# Effectiveness of Library Staff Training on Use of Gimlet in Reference Statistics Recording

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### **Abstract**

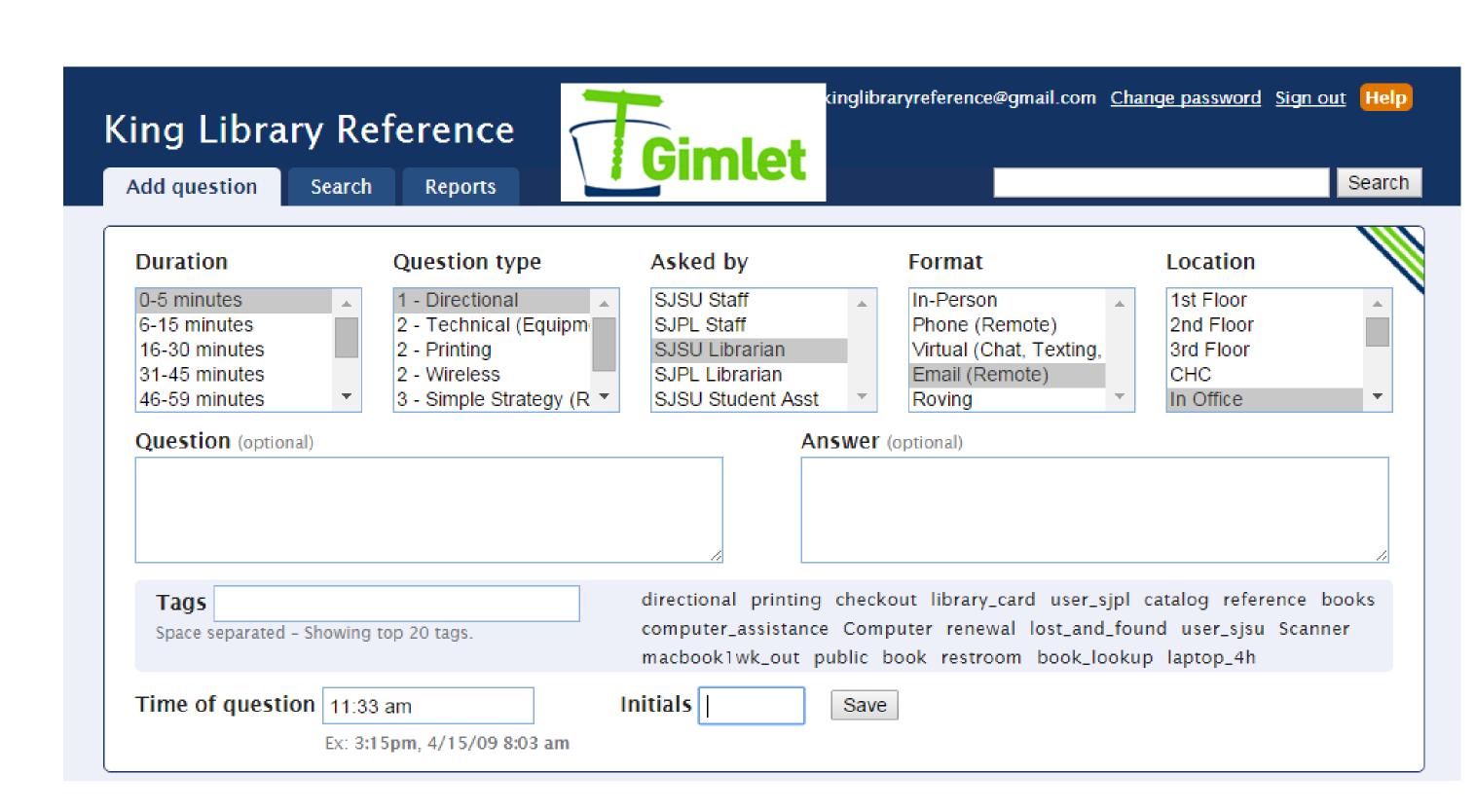
This study focuses on library employees' reference question coding accuracy. Employees were asked to code questions using the Warner Scale both before and after a library-wide training session on reference question coding. Initial results indicate that the training session had little impact on overall accuracy, but improvements were seen in specific employee demographic groups and for coding between specific question levels. Future efforts will focus on developing a more effective training model for all library employees.

## **Background**

The Dr. Martin
Luther King, Jr.
Library is a joint
partnership
between San José
State University
and the City of
San José. King
Library serves as
the University
Library and as the



main branch of the public library system of San José. Employees across both institutions answer questions at public service points and log their transactions into Gimlet.



Gimlet is a web-based statistical tracking software solution. It offers users the ability to input details about interactions with the public and can create on-the-fly reports to visualize daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly trends. King Library uses this program to evaluate staffing and training needs.

## **Modified Warner Model at King Library**

At the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, a large joint academic and public library, employees code all patron transactions with a modified Warner Scale.

## Level 1 - Directional

- Questions that do not require a resource to answer.
- May be answered by a sign or help sheet.
- Usually answered at the service desk.

#### Level 2 - Technical

- Questions that require a demonstration to answer.
- Usually related to technology,
- e.g. how to log in.
- Most often the library staff have to move to a location and demonstrate a skill.

#### Level 3 - Simple Strategy

- Questions that require the formulation of a strategy.
- May require selection of resources.
- May require individualized subject approaches.
- Usually answered at the service desk.

#### Level 4 – Complex Strategy

- Usually longer encounters outside of regular desk duty.
- Instructional element usually related to information literacy skills .
- The librarian will often make multiple research recommendations.

## **Materials and Methods**

Gimlet entries from 8/24-12/19/14 downloaded

Entries were excluded if the question or answer fields were omitted

Entries were anonymized and segregated by question level

Five questions per Warner level were selected using the random number generator at Random.org

Final set of 20 questions were reviewed and calibrated by a committee of academic and public librarians

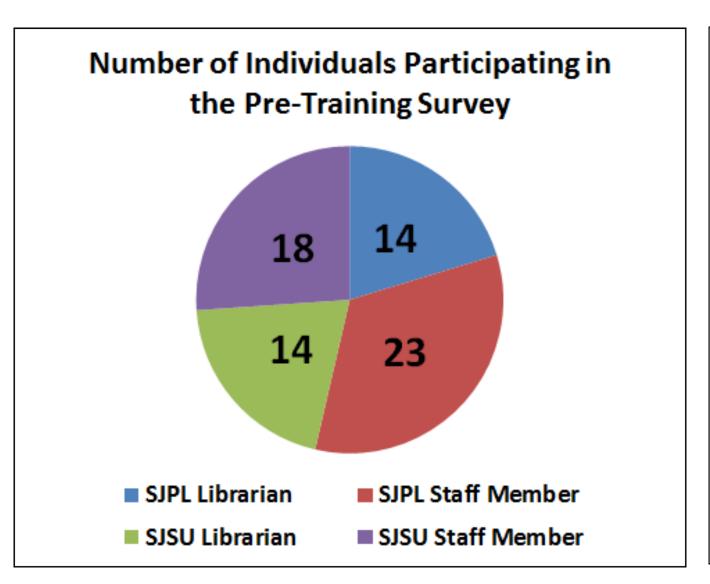
Employees
coded questions
via a Qualtrics
survey

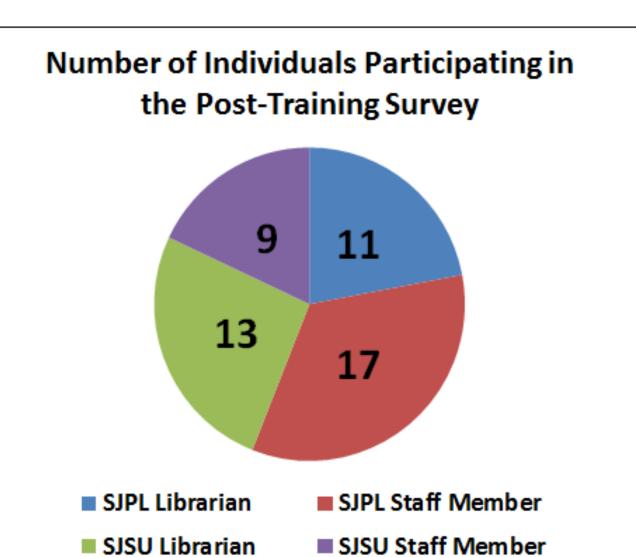
Training on reference transaction coding

Employees coded the same question set via Qualtrics

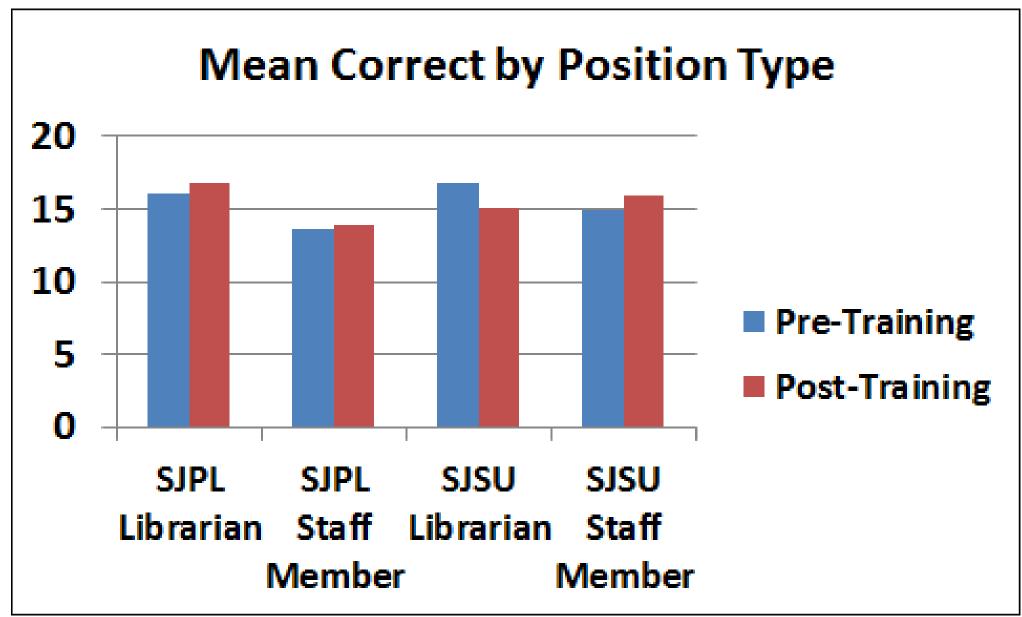
## Results

The same Qualtrics survey was administered before and after the reference coding training session. There were 37 and 28 San José Public Library respondents to the pre- and post-training survey, respectively. For San José State University employees, there were 32 pre-training and 22 post-training responses.





Coding accuracy nominally improved across all demographic groups after the training session, except for San José State University librarians. For this subgroup, accuracy was higher prior to the training.



## **Conclusions and Future Directions**

Coding accuracy decreased for the academic librarian group. It is unknown if the training session introduced greater ambiguity in coding reference transactions. The library-wide training session did not result in great improvements in reference transaction coding accuracy. Other methodologies for training will need to be explored.

## **References**

- Meserve HC, Belanger SE, Bowlby J, Rosenblum L. Developing a Model for Reference Research Statistics: Applying the" Warner Model" of Reference Question Classification to Streamline Research Services. Reference & User Services Quarterly. 2009 Apr 1:247-58.
- Warner DG. A new classification for reference statistics. Reference & User Services Quarterly. 2001 Oct 1:51-5.