an existing reference desk model. For instance, some libraries have even merged the reference and circulation desks into a single service point. Still others have implemented a tiered reference model (Brandeis Model), providing trained staff or students for common questions, with more advanced questions being referred to a librarian.

Another concern for libraries that still provide a traditional reference desk is the issue of staffing. As noted before, many have chosen to use both full- and part-time librarians to provide staffing for this service point. Respondents indicate that their reference services are in operation for an average of about 67 hours per week, with one library even offering 99 hours. With so many hours to staff, some libraries have turned to trained staff and or student interns to ensure services.

Add to this figure the number of hours that many libraries staff the desk with more than one employee, and staffing becomes even more of a concern. Just over half of responding libraries with reference desks offer double coverage to users. Among these, 10 implement this staffing model for more than 20 hours per week. Reviewing the data, there does not appear to be any correlation between the number of hours per week that reference services are offered and the number of hours with double coverage. Some libraries with a high number of operational hours do not provide this added staffing, while others with relatively few do. In addition, the overall number of librarians does not appear to have an effect on this decision.

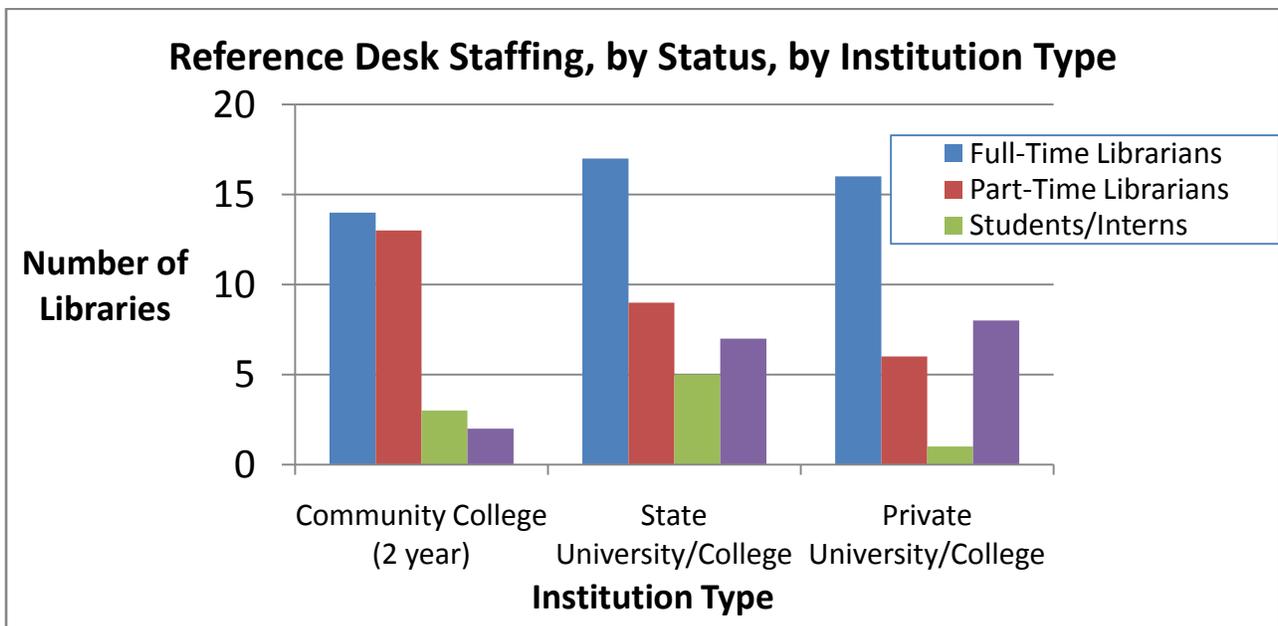


Figure 4: Reference staffing, by institution type

According to the results, about half of the responding libraries indicate that they are able to staff their reference desks entirely with librarians (both full- and part-time). Of the remaining 25 libraries, staff and students are utilized for an average of about 12 hours per week, and up to as many as 40 hours (Figure 4).

Based on a breakdown of library staffing practices, at least one library from each of the remaining institution types employs librarians, as well as staff and students (see chart). Notable among these results is the high number of part-time librarians utilized by community college libraries, whereas full-time library reference staff are more prevalent among state and private institutions. Also of note is a slightly higher use of students and student interns by libraries at state institutions.

This snapshot of reference staffing and the presence of a physical reference desk provides a starting point for future assessment. It is hoped that additional versions of the survey will identify emerging trends in desk usage and how different libraries are dealing with the challenges of staffing these service points, especially given the current financial situation in New Jersey.

Reference Models

Primary among this survey's goals was to investigate the various reference service models being used by academic libraries in New Jersey. Using a number of models identified by Steiner and Maddon (2008), respondents were asked to comment on their experiences with each. Results included not only current usage, but also explored library interest in models not currently used, as well as perceived success of those already in place.

With the variety of institution types explored, in combination with the varying staffing and specializations of each of their libraries, it was no surprise that many libraries have begun to branch out in terms of how reference services are offered.

- Traditional Model
- Brandeis Model
- Roving Librarian
- Information Commons
- Field Librarian
- My Librarian
- Research Consultation
- Virtual Reference

Upon reviewing the results, it became clear that the Traditional Model is still widely used among all institutions, with 44 respondents indicating that it is currently in use. This is fewer than the number of libraries reporting the presence of a physical reference desk, though, perhaps indicating that the desk is not necessarily an integral part of traditional reference services.

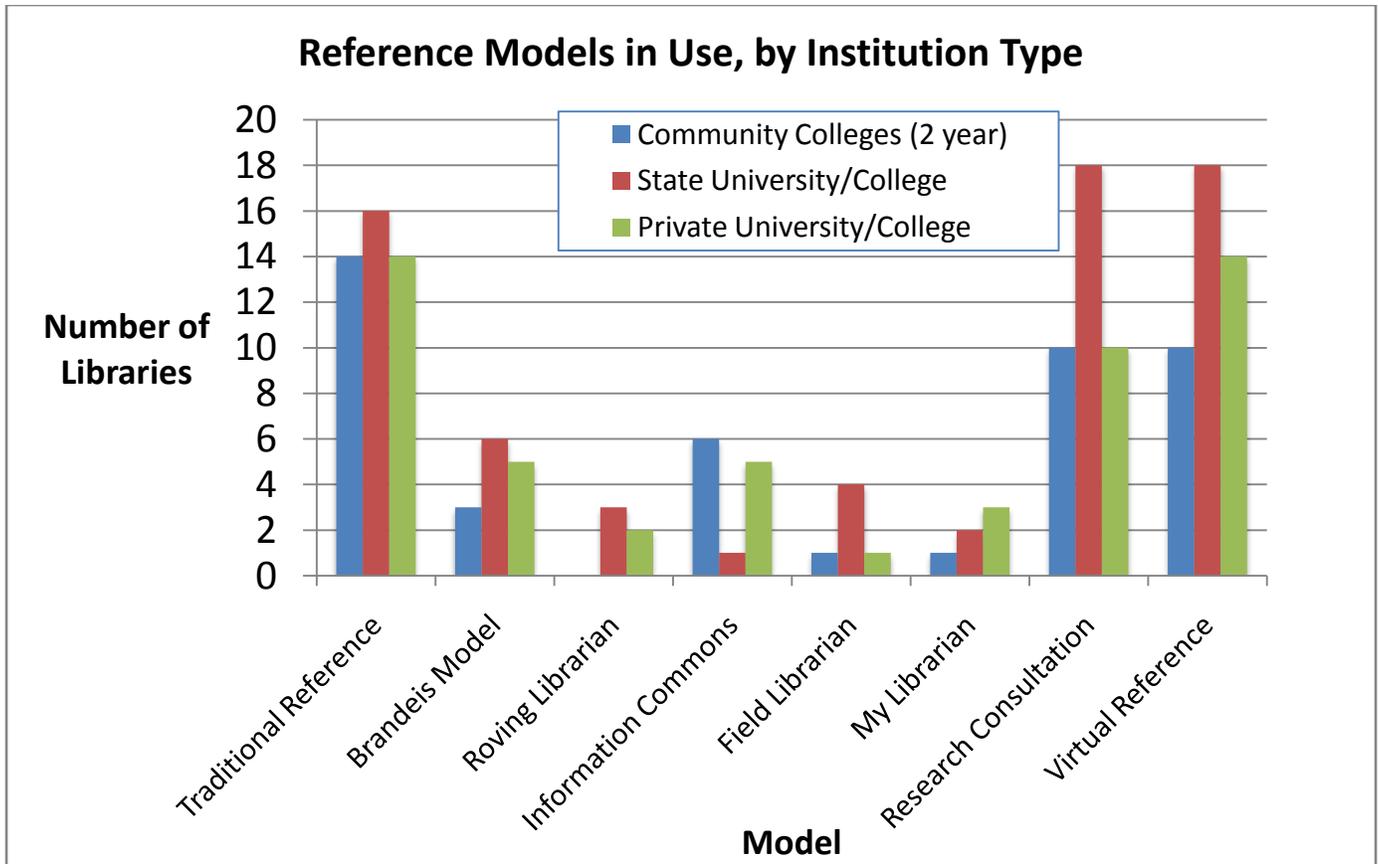


Figure 5: Reference model usage by institution type

Following closely were both Virtual Reference Services and Research Consultations, which were equally represented among state institutions and community colleges, with a higher use of virtual reference by private institutions. Other reference models showed only modest representation, with usage by only five or six libraries, in most cases. Two exceptions to this were the Brandeis Model, which had higher implementation among state and private schools, and the Information Commons, that seems to be more prevalent among community college libraries.

Additionally, it was discovered that only one library reported using just a single reference model, with over 75% using more than three at once. Some state and private libraries are using as many as five models, with one library supporting seven of the eight models, simultaneously. In most of these cases, the predominant combination of models was reported to be Traditional, Research Consultations and Virtual Reference Services.

Perceived Success

Among the reference models currently in use by individual libraries, most were considered to be successful in providing necessary services to users. In addition, the majority indicated that they intended to continue using the models in place.

In the case of the Traditional Model, the majority of respondents indicated that it was at least “Somewhat Successful”, with a lower number of libraries listing it as “Very Successful”, and one community college library labeling it “Not Successful”. In addition, two of the responding libraries also indicated that they did not plan to continue with the Traditional Model in the future. One of these respondents was the same community college library that expressed dissatisfaction with this model, while the other identified their experiences with it as only “Somewhat Successful”.

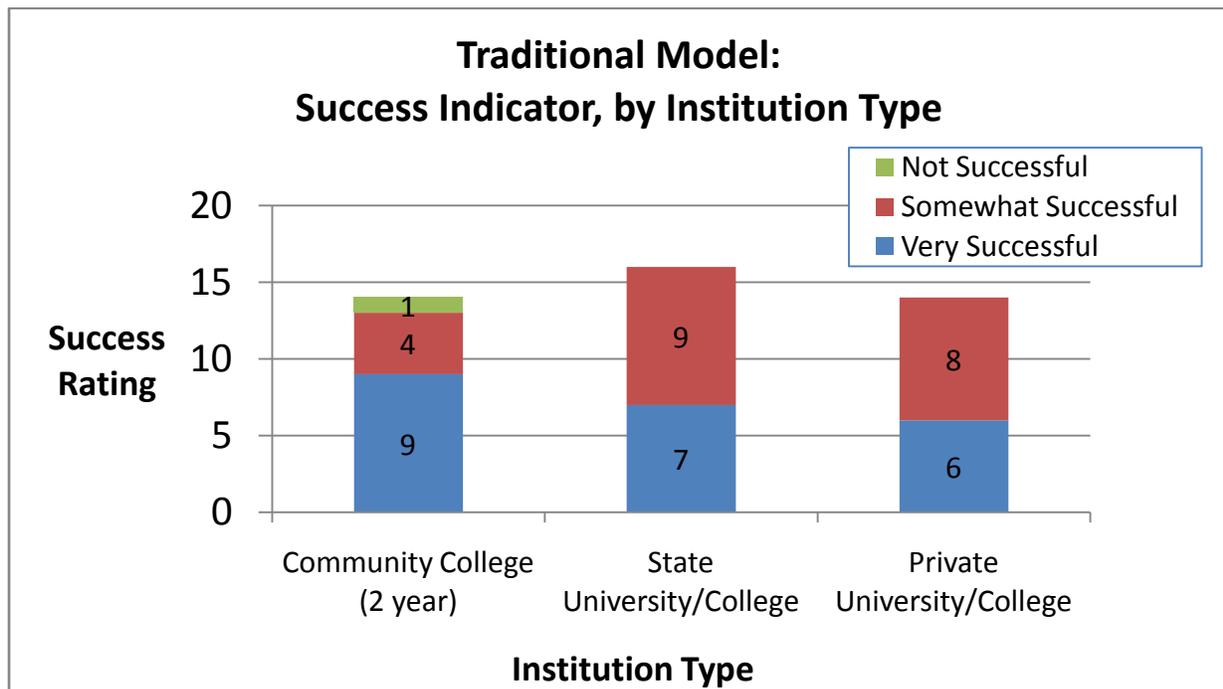


Figure 6: Perceived success of the Traditional Model, by institution type

Interest

Another consideration of the survey was to gauge the level of interest in each non-traditional model by libraries that had not already implemented them. This was done by compiling responses to the first question asked of each, which focused on libraries’ actual experience with using it. Based on the results of these questions, three categories were established to assess interest:

- The category of *Least Interested* combined the *Not Interested* and *Tried Previously* responses. This was considered an indicator that a given library had either already explored and discarded a particular model, or simply did not see it as a viable solution to their reference needs.
- *Most Interested* was created with a combination of *Considering* and *Planning to Use*, which indicated that a library was aware of a particular model, or already planned to establish it as part of their reference service structure.
- The final category of *Currently Using* simply looked at the number of libraries that had already implemented and were using a given model.

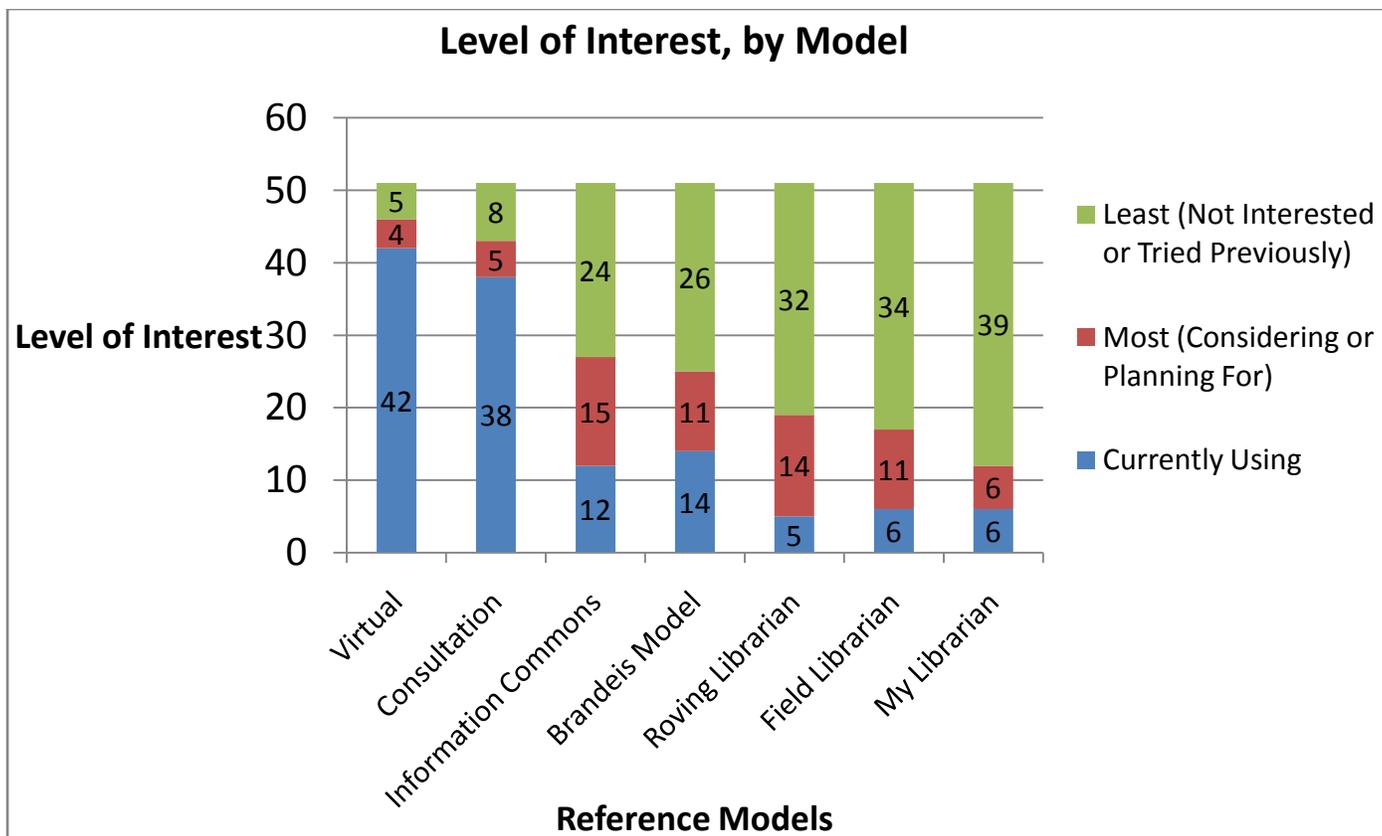


Figure 7: Level of interest in non-traditional reference models

The results (Figure 7) found that roughly half of those libraries not currently using *Virtual Reference Services* or *Research Consultations* indicated an interest level of *Most Interested* for these models. Of the remaining models, a rather pronounced decrease in interest is apparent when sorted by current usage, from libraries that are not currently using them. That is not to say that there is no interest in these models, though, with libraries still expressing interest learning about or implementing one of these services.

Possible reasons for this decreased interest level may have to do with the unique needs of individual libraries that simply do not see the benefit of a particular model to their users. For instance, implementing a *Roving Librarian* model in a multi-floor library may actually make library staff less visible by taking them away from the desk. Another possible explanation might be that librarians are not familiar with a particular model. So, a lack of interest may be due to a lack of awareness, or reflect the fact that a model had not yet been discussed. Therefore, it is recommended that future surveys be revised to further assess interest levels by allowing for additional comments.

Virtual Reference Services

Of particular interest to this survey was the use of virtual technologies being used in support of reference services. Virtual reference can encompass any number of technologies, including proprietary software and open source applications, internet-based Web2.0 tools or even original programs developed by individual libraries. The survey identified 10 broad categories of technologies used for virtual reference (see chart), and provided additional space for 'other' technologies that may have been overlooked.

Of the 51 responses collected, results indicated that 42 libraries were currently using at least one form of virtual technology in support of reference services. Upon further review of results, it was discovered that a number of respondents had said that they were not currently using these technologies, yet had later indicated that they utilized various virtual tools in providing reference to users. Based on a detailed analysis of individual tools, 50 of 51 respondents had actually identified at least one form of virtual reference technology.

Of the libraries that had indicated responded that they *did not* currently use the *Virtual Reference Services* model, numerous had also selected e-mail as the only technology used. Upon further consideration, the committee felt that respondents had perhaps felt that email had become such a commonplace technology that it was now considered part of a more 'traditional' model, such as the telephone may have been in prior decades. Therefore, results which indicated that email was the only virtual reference used were omitted from this part of the analysis. This omission left only 41 libraries, although the Virtual Reference Services model was still the most used of non-traditional models explored in this section.

Virtual Reference Technologies

- e-mail
- Q & A NJ
- Chat/Instant Messaging
- Text Messaging
- Knowledge Bases/FAQs
- Course Management Systems (CMS)
- Blogs
- Wikis
- Social Networking
- SecondLife

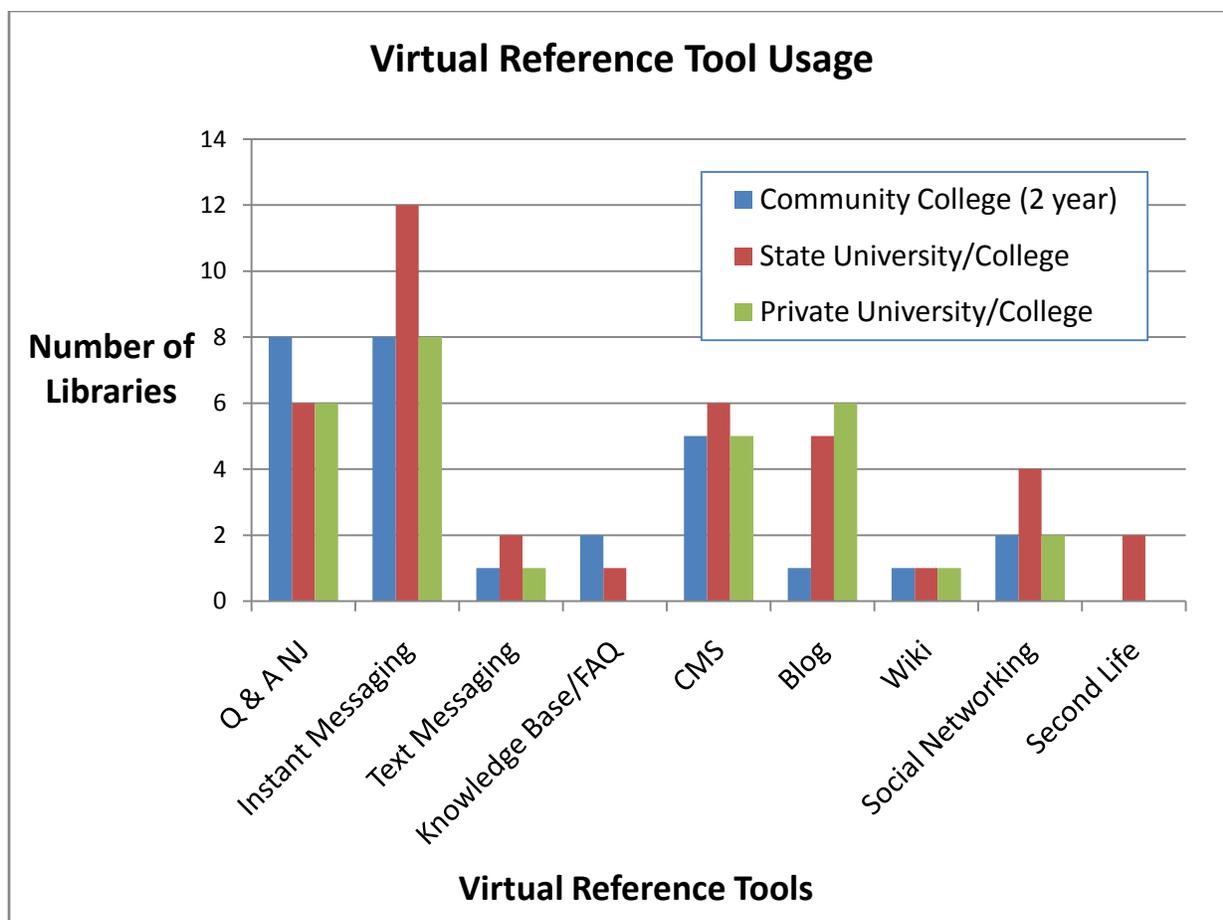


Figure 8: Virtual reference tool usage by institution type, minus e-mail

A breakdown of the various virtual tools used by New Jersey academic libraries revealed two technologies with a clearly higher usage than the others (*Figure 8*). Both Chat/Instant Messaging (IM) and Q & A NJ chat reference were shown to lead the pack in terms of virtual reference. Of these two, instant messaging was the most widely used (28 of 51 libraries), with Q&A NJ following close behind (20 of 51 libraries). These results are not surprising, considering the similarities between both tools. In fact, of the 28 libraries currently using IM reference, 12 have also implemented Q & A NJ.

Of the remaining virtual technologies, relatively high usage was reported for Course Management Systems and Blogs. Wikis and Knowledge Bases/FAQs were not well represented among the results, with only three responding libraries using these tools. This may be due to the existence of library pathfinders and, more recently, tools like LibGuides, which may serve a similar role to these two technologies. Use of LibGuides and similar resources will need to be considered and explored in future surveys.

Also less represented were Text Messaging reference and the once much hyped Second Life, which was only reported by two libraries. Text messaging’s low usage may be due to the relative newness of this technology in providing reference, and may be shown to increase in future surveys. Other factors may include the limited number of alphanumeric characters available for questions/replies and the fact

that text messaging is not generally a free service with most cell phone companies. Add to this the increasing numbers of ‘smart phones’ on the market, which provide access to email and the internet, and library users may simply be bypassing these text messaging limits altogether when remotely accessing library resources. Future surveys will have to investigate these factors, as well as libraries’ implementation of mobile-ready websites in determining the success of text messaging reference technologies.

Social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace received six responses, which seemed low for such a common online resource. This is likely due to the debate over the role of libraries and other academic entities in a primarily social space. No feedback was provided regarding *how* libraries are using social networking to reach users, though, or how effective these sites are in providing reference services.

In addition to the usage of individual virtual reference tools, responses were reviewed in order to discover how many libraries currently use multiple technologies for reference (*Figure 9*). Results of this analysis showed that slightly more than one-third of respondents are using only one of these tools for this purpose. As additional virtual technologies are added to the reference workflow, the number of responses, not surprisingly, is reduced, with only one library using six virtual tools at once.

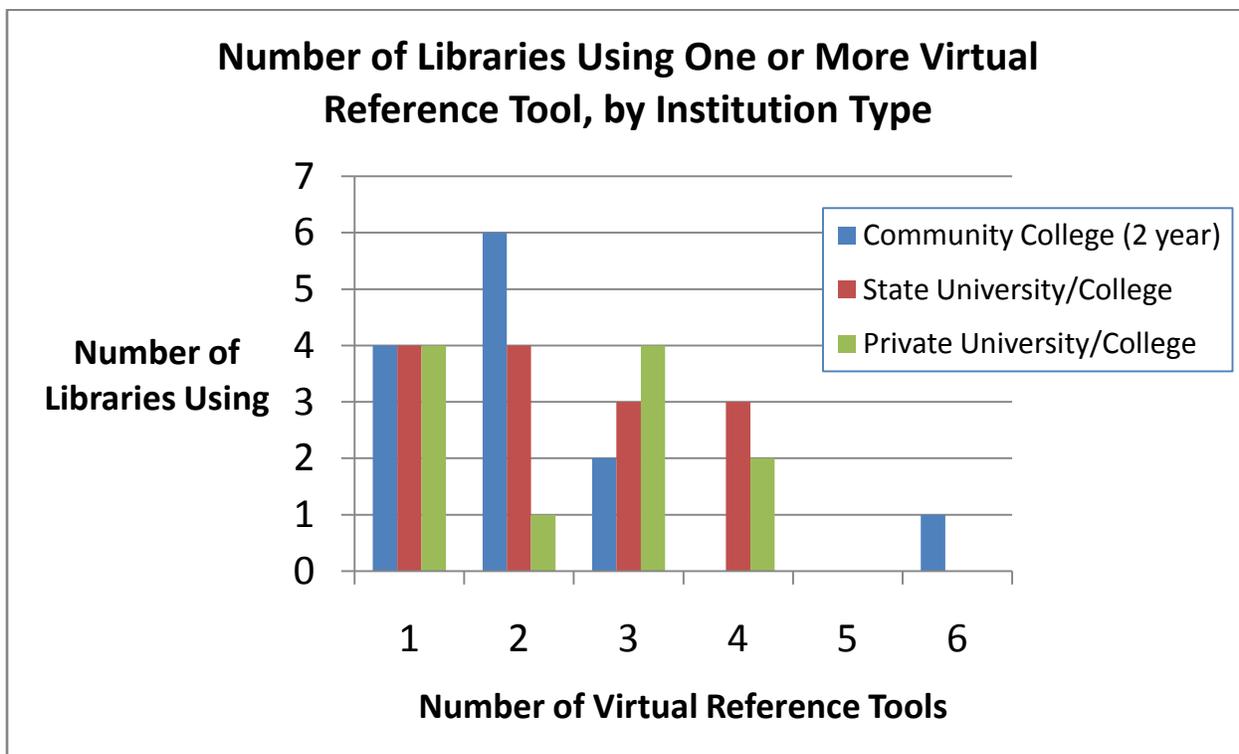


Figure 9: Libraries using multiple virtual reference tools, by institution type

Among the respondents who reported using the Virtual Reference Services model, most felt that it had been a success. Only two libraries reported dissatisfaction with this model, but no further information was provided to indicate why this was the case. Regardless of perceived success, all libraries that currently use virtual reference indicated that they planned to continue offering virtual services.

Due to the limited scope of the survey in analyzing the Virtual Reference Services model, responses were only intended to gather information about the prevalence of certain virtual technologies. Therefore, detailed information about each tool was not actively collected, but made available by some respondents in the comments field provided. Among these was one virtual tool not among the original list, which one library has recently piloted, video reference. Additional reference technologies emerge, a more thorough assessment will need to be conducted to chart the use and success of specific resources.

Additional Comments

Additional comments were encouraged at the end of the survey, both to gather more detailed information about specific libraries' reference practices and to solicit feedback about the survey itself. More than one respondent commented on the challenging nature of reference in regards to a more distributed patron base. As technology becomes more prevalent, students and faculty increasingly need access to the library and its vast resources from off campus. Some respondents have suggested that bibliographic instruction provide a balance to the often decreasing numbers of face-to-face reference questions. Also mentioned was the potential need for further collaboration among libraries and institutions in addressing the changing needs of academic library users.

Conclusions

The results of this survey have provided an interesting and timely view of the challenges facing academic libraries in New Jersey, today. While the *Traditional Model* of reference is still widely used, the changing nature of our society and library users has changed the way in which many of us conduct reference. What is clear, though, is that while each library has special needs and a unique culture, all of us are facing similar challenges.

This initial survey was only intended to determine trends in libraries, and to serve as a baseline on which to establish future directions in academic reference. Of the 53 libraries represented, a variety of models and services have been adopted, in an effort to accommodate the changing needs of users. Respondent ratings of success with non-traditional reference methods show that no two libraries have gone about reference in the same way, each finding the model(s) that work best for their unique needs.

Future surveys will be necessary to determine which models have a long term place in New Jersey's academic library environment. With the discoveries made by this first survey, many more questions have arisen than have been answered. The VALE Reference Services Committee hopes to find the answers to these questions, through the cooperation and contributions of all academic libraries in the state.

If one thing is certain, it is that the role of libraries will continue to change.

Appendix B:

Reference Model Definitions:

A recent publication, *The Desk and Beyond: Next Generation Reference Services*, by Sarah K. Steiner and M. Leslie Madden, provided a list of these new reference models which formed the basis of the survey questions. Below are the non-traditional models referred to in the survey, along with their definitions.

Model Name	Definition
Brandeis Model	A tiered-reference services model in which trained employees (or student assistants) manage directional and/or ready reference questions at a public service point, while professional librarians assist patrons with more in-depth requests in a more private location.
Field Librarian	Similar to the Roving Librarian, with the exception that reference transactions take place within the departmental buildings supported by an individual librarian.
Information Commons	Combining the reference desk with circulation and other services such as tutoring or computing services to create a collaborative space for learning.
My Librarian	Librarians are formally partnered with individual students/faculty, at the course or department level, to provide individualized reference services.
Research Consultations	One-on-one sessions with a librarian, either by appointment or at designated times, where more detailed instruction and assistance take place. Also referred to as clinics, appointments, and knowledge-counseling.
Roving Reference	Also referred to as the Mobile Librarian, this model takes the librarian and library services out of the library building, providing services at various locations around campus (dorms, student centers, etc.).
Virtual Reference	Includes a variety of services, including e-mail, instant messaging, and other Internet-based forms of reference service.

Changing Paradigm for Reference Services? Surveying the State of Reference in Academic Libraries in New Jersey

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 Co-Chairs, VALE Reference Services Committee

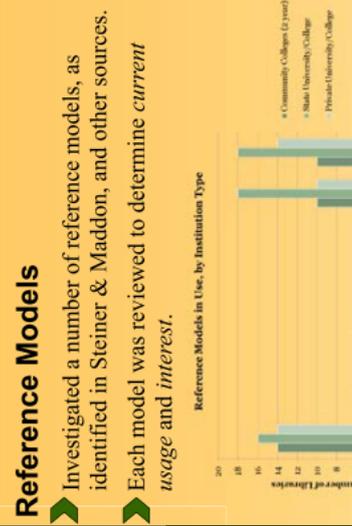
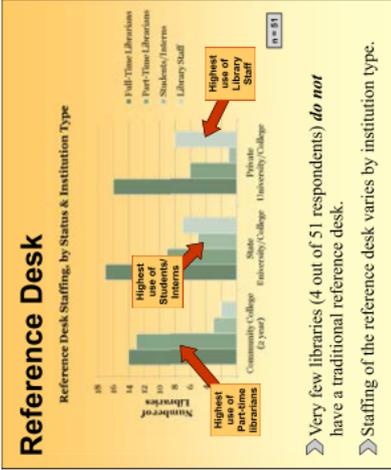
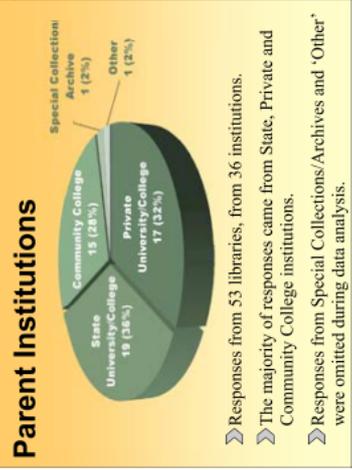
INTRODUCTION

Purpose:
 To investigate the changing nature of Reference Services in New Jersey's academic libraries.
 Based on VALE Reference Services Committee charge to:
 "... evaluate the role of traditional reference services and the use of technology at the point of service; either in person to users, on-line to users or through other modes of providing Reference Services."

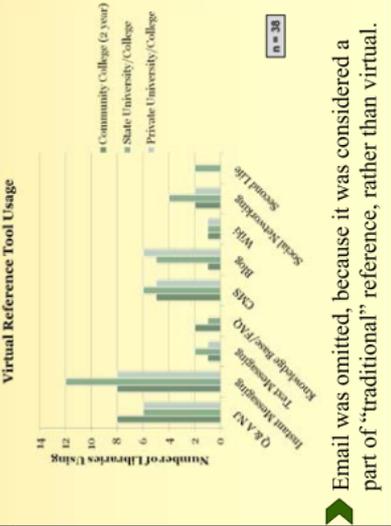
Method:
 Surveyed ALL New Jersey academic libraries regarding their use of different reference models.
 Models inspired by Steiner & Madden's The Desk and Beyond: Next Generation Reference Services.
 Presented case studies of non-traditional reference services.
 The basis for survey questions.

Data gathered through an online survey tool (Zoomerang)
 Survey gathered information about:
 The Parent Institution
 Library Staffing
 The Reference Desk
 Different Reference Service Models Used

RESULTS



Among currently used models:
 The majority of libraries feel that they are successful.
 The majority of libraries intend to continue.
 Of particular interest were the different forms of virtual reference services being used.



SUMMARY

Conclusions:
 The traditional reference model is still the predominant reference method in use.
 Use of different models varies across institutional types, and should be further investigated.
 Research consultations and virtual reference were the most common non-traditional models in use.
 76% of libraries are currently using 3+ models; most often using a combination of Traditional, Virtual, & Reference Consultations.
 38 of the libraries surveyed are using some form of virtual reference.
Instant Messaging (and the similar *Q&A NJ*) is the most commonly used form of virtual reference.

Comments:
 There is a perceived need for more virtual reference, balanced by a decrease in in-person transactions.
 Concerns were expressed about workload and the inclusion of additional services.
 The lack of interest in certain models may be due to lack of awareness, or differing definitions.

Future Directions:
 Survey serves as a benchmark of reference services in NJ academic libraries and will be repeated to determine changes over time.
 In future revisions, additional focus will be placed on individual virtual reference tools and the ways in which they are being used.
 Workshops and programs will be developed in response to areas of interest identified through the survey.