

California Digital Library

2009 Information Services Web and Telephone Helpline Survey

October 22 – November 4, 2009

Who uses the CDL Help services? What services and programs are users asking about? Through which communication channels do they come to us? CDL Information Services conducted its annual survey of queries coming into Information Services via email, phone, the VDXTrouble listserv, and Footprints for a 2-week period covering October 22 – November 4, 2009 in order to be able to answer these questions. This service is primarily staffed by Alison Ray and Jayne Dickson.

This survey does not address questions coming into all CDL programs, and omits those which go directly to eScholarship Publishing and University of California Curation Services, for example.

Overall Findings

During this 2009 2-week period, Information Services received a total of 236 queries compared to 149 last year, an increase of 63%. Why this augmentation? There may be several factors. First, it was not possible to conduct the survey during exactly the same 2 weeks as last year because of anticipated staff absences. The timing in the semester/quarter may have had an impact on activity because of increased searching being undertaken by students to complete midterms and research projects. Second, UC-eLinks had more action this year likely due to a change in linking procedures which resulted in both greater direct access to content and more questions. OAC had additional activity since Digital Special Collections (DSC) recently surfaced its content more effectively via crawlers such as Google. A new OAC interface had been launched in July, also making contents more broadly available. Improved visibility equals more feedback—more locales and relatives identified by the public; increased desires to use materials in coursework or publication.

Another factor in the increased usage of feedbacks was the highlighted presence of the NGM Pilot, accounting for this year's 4th most heavily queried project. In August 2009, the UC libraries made the NGM Pilot the preferred method of accessing UC collections, raising this service's visibility.

The 4 projects which generated the highest number of questions this year were UC-eLinks (47), licensed resources (46), OAC (36), and the Next Generation Melvyl (NGM) Pilot (25). Last year's top 4 programs were licensed resources (57), OAC (14), VDX (14), and UC-eLinks (8).

Mode of contact

Of the 236 queries, 200 came via email, 18 via phone, and 9 each via Footprints tickets and the VDXTrouble listserv, a listserv for campus ILL staff to inquire about and report problems with the VDX and PIR components of the Request service. One CDLALERT was sent out during this period.

Format

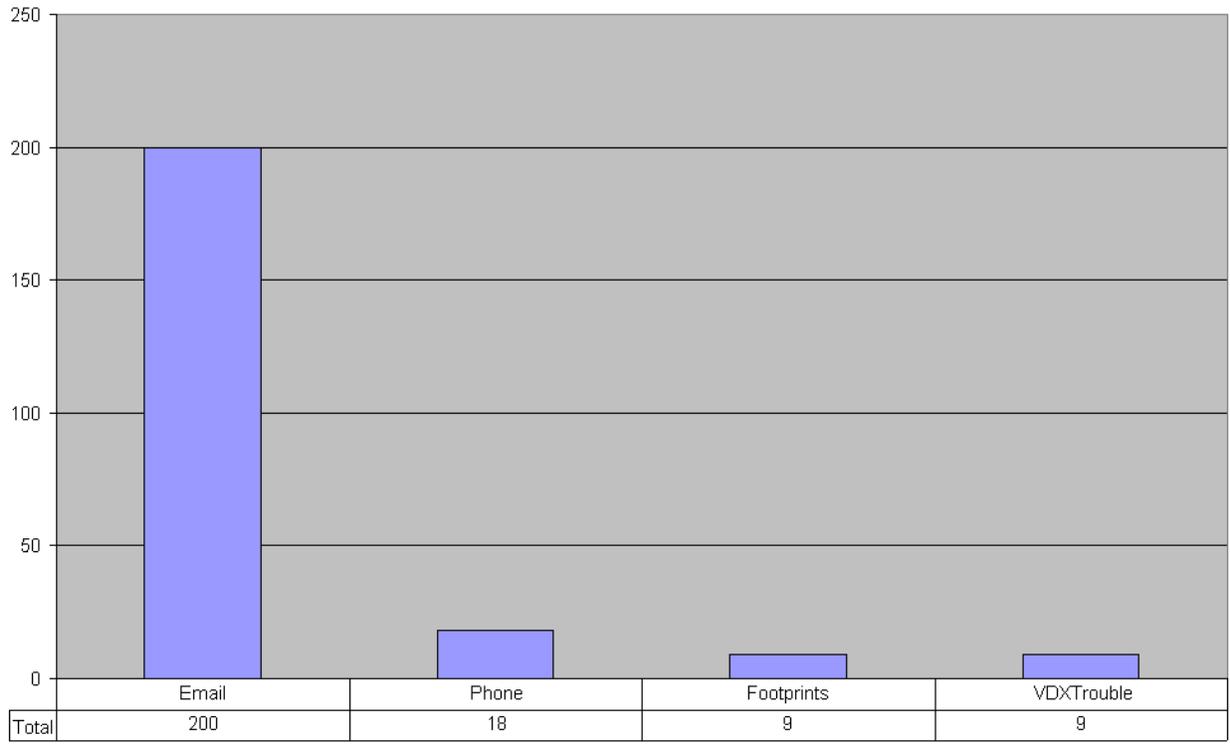


Figure 1: Mode of contact

Queries by program

As mentioned above, the top 4 programs which generated questions were UC-eLinks, licensed resources, OAC, NGM, followed by Request (19), VDX (9), Calisphere (8), current Melvyl (4), mass digitization (3), followed by XTF (1) and eScholarship Editions (1).

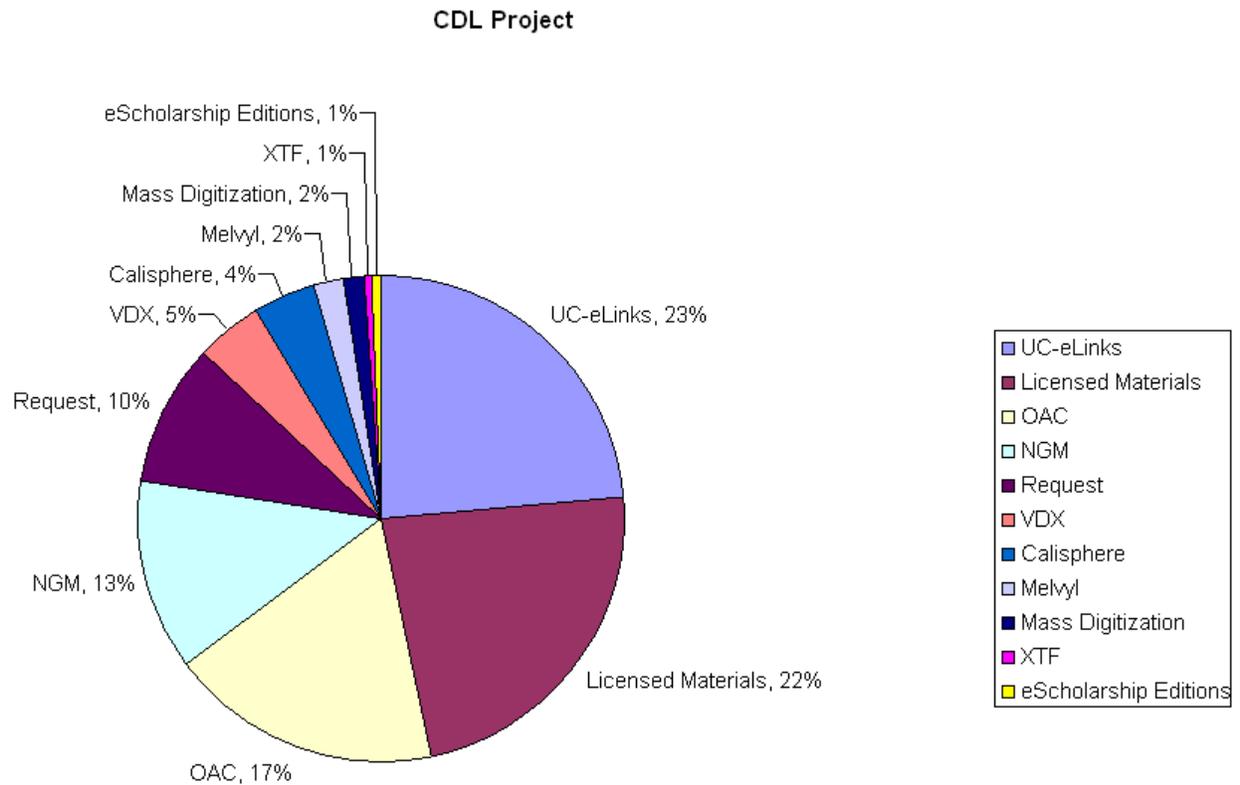


Figure 2: Count by CDL Project

Response Time

Information Services staff generally respond to telephone calls within 3 rings, although investigation and consultation can add additional time to resolve an issue. Email queries require more time to respond to, depending on when they come in, and if further consultation or referrals are required. Because of the complexity of VDX queries, and the need to really dig down to investigate, these problems generally require more time for responses. Similarly, the questions that go to Footprints are often sent to licensed content vendors to resolve, and so have a slower response rate.

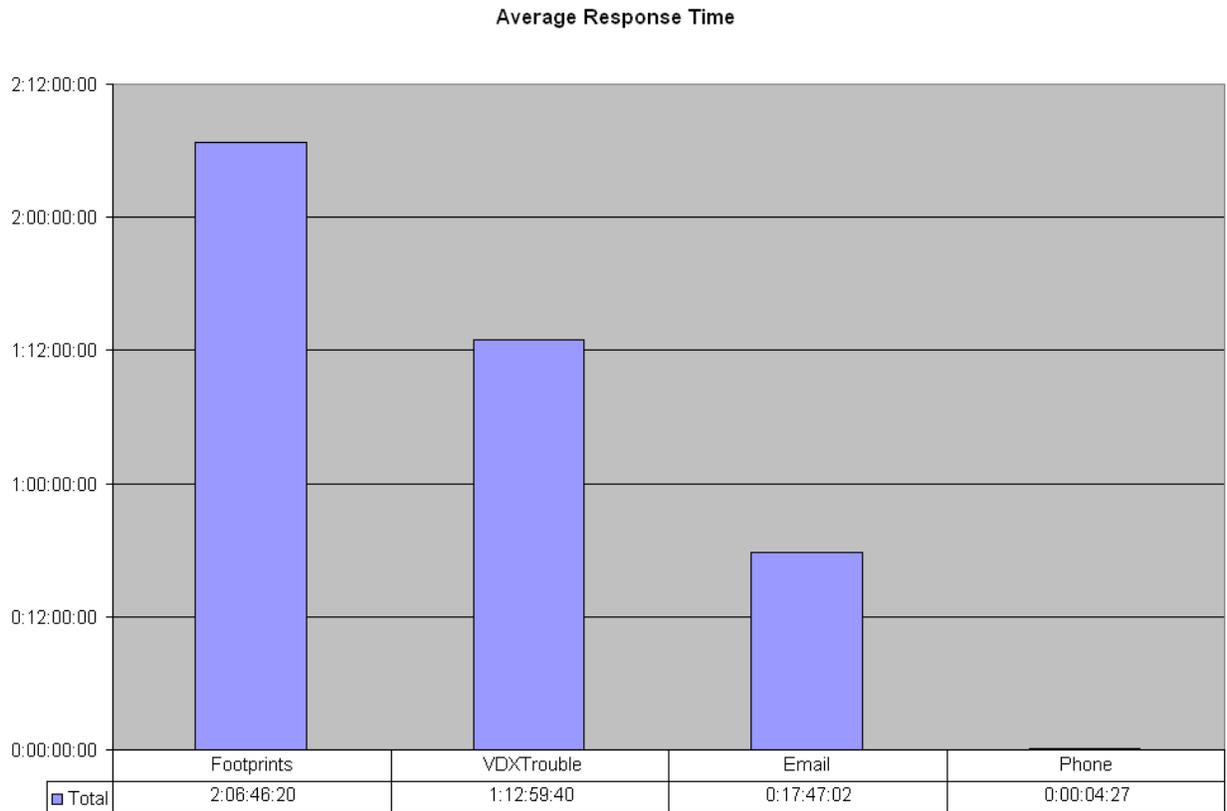


Figure 3: Response time

Affiliation

We had questions this year from every UC campus during this 2-week period. UC Davis led the way with 37 questions, followed by Berkeley (32), San Diego (21), and Los Angeles (17) with other campuses falling in behind, and including 2 from the Office of the President. Because UC Davis has its own instance of UC-eLinks, we often have a greater degree of consultation with this campus.

Sixty-six or 28% of the questions came from unaffiliated users (these include questions where we can tell clearly that they are from users unaffiliated with UC or cannot tell the affiliation, or when they come in from other than UC email or IP addresses). The majority of these are asking questions about OAC or Calisphere.

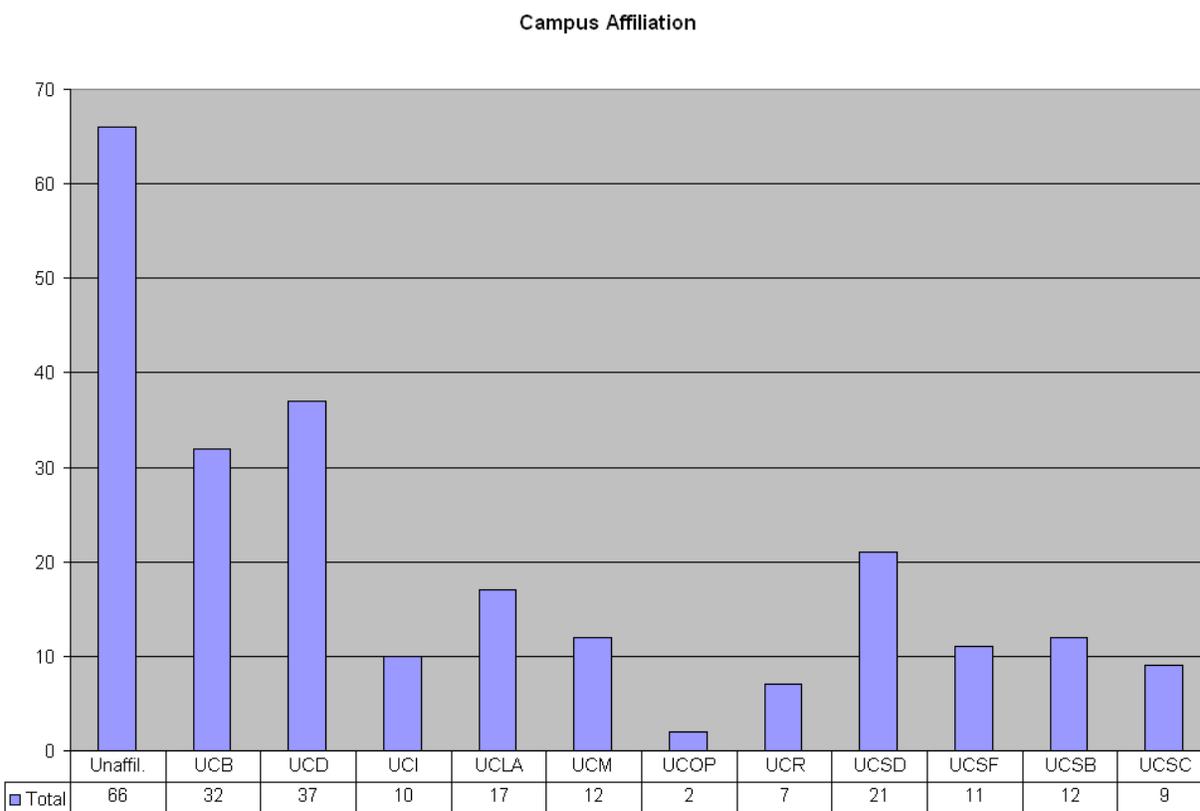


Figure 4: Affiliation

Categories Each year we divide the queries into different categories. Problems this year fell into the following categories:

Access to physical content: A user has found a physical resource (e.g., book, film, dissertation) and would like a copy sent to her/him (ILL); or the user wishes to visit the repository or library where the item is held.

Technical (includes performance/reliability issues): Problems related to the functioning of the system; when, in the user's opinion, something is not working; bugs/errors in the system; reporting down resources; system time-outs/crashes; broken URLs.

Access to electronic content: Authentication/authorization (password; proxy server and VPN questions); specific questions about how to access materials remotely; user requests electronic item.

Errors in content: Includes missing content; full text that is not yet available, such as latest journal issues; changes in journal availability not yet applied to catalog/SFX; incorrectly indexed/cataloged articles/books.

Response: Response back from user, such as thanking us for help.

Feature/function: Related to the use of a feature, not content; user has questions about how to use a feature/function.

Reference help: Questions regarding how to find materials on a particular topic.

Suggestions: Suggestions for material for help screens, comments on usefulness of help, or suggestions of modifications that would improve a feature.

Interface/usability: Comments on aspects of the site that are confusing/misleading; labels that are not helpful; terms used in the interface that are confusing (e.g., acronyms that are not explained); confusing or unhelpful error messages.

Other: Random questions/comments; some examples include questions from library staff about how to link directly to the CDL resources; questions about NRLF/SRLF, comments about digital images, and questions concerning copyright status.

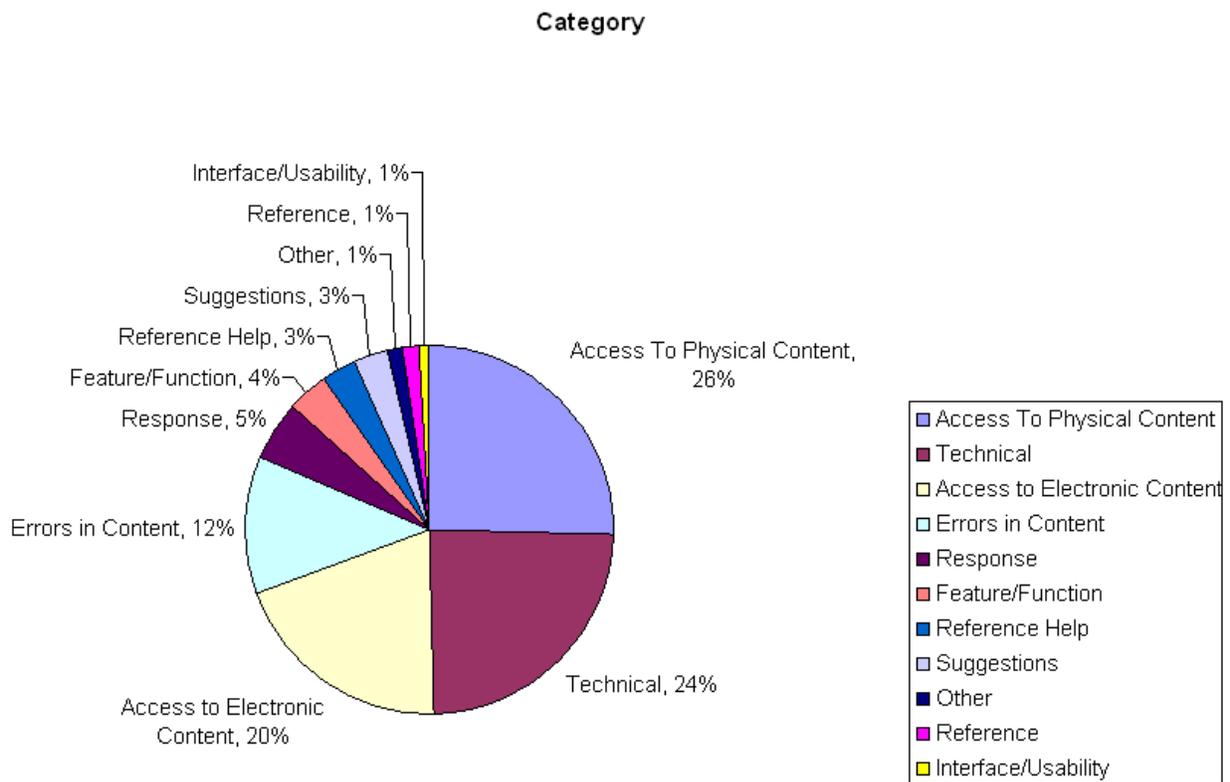


Figure 5: Categories

The Future

There are a number of areas in which we may experience changes in the upcoming year. In January 2010, the launch of the new CDL website is projected which will conjoin the current “brochure” or public site with the “Inside CDL” site, and add greater search features, among other things. This may decrease the number of questions we receive in some areas because the site itself and access to programs and services are much clearer. On the other hand, for a period, we may experience an increase because the placement of services is different. Users may be confused before they learn to use the new site.

We will have a status page on the new site which could answer (or generate!) additional queries. How the increase in use of blogging software and the use of Twitter at CDL will impact the Helpdesk is yet unknown.

In addition to the new CDL website, in January or February 2010 the new CDL ERMS Portal will be released to UC library staff. Again, although ultimately the number of questions we receive regarding licensed resources may drop, initially there will, no doubt, be an increase in feedback from library staff learning to use the new service.

As services such as the Web Archiving Service (WAS) or access to digitized materials in HathiTrust become regularized, Information Services will expand into responding to help more fully.

As we engage in continued successful improvement of our prime services, as we aim for seamless access for users, questions to our Helpdesk may diminish. Given the vitality of CDL programs and services, no doubt these will generate new activity.