

CHAT REFERENCE AND LOCATION-BASED QUESTIONS: A MULTI-METHOD EVALUATION OF A STATEWIDE CHAT REFERENCE CONSORTIUM

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Problem and purpose

- The problem this study addresses is a lack of knowledge about chat reference and location-based questions and the implications of this lack of knowledge on chat reference consortia.
- The purpose of this exploratory study was to understand how information providers formulate responses to location-based questions and to determine the correct response fill rate to location-based questions in a statewide chat reference consortium.

Goal of the Study

The goal of this study was to reduce a lack of knowledge about chat reference and location-based questions in order to provide practical recommendations on how information providers at participating information agencies in chat consortia may mitigate the challenges of accurately responding to location-based questions.

Objectives of the Study

- Identify the types of location-based questions.
- Explore how information providers formulate responses to location-based questions.
- Evaluate the percentage of location-based question transcripts, in total and by type, to total question transcripts, the percentage of non-local information providers responding to location-based question transcripts to total location-based question transcripts responded to, and the correct response fill rate to location-based questions, in total and by type, for both local and non-local information providers.

Objectives of the Study (cont.)

- Evaluate this study's assumptions.
- Assess the usefulness of the exploratory study approach.
- Provide practical recommendations to improve chat reference services.

Location-based questions

- Location-based questions include any question that concerns the attributes of a georeferenceable location or locations.
- Types of location-based questions include directional/wayfinding questions and non-directional location-based questions.

INFORMATION PROVIDER

Hello, Welcome to Ask a Librarian! Please wait a moment while I read your question...

USER

if i have a fine how much of it do i have to pay at one time?

INFORMATION PROVIDER

How much you need to pay is up to the library you borrowed it from. Some libraries require you pay it off at one time; others allow you to pay it off on an installment basis. Where did you check out the item?

USER

westgate library on paula drive

INFORMATION PROVIDER

Since West Gate is part of the Tampa-Hillsborough system, you will need to call their number, so they can look up your record and give you that information. Would you like me to give you the number?

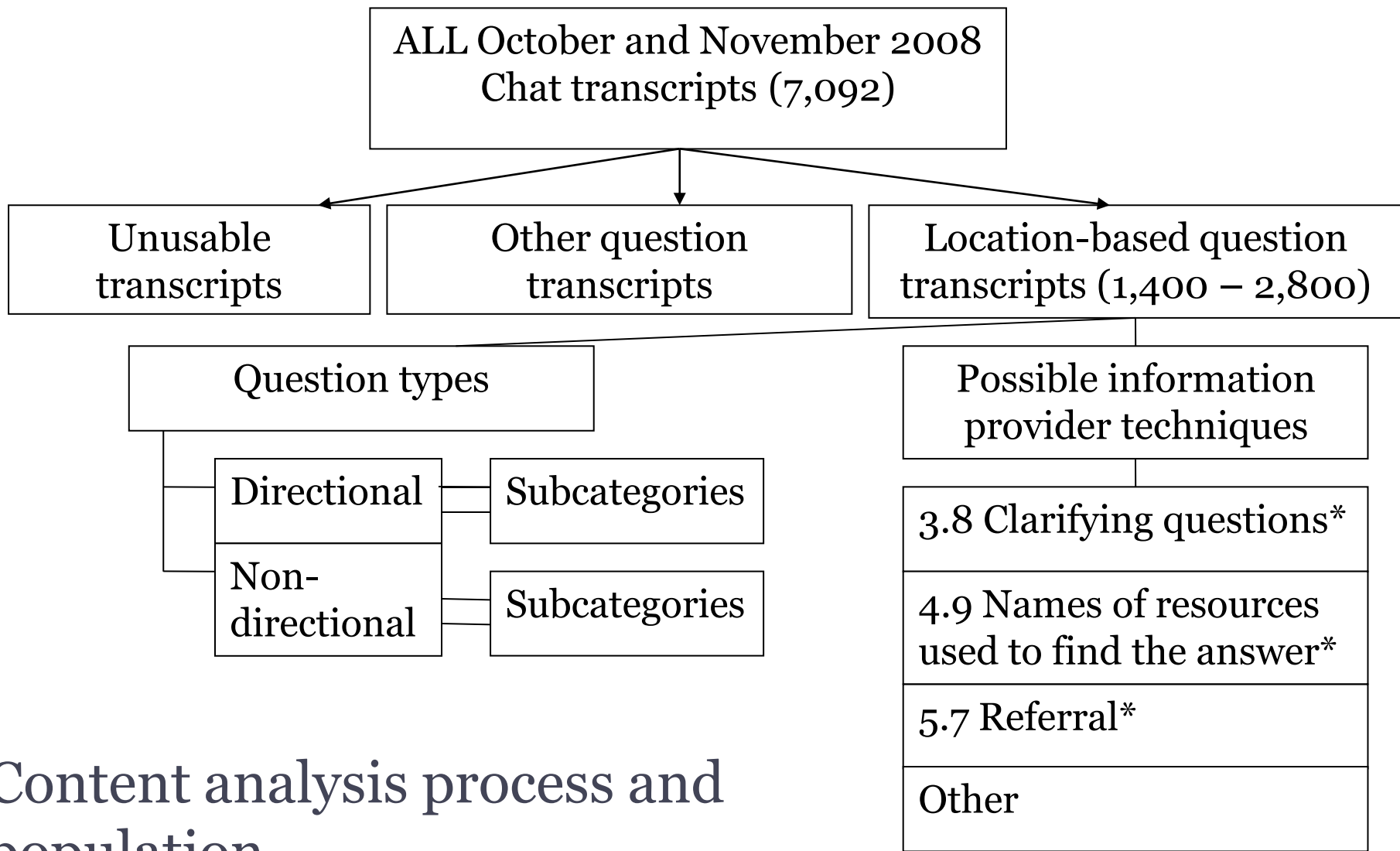
USER

yes

INFORMATION PROVIDER

Okay, hold on a minute.

Research Questions	Research Methods	Objective 1	Objective 2	Objective 3	Objective 4	Objective 5	Objective 6
1. What are the types of location-based questions?	<i>Content analysis</i> <i>Focus groups</i>	X			X	X	X
2. How do information providers negotiate location-based questions and formulate responses?	<i>Content analysis</i> <i>Focus groups</i> <i>Unobtrusive testing</i>		X		X	X	X
3. What is the percentage of location-based questions, in total and by type of question, to total chat questions?	<i>Content analysis</i> <i>Quantitative analysis</i>			X	X	X	X
4. What is the percentage of location-based questions responded to by non-local information providers to total location-based questions responded to?	<i>Content analysis</i> <i>Quantitative analysis</i>			X	X	X	X
5. What is the correct response fill rate to location-based questions, in total and by type of question, for both local and non-local information providers?	<i>Unobtrusive testing</i>			X	X	X	X



Content analysis process and population

* RUSA Guidelines

Types of location-based questions

- Some were *geography* questions that either concern the latitude and longitude of a location or the physical relation of a location to another location (e.g., where is Darfur? Or what continent is Florida in?).
- Most were *attribute of geography* questions concerning an attribute of geography of the location and were subdivided into those concerning *libraries, universities, and other* locations)
- One was a *directional* location-based question about how to get from Singapore to Hong Kong the quickest on a boat

Negotiation of location-based questions and how information providers formulated responses

Clarifying questions:

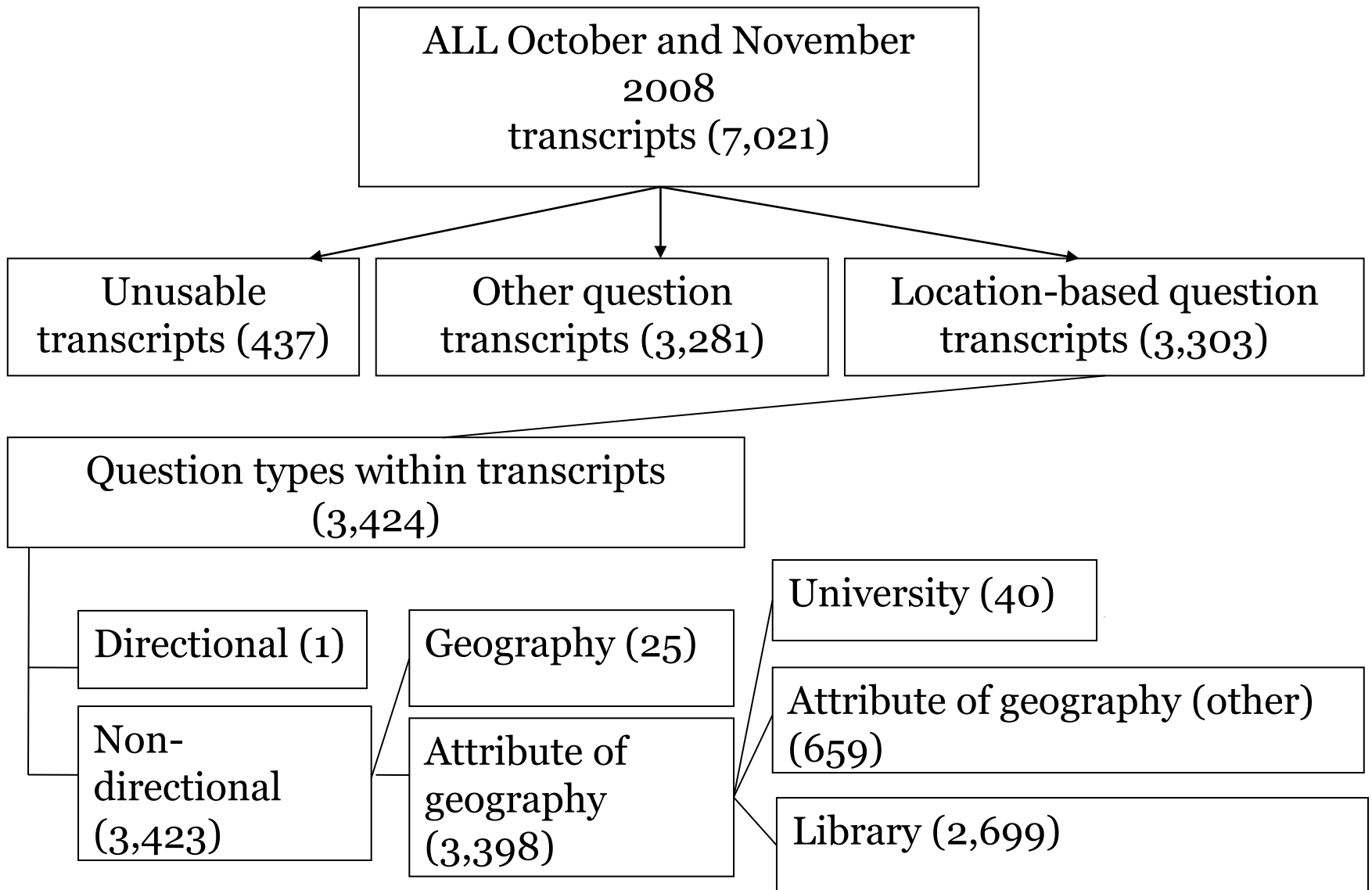
- 72.8% of transcripts in content analysis
- 50.6% of transcripts in unobtrusive testing

Resources:

- 44.4% of transcripts in content analysis
- 80% of transcripts in unobtrusive testing

Referrals:

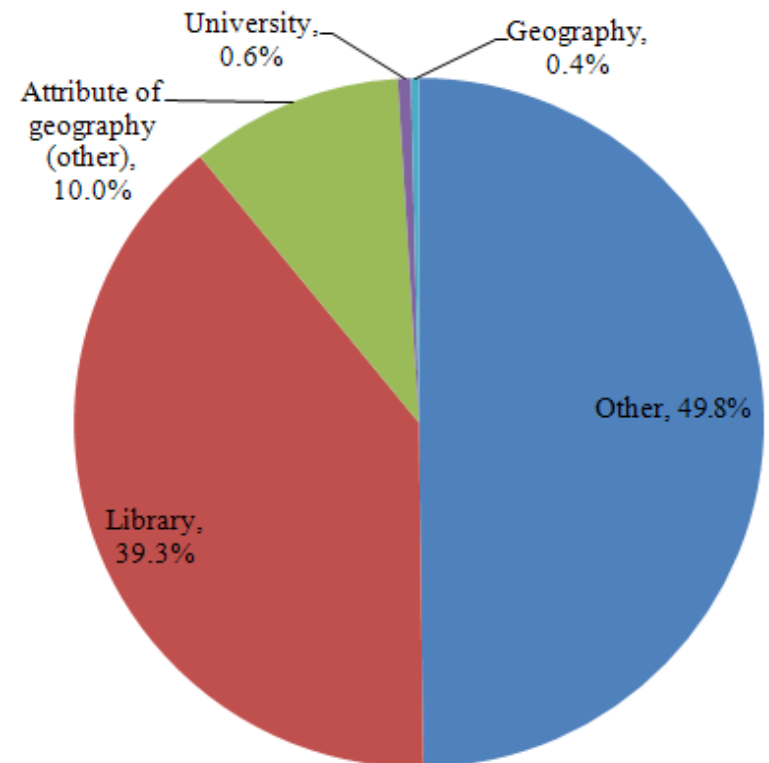
- 37.5% of transcripts in content analysis
- 39.5% of transcripts in unobtrusive testing
- Focus group participants indicated similar strategies to formulate responses to questions as well as acknowledged a high rate of referral.

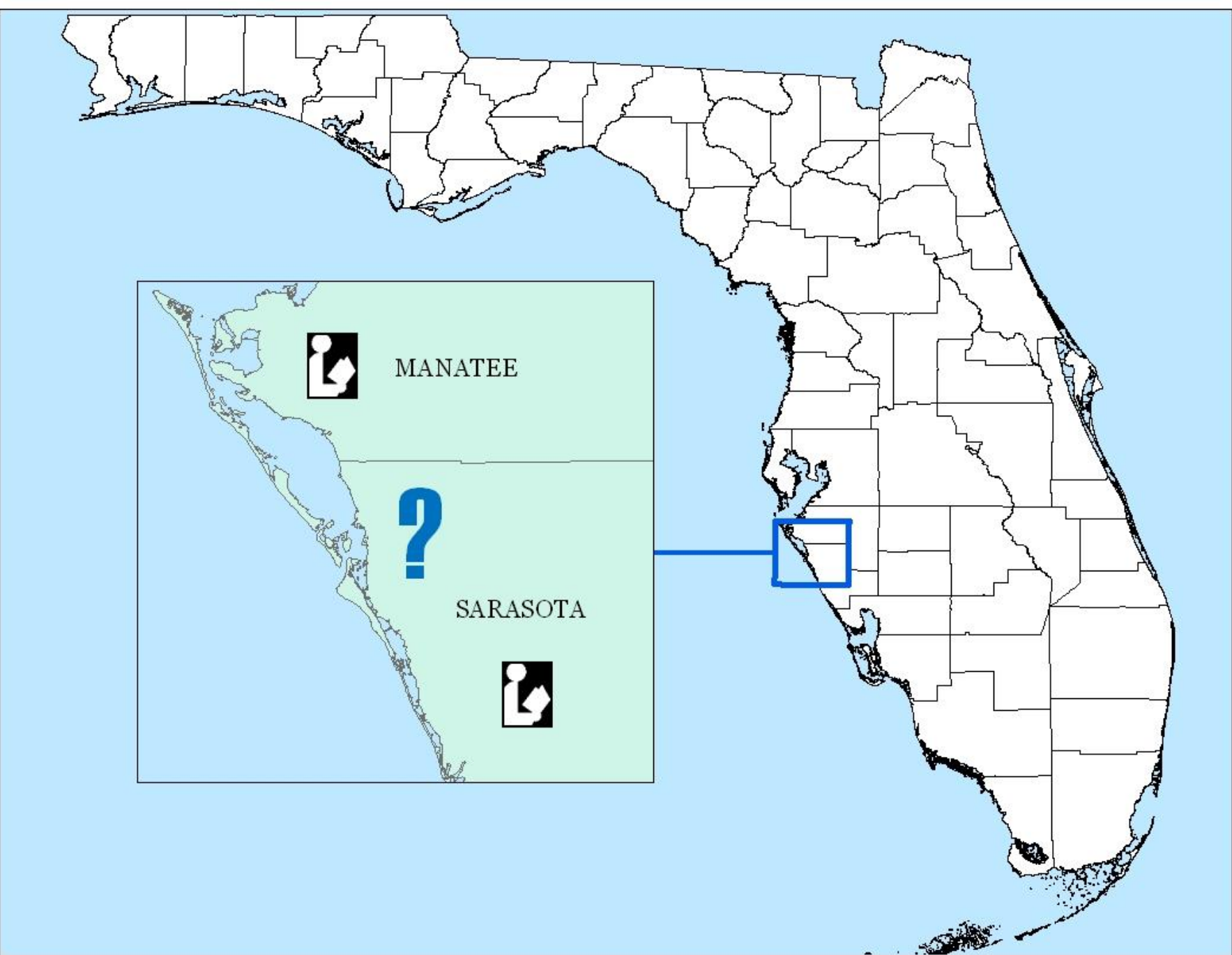


Percentage of location-based question transcripts, in total and by type, to total question transcripts

- **50.2% of transcripts from two months of data contained at least one location-based question.**

- 3,424 location-based questions within those 3,303 transcripts
- 78.3% of location-based questions were library type.
 - 33.2% of library type were circulation policies.
 - 26.1% of library type were find a physical item.
 - 19.2% of library type were log-in.
- 19.9% of location-based questions were attribute of geography (other).





MANATEE



SARASOTA



Percentage of location-based question transcripts responded to by non-local information providers to total location-based question transcripts responded to

Non-local information providers:

- 73.8% (2,394 of 3,243; known locations) in content analysis
- 84.6% (137 of 162) in unobtrusive testing

Local information providers:

- 26.2% (849 of 3,243) in content analysis
- 15.4% (25 of 162) in unobtrusive testing

Unobtrusive testing

- Provided quantitative measures on the accuracy of responses to location-based questions.
- Provided qualitative data on how information providers formulate responses to location-based questions.
- A correct response included the correct response to a location-based question.
- A correct and complete response included both a correct response and a resource, usually an URL.

Types of location-based question transcripts	Asked	Correct response fill rate (Correct and complete)	Correct and incomplete	Incorrect
<i>library</i>	126	36.5% (46)	25.4% (32)	38.1% (48)
<i>attribute of geography (other)</i>	18	88.8% (16)	5.6 % (1)	5.6 % (1)
<i>university</i>	9	66.6% (5)	0% (0)	44.4% (4)
<i>geography</i>	9	66.6% (5)	44.4% (4)	0% (0)
<i>TOTAL location-based questions</i>	162	44.5% (72)	22.8% (37)	32.7% (53)

Responses	Non-local information provider	Local information provider	All information providers
<i>Correct and complete</i>	41.6% (57)	60.0% (15)	44.5% (72)
<i>Correct and incomplete</i>	21.9% (30)	28.0% (7)	22.8% (37)
<i>Incorrect</i>	36.5% (50)	12.0% (3)	32.7% (53)
<i>Total responses</i>	100.0% (137)	100.0% (25)	100% (162)

Implications and recommendations for all involved

- Chat reference consortia managers
- Participating information agency administrators
- Information providers (Use the KB)
- Users
- Chat software developers
- Future reference research

Conclusion

- Cost cutting remains a paramount issue
- Chat reference consortia continue to grow and serve more diverse geographic areas
- This study indicates location-based questions are asked, are asked frequently (~50%), are referred frequently (~38%), and are not often responded to correctly or completely when asked (32.7%, incorrect)
- Further evaluation of location-based questions has the potential to improve these services

Questions



Thank you!

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Questions

- a. What types of location-based questions have you received?
- b. What techniques do you use to respond to location-based questions?
- c. Have you used clarifying questions in responding to location-based questions?
- d. Have you offered pointers or named resources you used in responding to location-based questions?

More questions

- e. Have you referred users to other sources or institutions in responding to location-based questions?
- f. What other techniques have you used in responding to location-based questions?
- g. What ideas do you have on overcoming the potential chat consortium weakness of location-based questions?