Diving Into Assessment: LibQUAL+(TM) as a Springboard

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Challenging GOAL
PROCESS
A
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Discovering customer expectations
Creating and implementing solutions so the process will meet or exceed customer expectations.” (Phipps, 2001)

“Successful process improvement study depends, in large part, on:

- Focus Groups & Detailed Analysis
- Articulating Initial Performance Indicators
- Reinforcement for Projects Underway
- Improved Conversations with University Community
- Presentations Opportunities

NOTE
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“Middle sized urban setting, local agricultural economy
Liberal education background; relatively new and growing graduate focus

“Inexperience with Evaluation Methods
•

“Assessment cannot be seen as a separate “management activity” but must be appreciated and valued by all members of the culture and assumed to be part of their regular work … If organizations are serious about change, they need to invest in the development of new skills to sustain it.” (Lakos & Phipps, 2004)

“Leadership
•

Leadership is essential for assessment work to succeed. Leaders must have a clear performance ethic … be visibly and continuously committed to assessment work … understand its importance to the success of the organization … show evidence of utilizing assessment and evaluation data … need to encourage risk taking … continuously articulate the organization’s purpose … engage in meaningful strategic dialog within the organization … develop incentive programs that support cultural change.” (Lakos & Phipps, 2004)

DEScribing THE Poool
University of Lethbridge…
- One of four publicly funded universities in Alberta, Canada
- Student population c. 8000 FTE, across three campuses
- Liberal education background, relatively new and growing graduate focus
- Medium sized urban setting, local agricultural economy
- Has the only academic research library in Southern Alberta

REFERENCES
Phipps, S. (2001). Beyond measuring service quality: commitment to assessment work … understand its importance to the success of the organization … show evidence of utilizing assessment and evaluation data … need to encourage risk taking … continuously articulate the organization’s purpose … engage in meaningful strategic dialog within the organization … develop incentive programs that support cultural change.” (Lakos & Phipps, 2004)

Beware the Sharks!
Library as a “public good”
- “There is a deeply held and tacit assumption that the “good” is widely recognized and that the value of the library service is universally appreciated … this deeply held value results in resistance to change and resistance to continuous assessment. The recognition of the threat to organizational survival is almost non-existent in certain sectors of librarianship.” (Lakos & Phipps, 2004)

Challenging our Expertise
- “…seeking data that allow questioning of deeply held assumptions that shape current views, biases, and internal perceptions … can keep libraries in touch with reality. … It is important to attain this grasp of reality in order to learn how to change with and for customers.” (Phipps, 2001)

Some staff think that by utilizing new measures that are customer-focused, libraries will be driven to ‘just do what the customers say’ or be driven by a business model based on competition and the bottom line.” … Research libraries have a shared vision. Listening to this vision should inform what is learned from customers.” (Phipps, 2001)

Fear, Suspicion and Lack of Trust
- “There is an underlying fear that expectations may develop that cannot be met.” (Phipps, 2001)

“Measurement should not be feared as a potential tool for blame and punishment but should be embraced as a means of demonstrating success or learning of the need to change strategies.” (Lakos & Phipps, 2004)

“For assessment and evaluation to succeed an open working environment is needed. This is usually impossible in an organization that manifests turf wars and personal distrust.” (Lakos & Phipps, 2004)

ON-going Analysis of User Comments
Statistics (Review and Reworking)
Overall Collection Evaluation
Space Use Studies

FURTHER RIPPLES
Space Use Studies
Overall Collection Evaluation
Statistics (Review and Reworking)
Ongoing Analysis of User Comments

OFF THE BOARD
Declining Funding → Accountability → Performance Indicators

Changing Information Environment → User Concerns
- “Libraries have moved from an environment where they had a virtual monopoly on information access to one where databases, Web resources and vendors are plentiful and customers have choices… This has led to a need for the development of a formal and extensive capacity to listen to our customers and to become listening organizations.” (Phipps, 2001)

Challenging the Pool
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TAKING THE PLUNGE
LibQUAL+™ 2005 → Identified 3 Main Issues
Focus Groups & Detailed Analysis → 12 Recommendations

Articulating Initial Performance Indicators
- “A successful process improvement study depends, in large part, on:
  - discovering customer expectations
  - analyzing where and why the process falls short of those expectations
  - creating and implementing solutions so the process will meet or exceed customer expectations.” (Phipps, 2001)

Positive Feedback
Presentation Opportunities
Improved Conversations with University Community
Reinforcement for Projects Underway
Budgetary Justification
Articulating Initial Performance Indicators
Opportunities to set Future Directions

- “…traditional input and output data … are meaningful data, but the more purposeful, effective data these days are outcomes and performance measures that show what good libraries do and how they perform given their human and financial resources.” (Covey, 2005)

PRESENTATION OPPORTUNITIES
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