

Speed Training: Library Instruction in 30 Minutes or Less

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Abstract

A question plaguing many librarians today is how to convey information and services when everyone is so busy. One answer may be to offer express classes. The Library offered a series of 15-30 minute drop-in classes as part of a series called Library Xpress Classes over the course of three semesters beginning in the Spring of 2013 and following through the Spring of 2014. For the first two semesters, the series targeted one topic each week and repeated the same class twice each Thursday to reach a broader range of people. During the last semester, the topic was taught once per week on Wednesdays. In total, fifty-three classes were offered over the three semesters.

The sessions were open to faculty, staff, graduate, and undergraduate students. Topics include basics on popular databases (Compendex, SciFinder, PubMed, etc.), citation management software (Endnote and Refworks), alerts and notifications, and popular types of resources (patents and standards). The classes are not designed to be comprehensive but to give an overview and brief introduction to products and services that otherwise might not be seen.

The sessions were taught by various campus librarians with different areas of expertise who visited the Engineering Library. Some classes were more successful than others. For example, the citation management software sessions were the most popular. The attendees were asked to rate the classes on a 5 point scale (with 5 being most useful). The average rating was 4.42 from the spring of 2013, 4.25 from the fall of 2014, and 4.37 from the spring of 2014. The average overall rating for the combined three semesters was 4.34.

More students attended the 2:30 pm afternoon sessions than either the 10 am or the 5 pm classes and most of the attendees were graduate students. The classes often had repeat students. In one class called Refworks, a graduate student noted he had never heard of Compendex until it was mentioned in this class. He, then, went on to sign up for 4 more of the sessions offered that semester.

The Xpress Class series has proven to be an overall success. As time goes on the Library will continue to adjust the programs to improve its outreach to students, faculty, and staff.

Introduction

With so much interdisciplinary education and research being conducted within engineering, the faculty, staff, and students often need to work with a variety of resources and services that usually are not seen in the engineering library or have not been used in sometime. These library users often have time-restraints that do not allow them to attend traditional hour-long training sessions. The Lichtenberger Engineering Library decided to help with this problem by providing a series of drop-in sessions which were fifteen or thirty minutes in length. This series of classes was named Library Xpress Classes. They were open to all faculty, staff, and students on the

campus and were focused towards those doing research and study through the College of Engineering.

The course series has been offered for three semesters beginning in the spring of 2013 and going through the spring of 2014 as of today's date. For the first two semesters, the series targeted one topic each week and repeated the same class twice each Thursday to reach a broader range of people. During the last semester, the topic was taught once per week on Wednesdays. In total, fifty-three classes were offered over the three semesters.

In addition to classes being taught by the engineering library staff offering updates for primary resources in the engineering fields, sessions were also taught by library staff from other campus libraries to offer those working in interdisciplinary fields an opportunity to learn about resources that might not be familiar. Topics covered include basics on popular databases (Compendex, SciFinder, PubMed, etc.), citation management software (Endnote and RefWorks), alerts and notifications, and popular types of resources (patents and standards). The classes were not designed to be comprehensive but just to give an overview and brief introduction to products and services that otherwise might not be seen.

Literature Review

Academic librarians, recognizing the importance yet the limitations for connecting with students due to time-restraints as well as their continued reliance upon mobile technology, offer abbreviated library instruction as an alternative, or a supplement, to more formal, comprehensive teaching methods. The "traditional model" of instruction might be a one-hour lecture.³ However, the short instruction, variously named, is derived for the purpose of briefly interfacing with students for the opportunity of active and integrated education and research assistance.

Giannini wrote a report on the "drop-in" sessions" which were utilized at Monash University in Australia as an alternative to the more traditional and formal library instructive methodology. The "drop-in" classes were brief, hands-on, and targeted to introducing the basic resources of a specific subject.² Jacklin & Bordonaro, at Brock University in Canada, implements the "drop-in clinics" to supplement the formal classroom instruction. A professor introduces the librarian in a faculty classroom. Then, the librarian provides an overview of the clinics scheduled throughout the term to coincide with class assignments. During the non-mandatory drop-in clinics, students are "engaged in social learning" as the librarian functions as a "facilitator" for the student's research.⁴

Texas A&M librarians have developed the "drive-by", a scheduled in-class public service announcement (PSA)-like session to give the students a sneak peak at resources and show them a friendly face from the library.¹ Similar to Jacklin & Bordonaro, the librarians form working relationships with faculty. By requesting minimal time and assistance from professors, often just asking for the class syllabi so that they can tailor the "drive-by" to specific and relevant resources associated with the course, the librarians' initiatives and flexibility contribute to the success of the program.^{1 4}

Library instruction literature identified timing and marketing as two key factors influencing successful programming. Manuel gathered and analyzed a decade worth of data from the drop-in workshops offered at New Mexico State University (NMSU). Previously, workshops had been falling out of favor as an instructional methodology due to poor attendance. Finding the optimal day and time during the semester, which did not conflict with class schedules, improved attendance. Effective promotion also achieved better attendance results. “Overall, the key to publicity is getting word out, reaching people where they are, rather than expecting them to come in to the library to pick up copies of flyers from service desks.”⁵ Creating “mailing lists” from the names of previous attendees, reporting the outcome of previous workshops to alert potential attendees of future workshops, and offering incentives such as extra course credit were all used at NMSU to boost attendance.⁵

Assessing the outcomes and benefits of the classes were also discussed in the literature. Following any kind of instruction, surveying students, faculty, and staff help with evidentiary reporting and can guide future programming. Hollister & Coe surveyed librarians in order to report trends in instructional service. According to the survey results, traditional methods for instruction are relevant but no single instruction method is most effective. “The use of a variety of instructional methods, reaching ever-widening audiences, and addressing ever-changing needs, is preferred.”³

Design Method

In order to reach a wide audience, planning required that several key elements be taken into consideration: classes offered, time of day, and instructors’ availability. All of these elements had to come together for these sessions to work. The design of the sessions varied each of the three semesters in an effort to improve attendance.

For the spring of 2013 semester, a discussion of which classes to offer began with a survey that was completed the prior year. College of Engineering students, faculty, and staff were asked to identify topics of interest. Also, since one of the departments in the College of Engineering was Biomedical Engineering, research was being conducted on genomes and proteins so it was thought they this subject might be of interest. The staff also considered topics that were the most requested by instructors when providing library instruction in the classroom which resulted in adding standard searching and PubMed to the list. After this evaluation, the library staff arrived at a course offering for the first semester. This sessions were Library Overview, RefWorks, Standards, Web of Science, Finding Company Information, PubMed, SciFinder, Compendex, Genome Databases, and Patents.

Once topics were selected, the next objective was scheduling. What were the optimal times for these classes? Reviewing the College of Engineering event calendar, for example, revealed an upcoming career fair which led to timing a session for how to search company information before the fair. Also, the library gate count was researched. The statistics identified Tuesdays and Thursdays as high traffic days which would make for greater attendance. In conjunction with the College of Engineering event calendar, Thursday was selected. To give more flexibility for the students, faculty, and staff attending the sessions, it also was decided to offer each class twice: once in the morning (10:00 am) and once in the afternoon (2:30 pm). For the fall of 2013

semester, the classes were offered at 2:30 pm and 5:00 pm. In the spring of 2014, the classes were moved to Wednesdays at 2:30 pm since many departments had seminars on Thursday afternoons. Teaching two classes per week had proven challenging, too, so the library staff decided to offer only one class time.

The third objective was recruiting various librarians throughout the Library system to teach these diverse express classes. The librarians asked to teach these classes were from various campus libraries. Several of the librarians thought that 15 minutes was not enough time to cover the topic. In that case, the librarian was extended the opportunity to teach the class as a 30-minute session; however, it was decided that no class should be more than 30 minutes as this would defeat the purpose of express classes and fall back into the “traditional” instruction model. With this option, the library staff was able to find instructors for each of the sessions. (See *Figures 1, 2 & 3*)

January 31	Library Overview	15 Minutes
February 7	Reworks	30 Minutes
February 14	Standards	15 Minutes
February 21	Reworks & WriteNCite	30 Minutes
February 28	Web of Science	30 Minutes
March 7	Finding Company Information	15 Minutes
March 14	PubMed	15 Minutes
March 28	Scifinder	30 Minutes
April 4	Compendex	30 Minutes
April 11	Genome Database	15 Minutes
April 18	Patents	15 Minutes

Figure 1 – Spring 2013 Xpress Classes

September 5	Endnote Basic	30 Minutes
September 12	RefWorks & WriteNCite	30 Minutes
September 26	Protein Database: 3-D Protein Structures	15 Minutes
October 3	Scifinder	15 Minutes
October 10	Standards	15 Minutes
October 17	Inside PubMed	15 Minutes
October 24	Learn Patent Searching	15 Minutes
October 31	Compendex	15 Minutes
November 7	Alerts & Notifications	15 Minutes
November 14	Web of Science	15 Minutes

Figure 2 – Fall 2013 Xpress Classes

January 29	Patents	15 Minutes
February 5	Web of Science	30 Minutes
February 12	Scifinder (canceled)	30 Minutes
February 19	Compendex	15 Minutes
February 26	Standards	15 Minutes
March 5	Endnote Basic	30 Minutes
March 26	Protein Database: 3D Protein Structures	15 Minutes
April 2	Endnote Basic	30 Minutes
April 9	PubMed	15 Minutes
April 16	Alerts and Notifications	15 Minutes
April 30	Endnote Basic	30 Minutes

Figure 3 – Spring 2014 Xpress Classes

Marketing Strategy

The marketing strategy for the Xpress Class series focused on getting the word out any which way possible throughout the whole semester. The library staff wanted to be very inclusive opening the sessions to faculty, staff, graduate and undergraduate students throughout the whole university with an emphasis on the College of Engineering.

Marketing methods included:

- Flyers
- Plasma Slides: Plasma Televisions are located throughout the College of Engineering and two are in the Engineering Library
- Digital Picture Frame Slides: Digital Picture screens are stationed at the circulation desk of the library

- Calendar: Both the College of Engineering Events Calendar & the Library Event Calendar
- College of Engineering Weekly Newsletter
- Weekly Emails to faculty, staff, and students
- Pre-Registration

Flyers and slides were created with a uniform look and coloring for continuity and branding. Separate slides were produced for each class session which were displayed the week before the class. Another slide ran through the semester listing the whole schedule. (See *Figure 4*)

Library Xpress Classes

Thursdays
2:30 & 5:00pm

Register at: goo.gl/SXaKbz

15 minute classes
unless noted

2001C Seamans Center
Library Computer Classroom

Register at goo.gl/SXaKbz

September 5th	Endnote Basics (30 Min)	October 17th	Inside PubMed
September 12th	RefWorks (30 Min)	October 24th	Patent Searching
September 26th	Protein Database	October 31st	Compendex
October 3rd	Scifnder (30 Min)	November 7th	Alerts & Notifications
October 10th	Standards	November 14th	Web of Science (30 Min)

THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA
Lichtenberger
ENGINEERING LIBRARY

Figure 4 – Library Xpress Classes digital marketing slide from spring of 2013

Emails were sent the day before a session. During the second semester, a concern was made about filling everyone's inbox so the emails about the class series were only sent three times over the semester. Patrons had the ability to register and to receive a reminder email the day before. Due to so few people using the pre-registration option, it was not implemented the third semester, and the staff reverted to the weekly emails.

Assessment

After each session, the participants received a short survey. The library staff evaluated the responses for basic assessment purposes. (See *Figure 5* for sample questionnaire.) The survey solicited several things:

- University status (freshman, graduate student, faculty, etc.)
- College department association (Biomedical, Civil, etc.)
- Class rating on a 1-5 scale
- Open comments (e.g., what did the participant find most useful)

Library Xpress Class Survey

Standards (Fed 14th)

Which class time did you attend: 10 am or 2:30 pm

Please describe yourself: (Circle One)

Freshman	Graduate Student
Sophomore	Staff
Junior	Faculty
Senior	Other

What department are you associated with? (Circle One)

Biomedical Eng	Chem & Biochem Eng	Civil & Enviro Eng	Comp & Elec Eng	Mech & Ind Eng	Other _____
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Was today's class useful? (Circle One)

1	2	3	4	5
Least Useful				Most Useful

Which topics presented today were most useful?

What topics were the least useful?

What questions remain in your mind following this session? (Add your name & email if you want us to follow up)

Are there other topics for Library Xpress Classes you would like to see? What would you like to learn more about?

Additional Comments?

Figure 5 – Xpress Class Survey

Results

Using Microsoft Office Excel software to tabulate the survey results, the Library staff was able to obtain feedback and analyze results from the various classes. *Tables 1 & 2* reflect attendance results for all classes taught during the three separate semesters.

Survey Summary Results for Spring 2013 through Spring 2014

Results	Spring 2013		Fall 2013		Spring 2014		Totals
	Raw	Percentages	Raw	Percentages	Raw	Percentages	
Average Overall Useful Rating	4.42		4.25		4.32		4.33
Total Overall Participants	37		20		29		86
Total Participants in 10:00 AM Classes	12	32.43%					12
Total Participants in 2:30 PM Classes	25	67.57%	19	95.00%	29	100%	73
Total Participants in 5:00 PM Classes			1	5.00%			1
Participant Totals:							
Freshman	3	8.11%	2	10.00%	0	0.00%	5
Sophomore	1	2.70%	0	0.00%	3	10.34%	4
Junior	1	2.70%	0	0.00%	2	6.90%	3
Senior	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	3.45%	1
Grad Student	23	62.16%	7	35.00%	10	34.48%	40
Faculty	3	8.11%	2	10.00%	3	10.34%	8
Staff	3	8.11%	6	30.00%	5	17.24%	14
Other	3	8.11%	3	15.00%	5	17.24%	11
Department Totals:							
Biomedical	1	2.70%	2	10.00%	7	24.14%	10
Chemical & Biochemical	10	27.03%	0	0.00%	4	13.79%	14
Civil & Environmental	6	16.22%	4	20.00%	1	3.45%	11
Computer & Electrical	2	5.41%	1	5.00%	5	17.24%	8
Mechanical & Industrial	4	10.81%	4	20.00%	4	13.79%	12
Other	14	37.84%	9	45.00%	8	27.59%	31

Table 1 - Survey Summary Results for spring 2013 through spring 2014

Table 1 indicates that 68% of the participants attended the 2:30 pm classes versus the morning classes for the spring of 2013 semester and that 95% of the participants attended the 2:30 pm class versus the 5 pm class in the fall of 2013.

Several factors probably played into the decrease enrollment for the fall semester. The first big change for the second semester was the lack of weekly reminder emails sent to the College of Engineering faculty, staff, and students. Reminders only were sent a total of three times throughout the entire semester instead of each week. The first reminder was sent the first week, right before the Standards session. The second reminder was sent before the Compendex session. Reviewing the attendance records, these were the classes with the highest participation.

The library offered patrons the option to register for the classes which would send a reminder email the day before the class; however, only 5 people took advantage of this service throughout

the semester and only 2 of the patrons who had reminders sent to them actually attended the sessions. For the spring of 2014 semester, the staff went back to weekly emails and saw an increase in enrollment.

Another factor was that Thursday afternoons were a busy time for those in the College of Engineering. Most departments had weekly seminars in the late afternoon on Thursday during the fall semester, which unfortunately did not get added to the College of Engineering events calendar until the second week of classes. By then, the Library Xpress Classes were already organized. There were times the College of Engineering calendar would have more than six different activities taking place in the college on Thursday afternoons.

Department totals in *Table 1* indicate that Chemical and Biochemical Engineering or Mechanical and Industrial Engineering Departments were tied for second and third most represented groups at the sessions. Those who listed their department as *other* were often from one of the five research centers that are associated with the College of Engineering. This group attended the most sessions.

The classes with highest overall attendance for the combined three semesters were RefWorks followed by Compendex, patents, and standards. See *Figure 6 - Xpress Class Series Spring of 2013 - Spring of 2014 Attendance by Subject*. The classes with one asterisk (*) signifies the class was taught one of the three semesters while the two asterisks (**) signifies it was taught two of the three semesters. The classes without asterisks were taught all three semesters. Because the library is converting from RefWorks to Endnote by December 2014, and to ease into the transition, all RefWorks classes were switched to EndNote in the spring 2014.

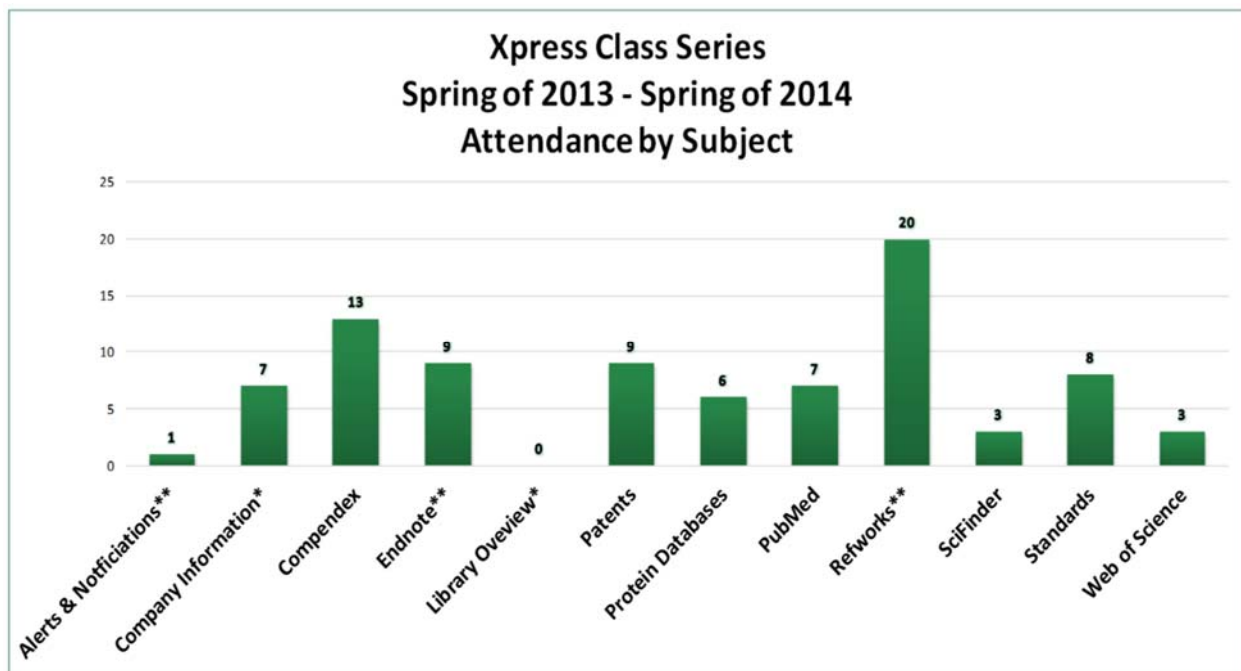


Figure 6 – Xpress Class Series Spring of 2013 - Spring of 2014 Attendance by Subject

The Xpress Classes were attended by faculty, staff, and students from freshman to graduate students. Graduate students accounted for 48% of those in attendance of sessions. Of those attending the sessions most had a favorable opinion. The freshman found the classes to be the least useful at 3.75 average on a 5 point scale. All the other groups had an average rating of 4 or higher for the usefulness of the classes. *See Table 2 - Xpress Class Series Spring of 2013 - Spring of 2014 Rating Average by Status.*

Rating Average by Status		
Status	Attendance Number	Rating Average
Freshman	5	3.75
Sophomore	4	4.25
Junior	4	5
Senior	1	4
Grad Students	41	4.38
Faculty	8	4.57
Staff	14	4.5
Other	9	N/A

Table 2 – Xpress Class Series Spring of 2013 - Spring of 2014 Attendance/Rating by Status

Xpress Class Series Spring Of 2013 - Spring Of 2014 Attendance By Status

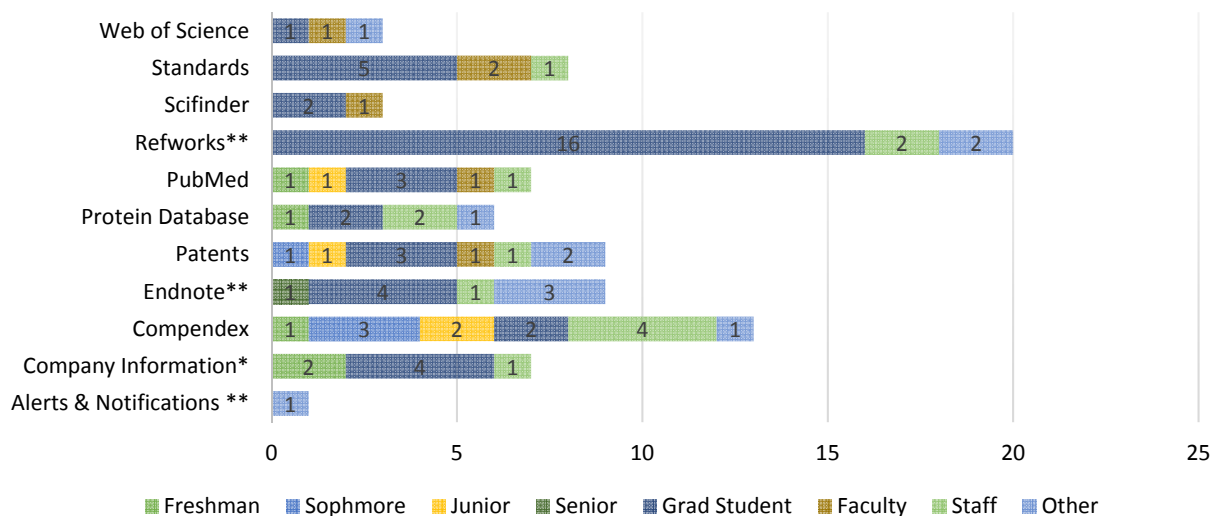


Figure 7 – Xpress Class Series Spring of 2013 - Spring of 2014 Attendance by Status

Xpress Class Series Spring Of 2013- Spring Of 2014 Attendance By Department

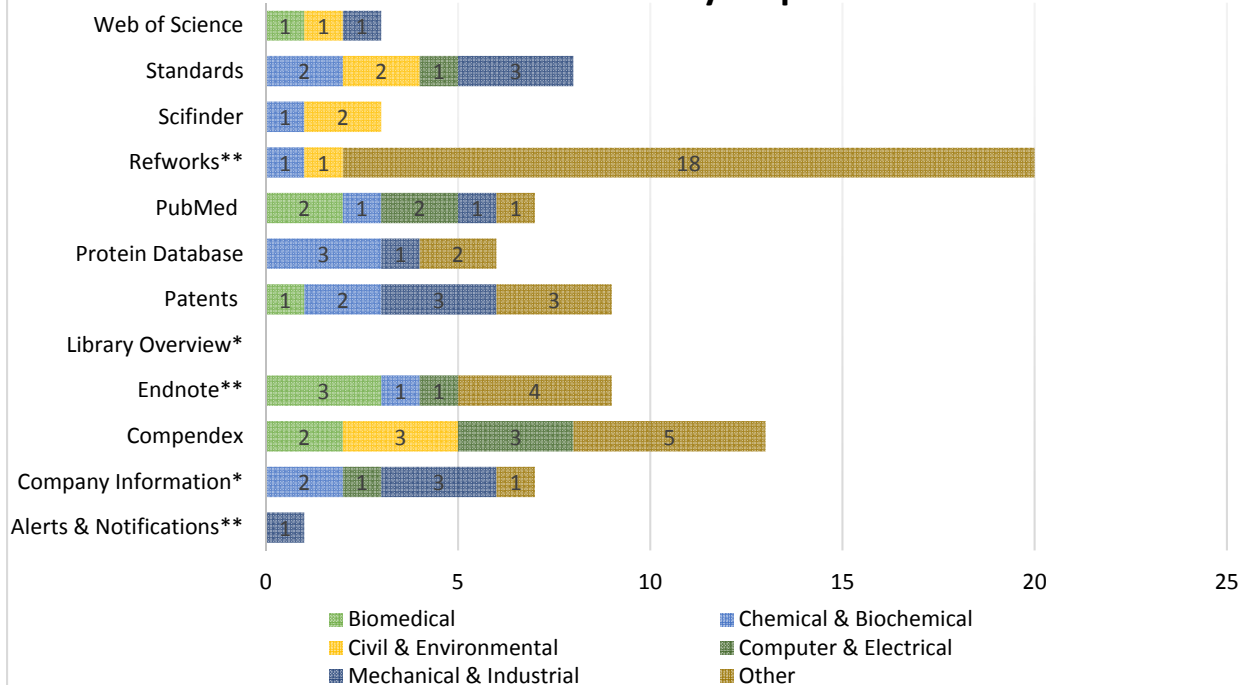


Figure 8 – Xpress Class Series Spring of 2013 - Spring of 2014 Attendance by Department

3. Hollister, Christopher V. and Jonathan Coe. "Current Trends vs. Traditional Models: Librarians' Views on the Methods of Library Instruction." *College & Undergraduate Libraries* 10, no. 2 (2003): 49-63.
4. Jacklin, Marcie and Karen Bordonaro. "Innovations in Practice: Drop-in Clinics for Environmental Studies Students. (Undetermined)." *Partnership: The Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research* 3, no. 2 (2008): 1-7.
5. Manuel, Kate. "Marketing "Drop-in" Workshops for Lifelong Learning." *Public Services Quarterly* 1, no. 4 (2003): 43-65.