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Planning a Strategic Lineup for the Delivery of Effective Reference Services

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Planning a Strategic Lineup for the Delivery of Effective Reference Services

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Taubman Health Sciences Library

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to determine trends in the provision of all forms of reference services by librarians and other staff at the library from July 2010 – June 2011.

The Taubman Library serves professional schools of medicine, public health, nursing, dentistry, pharmacy and the UM Health System; it is also open to the public.

Methods

Data was collected from:
➢ service management software (Footprints)
➢ statistical management software (Desk Tracker)

A trend analysis addressed potential correlations in the data for:
➢ service points
➢ length of reference transactions
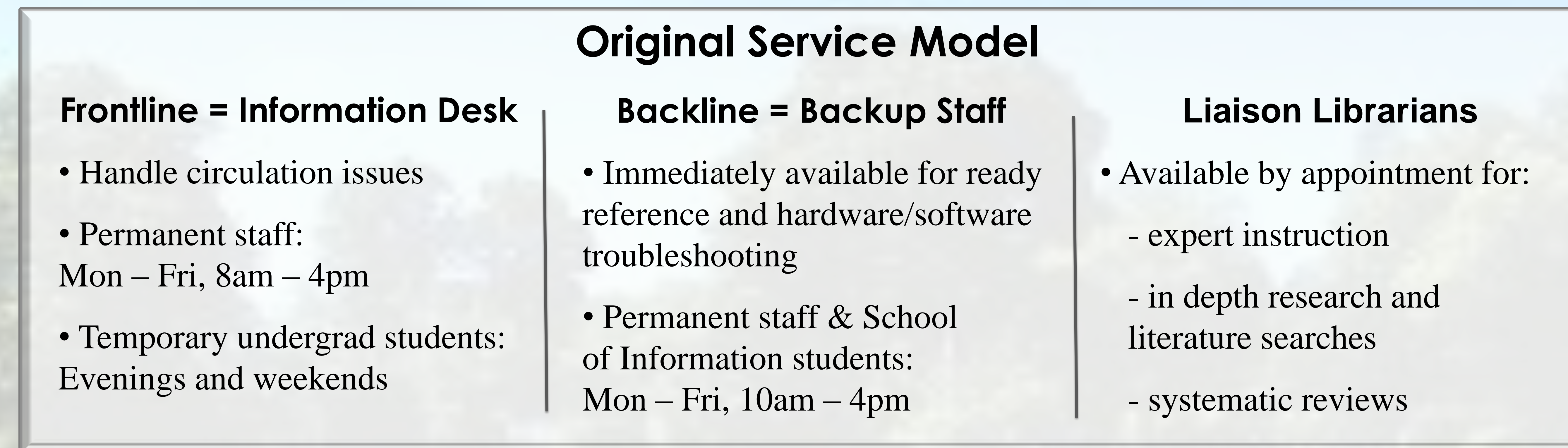➢ peak service times
➢ staffing levels

For each service point, frequency and percentage were calculated for the predefined categories of:
➢ question length
➢ reference contact type
➢ purpose of contact/visit

The analysis also addressed trends specific to particular service points, such as:
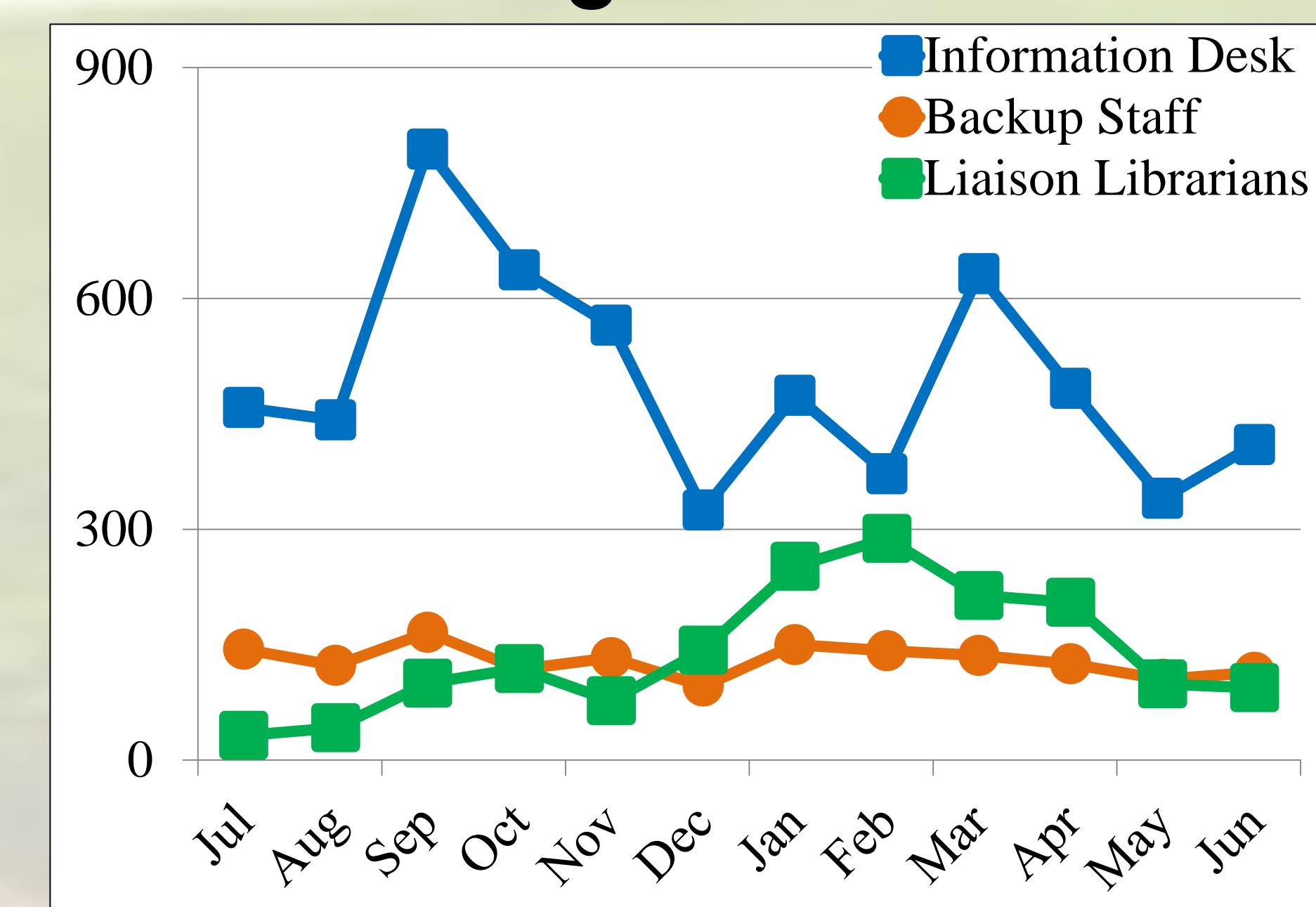➢ frequency in number of transactions over certain periods of time.
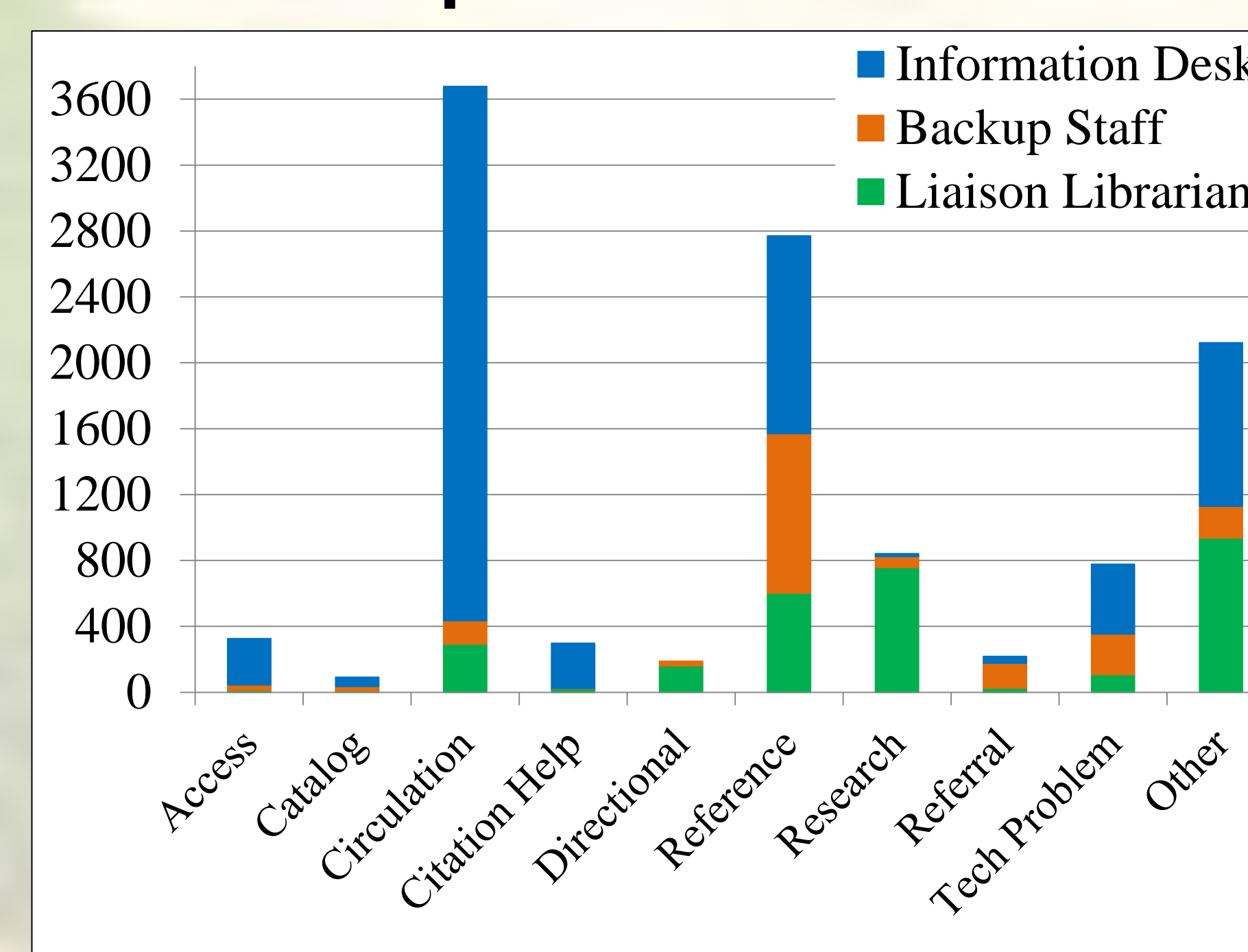
Reference Transaction Triage

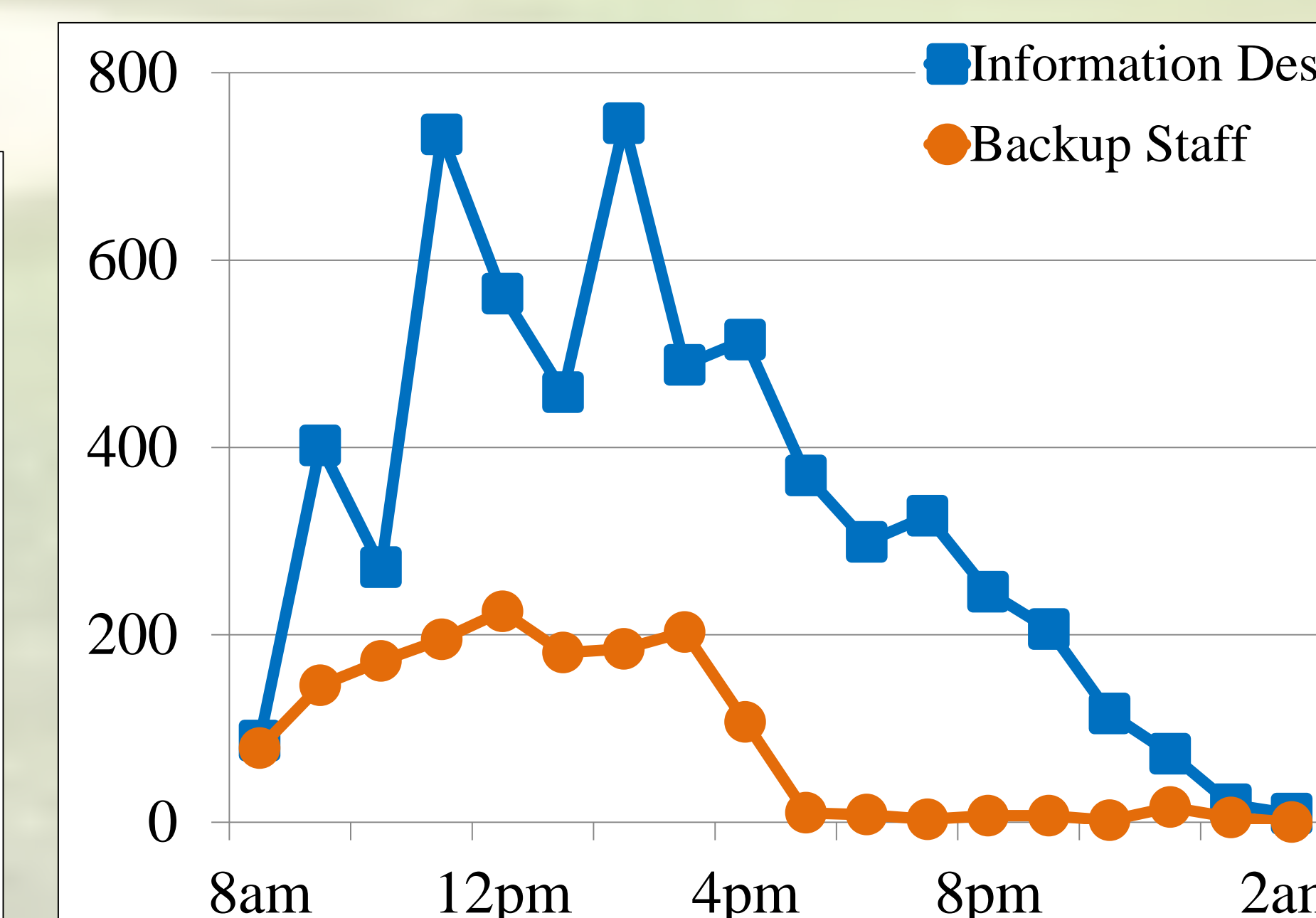### Original Service Model

Frontline = Information Desk

• Handle circulation issues

• Permanent staff:
Mon – Fri, 8am – 4pm

• Temporary undergrad students:
Evenings and weekends

Backline = Backup Staff

• Immediately available for ready reference and hardware/software troubleshooting

• Permanent staff & School of Information students:
Mon – Fri, 10am – 4pm

Liaison Librarians

• Available by appointment for:

- expert instruction

- in depth research and literature searches

- systematic reviews

Data Collection

Trends in Usage of Service Points

Purpose of Contact

Peak Service Times

Note: This data was not collected for Liaison Librarians due to reporting inconsistencies.

Data Analysis

Insufficient Data Collection

Restrictions on data collection imposed by the parent institution created a lack of detail in the data for:

• Purpose of contact

• Length of transaction

Brief = 5 min or less
Extended = more than 5 min

Has implications for staffing and tracking Liaison Librarian activity.

New Service Model

Simultaneous Uniform Single Service Point

• Reference staff at Information Desk

• Circulation backup

• Requires a higher skill set:

- more expertise

- greater knowledge of resources

Conclusions

Trends in usage and peak service times:
➢ were as expected
➢ supported initial changes to service points and staffing in 2011 – 2012

Changes made to data collection to provide more detail about the purpose of contact:
➢ supplementary data collection survey for Information Desk and Backup Staff

Currently evaluating optimal means to collect more detail about liaison activities:
➢ expanded systematic reviews
➢ clinical liaison opportunities

The study has been extended for a year to evaluate the changes made to data collection and to determine if additional staffing changes are necessary.

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For More Information

Please contact ekerby@umich.edu.

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