

# Desk Tracker™ in a University Library



## The Challenge

### Accurate Tracking of Public Service Transactions

Like many libraries, the University of Chicago tracked activity at most public service desks using tick marks on paper. The reference department used an Access database to log transactions but the ability to run reports was limited to one staff member with Access expertise. Data-gathering was concentrated in a two-week period once a year. Extrapolating from a limited sample didn't provide an accurate picture of public service activity. Collecting statistics on time spent in instruction-related activities was also a challenge.

<b>Name of Library:</b>	University of Chicago Library
<b>Location:</b>	Chicago, Illinois
<b>Population Served:</b>	5,027 undergraduate students; 10,122 graduate, professional, and other students; 2,211 faculty and other academic personnel
<b>Contact Person:</b>	Agnes Tatarka Assessment Director

Library staff began investigating web-based solutions for tracking public service interactions. The goal was to collect the same information in the same way while recognizing individual department needs. The 2007 ACRL Conference provided a venue to explore possible solutions and it was there that staff were introduced to Desk Tracker.

## The Solution

### Web-based System for Gathering Statistics Meets Range of Needs

Desk Tracker allows the library to standardize the way public service desks throughout the system gather statistics. Subject specialists use Desk Tracker to log student and faculty office visits and e-mail activity, enabling them to quantify their work. Staff use Desk Tracker's instruction tabs to capture data related to instruction activity, which has historically been difficult to track.

Automating the gathering of statistics has brought efficiencies to the library, including:

**More reliable data.** Staff keep Desk Tracker open on their desktops so transaction counting is continual, not just for short periods. This provides better data and a much clearer picture of the activity at the service desks.

**Impact on service.** More precise monitoring of activity has contributed to better utilization of professional resources. Analyzing usage patterns enabled the library to reduce double staffing during certain hours and free up 10 hours a week for reference librarians to perform tasks away from the desk.

**Distribution and reporting.** A web-based system provides valuable information for managers who can access core reports to see how people are using their services.

**Data customized by department.** Every form answers the basic questions of where a question came in, how the question came in, and why the question was asked. Beyond that, departments can customize additional information they want to gather, desk by desk, so that the data they collect reflects the unique activity of their staff.

## About Desk Tracker

A product of Compendium Library Services, Desk Tracker provides the fastest, easiest way to track library activity at every public service point. Web-based and fully customizable, Desk Tracker provides instant access to the data needed to effectively manage library resources. Visit [desktracker.com](http://desktracker.com) for more information, or contact Compendium Library Services at 970-472-7979 or PO Box 82, Bellvue, Colorado, 80512. You can also visit us on the web at [compendiumlib.com](http://compendiumlib.com).

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