

# Low Effort, Big Impact: Easy Ways to Improve Online Reference Services

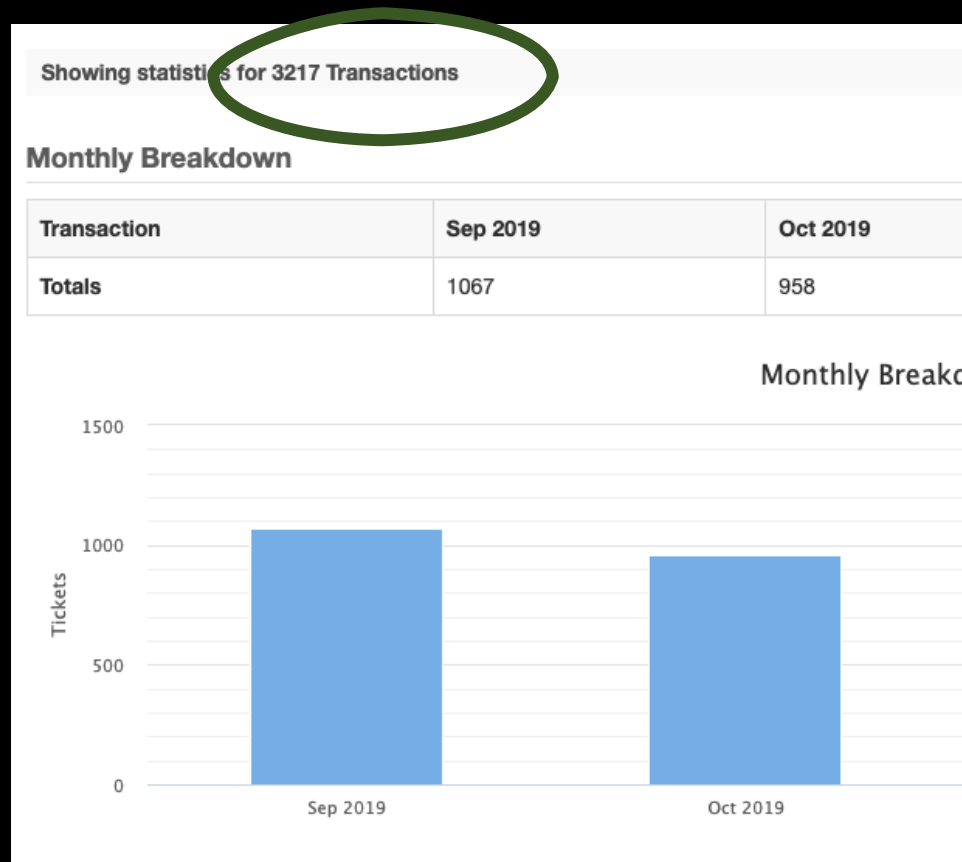
**Claire Ehrlich**

Reference and Instruction Librarian

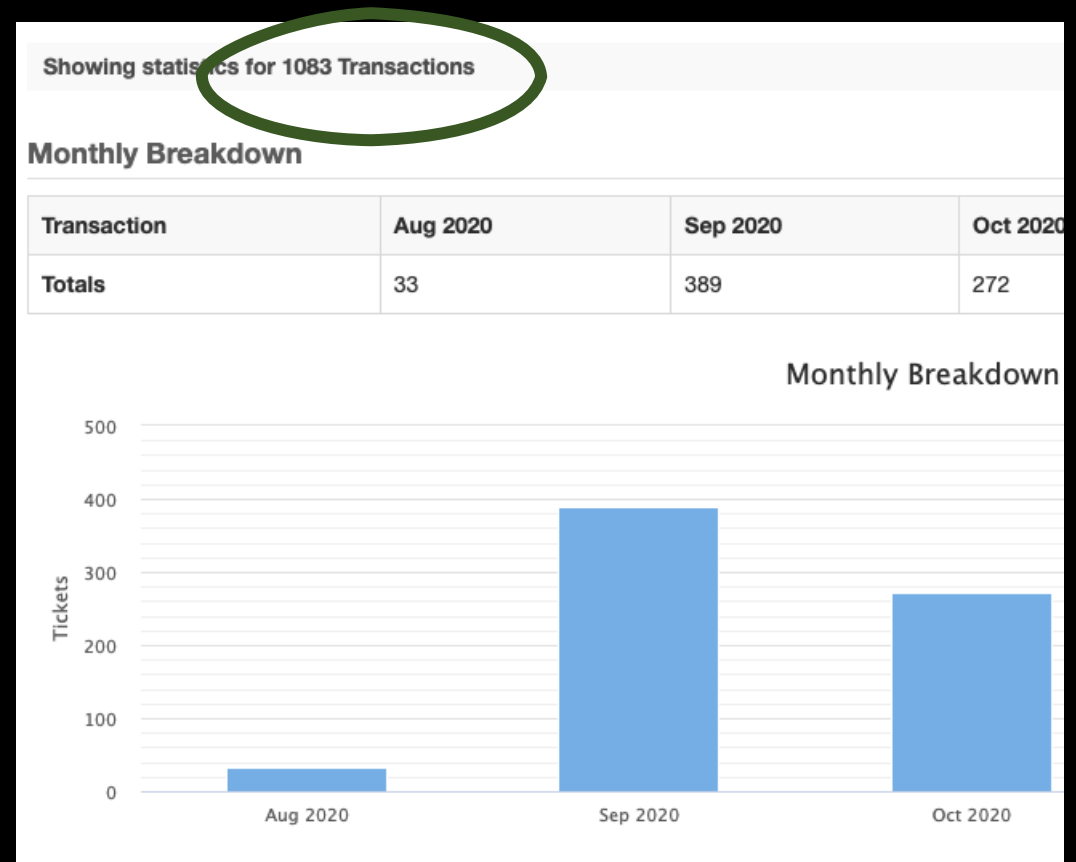
Mohawk Valley Community College, Utica NY

# The Problem:

Fall 2019: 3217 reference transactions

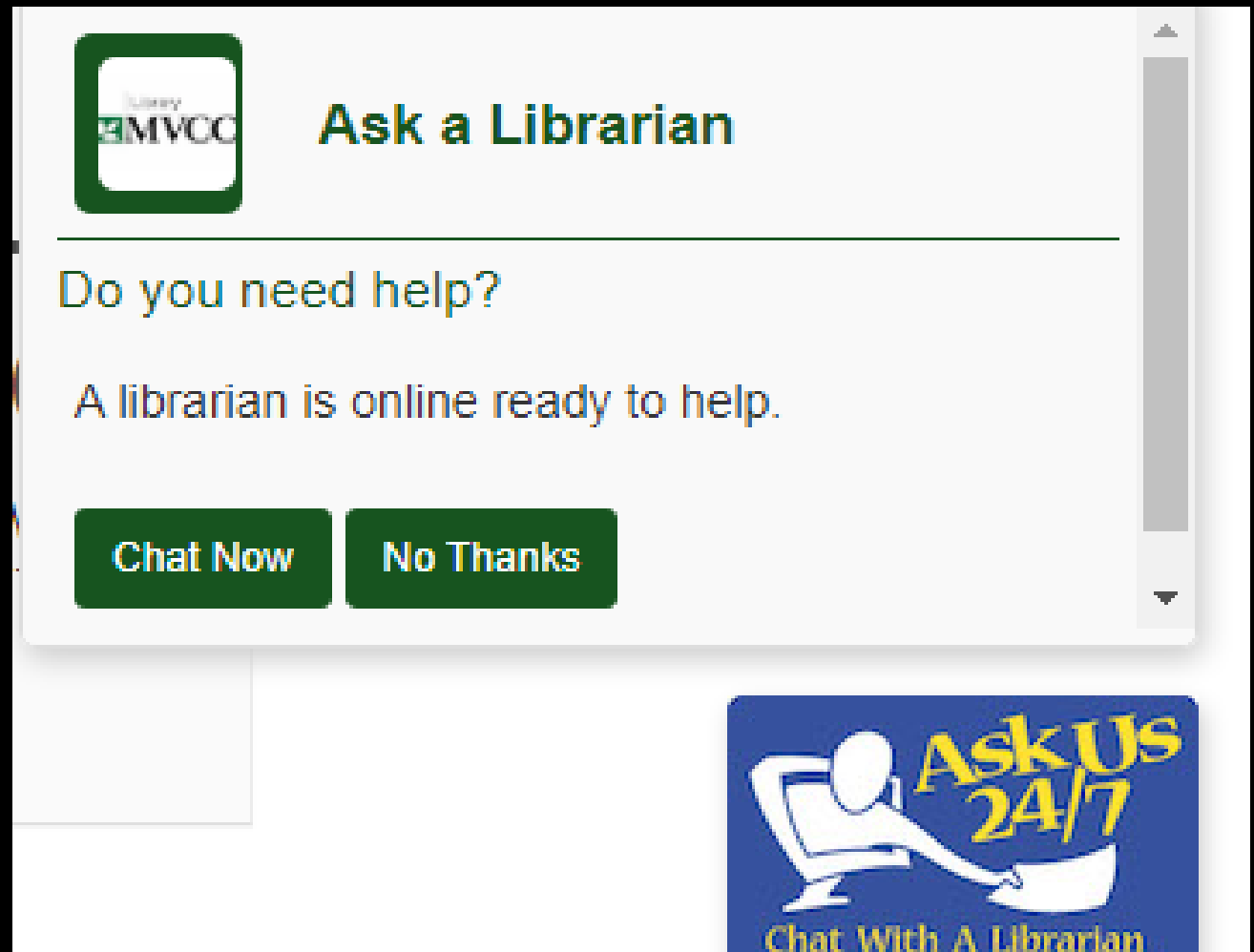


Fall 2020: 1083 transactions



## Solution 1: Proactive chat

- Already had LibAnswers/LibChat
- Embedded widget into library homepage and all LibStuff
- Chat traffic increased 122%, spring '21 versus Fall '20
- Up next: embedding into Primo and individual databases?



The screenshot shows a chat widget for a library. At the top left is a logo for "Library MVCC" inside a green square. To its right is the title "Ask a Librarian" in green. Below this is a horizontal line. The main text area contains the question "Do you need help?" in blue, followed by the response "A librarian is online ready to help." in blue. At the bottom of the chat area are two green buttons: "Chat Now" and "No Thanks". To the right of the chat area is a vertical scrollbar. Below the chat area is a blue banner with a white icon of a person sitting at a computer. The banner text reads "Ask US 24/7" in yellow and "Chat With A Librarian" in white.

## Solution 2: Using Search Data to Improve Usability

- LibAnswers FAQ QuerySpy
- LibGuides search data
- Primo most-searched

Query Spy: Real Time Query Analysis

what the visitors are asking and searching for, on your site.

Query Spy data is only kept for 6 months, with deletion occurring on the first of each month. You can back-up the data using the "Export Queries" option below.

Queries from:  to  Result: All Source: All IP range: All

Group: View All Referring URL:  Keyword:  Filter Queries (clear)

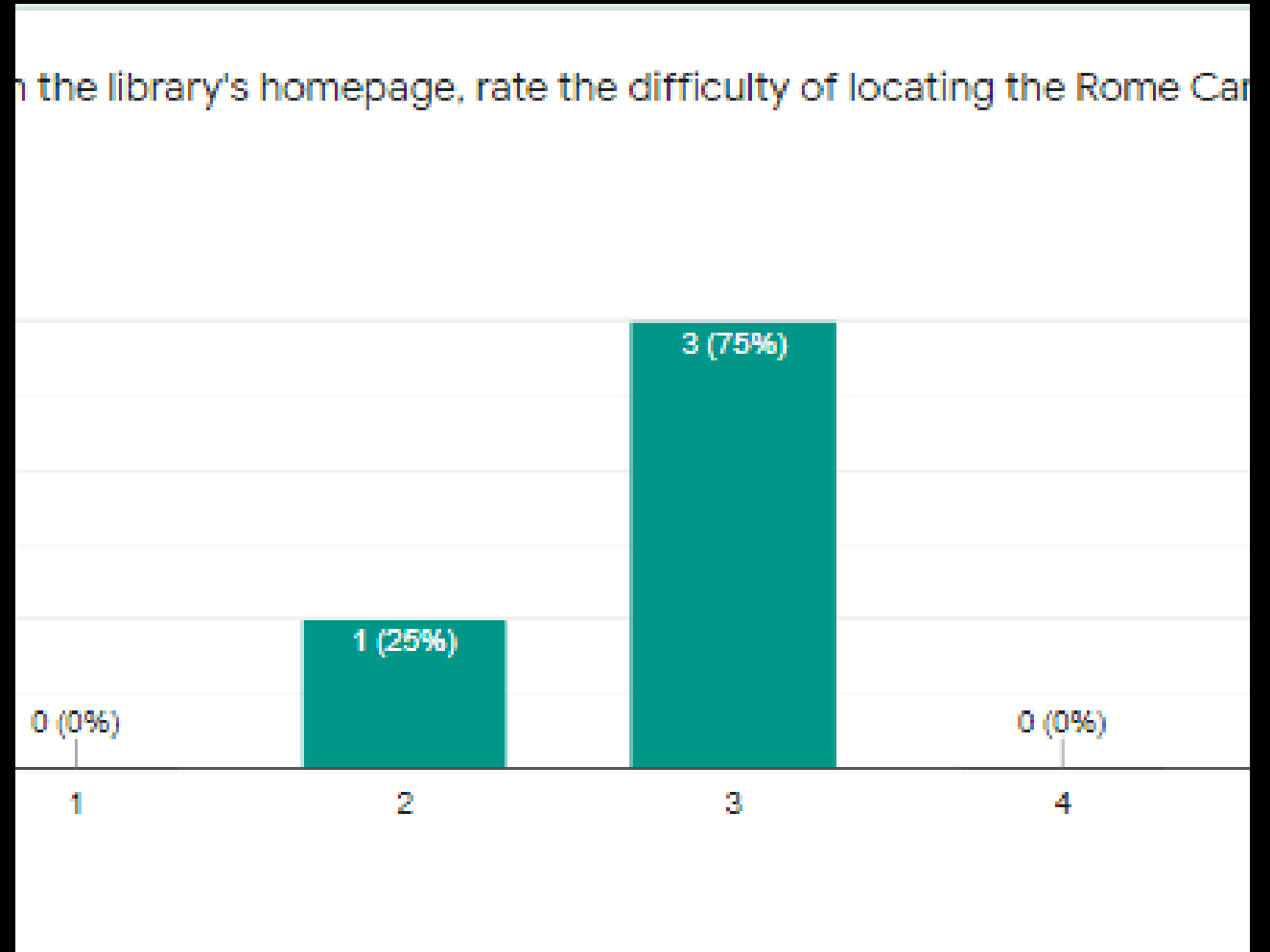
Queries Statistics Export Queries Export Stats

Showing 1 - 37 (of 37) Queries

Time	IP	Question Query	Result	Source	Group	Referring URL	Actions
03-10 4:59	[REDACTED]	visitor (add to FAQs) (mark as reviewed)	Question not submitted!	System	Reference	<a href="https://askmvcclibrary.mvcc.edu/">https://askmvcclibrary.mvcc.edu/</a>	🔍 🗑️
03-10 1:36	[REDACTED]	STUDENT NBR (add to FAQs) (mark as reviewed)	Clicked on How do I access my student drive (H:) from off campus?	System	Reference	<a href="https://askmvcclibrary.mvcc.edu/search/?q=STUDENT%20NBR&amp;t=0">https://askmvcclibrary.mvcc.edu/search/?q=STUDENT%20NBR&amp;t=0</a>	🔍 🗑️
03-10 1:09	[REDACTED]	How do I reset my MVCC email password?	Direct match via auto-suggest	System	Reference	<a href="https://askmvcclibrary.mvcc.edu/faq/92393">https://askmvcclibrary.mvcc.edu/faq/92393</a>	🔍 🗑️

## Solution 3: Website User-Testing with a Captive Audience

- College wanted to keep paying support staff during closures but needed meaningful work for them.
- Most of our student workers hadn't maxed out their hours and needed work.
- Google Form



# Solution 4: User-Friendly Research Guides

## Evaluate Internet Resources

### Evaluating Internet Pages

Currency

Relevance

Authority

Accuracy

Purpose

### Evaluating Internet Pages

5 Criteria

When evaluating websites, there are 5 criteria that you should look for on a page. Chico on how to evaluate articles, websites, magazines, and other research

1. **C**urrency
2. **R**elevance
3. **A**uthority
4. **A**ccuracy
5. **P**urpose

Take a look at each page to learn more about the 5 criteria!

#### Something to think about:

- You should consider all of the criteria before deciding whether or not a source has not been through the peer-review publication process does not

## How to Evaluate a Source



### 1. What type of source is this, and is it relevant to your assignment?

What is your source? Sometimes, particularly with information found online, it's not immediately obvious whether you are looking at an ebook, a government report, a plain old website, etc. Investigate to find out for sure ([ask a librarian](#) if you need help!).

Then check your assignment instructions. It doesn't matter how wonderful your website is, if your instructor only wants peer-reviewed academic journal articles.

## A Solution that Didn't Solve Much:

- Zoom/Collaborate Office Hours at designated times



[Image From Giphy.com](https://www.giphy.com)

# Further Reading/Viewing:

- Proactive Chat:
  - "That Thing is So Annoying"
  - "[Standing By to Help: Transforming Online Reference with a Proactive Chat System](#)"
  - "[LibAnswers Proactive Chat Increases User Engagement](#)" –how-to with screenshots and links to examples
- User-friendly Research Guides:
  - "[Student-Centered Design: Creating LibGuides Students Can Actually Use](#)"
- Use search data to meet students where they are
  - [FAQ Best Practices video](#)
  - [Maximizing Search in LibGuides & LibAnswers](#)



# Questions?

## Contact Info:

Claire Ehrlich

[cehrlich@mvcc.edu](mailto:cehrlich@mvcc.edu)

(315)-731-5737

[www.mvcc.edu/library](http://www.mvcc.edu/library)

