

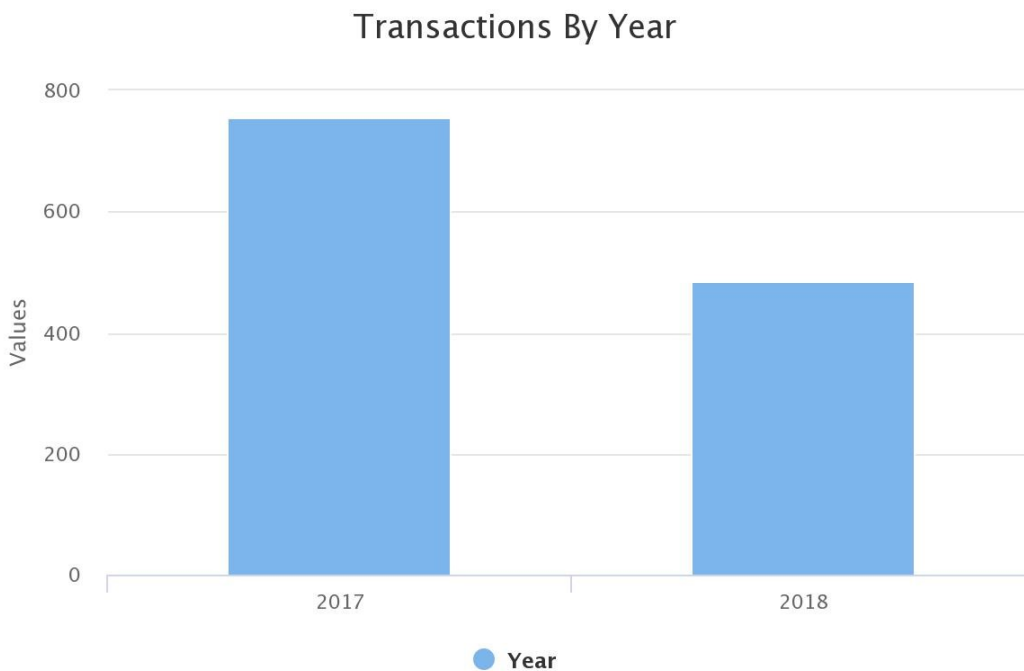
**Indiana University Kokomo Library
Research Help Desk
Spring 2018**

Compiled by Meg Galasso, Information Services Librarian & Archivist, May 2018

A total of 483 questions were recorded at the Research Help Desk during the Spring 2018 semester. For comparison, questions recorded at the RHD in previous fall semesters are as follows:

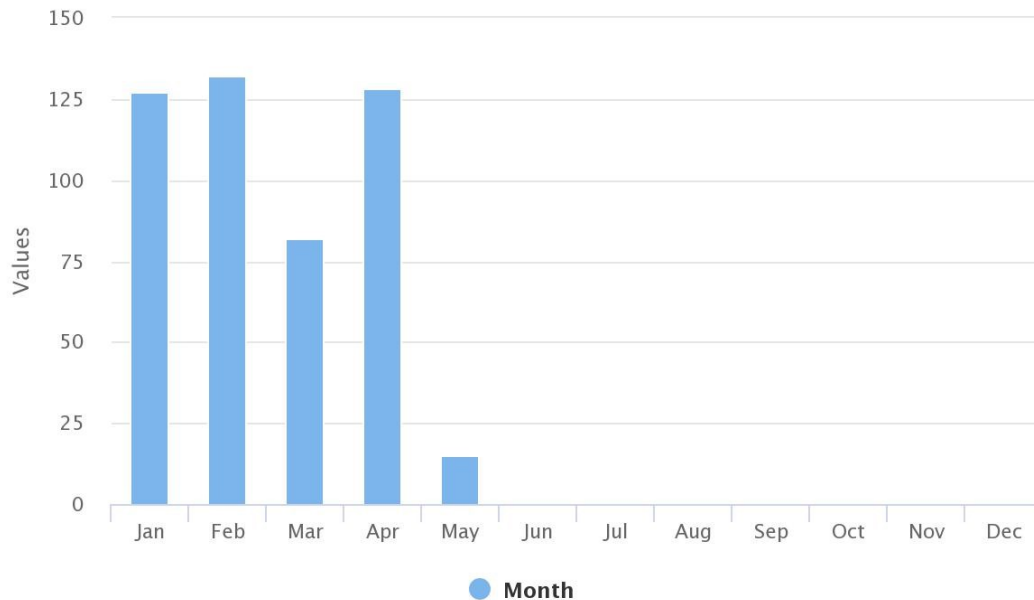
Spring 2015: 504
Spring 2016: 150
Spring 2017: 374

The notable increase between 2017 and 2018 is most likely due to the expectation, beginning in Fall 2017, that librarians remain stationed at the Research Help Desk throughout the semester. We experienced a significant decline (736 to 484) in questions recorded between Fall 2017 and Spring 2018 as represented on the chart below. Librarians have expressed that this decline seems to align with their experiences working at the desk in past years. This is affirmed in the data from the 2015-2016 academic year (408 to 150) and also seems logical when considering the smaller cohorts of new students in spring semesters. (The 2016-2017 academic year is not suitable for comparison as large areas of the Library were under renovation in Fall 2016.) We will revisit this question in Spring 2019 when we have another academic year of data to analyze.



Our usage was remarkably consistent throughout the semester, considering that the Research Help Desk was closed for one week in March due to spring break. Digging further, however, it is notable that March saw marked decreases in both overall (16.94%, 82) and Research (5.26%, 2) questions. While initially attributed to the typical pattern of research assignments within a semester, this is not supported by data from a similar point in the Fall 2017 semester.

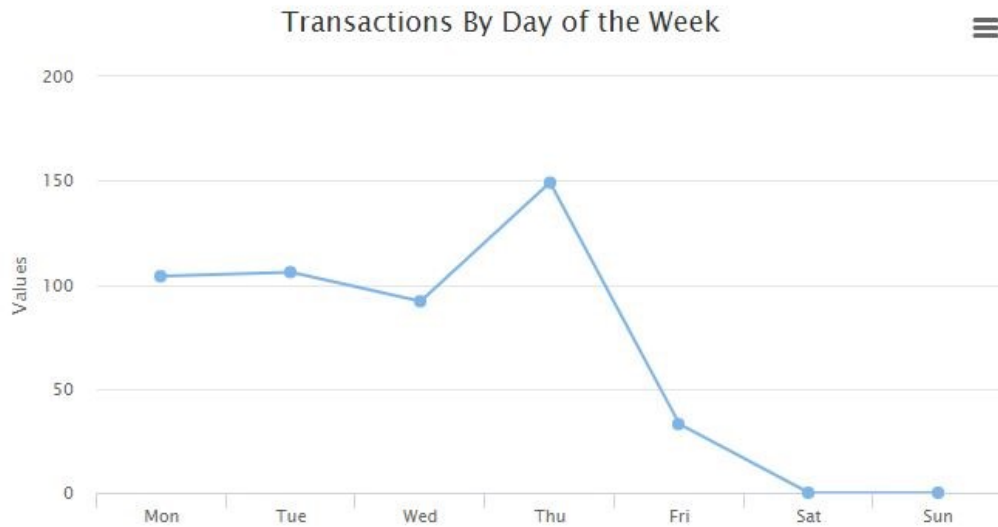
Transactions By Month



Daily and hourly distributions of questions largely align with expected outcomes, though Thursdays witnessed a relatively high volume of questions (30.79%, 149.) Cross-analysis of Library Service Desk Data and Gate Counts reveals that library usage overall was consistent Monday – Thursday during the Spring 2018 semester, so it is likely that other factors contributed to the volume of questions on Thursdays. These factors may include the diligence of the librarian recording questions, the librarian’s approachability and rapport with students, staffing at the Circulation Desk, specific courses taking place on Thursdays, and students completing assignments to submit online prior to weekend deadlines.

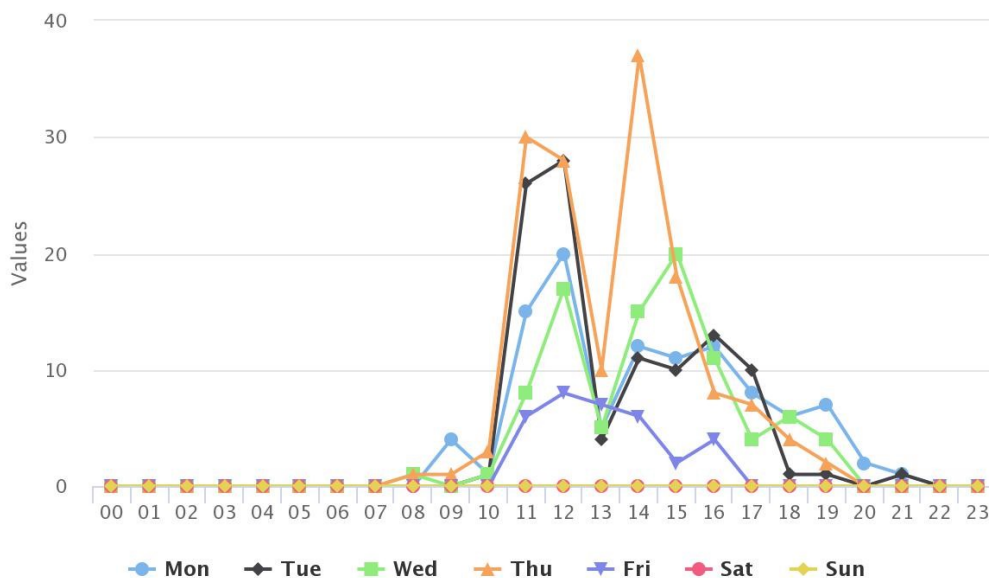
The low volume of questions recorded on Fridays remained consistent from Fall 2017 (6.39%, 47; 6.82%, 33.) Gate Counts are similarly low on these days (7.52%). Only one (2.63%) Research question was recorded on a Friday despite the Research Help Desk being staffed 11am-4pm. Paired with the consistent overall question data from the Fall, we may consider redistributing staffing resources accordingly.

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
104	106	92	149	33	0	0
21.49%	21.9%	19.01%	30.79%	6.82%	0%	0%

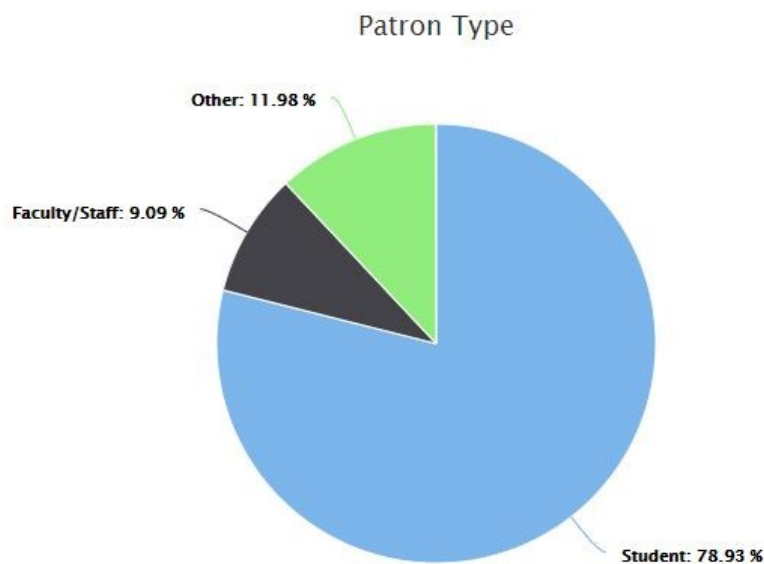


Hourly distributions align with expectations, including the daily dip around 1pm when most librarians sit away from the desk, in either their offices or the circulation area, to eat their lunches. To be sure that we are not missing potential users during this time, we have clarified our procedures to state that librarians should eat their lunches in the circulation area where they are more easily reached by student assistants and can even overhear some questions. This clarification is in effect as of May 2018.

Daily/Hourly Distribution

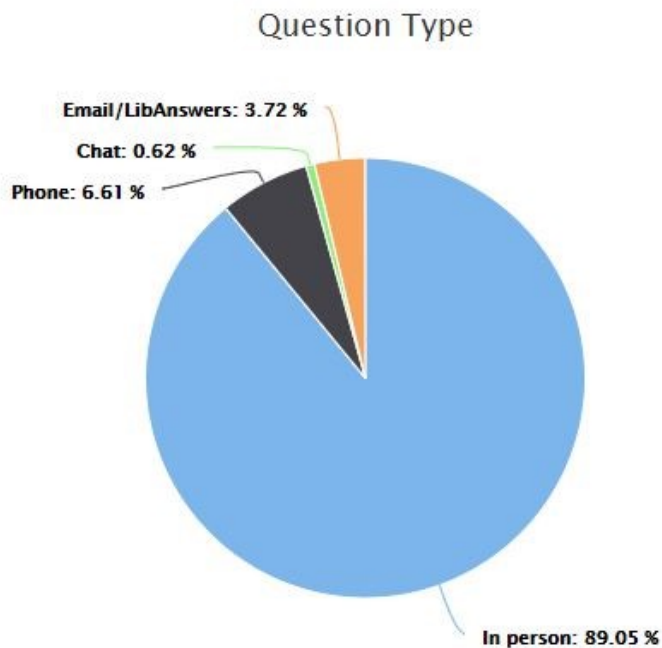


The Research Help Desk is primarily utilized by students (78.93%, 382), though faculty, staff, and members of the public constitute 21% (102) of our usage.



This semester included a soft launch of LibChat, a Springshare chat reference product, accessible through the “Ask Us” tab on the new library website. Promotion and more prominent placement on the website is planned for Fall 2018, though usage was still lower than expected (0.62%, 3.) That said, each of the three chat questions recorded were substantive research and circulation questions. In-person questions continue to be our most frequent (89.05%, 431.) Therefore, any future

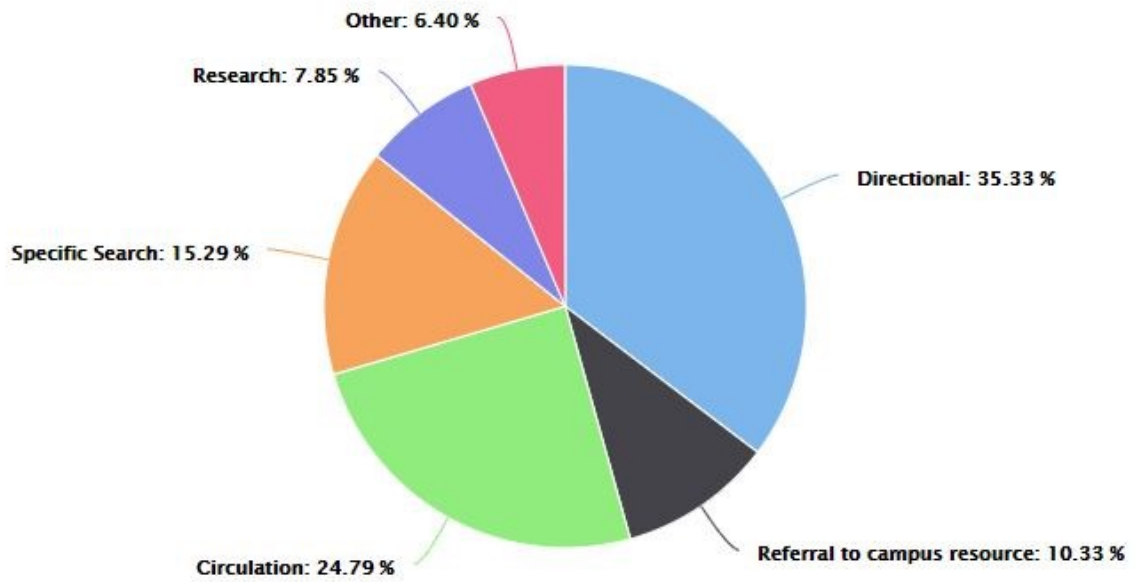
adjustments to Research Help Desk staffing must consider this user preference for face-to-face, point-of-need assistance.



The distribution of questions asked remained remarkably consistent from Fall 2017 to Spring 2018, including Research (7.88%, 58 to 7.85%, 38) and Specific Search (15.35%, 113 to 15.29%, 74.) This demonstrates that despite overall usage of the Research Help Desk declining from Fall to Spring, the decline was proportional across all question topic categories.

Two semesters of data now demonstrate that less than one-quarter (23.23%; 23.14%) of questions asked at the Research Help Desk relate to research or searching library collections. We may need to reconsider the prioritization of staffing the Research Help Desk, particularly when considering librarians' many other duties, the library's strategic plan, and other initiatives. Alternative models may include expanding the newly structured on-call model beyond summer, promoting chat (which can be staffed from librarians' offices), and working with teaching faculty to develop robust research consultations or clinics. These reference-focused events could supplement regular Research Help Desk hours, perhaps even improving visibility and rapport with students, leading to increased usage of existing reference services.

Question Topic



Individual user data is included below.

Unique Values	Count	% of Total Count (484)
Boruff-Jones, Polly (UID #2)	2	0.41%
Galasso, Meg (UID #3)	164	33.88%
He, Yan (UID #4)	74	15.29%
Kingery, Justin (UID #9)	41	8.47%
Pusnik, Angie (UID #1)	110	22.73%
Young, Martha (UID #10)	93	19.21%