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LibAnswers and User Patterns (Executive Summary)

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Executive Summary: LibAnswers & User Patterns

Introduction

The first in a series, this specific report details the information gleaned from an analysis of the LibAnswers statistical data. No patron information was compromised or revealed; furthermore, which is available through which the Libraries has used since the 2010-2011 academic year. The immediate outcome affiliated with this report is to use this information to support the development of Western Libraries User Personas. If you are interested in learning about personas in the user experience, [please go here](#). Questions? Please contact the UDWG at x4493.

Methodology

This section briefly describes the procedures used in gathering data for this report. These data are available to Libraries personnel who record statistics through the LibAnswers Statistics software. In gathering this information, the Usability & Design Working Group sought the following data types (which are largely universal across service points):

Patron Population. *Rationale?* Knowing which patron populations are using Western Libraries will supplement the development of personas.

Service Point. *Rationale?* Knowing which patron populations are using which service points is necessary for library services.

Transaction Numbers. *Rationale?* Knowing how frequently each population uses each service point will supplement the development of personas.

Top Three Services. *Rationale?* Knowing the top three services requested at each service point, and by each population, illuminates service patterns across patron populations at Western Washington University.

Length of Time per Interaction / Frequency. *Rationale?* Knowing the most frequent length of interactions per patron population, across service points, illuminates user patterns in use of library services, materials, and/or expertise.

Access. Rationale? Knowing *how* populations reach out to Libraries and Learning Commons professionals (e.g., through Chat or phone or e-mail) for services and support is important because it can inform future decisions about how to share information.

The methodology of this statistics review does have some limitations. The data gathered only reflect the interactions that occurred at service points within Western Libraries and Learning Commons between October 15th, 2014, and Oct. 15th, 2015. Furthermore, not all service points record their statistical data in LibAnswers, and thus, could not be included in this report. Lastly, there are definitional ambiguities across service points with regards to patron types. One such example? Whereas Heritage Resource units record if a patron is a WWU Alumni, the Research-Writing Studio usually simply records this patron as a Community member. Thus, these data may lack some granularity.

Results

In order to facilitate user-friendly access to the results of the statistical analysis, they are organized by patron population and by service point. Each patron population is prefaced by a summary statement, which includes definitional information and an overview of the results.

Western Washington University Faculty & Staff

Summary: This patron population refers to the tenured, tenure-track, and adjunct faculty, and most other employee categorizations (except student employees), who work at Western Washington University. These faculty and staff contact the Libraries for a variety of services and materials.

Results? With the exception of the Map Collection and the Information Desk, Western faculty and staff contact the Libraries through e-mail and through Chat at a much higher rate than other patron populations. And in contrast, service interactions feature more diverse inquiries and/or requests for teaching, learning, and service support needs. These sessions often occur more frequently in office settings (as opposed to service points), and these sessions typically last longer than those associated with other patron populations.

Western Washington University Students (Undergraduate & Graduate)

Summary: This patron population refers to the undergraduate, graduate, and Extended Education students Western Washington University. These students reside in various locations, and contact the Libraries for a variety of services and materials.

Results? WWU students are physically in the Libraries and Learning Commons at a much higher rate than their faculty and staff counterparts. Furthermore, they use library services – such as research consultation or educational technology -- more frequently and have shorter interactions. It is important to note that graduate students may have a different set of needs that has not been sufficiently captured through these data.

Non-Western Students (Collegiate & High School)

Summary: This patron population refers to collegiate and high school students who are not enrolled at Western Washington University but use library services. These students reside in various locations, and contact the Libraries for a variety of services and materials. The majority of these students use the Libraries in person and primarily for research support.

Community & Alumni

Summary: This patron population refers to the community members who use library services at Western Washington University but are not otherwise affiliated with the University. These community members have diverse research and support needs, and predominantly access the Libraries' services in person or through e-mail. While the majority of interactions remain under half an hour, interactions with Heritage Resources personnel can take longer and/or require more support.

Conclusions

These results illuminate high-level patterns in use of library services, materials, and expertise across several patron populations. This information is crucial for the data-driven development of patron personas for the Usability & Design Working Group at Western Libraries. How will this work? Here is one example: According to the data, when non-Libraries faculty and staff connect with the Libraries personnel for research or instruction support, they most frequently do so through e-mail or phone. Thus, the UDWG will include that information in the development of faculty persona(s) in order to ensure that future user testing best reflects the *actual* activities of WWU faculty and staff.

Works Cited

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