



Eastern Canada Chapter Section de l'est du Canada

Introducing the READ Scale: Qualitative Statistics for Reference Service

By Lynn Berard, Principal Librarian at the Engineering & Science Library at Carnegie Mellon University
Bella Karr Gerlich, Principal investigator on the Read Scale project, Georgia College and State University

SLA Eastern Canada Chapter and the Librarians' Forum, Concordia University, invite you to a talk on:

Wednesday 19 September, at 4pm
Concordia University – Hall Building
1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd. West, H-765 (7th floor – University Faculty Club)
Metro Guy, between Mackay and Bishop streets (facing the library building)

NB: The elevator is the easiest way to access the conference room but, due to ongoing renovations, only one elevator is available for the entire building so there can be delays in accessing the 7th floor.

Entrance is free. The talk is given in English. Questions can be in French.

Please confirm your attendance with Andrea Harland (andrea.harland@concordia.ca).

Welcome to all librarians working in special environment, especially those of you working at the academic libraries.

Speakers: G. Lynn Berard, Principal Librarian, at the Engineering & Science Library at Carnegie Mellon University. She managed the science libraries for over 20 years. Lynn teaches graduate library science courses for Clarion University of Pennsylvania and serves as Editor of FOCUS, the Carnegie Mellon faculty newspaper.

Mrs Berard is also a candidate for the SLA President Elect 2008

(<http://www.sla.org/content/SLA/governance/bodsection/bodcandidates/07candidates/berardbio.cfm>).

Bella Karr Gerlich is the Principal investigator on the READ Scale Project and is Associate University Librarian at Georgia College and State University.

As academic library reference service moves into the 21st Century and users become more technologically adept and comfortable utilizing online resources, methods for the evaluation of research services need to change accordingly. Many libraries using traditional statistical measures to analyze reference activity show a decline in the number of reference inquiries on any given day – a flawed methodology measures only the total number of users and not the actual knowledge management effort of the reference librarian.

Indications are that today's librarian expends more effort on reference work than ever before. We may see fewer questions overall, but the inquiries received often require in-depth research skills that only trained information scientists bring to the effort. Academic reference librarians need to create a new way of gathering and measuring the amount of effort spent when answering questions and assisting in research exercises to be able to express a true representation of the work we do.



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The READ Scale (Reference Effort Assistance Data) is a measurement system on a scale of 1 – 6 designed to express levels of effort and expertise in answering reference questions. This qualitative scale places emphasis on recording the skills, knowledge, techniques and tools utilized during the reference transaction thus providing recorded evidence of the quality of the effort rather than on “traffic”. This scale was developed and first tested at Carnegie Mellon University in 2003. In an effort to assess its viability as a statistical tool the researchers conducted a Spring 2007 study involving 14 diverse academic institutions across the U.S. This talk will introduce the scale, discuss study steps and protocols, share participant survey data and reveal next steps.

Principal Investigator: Bella Karr Gerlich, PhD, Associate University Librarian, Georgia College and State University. Research partner: G. Lynn Berard, Principal Librarian, Carnegie Mellon University.

Mirjana Martić
Présidente, SLA Section de l'est du Canada