If we build it, will they come?

Understanding reference users in the age of texting

Lili Luo, Aug 13, 2012
Do you own a cell phone?

Do you text?
According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project:

• In 2011, 83% of American adults own mobile phones and 73% send and receive text messages.

• Those between the ages of 18 and 24 exchange a daily average of 109.5 messages.
Text A Librarian – how text reference works
Welcome to My Info Quest - Txt 4 Answers!

On the go and need an answer? Text your question to a My Info Quest librarian and the answer is delivered to your phone within minutes!

Text your library’s keyword (see list of library keywords below) to 66746 for instructions. It’s easy and accurate!

My Info Quest is brought to you by your library and other participating libraries across the U.S.!

We are accepting new members; if your library would like to join, please email Lori Bell or Mary-Carol Lindbloom.

Hours of Service
Central Time: Monday - Thursday 8:00 A.M. - 10:00 P.M.
             Friday 8:00 A.M. - 6:00 P.M.
             Saturday 9:00 A.M. - 6:00 P.M.
             Sunday 2:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.

Library Codes
Include the code for your library in your text message:

Arkansas River Valley Regional Library - AVR
Black Hawk East LRC - BHC
Bradley University Library - BUL
Brazosport College - BCL
Broome County Public Library - BROOME
College of San Mateo Library - CSM
College of Westchester Library - CWL
Colorado Mountain College - CMC
Contra Costa County Library - CCC
Frontier Community College - FCCC
### Text Reference Question Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Category</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Library Related</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Local Library Related</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ready Reference</td>
<td>69.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific-search</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Knowledge Related</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About My InfoQuest</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of Service Scope</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear Questions</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A sample of questions.

- What is the airspeed velocity of an unladen European swallow?
- Wut does comme d'habitude mean in French?
- What is the weather forecast for Portland, Oregon?
- What is the reason for each country having its own currency?
- Why are so many players in the world
How teen library patrons perceive text reference service
Only 1/36 was aware of the service

Participants’ willingness to use the service was evenly split among: willing to use it, it depends, and would not use it

They would be seeking help primarily for school or library related information needs
Response time: expectations ranged from three to twenty minutes.

Librarians’ use of texting abbreviations: only use it reasonably to shorten a message (e.g. USA).

Constraints of texting: character limit and cost: should not be a concern
Use/non-use of text reference service among library patrons
Among the 303 respondents, 255 (84.2%) never used the service, and 48 (15.8%) did.

59.8% -- were not aware of it
22.5% -- were not texters
22.5% -- considered their information needs adequately met via other reference venues
15.7% -- were self-sufficient information seekers
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How users discovered text reference service</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I found it on the library Website.</td>
<td>41.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>I learned about it in the library promotional material/events.</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I heard about it from someone I know.</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I heard about it from a library staff member.</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What users liked about text reference service</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s easy to use.</td>
<td>77.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s convenient.</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s fast to get an answer.</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m comfortable with it.</td>
<td>47.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarians are a reliable source of information.</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s cool and fun.</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is useful when I have an idea of the question I want to ask but cannot form it into a specific Google search.</td>
<td>2.1</td>
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Implications for Best Practices

Marketing  User Satisfaction  Training
Questions/Comments?

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