



Guide to Descriptive Statistics and Measures

Adapted from:

McClure, C. R., Lankes, R. D., Gross, M., & Choltco-Devlin, B. (2002). Statistics, Measures, and Quality Standards for Assessing Digital Reference Library Services: Guidelines and Procedures. Retrieved from <http://quartz.syr.edu/rdlankes/Publications/Books/Quality.pdf>

Some changes were made to make this guide more appropriate for a collaborative reference service, and to focus it on chat reference, rather than other types of digital reference such as email. Those wanting more detailed information are encouraged to look at the original book.

Once you've retrieved your statistics from QuestionPoint, there are many ways to interpret/analyze them. This document presents some suggested methods. The statistics can be gathered during set periods – for example, for a one-week period, twice a year – or as part of an ongoing assessment.

Chat Reference Questions:

Chat questions received

This can be obtained from QuestionPoint in two ways. One is by using the Institution Report (available to all chatting librarians) and looking at the field *Number(Total) of Chat Sessions Requested*. The other way is to use the Reports of Sessions (available only to site supervisors) and looking at the field *Sessions with Our Patrons: Total* next to your library name.

Total reference questions received

This refers to the total number of reference questions received by all methods: chat, phone, email, in person, etc. This can be kept track via tally marks on a piece of paper, a shared Google Document, or a dedicated piece of software such as RefTracker.

Percentage of chat questions to total reference questions.

This is obtained by taking the number of chat reference questions, dividing it by the number of total reference questions, and multiplying the result by 100.

Chat Questions Received / Total Reference Questions Received x 100

This percentage can be useful when making decisions regarding staffing and schedules. For example, if a high percentage of questions are coming in via chat, it might lead to having more staff trained in using QuestionPoint, purchase of more electronic resources, etc.

Correct Answers:

Chat questions received

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Questions Receiving a Correct Answer

Due to the nature of collaborative reference, there are times when a patron may be given an incorrect answer from a chatting librarian, or when the chatting librarian is not able to answer the question and must refer it to your library for follow-up. This statistic measures the questions where a patron received a correct answer at the time of the initial chat (questions that had to be referred to the library for follow-up are not counted).

Correct answer fill rate

This statistic will measure the rate of correct answers, by taking the number of chat questions that received a correct answer, and dividing it by the total number of chat questions received, and multiplying the result by 100.

Questions Receiving a Correct Answer / Chat Questions Received x 100

In order to determine if answers are correct, full transcripts would need to be viewed, either via the Question Lists page, or the Review Transcripts Page. (See the site supervisor manual's section on reviewing transcripts for more information.)

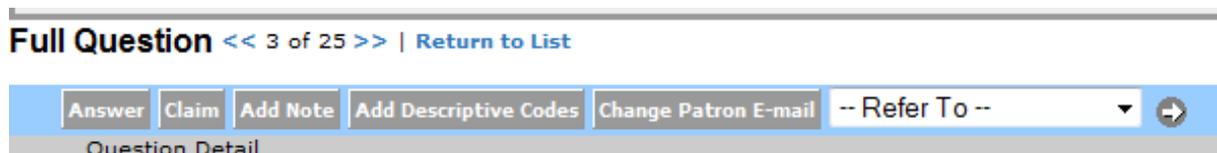
A low percentage can be resolved in a number of ways:

- making changes to the library policy page, based on the types of questions being received
- making changes to the library website
- sending poor chats to QuestionPoint's quality control team if necessary

Types of Questions:

Setting Descriptive Codes

QuestionPoint allows librarians to set "descriptive codes" for each chat **with their own patrons**, either at the time the chat ends (if a librarian is chatting with their own patron) or when reviewing transcripts from the "Questions" page.



Just click the “Add Descriptive Codes” button to select up to 4 codes to describe the content/topic of the chat, such as Citation, Directional, or Interlibrary Loan.

The site supervisor can add customized descriptive codes to the list by going to Administration→Settings→Descriptive codes.

This data can be useful when making decisions regarding collection development, purchase of print vs. electronic resources, or where to put certain information on the library website.

Chats with a given descriptive code

The site supervisor can find out how many chats were assigned each descriptive code by clicking on the “Reports” tab at the top left of My QuestionPoint, then clicking “Institution” and then “Descriptive Codes.”



Chat questions received

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Percentage of each descriptive code

This statistic measures the percentage of questions that comprise a given descriptive code, such as “Citation.” The number of chats with the given descriptive code is divided by the number of chats received in the same time period, then multiplied by 100.

Chats with a given descriptive code / Chat Questions Received x 100

Repeat Users:

Patron ID

QuestionPoint automatically assigns a patron ID for each unique patron e-mail address provided with a question or chat session. This can be used to determine the number of repeat users, but keep in mind that this is not an exact count for the following reasons:

- If a single patron asked multiple questions and used different e-mail addresses for some of the questions, the patron has multiple patron IDs.
- “Anonymous chat user” appears once in the report for all patrons (if any) who asked a question via chat without providing an e-mail address. Therefore, this could include several unique patrons, but there is no way to know how many.

The site supervisor can obtain this report by clicking on the “Reports” tab at the top left of My QuestionPoint, then clicking “Institution” and then “Number of Questions by Patron ID.” The report will show the numbers for the past 90 days – there is no way to customize the date range.

Number of unique, identified users

2712880	1
2784603	2
2784596	1
2784609	3
2784614	1
2815636	1
Total Number of Records: 31	

At the bottom of the report, the line “Total Number of Records” indicates the number of unique patron IDs during the last 90 days. Subtract one number from this amount, to discount all the patrons listed as “anonymous.”

Number of repeat, identified users

The number of repeat users during the past 90 days can be determined by looking at the report and counting the number of lines with a number greater than one (not including “anonymous”).

Repeat rate:

Find the percentage of users who are repeat visitors (during the past 90 days) by dividing the number of repeat users by the total number of unique users, and multiplying the number by 100.

Number of unique, identified users / Number of unique, identified users x 100

Knowing the number of repeat users can be a way of determining patron satisfaction. Just make sure to keep the above points in mind. Also know that not all patrons who use the service once are necessarily dissatisfied.