

Library on Location Report – trial 2

Summary

A second trial of the Library on Location service was conducted in term 2 of 2008. This trial involved providing the service in a single location at a regular time each week for one term. By regularly visiting the same location, Library staff became acquainted with people who frequented that area, and were able to offer materials specifically for their needs.

The number of reference questions answered on location compared favourably with those answered in the branches for the same time period, and the positive feedback received indicated that users valued the service. Students and staff frequently mentioned having been unaware of services we told them about.

Due to the success of the service, we recommend that the Library commit to providing the Library on Location service on a permanent basis.

Background

An initial trial of the Library on Location service had been run using a variety of times, locations and methods during term 4 of 2007. The service received positive feedback from students and staff who used it. It was decided that we would run a second trial to explore the effects of providing this service at a regular time and day and at a fixed location, and to better compare the usage of the Library on Location service with services provided in branches.

Trial set-up

We ran the service from the Erskine Maths/Computer Science building, outside the computer labs and in a spot that was visible from the cafe. We picked Tuesday from 10:15 - 11:15 as mornings had proved in the first trial to be more popular than afternoons, and during this morning tea time people would be congregating around the cafe.

The service was promoted on the news section of the Library homepage, on the Engineering Library blog, and through Chemistry and Physics department newsletters. As we had done in the first trial, we took lollies out to attract interest, with the intention of distributing these less frequently as students became more familiar with the service.

During the trial we maintained a trolley of items ready to go rather than assembling it on-site each time. We also displayed books "shelved" spine-out on the trolley, rather than facing them out in a broader display around the floor. This was done to reduce our setup time but, as a positive side effect, it also encouraged people to come in close to browse the trolley contents and so made it easier to engage them in conversation.

Results

We encountered a wide range of users:

- academic and general staff
- undergraduates

- pre-entry students
- international students
- students with disabilities
- users with children

As a result we were asked a wide range of questions (see Appendix A). Many people expressed surprise at the types of resources and services on offer at the Library. We came to know some regular users and were able to provide follow-up service on several occasions.

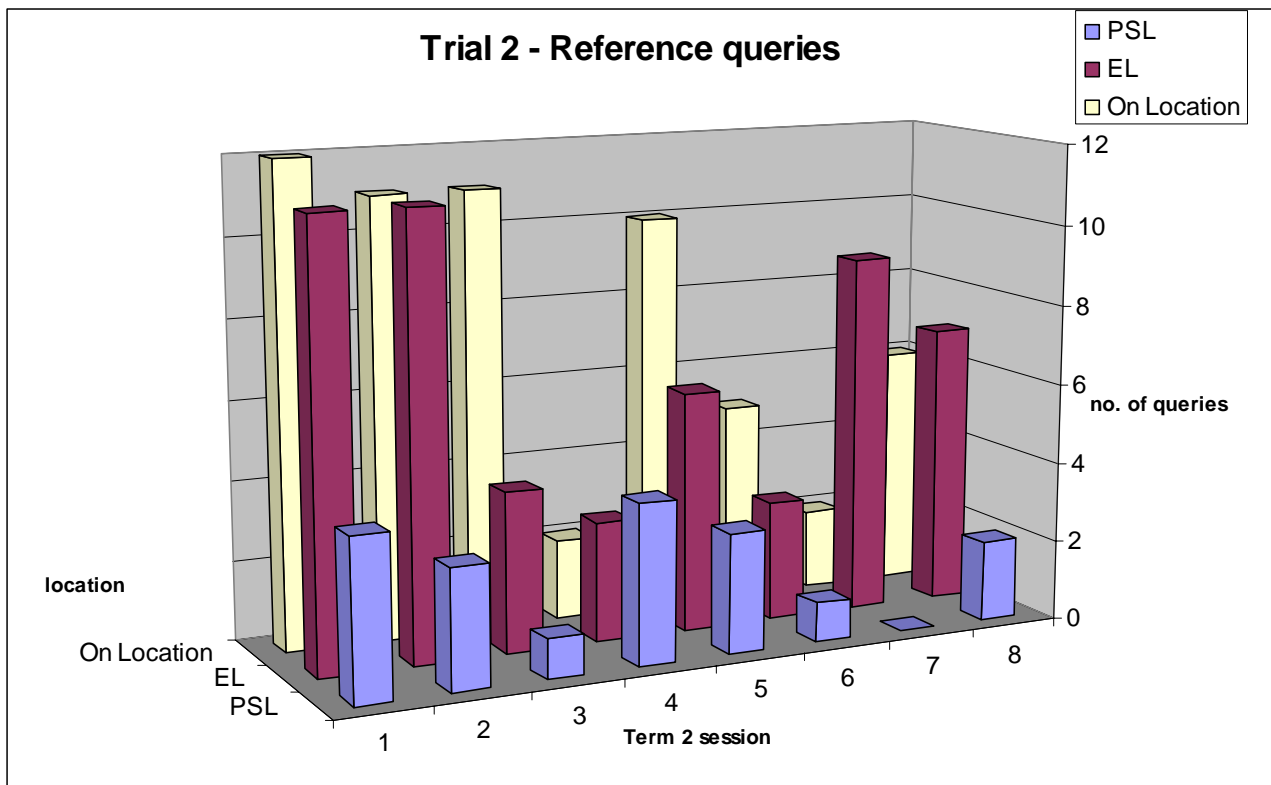
We interacted with people who had seldom used the Library and also found that it improved our rapport with students who were already regular Library users. For some people, Library on Location operated in a less intimidating environment than the Library. At the same time, more "while you're at it" questions arose, probably because students perceived there to be less pressure on staff time.

In session 4 we attempted to forgo the distribution of lollies, but this was not a success: without these to break the ice, people would hurry on by. With experience, we became increasingly more comfortable and adept at attracting attention and promoting the service.

Usage statistics

We collected reference and circulation statistics for each session both on location and at the Engineering and Physical Science branch libraries. Although we typically loaned or renewed a few items each session, and once received an item for check-in, the branch libraries overwhelmingly outperformed Library on Location for circulation statistics (see Appendix B).

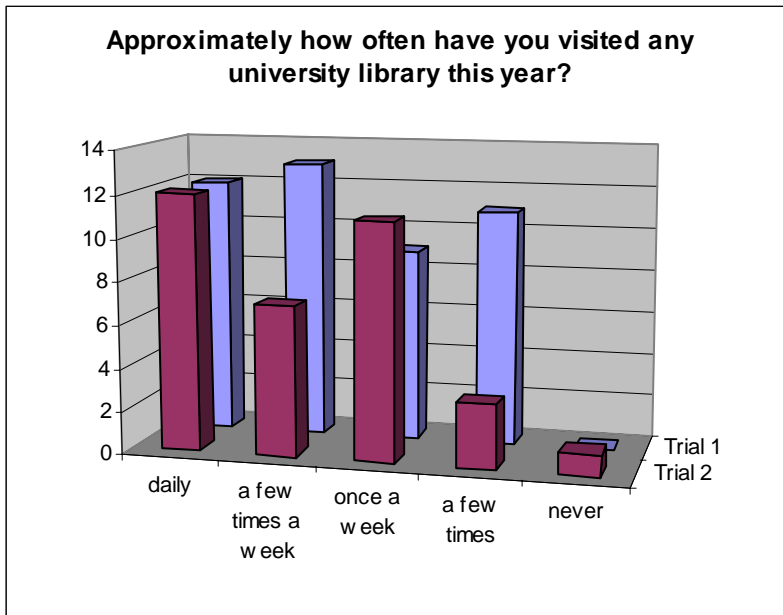
However, in terms of the number of reference queries, Library on Location performed favourably compared to the branches. The nature of queries answered at Library on Location also tended to be more involved than the quick answer type of query that dominated at the branch desks.



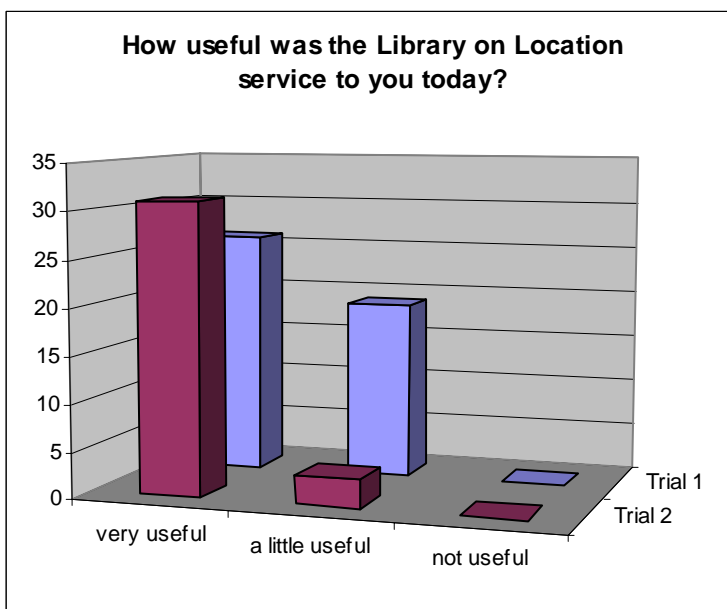
The low performance of session 4 was a result of not having any lollies with which to attract attention. By session 6 we were in the last week of term and students were hurrying to get assignments completed. Sessions 7 and 8 came when students were busy studying for exams.

Feedback

As during the first trial, we asked students using the service to complete a feedback card.



Most users had visited the library at least once a week, but we did help some students who had only visited a few times, or even not at all.



All feedback cards completed gave positive responses. In comments, one respondent wrote that "The library can be very intimidating and you can often feel quite silly asking questions but this service makes it easier." Another wrote that "[the librarians are] able to take [the student] through system without [the student] feeling

bad about holding people up". Two each wrote that they didn't know that we had DVDs, and that they appreciated the leisure reading collections we brought. All comments are reported in Appendix C.

A number of students, hurrying past on the way to lectures, told us that they would come back after the lecture. However, as we were only there for the one hour, they weren't able to do this.

Conclusion

Based on the reference statistics, provision of Library on Location can be justified on this campus. Feedback also showed that people appreciated the service, and the range of conversation topics was broader than would normally be covered in the same time period at the service desks.

It was worth choosing a fixed location to return to regularly. Although we had no evidence that those who did not stop one week would do so another week, the mood of passersby seemed more at ease with our presence and increasingly friendly over time. It also allowed us to build a rapport with repeat customers.

The use of lollies was important to attract the attention of busy students.

Recommendations

1. That the Library commit to providing the Library on Location service on a permanent basis.

- That the Library investigate various locations on campus to determine which have sufficient foot traffic and wireless access for the service.
 - Setting up at a different location each term would be ideal in order to maximise exposure.
- That the Library commit to staffing one or two sessions per week during term time on a permanent basis.
 - One-hour sessions would be sufficient, but the ideal would be a 1.5 hour session beginning at quarter to the hour so students rushing to a lecture can return afterwards.
 - Additional time should be allowed to collect items for the trolley and move to and from the location.
 - Staffing could be drawn from a pool of interested staff in any of the branches.
 - A small regular budget should be allowed to provide lollies.
- That Facilities design and build a suitable trolley that:
 - Can travel over uneven ground
 - Has built-in weather protection
 - Can securely hold materials to be transported between buildings and browsed from the trolley.
 - Has a fold-down end panel to hold a laptop

2. That the Library provide the Library on Location service during special marketing opportunities such as Orientation Week.

3. That the Library investigate the possibility of providing a Library on Location service in the evenings at one or more of the Halls of Residence.

Appendix A: Topics covered on location

- Video/DVD searching (x20)
 - didn't know we had movies
 - didn't know movies were free
 - browsing movies by genre
 - finding videos with subtitles
 - DVDs not playing on UC lab computers
- Interbranch delivery (x17 including a group of 10 browsers)
 - including resources from Education library for children (x3)
- Directional/factual (x7)
 - can return books to any library
 - paying fines
 - loading money onto Canterbury card
 - where to borrow/return books
- Catalogue help (x6)
 - searching for items
 - "binding trolley A" (needed book today, had been giving up)
 - adding books from trolley to MyList for later
 - renewing online
- ESOL questions (x5)
 - general info for new ESOL student
 - finding ESOL readers
 - requesting an ESOL grammar book
 - didn't know could borrow; assumed cost involved
- Reference questions (x5)
 - databases for autism research
 - computer programming books
 - books on native birds
 - learning French
 - easy writing books
- Other (x7)
 - learning services
 - variety of material in library
 - "thought the library just had subject books"
 - where to find fiction
 - info on library access for blind student and guide dog
 - AskLive
 - EndNote question

Appendix B: Full reference and circulation statistics

Library on Location

	29-Apr	6-May	13-May	20-May	27-May	3-Jun	10-Jun	17-Jun
Directional/factual	1	3	3	0	2	0	0	0
Library resources	11	7	7	1	8	5	1	6
Referral	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
IT questions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Longer than 5min	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reference total	12	11	11	2	10	5	2	6
Checkout	6	7	4	4	5	4	0	3
Checkin	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Renewal	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	0
Circulation total	6	7	4	4	6	4	0	3

Engineering Library

	29-Apr	6-May	13-May	20-May	27-May	3-Jun	10-Jun	17-Jun
Directional/factual	10	9	2	2	1	1	7	4
Library resources	1	1	2	1	3	1	2	1
Referral	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
IT questions	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
Longer than 5min	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reference total	11	11	4	3	6	3	9	7
Checkout	20	11	5	15	10	14	15	15
Checkin	11	18	5	10	8	16	15	5
Renewal	2	0	1	1	1	1	7	0
Circulation total	33	29	11	26	19	31	37	20

Physical Sciences Library

	29-Apr	6-May	13-May	20-May	27-May	3-Jun	10-Jun	17-Jun
Directional/factual	1	0	1	2	2	0	0	2
Library resources	0	3	0	2	0	1	0	0
Referral	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IT questions	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Longer than 5min	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reference total	4	3	1	4	3	1	0	2
Checkout	27	15	20	18	15	4	7	10
Checkin	18	31	7	4	25	3	18	14
Renewal	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Circulation total	45	46	28	22	40	7	25	24

Appendix C: Full written feedback comments

- *The library can be very intimidating and you can often feel quite silly asking questions but this service makes it easier Thankyou*
- *I didn't know library had dvds. Ladies were lovely and really helpful Thank you.*
- *good idea to bring some leisure reading!*
- *I LIKE THIS IDEA!*
- *Nothing*
- *The Crypt is a very strategic location and I would like to visit it.*
- *able to take through system without feeling bad about holding people up {smiley}*
- *yay for sci fi!*
- *Good Marketing*
- *Didn't know lib even had DVDs*
- *Should be in the COSC building more often as there is no library*
- *The librarians, very helpful and polite and have a great sense of humour.*
- *It's a great idea.*
- *Nice to see library culture in maths/science areas! :-)*
- *some lib on location services like this are good to educate students about library & its resources.*