Summary

The Maryland State Law Library provides reference assistance to a variety of patrons, including members and staff of the Judiciary, attorneys, other librarians, government agencies, students, and members of the general public, including self-represented litigants (SRLs) and correctional facility residents.

Reference services are provided through:
- In-person visits
- Telephone
- Email
- Online chat
- Regular mail

Patron inquiries range from brief directional questions to lengthy research queries. Library reference staff provide assistance through provision of informational materials such as books, databases and websites. Staff also provide instructional assistance, in the use of informational materials as well as in the use of technology; and assist patrons in evaluating resources.

Reference staff adhere firmly to Library guidelines for reference provision, including

- Guidelines for Legal Information Service to the Public, as approved by the Library Committee in 1991: www.lawlib.state.md.us/services/guidelines-public.html

- Guidelines for E-Mail Reference Service at the Maryland State Law Library, as adopted by the Library Committee in 2011: www.lawlib.state.md.us/aboutus/policies/EmailReferenceGuidelinesMSLL.pdf

The Library employs a number of reference staff with varying hours. There are nine Library staff members with regular responsibility for handling reference services. Six of these are full-time, present 40 hours per week, mainly during regular business hours (8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday). Three reference staff are part-time, with hours covering some regular business time as well as the Library's extended opening hours on Tuesday and Thursday evenings (4:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.) and Saturdays (9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.).

Reference activity is scheduled as two four-hour shifts each weekday (8:30 a.m. – 12:30 pm.; 12:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.). Additionally, the Library participates in six hours weekly of live chat coverage through the Maryland AskUsNow! service (www.askusnow.info) . Seven of the nine reference staff assist in this coverage, usually in one-hour shifts.

All reference staff have additional duties and responsibilities beyond provision of reference. Generally, full-time reference staff are expected to be scheduled for no more than two shifts per week; and for no more than two hours of chat coverage per week. The combined total for each staff member is generally no more than 10 hours per week. There is broad flexibility in the scheduling. At any given time, several reference staff are absent from the office for conference and meeting attendance, educational events, presentations, other work-related absences, as well as vacation and sick leave.

Overall Reference Services

Fiscal Year	Total Requests	% Change
FY2015	9818	-9.2%
FY2014	10567	11.9%
FY2013	9440	3.70%
FY2012	9099	3.10%
FY2011	8827	4.20%
FY2010	8471	---

Library staff handled a total of 9,818 information interactions during FY2015. This constitutes a small drop from the FY2014 number of 10,567. However, it is continues the rise in overall numbers since FY2010.

There are a number of possible reasons for the specific year changes. The FY2014 number constituted a significant rise from FY2013. Possibly that year was an anomaly, caused by the introduction of a new element to the reference tracking system (unidentified as yet); and the FY2015 number is merely a return to the usual percentage rise of 3-4.5% annually. Over time this may become clearer.

Gimlet Tracking System

The Library uses the web-based utility (gimlet.us) to track telephone and in-person interactions. Email, chat, and letter interactions are totaled, but at this time are not tracked through Gimlet. Gimlet allows the Library to record and analyze a more detailed picture of how the Library's resources and personnel are being employed.

Email, chat and letter interactions are recorded as a single number of interactions. The total number is recorded in the Library Statistics spreadsheet, which records numbers not just for reference activity, but also visitor numbers, website hits and other user data.

For this Fiscal Year 2015 Report, summaries of reference activity are organized by what the Library hopes to learn about such activity, namely:

- Who is asking for assistance?
- What are they asking?
- When are they asking?
- How and where are they asking?

Who is asking for assistance?

- *Who are the library's patrons?*
- *In which categories of patron does the library see the most activity? The largest growth in activity?*

The Library provides reference assistance to a diverse array of patrons. The array includes three main divisions: the Judiciary, the bar, and the public. Each of the three divisions includes multiple subcategories:

Judiciary	Bar	Public
Judges	Private attorneys	Self-represented litigants (SRLs)
Law clerks	Government agency attorneys	Students
Administrative staff	Pro Bono attorneys	Legal researchers
	Law librarians	Historians
		Genealogists
		Public library staff

Patron type information is gathered for in-person and telephone inquiries using Gimlet, and for regular mail inquiries by hand. Neither email nor chat sessions are identified by patron type at this time.

Patron Categories FY2015

Patron Category	# of Inquiries	% of Total
Public	2953	61%
Judiciary	730	15%
Bar	688	14%
Student	239	5%
Library	109	2%
Government	100	2%
Other	22	<1%
Total	4841	100%

Patron Categories FY2015
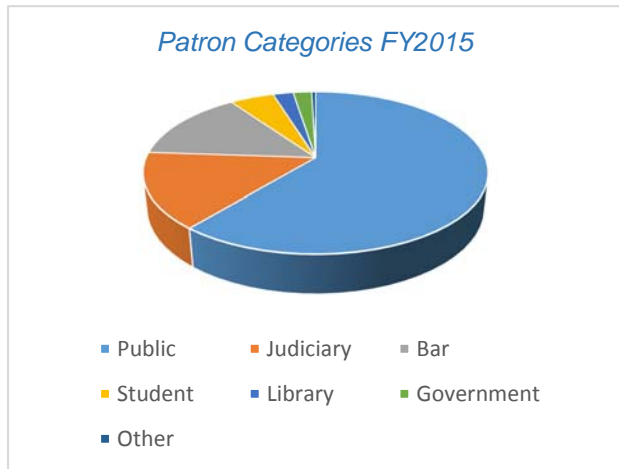
For FY15, 4841 interactions were recorded on Gimlet, half (49.3%) of the 9818 total interactions. Therefore, a look at the breakdown of library patron types summed from the system reflects a usable picture of the percentage of interactions from each category.

This matches roughly with the previous two fiscal years (table on right).

Some small differences may be attributable to an error in the recording; it is not always possible to guess accurately the category under which a patron may fit, and as the default is to record it as "public", the public number will remain high. However, it is interesting to note that the number of public interactions has increased steadily, even with increased attention on accurate recording. It is, in fact, the only category that saw growth this year; requests from the Judiciary stayed the same; and all others dipped, if only slightly.

Patron Categories by Fiscal Year

Patron Category	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015
Public	49%	57%	61%
Judiciary	19%	15%	15%
Bar	19%	17%	14%
Student	9%	6%	5%
Library	2%	3%	2%
Government	n/a	2%	2%
Other	2%	1%	<1%

Spotlight: Service to Correctional Facility Residents

The Library incorporates service to correctional facility residents as part of its overall public service. Requests from correctional residents are treated in the same manner as all other inquiries, i.e., reference staff review the request to identify the topics and resources needed; inform the requestor of the availability of such materials; and assess the standard document delivery fees, which for FY15 are $.50 per page, prepaid. When the page count of requested materials is minimal, generally under 5 pages, staff have the discretion to waive the fees and simply send the material.

Examples of actual and fairly representational responses include:

Example 1:
Your letter requested the original legislative enactment for the charge of armed robbery, currently found in the Maryland Code, Criminal Law Article section 3-403. The crime of armed robbery dates back to the original enactment in 1927, Chapter Law 457. Enclosed is that Chapter Law.

You also asked for the legal definition of "true bill". Black's Law Dictionary, 9th edition (2009), defines "true bill" as follows:

True bill, n. (18c) A grand jury's notation that a criminal charge should go before a petty jury for trial <the grand jury returned a true bill, and the state prepared to prosecute>.

Example 2:
Your letter requested a case which you described as in either Maryland state or federal court in the last three years, in which both handguns and drugs were involved, and in which there was a discussion of lesser and greater offenses. Our online search resulted in 18 cases; a citation list of these 18 cases in enclosed herein for your review. Should any of these look like the one in which you are interested, we can supply the full text of the opinion for our standard document delivery charges of $.50 per page, prepaid.

Example 3:

Your letter asked how Maryland determines which felony is the "greater". Enclosed are pages from the *Maryland Law Encyclopedia*, Criminal Law sec. 325: Several indictments or counts, which provides some discussion of mergers of multiple indictments in sentencing. Also enclosed is COMAR 14.22.01.12 (Maryland State regulations) related to Multiple Offense Scoring. These materials may provide some illumination.

The Library has kept statistics on the written correspondence received from correctional facility residents for some years. For a lengthy time, the state-run program Library Assistance to State Institutions (LASI), originally with the State Department of Education and now with the State Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, provided a resource for inmates to request and receive basic legal information, including cases, statutory language, law review text, and other legal materials for which the inmate provides a specific citation. Materials received through the LASI program are and always have been free of charge to the inmate. In more recent years, the LASI program has been curtailed somewhat, and now provides only case text.

A look at the Library's statistics on correspondence with inmates shows a rising trend:

Number of letters received from correctional residents by fiscal year											
FY04	FY05	FY06	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15
43	51	44	37	34	57	58	72	84	86	86	78

Clearly, the number of requests received by the Library is seeing steady growth. In fact, a look at the twelve year span identifies the timeframe of the shift of LASI, part of the correctional education program, from the Department of Education (MDE) to the Department of Labor, Licensing & Regulation (DLLR), and the subsequent restructuring of the citation service overall. See the breakdown here:

- FY04-FY08, average of 41.8 per year
- FY09-FY10, average of 57.5 per year
- FY11-FY15, average of 81.2 per year

The 2008 Laws of Maryland, Chapter 134 (eff. July 1, 2008), codified at Maryland Code, Labor & Employment sec. 11-903(a) shifted the workforce training program from the MDE to the DLLR ("The Department is responsible for the provision of education and workforce skills training programs in the adult correctional institutions in the State."). Referring to the numbers above, up until the end of FY08 (June 30, 2008), the Library received an average of just over 40 requests per year from correctional residents.

According to the FY2011 Division of Correction Annual Report, *200 Years of Corrections in Maryland* (www.dpscs.state.md.us/publicinfo/publications/pdfs/DOC2011AnnualRpt.pdf), the revised LASI program was fully operational in December 2010 (mid-FY2011). Referring to the numbers above, during the time frame between the move from MDE until the full implementation of the revised LASI program, the Library averaged 57.5 requests per year from correctional residents.

From December of 2010 forward, the revised LASI program has supplied judicial opinions – and only judicial opinions – free of charge to requesting inmates (see www.dllr.state.md.us/ce/).

And from FY11 forward (July 1, 2010 to the present), the Library is averaging 81.2 requests per year, double the number of requests from ten years earlier.

While the specific time investment per letter request was not tracked in FY2015, reviewing the numbers above, it is clear that this number needs to be reviewed. Each letter may take anywhere between 15 minutes to several hours to review, determine the need and how best to address using Library resources, and draft a response. This is a substantial investment of time and effort on the part of the Library and its staff.

What are they asking?

- *What are our patrons asking about?*
- *How complicated are the questions they are asking?*
- *What is the time involved (duration) in handling inquiries?*
- *What assistance is needed from the Library staff in addressing the inquiries?*

Question Type

The Library tracks reference inquiries in question type categories designated and recommended by the Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors (CMCLLD, adopted November 2014). The CMCLLD recommends five overall categories, and allows for individual libraries to track in more specialized subcategories if wished.

The five main categories as adopted by the CMCLLD, with descriptions, are:

Reference: basic category; use as the default if an interaction falls into multiple categories

Directional: all strictly directional questions
Examples include: Where is the Clerk's Office? How do I get to the Legislative Services Library? Where is the Maryland Code in print?

Referral: all interactions in which the only information provided is a referral; interactions that include additional reference assistance are logged in the Reference category.
Examples include: Procedural questions about certain District Court civil matters, when the patron is referred to the District Court Self Help Center; certain complicated landlord/tenant inquiries, when referring patrons to Baltimore Neighborhoods, Inc.

Tech Assistance: interactions where there is not actual reference or research assistance but rather only technology or machinery use assistance.
Examples include: how to cut and paste in a Word document; how to use the copy machine; how to access the Library's wi-fi.

Other: serves as an umbrella for questions that do not fit above categories and serves as a place-holder for the needs of libraries when no specific category fits.

The Library breaks down two of the above CMCLLD categories into subcategories as follows:

Reference interactions are distinguished as:
- Reference – General
- Reference – Legislative History
- Reference – Online/Computer: interactions where the patron needs online research assistance, such as: assisting in Keyciting a case; instruction in how to construct a general topic search; assistance in locating a particular file in a database, such as finding the *Maryland Law Encyclopedia* on WestlawNext.
- Reference – ILL: interactions related to the borrowing of material for Library patrons; or the lending of material to other libraries, is logged under ILL (interlibrary loan). The Library began using this category in the middle of FY2015, so statistics from this category on the Gimlet system are few. The Library handles the bulk of interlibrary loan

transactions through external software, and began generating statistical reports in FY2015. This will be addressed later; for the purposes of the Question Type section here, ILL numbers are rolled into the general reference numbers.

Other interactions are distinguished as:

- Other – Payment Only: to record the time required to receive payments, fill out and provide receipts, and run credit card payments. While individually brief, these can amount collectively to a significant amount of time for staff.
- Other – Circulation: for handling incoming and outgoing materials. Most often, this is providing assistance to law clerks in signing out texts, or time spent pulling checkout cards when materials are returned.

The majority of staff interactions fall, not surprisingly, into the Reference category.

Question Type Breakdowns for FY2015

Question Type	Total	Percentage
Reference – General	2943	61%
Reference – Legislative History	151	3%
Reference – Online/Computer	203	4%
Directional	407	8%
Referral	139	3%
Tech Assistance	370	8%
Other – Circulation	187	4%
Other – Payment Only	441	9%

Question Type FY2015

- Reference – General
- Reference – Legislative History
- Reference – Online/Computer
- Directional
- Referral
- Tech Assistance
- Other – Circulation
- Other – Payment Only
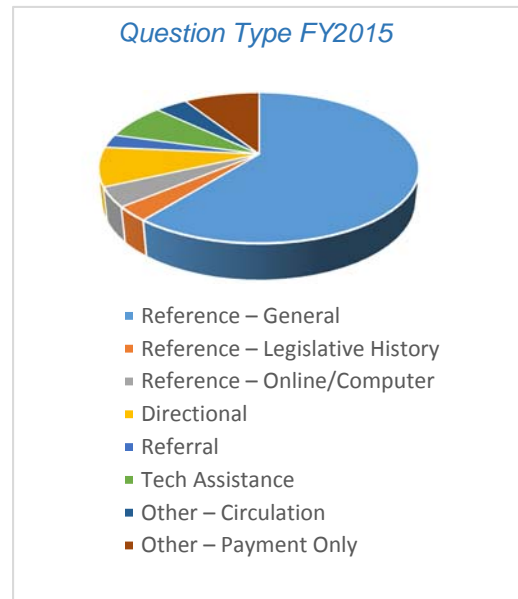
Looking solely at the Reference category, the bulk of interactions are labelled "General".

Reference Category Breakdowns, Fiscal Years

Question Type	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015
Reference – General	70%	84%	89%
Reference – Legislative History	17.5%	7%	5%
Reference – Online/Computer	12.5%	9%	6%

The Library began tracking reference statistics on Gimlet, and in this level of detail, in mid-September 2012 (FY2013). It is therefore perhaps early to determine if the percentages are a trend or an anomaly. However, looking over the years that are available, the bulk of tracked interactions clearly in the General category are clearly increasing. Therefore, it may be appropriate to discuss further breakdowns in the Reference category, to determine more closely where the need for assistance is. Possible further category breakdowns include regulatory history; criminal law questions; and perhaps family law.

Crossing Over Question and Patron Types

Questions by Patron Type FY2015

Question Type	Public	Judiciary	Bar	Student	Library	Gov't	Other	Total
Reference – General	1895	378	379	126	85	63	17	2938
Reference – Legislative History	27	47	46	5	9	15	2	151
Reference – Online/Computer	136	20	32	10	2	3	0	203
Directional	237	55	66	42	1	4	2	407
Referral	121	9	7	0	1	1	0	139
Tech Assistance	204	53	74	29	2	7	1	370
Other – Circulation	14	155	9	0	4	5	0	187
Other – Payment Only	319	13	75	27	5	2	0	441
Total	2953	730	688	239	109	100	22	4841

A few possible mistakes in recording appear in the overall numbers (for example, within Judiciary/Other-Payment Only there are 13 recorded interactions. As Judiciary staff do not pay for work-related copies, it is unlikely that there were in fact any interactions where payment was accepted). However, as with all Library statistics, the interest is in the trends.

Not surprisingly, the Judiciary and the Bar have the highest numbers of Reference-Legislative History assistance. Legislative History assistance accounts for 6.9% of the overall assistance for these two groups. This percentage, however, is down from prior years.

A three-year time span is not sufficient to make any reliable conclusions. However, of note is that in September 2013, Library staff began offering special hands-on, one-on-one, Maryland legislative history research training to incoming law clerks.

Percentage of Reference Identified as Legislative History

FY2013	FY2014	FY2015
12.3%	7.8%	6.9%

Spotlight: Staff Technology Assistance

Two of the reference categories indicate a connection to the use of technology: Reference-Online/Computer and Other-Tech Assistance. While the two categories were established to measure different facets of a question, the underlying concept in both is the same: the patron needs assistance from Library staff in using technology. As more information and more government interaction becomes technology-based, there is a presumption that the average citizen is able to keep up with the knowledge needed to use such technology. If this is the case, the percentage needing staff assistance should decrease. Instead, the Library is seeing an increase in the percentage of patrons needing assistance from staff on technology-related issues.

Percentage of requests for technology assistance

Fiscal Year	Tech Assist	Ref Online	Combined	% of Total Interactions
FY2013	103	200	303	7%
FY2014	278	274	552	9.4%
FY2015	370	203	573	11.8%

Duration of Questions

The Duration category is used to help understand the amount of staff time and effort needed to address reference desk interactions. Duration may reflect the level of complication of the question; for instance, a legislative intent question generally will take at least 15 minutes, and often will take significantly longer. Sometimes, however, the complication is less the actual question and more the level of need or challenge that the patron presents. Library patrons with a low level of understanding of the legal system, terminology and research methods require more attention and time from staff and therefore fall into the longer duration categories.

During FY2013, time breakdowns were recorded in four rather than five categories. The categories were amended for FY2014 in accordance with the CMCLLD recommendations. Therefore at this time, there are only two years for data comparison.

The numbers are fairly equal from one year to the next. The Library will continue to monitor for any developing trends.

Duration of Questions

In minutes	FY2014	FY2015
0-5	3638 (62.2%)	2906 (60.0%)
6-15	1510 (25.8%)	1321 (27.3%)
16-30	543 (9.3%)	427 (8.8%)
31-60	83 (1.4%)	119 (2.5%)
60+	72 (1.2%)	68 (1.4%)

Questions by Month

	0-5 min	6-15 min	16-30 min	31-60 min	60+ min	Total	%
Jul-14	254	124	53	8	7	446	9.2%
Aug-14	249	104	39	7	8	407	8.4%
Sep-14	284	115	38	17	1	455	9.4%
Oct-14	249	137	37	16	9	448	9.3%
Nov-14	216	88	25	3	1	333	6.9%
Dec-14	207	79	33	12	6	337	7.0%
Jan-15	240	99	31	8	6	384	7.9%
Feb-15	203	113	38	10	2	366	7.6%
Mar-15	254	103	33	4	4	398	8.2%
Apr-15	255	95	28	10	5	393	8.1%
May-15	226	124	39	13	11	413	8.5%
Jun-15	269	140	33	11	8	461	9.5%
Total	2906	1321	427	119	68	4841	
%	60.0%	27.3%	8.8%	2.5%	1.4%		

Peak months include June (9.5%), September (9.4%), October (9.3%), and July (9.2%).

Overall, in FY2014, peak months were January through April; and in FY2013, March through May. At this time, therefore, it does not seem that there is a clearly identifiable "busy season" for the Library.

When are they asking?

- *Are there days of the week, times of the day, or months during which reference interactions are recognizably higher?*
- *What is the significance for staffing of higher levels of interaction?*

Days of the Week

The Library is open six days of the week according to the following schedule:
- Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- Tuesday and Thursday, 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.
- Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Because the Library is open late on Tuesdays and Thursdays, the number of patron interactions is expected to be higher on those days, and indeed they are (table at right).

Saturday interactions account for 6.9% of the total interactions, or about half the number generally found on weekdays when the Library is open during regular business hours (M/W/F). This is significant because

Patron Interactions by Weekday

Weekday	Interactions	%
Sunday	0	0%
Monday	752	15.5%
Tuesday	1159	23.9%
Wednesday	801	16.5%
Thursday	1117	23.1%
Friday	677	14.0%
Saturday	335	6.9%

there is only one staff member present on Saturdays, while during regular business hours on weekdays (8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.), there can be as many as 8 or 9 other reference staff present in the Library who can assist with incoming questions if needed. Conversely, during regular weekday hours, only a single reference person is scheduled to be "on" the desk; however, the number of incoming questions is double that on Saturdays. Whether, in fact, Saturdays need additional personnel, or the converse, that perhaps more than one person should be scheduled for "desk" time during weekday business hours is a question that will be considered.

Comparing the number of hours open to the number of questions shows the following:

It is interesting to note that Wednesday has the highest average per-hour questions, higher even than Tuesdays and Thursdays when the Library is open additional hours. The conclusion is that the number of patrons using Library services during non-business hours is not as high as the number using

Questions per Hour Blocks FY2015

Weekday	# of Questions	Hours Library is Open	Questions per Hour Block (averaged/annual)
Monday	752	8.5	88.5
Tuesday	1159	13	89.2
Wednesday	801	8.5	94.2
Thursday	1117	13	85.9
Friday	677	8.5	79.6
Saturday	335	7	47.9
Total	4841	70	69.2

services during regular business hours. This was true in prior fiscal years 2013 and 2014 as well, as is clear from the table and calculations below.

Questions per Hour Blocks Fiscal Year Comparison

Weekday	Questions/Hour FY2013	Questions/Hour FY2014	Questions/Hour FY2015
Monday	69.3	106.4	88.5
Tuesday	60.0	94.7	89.2
Wednesday	95.5	113.4	94.2
Thursday	79.2	93.5	85.9
Friday	81.6	106.9	79.6
Saturday	58.3	65.9	47.9
Total	61.6	81.2	69.2

The calculations for Questions per Hour were calculated as follows:

Average number of questions per day for M/W/F (FY2015)
752+801+677 = 2230 /3 = 743.33 /52 (weeks per year) = 14.29

Average number of questions per day for Tu/Th (FY2015)
1159+1117 = 2276 /2 = 1138 /52 = 21.88

Average number of questions per day for Sat (FY2015)
335 /45 = 7.44*

The Saturday number is divided by 45 rather than by 52 weeks for the year as the Library is closed on a number of holiday weekends. During FY2015, these included July 5 (Independence Day); August 30 (Labor Day); November 29 (Thanksgiving); December 27 (Christmas); January 3 (New Year's); January 17 (Martin Luther King Day); and May 23 (Memorial Day). Weekday closures do not have the impact on the averages in the same degree, as there are proportionally more open days.

Time of Day

Overall, the largest number of questions came in between 10:00 a.m. and noon, and again from 2:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. This was also the case in the previous fiscal year. The highest number of questions falls in the 3:00 p.m. block (625), which may in some part be attributable to staff catching up on the entry of statistics at the close of the day. However, the number also reflects staff unquantified observation.

Statistics appear in the 7:00 a.m. block, when the Library is not yet open, and in the 9:00 p.m. block, after the Library is closed. Several staff work on shifted schedules, some beginning at 7:00 a.m. and others working later in the day; and some staff stay past scheduled hours to complete open questions. At times, Library staff may receive questions from Judiciary staff during these blocks, or may pick up an out-of-hours phone call and choose to handle it. There are, therefore, a minimal number of interactions in those time blocks.

Time of Day	Questions
7:00 AM	10
8:00 AM	161
9:00 AM	399
10:00 AM	522
11:00 AM	526
12:00 PM	509
1:00 PM	458
2:00 PM	528
3:00 PM	625
4:00 PM	466
5:00 PM	201
6:00 PM	146
7:00 PM	114
8:00 PM	162
9:00 PM	14
Total	4841

Time of Day Assessment of Tuesday/Thursday and Saturday

In prior years, the number of questions in the first hour of the evening (5:00 – 6:00 p.m.) was clearly higher than later hours. This is the case for Tuesdays during FY2015, except that number also jumped at the 8:00 p.m. block. This may be attributable to the paralegal class, held in the Library's conference room on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, gets out at that time, and students may have questions before leaving. It may also be attributable to patrons, realizing that the Library closes at 9:00 p.m., are asking their questions before closing. These numbers bear watching over the next few years.

Thursday evenings during FY2015 do not follow any of the previously-identified trends. The highest number of questions falls in the 6:00 – 7:00 p.m. block, and as with Tuesdays, there is again a jump in the 8:00 p.m. block.

Saturday questions peaked in the noon hour, with a secondary jump in the 2:00 p.m. block. Overall, Saturday numbers appear to run more consistently than Tuesday/Thursday evenings.

Questions per Hour Block (Actual)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Total
7:00 AM	0	3	4	1	2	0	10
8:00 AM	34	51	26	24	23	3	161
9:00 AM	82	95	55	80	53	34	399
10:00 AM	99	98	115	89	69	54	522
11:00 AM	88	95	90	134	81	38	522
Noon	113	85	106	72	72	63	509
1:00 PM	80	76	81	95	87	37	456
2:00 PM	69	106	116	70	111	56	527
3:00 PM	118	100	113	134	112	48	624
4:00 PM	67	123	90	119	66	1	466
5:00 PM	2	120	3	74	1	1	200
6:00 PM	0	58	2	86	0	0	146
7:00 PM	0	59	0	55	0	0	114
8:00 PM	0	86	0	76	0	0	162
9:00 PM	0	4	0	8	0	0	12
Total	752	1159	801	1117	677	335	4841

Tuesday/Thursday evening and Saturday hours will continue to be monitored closely, as there is only one librarian scheduled to work at those times. Historically, there has needed to be only a single librarian; however, as overall numbers continue to rise, the Library will continue to watch to ensure appropriate staff levels are available to address the needs of the patrons.

How and where are they asking?

- *What communication methods are our patrons using to access us?*

Patrons can contact the Library using five different communications methods: in person; by telephone; via e-mail; through chat (live or followup); and using regular mail (letters). Email, in-person and telephone inquiries combined constitute 95% of all incoming patron inquiries (table at right).

Question Format FY2015

Question Format	Total FY15	Percentage
Telephone	2264	23.1%
In-Person	2533	25.8%
Email	4491	45.7%
Chat	452	4.6%
Letters	78	0.8%
Total	9818	100%

Question Format
Fiscal Year Comparison

Fiscal Year	Combined chat and regular mail requests
FY15	5.3%
FY14	5%
FY13	4%
FY12	4%
FY11	2%

The remaining 5% is consistent with FY2014, and constitutes a slight rise from prior years (table at left).

If the Library averages about 10,000 reference requests per year, and the chat and letter number grow by 1% of the total, an annual growth of 100 interactions, a number that bears watching. Examining the breakdown of these numbers within the past five years, the number of incoming letters has remained fairly static; however, live chat sessions have increased by 76%, and chat followup, by 495%, an astounding number (table below).

Combined Letter and Chat: Fiscal Year Comparison

Fiscal Year	Letters	Chat Live	Chat Followup	Combined Total
FY2015	78	65	387	530
FY2014	86	77	292	455
FY2013	86	48	198	332
FY2012	84	52	183	319
FY2011	72	37	65	174

Further, looking at prior fiscal years FY2011 through FY2014, the overall number of incoming reference inquiries has been steadily growing. How the question comes to the Library, however, has clearly changed. A look at the percentages for each format category through the past five fiscal years shows a notable growth (table below)

Question Format Percentages by Fiscal Year

Question Format	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15
Telephone	2916 (33%)	2455 (27%)	2180 (23%)	2656 (25%)	2264 (23%)
In-Person	3100 (35%)	3204 (35%)	3271 (35%)	3102 (29%)	2533 (26%)
Email	2639 (30%)	3121 (34%)	3657 (39%)	4354 (41%)	4491 (46%)
Chat	102 (1%)	235 (3%)	246 (3%)	369 (4%)	452 (4.6%)
Letters	72 (1%)	84 (1%)	86 (1%)	86 (1%)	78 (.7%)
Total	8829	9099	9440	10567	9818

In FY11 and FY12, In-Person inquiries were the largest percentage of library activity, with 35% of the total. In FY13, this changed, with Email inquiries taking over the top portion at 39%. Email activity has continued to grow, rising to 46% of the Library's reference activity in FY15. At the same time, the Library chat numbers have risen, even if by the slightest percentage, to 4.6%. For the first time, the Library's electronic communications activity constitutes over 50% (50.6%) of the Library's total reference activity. While the margin is slight, the trend is clear.

Conclusion

The figures presented in this report can be summed up by the following:

- The overall number of reference interactions is steadily rising;

- The number of interactions with identified public patrons now constitutes over 60% of the Library's activity;

- Correspondence from correctional residents has doubled since FY2008;

- Traditional reference inquiries constitute almost 70% of the Library's activity (as opposed to referrals, directional assistance, circulation and payment);

- The number of inquiries requiring assistance with technology as a percentage of all questions is rising;

- Weekday interaction numbers are twice weekend numbers, causing a concern that weekday desk staffing may need to be higher.

The Library will continue to collect statistics in established categories, learning each year from the results. As more time passes, the Library will identify trends that will help determining the optimum methods for assisting its diverse patron population.