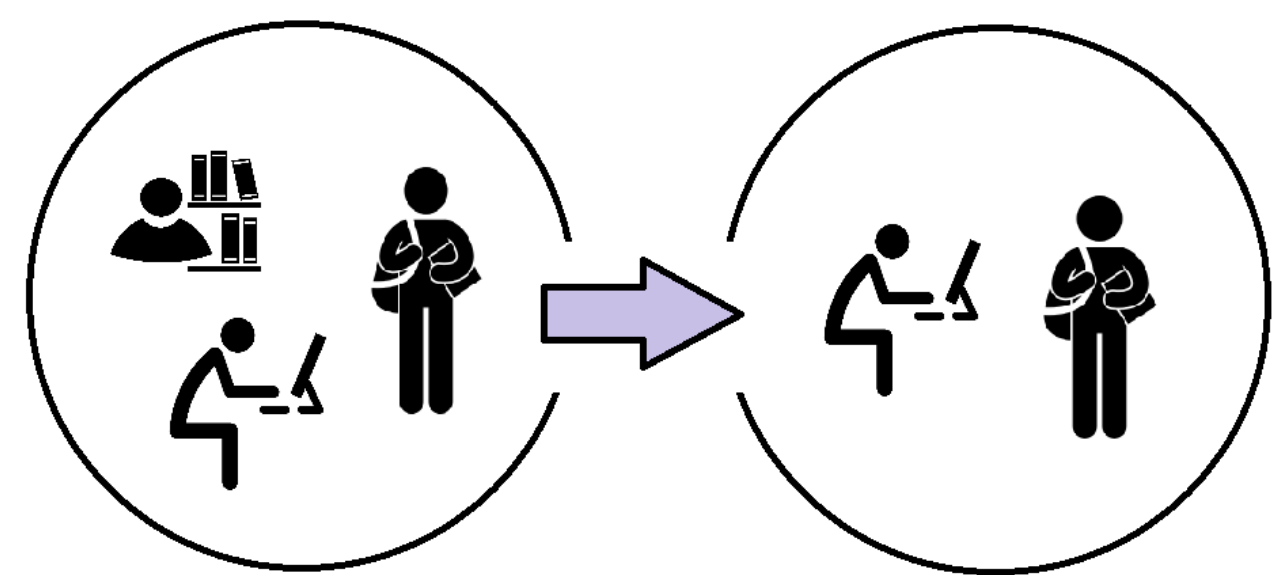


# Learning-Centered Decision Making: Transitioning Online Reference Staffing Models



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## INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND



In 2017, the Florida State University Libraries virtual reference coordinators were tasked with exploring a new staffing model that would align with current staffing practices on our physical desks while maintaining a high level of reference and customer service. This meant removing librarians from the service and having staff and graduate students staff chat reference. As this high-impact service supports users on-campus, at a distance, and on branch campus locations, an online assessment was planned to measure patron and staffer satisfaction with the service and quality of chat interaction before and after the transition.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS & METHODOLOGY

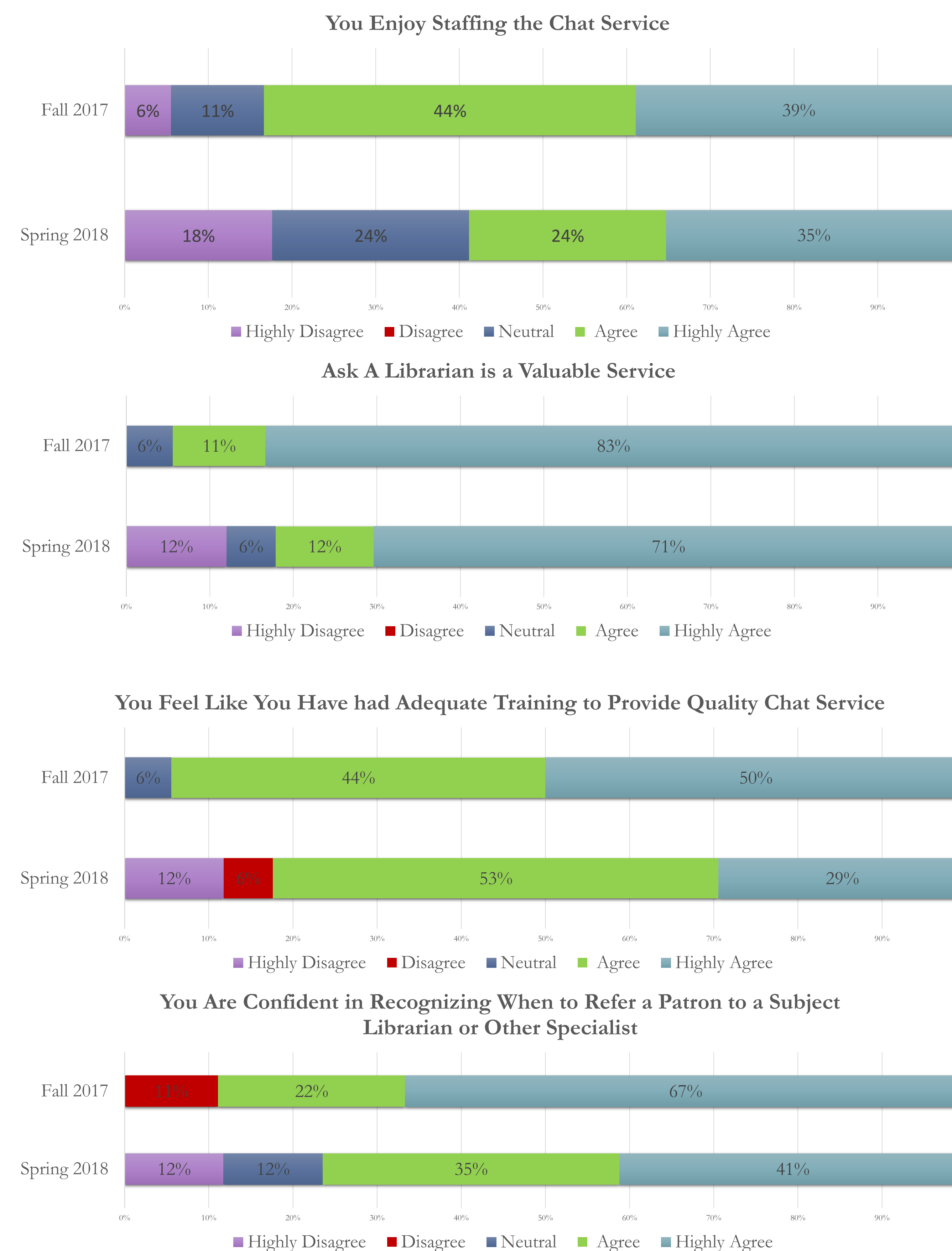
To provide patrons and staffers an opportunity for feedback and a voice in organizational change, we conducted a research study that addressed the following questions:

1. How does a staffing transition of taking librarians off our chat reference services affect patron satisfaction?
2. How does a staffing transition of taking librarians off our chat reference services affect employee satisfaction?
3. How can our organization substantiate changes with patron and staff feedback for changing services and processes?

In order to assess the impact of the chat reference staffing model change on both patrons and staffer perception, we created simple patron and staffer surveys. Both surveys were created using Qualtrics and included IRB consent, likert scales, and an open ended comments question. We distributed the surveys at two points in the staffing transition: once to staffers and patrons before the transition and once again to both staffers and patrons after librarians had been taken off the virtual reference desk.

We received 18 responses for the staffer survey in Fall 2017 and 17 responses in Spring 2018. We received 73 responses for the patron survey in Fall 2017 and 111 responses in Spring 2018.

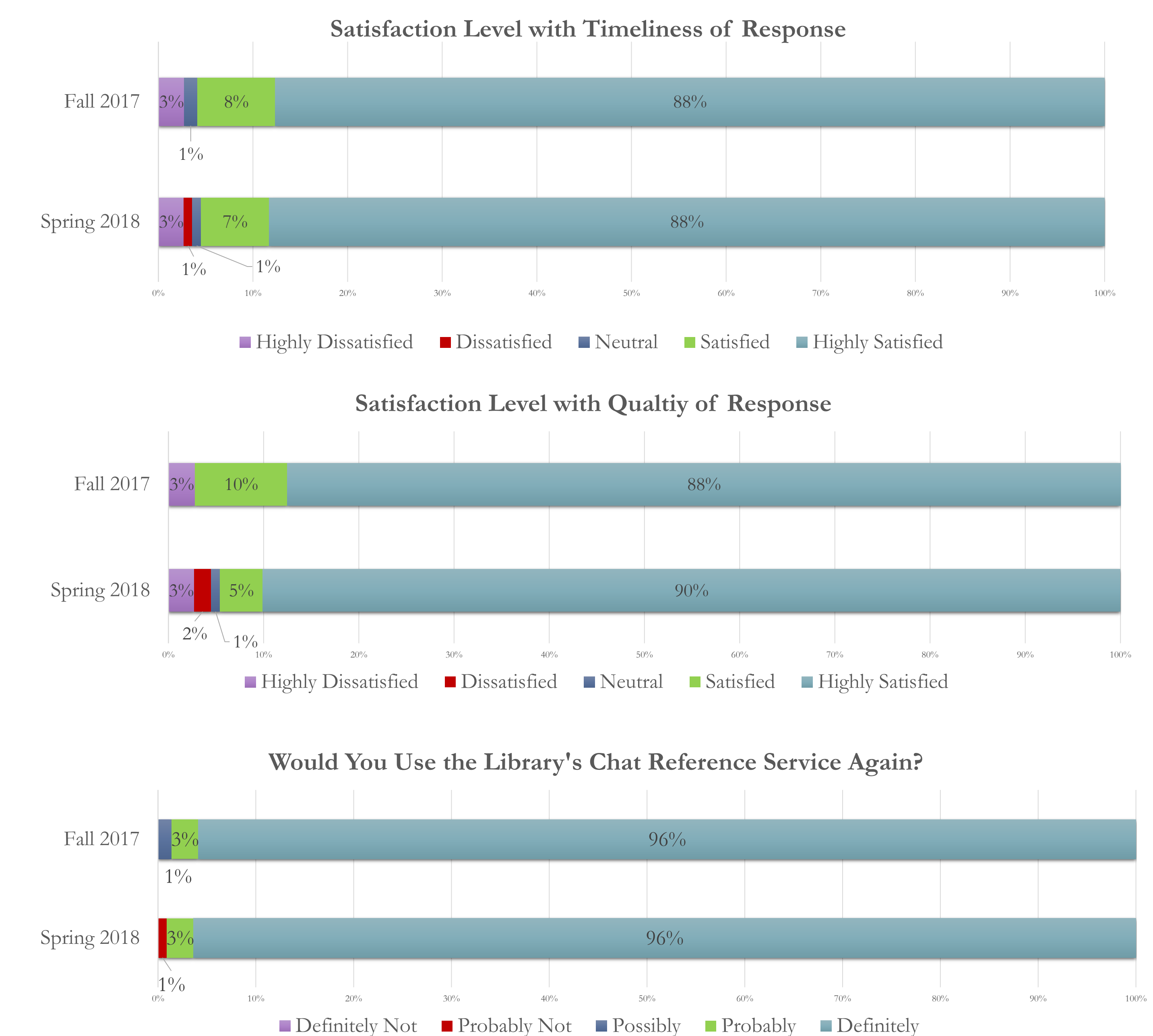
## STAFFER SURVEY RESULTS



### Summarized Discussion

- Most notable difference was perception of adequacy in training and confidence of when to refer patrons with overall decrease in abilities
- Less staffers thought the service was valuable, enjoyed staffing the service, felt that they had adequate training to provide quality service, and felt confident in their referral abilities
- Authors attribute these changes to several factors: a lack of satisfaction with hierarchical separation of staff vs. professional status of faculty librarians, a lack of satisfaction with mounting responsibilities in the “less is more” environment and the resistance to broader organizational changes

## PATRON SURVEY RESULTS



### Summarized Discussion

- Results reflect insignificant changes between the data collected in the Fall and Spring surveys
- Slight increase in percentage of highly satisfied patrons from Fall to Spring (87.67% to 88.29%) while highly dissatisfied patrons remained at 2.7%
- Percentage of patrons saying they definitely would use the service again marginally improved; none of the survey respondents indicated that they would “Definitely Not” use the service again
- Results reflect a high level of satisfaction with chat service before and after staffing model transition

## LOOKING FORWARD

- Patrons are equally happy with the staffing change and don't report a loss of confidence in quality of responses after staffing transition
- Staff showed they felt service was valuable but enjoyed it less and felt unequipped, understaffed
- Further integrating emotional intelligence and digital empathy into training program with attention to personal contact in our reference interactions
- Continued assessment, training, and incorporation of user feedback for our online and reference services