Assessment Annual Report

Service: Reference and Research Services, Special Collections and Archives Research Center (SCARC)

Fiscal Year: FY21 (2020-2021 academic year)

Overview

The SCARC Public Services Team covers the constellation of public services offered by the Special Collections and Archives Research Center. These services include in-person reference, 5th floor reading room operations, remote reference, facilities support, instruction support, planned and drop-in tours, permissions and publications requests, and interlibrary loans of special collections.

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted SCARC Public Services activities in a number of ways. Faced with limited staffing and the closure of the library to the public except for the main floor, SCARC pivoted to focus on increasing remote reference services and offering by appointment only collections consultations in a space on the main floor. For FY21, we did not offer any planned or drop-in tours and, in consultation with the Resources and Acquisition Sharing department, we stopped providing access to interlibrary loans of special collections materials.

Our decision to temporarily discontinue some of our typical public services activities, expand our remote reference services, and only offer onsite consultations by appointment, were made based on the desire to help mitigate negative impacts on researchers due to a variety of pandemic-related limitations, while also protecting the health and capacity of public services staff.

Our takeaways included the usefulness of Zoom research consultations, the effectiveness of a by appointment only onsite collections consultation model, the benefits of expanding our remote research services, and the absolute necessity of Oregon Digital. Based on our takeaways, for the 2021-2022 academic year, SCARC intends to: continue using Zoom consultations, especially for traveling researchers; develop a by appointment model for onsite collections consultations in the 5th floor reading room; refine our expanded remote research services processes and documentation; and strategically invest in Oregon Digital.

Strategic Significance:

The content of this report has direct bearing to all strategic goals of OSULP, including emphasizing high quality services and expertise. In the actions described below we also show our dedication to building and strengthening our relationships with OSU students, faculty, staff, OSULP colleagues, and the wider global community of scholars to support their research with our collections. SCARC's Public Services staff is proud to find creative and innovative solutions to complex challenges in the day-to-day, but even more so in the face of the crises faced this past year.

Takeaways:

Zoom Consultations: A New Tool Becomes a Mainstay
The success of the virtual reading room service offered during spring term 2020 functioned as an unintentional proof-of-concept for reference and research service in FY21. Zoom was especially useful during our by appointment only onsite collection consultation hours beginning in fall term 2020, and we expect it to show continued utility in preparing out-of-town researchers for a visit to Corvallis.

By Appointment Only Onsite Collection Consultations: A Roadmap for FY22
The by appointment only onsite collection consultation service offered this year was very successful, both for patrons and for public services staff. The process to engage with patrons prior to their in-person visit enabled researchers to be more thoughtful in their selection of collections, more prepared to engage with the materials, and make more efficient use of their research time. For public services staff, the by appointment model, which required pre-onsite visit conversations, enabled them to more fully consider the patron's research topic to determine SCARC materials to recommend for their research. Additionally, these preliminary consultations have shown their efficacy in decreasing "archival anxiety" among researchers new to research in SCARC, or archival research in general.

See "Appendix A: By Appointment Only Onsite Collection Consultations" for more details about the selection of the space, the process for providing this service, and the data regarding the patrons who used this service.

Remote Research Services: Expanded Services and Processes Become the Status Quo
Given the limited physical access researchers had to our collections this year, an expansion of our remote research services was a necessity. Public Services staff, namely the Public Services Archivist and the Public Services Assistant, worked staggered onsite schedules each week in order to facilitate remote access to collections (e.g., by conducting collections research and digitizing materials relevant to reference requests). Public Services staff were further able to engage in remote reference thanks to a wide variety of digital resources collections (e.g., Oregon Digital, ScholarsArchive@OSU, and Archives West).

In light of the expansion of remote research services being offered to patrons, this year Public Services staff tracked statistics on total time spent on each remote research inquiry, including the amount of time spent paging the necessary box(es), finding the requested material, scanning the materials identified, and communicating with the researcher.

SCARC's Use of LibAnswers Evolves
In FY21, the Public Services Team worked to develop a shared tagging library, and to standardize the application of tags to remote reference tickets (November 2020). The use of tags has helped illustrate and capture the wide array of resources used in remote reference and will continue to do so moving forward. Additionally, as the SCARC reference email is quite often used by community members, both within OSU and the general public, to make donation inquires, the Public Services Team and the Collections Team collaborated to develop a process to ensure those inquiries were forwarded to the Collections Team and recorded appropriately in LibAnswers. SCARC's use of LibAnswers has moved beyond implementation to consider how LibAnswers can be of further use.

Statistical Granularity: Remote Research Support edition[1]
This year, Public Services staff also tracked statistics on total time spent on each remote research inquiry, including the amount of time spent paging the necessary box(es), finding the requested material, scanning the materials identified, and communicating with the researcher. On average per transaction, Public Services staff spent 20-25 minutes paging and identifying materials, 35-40 minutes digitizing materials and "touching up" scans, and 45-50 minutes communicating with the researcher.

Strength of Oregon Digital as a Resource: an Essential Investment
Anecdotally, all Public Services staff previously and frequently reported the indispensability of Oregon Digital as a resource, both for in-person research assistance and remote research support. The pandemic has further highlighted the essential nature of the digitized content in Oregon Digital, and the importance of on-going digitization projects that feed into that portal (e.g., Henderson slides, *Barometer* scanning).

Based on tagging data via LibAnswers, during FY20, 118 transactions were tagged with the Oregon Digital tag in LibAnswers, over 15% of the 767 total tickets.[2] This year the Oregon Digital tag was applied to 176 tickets, over 21% percent of all tickets this fiscal year (823 in total).

Next Steps:

Continue to Utilize Zoom Consultations
Public Services staff plan to continue to use Zoom for preliminary consultations to help better prepare researchers for their in-person visits; these preliminary consultations will be especially useful for out-of-town and international researchers. Preliminary consultations have also anecdotally shown their usefulness in decreasing "archival anxiety" among researchers new to research in SCARC, or archival research in general.

Develop a Model for By Appointment Only Onsite Collections Consultations in the 5th Floor Reading Room
With the addition of hours to the Public Service Assistant position, and the return to the 5th floor Reading Room, Public Services staff anticipate being able to provide access to twice as many researchers as were served in FY21. However, with fewer staff working on the 5th floor in FY22, and a continued deficit in Public Services FTE, matching the schedule and/or hours of previous fiscal years is untenable.

Further, it remains to be seen whether there is demand for six open hours per day, five days per week. Anecdotally, trends suggest there is a diminishing demand for drop-in hours, especially in light of the expansion of remote research services. We plan to begin the academic year with limited hours available for appointments, in comparison to our pre-pandemic hours (drop-in hours from 10:00am to 4:00pm, Monday through Friday), in order to pilot the by appointment model. We will assess the new model's effectiveness to determine potential changes for winter or spring term.

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[1] This data was collected in order to parse out the time spent on each phase of a reference transaction (e.g., initial response, paging and identification of materials, digitization, follow-up response), determine benchmarks, and set future policies based on those benchmarks. The SCARC Public Services Team is exploring updates to LibAnswers that would allow for the collection of this data on a more regular basis.

[2] It should be noted that tags may not have been consistently applied prior to November 2020; it's likely more transactions made use of Oregon Digital than were captured.

During Summer 2021, SCARC will:

- Begin preparing for onsite, 5th floor researcher services in fall 2021, to include:
    - Adapting pathways for entrance, egress, and general traffic flow, given the by appointment only model
    - Determining onsite Public Services staff schedule
    - Hiring Student Archivists to serve as Reference Assistants
    - Identifying on site projects for dedicated public services students, with an eye towards increasing efficiency in onsite collection consultations
    - Designing a promotion plan, scripting, and additional messaging regarding the new service model, both for internal and external stakeholders (e.g. automated phone message updates, LibGuide updates, signage, etc.)
    - Assessing how the new service model impacts SCARC colleagues and other Valley Library staff

- Identify a means to track interest in, and demand for, in-person visits in order to determine next steps with regards to staffing capacity and hours.

Continue and Refine Expanded Remote Research Services

At implementation in 2017, Public Services staff used the LibAnswers ticketing system to track, assign, and respond to remote research inquiries, and capture statistics about those inquiries. Due to the impacts of the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, remote research requests increased; in response, the Public Services Team expanded its reference services to help mitigate the limitations imposed on in-person service. Since we expect these expanded services to continue under our by appointment service model, we plan to improve upon LibAnswers' utility in tracking data from those transactions by:

- Implementing changes to LibAnswers in order to track remote research assistance data in a more sustainable way by adding more granular 'time spent' drop downs. This may also precipitate additional training for department staff who also track communication in LibAnswers.

- Continuing to look for additional ways in which LibAnswers might be modified to better suit our needs, including:
    - adding additional patron types in the "Patron type" drop down
    - adding additional transactions types (e.g., donation)
    - adding additional drop-downs in order to track the amount of time spent on each phase of a reference transaction in order to more granularly and accurately capture time spent

Strategically Invest in Oregon Digital

With the implementation of the SCARC Digital Projects Team in June 2021, and the integration of Public Services staff on that team, we expect to engage in conversations to develop digitization projects informed by our remote reference requests, and to make data driven decisions regarding digitization efforts that will be useful to a wide variety of researchers.

Further, as part of SCARC's FY22 budget conversations, as a department we made the decision to dedicate funds to outsourcing the digitization of materials that cannot be digitized in-house (e.g., microforms, some A/V formats), as well as funds for specialized digital projects equipment.

Assessment:

The Public Services Team meets weekly to develop, assess, and modify policies and procedures; think strategically about future needs and adjustments; identify and loop in stakeholders, both in SCARC and library-wide; and collaboratively write assessments and reports. Data was collected and analyzed as a means to drive, direct, and inform these conversations.

Collection use and patron type statistics were captured through the circulation of materials in Alma, to include:
- Patron type
- Collections circulated
- Collections most frequently circulated
- By collection type (e.g. manuscript, record group, photographs, oral histories)

Public Services staff also captured remote reference transaction data using the reporting features in LibAnswers, to include:
- Patron type
- When we were contacted (month, day of the week, and time of day)
- How we were contacted (e.g., phone, email, mail, Archon)
- Transaction type (e.g., reference transaction, reference appointment request, use / publication permissions request)
- Area of interest (e.g., OSU history, genealogy, local history, History of Science, rare books)
- Time spent per transaction
- Reproductions per transaction
- Ticket tagging data

Using a shared Google sheet, Public Services staff, especially those working weekly shifts on site, captured remote reference transaction data, to include:
- Patron name, email, and research interest
- Collections used to complete the request
- Time spent communicating with the researcher, paging and locating the materials requested, and scanning the materials once identified

Respectfully submitted,

SCARC Public Services Team   July 30, 2021

Rachel Lilley, Team Lead
Anne Bahde
Anna Dvorak
Natalia Fernández
Kevin Jones
Chris Petersen

Attachments

List of Appendices
- Appendix A: By Appointment Only Onsite Collection Consultations model
- Appendix B: Circulation data tables (Alma / Analytics)
- Appendix C: Remote research support data tables (LibAnswers)

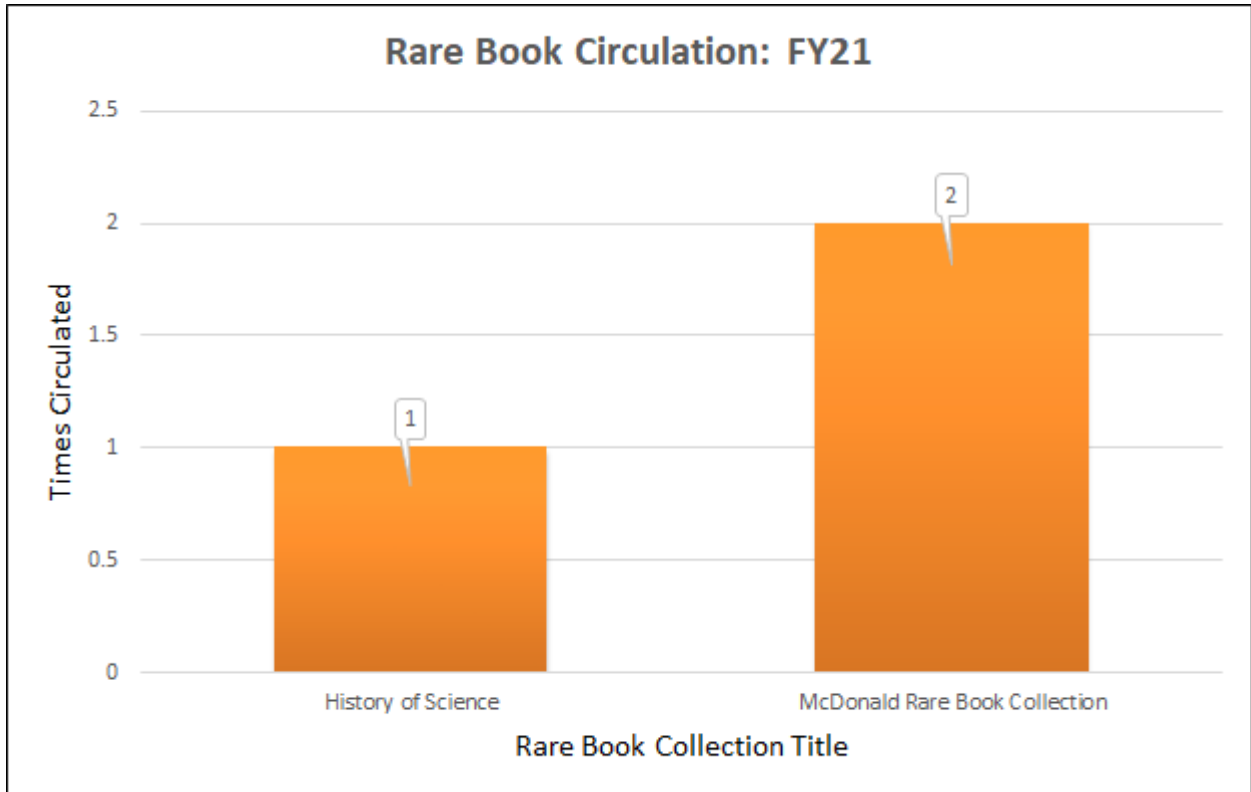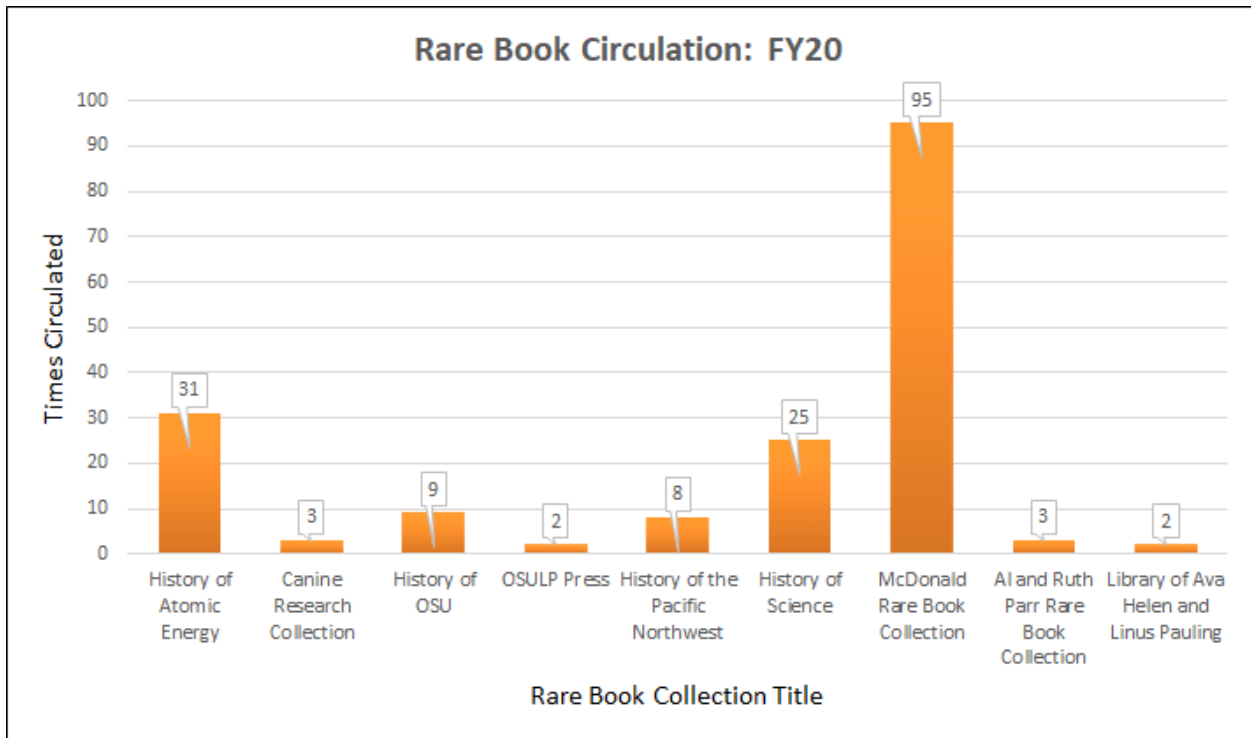**Appendix A: Appointment-Only Onsite Collection Consultations model**

In the lead up to fall term 2020, two spaces on the main floor of the Library were considered for onsite collections consultations: the News Room, and a cubicle in the Undergraduate Research and Writing Center (2750A). SCARC staff ultimately selected the News Room, as it allowed for better physical distancing and people flow through the space. Research appointments began the second week of fall term, with the News Room serving as a "mixed use" space: in use by SCARC when onsite appointments were scheduled, and open for reservation by Main library patrons when not in use by SCARC. Several weeks into the term (October 13), Library Maintenance staff, in consultation with LEAD and SCARC staff, designated the News Room a SCARC-only space. Space use on the main floor was well under capacity, and the News Room walls required LEAD staff to walk through rather than past the space, making the area more difficult to monitor. While the News Room provided the benefits of better physical distancing, improved sight lines, and a quieter space, Public Services staff were unable to provide access to microform or oversize materials in the space, paging on demand was logistically impractical, and there was very little natural light.

Researchers were required to meet with Public Services staff in a preliminary Zoom consultation prior to setting their appointment. Initially, five business day's advance notice was required prior to an appointment; by spring, that window had been shortened to three days. One patron visit was scheduled per day, and appointments were booked for the entire block of available time each day. Paging-on-demand service was not offered, and total materials paged per visit was limited to five cubic feet of material. The quarantining of materials, while initially requiring 72 hours, was decreased to 24 hours, based on findings of the Oregon State Library. Since access to the collections would be accommodated on the 2nd floor, and no paging on demand was done, back-up needs were minimal. In fall, two SCARC Student Archivists were each scheduled for two of the four weekly appointments; in winter and spring, a SCARC staff member already scheduled for onsite work was added to the back-up rotation. Back-up duties primarily consisted of providing restroom or "leg stretch" breaks for Public Services staff during research appointments.

During the 2020-2021 AY, Public Services staff provided 108 appointment blocks: 30 in fall, 40 in winter, and 38 in spring. Cumulatively, staff served 9 researchers (7 unique, and 2 who made visits across multiple terms), over a total of 28 appointments. Among these researchers there were 3 undergraduates, 2 graduate students, 1 e-campus student, and one convenience card holder local to Corvallis. These researchers made use of a wide variety of collections, including twenty-eight archival collections (thirteen record groups, ten manuscript collections, two oral history collections, and two photographic collections), and three rare book collections (four volumes from the McDonald collection, five from History of Science, and three from HistOSU).

Appendix B: Circulation data tables (Alma / Analytics)[3]

<u>Most Used Collections</u>

Rare Book Circulation: FY20

Times Circulated (y-axis, 0 to 100)

- History of Atomic Energy: 31
- Canine Research Collection: 3
- History of OSU: 9
- OSULP Press: 2
- History of the Pacific Northwest: 8
- History of Science: 25
- McDonald Rare Book Collection: 95
- Al and Ruth Parr Rare Book Collection: 3
- Library of Ava Helen and Linus Pauling: 2

Rare Book Collection Title (x-axis)

Rare Book Circulation: FY21

Times Circulated (y-axis, 0 to 2.5)

- History of Science: 1
- McDonald Rare Book Collection: 2

Rare Book Collection Title (x-axis)

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[3] No instruction-related circulation data for this fiscal year.

Archival Collections: FY20

Times Circulated

Collection Title	Times Circulated
Ava Helen and Linus Pauling Papers	48
Aerial of Benton, Lincoln, Linn, Marion, and...	38
OSU Memorabilia Collection	27
Printing and Mailing Services Records	22
Oregon Tilth, Inc. Records, 1975-2018	16
Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Oregon	12
Fred Eckhardt Papers	12
Nursery and Seed Trade Catalogues Collection	12
College of Veterinary Medicine Records	12
Chih H. Wang Papers	11
Agricultural Experiment Station Records	11
Horticulture Department Records	11

Archival Collections: FY 21

Times Circulated

Collection Title	Times Circulated
OSU Memorabilia Collection	13
RG 273	11
Ava Milam Clark Papers	10
Douglas McKay Papers	8
RG 172	8
RG 141	6
OMCRC	3
RG 157	3
RG 203	3
RG 277	3

Who Used our Collections Onsite

Number of Patrons: FY20

Bar chart showing Number of Patrons: FY20 by Patron Group:
- Convenience Card: 3
- Graduate student: 5
- OSU Library Faculty: 38
- OSU Staff: 6
- SCARC User Only: 50
- Undergraduate: 47

Number of Patrons: FY21

Bar chart showing Number of Patrons: FY21 by Patron Group:
- Graduate: 1
- OSU Faculty/GTA: 1
- SCARC User Only: 1
- Undergraduate: 5
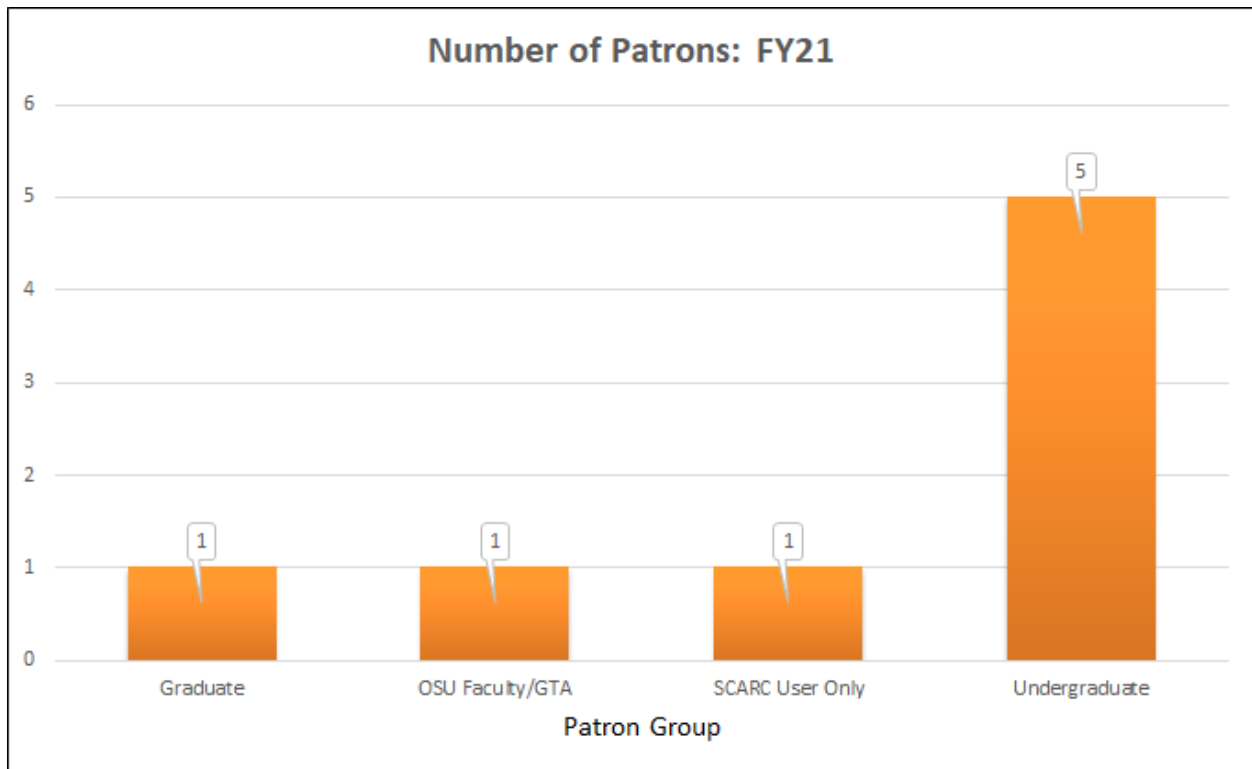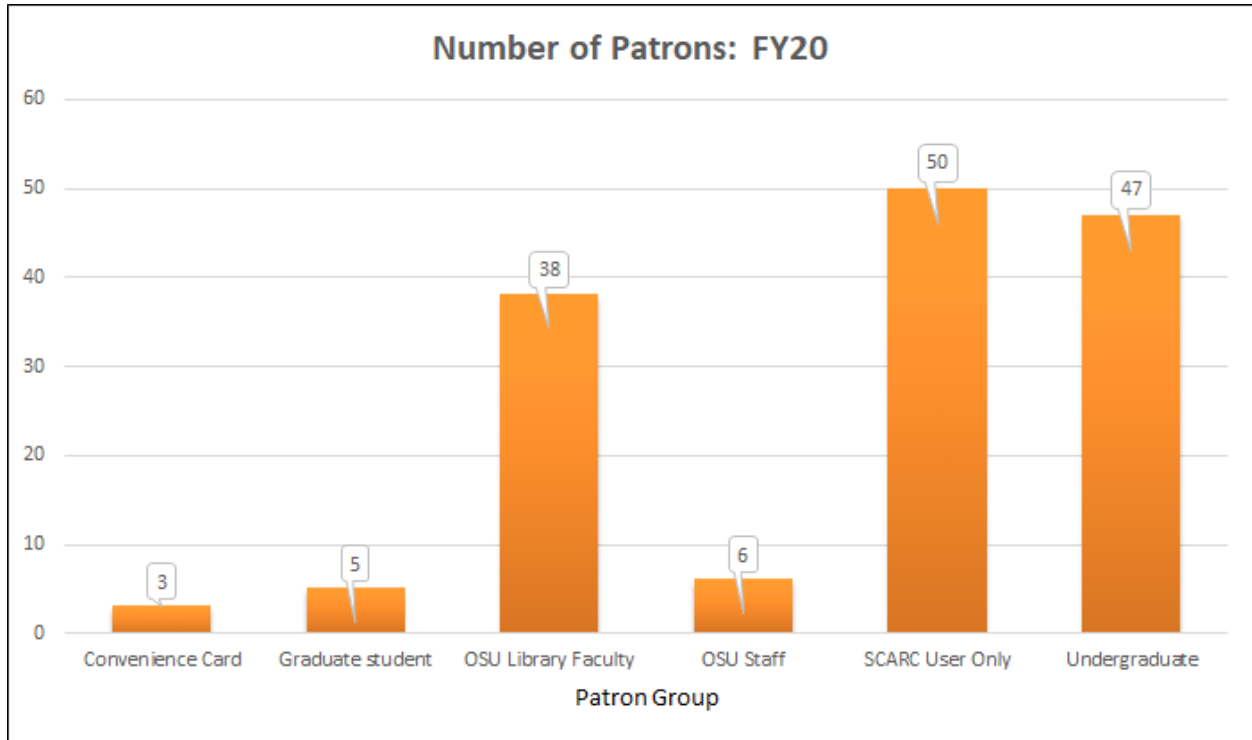
Appendix C: Remote research support data tables (LibAnswers)

In total, SCARC's Public Services staff managed and/or responded to 767 reference transactions in LibAnswers in FY20; in FY21, reference transactions totaled 823.

When We Were Contacted: Month & Day of Week

Transactions per Month: FY21

Month	Number of Transactions
Jul-20	55
Aug-20	53
Sep-20	60
Oct-20	85
Nov-20	63
Dec-20	72
Jan-21	62
Feb-21	60
Mar-21	105
Apr-21	85
May-21	63
Jun-21	60

Transactions per Month: FY20

Month	Number of Transactions
Jul-19	81
Aug-19	78
Sep-19	51
Oct-19	77
Nov-19	54
Dec-19	75
Jan-20	74
Feb-20	65
Mar-20	76
Apr-20	34
May-20	41
Jun-20	61

Transactions per Day: FY21

Transactions per Day: FY20

How We Were Contacted

Contact Type: FY21

Contact Type: FY20

Why We Were Contacted

Transaction Type: FY21

Number of Transactions

Transaction Type	Value
No Value Set	19
Reference Transaction	530
Reference Appointment Request	25
ILL	2
Directional/Technical	17
SARS Request	35
Records Management Inquiry	4
Records Review	5
Use/Publication Permission	78
Other	106
Materials Request	2

Transaction Type: FY20

Number of Transactions

Transaction Type	Value
No Value Set	10
Reference Transaction	383
Reference Appointment Request	88
Tour-Walk-in	3
Visitor-No Tour	6
Directional/Technical	21
SARS Request	30
Records Management Inquiry	12
Records Review	16
Use/Publication Permission	51
Other	124
Materials Request	23

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Area of Interest

Area of Interest: FY21

Number of Transactions

Area of Interest	Number
No Value Set	9
History of Science	84
Natural Resources	82
Oregon Multicultural Archive	47
Oregon Hops and Brewing	83
OSU History	298
Rare Books	16
Local History	64
Archival Practice	7
Records Management	4
OSQA	4
Geneaology	32
General / Other	93

Area of Interest: FY20

Number of Transactions

Area of Interest	Number
No Value Set	15
History of Science	95
Natural Resources	51
Oregon Multicultural Archive	33
Oregon Hops and Brewing	36
OSU History	289
Rare Books	17
Local History	54
Archival Practice	11
Records Management	7
OSQA	1
Geneaology	29
General / Other	129

Who Contacted Us

Patron Type: FY20

Number of Transactions vs Patron Type

- No Value Set: 11
- Undergraduate (OSU): 65
- Undergraduate (Other): 7
- Graduate Student (OSU): 14
- Graduate Student (other): 28
- Faculty (OSU): 148
- Faculty (other): 73
- Alumna/e: 27
- Other: 271
- Unknown: 123

Patron Type: FY21

Number of Transacti vs Patron Type

- No Value Set: 9
- Undergraduate (OSU): 94
- Undergraduate (Other): 5
- Graduate Student (OSU): 13
- Graduate Student (other): 32
- Faculty (OSU): 153
- Faculty (other): 80
- Alumna/e: 50
- Other: 255
- Unknown: 132

Staff Time Per Transaction

Staff Time per Transaction: FY21

Number of Transactions

Staff Time per Transaction	Value
No Value Set	8
<5 minutes	49
<15 minutes	164
<30 minutes	184
<45 minutes	87
<60 minutes	110
>60 minutes	221

Staff Time per Transaction: FY20

Number of Transactions

Staff Time per Transaction	Value
No Value Set	21
<5 minutes	88
<15 minutes	191
<30 minutes	110
<45 minutes	111
<60 minutes	130
>60 minutes	116

Reproductions Per Transaction

Reproductions per Transaction: FY21

Bar chart showing Number of Transactions by Reproductions per Transaction for FY21:
- No Value Set: 113
- 0: 445
- <10: 169
- <20: 21
- <30: 12
- <40: 3
- <50: 12
- >50: 48

Reproductions per Transaction: FY20

Bar chart showing Number of Transactions by Reproducations per Transaction for FY20:
- No Value Set: 332
- 0: 256
- <10: 143
- <20: 9
- <30: 5
- <40: 1
- <50: 7
- >50: 14

Tags Most Frequently Applied[4]

Most Frequently Used Tags: FY21

Chart values:
- Oregon Digital: 176
- External sources: 81
- MSS Pauling: 53
- RG 053 - SG 2: 37
- Yearbooks: 22
- General Catalogs: 19
- ScholarsArchive: 15
- MSS MC: 13
- Barometer: 12
- Omeka: 12
- Archives West: 10

Y-axis: Number of Transactions
X-axis: Tag Title / Resource

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[4] The application of tags to reference transactions in LibAnswers was not formalized and standardized until November 2020, and so only data for FY21 is included in this report.