DART Reference Tracker Report Poudre Libraries, 2013

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Background

The Data Analysis Reference Tracker (DART) is a free, web-based reference tracking tool administered by the Library Research Service (LRS), based at the Colorado State Library in Denver. Dart is available online at dart@lrs.org and is customizable by site. Currie Meyer manages Dart use at Poudre Libraries, with assistance from OTL Librarian Amy Holzworth, and tech support from the State Library.

Dart is used as a sampling tool, three times per year, for seven days at a time, Monday - Sunday. All staff that interact with the public within our library buildings and the Answer Center use Dart to record each transaction they conduct with library customers during designated 'Dart weeks'. In 2013, the Dart weeks were February 11-17, June 24-30 and October 21-27.

Using the web-based, customized form (see sample, attached), staff can click on radio buttons to indicate the physical origin of the question, (e.g. circulation desk or roving), the category of the question, (e.g. informational or procedural), and the duration of the question. Transaction content (question and response) may be entered via text box. Poudre Libraries tested Dart in the fall of 2010, and has actively used it for data sampling in 2011, 2012 and 2013.

Application at Poudre Libraries

In 2013, as in 2012, around 120 staff members recorded their transactions with customers using Dart. Staff recording transaction data included librarians, library assistants, library service representatives, materials handlers on public service duty, and Answer Center staff. Until 2012, only public desk staff at OTL, HL and CTL as well as circ staff at CTL had been asked to record their customer information transactions in Dart. Therefore, the data gathered in 2013 is directly comparable to data gathered in 2012.

Data input

Informational transaction data was collected using the input form which included categories

Location

OTL

HL

CTL

Answer Center

Specific Location*

Circulation desk

Information desk

Roving

Other

*Answer Center's input form does not include this option, since almost all their transactions take place over the phone.

Question Type

Procedural

Renewal

Payment

ID check-out / card #

Express check help

Holdshelf help

Problem item / CR (Claims returned)

Check-in receipt

Course reserves (Harmony Library only)

Other

Reference

Readers' advisory

Informational assistance

Summer Reading Program (June only)

Directional

eMedia

iPad / Android

Kindle

Nook

e-audiobooks

Music or video downloads

Technology

Printing

Other

In 2012, I asked AC Supervisor Lynda Dickson for input on the Answer Center's Dart form. She suggested removing the specific location question since the AC answers the majority of its questions over the phone.

Also in 2012, I asked Digital Librarian Kristen Draper for input on the eMedia Question Type. She suggested the categories above, including iPad/Andriod, Kindle, etc.

Staff was asked to enter very brief narrative into the "Question: " and "Response: " text boxes only when responding to Reference or Emedia question types.

Question types and categories were listed from top to bottom based on frequency of use in 2012. For example, the most frequently asked question type is Procedural, followed by Reference. Within the Procedural question type, Renewal is the most frequently asked question category, followed by Payment, etc.

Staff training

Staff training was minimal in 2013. Currie sent email reminders about upcoming Dart weeks about a week before a Dart week was scheduled. Using All-staff email, Currie sent 'Cheat sheets' that defined each question category and question type (Reference, summer reading program, technology, iPad, etc), and provided examples (attached). Currie also emailed statistical updates and procedural reminders to All-Staff during each Dart week (attached).

Results

The average number of transactions per Dart sample week was 5,310 (Monday – Sunday). Projecting that average to the 51 weeks per year that our Libraries / AC are open, the District answered 270,810 questions this year.

June was our biggest Dart sample of the year, with 5,561 questions recorded by staff. Our biggest day for transactions was Monday, June 18th, with more than 1,100 questions answered. This number reflects the amount of people that Summer Reading Programs attract to the library.

Main /Old Town Library leads the District with about 38% of total transactions, followed by CTL and HL, both with 25%. The Answer Center had a little more than 11% of total transactions for the year.

The most frequently asked questions of District staff included those about:

Procedures, including questions often asked at the circulation desk (42%)

Reference questions including traditional reference / research questions, readers' advisory requests, and summer reading program questions (29%)

Directions, (12%)

Customers ask their questions at the

circulation desk (42%),

information desk (33%),

Answer Center (11%)

94% of customer transactions are completed in less than five minutes.

Comparisons to 2012

Reference transactions (total Reference Qtype combined with total emedia Qtype) during the three Dart weeks combined were down by 1,142 this year, a difference of 20%. Projected reference transactions for a 51-week operating year were down 19,431 from 2012, likewise a difference of 20%.

Answer Center transactions are up 1% over last year

Total transactions are down slightly from 16,151 in 2012 to 15,975 in 2013, a difference of 176 transactions, or 1.01%.

Transaction time in under five minutes is up in 2013, to 94%, from 92% last year.