

Reference Resilience: Balancing sustainability with customized and effective research support search

Academic libraries are facing increasing economic pressures and demands for accountability, coupled with a need for rapid evolution to accommodate changes in students' information behavior as well as in the resources and services required for their success. Many libraries have seen a significant decrease in traditional reference statistics over the last decade, often attributed to the easy availability of so-called 'ready reference' information online. However, the expanse of information available on the internet and the increasing complexity of digital search tools have created demand for a different kind of assistance which is more in-depth and provides strategies for efficiently and effectively navigating resources. These changes demand that academic librarians adapt and innovate to meet evolving needs; often, adaptation means shifting priorities and hours from traditional reference services to other, more-personalized types of research support such as expanded liaison roles and personal consultation services. However, these kinds of high-impact services are time-intensive, and require academic librarians to sustain new models of research support which are popular and highly-used, but see continual growth sometimes beyond what staff can physically support.

Following the implementation of a Personal Research Consultation service in Fall 2011, College of the Holy Cross' library has experienced a rapid increase in extended research assistance and has expanded and enhanced its role in supporting teaching and learning for the campus community. The service reaches students more effectively than the library's traditional, e-mail and chat reference services and has received positive feedback and faculty buy-in. However, it has also seen exponential growth at a rate that creates questions about sustainability.

Through collaborative efforts and the development of reusable learning materials, Holy Cross librarians have found ways to sustain this popular service. These reusable—and customizable—materials have assisted librarians in meeting the needs of students from different class years, from different academic disciplines, and with varying levels of research expertise, while also reinforcing the instructional focus of research consultations and enabling students to leave equipped not only with the resources they need, but also with skills and knowledge applicable to future assignments.

Please feel free to contact us with questions:

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Name:

Research topic:

Mark the types of sources you'd like to find (the categories below may overlap):

- Background information
- Scholarly sources
- Popular sources
- Primary sources
- Secondary sources
- Articles
- Books
- Video
- Audio
- Images

Search terms to try:

Recommended databases and resources:

Strategies to try:

Research Plan: Using one article as a launching off point

libref@holycross.edu * Call 508-793-2259 * Text 508-784-1685 * <http://libguides.holycross.edu/ask>

Name:

Research topic:

Start with one article you have found that looks helpful. Write down the citation here:

- Look at the subject terms/descriptors/abstract? Do you see terms that you could use in future searches? (Look for more terms within the text of the article too)
- Look through the bibliography/works cited. Do any of these citations look like sources you'd like to track down for your research?
- Who has cited the article since it was published?
- Who wrote the article you chose? Has the author written anything else on this topic?
- What journal did the article appear in? Does this journal look like a publication that would have more articles relevant to your research?