Navigating E-Mail Reference

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Background

• UCLA Biomedical Library serves a large academic research community including four professional schools, one academic division, and a high traffic health center.

• UCLA Medical Center in Westwood provides internationally recognized patient care in nearly every medical specialty to more than 380,000 people each year from Los Angeles and around the world.
  • Employs 1,500 full-time physicians and more than 2,500 support staff.

• Health Sciences: 3938 students, 4000 students
Background

- Email reference services
  - The library has a shared general reference email, monitored by librarians and graduate students

- This project
  - Explore our own data and learn some basic data skills in Open Refine and Python
  - Look at what types of reference questions are being asked
  - Evaluate the effectiveness of reference responses
Data

• Email reference interactions Fall 2016 – Spring 2017
  • 506 sent emails and 658 received emails
• Random sample of emails to assess quality
  • Used the cleaned version of the sent email data to pull a random sample to assess
Methods

• Cleaned and transformed data
  • OpenRefine
• Frequency
  • Python
• Identified common themes/terms
• Quality Rubric
Results

• Frequency of Emails
  • Days of the week
  • Departments

• Frequency of terms/content
  • Use topics to identify departments

• Qualitative Analysis
  • Quality of Responses
Frequency

• Created lists of commonly used terms for both topics and communities
  • citation_words = ['endnote', 'zotero', 'citation']
  • nursing_words = ['cinahl', 'nursing', 'nurse']
Qualitative Analysis

• 24 random emails were selected
• Each email chain was graded with a rubric
  • We looked at their skill in these areas: Referral, Search, and Follow-up
• Responses were categorized as Advanced, Developing, or Beginner
References


Github

• https://github.com/bethanymyers/reference-email
Thank you!

Questions?

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