

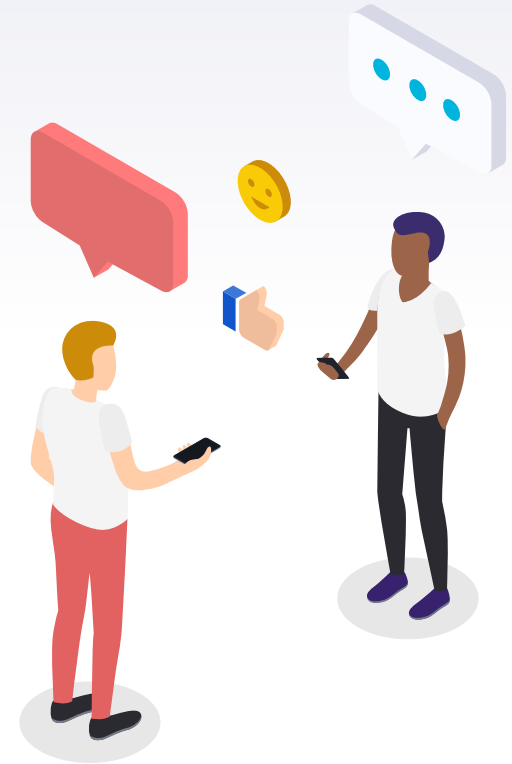
# Providing Virtual Reference Services During a Global Pandemic: Leveraging an Existing Library Service During Challenging Times



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November 3rd, 2020

# Agenda

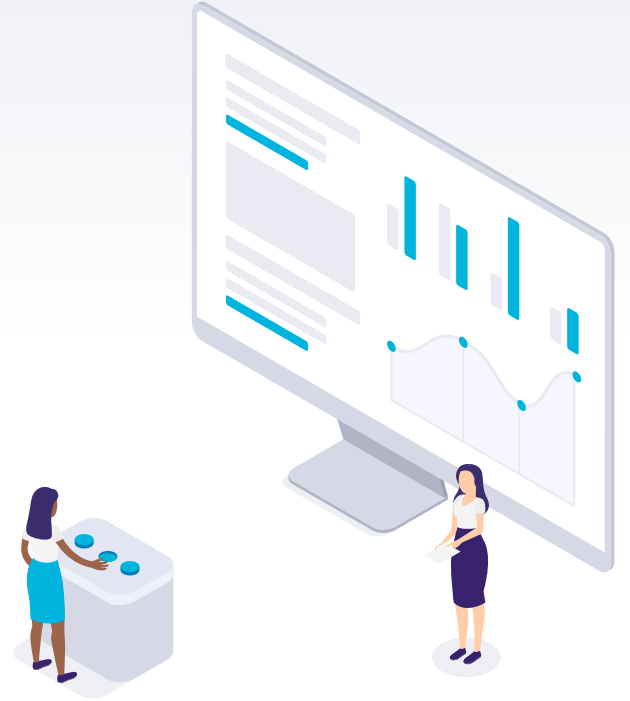
- ▶ Overview of the services pre-pandemic
- ▶ Optimization of the virtual reference service
  - ▶ Hours
  - ▶ Staffing
  - ▶ Canned Messages
- ▶ Number and types of questions asked during the pandemic
- ▶ Next steps



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# Overview of the Services

Pre-pandemic



# ▶ Service Delivery

## **Chat**

Live chat with a librarian during the opening hours.

## **Email**

Users submit their questions by email. Librarians staffing the service respond within 24 hours.

## **Text**

Short interactions. Live during the opening hours. Automated message is sent to the patron during closed hours.

# ▶ Virtual Reference Platform

- ▶ LibAnswers by Springshare
- ▶ Enables chat, email and text reference
- ▶ Since 2006 at McGill
- ▶ 1 hour shifts staffed by 1 librarian

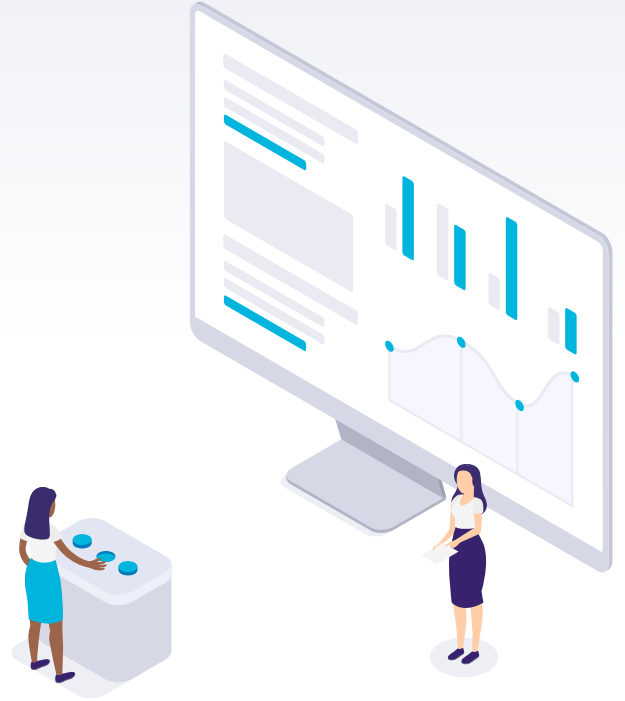
# Hours of Operation

	Monday-Friday	Saturday and Sunday
Chat	10 am - 5 pm	No service
Email	10 am - 5 pm	10 am - 6 pm
Text	10 am - 5 pm	No service



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# Optimization of the Services



# ▶ Staffing

- ▶ Reference shifts increased to 2 hours
- ▶ 2 to 3 librarians offer the service at the same time
- ▶ New operators are added to the service:  
librarians and 3 document technicians



# Hours of Operation - Spring

	Monday-Friday	Saturday and Sunday
Chat	10 am - 6 pm	No service
Email	10 am - 6 pm	No service
Text	10 am - 6 pm	No service



# Hours of Operation - Summer

	Monday-Friday	Saturday and Sunday
Chat	10 am - 4 pm	No service
Email	10 am - 4 pm	No service
Text	10 am - 4 pm	No service



# Hours of Operation - Fall

	Monday-Friday	Saturday and Sunday
Chat	10 am - 6 pm	10 am - 6 pm
Email	10 am - 6 pm	10 am - 6 pm
Text	10 am - 6 pm	10 am - 6 pm

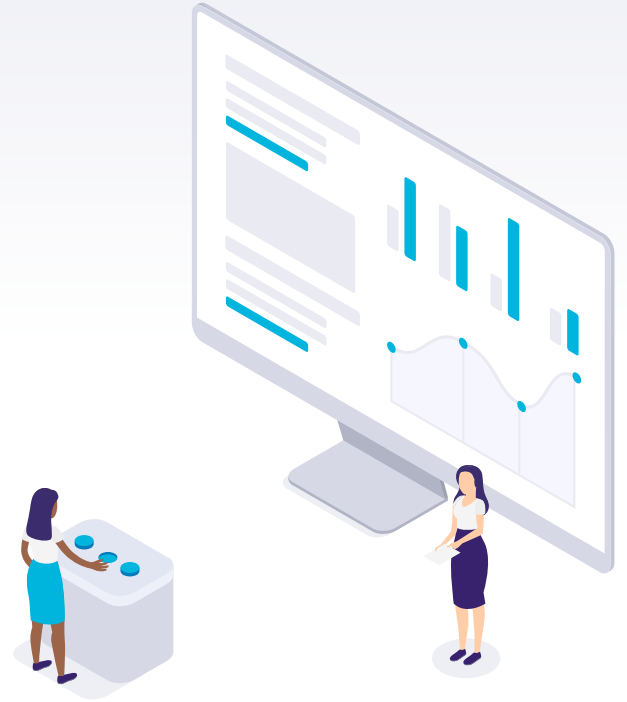


# Canned Messages

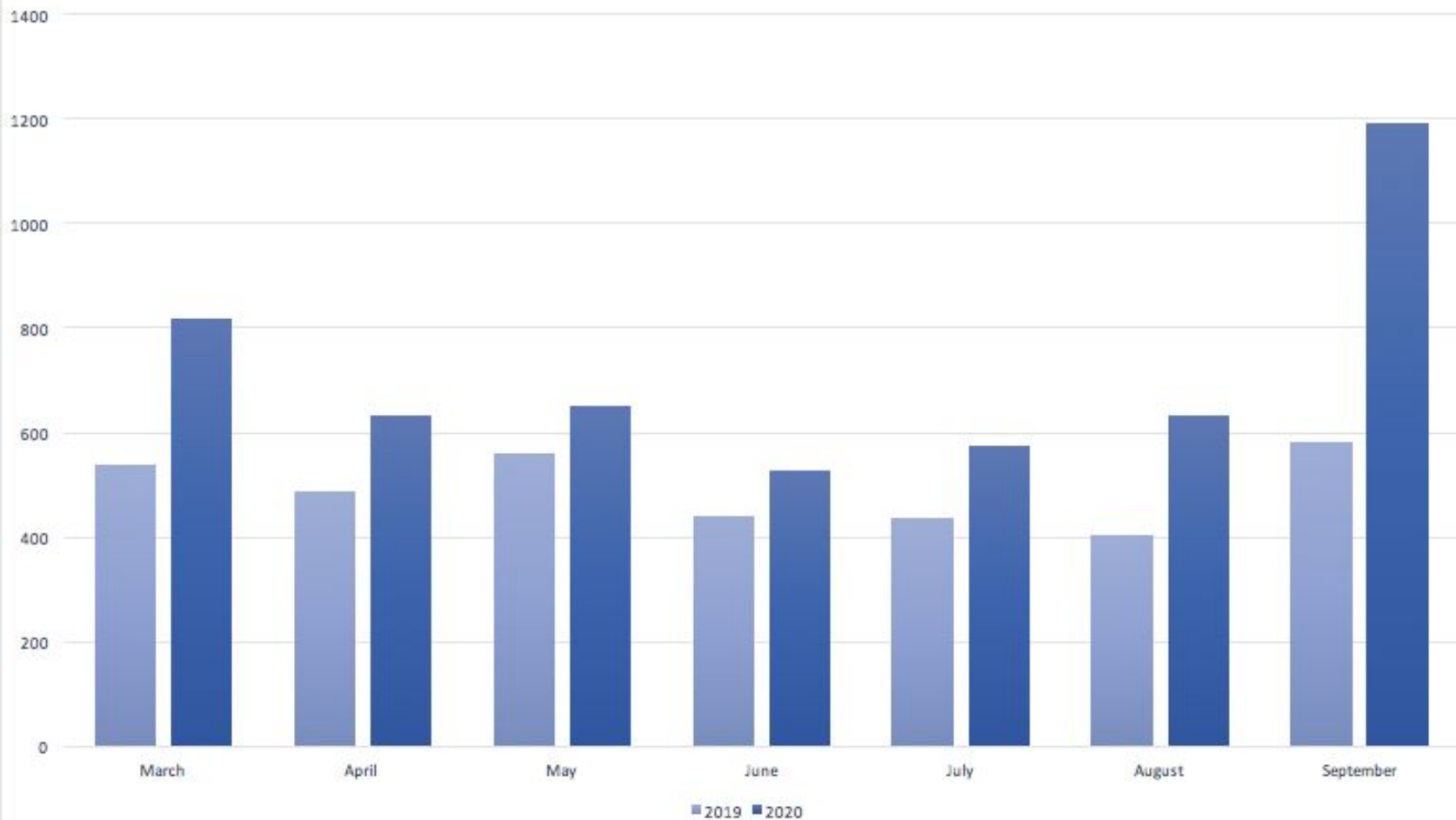
- ▶ Pre-written responses to frequently asked questions
- ▶ Existing canned messages: welcome, thank you, etc..
- ▶ Covid-19 response messages:
  - ▶ Library closure
  - ▶ Fines
  - ▶ Borrowing/returning books
  - ▶ ILL
  - ▶ Study spaces
  - ▶ Etc..

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# Number and Types of Questions



## Virtual Reference Questions Received in 2019 vs. 2020



# Number of virtual reference interactions in March 2020

Chat	Email	Text	Total
399	385	35	819

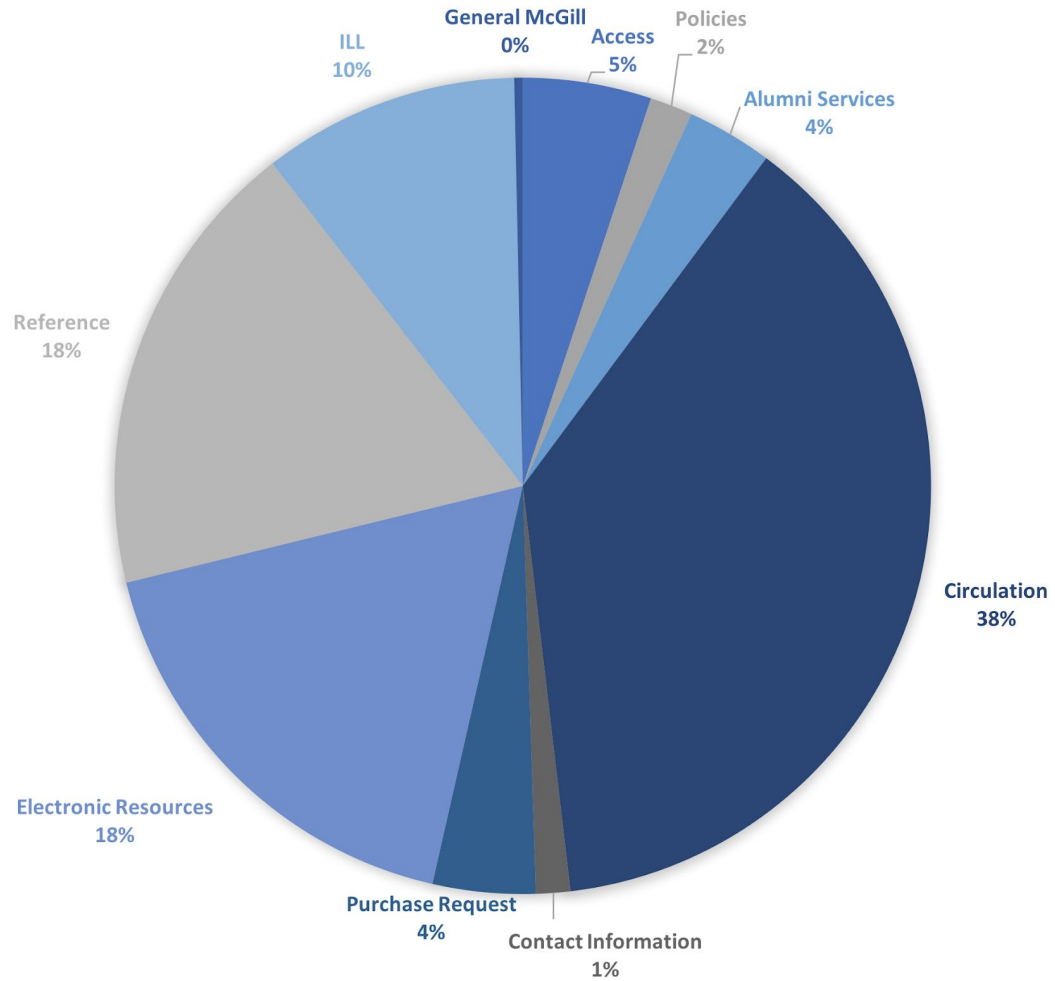


# ▶ Transcript Coding Methodology

- ▶ 299 chat transcripts were coded (beginning March 13)
- ▶ Each transcripts was assigned one code
- ▶ Code:
  - ▶ Access
  - ▶ Circulation
  - ▶ Policies
  - ▶ Electronic Resources
  - ▶ Purchase Requests
  - ▶ Alumni Services
  - ▶ General McGill
  - ▶ Contact Information
  - ▶ ILL and Document Delivery
  - ▶ Reference



## TYPES OF QUESTIONS



# ► Mention of COVID-19 in Transcripts

Between March 13 and October 1st

Pandemic **88**

COVID **324**

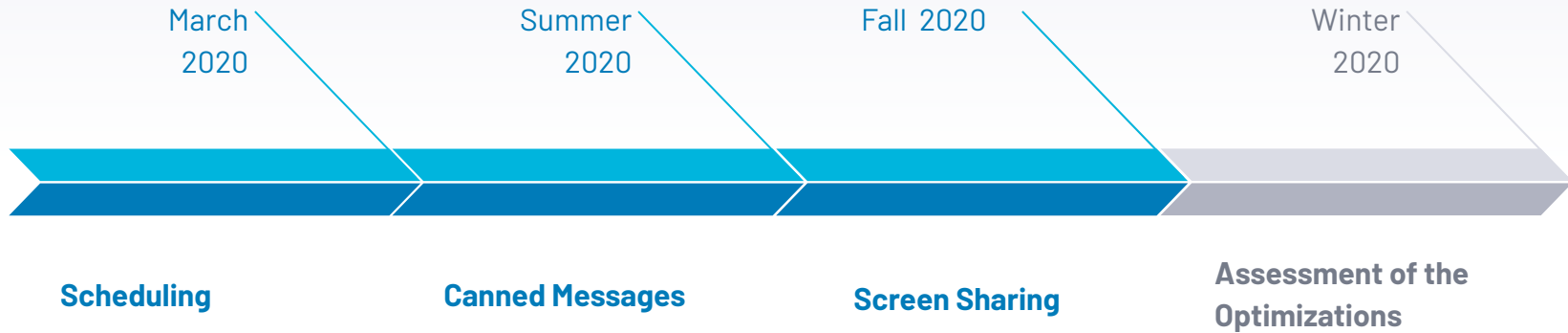
Coronavirus **16**

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# Next Steps



# Optimization stages





# Thank you!

## Any questions?

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