



Knowledge for a better world

The academic library service desk as a pedagogical tool

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NTNU University Library

- 15 branch libraries in Trondheim, Ålesund and Gjøvik
- The main mission of the library is to support research and teaching at the university
- Our primary users are students and employees at NTNU



Photo: Lene Løkkhaug

Two projects about the library desk service – partly funded by the National Library in Norway

TREFF (2017-2019)

Purpose: examine the desk service.
Focus: the personal meeting with the student at the desk.

SkjermTREFF (2021-2023)

Purpose: explore different aspects of meeting the library users digitally on Zoom.

Both

We have examined how the physical and the digital meetings work from the perspectives of both users and library staff.

Goal

Further develop both the physical and the digital user meeting in academic libraries.

SkjermTREFF - the digital library desk on Zoom

- Pandemic in 2020: The NTNU University Library established a digital library service desk, reference service, courses and writing activities on Zoom - The Virtual Library (DVB)
- From autumn 2020, DVB became part of the library's permanent service - operated jointly and across the library branches
- More information about The Virtual Library:
<https://i.ntnu.no/wiki/-/wiki/English/The+Virtual+Library>



Illustrations:

Stine Thordarson Moltubakk, Idun K. Østerdal

Research methods

Library users

- In-depth semi-structured interviews
- Guerrilla interviews on the campuses

Library staff

- Focus group interviews

Statistics

- Registration of questions based on pre-defined categories (as in the TREFF-project)

TREFF-prosjektet, registrering av spørsmål i skranken, uke 17 (mandag 23. april – fredag 27. april 2018)

Bibliotek: **Dato:**

Bruk ett skjema pr. dag (NB! Vi teller ikke lørdager). Registrer antall spørsmål i riktig kategori (det kan være flere spørsmål pr. henvendelse). Sett én strek pr. spørsmål. DET ER KUN SPØRSMÅL FRA STUDENTER SOM SKAL REGISTRERES. Spørsmål på epost/telefon skal ikke telles.

Kategorier	Åpningstid – 12.00	12.00-15.30	15.30 - stengningstid
Samling og tilgang (digitale og fysiske samlinger). Eks.: har dere «tittel», hvor finner jeg, hvordan får jeg tilgang			
Veiledning (referansespørsmål) Eks.: Har dere noe om..., er dette en vitenskapelig artikkel, hvordan søke, hvor søker jeg...			
Referanser og litteraturlister Eks.: hvordan referere, lage litteraturlister, bruk av referanseprogrammer (ikke tekniske spørsmål om installasjon o.l. = IT-spørsmål)			
Lån (lån, lånekort, bestillinger) Eks.: registrering av utlån/retur, hjelp med automat, innlogging i Qaja , hva er utlånsstid, fjernlån, hente bestilte artikler, erstatningskrav. Bekrefteise på retur			
Praktisk (rom/bygg/utstyr) Eks.: hvor er grupperom, kantine, auditorier..., dårlig luft..., åpningstider, levere hittegods, låne stiftemaskin o.a., hvor står skriveren			
IT-spørsmål Eks.: utskrift fra bærbar, utskriftsproble., nettilgang, spørsmål om installasjon og bruk av programvare			
Annet (sett strek og godtår ned spørsmålet) Eks.: studieadministrative spørsmål			

Do you have questions?

just ASK

Get your answers at the information desk!

Would you like to know how to:

- Find curriculum literature?
- Search for books and articles?
- Find relevant sources for your assignment?
- Access digital articles and books from home?
- Cite references correctly in your text?
- Make a reference list?

Do you have any other questions? Just ask!
We have skilled employees who are happy to help.

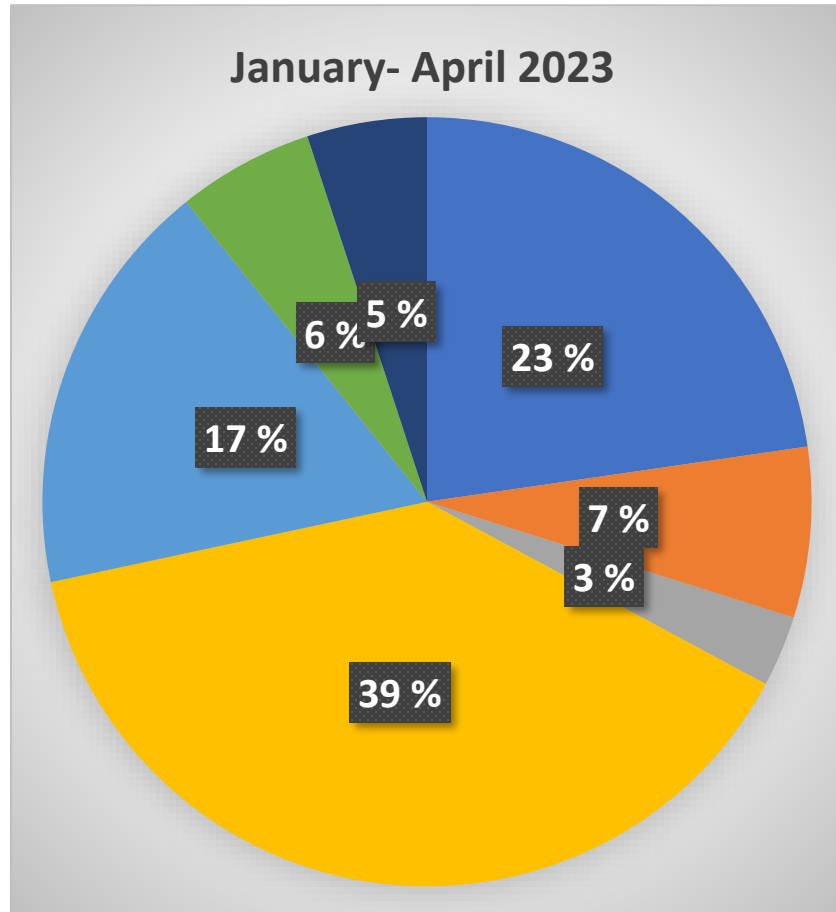
Drop by your nearest library.

 NTNU
University Library

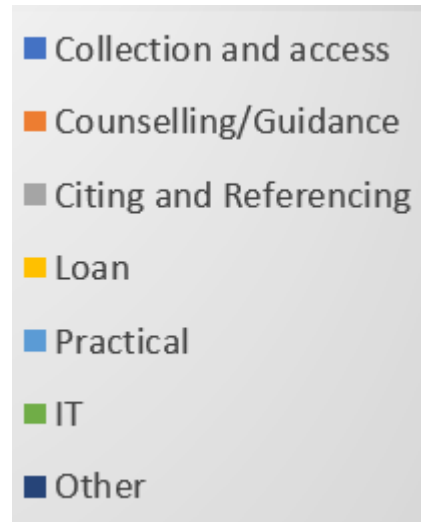
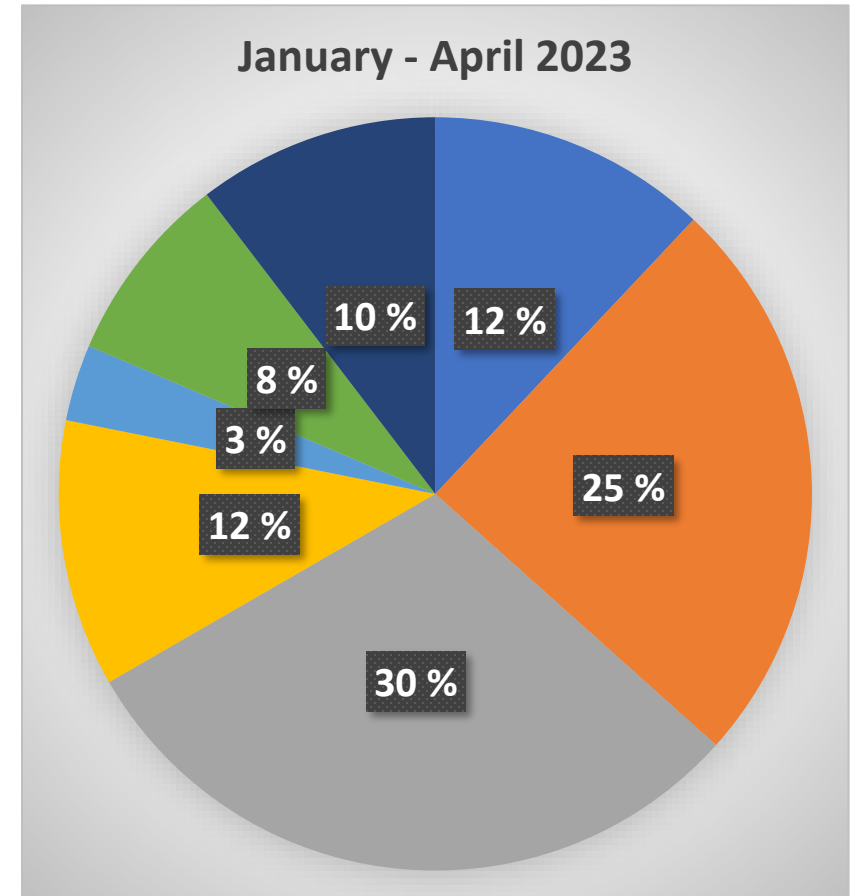
<https://innsida.ntnu.no/bibliotek>

Results: statistics

The physical library desks
(15 libraries)



The digital library desk



Number of questions

January – April 2023 – The physical library desk

Collection and access	Counselling/ Guidance	Citing and Referencing	Loan	Practical	IT	Other	Total
4179	1319	549	7141	3236	1055	927	18406

January – April 2023 – The digital library desk

Collection and access	Counselling/ Guidance	Citing and Referencing	Loan	Practical	IT	Other	Total
22	45	55	21	6	10	19	183

Pedagogical challenges and opportunities

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...om library
...r practitioners

Editors:
Sam Ast
Andrew

Undisturbedness at the digital desk

Many of our informants expressed that they appreciated the **focus**, **undisturbedness**, and the experience of **not having to rush** in the digital meeting. This in contrast to the situation at a physical desk.

“I felt that it was like both had one focus only ... that is, each other in focus“

“[they] .. have in a way conveyed indirectly that ...that I should help you, I really have been waiting for you to call right now.”

Implications for practice:

- to use this undisturbedness in the digital desk for pedagogical purposes
- transform the undisturbedness to the physical desk as well

The unique meeting

Quote from an informant:

"The mindset should be that the one time during the semester that particular student asks for something at the library desk, she/he should get help. It is unique to him/her."

Implications for practice:

- take care of each individual and use the pedagogical opportunities, ref the reference interview (Bøyum, 2021)

Librarians' competencies

It seems to be unclear what the physical desk can be used for and what kind of expertise is available there (ref. the TREFF project). This uncertainty seems to apply to the digital desk as well.

“Never think they are too busy to be asked, but don't know what they know, except answering short questions.”

“...Don't quite know what the librarian's job is...It's awkward to feel that you may have asked the wrong question in the wrong place”

Implications for practice:

- we need to market librarians' expertise better to both students and faculty
- involve the students more in the development of the library's pedagogical work

The library desk as a pedagogical tool - a survey of the competence needs of library desk staff

- Reference management and tools
- Academic writing for students (subject-specific)
- Literature search and the most used databases
- To practice on specific questions (frequently asked)
- Reference interview
- User meetings in general
- Word



References

Bøyum, I., Byström, K., & Pharo, N. (2021). Is the reference desk used for reference interviews. *Reference Services Review*, 49(1), 79-93. <https://doi.org/10.1108/RSR-11-2020-0066>

Kilvik, A. & Lamøy, L. I. (2019). *Sluttrapport Bibliotekets førstelinje som knutepunkt (Ref. 2017/85)*. <https://bibliotekutvikling.no/prosjektbank/prosjekt/bibliotekets-forstelinje-som-knutepunkt/>

Lamøy, L. I., & Kilvik, A. (2021). May I Borrow a Stapler? Is This All Students Ask at the Service Desk in a University Library? *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*, 16(3), 32–45. <https://doi.org/10.18438/eblip29883>

Reference and User Services Association. Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Service Providers. Approved by the RUSA Board of Directors, 2023.