

The Changing Face of Reference



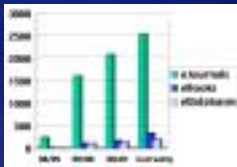
Changes at Welch

The need for Welch patrons to physically visit the library has greatly decreased as our number of virtual services and resources has grown; most significant to this fact is the increase in our electronic resources collection.

Welch eResources

FY 98/99 99/00 00/01 Currently

eJournals	236	1600	2077	2,528
eBooks	0	100	159	328
eDatabases	12	100	131	193



Virtual Reference

With decreased physical visits to the library and increased use of library services & resources via their desktop, Welch patrons have demonstrated greater need and use of virtual reference service.

Average number of electronic reference questions:
1999 = 16/mo 2002 = 36/mo

Avenues of Virtual Reference

- A reference email address, refer@jhmi.edu for patrons to submit reference questions is linked on the Welch Services page.
- A service form for patrons to submit reference questions is also linked on the Welch Services page, in addition to the Service Forms page available via taskbar on all Welch web pages
- "Ask MyLibrarian" link to question form via MyWelch
- Welch email address via Contact Us link on every WelchWeb page

Patrons opt for convenience

With the information gathered and used to prepare this poster, we learned that regardless of providing a reference email address or specific reference question form on our site, patrons submit their questions via their most convenient access to us, which is the general library email address found via "contact us" on every page. Determining this fact has led us to the decision to add an "Ask A Librarian" link to our standard frame on every WelchWeb page.

Tina M. Otter, MLIS, Reference Librarian, Welch Medical Library, The John Hopkins University

This poster addresses the primary concerns of virtual reference patrons of The Welch Medical Library at Johns Hopkins University. As Welch Library has increased the number of electronic information sources and services available to its patrons, they have become better able to meet their information needs virtually. Technology has facilitated this convenient access to information for users, but with this, the need for virtual reference service has significantly increased. A major part of our virtual reference service deals with accessing electronic resources, from "how do I access?" questions to troubleshooting journal and database access barriers and technical problems. This point is demonstrated with an analysis of the questions received at the Welch Virtual Reference Desk.

All questions received via the avenues of Welch Virtual Reference were analyzed and classified into categories:

- **Reference**
- **Access:** related to accessing electronic resources
- **Other:** to include questions regarding circulation, collection development, library admission policy and technical matters such as email, Acrobat, Word, etc.

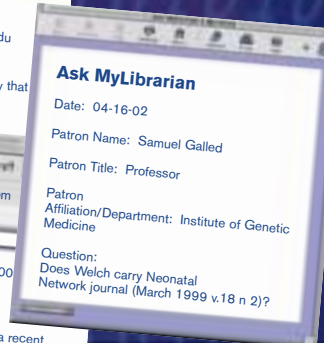
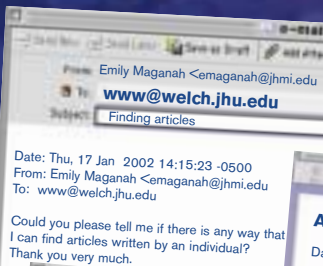
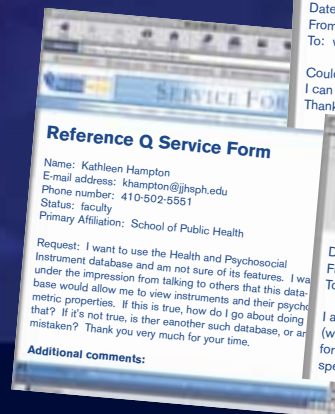
A traditional variety of reference questions --as we used to know them--are still asked

Reference questions, however, do not comprise the majority of questions received at Welch Virtual Reference Desk.

An analysis of questions received this year at the Welch Virtual Reference Desk has revealed a higher number of questions related to accessing electronic resources than reference or other types of questions

Welch Library Virtual Reference Requests
January - August 2002

Access: 43%
Reference: 30%
Other: 27%



Welch Library Virtual Reference Requests

Based on the trends at Welch Library, Virtual Reference Librarians can expect to answer more questions related to accessing electronic resources. Necessary for this will be:

- The need to keep cognizant of developments in electronic access.
- Being aware of licensing agreements
- Maintaining skills for troubleshooting technical problems

The change that we have seen in Virtual Reference Questions at Welch Library is one that is likely to continue as we progress into this electronic age toward a complete digital library.