Revamping the Reference Referral

Information Strategies for Student Workers



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Identified Problem

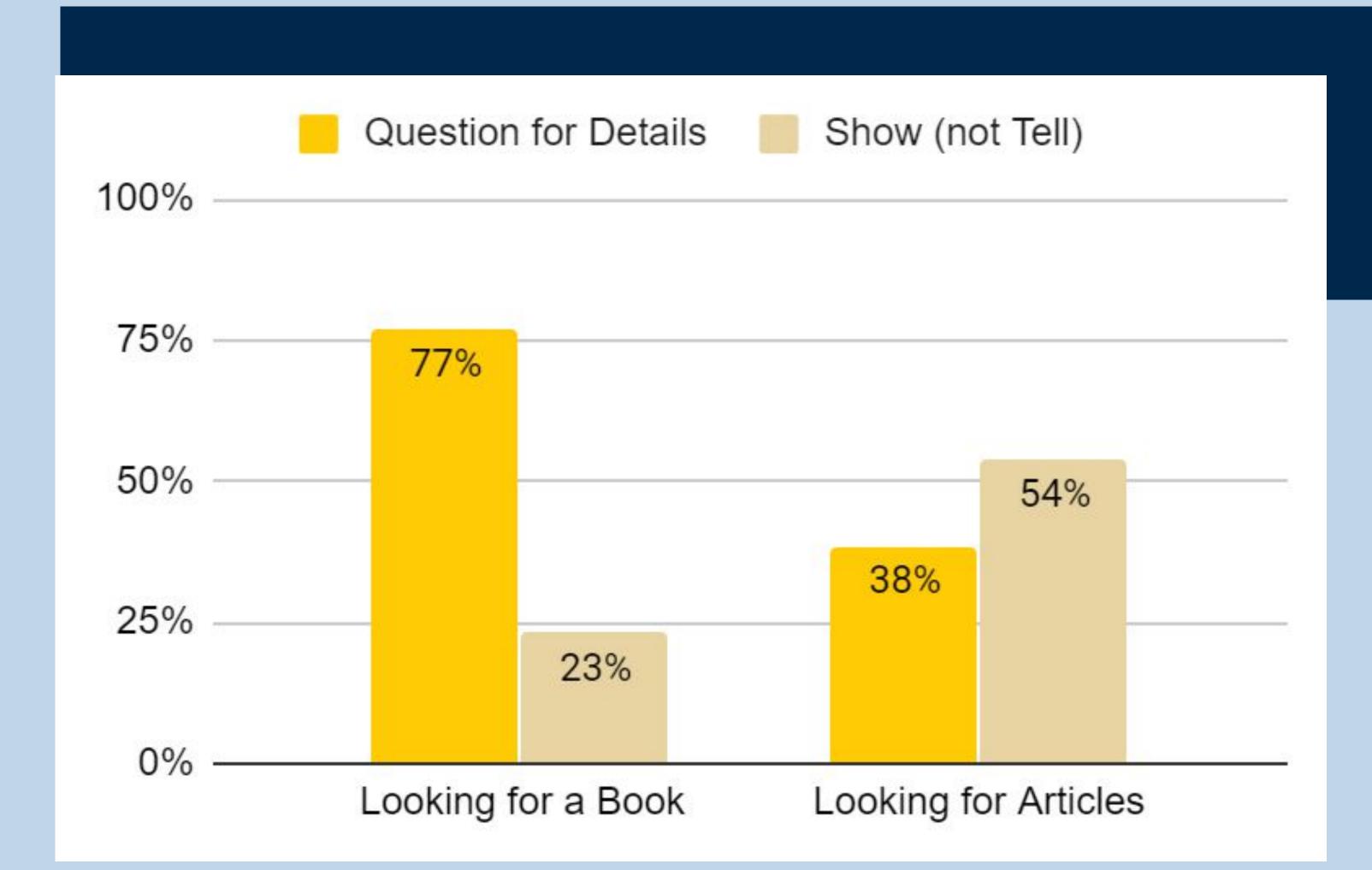
Library Info Desk Student Assistants (SAs) are trained to handle circulation duties, but are also expected to answer or appropriately refer questions about access to materials, research topics, & reference inquiries.

Initial Questions

- What types of questions do SAs typically answer?
- What types of questions to SAs typically refer?
- Are SAs providing consistent, high-quality responses to questions?
- Are SAs identifying and referring research and reference questions?

Gathering Data

- Survey given to all Library Info Desk Student Assistants
- Five scenarios based on Library Info Desk interactions
- Open-ended descriptions examined for keywords
 & concepts, accuracy, & completeness
- Multiple choice questions to report level of comfort answering question & likelihood to refer the question to a supervisor or librarian
- Also examined length of employment
- Students identified topics they would like to learn more about

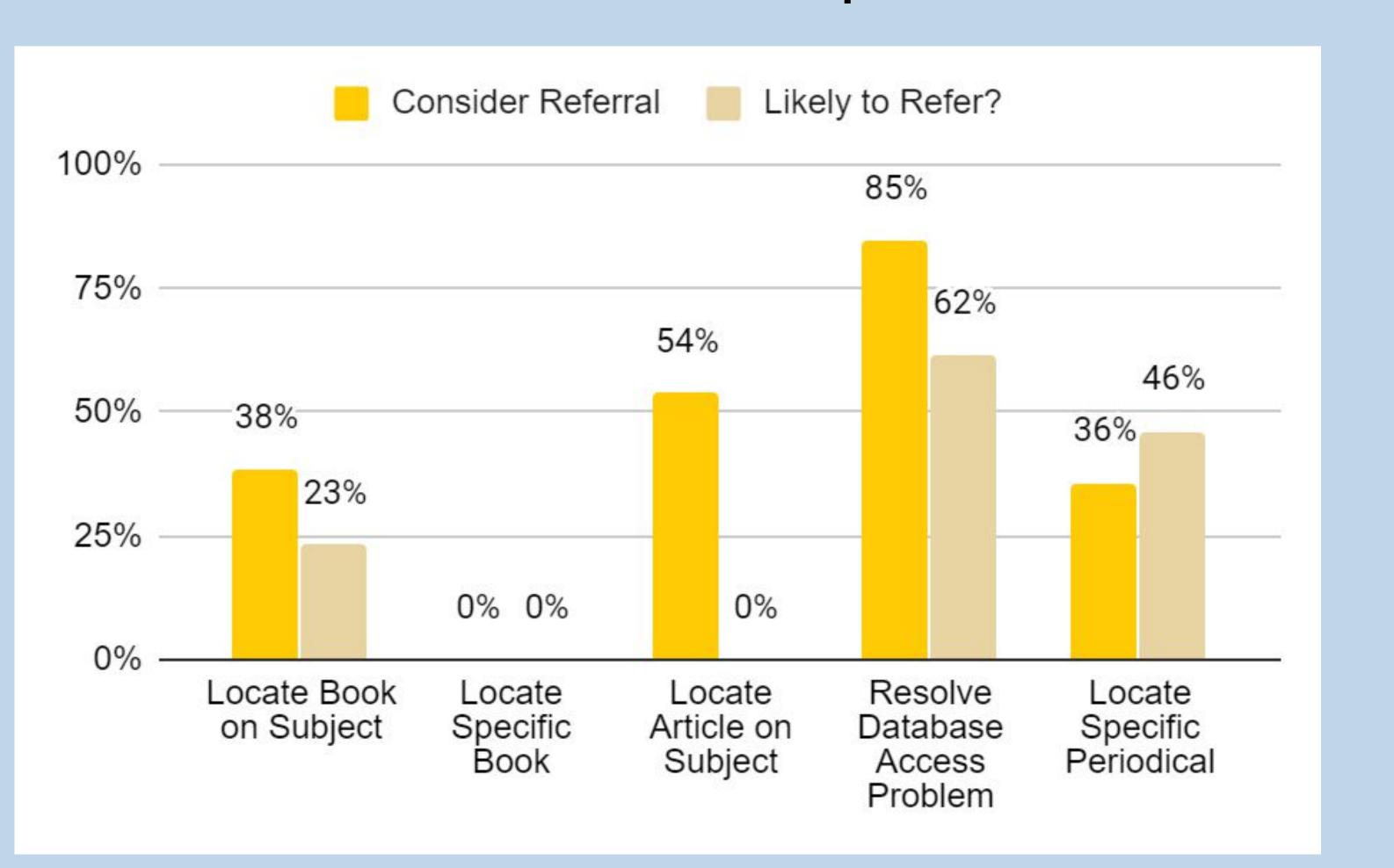


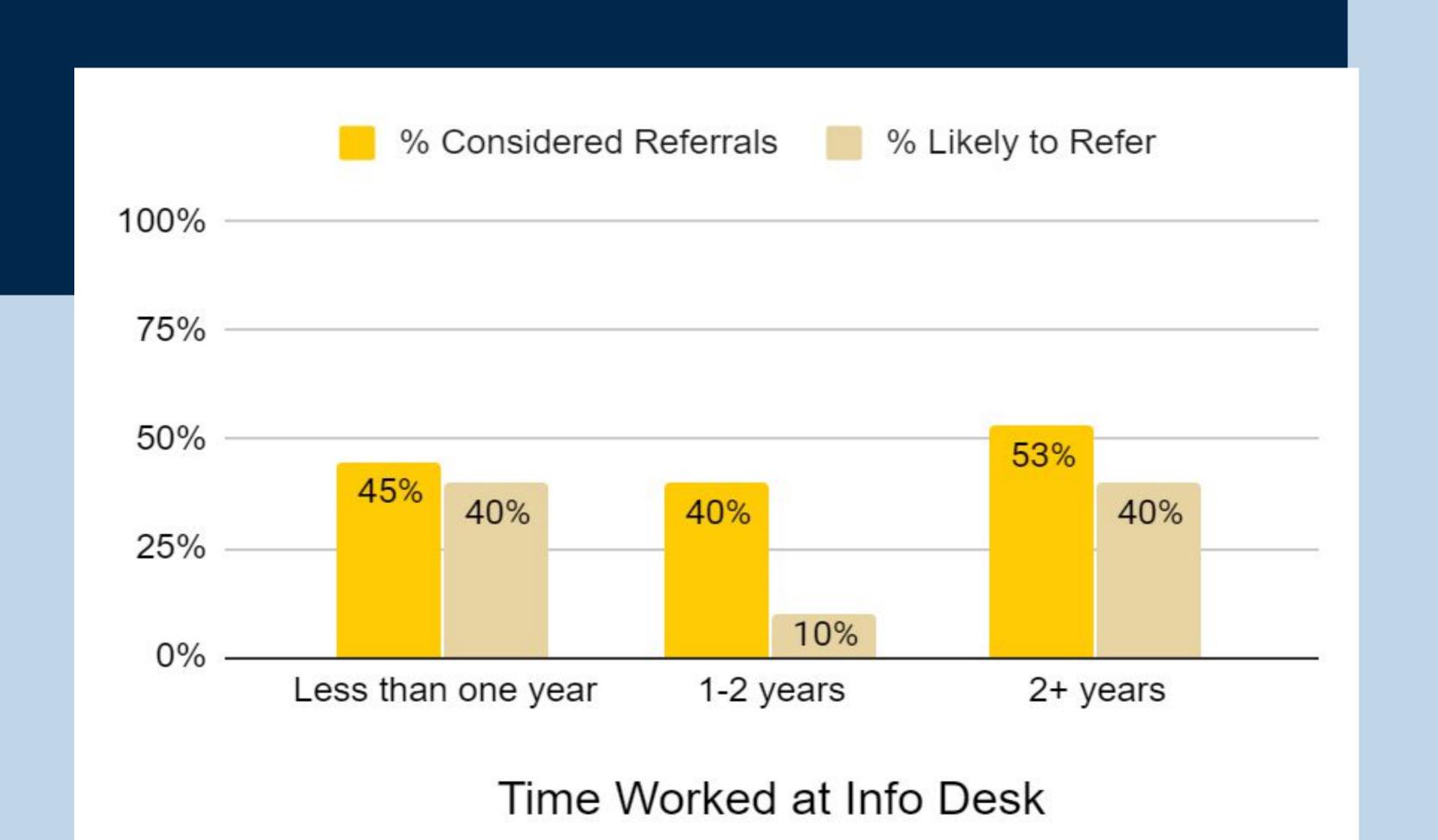
SAs were not consistently asking for details about what a person was looking for, nor were they consistently showing library users how to locate material independently.

Users' questions were fully addressed only 22% of the time.

What We Found

SAs were more likely to refer questions about specific sources (periodicals or databases), and less likely to refer research or reference questions, even though they are aware that referrals are possible.





SAs mentioned the possibility of referring the question at least 40% of the time, but students with 1-2 years of experience at the Library Info Desk reported that they were likely to refer a question much less often than other groups.

All active SAs complete the four required

modules by the end of the Fall 2020 semesterIncrease "showing" behaviors when answering

Next Steps

Develop implementation schedule for required

training modules: "I need a book...," Borrowing

Options, Is it ITS or is it US, & Knowing When to

Revise modules based on desk responses &

Short Term Goals

Continue monitoring desk responses

feedback from completed modules

Refer a Question

questions

- Improve understanding of best uses & limitations of available resources
- Increase direct referrals for specialized research questions

SAs wanted to learn more about: Borrowing options for material not available in our library (62%); How to locate a specific source, such as a periodical or database (62%); How to access library materials when off-campus (46%)

Find What You Need The Computer Did What? Subject Guides and Course Reserves Options for Borrowing Items The Computer Did What? Isit ITS, or is it US? Over-the-Phone Fix-it NYT, WSJ, and Other Account Problems Journals, Databases and LRC Resources Knowing When to Refer a Question The Helpful Librarians of the LRC Database Discovery & Journeys with Journals

Ongoing Training Opportunities

We believed that opportunities for ongoing training could help students gradually build their knowledge without providing too much information at one time.

3. Introduction to Public Health by Mary-Jane Schneider students of the Public Health b

We developed an online training platform using Google Sites that included a variety of modules on topics including locating materials, using off-campus borrowing services, & how to make a referral.

Each module is divided into sections & includes opportunities to practice tools & skills in a low-stakes environment. A final quiz includes information from each segment.

What We Did

Try it out! Look up each of the following items using Summon. For each search, think about what part of the process might be surprising or confusing to someone learning to search the catalog for the first time. In the form, describe 1-2 different things for each search, and what you might show someone to make their search easier. 1. Computer Networking: A Top-Down Approach by Kurose & Ross (2017) 2. The most recent MCAT study guide 3. Introduction to Public Health by Mary-Jane Schneider

Using the Catalog

Using Summon

Understanding the Search Results

Special Situations & Things to Watch
Out For

Test Your Knowledge

How do you respond?

Looking for a Specific Book

Show vs. Tell

Where to Search

	True	False	Not Sure
Only UMD students & faculty can access our online catalog	0	0	0
Some books in our catalog may be available, but not in the library building.	0	0	0
When filtering Summon results, it is important to use as many filters as possible.		0	

Long Term Vision

- Advanced modules required as part of SA promotion process
- Resource information sessions led by subject librarians included as ongoing training opportunities
- Continued collaboration between the Library Info
 Desk & the librarians in the Library Research
 Center (LRC)