

LibQUAL+™ at the University of Lethbridge

Final Report and Recommendations

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Executive Summary

In 2005, the University of Lethbridge Library participated in the Spring 2005 “run” of the LibQUAL+™ survey developed by the Association of Research Libraries. 829 members of the University community responded to the invitation to participate resulting in 793 valid responses. Following review of the aggregated results notebook, focus groups with faculty, graduate students and undergraduate students were organized for the purpose of seeking additional information on three topics:

- Quality of and access to information resources
- Services provided directly by staff
- Noise in the Library.

Based on the overall findings, 12 recommendations are proposed as a framework to focus the Library’s efforts and resources on the issues of communication, collections, the building, and relationships with the University community as well as building on the results of this undertaking.

Recommendation #1: That the Library seek every opportunity to engage the University community and communicate with it for the purposes of sharing information, presenting a Library perspective on University issues, educating the Community about Library policies, roles and services, making the Community aware of issues and challenges faced, etc.

Recommendation #2: That the Library engage the University Community, faculty in particular, in a discussion with respect to the strategic directions that the Library faces with respect to collections.

Recommendation #3: That the Library undertake an evaluation of its collection.

Recommendation #4: That the Library undertake to review the existing assortment of documentation with respect to collection decisions made, the results of the collection evaluation, and the knowledge gathered by engaging faculty in discussion with the express purpose of developing something like a “statement of philosophy” for the Library’s collection.

Recommendation #5: That the Library review the floor plans of the building giving consideration to:

- The layout of service points.
- The layout of the services
- The layout of furniture (tables, carrels, and computers) relative to the noise issue.
- Zoning for noise
- Improving signage
- Demarcation of designated areas

Recommendation #6: That the University conduct “remedial work” on the Library, taking specific aim at:

- Installing electricity on Level 11 East.
- Insulating the group studies and meeting rooms for noise
- Expanding the number of computers and the study spaces (quiet, conversational, and group studies) to the extent possible

Recommendation #7: That each Library staff member honestly reflect on their attitudes towards public service considering:

- *The role of the Library,*
- *Their role as a staff member within the Library,*
- *The user perceptions of staff-mediated services as summarized in this document and those experienced first hand,*
- *Why they make the choices they do when dealing with specific individuals,*
- *What they can do personally about those things that get in the way of having a positive interaction with users,*
- *What they can do personally about working around any issues they have with respect to public service, in order to improve their interactions with users,*
- *What skills (e.g., technical, communication, empathy, etc.) they feel they need to develop or what they need to learn in order to be more comfortable in a public service role.*

Recommendation #8: That the Library, the academic librarians in particular, give consideration to reassessing the existing opportunities for student contact with a view to increasing the opportunities for quality contact time with students and considering the role that can be played by faculty.

Recommendation #9: That the academic librarians, as a group, give consideration to ways that they may play a more prominent role in the work of the faculty.

Recommendation #10: That the Library remain cognizant of opportunities to expand the options for self-service.

Recommendation #11: That the Library undertake a schedule of review for the various policies and procedural interpretations of policy with a view to:

- a. Ensuring they are relevant to the environment of the University and the needs of the University community*
- b. Ensuring the procedural interpretations of the policies are consistent with the intent of the policy*
- c. Ensuring there is a consistency of message being conveyed to the users with respect to policy (i.e., enforcement).*

Recommendation #12: That the Library develop a regular cycle of performing comprehensive survey of the University community every three years using LibQUAL+™.

Background

In September 2001, the University Library vacated its old and cramped location in University Hall and assumed primary occupancy of the Library and Information Network Centre, or LINC. For the previous 10 years or so, planning for the new building had taken up much of the focus and energy of Library Administration. After the move, as staff settled themselves and library services into their new surroundings, the focus of Library Administration shifted to the concept of library services.

In 1999, the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) initiated what was called “The New Measures Initiative” recognizing that, as the collection format of choice moved to electronic delivery to the desktop, it resulted in fewer users being forced to come to the library to borrow print materials. As a result, the physical counts of things (e.g., collection size, gate counts, circulation transactions, etc.) used traditionally to measure and compare libraries became increasingly less useful. Users were still visiting libraries but differently. Obviously, old measures no longer reflected (if they ever did) the true value and quality of libraries as service organizations. At this same time, and lending impetus for this development, was the increasing pressure on libraries, along with other public institutions, to demonstrate their value through the use of performance measures.

Texas A&M University Libraries along with the ARL and funding from U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education took the lead in developing new measures for libraries, ones that better reflected their new reality. Key to this initiative was the adaptation of an instrument, SERVQUAL, originally developed for the service industry, into an instrument designed to measure the quality of library services—LibQUAL+™. This instrument, unveiled in Fall 2000 and used for the first time in 2001, reached maturity in 2003. In its final form, LibQUAL+™ is best described as “a suite of services used to solicit, track, and act upon users’ perceptions of library services” the centerpiece of which is a web-based survey instrument.

Measuring something as intangible as service was something very new to libraries and as a result, many opportunities were being arranged for librarians to “come up to speed” on the topic. Individual staff members, for whom this was a topic of interest, participated in a number of training opportunities. Donna Seyed Mahmoud, Associate University Librarian, attended the University of Calgary Libraries 2002 Professional Development Day, which was a full day exploration of the topic of assessment and measurement. Subsequent research on her part culminated in a FY2004-2005 budget request to fund participation by the University of Lethbridge Library in LibQUAL+™ -- a request that was successful. Planning for LibQUAL+™ at the University of Lethbridge began Fall 2004 with the target of participating in the Spring 2005 LibQUAL+™ survey.

The LibQUAL process on our campus was organized into three phases. Part 1 was the execution of the LibQUAL+™ survey itself which took place from September 2004 to

June 2005. Part 2 involved followup discussions with focus groups to explore in greater depth some of the specific issues emanating from the survey. This second part, entitled “We’re Listening ... Talk to Us!” took place from August to November 2005. Part 3, which we are currently about to embark upon, involves responding to the information learned from the LibQUAL+™ exercise in an effort to improve service to Library users. This report, which covers Part 1 and 2 of the data gathering and analysis, is the first step in this last phase.

The overall goals for the initial LibQUAL+™ project may be summarized as follows:

- Establish a baseline assessment of users’ perceptions of library services
- Provide direction about where our efforts and resources should be focused
- Provide a foundation for the development of performance indicators for the Library

The Library’s Library Management Team (LMT) was advisory to the process as required.

Complete background information on the University’s participation in LibQUAL+™ may be found at <http://www.uleth.ca/lib/libqual>.

Part 1: Survey on Library Service Quality (September 2004-June 2005)

Ethical Review

As the purpose of this survey was directly related to assessing the performance of the library, this phase of the project was exempted from review by the Human Subjects Research Committee according to Section 1, Part A, Article 1.1d) of the *Tri-council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*.

Methodology

The Survey Instrument

The LibQUAL+™ survey executed at the University of Lethbridge (see Appendix A) consisted of 27 statements including 22 core statements and 5 “local” statements, a general satisfaction section, a section on library usage, user demographics and space for comments.

The 22 core statements of the survey measure user perceptions of service quality in three dimensions:

- Affect of Service – the interpersonal interactions between library staff and users
- Library as Place – the physical environment of the library
- Information Control – the quality of and access to information resources and collections

Each dimension is assessed through at least five different statements to ensure validity of the responses.

The five local statements are optional. The LMT opted to include these questions and, from a list of 108 possible questions provided by ARL, selected five that it felt would give some feedback on our efforts in the areas of document delivery service, promotional activities, and information literacy.

For each of the 27 questions, survey participants were asked to rate each statement three times on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 9 (highest) according to:

- The **Minimum** level of service that the user would deem acceptable
- The **Desired**, or ideal, level of service that the user would want
- The **Perceived**, or actual, level of service that the user believes the library provides.

Participants could choose “NA” (not applicable) if they felt the question was not applicable or if they chose not to respond to a given statement.

The general satisfaction section of the survey the user was asked to indicate their level of agreement on each of eight statements using a Likert Scale of 1 (strongly disagree/extremely poor) to 9 (strongly agree/extremely good). Statements in this section relate to information literacy outcomes as well as overall satisfaction with the library.

To get some idea about pattern of library usage, users were asked to indicate the frequency with which they used resources on site, via the library website or via a non-library gateways such as Google™, etc.

The demographics section collected information on age, gender, disciplinary area, user constituency, and position within the institution. The disciplinary options presented to the respondents were customized using the department listing of the campus directory. These disciplines were then mapped to the broader, standardized list of LibQUAL+™ disciplinary areas as outlined in Appendix B.

Finally the University of Lethbridge chose to offer participants an incentive of one of five \$100 gift certificates from the University Bookstore. As a result, participants wanting to be considered for the draw were asked to submit their email address. Inclusion of the email address was strictly voluntary. The email address was automatically separated from the completed survey at the point of submitting the survey to maintain the confidentiality of the participants. Its sole purpose was to facilitate award of the incentive prizes.

The Population and Sampling

The target population for this survey was the University of Lethbridge Community which includes academic staff, graduate students, undergraduate students, non-academic/non-Library staff and Library staff, working and studying on three campuses in Lethbridge, Calgary and Edmonton as well as at a distance.

ARL provided guidance on minimum recommended sample sizes for large academic libraries with the advice that where populations were smaller than these recommended sizes, that participating libraries survey the entire population. As a result, we chose to survey the entire populations of academic staff, graduate students, non-academic/non-library staff and Library staff.

The undergraduate population exceeded the minimum recommended sample. It was subsequently decided to randomly sample this population group at the rate of approximately 20%. While consideration was given to surveying this entire population group, there were other surveys of undergraduates being conducted at the same time that

raised concerns in University Administration about survey fatigue. It was the preference of the University's Office of Institutional Analysis that a) we sample this population group and b) we co-ordinate the sampling with the sampling for the other surveys.

With the permission of the Registrar's Office, Institutional Analysis drew the sample of undergraduate students using the Banner Student database and provided the names and email addresses for the graduate student population group. Human Resources agreed to provide the names and email addresses for all academic staff (including sessionals) and all non-academic staff (including library staff and post doctoral research fellows).

Execution

The University of Lethbridge provides all students and staff with email addresses. Students are advised that the University email address is the official channel for electronic communications and announcements. Thus, there was no concern about invalid email addresses.

A separate electronic mailing list was established for each sample population group. The mailing list was populated with the email addresses provided by Institutional Analysis and by Human Resources. These mailing lists were used to send the initial invitation to participate as well as each of three reminders.

A generic email account, libqual.library@uleth.ca, was established as the central recipient of any concerns or questions about the survey so that questions about the survey would not get lost amidst personal email. This account was monitored by the LibQUAL+™ Project Librarian.

The survey was scheduled to run February 28 to March 18 although it was not officially shut down until March 23 as a result of operational issues. A total of four communications were sent to the survey mailing lists: the invitation to participate and three reminders. Each communication was customized to address the specific audience of each of the mailing list. The initial invitation was sent by the University President on the Monday that the survey opened. Two reminders were sent by the University Librarian on the two following Mondays. On the advice a faculty member, a third reminder was sent by the University President on Thursday, March 17.

Print surveys were available by request but were not required.

Promotions

A local LibQUAL+™ project website was established as a resource for those curious about the project. This site remains available at <http://www.uleth.ca/lib/libqual>.

The Library's Public Relations and Promotions Committee (PRP) played a significant role in helping to draft the invitation and the reminders. In addition, they promoted the survey, both during the lead-up to the survey as well as during the survey run, by facilitating the following:

- Posters (2 variations for before & during)
- Screensavers (2 variations for before & during)
- *The Melorist* (variations of "Three Lines Free" (leading up to & during))
- *The Legend* (article)
- Notice Board (prominent placement during)

Presentations were made to various groups to educate them about what we were doing and why. These groups included Library Staff, GFC Library Committee, Deans Council, Arts & Science Faculty Council, Health Sciences Faculty Council. In addition, the Dean of Education sent an email to the Faculty of Education mailing list encouraging them to participate in the survey. Finally, an announcement of the survey was made to Fine Arts Faculty Council. The only faculty not to receive advanced promotion of the survey was the Faculty of Management.

As mentioned earlier, an incentive, the opportunity to win one of five \$100 UofL Bookstore gift certificates, was offered.

Data handling

The web survey is hosted and the data stored behind a firewall at Texas A&M University. Any identifying information (i.e., email address) is separated from the completed surveys to ensure confidentiality. 50 email addresses are randomly selected from those submitted and are forwarded to the participating library for the purposes of awarding the incentives.

The results of the survey were then tabulated by the ARL and compiled into an aggregated results notebook that provides overall results for all constituency groups except Library staff as well as aggregated results for each individual constituency group. As well institutional data files and comments are available for downloading and analysis by each participating library.

Comments were mounted for public review on the local LibQUAL+™ website, <http://www.uleth.ca/lib/libQUAL/libqual-comments.asp>. To ensure the confidentiality of the respondents, identifying names and/or information that might have compromised their confidentiality was removed. In addition, comments about specific members of the Library staff were edited to remove personal identification, to ensure the privacy of the individuals and to maintain a focus on the comments as they pertained to library services. The comments posted for public review were made searchable by constituency group and by keyword.

Analysis

The aggregated results notebook was reviewed; specific interest being given to the results by individual constituency group.

Comments were analyzed using the software package, AtlasTI.

Interpretation of the Results

The aggregated results present the mean score for each survey statement using completed surveys.

Service Adequacy gaps, a measure of how well the library is meeting the expectations of its users, were calculated by subtracting the **Minimum** scores from the **Perceived** scores (i.e., **Perceived** minus **Minimum**). A negative **Adequacy** score indicates that the users' perceptions of library service fall below their **Minimum** expected level of service. A positive **Adequacy** score indicates that the users' perceptions exceed their **Minimum** expectations of service. The higher the number associated with service **Adequacy** gap, the better the library is performing.

Service superiority gaps are calculated by subtracting the **Desired** scores from the **Perceived** scores (i.e., **Perceived** minus **Desired**). A positive superiority gap is an indication that the library is exceeding **Desired** levels of service. The higher the number associated with service superiority, the better the library is performing.

Adequacy and **Superiority** gaps are reflected in the radar charts plotted in the aggregated results notebook (see Figure 1). Each "spoke" in the radar chart represents one of the 22 core statements from the survey. The **Minimum**, **Desired**, and **Perceived** scores are plotted. Red on the graph is a visual indication that the **Adequacy** gap is negative. Blue indicates that the **Adequacy** gap is positive. **Superiority** gaps, when they occur, are depicted in green.

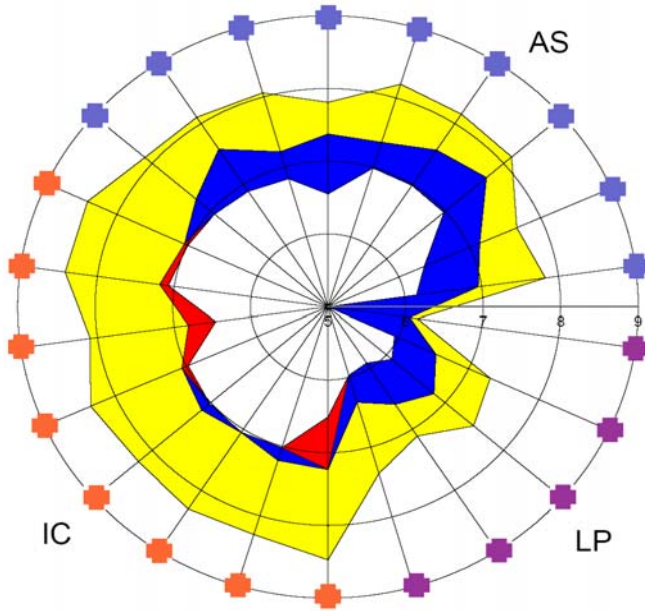


Figure 1: Example of a radar chart

The means for each dimension were calculated based on the means of the individual statements that challenge each dimension. The means for the overall dimension follow the same logic explained above but are displayed visually using a bar graph (see Figure 2).

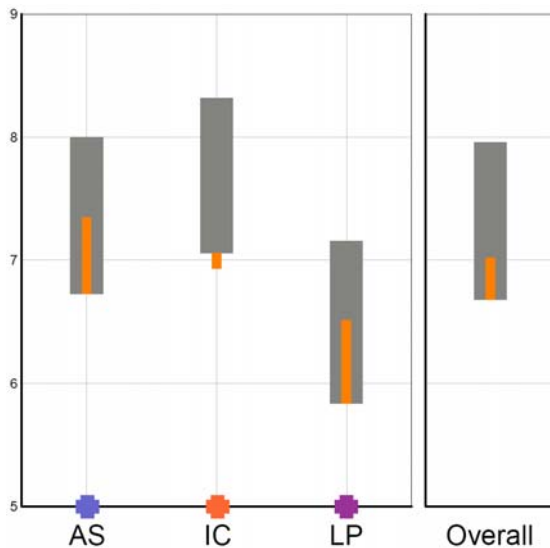


Figure 2: Example of a bar graph or “zone of tolerance” chart.

Plotting the **Minimum** and **Desired** means for each dimension results in a visual representation of a “zone of tolerance” as represented by the gray bar. The **Perceived**

mean for each dimension is also plotted and its difference from the **Minimum**, the **Adequacy** gap, is represented as an orange bar. Ideally, a library wants to see the orange bar placed within the gray bar meaning that the library is exceeding **Minimum** expectations. An orange bar falling below the gray “zone of tolerance” indicates that the library is not meeting even **Minimum** expectations.

The means for each dimension combine to give an overall mean for all services for the library. This is represented in the right hand panel of the bar graph.

The complete Aggregated Results Notebook is included in Appendix C and the LibQUAL+™ Highlights for Spring 2005 are included in Appendix D.

The Results

Survey Monitor

Based on advice from previous LibQUAL+™ libraries, the University of Lethbridge had a goal of achieving an overall response rate of 30% or more. The survey was promoted heavily in advance of the actual survey run as well as during the survey using methods described earlier in this report. As well, the involvement of the University President was a key strategy for encouraging response and participation in this survey.

The Survey Monitor (see Figure 3) is a tool provided by the ARL to monitor the progress of survey submission over the course of the survey run. As can be seen from examining Figure 3, there was an immediate response to the initial invitation to participate which dwindled over the course of the week. With the first reminder, sent by the University Librarian one week after the survey opened, there was a resurgence of response that was duplicated albeit with less intensity with the second reminder sent by the University Librarian in the third week of the survey. The final reminder, sent by the University President on the Thursday prior to the survey closing, seemed to have the anticipated (and welcomed) effect of encouraging a final burst of responses.

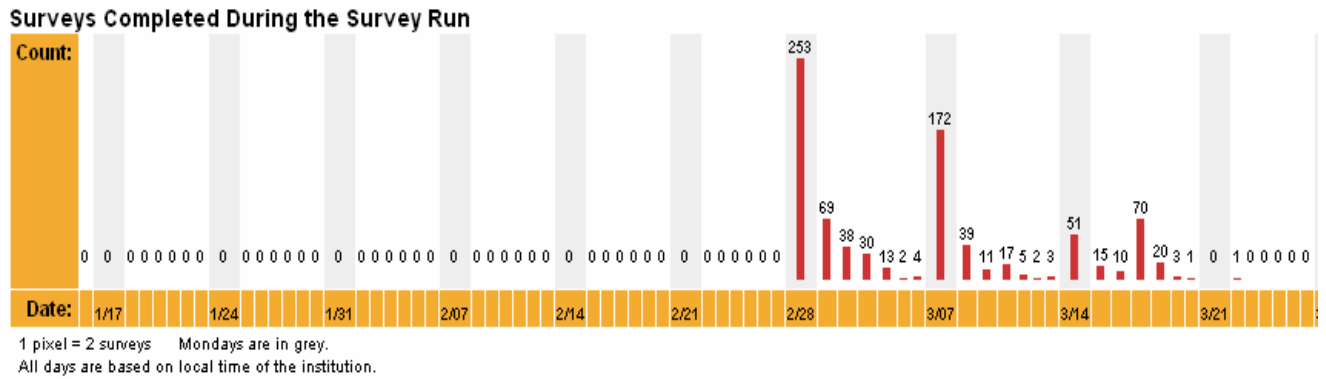


Figure 3: LibQUAL+™ Survey Monitor for the University of Lethbridge, Library

This visual representation of response over the course of the survey, shows that there is benefit to having the active support of the University Administration. This supports the advice of other libraries that have run LibQUAL+™.

A total of 829 responses were received (see Figure 4). One may conclude from the median and average survey completion times, that most respondents found this survey took very little time to complete while there were a few who took much longer, relatively speaking.

Summary:	
Completed Surveys:	829
Median Survey Time: (min/sec)	10:09
Average Survey Time: (min/sec)	17:05

Figure 4: Completed surveys, Median

A breakdown of these responses by constituency (or user) group appears in Figure 5.

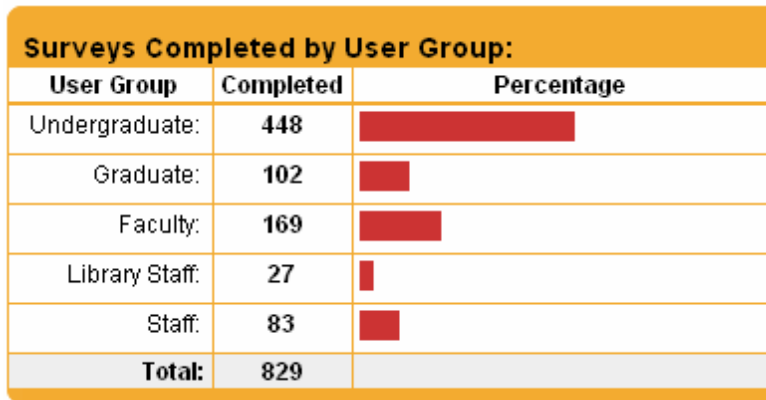


Figure 5: Surveys completed by User group

Response rates

The surveys completed were screened by the ARL according to three criteria:

- Only records with complete data on the 22 core statements and where the respondents chose a “user group,” if applicable, were retained in the summary statistics.
- Responses containing more than 11 “NA” (not applicable) responses were eliminated from the summary statistics.
- Records containing more than 9 logical inconsistencies (e.g., “Desired” score less than the “Minimum” score) were eliminated from the summary statistics.

Therefore the total number of valid responses was 793. Figure 6 outlines the final response breakdown by user group including response rates.

User Group	Population	Sample Population	Official Response	% Response by User Group Sample	%Total Population	%Sample Population	%Response by Total Return
Faculty* (incl. Sessionals; excl. Librarians)	591	591	166	28.09%	6.82%	19.72%	20.93%
Graduate Students*	301	301	102	33.89%	3.47%	10.04%	12.86%
Undergraduate Students*	7198	1530	429	28.04%	83.07%	51.05%	54.10%
Non-Academic Staff (excl. library; incl. PostDocs)	525	525	69	13.14%	6.06%	17.52%	8.70%
Library Staff (incl. CurrLab & Record Services)	50	50	27	54.00%	0.58%	1.67%	3.40%
TOTALS	8865	2997	793	26.46%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
*TOTALS for Academic Users only	8090	2422	697	28.78%			

Figure 6: Official and final responses by user group

The overall response rate for all five user groups including Library staff was 26.46%. However, as can be seen in Figure 6, especially in the response rates by user group sample, the Library staff over-responded and the non-academic/non-library staff under-responded. As the focus for the evaluation was really directed at our academic users (i.e., faculty, graduate students and undergraduate students), the response rate for this group, 28.78%, is the most important response rate to note.

Even within the academic users, the response rate for each user group varies from 28.04% for undergraduate students to 28.09% for faculty to 33.89% for graduate

students. To explore these differences a little further, a one-way analysis of variance was done using the mean Adequacy gaps for each dimension across these three user groups. Significant differences were found for each dimension reinforcing the notion that each group should be treated separately for the purpose of analysis. (See Appendix E for complete statistical details.)

Representativeness

Respondents had been asked to indicate their departmental affiliation, or subject area, as part of the demographic information calculated. These departmental affiliations were mapped to the standardized disciplinary categories of LibQUAL+™.

The number of respondents within each departmental affiliation was too small to be reliable for the sake of analysis at this level of detail. Therefore analysis of the survey results continued at the disciplinary level.

In the disciplinary representativeness charts that follow, the blue points indicate the per cent of the total population represented by each discipline as submitted to the ARL. The red points represent the per cent of the sample population represented by each discipline as self reported by the respondent. Ideally, the red points should overlay the blue points exactly.

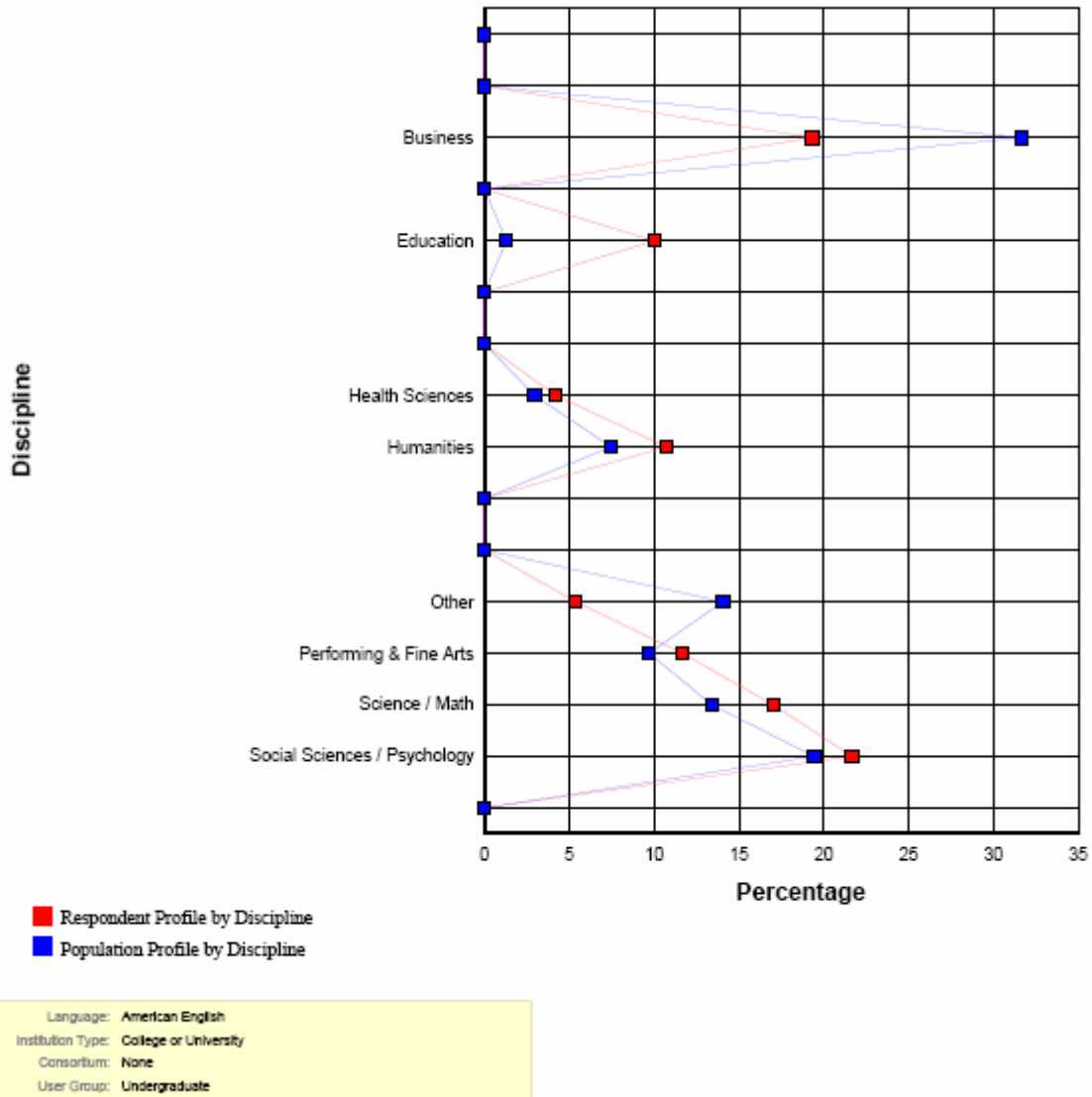


Figure 7: Undergraduates by discipline

In the undergraduate population, there tended to be an over response in all disciplinary areas except for “Business” (or Management in the language of the University of Lethbridge) and “Other”. “Other” as a subject area or departmental affiliation was used included to capture those individuals who were not affiliated with a particular department or program of study.

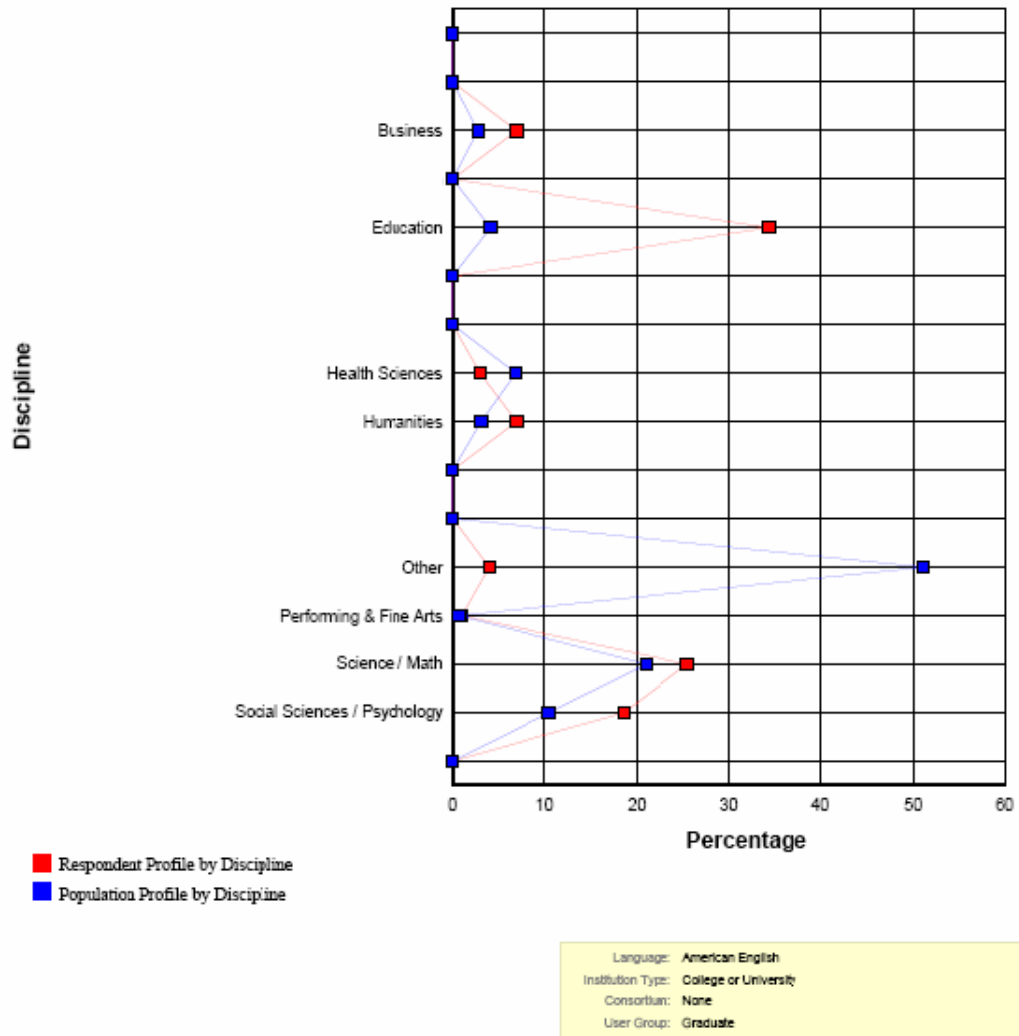


Figure 8: Graduate student representation by discipline

As with the undergraduate respondents, the graduate students tended to over-respond except in the case of Health Sciences and “Other”.

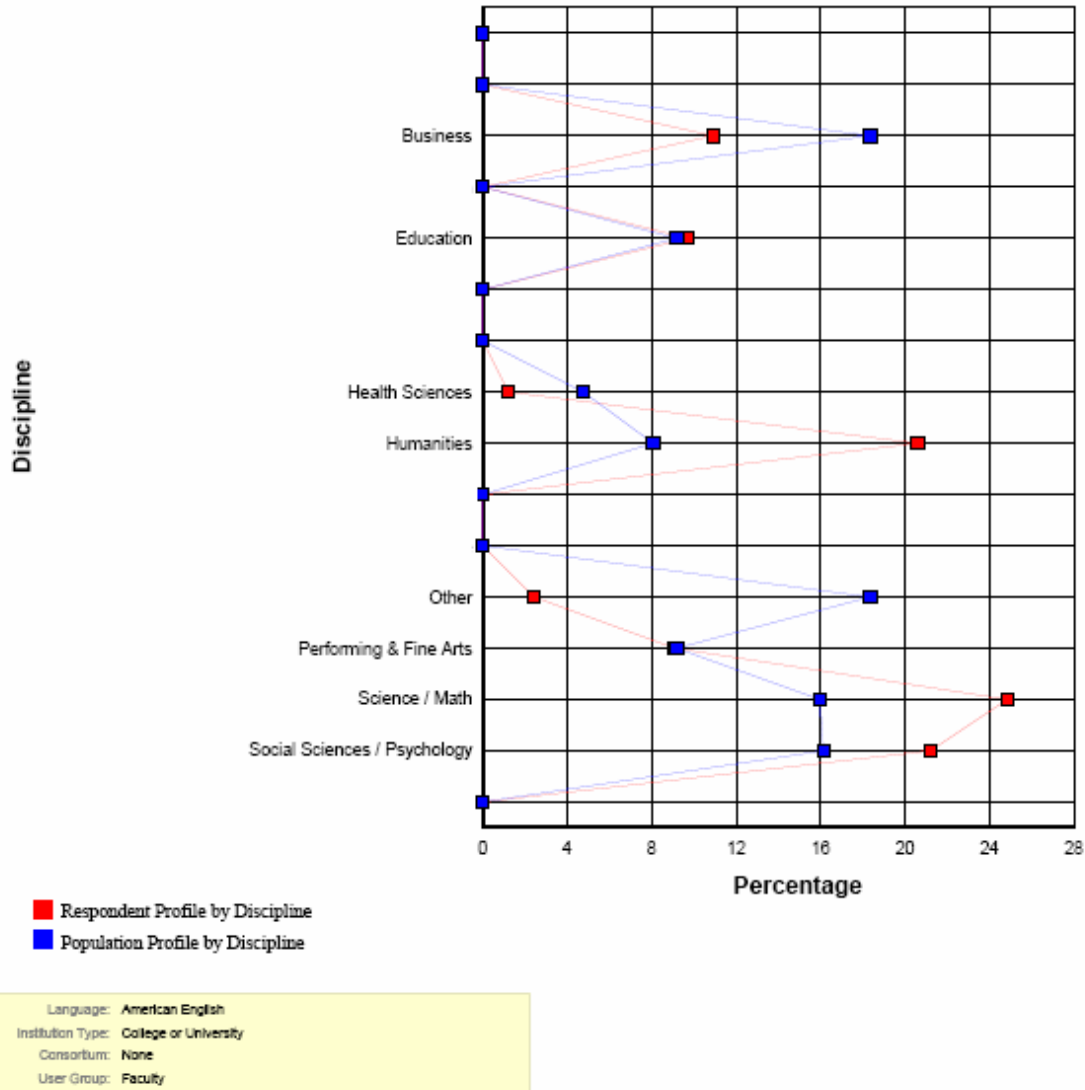


Figure 9: Faculty by discipline

Interestingly, those in disciplines associated with the Faculty of Arts and Science, namely Humanities, Social Sciences/Psychology, and Science/Math all over responded while faculty affiliated with the professional schools either responded proportionately to their population (i.e., Performing & Fine Arts and Education) or under responded (i.e., Health Sciences and Business).

It is interesting to note a few things about the faculty response by discipline. The first is the issue of endorsement. Faculty members in the Faculty of Education, who responded almost in proportion to their population, were sent an email from their Dean highlighting the importance of this survey. In the Faculty of Fine Arts, which also responded in proportion to its population, there was special mention of the survey at their Fine Arts Council. The Faculty of Arts and Science had a special presentation made to their

Faculty Council prior to the distribution of the survey. The School of Health Sciences had a presentation made to their School Council about mid-way during the survey run. No mention of the survey was made to the Faculty of Management; the invitation to participate and the reminders were the only known means of communication with the members of this faculty.

It is possible that the endorsement campaign, combined with the level of support shown by the Deans in the various faculties, affected faculty response since there seems to be a logical correlation (albeit one that cannot be measured). It is possible, as well, that workload issues within a unit or internal climate issues may have interfered with faculty response in the units with lower response rates.

Reliability

Although the psychometric properties of the LibQUAL+™ instrument have been established, the ARL advised assessing the reliability of the instrument in each setting. Therefore reliability analysis was performed on each set of items that make up a dimension of service quality. The analysis showed (see Table 1) that Cronbach's coefficient alpha was in the high or very high range for all sets of items indicating high reliability of the instrument within the University of Lethbridge environment.

Dimension	Cronbach's alpha	Number of items
Affect of Service	0.944	9
Information Control	0.922	8
Library as Place	0.821	5

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha

Perceptions: Minimum, Desired, Perceived and Adequacy Gaps

a. Overall Perceptions

Figure 10 demonstrates the overall response for all University of Lethbridge respondents as compared to the overall response for all college and university libraries participating in the Spring 2005 LibQUAL+™ survey. As may be seen from these graphs and charts, the University of Lethbridge users are relatively typical of the overall "zones of tolerance" (the gray bar; the difference between **Minimum** and **Desired** scores) for each dimension of library service quality. However, the University of Lethbridge users perceive the level of service for each of these dimensions slightly differently, these **Perceived** scores coming slightly

higher for “Affect of Service” and “Library as Place” while being lower in “Information Control”.

Overall, comparing the resulting means for the **Minimum** and **Desired** levels of service, University of Lethbridge users have a slightly smaller zone of tolerance for library services although their overall perception of library services (i.e., **Perceived** mean = 6.95) reflects the perception of users across college and university libraries.

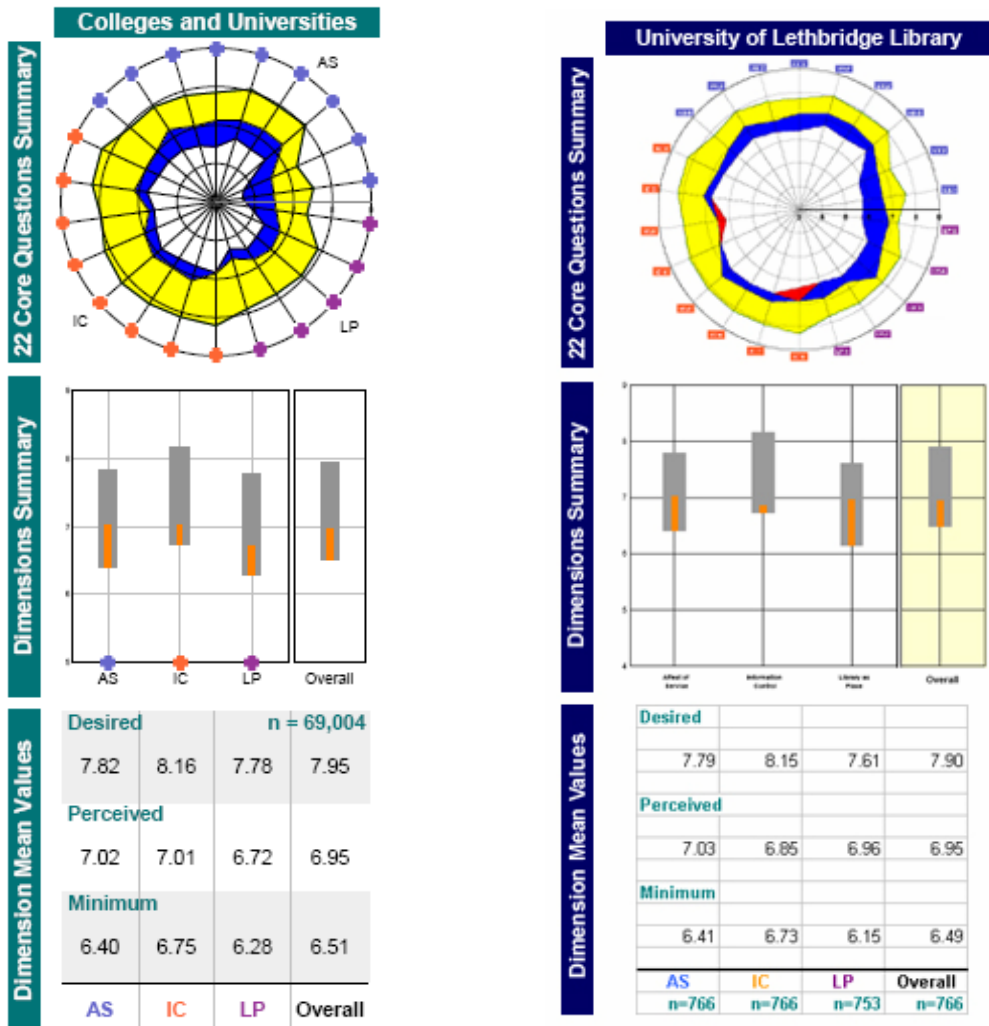


Figure 10: Comparison of UofL Overall response to Colleges and University Libraries participating in Spring 2005 LibQUAL+™

b. Undergraduate Students

Figures 11 and 12 outline how the library is **Perceived** by undergraduates. As can be seen in Figure 11, across all dimensions of service, the Library is exceeding the undergraduate students' **Minimum** expectations (orange bar within the gray zone of tolerance).

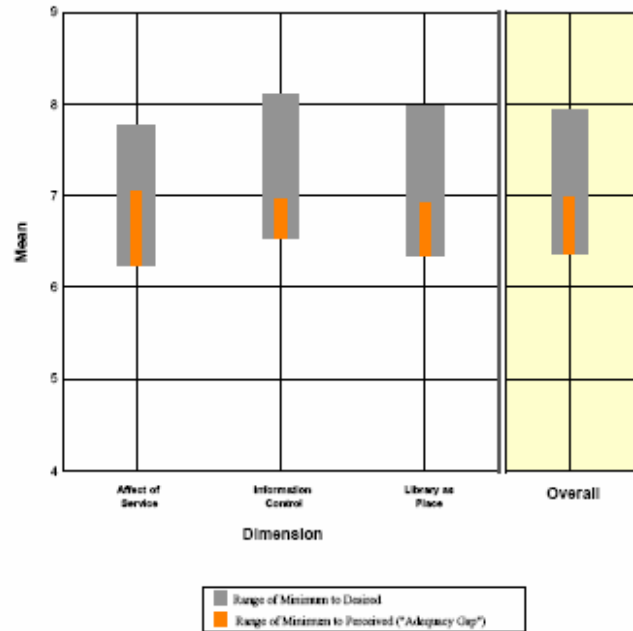


Figure 11: Undergraduate Students – Zones of Tolerance

Figure 12 outlines **Minimum**, **Desired** and **Perceived** scores for each of the 22 core statements. While the Library is exceeding the **Minimum** service expectations of the undergraduate students, there is some concern over “print library materials I need for my work” (IC-3), “print and/or electronic journal collections I require for my work” (IC-8), and “quiet space for individual activities” (LP-5).

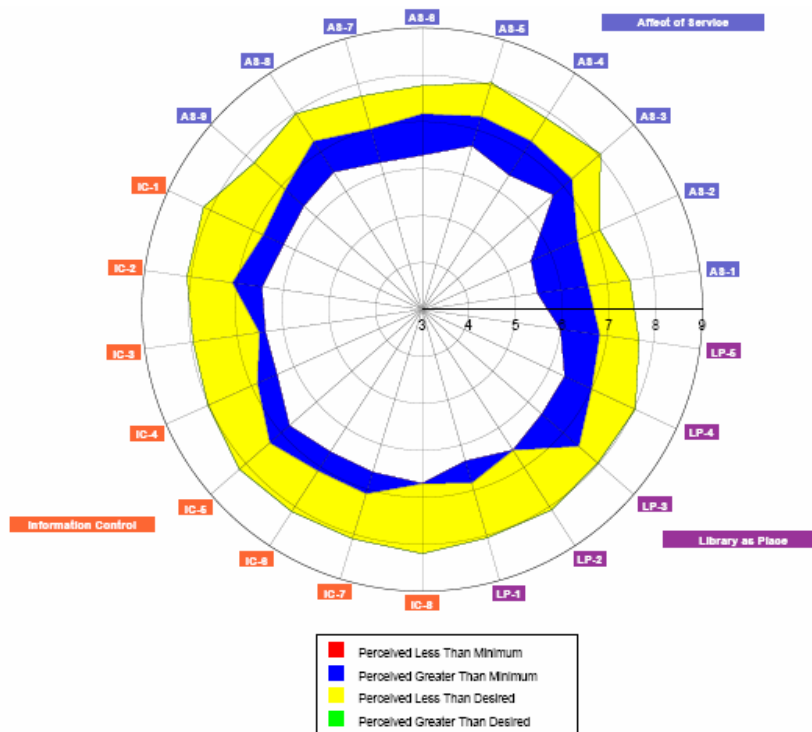


Figure 12: Undergraduate Radar Chart for 22 Core Questions

To determine if there were differences between undergraduates on the basis of discipline, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to compare the **Adequacy** means for each statement of each dimension between disciplinary areas. There were sufficient cases in each of the disciplinary categories to allow for all disciplines to be included. (See Appendix F for statistical analyses.) It should also be noted that, before proceeding with each Analysis of Variance, a test for homogeneity of variance was performed to ensure that this assumption of the ANOVA was met. Details of these tests are also available in Appendix F.

The ANOVA revealed that, on all 22 core statements, save one, there were no statistically significant differences among Adequacy means across the disciplinary areas of the undergraduate students. The only significant difference appeared for this statement: “library space that inspires study and learning.” ($F(7,414) = 2.602, p=.012$). Contrast tests of means for students in the Sciences/Math and those in the Health Sciences versus students in other disciplinary areas revealed that the two former groups had a more favourable perception of the Library than undergraduate students in the other disciplinary areas (See Appendix F).

c. Graduate Students

Figure 13 provides visual representation of the zones of tolerance for library service quality for graduate students. Overall, the Library appears to be meeting the needs of the graduate students. With respect to the specific dimensions, there are large **Adequacy** gaps for “Library as Place” and “Affect of Service” but it is evident the Library is failing to meet minimum expectations in the area of “Information Control”.

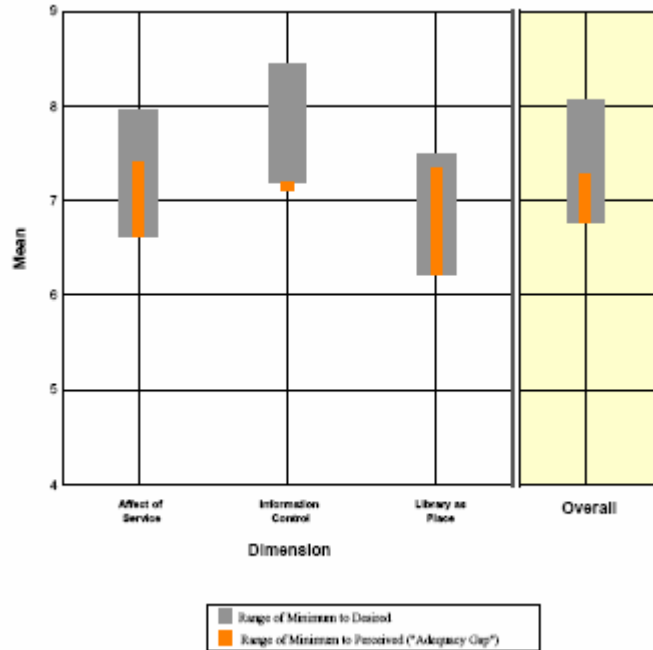


Figure 13: Graduate Students – Zones of Tolerance

Figure 14 provides a visual summary of the graduate students’ responses to the 22 core statements. The failure to meet minimum expectations overall for “Information Control” is explained in this radar chart where it appears the greatest concerns for graduate students are with respect to:

- “printed library materials I need for my work” (IC-3)
- “the electronic information resources I need” (IC-4)
- “print and/or electronic journal collections I require for my work.” (IC-8)

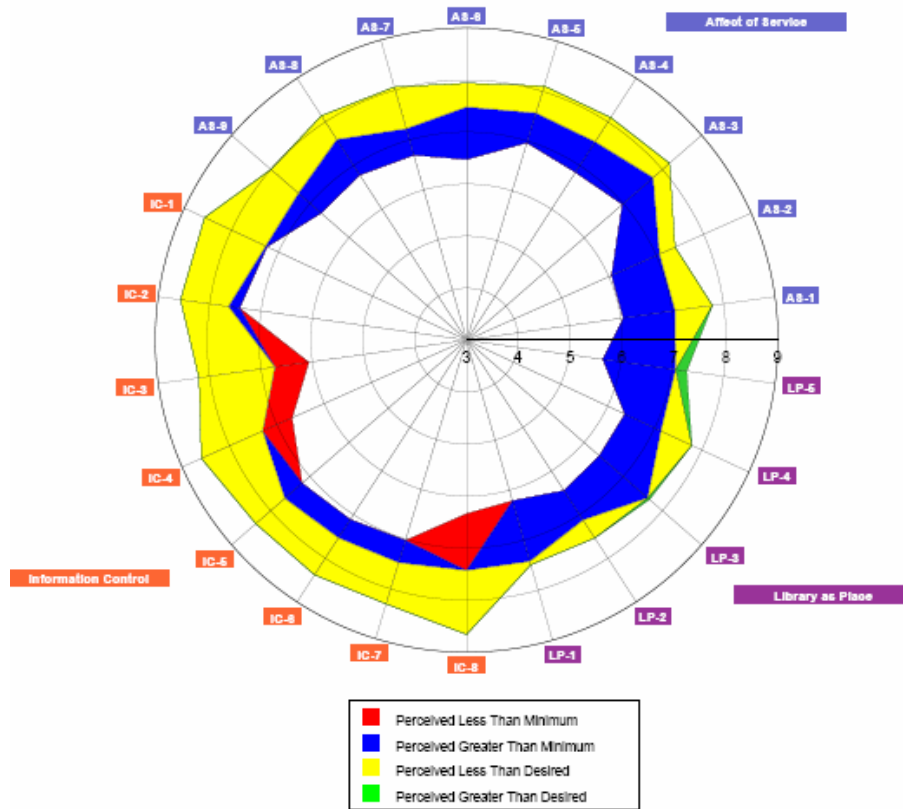


Figure 14: Graduate Students – Radar Chart

The radar chart (Figure 14) also highlights that the Library is barely meeting the **Minimum** expectations of graduate students with respect to:

- IC-1: “making electronic resources accessible from my home or office” (Adequacy mean = 0.03, s.d.=2.36)
- IC-2: “a library website enabling me to locate information on my own” (Adequacy mean = 0.22, s.d=1.94)

The graduate students’ responses were analyzed by comparing the **Adequacy** means for each of the 22 core statements across disciplinary groups using a one-way analysis of variance. There were too few cases in the disciplinary categories of Health Sciences, Performing & Fine Arts, and Other so these disciplinary categories were removed from the analysis. There were no significant differences to be found in this analysis, demonstrating that the graduate students were quite homogenous in their evaluation of library service quality.

d. Faculty

As with graduate students, the Library is meeting the needs of faculty overall but just barely in this case. With respect to the individual dimensions of library

service, it appears the faculty are quite satisfied with “Library as Place” but less so with “Affect of Service” (although the Library is meeting minimum expectations overall in this area). Faculty are very dissatisfied with the dimension, “Information Control” where the **Adequacy** gap is very definitely negative.

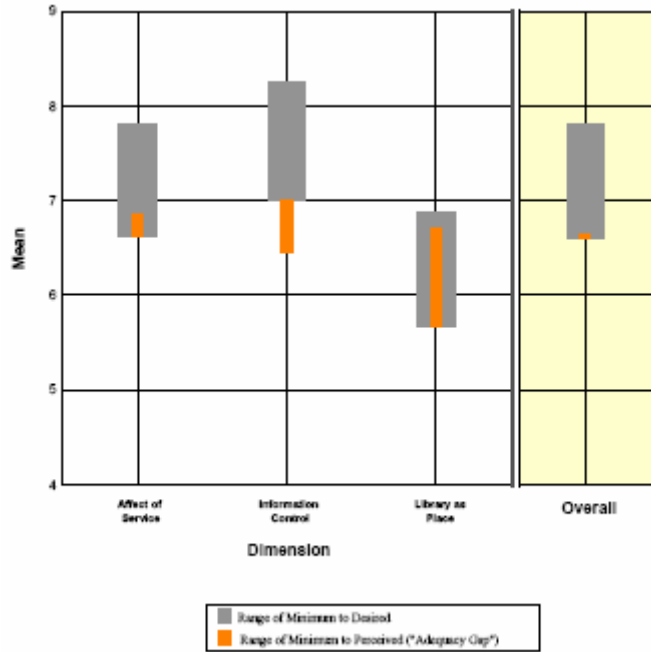


Figure 15: Faculty – Zones of Tolerance

The radar chart for faculty (Figure 16) visually reveals that the Library is failing to meet minimum expectations on six of eight of the statements relating to the dimension “Information Control”:

- “making electronic resources accessible from my home or office” (IC-1)
- “a library website enabling me to locate information on my own” (IC-2)
- “the printed library materials I need for my work” (IC-3)
- “the electronic information resources I need” (IC-4)
- “easy to use access tools that allow me to find things on my own” (IC-6)
- “print and/or electronic journal collections I require for my work” (IC-8)

The Library is also barely meeting minimum expectations for seven of the nine statements relating to the dimension “Affect of Service” and is failing to meet the minimum expectations of faculty when it comes to “employees who understand the needs of their users”.

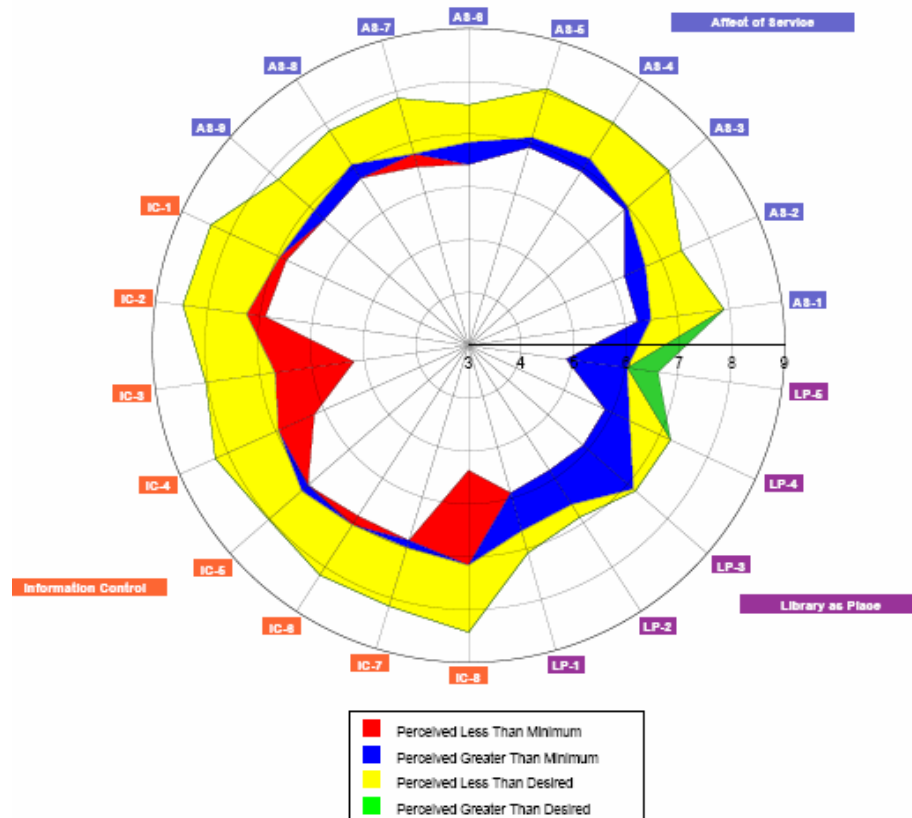


Figure 16: Faculty – Radar Chart

Again, a one-way analysis of variance was performed to determine if there were disciplinary differences in the mean Adequacy scores for each statement. There were no significant differences found suggesting that faculty are also quite homogenous in their opinion of the Library.

Information Literacy

The University Library has focused many resources on developing a program of instruction in using the library, seeking, retrieving, evaluating and using information (i.e., information literacy). LibQUAL+™ provided an opportunity to “check in” on this initiative. Our user groups were asked three local questions to gauge the **Minimum** and **Desired** expectations as well as the **Perceived level of service**. Graphs illustrating the **Minimum**, **Desired** and **Perceived** means for the responses are included below (Figures 17, 18, and 19). (Although the graphs include the responses of Library staff for visual comparison, this group was not included in any of the one-way analyses of variance executed.)

a. *“Teaching me how to access, evaluate, and use information.”*

Figure 17 summarizes the **Minimum**, **Desired** and **Perceived** levels of service relating to the role of the Library in *“Teaching me how to access, evaluate and use information.”*

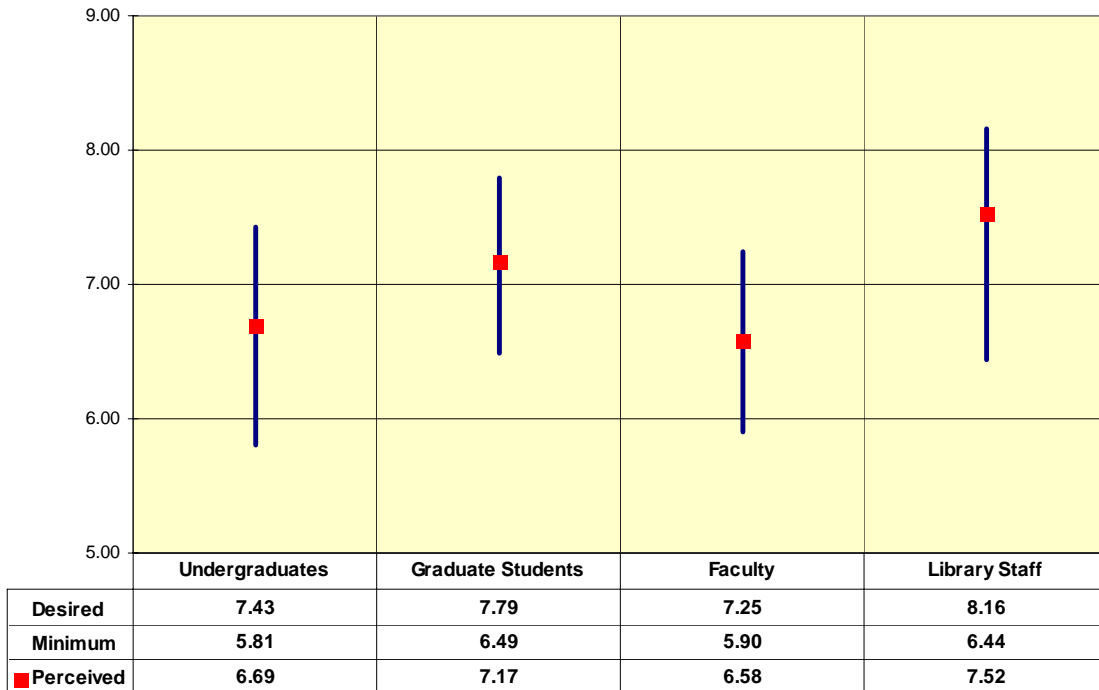


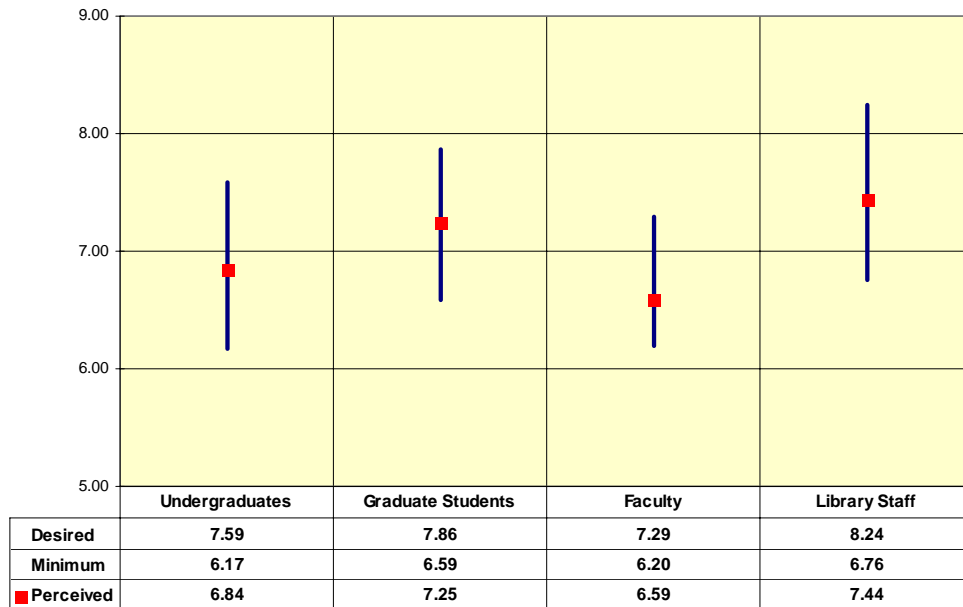
Figure 17: *“Teaching me how to access, evaluate, and use information”*: Mean scores for Minimum, Desired, Perceived levels of service

The one-way analysis of variance for **Minimum level of service** scores demonstrated significant difference between the three groups (For means, see Figure 17, $F(2, 646) = 5,385, p=0.005$). ANOVA of **Perceived level of service** scores also showed significant differences between the three groups (For means, see Figure 17, $F(2, 646) = 4.321, p = 0.014$). Contrast tests confirmed that these differences were significant between graduate students and undergraduate students and between graduate students and faculty. (See Appendix G for statistical analyses.)

With respect to the mean for **Desired levels of service** relative to this statement, because there was heterogeneity of variance between the groups, a more stringent criterion for asserting there is a significant difference in the means among the three groups (i.e., $\alpha = 0.01$) was used. The result of the one-way analysis of variance to compare the means for **Desired level of service** was significant only to $p < 0.05$ and was therefore ignored.

b. “Providing me with the information skills I need for my work or study.”

Figure 18 summarizes the **Minimum**, **Desired** and **Perceived** levels of service relating to the role of the Library in “Providing me with the information skills I need for my work or study.”



**Figure 18: “Providing me with the information skills I need for my work or study”:
Mean scores for Minimum, Desired, Perceived levels of service**

A test for homogeneity of variances was done for each mean and revealed that there was heterogeneity in the variance existed for all three means being examined. Again, the differences demonstrated in the one-way analysis of variance for the **Minimum** and **Desired** means were not significant to $p < 0.01$ and were therefore ignored.

Again, for this question, because there was heterogeneity of variance for all three variables across the groups, a more stringent criterion for asserting there is a significant difference in the means among the three groups (i.e., $\alpha = 0.01$) was used. The result of the one-way analysis of variance to compare the means for **Minimum level of service** and **Desired level of service** was significant only to $p < 0.05$ and was therefore ignored. However, the ANOVA for **Perceived level of service** among the groups did show significant differences at the higher criterion ($F(2, 626) = 5.440, p = 0.005$). The contrast testing for this mean, not assuming equal variances, demonstrated significant difference between graduate students and undergraduates ($t(167.815) = 2.580, p = 0.01$) and between graduate students and faculty ($t(228.436) = 3.472, p = 0.001$). (See Appendix G)

c. *“Librarians providing help that assists in finding information needed now while improving my research skills.”*

Figure 19 summarizes the **Minimum**, **Desired** and **Perceived** levels of service relating to the statement *“Librarians providing help that assists in finding information needed now while improving my research skills.”*

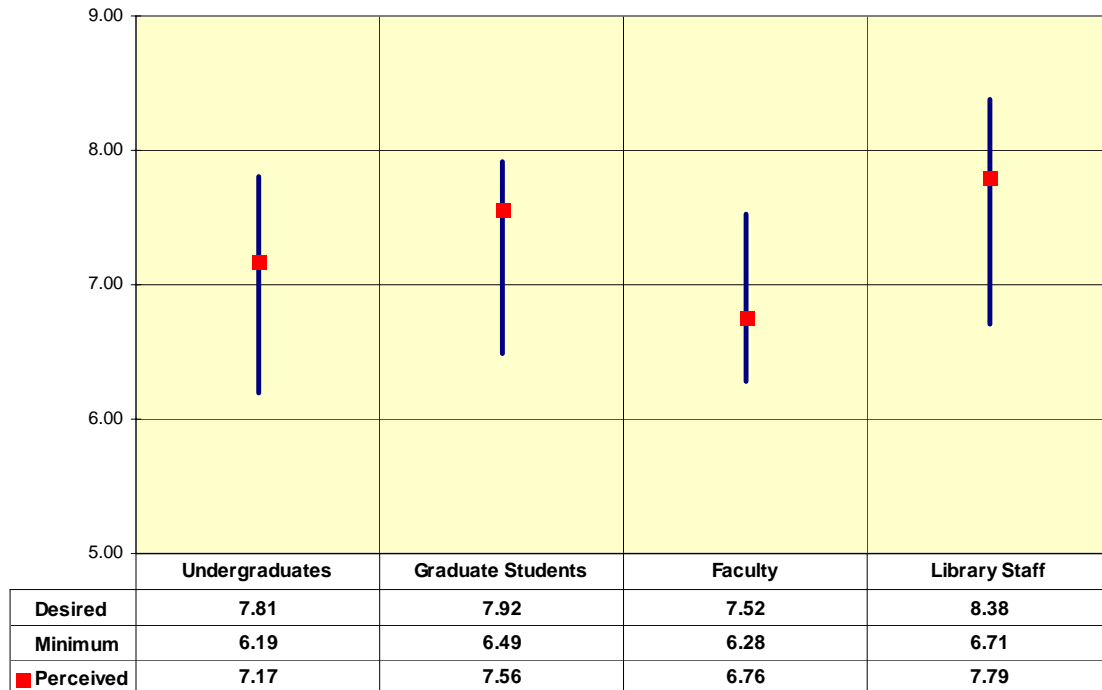


Figure 19: *“Librarians providing me with help that assists in finding information needed now while improving my research skills”*: Mean scores for **Minimum**, **Desired**, **Perceived** levels of service

The test for homogeneity of variances revealed that this condition was met with respect to the analysis for **Minimum** expectations. However, there was definite heterogeneity between the groups for the **Desired** mean and the **Perceived** mean.

The one way analysis of variance showed no significant differences in the mean for **Minimum** or **Desired** expectations of service for this statement. On the other hand, there were significant differences between the groups relative to the **Perceived** means ($F(2, 628) = 7.305, p = 0.001$).

The contrast testing further revealed significant differences in the **Perceived** means:

- between undergraduate students and graduate students ($t(175.418) = 2.626, p = .009$);

- between undergraduate students and faculty ($t(205.022) = 2.294, p = .023$); and
- between graduate students and faculty ($t(230.861) = 3.903, p < .001$).

Unlike the other statements, this statement did show significance in **Adequacy of service** gaps. The variance between groups was homogeneous, the one-way analysis of variance showed a significant difference ($F(2, 628) = 3.859, p = 0.022$) and the contrasting tests demonstrated significant difference between the Adequacy gap means of undergraduates and faculty ($t(628) = 2.599, p = .010$) and between those of graduate students and faculty ($t(628) = 2.246, p = .025$). (See Appendix G)

d. Information Literacy Outcomes

LibQUAL+™ asked users to rate their agreement on various statements of information literacy outcomes using a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 9 (strongly agree). Faculty consistently scored lower on these questions than did either undergraduate or graduate students.

- *“The library helps me to stay abreast of developments in my field(s) of interest.”*

Question	Undergraduates (N=429)	Graduate Students (N=102)	Faculty (N=166)
<i>The library helps me to stay abreast of developments in my field(s) of interest.</i>	Mean = 5.56 (s.d.=1.86) Median = 6 Mode = 5	Mean = 5.69 (s.d.= 1.95) Median = 6.0 Mode = 6	Mean = 4.93 (s.d.= 2.08) Median = 5.0 Mode = 5

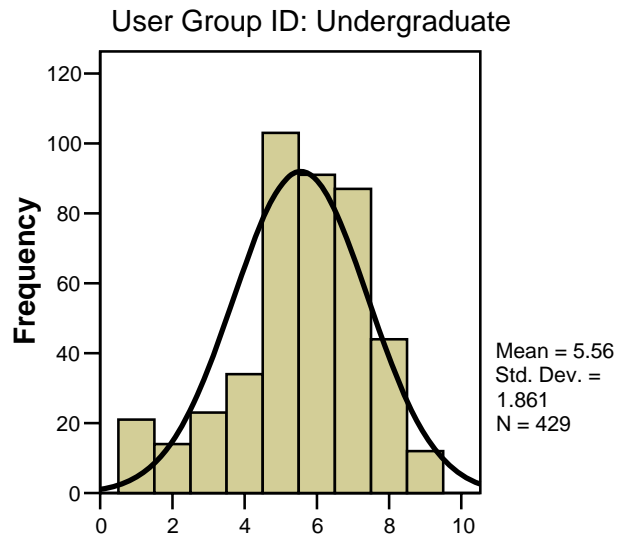


Figure 20: Undergraduate student response: *The library helps me to stay abreast of developments in my field(s) of interest.*

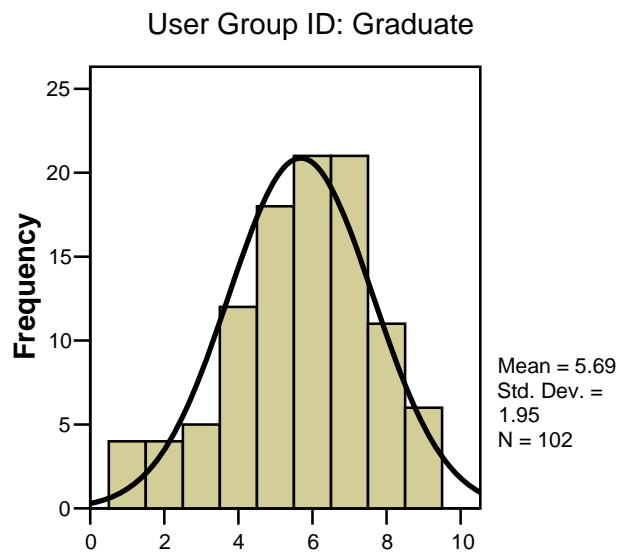


Figure 21: Graduate student response: *The library helps me to stay abreast of developments in my field(s) of interest.*

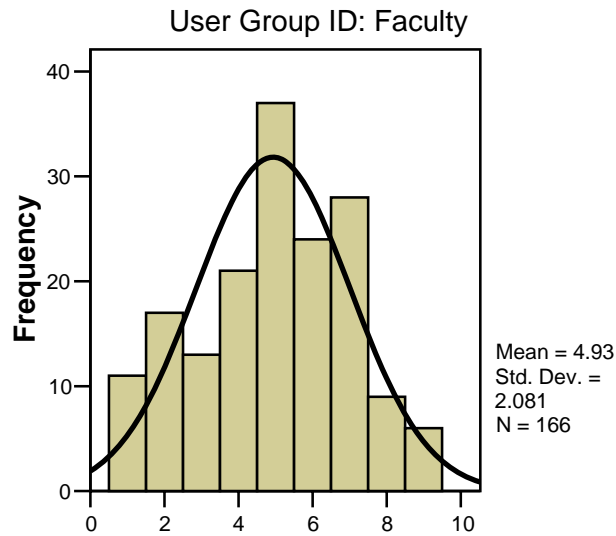


Figure 22: Faculty response: *The library helps me to stay abreast of developments in my field(s) of interest.*

- ***“The library aids my advancement in my academic discipline.”***

Question	Undergraduates (N=429)	Graduate Students (N=102)	Faculty (N=166)
<i>The library aids my advancement in my academic discipline.</i>	Mean = 6.41 (s.d.= 1.73) Median = 7 Mode = 7	Mean = 6.69 (s.d.= 1.83) Median = 7.0 Mode = 7	Mean = 5.28 (s.d.= 2.06) Median = 5.0 Mode = 5

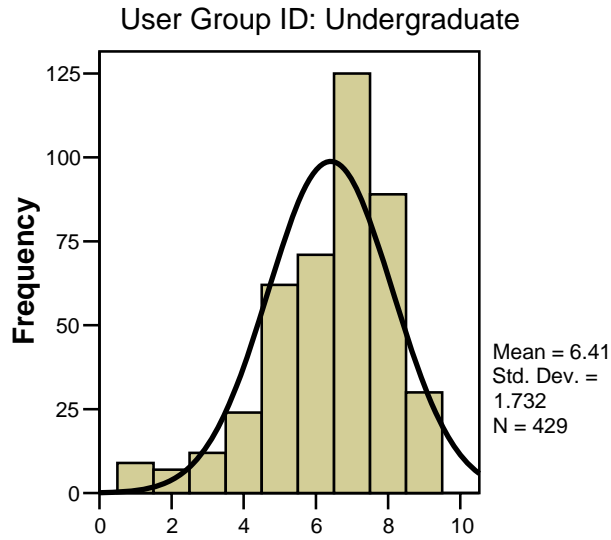


Figure 23: Undergraduate student response: *The library aids my advancement in my academic discipline*

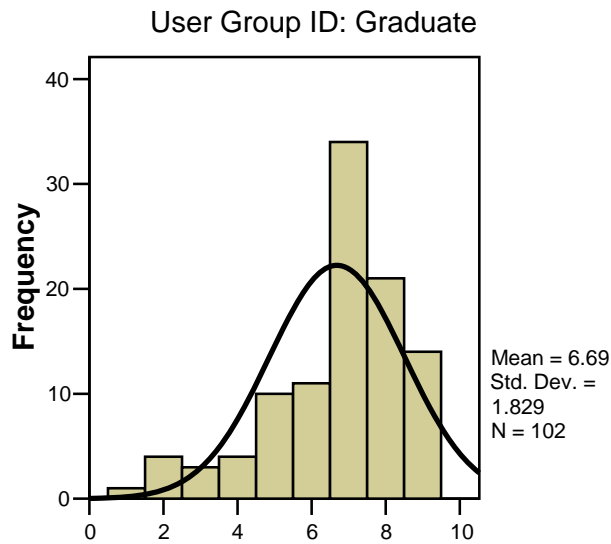


Figure 24: Graduate student response: *The library aids my advancement in my academic discipline*

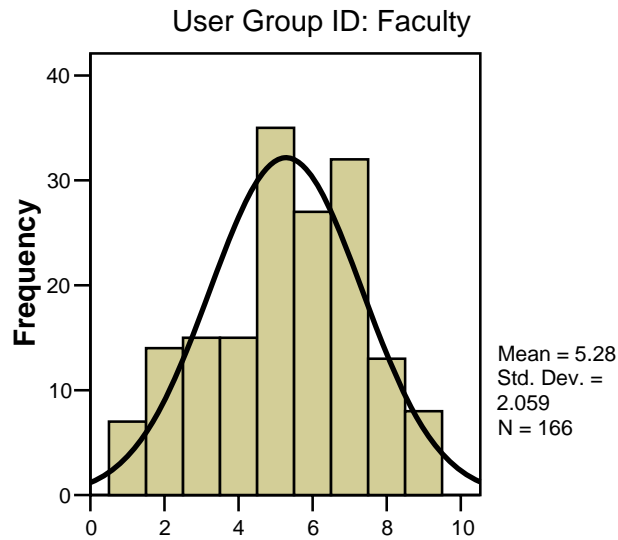


Figure 25: Faculty response: *The library aids my advancement in my academic discipline*

- ***“The library enables me to be more efficient in my academic pursuits.”***

Question	Undergraduates (N=429)	Graduate Students (N=102)	Faculty (N=166)
<i>The library enables me to be more efficient in my academic pursuits.</i>	Mean = 6.67 (s.d.= 1.78) Median = 7.0 Mode = 7	Mean = 6.80 (s.d.= 1.82) Median = 7.0 Mode = 7	Mean = 5.61 (s.d.= 2.08) Median = 6.0 Mode = 7

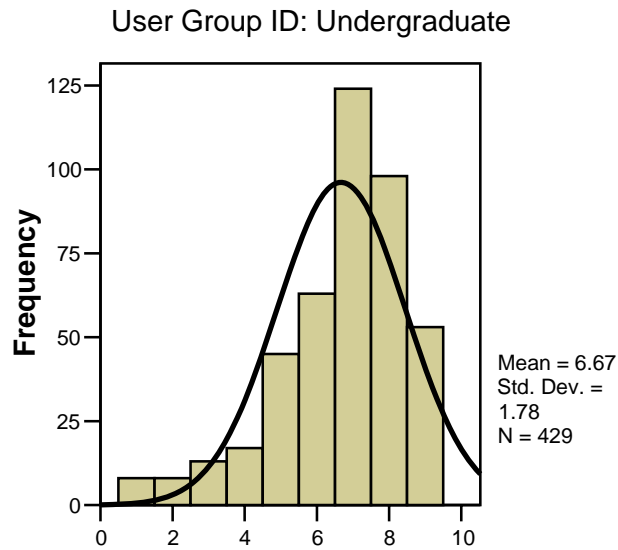


Figure 26: Undergraduate student response: *The library enables me to be more efficient in my academic pursuits.*

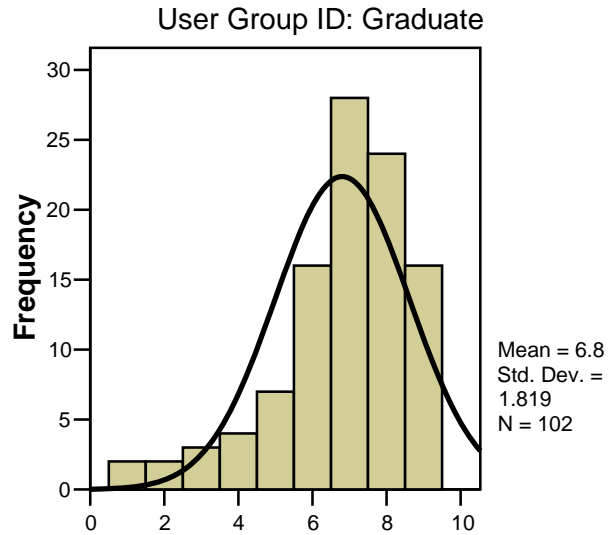


Figure 27: Graduate student response: *The library enables me to be more efficient in my academic pursuits.*

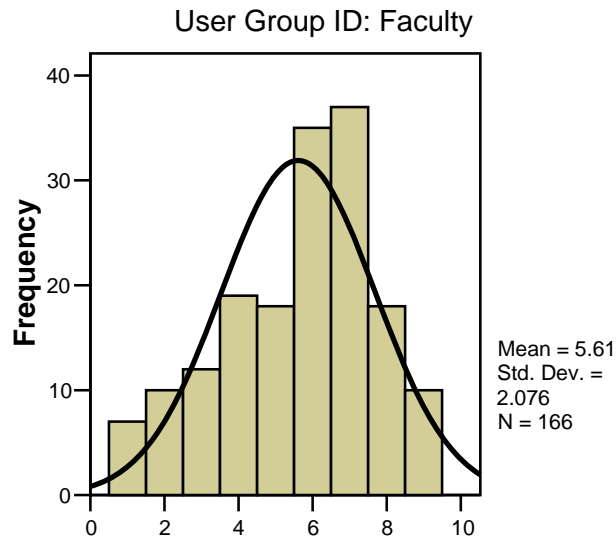


Figure 28: Faculty response: *The library enables me to be more efficient in my academic pursuits.*

- *“The library helps me distinguish between trustworthy and untrustworthy information.”*

Question	Undergraduates (N=429)	Graduate Students (N=102)	Faculty (N=166)
<i>The library helps me distinguish between trustworthy and untrustworthy information.</i>	Mean = 6.07 (s.d.= 1.80) Median = 6.0 Mode = 7	Mean = 5.77 (s.d.= 1.93) Median = 6.0 Mode = 6	Mean = 4.87 (s.d.= 2.25) Median = 5.0 Mode = 5

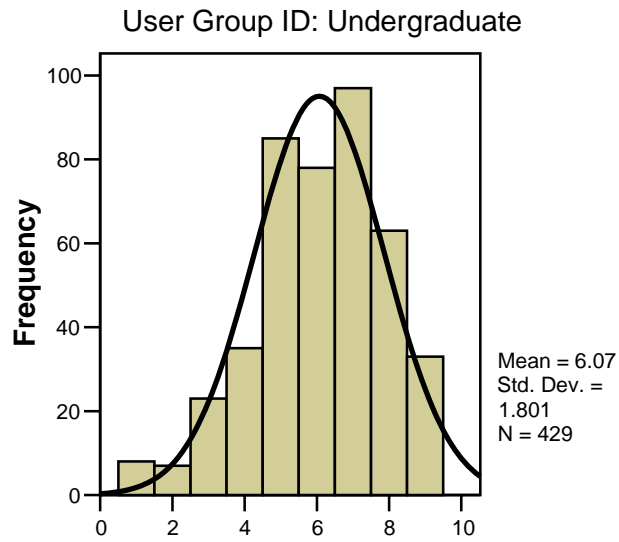


Figure 29: Undergraduate student response: *The library helps me distinguish between trustworthy and untrustworthy information.*

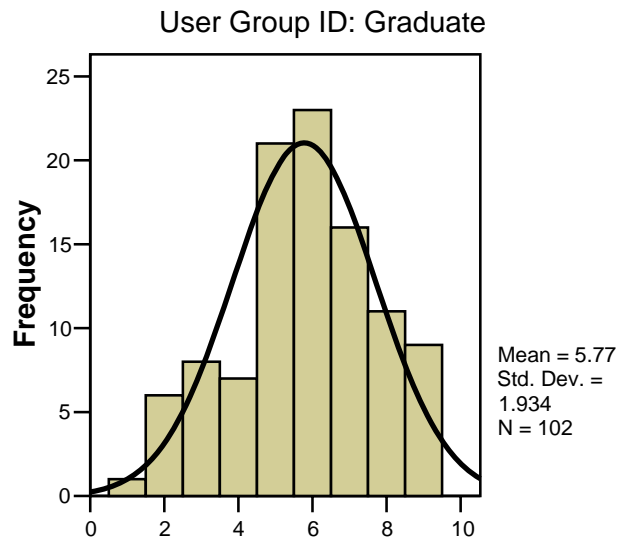


Figure 30: Graduate student response: *The library helps me distinguish between trustworthy and untrustworthy information.*

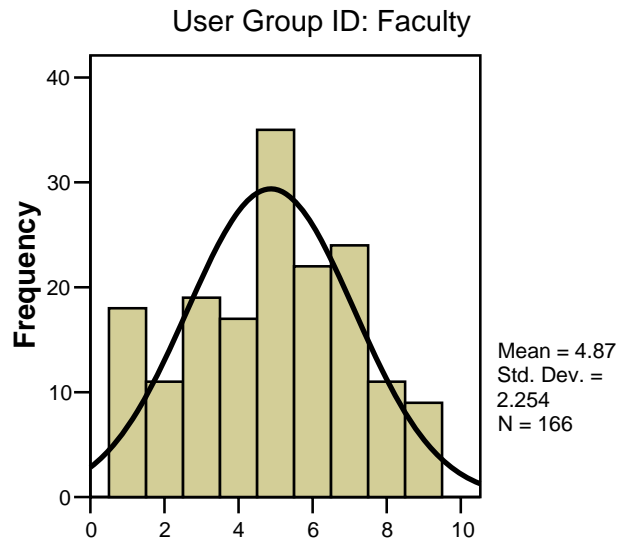


Figure 31: Faculty response: *The library helps me distinguish between trustworthy and untrustworthy information.*

- ***“The library provides me with the information skills I need in my work or study.”***

Question	Undergraduates (N=429)	Graduate Students (N=102)	Faculty (N=166)
<i>The library provides me with the information skills I need in my work or study.</i>	Mean = 6.22 (s.d.= 1.76) Median = 6 Mode = 7	Mean = 6.25 (s.d.= 1.94) Median = 6.50 Mode = 7	Mean = 5.20 (s.d.= 2.17) Median = 5.0 Mode = 7

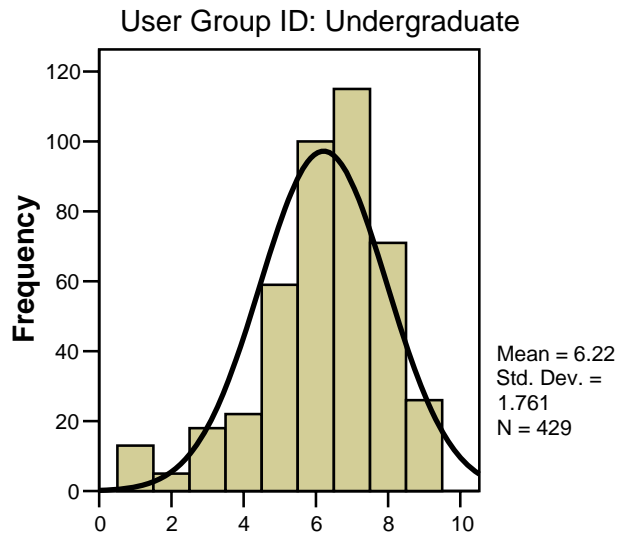


Figure 32: Undergraduate student response: *The library provides me with the information skills I need in my work or study.*

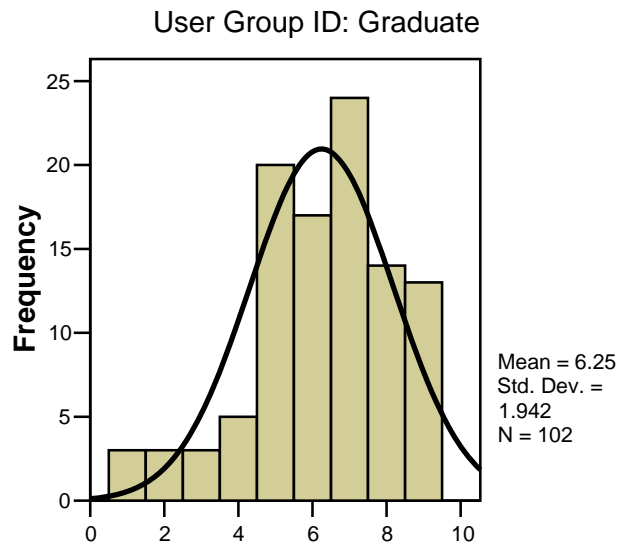


Figure 33: Graduate student response: *The library provides me with the information skills I need in my work or study.*

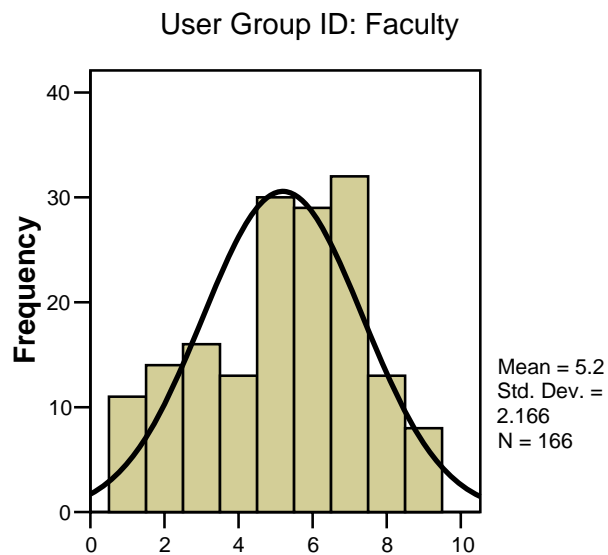


Figure 34: Faculty response: *The library provides me with the information skills I need in my work or study.*

Promotion and Awareness of Library Services

In an attempt to measure expectations for making users aware of library developments, the statement, “*Library keeping me informed about all of its services*” was asked. Figure 35 summarizes the responses to this statement.

The one-way analysis of variance demonstrated that there were significant differences among the three means for **Minimum** ($F(2, 670) = 6.904, p = .001$) and **Perceived** ($F(2, 670) = 4.928, p = .008$) responses as well as the mean **Adequacy gap** ($F(2, 670) = 6.293, p = .002$). There were no significant difference among the groups for **Desired** response.

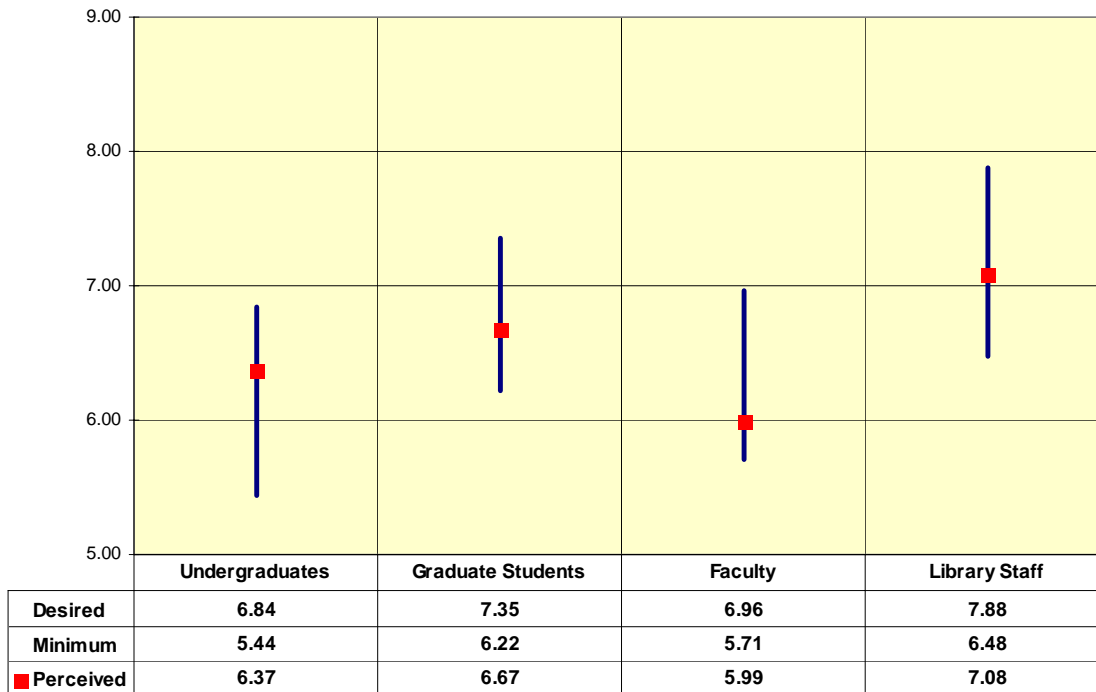


Figure 35: “Library keeping me informed about all of its services”: Mean scores for Minimum, Desired, Perceived levels of service

Further investigation of these differences using contrast testing revealed significant differences among the means for the **Minimum** level of service response between undergraduate and graduate students ($t(670) = 3.652, p < 0.001$) and between graduate students and faculty ($t(670) = 2.097, p = 0.036$). Means were also significantly different in the **Perceived** response between undergraduates and faculty ($t(670) = 2.284, p = 0.023$), and between graduate students and faculty ($t(670) = 3.033, p = 0.003$). Significant difference was also found between the means for **Adequacy** between undergraduates and graduate students ($t(670) = 2.029, p = 0.043$), and between undergraduates and faculty ($t(670) = 3.298, p = 0.001$). (See Appendix H)

Document delivery and interlibrary loan services.

To determine expectations for service with respect to interlibrary loan and document delivery, users were asked to respond to the statement, “*Timely document delivery / interlibrary loan.*” Figure 36 summarizes the responses to this statement.

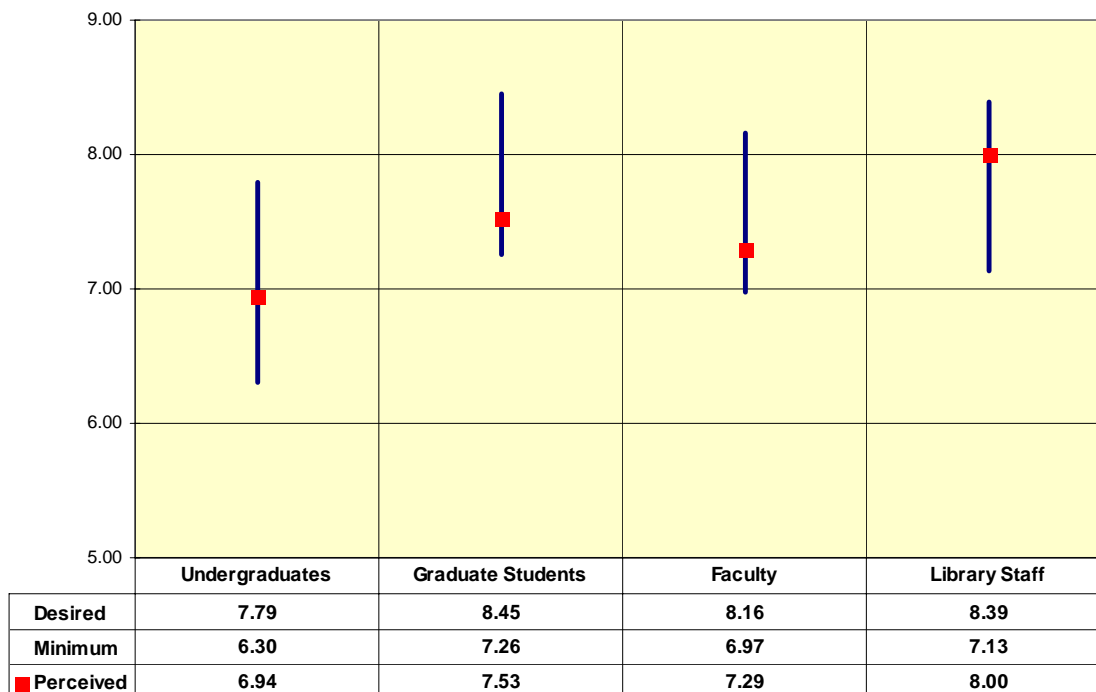


Figure 36: “Timely document delivery/interlibrary loan”: Mean scores for Minimum, Desired, Perceived levels of service

The test for homogeneity showed that there was heterogeneity of variance in the responses for **Minimum**, **Desired** and **Perceived** expectations. As a result, a more stringent test for significance ($\alpha = .01$) was used for the ANOVAs in this area. Significance was indeed achieved when analyses were run for all three categories of response: **Minimum** levels of service ($F(2, 499) = 13.758, p < 0.001$), **Desired** levels of service ($F(2, 499) = 8.509, p < 0.001$) and **Perceived** levels of service ($F(2, 499) = 5.399, p = 0.005$). There was no significant difference found with respect to the mean **Adequacy** scores.

The contrast testing revealed the difference in means was between undergraduate students and graduate students in all three categories of response: the **Minimum** response ($t(193.042) = 5.023, p < .001$), **Desired** response ($t(272.902) = 4.997, p < .001$), and **Perceived** response ($t(233.630) = 3.644, p < .001$). (See Appendix I)

General Satisfaction

The final category of response was with respect to general satisfaction where respondents rated their levels of general satisfaction with respect to treatment, support and overall satisfaction on a scale of 1 (strong agree) to 9 (strongly disagree).

- *In general, I am satisfied with the way in which I am treated at the Library.*

Question	Undergraduates (N=429)	Graduate Students (N=102)	Faculty (N=166)
<i>In general, I am satisfied with the way in which I am treated at the library.</i>	Mean = 7.20 (s.d.=1.54) Median=7 Mode = 8	Mean = 7.59 (s.d. 1.54) Median=8 Mode = 8	Mean = 7.00 (s.d.=1.88) Median=7 Mode = 8

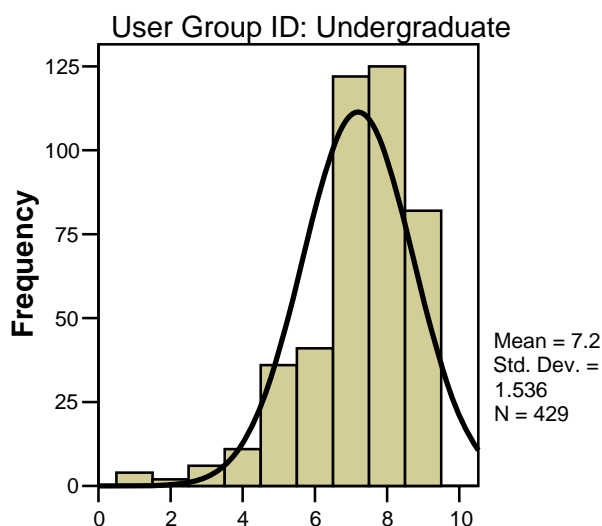


Figure 37: Undergraduate student response: *In general, I am satisfied with the way in which I am treated at the library.*

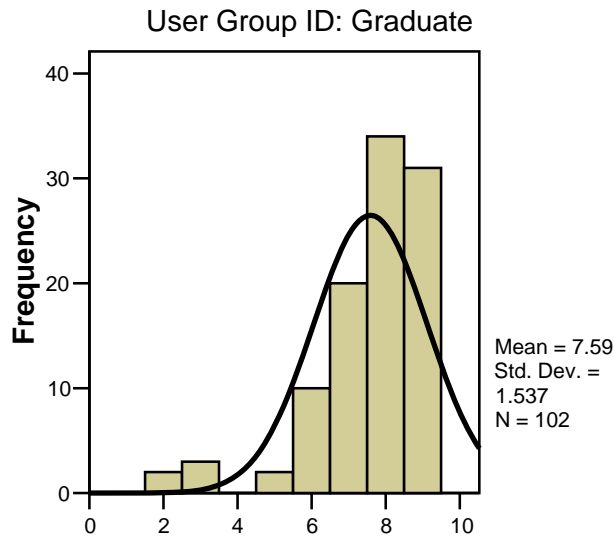


Figure 38: Graduate student response: *In general, I am satisfied with the way in which I am treated at the library.*

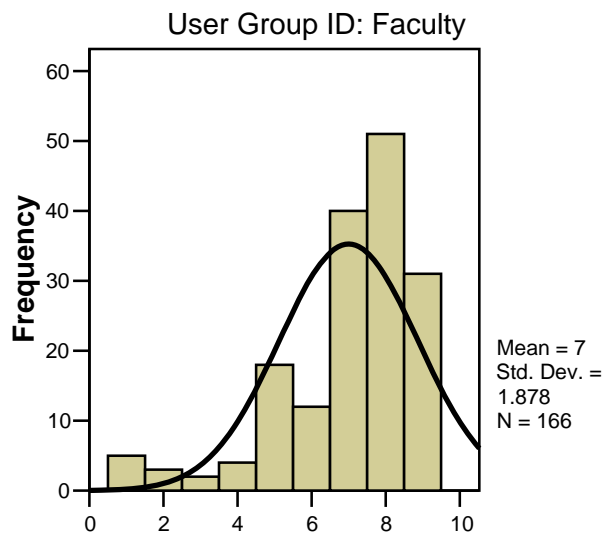


Figure 39: Faculty response: *In general, I am satisfied with the way in which I am treated at the library.*

- *In general, I am satisfied with library support for my learning, research and/or teaching needs.*

Question	Undergraduates (N=429)	Graduate Students (N=102)	Faculty (N=166)
<i>In general, I am satisfied with library support for my learning, research, and/or teaching needs.</i>	Mean = 6.71 (s.d.=1.69) Median = 7 Mode = 7	Mean = 6.85 (s.d.=1.95) Median = 7 Mode = 8	Mean = 5.52 (s.d.=2.16) Median = 6 Mode = 5

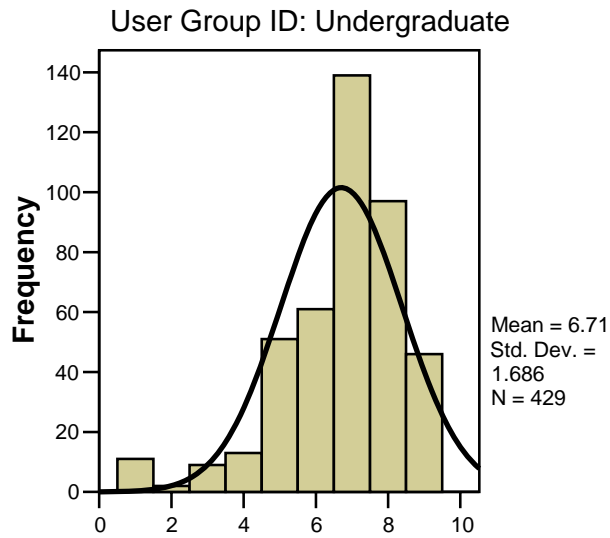


Figure 40: Undergraduate student response: *In general, I am satisfied with library support for my learning, research, and/or teaching needs.*

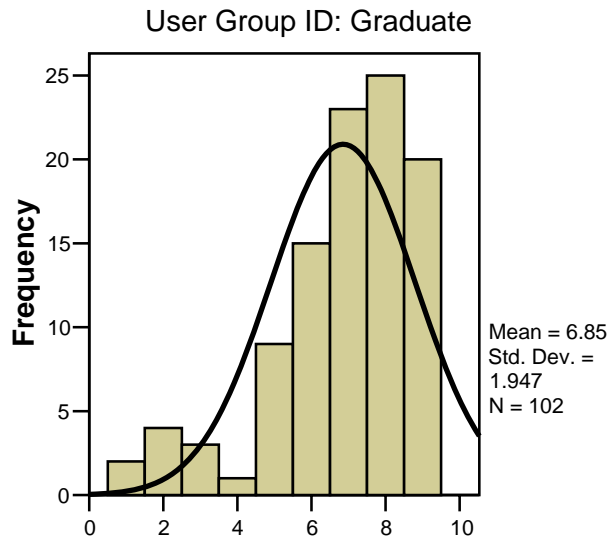


Figure 41: Graduate student response: *In general, I am satisfied with library support for my learning, research, and/or teaching needs.*

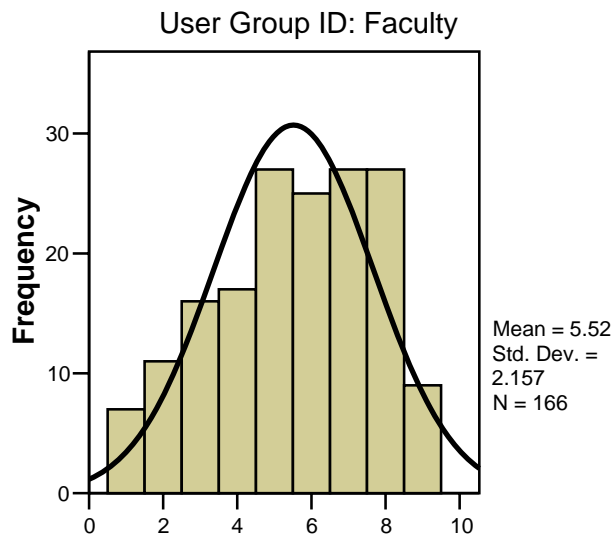


Figure 42: Faculty response: *In general, I am satisfied with library support for my learning, research, and/or teaching needs.*

- *How would you rate the overall quality of the service provided by the library?*

Question	Undergraduates (N=429)	Graduate Students (N=102)	Faculty (N=166)
<i>How would you rate the overall quality of the service provided by the library?</i>	Mean = 6.99 (s.d.=1.38) Median = 7 Mode = 7	Mean = 7.11 (s.d.=1.40) Median = 7 Mode = 7	Mean = 6.31 (s.d.=1.76) Median = 7 Mode = 7

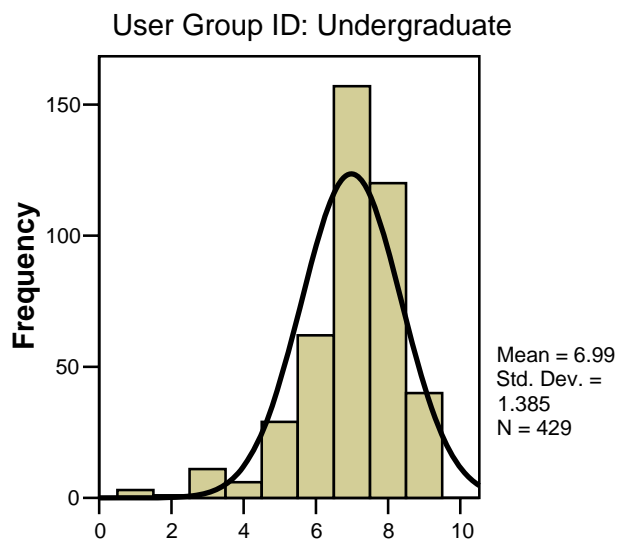


Figure 43: Undergraduate student response: *How would you rate the overall quality of the service provided by the library?*

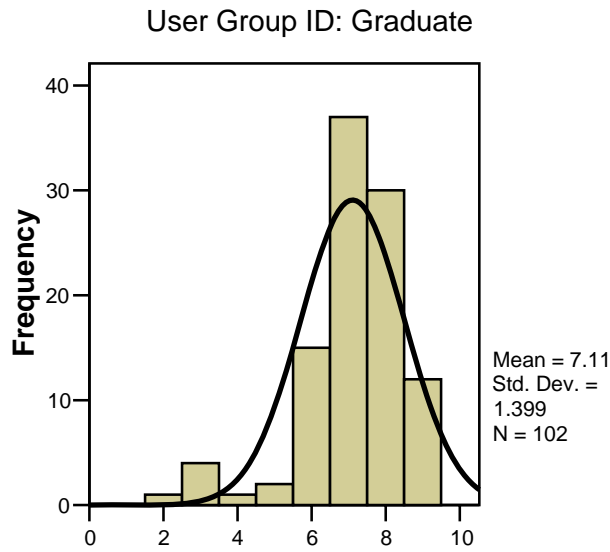


Figure 44: Graduate student response: *How would you rate the overall quality of the service provided by the library?*

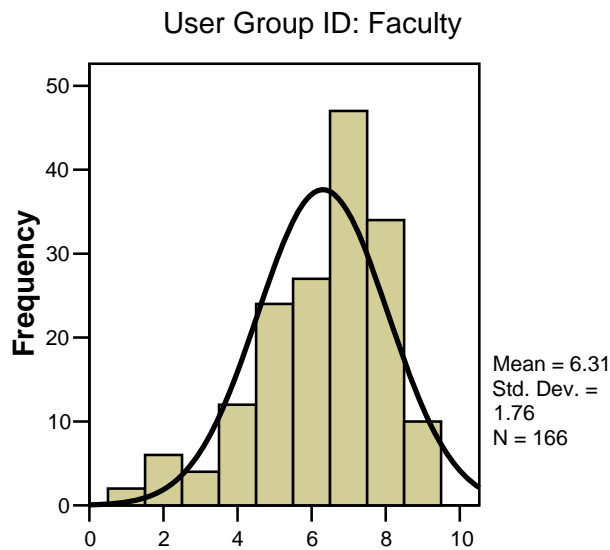


Figure 45: Faculty response: *How would you rate the overall quality of the service provided by the library?*

Library Use

One final set of questions were included in the LibQUAL+™ survey to ascertain users' user of the library, the library website, and the use of non-library gateways, such as Google™ or Yahoo™. While the responses provide some indication of how users access information, it is difficult to know if the frequencies are as discrete as might be preferred. For example, it is possible that a user might opt to jump to, for example, Google™ from the library web site while using a computer located in the Library. How would one respond in this situation?

- *How often do you use resources on library premises?*

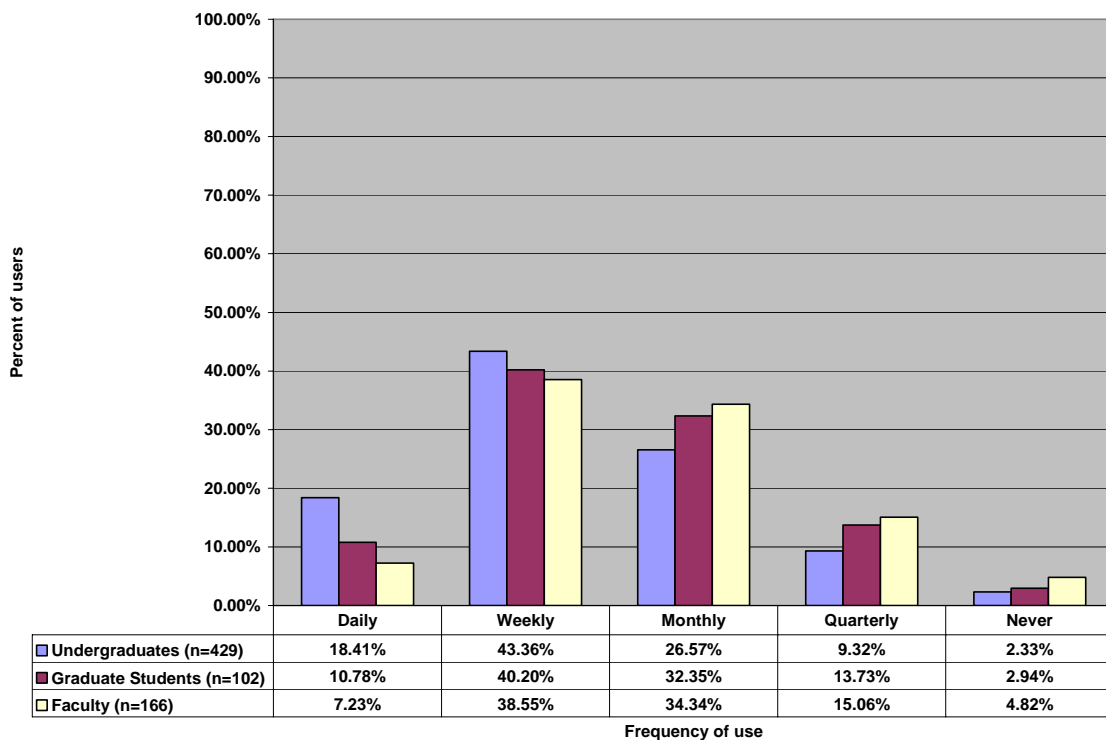
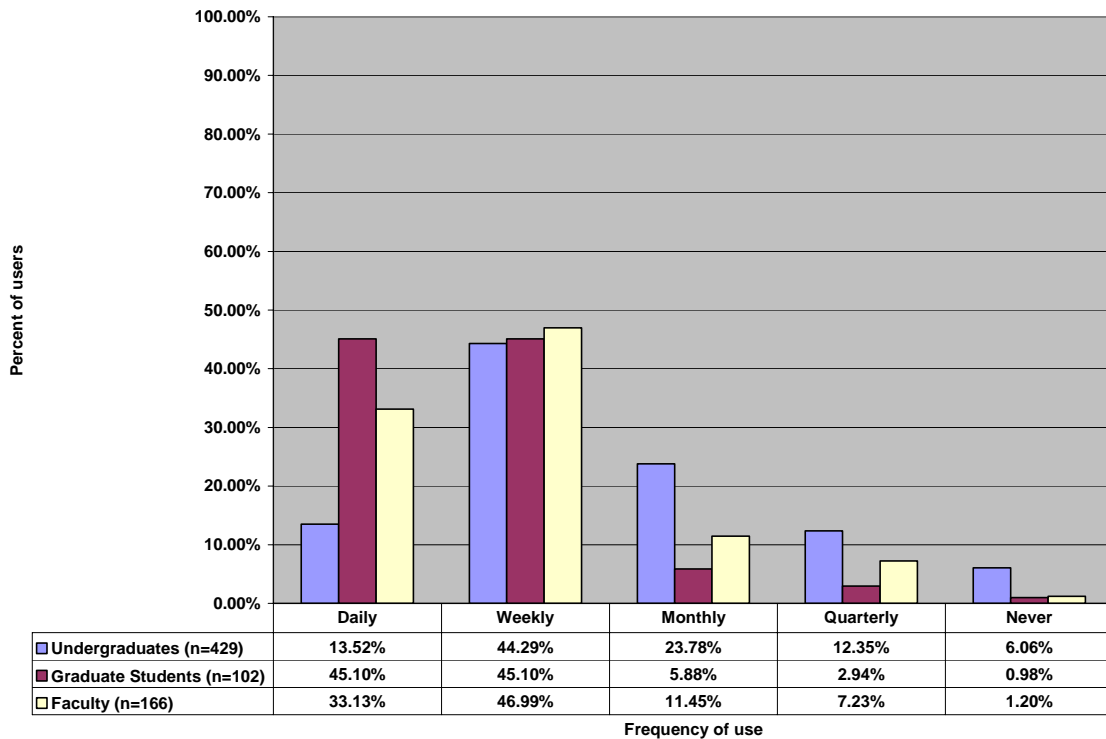


Figure 46: *How often do you use resources on library premises?* Percentage of users per frequency

Undergraduates are the most frequent users of the Library onsite with 61.8% of undergraduate respondents indicating they use the Library onsite either daily or weekly. This is contrasted with graduate students where approximately 51% of the respondents use the Library onsite either daily or weekly while faculty are the least frequent of the academic users to use the Library onsite with approximately 46% of faculty respondents indicating the visit the Library either daily or weekly.

How often do you access library resources through a library Web page?



**Figure 47: *How often do you access library resources through a library Web page?*
Percentage of users per frequency**

Graduate students appear to be the most frequent users of the Library web site with over 90% of the graduate student respondents indicating that they access library resources in this manner on either a daily or weekly basis. Approximately 80% of faculty respondents indicated they accessed resources through the Library’s web site while approximately 58% of undergraduate student respondents indicated their frequency of use as either daily or weekly.

How often do you use Yahoo™, Google™, or non-library gateways for information?

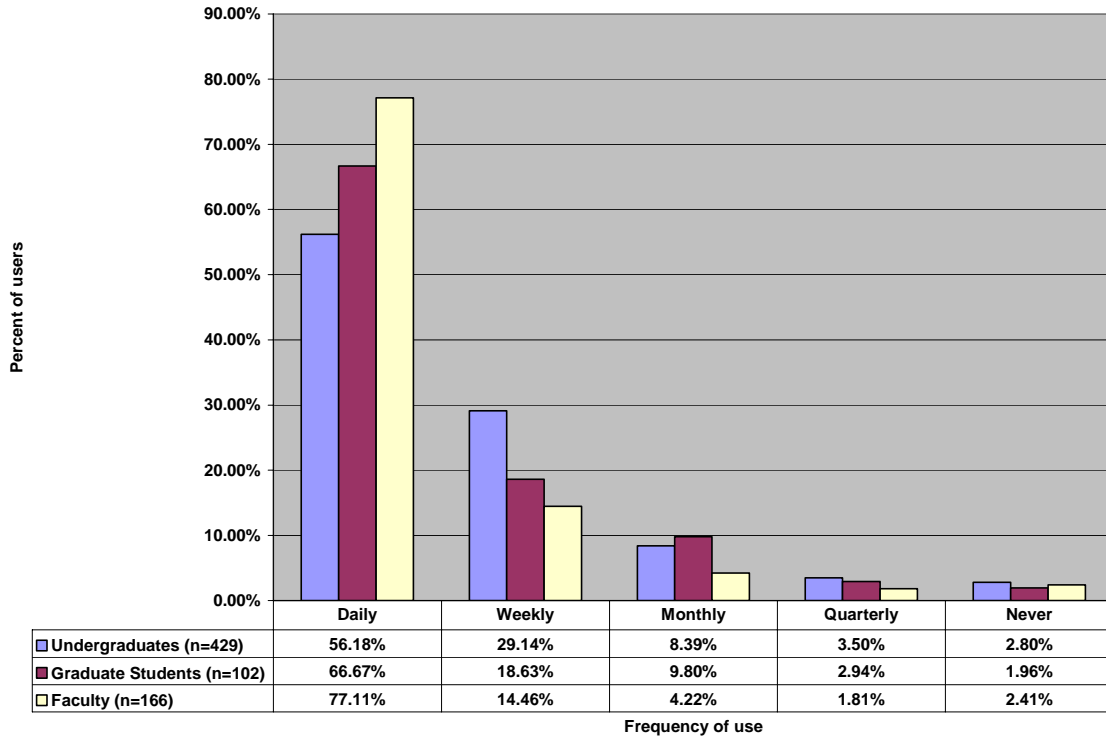


Figure 48: *How often do you use Yahoo™, Google™, or non-library gateways for information? Percentage of users per frequency*

One might have expected undergraduate students to be the biggest users of non-library gateways when seeking information resources. Interestingly, faculty proved to be the biggest users of this form of access with approximately 92% of faculty respondents indicating they use generic search engines and other non-library gateways when seeking information. Meanwhile, 85.32% of undergraduate and 85.3% of graduate student respondents indicated use of this form of access on a daily or weekly basis.

Comparisons were also done by user group comparing how frequently they used the various resources suggested. The pattern of access was replicated across all user groups.

- **By user group, Undergraduates**

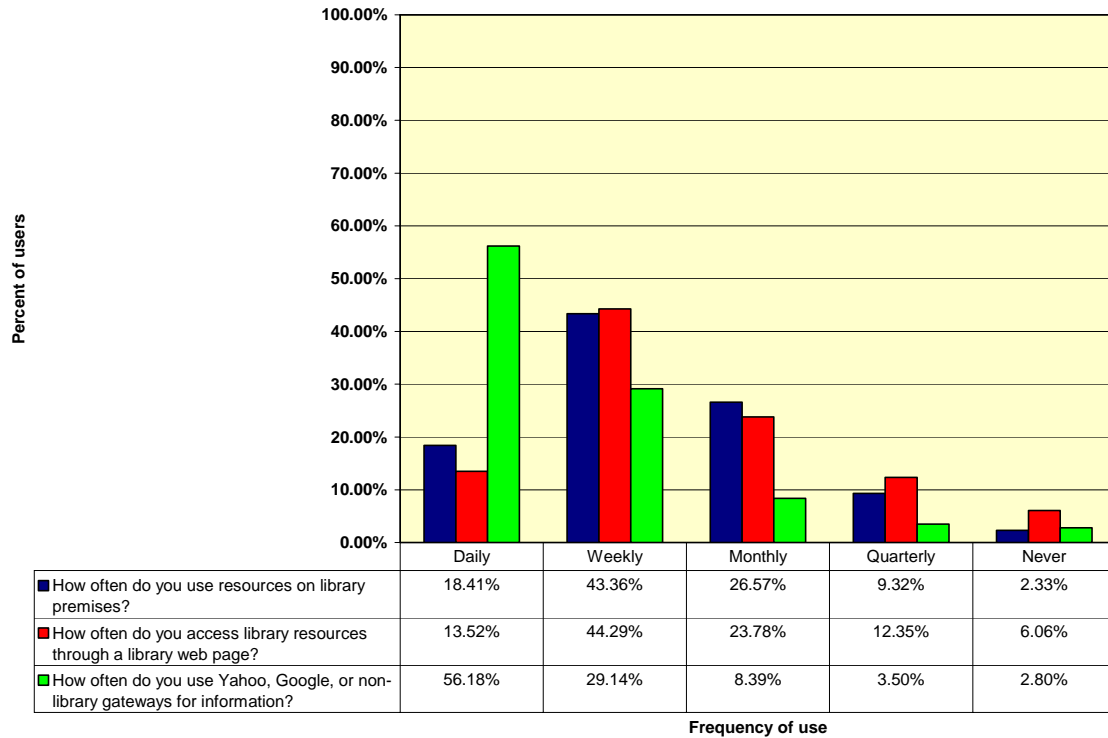


Figure 49: Library use Summary for Undergraduate students

Examined in this way, it is clear that non-library gateways are the most frequently used form of access by undergraduate students with 85.32% of undergraduate respondents indicating a daily or weekly use of this form of access. Meanwhile, approximately 62% of undergraduate students indicate a daily or weekly use of the library onsite with approximately 58% of the respondents indicating daily or weekly use of the library website as a means of access.

By user group, Graduate students

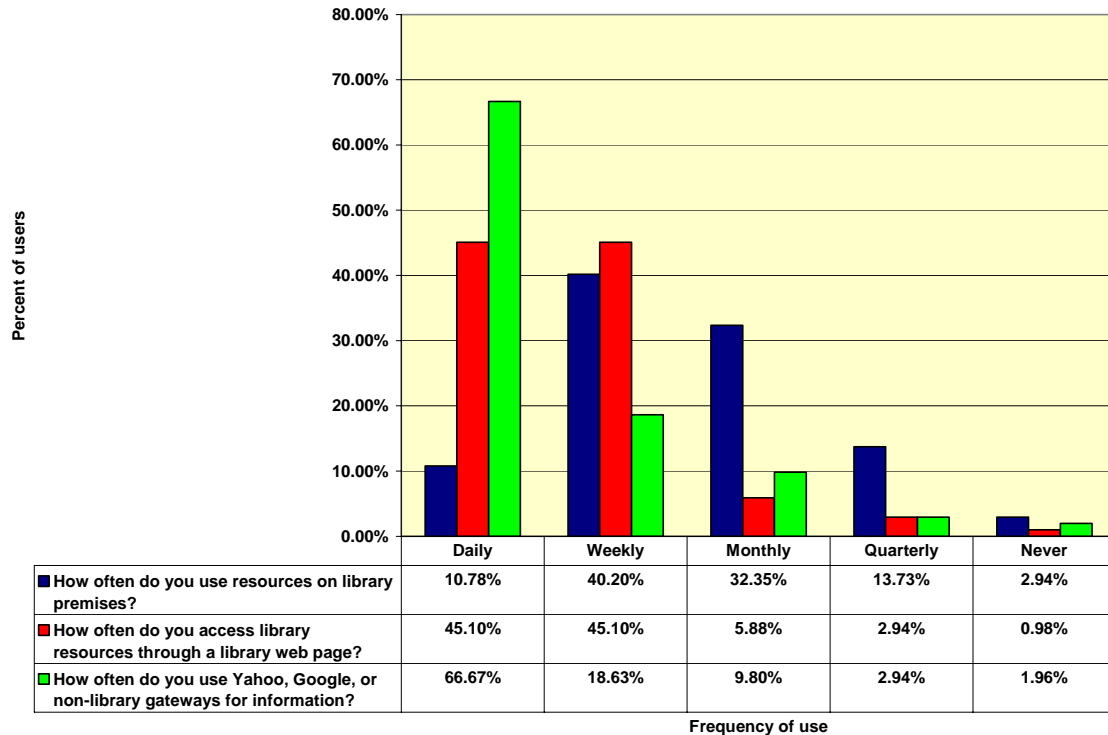


Figure 50: Library use Summary for Graduate students

90% of graduate respondents use the library web site on a daily or weekly basis to search for information. This is followed by the use of non-library gateways as indicated by 85.3% of graduate respondents who indicated daily or weekly use of this form of access while only 51% of the graduate respondents indicated daily or weekly use of the library onsite.

- **By user group, Faculty**

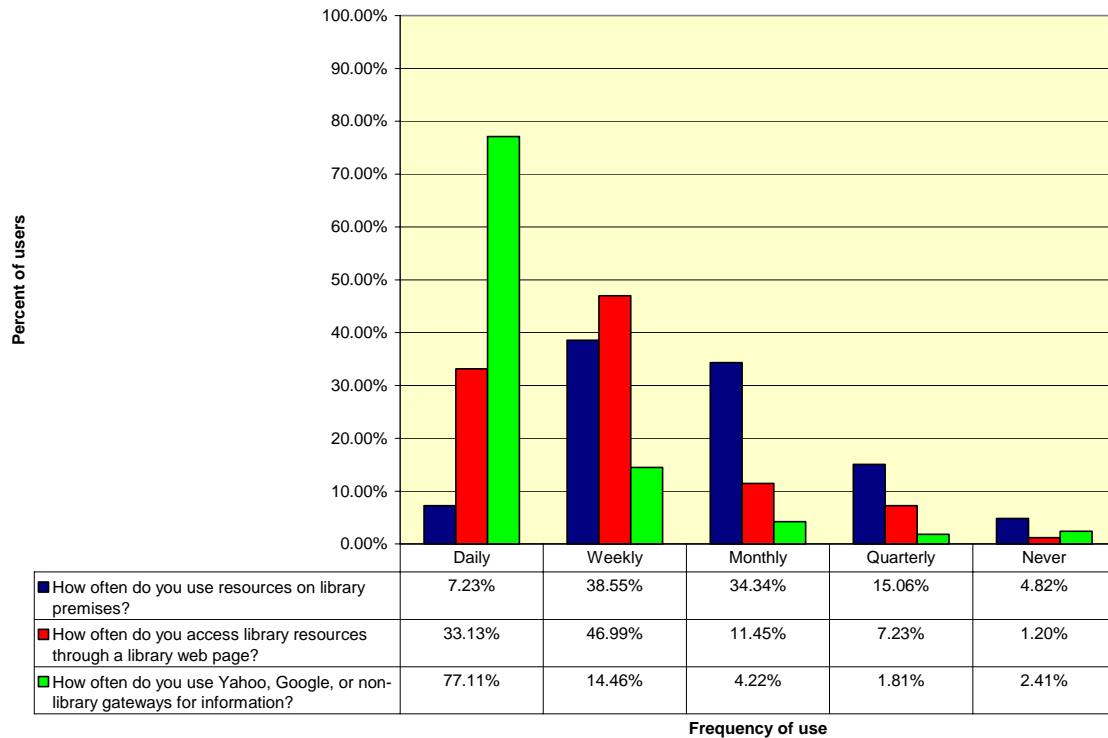


Figure 51: Library use Summary for Faculty

Approximately 92% of faculty respondents access information using non-library gateways on a daily or weekly basis while approximately 80% of the respondents use the library website on a daily or weekly basis. Only about 46% of faculty respondents access information resources on site in the library on a daily or weekly basis. However, this more frequent use of the library is perhaps impeded by workload issues or other such events since an additional 34.34% of faculty respondents indicated they visited the library at least on a monthly basis.

Comments

A total of 410 respondents chose to supplement their survey response with comments. While there was much praise for the library facility the major concerns seemed to be around noise and around hours of operation.

There was also much praise for the Library staff, the most frequent positive comment relating to their helpfulness. However, respondents did express concern about staff attitudes, knowledge and competency, loudness, and sensitivity to user needs.

Those respondents commenting about the Library's collection expressed concerns about the currency, breadth, and depth of the available collection. Most offered stated a preference for electronic delivery, especially for journals, and many felt that interlibrary loan was an excellent service but they had to depend on it too often to support their research and learning.

Comparisons to other libraries

One benefit of participating in LibQUAL+™ is the ability to benchmark one library against a peer group of libraries. Of course, this is contingent on there being libraries of similar mandate and size against which to compare and any participating library does not know what other libraries will be participating before they sign up for their own survey run.

In seeking a comparable libraries, the we looked for the following characteristics:

- e. Canadian libraries
- f. Comparable size
- g. Comparable institutional mandate

Unfortunately, there were no libraries against which the University of Lethbridge could legitimately compare their results. The closest match was the University College of the Fraser Valley in British Columbia. However the educational mandate of this institution is more technically focused compared to the University of Lethbridge's liberal education focus so benchmarking against this institution was not pursued.

Selective comparisons of our results were made to the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta taking into consideration that these sister institutions were not part of the 2005 LibQUAL+™ survey run. As well, both of these library systems are part of the Canadian Association of Research Libraries, a group for which the University of Lethbridge does not qualify on the basis of size.

Part 2: “We’re Listening ... Talk to Us!” (August to November 2005)

Ethical Review

On the advice of the Acting Chair of the Human Subjects Research Committee, this portion of the project was submitted for review to the Human Subjects Research Committee. Approval to proceed was forthcoming on 2005 September 06.

Methodology

Questions

Based on the aggregated results notebook, three topics were identified for further followup:

- Quality of and access to information resources
- Services provided directly by staff
- Noise in the Library.

Framework for project

An invitation to participate was publicized from mid-September to October 6. (See Appendix J) The publicity took many forms including:

- a link to the invitation from an icon on the Library website,
- a notice on the University’s Notice Board,
- direct email using established University mailing lists for faculty, graduate students and undergraduates
- a notice in *The Legend*
- a notice in *The Melorist*
- screensavers both in the Library and around the campus
- posters in the Library
- word of mouth

Those indicating an interest in participating were asked to indicate all the ways they had learned about this project. Direct mail was referenced by the majority of applicants.

An incentive to participate was offered. The incentive prize was a chance to win one of 6 sets of four \$5 food vouchers (total value of \$20 per set) good at the food vendors in the Students Union building.

The application to participate was online. (See Appendix K) In addition to their name, email address and relevant demographic data, applicants were also asked to indicate rank the issues with respect to interest and to indicate using a menu of pre-arranged timeslots which ones worked with their schedule. As applicants submitted their form, the data submitted was captured into an access database and exported into Excel to facilitate formation of the groups.

There were a total of 79 applications. Applicants were separated into their respective user group constituencies: 11 faculty members, 10 graduate students, and 58 undergraduate students. Faculty and graduate students were grouped together for the purposes of the focus groups. Groups were formed using the user group constituency as a basis. Then primary interests were considered. Finally groups “coagulated” around enough people with a given interest in a given timeslot. Some negotiation with applicants took place, either asking if they could adjust their schedule to accommodate a different timeslot given their primary interest or, failing that, if they were interested in joining a focus group on their secondary interest that worked with their schedule. In the end all applicants were contacted as arrangements for the focus groups were made.

A total of 65 invitations to specific focus groups were sent out. 48 recipients responded: 40 affirmative and 8 negative. In the end, 32 participants (6 faculty, 4 graduate students and 22 undergraduate students) formed a total of 8 focus groups: 4 on collections (2 faculty/graduate student ones and 2 undergraduate student ones), 2 undergraduate focus groups on service and 2 undergraduate focus groups on noise in the Library.

The task of moderating was divided between L. Jacobs, LibQUAL+™ Project Librarian and S. Greidanus, LibQUAL+™ Research Assistant with Ms. Greidanus moderating all but one of the undergraduate focus groups.

Two specific questions were posed as the basis for discussion:

- what are the specific concerns about this topic that you feel the Library should be aware of?
- what suggestions would you make to the Library with respect to addressing these concerns?

Analysis

All focus group sessions were recorded and notes were taken on the discussion. Time prevented a full transcription of the recordings. However, all field notes and recordings were reviewed independently by the Project Librarian and the Research Assistant and

summarized independently. These independent summaries were then reconciled through discussion.

All participants were invited to a “What we heard” meeting on 2005 October 31. A summary of the results was presented for validation by all focus group participants. This meeting offered further insight and cross-commentary about the summary results which further enriched the data gathered.

The results of the validation meeting were then presented to Library staff on 2005 November 3. Library staff present (~20) counted off to form five groups. Each group was given a set of summary results pertaining to one of the following five issues:

- Intellectual access to information resources
- Physical access to information resources
- Quality of information information
- Services provided directly by staff
- Noise in the Library

Each group was asked to review the summary results of the focus groups by reflecting on the following questions:

- With respect to the specific concerns identified by participants:
 - What is going on here?
 - What have we learned from our users?
 - Do the experiences of the users mesh with our own view of this same topic? If not, why not?
 - What does this mean in terms of how we respond?
- With respect to the specific suggestions proposed by participants to address these concerns:
 - Are the suggestions ones that we can adopt or adapt? If so, what do we need to do to? What are the next steps?
 - Do we want to offer a different response? If so, what might that response be?

The staff groups were asked to report on their reflection to the larger audience. This generated much discussion and brainstorming.

The staff discussion for each topic was then summarized and the staff participating in each group was asked to confirm that the summary reflected their group’s discussion. These summaries then became part of the results as well.

Results: User Concerns and Suggestions, Library Staff Reflections

Findings from each of the focus group topics are summarized below. A summary of the Library staff's response is also included after each topic.

Quality of and access to information resources

Two different perspectives on collections were offered, one by Faculty and Graduate students combined (i.e., a total of six faculty and four graduate students) and the other by undergraduate students (i.e., total of nine). As well, aspects of this topic came up in the focus groups on “service provided directly by staff”, especially as these particular discussions wandered into the territory of learning to use the library.

Faculty spoke to the issue of collections in terms of their perceptions of and concerns for student access and in terms of supporting their research. Graduate students drew on their experiences as undergraduate students at the University of Lethbridge as well as on their current experiences using the collection as graduate students. Undergraduate students spoke for themselves and their undergraduate peers.

The general consensus of those choosing to discuss the topic of collections was that, for them, collection—having one and being able to access it—is the most important attribute of the library.

On the specific topic of access, two threads emerged: intellectual access or “how to use the library” and physical access (e.g., circulation policies, etc.).

a. Intellectual Access

What we heard

Concern was expressed about the quality of information being used by students which suggests that they do not know what kinds of information exist, how to access this information or how to properly use a library for their research.

“... it is my belief that our students really don't know (my undergraduate students) don't really know how to use an academic library. Some of them, to my surprise, are really rather intimidated by it. They don't see this as—learning how to use an academic library— as being [an] integral part of the whole undergraduate education ... and it is certainly obvious from their essay proposals that they really haven't been using the library very much ...” (Faculty member)

There was the opinion that students simply don't access what is available to them locally.

"...the student access issue is that they don't access, it is not that it isn't here. ... I don't think I have ever had a situation where I've had books that I desired that weren't here or references that were necessary that students couldn't get. It's that they didn't get them. ... I mean I have never yet accepted an excuse from a student which is "I can't get access". I consider that to be a cop-out. If you are ready to go, geared up, organized you can get access from this library." (Faculty member)

This issue is exacerbated by the students' lack of understanding about fundamental steps in research and by the "era of instant gratification" where it is perceived by faculty that students don't want to work at working to find information. It was also noted that in some areas that students seem to be simply choosing the wrong databases to conduct their searches.

To complicate matters, some areas of research are becoming increasingly more interdisciplinary. In addition, there is increased reliance on "gray literature" (e.g., reports, promotional literature, etc.) in other research areas. It was noted that there are inherent challenges in searching interdisciplinary topics. This applies as well to searching the Web for "gray literature". It was recognized that strategies for teaching these kinds of information seeking need to be developed and implemented.

Special mention was made of difficulties encountered by students who are either transfer students to or exchange students in upper undergraduate level courses. Students coming up through the local system know the library and are likely to have had some introduction to using it. Exchange students or students transferring into the University do not have this background which results in an uneven playing field for the students in a given program and impedes their progress. It was recognized that some strategies need to be developed to address this situation.

The Web came up as a special challenge as it is recognized that students are turning more and more to the Web as a source of information. There were concerns by faculty and some students alike about the reliability of the information available via the Web and the need for students to become more discriminate in its use. Perhaps in reaction, it was noted by students that professors are specifically stating that the Internet may not be used for their research causing some students to confess that they "sneak" their resources off the net by not including the URL in the corresponding citation.

While lamenting these issues and reflecting on their own experience, one faculty member did acknowledge:

"...maybe you're right maybe the students are just – I don't know -- I don't think it is a factor of the times but those of us that are where we are sitting now, we're the geeks – that's fairly obvious so – our strategies may not represent the whole – they probably didn't represent the whole 10-15-20 years ago either – I'm just taking a wild guess" (Faculty member)

It was recognized that the responsibility for addressing these issues rests with both the faculty and the librarians. It was recognized that Faculty have to provide opportunities in the first and second year level courses in order to establish the patterns of research required by the students in their upper undergraduate classes:

"... don't get them in the door at first year, I don't know how you convince them to walk through the door in fourth year because they have already established a pattern of not coming to the library in order to do some of their quote-unquote work" (Faculty member)

However, it was noted that assigning term papers and other writing assignments becomes problematic and impractical as class sizes increase. One suggestion to this problem was to use library assignments, designed to introduce students to the library, to facilitate the discovery of major tools in a disciplinary area, and to expose the student to research in a given subject area.

While the faculty discussing this topic did not actually develop the role that the librarian might play in addressing issues of intellectual access, they did comment on the benefit of having a subject librarian to refer students to:

"... having a subject librarian is a rare luxury. ... So here we got, I mean I send people to our subject librarian all the time – "well go and see your subject librarian" – that's a rare luxury that the UofL's got. You know, if we ever lost that, it would be a real tragedy." (Faculty member)

Meanwhile, students, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels, commented on the benefit of integrating the subject librarians into classes both as a way of introducing students to the potential of the library:

"I don't know if this is common to intro classes cause I didn't do my intro stuff here but I did take my intro to XXX this summer and XXX librarian came out for one – part of one class. And she was awesome. Like I think I learned more about the library from her presentation than I had on my own just stumbling around last year looking for stuff. She was very helpful." (Undergraduate student)

and introducing them to their subject librarian:

“... our librarian was really good cause she showed us where our discipline stuff is commonly found and, like, her contact info. It was nice to feel like you had one point of contact in the library ‘cause often, you know, you go in there and go to the information desk and you’re just like “whose available?” I feel like I have a really big project, I can just call her up and, like, “can we set up an appointment?” and you have your personal guide to resources.” (Undergraduate student)

In addition, during the validation meeting with participants, one student specifically mentioned the benefit she had derived academically from taking Library Science 2000.

There was a general consensus from the faculty and graduate students discussing this that tours, in particular, didn’t work to facilitate student understanding of the library or how to do research on a topic. However, undergraduate students felt that tours were all that were required to learn how to use the library and if you missed the opportunity to take a tour, then you missed out on your research. They felt that class-organized tours were especially helpful. There was the suggestion that tours should be made mandatory for all entering students (although it was recognized this might be hard to organize). In addition, it was suggested that perhaps right at the beginning of semester might not be the best time for the Library to conduct tours since there is so much going on at that time. The students noted that, as it currently stands, most of them have to be self-motivated to sign up for a tour so most students likely would not sign up. However, these same students felt that if the tours were held later in the semester and/or provided weekend and evening options and/or were more focused on orienting the students to the appropriate resources for researching their term papers, there would be more opportunity and motivation for students to partake of the tours.

The Library Staff Reflect:

The concerns expressed regarding intellectual access to the collection are shared by the Library. The take-away message seems to be that we need to increase awareness of the issue and of our role in addressing the issue. To date, the Library has focused on developing information literacy content¹ but has spent very little time on creating awareness of this program or on the advantages of using the library. There seems to be a huge need to educate the University community, especially faculty, about this service in order to make both faculty and students aware of what is available and to engage students who might otherwise never enter the Library or who use it only as study space. This suggests

¹ Students learn how to define their information needs, develop effective research strategies, use various types of information tools effectively, critically evaluate the information and apply the information appropriately.

that we need to reach out to faculty and work more closely with them on this issue and reach out to students to alert them to the possibilities that already exist.

On the topic of tours, there was respect for the suggestion that additional tours might be scheduled for later in the semester since there is a lot happening at the start of the semester. There is merit in offering tours when they are more relevant to the students' course work. Later tours might be more targeted to the research process and we might consider offering "Lunch & Learns" when the students need assistance in their research. There was the reminder of the TPCs (term paper counseling) that we discontinued a few years ago.

There was recognition that we need to help people to help themselves. We need to increase awareness of the subject librarians as a resource for students and to encourage users to make better use of the subject librarians by encouraging appointments and/or holding office hours to address subject specific questions.

It is obvious our current ways of approaching this issue are not necessarily working. Variety is key to attracting the attention of students. We need to break out of our routines and find new ways of connecting with students. The point was made that if we offer the same "old" thing in the same "old" way at the same "old" time every year, users lose interest or think they have heard it all before.

b. Physical Access

What we heard.

The topic of physical access to the collection identified two issues of specific note generally described as "policies for access" and "hours of opening"

i. Policies for access

It was noted by faculty that this is one of the better libraries with respect to loan policies. Concern was raised, however, about the special loans policy and a user having to know who among library staff might be the best person with whom to negotiate a special loan. As a suggestion, the idea was raised whether, in fact, the non-circulating collections to which this policy applies should have their non-circulating status reconsidered for short term loans similar to those for journals.

The same concern regarding "who you know" was raised with respect to the policies around the interlibrary loan. It was also noted that there are inconsistencies in what is said (i.e., policy) and what is actually done (i.e., procedurally). It was noted that this was unfair to those people who did not know to ask for flexibility.

“I think you actually raised a very good point about the sort of hush-hush policies around interlibrary loans. For those of us who haven’t formed a relationship with a department librarian and who says, I know it says 50 per year but we can really accommodate you... so if we have a policy that states there’s 50 a year and you’ve been making your research decisions based on that policy ... I think that is a bit of an issue to have policy and practice not being remotely close and I think that’s a concern.” (Graduate Student)

There was also confusion about borrowing privileges for graduate students and questions raised about the consequences of exceeding one’s ILL quota. Users indicated their interest in being able to monitor the use of their ILL quota or to at least receive a statement of how many were used in the previous fiscal year.

The electronic courtesy notices (email reminders to return or renew library materials) received very special mention by faculty and students alike. This is a much appreciated service enhancement.

There was frustration about users who keep materials out for the full loan period even if they are not being used or when they are in high demand by classmates and a question about why the library could not facilitate quick returns of materials that are in demand by others. There was also frustration about why print journals do not circulate to undergraduate students and frustration that CDs do not circulate out to undergraduate students.

The Reserve Collection also came under scrutiny. Specific concerns mentioned included an inadequate number of copies of readings, problems with missing pages in the readings, pages of the reading out of order, readings in the wrong file. To remedy these problems, it was suggested that one copy be “read only” for those wanting to read and not photocopy the reading. It was also felt that loan periods are too short for those individuals who choose to read the reserve as opposed to copying it, especially for students whose first language was not English. It was also noted that for library materials placed on reserve, the access to the items are restricted for all borrowers, not just those affiliated with the course for which the materials are on reserve.

Interlibrary loan (ILL) was described as an excellent service but it was felt that most undergraduate students don’t really know about it and if they do know about it, they will not use it unless it is absolutely needed. The quotas were perceived to be problematic for users more dependent on the monographic literature (given that most journals are now accessible

electronically). As well, the presence of a quota forces users to have to discriminate unnecessarily on their requests since they may not know they can flex this limit by talking to the right people. It was felt that ILL request take too long to arrive and when they do arrive, the loan periods for ILL books are too short requiring the user to either photocopy whole books or to re-request the title so they have sufficient time to work with the material. Graduate students, in particular, were of the opinion that ILL was not a viable option to address their specific research needs because of the time the request takes to be filled and the amount of time the students have to use the resource before it must be returned. It was suggested that ILL be streamlined to improve delivery time including a way for users to check on the status of their ILL request so they had a better idea of when to expect it.

Electronic access is increasingly the format of preference (at least for journals) and the availability of the resource at the desktop is increasingly a factor in assessing the value of the resource (i.e., whether it is worth making the trip to the Library to get it). Mixed format journal runs (i.e., print, electronic and/or interlibrary loan requests) complicate the research process. Improvements in finding out what resources we have electronic access to were an especially appreciated service enhancement. It was noted that thickly bound journal volumes are hard to photocopy which makes them frustrating to use.

There is both confusion and frustrations when using systems to search for information. For example, there is confusion when users are bounced across systems while searching for information (e.g., from library catalogue to journal linker software). Frustration when there is no apparent way to search across libraries; it was suggested that links to the University of Alberta, University of Calgary and other ILL partner libraries be embedded directly into the library's catalogue. Frustration that there is no easy way to move from searching for books to searching for journals on a topic; it was suggested that links to the titles of related journals be embedded in the catalogue records for books. There is also frustration that develops when users use systems at other institutions that they perceive to be more comprehensive in content or are easier to use and provide more immediate access to resources than they have use of locally.

“at the University of Toronto, for example, they seem to have snuggled into bed with Google so they have the UofT Google page and you can make the UofT Google Scholar fit hand in glove with the UofT system so you that you go from Google to PDF fulltext like that [snap of fingers] almost and apparently we haven't gone that way either so ...” (Faculty member)

Physically, there were some concerns about maintenance of the CD and DVD collections although this concern did not translate to the main collection.

“...personally I have never found anything out of order. In fact that’s probably one of the strongest points of this library collection is that it is just anally in order.” (Undergraduate student)

There were mixed reviews about the moveable shelves, some people feeling that they impede retrieval and serendipitous research and others indicating that they did not mind these shelves.

Finally there was some suggestion that various Library processes around access issues that involve mediation by staff should be streamlined. Two specific ones mentioned: how a user can report a book missing and access to journal issues awaiting binding,

ii. Hours

The issue of library hours of opening came up in the discussions.

“They offered the tours and they’re very good with student’s schedules and they’re comprehensive so A+ for that. F for the hours.” (Undergraduate student)

Specifically mentioned were extended hours on Friday evenings, Saturday and Sunday mornings, during the mid-term crunch, and holiday Mondays. It was suggested that hours of opening need to be reconsidered given the other demands that students face (e.g., out of town practicums, working on weekends, etc.). Recognizing that budget might be an issue, one suggestion was to rearrange the current complement of staff person hours to cover more hours of opening.

The Library Staff Reflect:

Policies for access (e.g., borrowing privileges, ILL quotas, etc.) as well as hours are issues that perpetually plague the Library. It is likely worthwhile reviewing the loan policies for specific local collections even if to reaffirm that current policies are valid and justifiable given environmental changes (e.g., electronic access, demand, etc.). It is also worthwhile to educate library staff as well as our users as to the rationale behind certain policies (e.g., ILL loans, etc.).

Hours of opening have been reviewed many times to find the optimal allocation. Most recently, extended hours during the final exam period

were added. It was noted that there are different demands on students such as working to offset student debt which we may need to take into consideration when thinking about how to maximize our hours of opening.

As in other areas, there is simply a need to reach out to faculty and students to make them more aware tools and resources to make access easier. As one example, TALOnline, the consortial catalogue of The Alberta Library, was mentioned as a means of easily searching across library catalogues in Alberta.

c. Quality Issues

What we heard

In general, participants were of the opinion that the quality of the physical collection reflects cycles of economic prosperity and government largesse as well as the turnover in faculty research interests. Increasingly specialized areas of research as well as increased interdisciplinary research activity have resulted in increased demand for more and varied resources to be acquired within the collection dollars available. In addition, there is the impression that the collection has not grown commensurate with the growth in the University as evidenced by the increased number of holds being placed on items. Increased use of holds was seen as a positive in that the collection that exists is being used but that this was an indication that the collection was insufficient to address the demand.

It was noted that faculty and students in the Humanities and Social Sciences prefer and rely more heavily on monographic collections, preferably in print format, while those in the Sciences rely more on the journal collection, preferably in electronic format. It was observed that in many respects, the direction of the Library's collection (towards online, electronic access) is being driven by a view from the Sciences but that this is not necessarily in the best interests of those in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Overall, the opinion that more was better was accompanied with a certain amount of nostalgia for the library of old and a suggestion by some that study space should be converted to housing collection.

It was felt by some that the Library had a role to play in attracting quality graduate students and making their educational experience a positive one. It was observed that the Library is not setup to support graduate studies work and that graduate students are forced to go elsewhere for their information resources or use interlibrary loan which does not work well for them. Meanwhile undergraduate students expected that the collection should be able to support core and repeat course offerings as well as class reading lists.

Access to journals, particularly electronic journals has improved over the last few years although it was noted that coverage is spotty in some areas. At the same time we have access to journals with little relevance to the research and course offerings of the University of Lethbridge. It was expected that savings from journal rationalization projects would be transferred to acquisition of key research journals but this does not seem to have happened. It was suggested that the Library rationalize the collection electronic journals acquiring only those of relevance to the University's interests. However, it was noted that this may not be possible currently but it was felt that the Library should lobby the database vendors to un-bundle their electronic journal databases or to allow customized packages of journals.

Concern was expressed that we have really good coverage of titles but no depth in terms of years of coverage, either in print or online. It was noted that entire branches of the literature are missing from the collection.

While having access in print journals is better than not having access at all, electronic access to the journal backfiles was definitely preferred. At the other end of a journal run, it was noted that embargos on access to specific electronic journals affect the support being offered to research as well as to graduate and upper undergraduate course work.

In the case of monographic collections, onsite in print was definitely preferred followed by electronic access. Failing access either in print or electronically, interlibrary loan with a loan period that paralleled that for onsite materials was the next best option. Acquiring materials via interlibrary loan using the current lending policies was the least preferred means of access.

It was mentioned by student participants that faculty complain about and denigrate the Library's collection to their students. Student participants, in particular, felt the monographic collection was old, not to say that the content was invalid but that it lacked current critical texts. It was theorized that the age of the monographic collection might have to do with the cost of items and possibly that the Library preferred to collect materials with broad appeal for the University community rather than collect specialized subject resources that were used by only a subset of the University population. It was observed that the collection was usually more current and comprehensive the less obscure a topic was. It was suggested that the Library critically evaluate the collection and involve faculty, as content experts, in the selection of materials. Student feedback and using ILL requests were both suggested as other sources of information to be used for building the collection. Ways were also discussed with respect to how the Library might facilitate access to the professors' personal collections which were deemed superior to the Library's collection.

There was evidence of controversy over the issue of textbooks and electronic books (or, e-books). Both faculty and undergraduate student participants questioned why the Library did not collect textbooks although others challenged this idea noting that textbooks were a luxury that this Library could ill afford given the need for non-textbook monographs. Those arguing for textbooks recommended that one copy of every version of textbook being used should be held in the Library or that at least there should be textbooks in the collection that were similar to those being used. Regardless of the details, it was suggested that the Library revisit their collection policy with respect to textbooks.

Meanwhile, advocates of e-books saw this monographic format as superior in terms of searching and ease of access as well as a means of overcoming the limitations of hours of service as well as those of our monographic collections. Those opposed to the idea of e-books noted that they did not facilitate serendipitous research and that being online, they were harder to read and retention was less than with a print monograph. Both groups, however, argued that any e-book would end up in print copy – either through printing it off at great expense or by using an e-book as an aid to evaluate whether to “waste” an interlibrary loan request getting a print copy brought in. Indeed, advocates saw e-books as an interim measure until that interlibrary loan request arrived.

Overall, participants felt that they either had to “make do” with what was available or they changed their topics relative to what was available in the Library or they had to go elsewhere to do their research. Many admitted to “going elsewhere” and described the various and sometimes surreptitious things they had done to get the information they needed. However, they noted that having to sneak their information from elsewhere made them feel like they were stealing.

“...I feel like ... you know I'm doing my job and I feel like I'm sort of shop lifting, you know. Geez I'm just ... I come to the library and I can't get it here unless I put in an interlibrary loan and I've got to wait two weeks and I'm working at 10 o'clock at night from home and I can key this thing in.”

The idea of negotiating affiliated memberships with other institutions, such as the University of Alberta, was suggested as a remedy.

There was recognition that the quality of the collection is determined in part by the size of the budget available. Participants questioned where a quality library collection was on the list of priorities for the University and for the provincial government, who, it was noted, tend to prefer more glamorous projects. There was a certain amount of resentment expressed about the recent approval of student levies for the Health and Wellness Centre when juxtaposed against the perception that the budget for library collections was inadequate.

“...as much as space can be an issue, I would rather have more journals than 10 more treadmills. That’s what it comes down to for me. There’s lots of other places where I can go in the city for exercise and climbing wall and whatnot but I mean this is my one-stop shop here in Lethbridge for resources.” (Graduate student

In response to concerns about the budget available for collections, several ideas were brainstormed: creative internal funding arrangements with other units; lobby the provincial government on the issue of an infrastructure deficit (i.e. support for libraries) in post-secondary education, fundraising, additional student levies targeted for library collections, sponsorships, cutting the interlibrary loan service and diverting the cost savings to the collection, and wiser use of the collection budget by involving faculty.

At a much higher level, participants raised some philosophical issues around the entire issue of collections. As more and more information becomes available via the Web and the preferred format is electronic, what is the role of the Library of the future? What is the purpose of the University of Lethbridge Library—as undergraduate or graduate or research resource? Why is the Library not including faculty when deciding on directions and policy pertaining to collections? These latter two philosophical questions are perhaps best illustrated by the following exchange by two faculty members:

(Participant A)... it is my understanding that some decisions have been made I am told from the wisdom of professional librarians who are doing their job and don’t want users to presume to interfere with it but some decisions have been made about our philosophy of access to online journals ... I understand that some key decisions have been made and yet I don’t feel, and maybe the library committee has met and understood the demons you’re wrestling with but, at the present time I feel like, as a user, nobody’s explained to me what our overall thrust is in electronic journal access and why some things are available at remote libraries ... we’re marching to a different drummer here I think and I don’t understand why and I think the users who care about access to the collection would at least deserve to understand if you’ve made a decision, fair enough but tell us what the stakes are and the considerations were and which way we’re going here. ...

(Participant B) ... I think that [Participant A] had a really good point with what is our policy? What is our policy towards online? That seems to be the way it’s gone. That seems to be the way students are ...

(Participant A) Can we be a fly on the wall?

(Participant B) Yeah.

(Participant A) Can you tell us how you are making these decisions? Better yet, can we have a seat at the table?

(Participant B) Yeah.

(Participant A) As users.

(Participant B) Yeah.

(Participant A) Right now we are sort of alienated from a political kind of a process that goes on that's an integral part of how we do our jobs.

(Participant B) Yeah. Yeah, so part of it is student thing and part of it is, hey, the other 40% of our activities report is comprised of our research so I see the library as being a research tool as much as I see it as being a student resource and predominantly I think it's used being a student resource and less as being a research tool so it gets harder. I mean that ... some clarity what our goals and objectives are for the online and, you know, what we have in terms of a mandate for this, how can we make it better ...

The Library Staff Reflect

The issues raised are ones that we are cognizant of but to a large degree are systemic to the information industry and beyond our control to do much about as a single Library. The key seems to lie in communication, with faculty in particular and the University community in general, with respect to the challenges being faced.

It is recognized that there is not an actual collection policy, even at the most abstract level. There are various subject level agreements and Library collection decisions that have not undergone a thorough review in light of changes to the information industry over the course of the last approximately 10 years. These should be reviewed if only to confirm that they are still valid given the needs of our users, changes to the University environment (e.g., increased class sizes, graduate programs, etc.) and the information environment we find ourselves in.

At a very practical level, there is a need to work with faculty to ensure support exists for their students (e.g., class reading lists are supported). It is recognized that while details of subject specific collection areas are the purview of the subject librarians working with faculty in their respective subject areas, there is an opportunity to engage faculty at a higher level and in relation to strategic directions the Library is grappling with (e.g., moving into electronic books, abandoning print back files, etc.).

Services provided directly by staff

What we heard

Surprisingly, given the survey response that showed faculty had the most concerns with services provided by staff, it was undergraduates who wanted to discuss this issue. The seven undergraduates who participated felt that their interaction with staff was an important element to creating an environment that users wanted to be in, that it served as the “entry point” to the collection, that it is the first thing noticed, that it can be all that users expect and that it’s the one thing that the Library has some control over.

Overall, participants are generally happy with the service they receive: check out people are good, the students working at the General Services Desk (GSD) are helpful and staff at the Information Services (Reference) Desk (ISD) were described as knowledgeable and helpful as were Faculty of Education Curriculum Laboratory staff. Having one-on-one help with a librarian or even having exposure to the librarians in classes for subject specific instruction was especially appreciated since very few undergraduates although it seems very few students have been exposed to their subject librarian through class or know of this person as a contact in the Library.

That said, it was recognized that staff likely have to deal with a lot of repetitive and redundant questions. As well, it was recognized that there were likely a lot of “attitudes” among users. However, participants felt that it was important for staff to have the communication and interpersonal skills as well as professional attitudes to handle such situations. Users want to be treated well and with respect. Mistakes happen and there was a sense that some understanding should be shown. There was a sense that policy sometimes took precedence over people. It was suggested that if there are complaints about specific staff, appropriate training opportunities should be made available to the staff member so they can improve their skills.

It was mentioned that there seems to be an attitude towards undergraduate students². This sense was not unique to the Library but had been experienced across the campus as well as at other universities.

“... there is just some attitude sometimes towards students in general. And it’s not just the library. I’ve seen it in other areas of the school too. It’s like a bureaucracy and you’re an undergrad and stuff.” (Undergraduate student)

This attitude became especially problematic when directed at mature students.

² In the “What we heard” (validation) meeting, a faculty participant noted that there is University-wide problem that we don’t have an ethic or atmosphere that helps or encourages questioning... “yes, we are busy, but we’re here to help”

“...so I asked a few people about how they felt about the library and it was kind of the same as me. When I came here last year, the impression I got, my first interactions with the library was that there was the assumption that because I looked older, I should already know what I’m asking. Like, no I’m not a prof. No, I don’t work here. I am new. Like, I didn’t say that but that is what I was screaming inside that just because like I look like I should know my way around the library doesn’t mean I do – I just got here last week, um ... And one of my classmates who’s also a mature student said that she felt the same way – that, that, um, and that – and once you’ve had one interaction like that, it’s very – for us – you know, we’re even more intimidated because we are in a, um, situation where we’re a minority as mature students and so we already feel like “maybe they think we’re even stupider than we feel” so, um, then you don’t go ask the next time for help so, you know, if we could get service at the library that just assumed that, you know, we wouldn’t ask for help if we didn’t need it and you know, we may have just got here last week. It would make mature students feel a lot more comfortable cause some of us have huge gaps between high school and here.” (Undergraduate student)

In other cases, experiences with staff were described where the student was made to feel like a thief, especially when borrowing electronic equipment that had pieces missing prior to circulating. There was frustration when they were provided with one-word answers to questions (e.g., details about acquiring technical supplies) and when assistance was not forthcoming or when they didn’t know they needed the reserve call number in advance of asking for the reading and were made to get it and get back in line for service. It was observed that there are many resources available that would make a student’s life easier (e.g., wireless laptops) but students don’t know about them.

The participants found tours helpful and the online services great although there was not wide-spread awareness of the online services. More should be done to make students self-sufficient (e.g., “e.g., “critical path” for photocopiers; make the maps more accessible/visible by stairwell; how to get the best results from X database, FAQs on the website, etc.) While it was noted that the increased availability of electronic content has cut down on face-to-face interactions with staff, there was a sense that they still found it important to have staff available to help them navigate the system.

Interestingly enough, while they wanted to have staff available to provide assistance, there was a reluctance to approach the service desks for help. They didn’t want to appear ignorant or they wanted more time than they thought the staff person could give them. If there was a lineup of users, they thought the staff person might be too busy to help them.

There also seemed to be some confusion about who it was they should approach, all agreeing that they approached anyone that looked like they may be able to help them whether they were student assistants, library staff or librarians or another user. This confusion seemed to extend to the service points, where students referred to the General Services Desk as the place they needed to go to for reference assistance.

"... I feel comfortable going to the information desk. ... It's a small desk. Whereas the general services desk is huge and often like the people are way far back ... I hate going to that desk ... Like it doesn't seem like it should be intimidating but it is cause it feels like they hold the keys to this knowledge that I don't have yet and I want to look like I know what I'm doing in terms of using the library but I often don't." (Undergraduate student)

There was the general impression that the Library lacked staff presence. The General Services Desk (GSD) was discussed at length. The Information Desk is not visible from the Library entrance. The GSD is a very large and intimidating desk. The staff tend to concentrate on the far side (near the exit and away from the entrance) or at the back workstation. They may also be working on their own work. Thus, users feel uneasy interrupting the staff's work or they feel that they need to call out to the staff at the GSD in order to get assistance.

"...and just keeping a heads-up too. I mean, it's fine if you have stuff to do on your computer but you're also at work and you have people to help and – I don't know, I feel bad sometimes being like "you-ooo... can you help me?" 'cause, you know, I always think they're busy or something but at the same time, that's what they're there for." (Undergraduate student)

The curvature of the GSD draws users around and away from the Information Desk. It was suggested that staff and computers be deployed around the perimeter of this service point to make them more accessible to users.

The users felt that there needed to be more staff available.

"... the general, the public services desk I find also that they kind of hide in the corners and you don't see them right away and you kind of have to wait a while. Um, the information desk, it's either they're off helping other people or, like, that there is a bunch of students around and you kind of feel like, you know, I should just maybe keep looking on my own cause I might find the answer quicker rather than waiting so I don't know if it's necessarily people not willing to help but maybe it's must a lack of staff that are able to help. 'Cause when I have received the help, it's been, it's been good. And really, they're knowledgeable and everything but it's just a little bit hard to come by because they're not always available." (Undergraduate student)

It was felt that the Information Desk in particular would benefit from more staff during peak hours described as being sometime around mid-morning (approximately 10am) to mid-afternoon (approximately 4pm) at least during mid-semester and extended hours when students are working on projects.

The Library Staff Reflect

The main issue seems to be a lack of staff and/or their visibility in the Library. There is recognition that the design of the building, especially the size of the GSD with no staff situated on the entrance side and the location of the Information Services Desk are contributing to this sense that there are no staff to help. It might be time to revisit the layout of the building with respect to the location of the ISD to make it more visible from the entrance or it may be time to reconsider staffing the entrance-side of the GSD. At the very least improved signage directing users towards where staff are concentrated might be a useful interim step.

It was specifically noted by students that they would like to see more staff at the ISD so they felt like they had more time to spend with the reference librarians.

Attitudes of staff are pretty clearly identified as an issue by the focus groups. Some thought was given to providing general sessions for staff on expectations of service (e.g., respect, helpfulness, etc.) as well as to help them develop skills to recognize and respond better to individual needs of such users as mature students.

There was a discussion about the pros and cons of wearing identifying badges, pins, etc. so staff members are more easily identified by users as being able to help. There is resistance to the idea of name tags but perhaps the idea of having a “staff” or “librarian” designation when working at the service point is worth consideration.

Noise in the Library

A total of six undergraduate students chose to discuss the topic of “noise in the Library”. They noted that the Library is a preferred study space for quiet study and is, in addition, a place where students can do their group work. For some students the Library is also a central meeting place on campus for students to meet and socialize. However, noise has become a serious issue for students as evidenced by the comments about noise in the Library appearing in the “Three Lines Free” section of *The Melorist*, the student newspaper.

“Noise is one of the more common things that you hear from other people; like, I hear friends and other students even saying the noise is far more of an issue to them...” (Undergraduate student)

Participants were of the opinion that no one intentionally sets out to be noisy but there seems to be a general lack of awareness about how one individual user’s behaviour affects other users around them, especially in the quiet study areas. Inconsiderate use of cell phones and personal entertainment devices as well as conversations were highlighted as sources of the noise problem. Computer keyboarding and unconscious vocal

interaction with email (e.g., laughing at humorous email, etc.) exacerbated the situation as did students who ate crunchy foods such as chips.

Participants felt that disrespect for the quiet areas of study initiates a vicious circle whereby those individuals seeking quiet study are driven into the group study rooms which in turn forces groups out into the open areas thereby creating more noise. In addition, the lack of computers in the group study rooms means groups have to move out into the areas where there is a computer in order to work on group projects.

Participants were also aware that a conflict exists between the expectation for quiet study and the noise generated as a result of the regular operations of the library. Examples given included staff talking in the stacks while reshelving, the “clicking” of the metal bookends on the shelves as shelving is taking place, staff talking in the Level 9 Re-shelving area and staff talking at General Services Desk.

Some participants were of the opinion that computers encouraged social interaction and, hence, noise. In the same vein, there was consensus that tables implicitly suggest group work and, hence, talking and noise.

The infrastructure of the building contributes to the noise issue. Participants noted that group studies are not sound proof and that the sound transfers between rooms and bleeds out into the open areas immediately adjacent to the rooms. In addition, the sound generated by groups studying at tables on Level 9 North/East (by the windows to the concourse) is channeled back by the architecture (windows, curved wall) into the quiet study area on Level 9 North/West. Interestingly, there was a feeling that the moveable shelving did not contribute substantially to the noise since library users are learning how to bulk-move the shelves to reduce beeping and noise.

Participants were quite explicit in their suggestions for ways to address the noise issue. Sectioning the library, taking into account sources of noise beyond our control, was described with some level of detail. It was suggested that computers be concentrated in in specific areas such as Level 9 South and Level 11 North as well as Level 10. Level 9 North/West and Level 11 East were highlighted as being situated well as quiet study areas while the study area in Level 9 North/East would best serve as a semi quiet study area due to the operational noise that emanates from the re-shelving and sorting area immediately adjacent. It was felt that Level 10 be acknowledged as a “group friendly” since it is a high traffic area and includes Library service points, a source of noise although the Government Documents area of Level 10 could serve as a quiet study area if the computers were removed from the immediate vicinity.

More explicit zoning was suggested. One idea was worker-friendly zones potentially signed to alert users to the possibility of noise. Another idea was to provide cell phone booths or otherwise create cell-phone friendly areas for users to take themselves off to so they could carry on their phone conversations without disturbing others. It was felt that

the Library needed “no conversation zones” (such as Level 11 East) in addition to or instead of “quiet zones” which are ambiguous when it comes to conversations that can quickly evolve from quiet conversations to anything but.

Participants felt that these zones needed to be more prominent. They suggested physical cues were necessary to alert users when they entered a different zone. They were of the opinion that furniture and computers could be rearranged to facilitate this and suggested reserving “cubicles” (i.e., carrels) for quiet study and/or no conversation areas, placing tables in conversation friendly areas and installing computers in the group study spaces to facilitate and encourage appropriate use of group studies. Other suggestions included a physical structure (e.g., a gate or doorway) that the users would have to pass through when entering and exiting a quiet study space.

Signage was seen as another idea for improving users’ awareness of what “zone” they were in and, hence, what behaviour was expected. The participants complained that the current hanging signage that demarcates quiet study areas is too high and suggested lowering the signage, making it more prominent, and using different kinds of signage to capture users’ attention. It was suggested that individual carrels be signed reminding the user that they are in a quiet study area and outlining suggestions for courteous behaviours including appropriate use of cell phones and personal entertainment devices as well as how best to handle conversations.

In the case of the group studies, it was suggested that the guidelines for use be made bigger and placed on the outside of the door or in the window facing out so they could be referenced from outside the room. It was suggested that the guidelines emphasize that the group studies are for group use and give students “permission” to contact staff to intervene if required or desired.

Participants suggested that a culture of quiet needed to be established. Currently students do not feel that they have the right to challenge others who are being noisy. However, if such a culture of quiet was established, initially by enforcement of zones and group studies, then students would take ownership of the issue and be able to challenge the issue themselves.

“... if someone did monitor for two or three years then students would get into a cycle of monitoring it themselves. Like I have friends who go and have gone to the UofA and they say certain areas in their library, if you say something, someone will come over and kick you in the shins immediately.” (Undergraduate student)

To this end, it was noted that the purpose and locations of the various study areas be stressed as part of library tours and that there be a regular and consistent enforcement of these purposes by staff to reinforce appropriate behaviour.

Last but not least, participants felt the Library needed to increase awareness of this issue but because it is a students' issue, that it should partner with the Students Union on any awareness campaigns. Specifically, they noted the campaigns should be periodic but not predictable since predictability is easily ignored. They recommended that these campaigns should extend out beyond the immediate library to other areas of the campus in order to engage students. As people respond differently to different communication methods, they suggested a variety of communication vehicles be used such as screensavers, tent cards, posters, ads in *The Melorist*, reminders on campus radio station (i.e., CKXU), etc. They mentioned that they thought the screensavers were particularly effective.

The Library Staff Reflect

The suggestions made by the focus groups were really quite explicit. Signage seems to be an issue to focus on including the idea of having signage, especially at the front entrance, directing users to specific areas based on their need for quiet or group work areas, perhaps with specific colour coding to reinforce the physical areas. Given the observations made about how sound travels and how tables, carrels and computers send different signals about noise, the layout of the library is something that should be revisited. For example, there is a need to group tables in noisy areas, and clump quiet study carrels, and perhaps the computers (or designate some computers single and quiet use only). The points about education and enforcement are well taken. However, enforcement is perhaps best handled by uniformed individuals who are not part of the Library staff (e.g., a commissionaire).

General Comments

Woven throughout the focus group discussions regardless of the topic assigned were specific issues that emerged over and over:

- There is not enough study space.
- There are not enough computers.
- The computers are hard to find.
- The building is great – clean, bright and well organized and despite the noise issue, one of the quietest places on campus to study.

Part 3: Weaving it All Together: Discussion and Recommendations

There is a 1944 song written by Johnny Mercer (lyrics) and Harold Arlen (music) and made popular by Bing Crosby in the movie, *Here Come the Waves*³, which goes:

You've got to accentuate the positive
Eliminate the negative
Latch on to the affirmative
Don't mess with Mister In-Between

The goal of this entire project was to:

- Establish a baseline assessment of users' perceptions of our services
 - what are we doing well; what can we improve on
 - what we need to focus on fixing
 - what we need to learn more about re: expectations
- Provide direction about where to focus our efforts and resources
- Provide a foundation for developing performance indicators for library services

Noting those aspects of library services that made the users' experiences easier and more enjoyable is an apt beginning to discussing these results and recommending some things for the Library to turn its attention to.

The Baseline Assessment

Library as Place

The Library is considered a central meeting place for students and is their preferred study space as evidenced from the demand on study spaces and distributed computers. The Library is described by users as being cleaner, brighter, fresher smelling and quieter than other places such as the Atrium's 24-hour Study Centre that are designated for study. On all five questions pertaining to the dimension, "Library as Place", the perception of the Library exceeded the minimum expectations for faculty and graduate students. In the case of "community space for group learning and group study", the Library exceeded even the desired expectations for these two constituencies.

³ Information about this song, including the chorus, were retrieved from many places on the website of The Johnny Mercer Foundation (c2002-2005) accessed on 2005 November 15 and available at <http://www.johnnymercerfoundation.org>.

The Library also exceeded the minimum expectations of undergraduate students for all five questions relating to “library as place” although it was here that the issue of noise arose; the Library barely met the minimum expectation of the undergraduate user on the question on “quiet space for individual study.” The issue of noise elicited a number of comments on the topic (more negative than positive) and focus group participants emphasized that there is an overall concern with noise among the student body. “Three Lines Free,” a regular section in the student newspaper, *The Melorist*, is apparently used by students to voice their frustrations with the noise issue in the Library. Therefore while the Library is quieter, relatively speaking, than other places on campus designated for studying, it appears that noise is an issue calling for some attention if the Library is to build on the inherent strengths of the facility itself. Library staff were aware of this issue and had started to think about how to address it prior to executing the LibQUAL+™ survey. However, as the most tangible of the issues pursued, the suggestions of the focus groups discussing noise were quite concrete and not outside the bounds of possibility. There were three main thrusts to their very explicit suggestions: re-evaluating library space, creating an awareness of the issue, and creating a “culture of quiet”.

Affect of Service

Despite a couple of concerns, another area of strength was the dimension, “affect of service”, or, the public service quality of staff-mediated services. Overall the Library staff was viewed positively through the survey, comments and focus group discussions. This view was demonstrated in the survey results where the Library exceeded the minimum expectations on all nine questions for both graduate students and undergraduate students. Faculty, however, were not as generous in their assessment overall. While the Library exceeded the minimum expectations of faculty on most questions asked, it was not by much and two trouble spots in particular showed up in the aggregated results for faculty: a) courtesy where Library staff barely met faculty’s minimum expectations and b) understanding user needs where Library staff failed to meet faculty’s minimum expectations.

Overall the quantitative results were reinforced by the comments submitted, not necessarily by faculty *per se* but by the respondents in general. More kudos than complaints surfaced in the comments, especially with respect to helpfulness. However, the comments expressed did highlight the issues of courtesy and of understanding of (or sensitivity to) user needs as specific concerns. The comments also raised concerns about the knowledge and competency of the staff, primarily with respect to the abilities of the General Services Desk staff in relation to media equipment but this may have been due to a decision, made just the semester previous, to circulate the media equipment from that service point.

When it came to the focus group on “quality of services provided directly by staff”, it was primarily undergraduate students who were interested in discussing the issue.

Participants in the discussion again reiterated that, overall, the public service quality of the staff was good but that perhaps there were members of the staff that exhibited “attitude” when it came to dealing with undergraduates, something especially frustrating to “mature” students who, after an extended absence from an educational institution, felt especially intimidated by the university environment. While some participants indicated this “attitude” seemed to be pervasive across campus, it may still be worthwhile for Library staff to reflect on how their own interactions may feed this perception.

These focus group discussions also highlighted another issue with respect to where users go and who they approach to ask for help. Specifically the Library seems to lack staff presence even though the Library has two service points on the main floor (Level 10), one of which is staffed all of the hours that the Library is open. So what is going on? Subsequent musing about this observation and discussion with students “off the record” suggested that there is no one to “greet” the users entering the Library. The Information Desk is around the corner to the right as one enters and is out of sight of the entrance; users looking to the right as they enter, see only a bank of computers over by the windows so they turn to the left. To the left, there is a huge General Services Desk with staff concentrated either on the far side closest to the exit checking out materials or behind the back counter checking in materials. As well, one student described how the curvature of the desk pulls the user around and away from the Information Desk and away from the assistance they may well be looking for. How much opportunity for student contact is the Library missing by not having staff situated within view of the entrance?

The other point raised was the reluctance of undergraduate students to approach staff. While there is a stated preference for self-sufficiency, there is also a desire to have help handy when they need it. It seems particularly difficult for students to overcome their reluctance to approach a staff member. Two things cropped up when exploring this reluctance: a) who is a librarian (given that for a user, anyone who works in a library is a librarian) and b) can the librarian spend the amount of time that the students think they may require? In this latter case, if students don’t think they will have the undivided attention of the librarian for the time period they think they require, then they will not bother to even initiate the contact. Again, how many opportunities for student contact is the Library missing by not identifying library staff, in general, and the academic librarians (or reference staff), in particular? How many opportunities is the Library missing by not having enough staff to allay the students’ concerns for quality contact time?

The survey did not ask about online self-serve options specifically and commentary about these options was not prominent in the survey comments. However, the Library’s efforts to “push out” particular services using the Library’s website was commented on favourably by those focus group participants who had literally “discovered” them while mining the website. Word of these online self-services was received with some excitement by participants who were not previously aware of them. As well, the Library

received praise for implementing courtesy notices for library materials out on loan (these notices alert users that their library materials are coming due soon) and for the improvements made to facilitating access to the electronic resources available through the University of Lethbridge Library. Obviously building on this success is one thing and making the University Community aware of the services is another.

Information Control

The final dimension for the LibQUAL+™ project was “information control”—the quality of and access to the information resources of the Library. The survey results demonstrated that undergraduate students were the least frustrated by the collection, the Library collection exceeding their minimum expectations on all eight questions although there was noticeable concern about the print collection relative to the rest of the questions asked.

Graduate students were explicitly concerned about both print and electronic resources as well as the journals in either, print or electronic format, required for their work. For these three questions, the Library failed to meet minimum expectations of the graduate students.

The Library also failed to meet the minimum expectations of the faculty in six of the eight questions asked in this section. Faculty did allow (albeit barely) that the Library was making the attempt to provide access through modern equipment and to make information more accessible for independent use.

Not to make light of things but the survey response by faculty and graduate students was not unusual and reflected, for the most part, what is considered a “normal” response by faculty and graduate students in all libraries as evidenced by the LibQUAL+™ total results for all participating libraries. (See Figure 52)

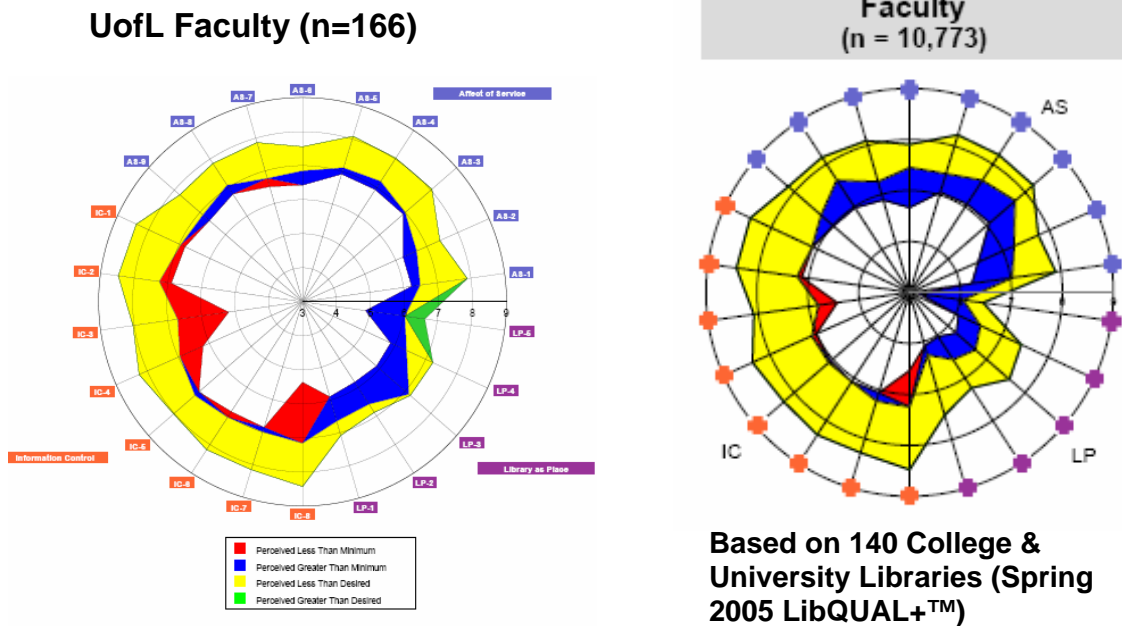


Figure 52: University of Lethbridge Faculty (Radar Chart) compared to Overall Faculty response from all colleges and universities participating in the Spring 2005 LibQUAL+™

This is not to say the concerns raised can be ignored. It was mentioned more than once how faculty tend to denigrate the Library collection to their students which in turns shapes the perceptions undergraduate and graduate students have about the collection, possibly negatively.

Comments clarified that users:

- Wanted more of everything,
- Preferred electronic delivery,
- Found loan periods for particular collections frustrating,
- Found hours of access frustrating,
- While it is an excellent service, felt there was too much dependency on interlibrary loans, and
- That it took too long (confirming the perceptions about timely delivery asked in the survey).

Obviously, the Library needs to take steps to address the concerns raised about collections including how to make the transition from a primarily undergraduate focus to one that can also support an expanded graduate program. In the end, however, it is perhaps less about the actual collection and more about how to communicate the

challenges posed by the information industry at this time and what actions are being undertaken by libraries to address them.

Focus groups confirmed the sentiments expressed by the comments on collections and added another insight to the perception of collection quality; namely, how undergraduate students in particular use (or do not use) the Library. This was an obvious source of frustration for some faculty participants. In discussing this particular thread, the subject librarian model was highlighted as a “rare luxury” and faculty, graduate students and undergraduate students who knew about “their” subject librarian, found having such a point of contact in the Library was a great asset. However, while most faculty may be aware of the subject librarian from a collection liaison point of view, not too many amongst the University Community know that the academic librarians are organized as subject specialists in order to provide instructional and, to some extent, specialized reference assistance for them.

Information Literacy

The issue of instruction in how to use the library also raises the issue of responsibility for the same. Faculty see themselves filling this role but as the faculty participants described their approach to such instruction, it was obvious that they were simply passing along their experiential knowledge of library skills which focused on serendipitous research in a paper-based world. While this is one way to approach using the library, the information universe has changed dramatically and shifted in the last 10 years with growth in electronic access and the existence of the Web. One faculty focus group participant acknowledged that his/her approach was not necessarily the only way and that perhaps things had shifted.

Students, on the other hand, felt that, for the most part, a general tour was all that was required for them to know how to use a library—that is, until they tried to complete their assignments and either didn't know who to approach (i.e., the identification issue) or felt they needed more help than could be provided (i.e., the quality time issue). As well, more general challenges facing students today came up across the focus groups: increased tuition and cost of education leading to greater student debt. To offset the cost of education, many students work part-time. Therefore, while education may be important, it is the real-life issues of balancing school, work and recreational time that determine how much time a student has to complete their assignment, when students do their research, where they go for information, and what they ultimately choose to use to complete their assignments and papers.

While there was little discussion of this issue from the graduate student perspective, what there was, was positive in viewpoint. As well, their perception of the Library's role in instructional activities was highlighted in the results of the survey, specifically the local questions on information literacy. These results, demonstrated that graduate students

differed from faculty and undergraduate students in their opinion of the Library in facilitating their information literacy, having both higher expectations of the Library and a higher perception of the service they receive in this respect. Meanwhile, faculty and undergraduate students shared relatively lower expectations and perceptions of the Library's role in knowing how to use the library on two out of the three local questions on the topic. These differences between graduate students and undergraduate students and between graduate students and faculty may be due to a variety of reasons but two plausible suggestions are that a) it is more likely they have been exposed to a subject librarian in their educational past and/or b) they may be more aggressive about asking for (and receiving) help.

By virtue of the work they do, academic librarians have been immersed in the information world as it has evolved and changed from paper-delivery to electronic-delivery, from structured information "containers" to "anything goes". They share the faculty's concern about how students use the library, make their choices and ultimately use information resources. Is there perhaps opportunity to sit down with faculty to co-operatively develop some options for addressing these shared concerns and to develop ways of working with students that go beyond what has worked (or not) in the past?

The Academic Librarians

In many of the focus groups, it seemed the Library was seen as a place, a collection and the General Services Desk where staff located themselves "back in the corner" and had to be called out to help. Rarely did the role of the academic librarian emerge in the discussions as even a wee part of the solution to the issues being raised. The academic librarians in particular should be concerned about this perception. Anyone who works in the Library, from the "Student Assistant" to the "Professional Librarian", is a "librarian" in the eyes of the user and this confusion made it very hard sometimes to sort out who was being referred to when users referred to "the librarian". Faculty and graduate students may know that there is a "subject librarian" for them to work with but they didn't seem to really know what the responsibilities of that role were. Undergraduate students, who perhaps interacted with a subject librarian in a class or because they had been sent specifically to consult with one, thought that it was more luck than anything else that they had found such a person in the Library. It seemed, as well, that neither graduate nor undergraduate students were really very aware that there were educational differences among the staff of the Library that might make some difference to the kind of help they could expect. If a user has a specific expectation of the kind of help they need but thinks that any one who works in a library is a "librarian", they may be disappointed or at the very least, may not receive the assistance they actually required. Perhaps it is worthwhile for the Library to think about this observation and to consider what steps might be taken to ensure users get the assistance they may not even know they need.

Library Relations with the University community.

Finally, it may also be worthwhile asking whose Library is this? Throughout the comments and focus group discussions, there was an implicit (sometimes explicit) thread of concern that the University Library of today has evolved without the participation of and the consideration for the University community. This is a fundamental problem. Regardless of whether Library staff feel this is the case or not, it is a perception that exists and one that the Library should be concerned about for very practical reasons—funding and support for initiatives undertaken.

The University community, faculty in particular, wants to be engaged in those aspects of the Library that affect how they do their work. Despite criticism of the LibQUAL+™ instrument (which was to be expected), participants were generally happy to have been asked their opinion. Focus group participants thanked the moderators for organizing an opportunity for users to “engage” with the Library. The point is that having the Library reach out to the University community was important to those who took the time to participate. Are there other ways that the Library can re-engage with the University community?

Focusing efforts and resources

What are the themes that have emerged from the results and this discussion? It is tempting to take the suggestions of focus group participants at face value. The reality is that while they expressed their understanding of the concerns, these understandings were sometimes misinformed and lacked context. One key focus for the Library, fundamental to everything else, must be communication, communication, communication.

Communication

Recommendation #1: That the Library seek every opportunity to engage the University community and communicate with it for the purposes of sharing information, presenting a Library perspective on University issues, educating the Community about Library policies, roles and services, making the Community aware of issues and challenges faced, etc.

This is a tall order and the list is far from exhaustive. Three things are worth mentioning:

- a. As was learned from the undergraduate focus group participants, variety in the message, the messenger and the medium is very important. The Library plays to a wide audience of users who range from “millennials” to “baby boomers” and each group has their unique preferences for what they pay attention to and how they receive information. What works for one group may not work for the others. Know your audience.
- b. Also learned from the undergraduate focus group participants: attention spans are short so the message must be repeated in a variety of ways and reinforced on an unpredictable, irregular, and periodic basis.
- c. Communication cannot just be one-to-many (i.e., Library to University Community). To ensure that communications are received, engagement should be the mode of communication. Engagement is best served by a multi-pronged approach to communication meaning that it becomes the responsibility of all staff to know what is going on, and why, so that they can share this information with the users they come into contact with. The message should be the same regardless of who is saying it.

One campaign of awareness specifically identified relates to the issue of noise. Focus group participants went into some detail about how to create an awareness of noise as an issue in the Library and how to control it. With undergraduate students the likely audience for such a campaign, their advice, including partnering with the Students Union, may be well taken. [See Part 2, the Results Section, “Noise in the Library” for details.]

Collections

Expectations are formed on the basis of the information available. In the absence of any understanding of the challenges posed by the evolving information industry (quantity, cost, format, access) users have made assumptions about what they should be able to expect from the Library’s collection and, based on these expectations, there is a degree of dissatisfaction. There are three things (and maybe more) that the Library can focus on to begin the process of finding alignment between the challenges faced by the Library and the users’ expectations. They are engagement, evaluation, and negotiation.

Recommendation #2: That the Library engage the University Community, faculty in particular, in a discussion with respect to the strategic directions that the Library faces with respect to collections.

Not only is this an opportunity for communication (see Recommendation #1), it is also overdue (in the eyes of the faculty focus group participants) and necessary if the Library is to act responsibly and in the best interests of the University. Some of the strategic directions that the Library may want to discuss include (in no particular order and far from a complete list):

- Issues around electronic journals and databases, for example:
 - Limitations, embargos, backfiles, etc.
 - Database selection versus journal selection
 - Funding and sustainability
- Issues around balancing the collection, for example:
 - Foundational collection support for liberal education at the first and second year versus subject level collection support
 - Undergraduate student needs versus graduate student needs versus faculty needs
 - Support for distance programs versus local programs
 - Disciplinary needs re: monographs, journals
 - Subject level collection development versus disciplinary level collection development versus format-driven collection development
 - Erratic funding vis-à-vis one-time versus continuing costs
- Issues around access to the collection
 - Direct access: electronic versus print vis-à-vis journals and vis-à-vis monographs
 - Intellectual access and the role of the subject librarian
- Issues around abandoning print back files for journal titles, for example:
 - Conversion of University assets to operating expenditures
 - Access versus ownership in the event of cancellation

Recommendation #3: That the Library undertake an evaluation of its collection.

There has been some research done on the OCLC service to evaluate library collections. This service, or something similar, should be pursued to evaluate the the collection for currency, breadth and depth—the three main criticisms leveled against the Library’s collection.

Recommendation #4: That the Library undertake to review the existing assortment of documentation with respect to collection decisions made, the results of the collection evaluation, and the knowledge gathered by engaging faculty in discussion with the express purpose of developing something like a “statement of philosophy” for the Library’s collection.

There is not an overall understanding about or agreement on the purpose of the Library’s collection. Overall, the balance in the collection has been corrupted by erratic funding cycles and opportunities which benefited some areas and not others. As well, the University focus has shifted to encourage growth in graduate programs. The rise in interdisciplinary studies and research further complicate a collection which is being built at the subject level. It is perhaps time to step back and re-evaluate our collection philosophy, policies, and procedures in order to take into account directional changes of the University, the needs of the University community, and changes to the information industry.

The Building

Library service and interactions with our users changed when the Library moved into its new facility in 2001. The building offered new opportunities and, at the same time, new challenges. After having “lived” in these new surroundings for the past four years, it is time to review the layout in light of some of the issues and comments raised by users.

Recommendation #5: That the Library review the floor plans of the building giving consideration to:

- a. The layout of service points.

With respect to concerns around staff-mediated services, we have learned that there is not a staffed service point to greet users as they enter the Library. The activities of the General Services Desk place staff on the opposite side of this service point and the Information Desk cannot be seen from the entrance. Compounding the problem is the curvature of the General Services Desk that draws users away from the Information Desk and puts increased pressure on activities of the General Services Desk.

- b. The layout of the services

While the layout of service points relative to their location within the building is one aspect to consider, another may well be to re-evaluate how the activities of the service points are organized with some thought to positioning staff in the immediate vicinity of the entrance or, at least, in the case of the General Services Desk, closer to the counter so that they are more accessible to users needing assistance.

- c. The layout of furniture (tables, carrels, and computers) relative to the noise issue.

With respect to the noise issue, we have learned that tables encourage conversation, hence, noise and that this furniture should not be located within areas designated for quiet study. We have learned that computer use generates noise either directly or through the social interactions of those using them for group work and that we should give some consideration to clustering the computers in specific areas of the Library. We have learned groups requiring the use of a computer migrate out of the group studies areas. While we are building a collection of computer/projector carts for use in the group studies, students felt computers should be installed directly into them. We have learned that carrels promote quiet study and should be the furniture of

choice in quiet study areas. We have learned that the curve of the wall on Level 9 North/East channels noise from the tables in that area to the quiet study area in Level 9 North/West so using carrels along this wall may help to “slow down” the sound waves.

d. Zoning for noise

With respect to the noise issue, we also learned that the activities of users contribute to the noise issue and that perhaps zoning for particular activities would help. Examples given included zoning for conversation (i.e., no conversation or, perhaps, conversation friendly zones), for cell phone use (e.g., implementing cell phone booths), for group friendly areas, worker-friendly areas (e.g., the study space adjacent to the re-shelving and sorting area or the service points), etc.

e. Improving signage

Signage came up with respect to the noise issue as a way to create more awareness of quiet study areas. We learned that the current signage for quiet study areas hangs too high with the result that users are unaware that they are in a quiet study area. We learned that the signage cannot blend into the décor of the Library but must stand out if it is to be noticed. Variation in style and placement to accommodate the variation in users was suggested. Have we thought about signage on the floor with the message created via the carpet tiles?

Staff also suggested that signage at the entrance alerting users to the types of study spaces (e.g., quiet study, group study, etc.) and directing them accordingly might be in order.

There was the suggestion of putting signage in each carrel reminding users of what kind of study area they were in and providing guidelines for appropriate behaviour while in the area. This also applies to the group study rooms where it was suggested that the guidelines for use be made bigger, more noticeable, and posted on the outside of the door for reference by both individual and group users of this space.

From the perspective of staff-mediated services, we learned that users cannot see the Information Desk from the entrance. As an interim measure, signage may have a role to play in directing users needing assistance to this service. A suggestion provided by a guest to the Library was to change the carpet tiles and create a path to the Information Desk that would visually draw users to this service point.

One other idea for signage is to post “Caution staff working” signs either on the book carts or in the areas that are being re-shelved just so that those studying know to expect some level of work-related noise.

f. Demarcation of designated areas

Signage was seen as one idea for helping to create awareness of the different types of study areas available in the Library. There was also the suggestion that awareness might be served by creating physical demarcations of space such as an entry way to an area reminiscent of the reading rooms that exist in some libraries. A supplementary suggestion by staff was to perhaps change the colour of the carpet in these areas and otherwise colour code the areas to create an awareness for the user that they were in a different space.

Recommendation #6: That the University conduct “remedial work” on the Library, taking specific aim at:

a. Installing electricity on Level 11 East.

Level 11 East has emerged as a natural quiet study area for students despite the noise that bleeds from the group study rooms immediately adjacent. It was acknowledged that this area did not have electricity which precludes use of the reading lights in the carrels. Students do find it dark, especially at night. However, as one student put it when the discussion turned to alternative study spaces on the campus and in the Library that were noisier:

“If I had to make a choice between lighting and noise, I would come up here [Level 11] because it’s quieter.” (Undergraduate student)

The point is that students are seeking out and using this space because it is a quiet area. It behooves the University and the Library to provide the right facilities for the health of these students.

b. Insulating the group studies and meeting rooms for noise

Level 11 East has emerged as a natural quiet study area for students. However, through the discussions around noise issues, it was noted that the group study rooms are not sound proof and are barely sound-reducing. Group activities generate noise and this noise bleeds both between rooms and out into the quiet study space immediately adjacent. This is the same situation for the group studies (or edit suites) and meeting rooms located on Level 11 North and the group studies on Level 10.

- c. Expanding the number of computers and the study spaces (quiet, conversational, and group studies) to the extent possible

They said it in the comments and they said it in the focus groups: the Library is the primary and preferred study space for undergraduates on campus. The University enrollment has increased; suitable study space apparently has not. There are not enough study spaces of any type and there are not enough computers.

Relationships with the University Community

1. Individual responsibility

The Library building was built with a vision of how it would function in terms of services. The vision relied, to a large degree either to an expansion in staff or a redeployment of staff from traditional “backroom” activities to public service duties. However, the staff complement has not expanded and traditional activities have not disappeared as quickly as was assumed. Much of what is perceived by users as service issues (e.g., a lack of staff presence) may, in fact, be attributed to a conflict between the vision of how the building was designed to function and the reality of staffing it. As a result, a review of the building, as proposed in Recommendation #5, will begin to address service issues as described by users. A review of the building, however, does not address those issues specific to attitudes of individual staff towards their public service activities which inform user perceptions about the staff they interact.

Recommendation #7: That each Library staff member honestly reflect on their attitudes towards public service considering:

- *The role of the Library,*
- *Their role as a staff member within the Library,*
- *The user perceptions of staff-mediated services as summarized in this document and those experienced first hand,*
- *Why they make the choices they do when dealing with specific individuals,*
- *What they can do personally about those things that get in the way of having a positive interaction with users,*
- *What they can do personally about working around any issues they have with respect to public service, in order to improve their interactions with users,*
- *What skills (e.g., technical, communication, empathy, etc.) they feel they need to develop or what they need to learn in order to be more comfortable in a public service role.*

There is truth in the saying, “you can lead a horse to water but you can’t make it drink.” While there was the opinion that the Library has the greatest control over

this issue, in reality this is not the case. Over the years, the Library has provided many “customer service” workshops and professional development opportunities via the Annual Staff Retreat. However, mandatory participation in workshops is not the answer if a staff member does not see themselves, or their attitudes, as a problem.

By design and somewhat of necessity, all staff share the responsibility of the public service points. Hence, it is hard to hold any single staff member accountable for their actions given that staff, in their public service role, are a rather large, amorphous and quite indistinguishable (at least to the user’s eye) lot of people.

Given the present organization of work, the solution to issues of “attitude” really rests with the individual staff taking responsibility for themselves and their commitment to public service since they can only be as helpful and approachable as they themselves choose to be. The Library can articulate expectations of service and, through supervisors, model appropriate service behaviours, coach staff with respect to meeting these expectations of service, challenge staff to think about the attitudes they hold and support the actions they want to take. In the end, though, it is up to the staff members to take ownership of and take action on their attitudes and their approach to public service.

In response, to this individual reflection, Library Administration can support staff attempts to resolve the issues affecting their work. Examples of such support might include: negotiation and clear articulation of expectations for service, providing access to professional development and continuing education as requested, addressing systemic issues within the Library that affect staff performance in general and public service attitudes specifically, etc.

2. Reassessing opportunities for student contact

Recommendation #8: That the Library, the academic librarians in particular, give consideration to reassessing the existing opportunities for student contact with a view to increasing the opportunities for quality contact time with students and considering the role that can be played by faculty.

The students want to interact on their own terms with librarians. They want self-sufficiency but they want to know that when they approach a librarian, they will have the librarian’s attention for as long as it takes to get them to the next step in their project. Students who knew they could contact a subject librarian appreciated knowing this was an option available to them. Suggestions coming from the students included increasing staffing levels at the Information Desk during peak hours of the day and peak times of the semester and/or increasing opportunities for in-depth help such as “research Q&As” around mid-term.

Another idea suggested by a staff member was to have subject librarian “office hours”.

It is one thing to increase the opportunities for quality contact time with students. It is another to get the students to overcome their intimidation and reluctance to take advantage of these opportunities. Much of the frustration developing non-credit workshops, etc. stems from the lack of student interest. Recognizing that most students need external motivation (e.g., credit of some form, etc.), a lesson might be taken from the fairly recent development where faculty are assigning students to take a library tour. Involving faculty both in the identification of the kind of additional library instruction opportunities that would best support their instruction and in aid of promoting these opportunities might go some distance to increasing student interest in the opportunities finally decided upon.

3. Reassessing the relationship with faculty

Recommendation #9: That the academic librarians, as a group, give consideration to ways that they may play a more prominent role in the work of the faculty.

Faculty play a significant role in the education of the graduate and undergraduate students. So much of the success of the Library rests with the faculty knowing what is happening in the Library and communicating positively with students. The relationship with the faculty is the responsibility of the academic librarians. Faculty perceptions about the collection, about the role of the academic librarian in instructing students, about services, and about decisions taken are all informed by the relationships built between the faculty members and the academic librarian, either as Professional Librarians or as subject librarians. It would seem then that reassessing and renewing relationships with faculty and educating them with respect to what they might expect from the academic librarians is a first step to addressing issues of library service quality.

4. Expanding self-service options

There will always be users that want someone to tell them how to do something and then there are others who really just want to do it themselves. Helping users to help themselves is seen as a good thing. The Library needs to continue this emphasis with its online self-services and consider expanding into the physical world.

Recommendation #10: That the Library remain cognizant of opportunities to expand the options for self-service.

Suggestions made include “critical paths” (signage) for such things as how to put money on campus ID cards, more strategically located maps, subject specific finding aids, the ability to monitor the status of ILL requests and quotas, etc.

5. Policy Review

Policies are a negotiated understanding between the user and the Library of their respective rights and responsibilities. It is worthwhile to periodically review policies to see if the assumptions upon which they were negotiated are still valid.

Recommendation #11: That the Library undertake a schedule of review for the various policies and procedural interpretations of policy with a view to:

- a. Ensuring they are relevant to the environment of the University and the needs of the University community*
- b. Ensuring the procedural interpretations of the policies are consistent with the intent of the policy*
- c. Ensuring there is a consistency of message being conveyed to the users with respect to policy (i.e., enforcement).*

The idea has already been proposed of reviewing the decisions that have shaped our collection with a view to developing an overall statement of philosophy. Enforcing the Library position on noise is another immediate issue to address. Loan policies for non-circulating collections and special collections were questioned. Issues with quotas and loan policies for interlibrary loan materials were also raised. It was suggested that the guidelines for the appropriate use of group studies and quiet study spaces be bolstered and enforced. Hours, of course, is something that remains controversial and always in need of review. It may also be worthwhile reviewing the current non-identification of staff in light of some of the feedback received.

Foundations for performance indicators

The LibQUAL+™ survey, in and of itself, is likely the best tool for measuring performance in libraries. It is the most mature tool in the set of “new measures” being worked on by the Association of Research Libraries. In larger institutions, such as the University of Alberta, LibQUAL+™ is run every year and the results are the library’s performance indicators. While there is merit in running LibQUAL+™ on a regular basis, annually is perhaps too much for the University of Lethbridge. The University of Calgary seems to have picked a two-year cycle and three years is the maximum interval recommended by ARL.

Recommendation #12: That the Library develop a regular cycle of performing comprehensive survey of the University community every three years using LibQUAL+™.

A regular and standardized comprehensive survey of user perceptions, such as LibQUAL+™, will have many benefits:

- To maintain a tangible engagement of users in the affairs of the Library,
- To determine how effective the Library is overall in addressing issues raised by users,
- To develop longitudinal data on changes in user perceptions over time, and
- To uncover problems before they become serious issues with potentially expensive solutions.

Executing such a survey on a reasonable basis should not be seen as an expense but as an investment in Library services and in the University of Lethbridge.

Reflections: Should we do this again ...

The ARL provides documentation, optional training sessions, and a closed mailing list for LibQUAL+™ participants to draw on. However, there is no greater learning opportunity for learning than doing something for the first time. This was a first-time LibQUAL+™ for the University of Lethbridge done against a very compressed timeframe and, as such, many lessons were learned along the way.

1. Challenge the idea of surveying non-academic/non-library staff

Unless the role of the Library vis-à-vis the non-academic/non-library staff (i.e., AUPE and APO staff from outside the Library) changes, it is recommended that this group is exempted from participating in future LibQUAL+™ surveys. In this role, they are not primary users of the Library. Although member of this group may also be students, it would then be and should be as students that they would participate.

As well, many complained they did not want to participate in the survey. The response rate was less than half the response rate of the academic user and of 83 surveys submitted, 14 were screened out as being invalid—the highest number of any of the groups.

2. Distance students

While the LibQUAL+™ is the best tool available, it seems to be focused on a residential setting and is not good at capturing the perceptions of distance students and faculty. Distance students were included in this baseline assessment using LibQUAL+™ but there was no way to identify a distance user unless they self-identified in the comments. Some indicated via email that they refused to participate.

The needs of the distance users are different. It would be beneficial, therefore, to research the possibility of an additional survey instrument specifically designed to capture the user perceptions of distance students and to use this instrument to supplement the LibQUAL+™ results in order to understand the perspective of all of our users.

3. Remind, remind, remind ... and then remind again.

The response rate for this survey exceeded expectations for returns on Web based surveys. Participating libraries were advised to try for 15-25%, with 25% being considered high. At a little over 28%, the University of Lethbridge came in on the high side of the top quartile for response rate according to the ARL. Still, the advice “out there” says 30% is the goal and the only real way to achieve this magic number is to remind participants to complete their survey. This survey was supported by novelty (the users had not been asked their opinion for a very long time, if ever!), an aggressive

promotional campaign, and the support of the University President. Due consideration must be given to how to maintain this response rate and improve upon it.

4. Departmental demographics

This survey run captured the department or division level affiliation of the respondents. While this was perhaps convenient, it did not provide an avenue for any useful analysis given the number of cases at this level were too few for results to be reliable. As well, respondents expressed concern that their confidentiality would be compromised by answering this question truthfully. One must wonder, as well, if the division into departments is artificial, especially in light of increased interdisciplinary research. For example, in Geography we have faculty who pursue economic research relating to industry and others who pursue scientific research relating to water. Might it be better to work at a broader level, such as the disciplinary levels and allow the respondents to classify themselves accordingly?

5. Engage an Applied Studies student.

For Part 2 of the project, an Applied Studies student, Shareen Greidanus, joined as the LibQUAL+™ Research Assistant. Shareen had completed course work in both qualitative and quantitative research methods and was one of a pool of people recommended by Dr. Muriel Mellow, Assistant Professor (Sociology). Shareen's course work was directed at gaining practical experience in qualitative research methods with a specific emphasis on the evaluation of focus groups as a qualitative research method. Shareen expressed a preference for Sociology credit. Therefore her applied studies was registered as Sociology 4980, "Advanced Qualitative Research Methods" with Dr. Mellow serving as Faculty Supervisor and L. Jacobs, LibQUAL+™ Project Librarian, as Placement Supervisor.

As a 4th year undergraduate student in her final semester, Shareen's participation and perspective in Part 2 of the project proved invaluable. The theoretical knowledge that she brought to the project helped in laying out the project and drafting the application to the Human Subjects Research Committee while her perspective as an undergraduate helped to shape the project.

With respect to the actual execution of the focus group sessions, there were obvious differences in the dynamic when Shareen was moderating. When the Project Librarian was moderating, the groups had a tendency at some point in the discussion to turn into a question and answer period. When Shareen moderated the groups, an actual discussion took place that elicited valuable perspectives on library service. In addition, it was noted that the dynamic in the undergraduate focus groups adopted a more casual sharing of concerns and ideas which benefited the discussion and the results.

Finally, Shareen brought her own listening and analytical skills as well as her undergraduate perspective to the debriefing sessions and to the analysis of the results with the result that a few different things were heard than might have been heard otherwise.

For Shareen, the project provided valuable practical experience in qualitative research methods. In exchange, the Library not only achieved better results but engaged in the educational process at a different level.

It is highly recommended that consideration be given to including an Applied Studies component in future assessment and evaluation projects.

Conclusion

The 2005 LibQUAL+™ Project at the University of Lethbridge was a first attempt to survey and analyze user perceptions of library service quality. It was a positive experience from the perspective of the users and it has already gone some way to putting the Library on the “radar screen” of the University community.

Regardless of the fact that this first use of LibQUAL+™ was a learning experience for everyone, it has served the purpose of establishing a baseline assessment of user perceptions. From this the Library can now proceed to take action on the results and on the recommendations being proposed.

The Library promised it was listening and encouraged users to “talk to us.” Only future LibQUAL+™ surveys, though, will tell the Library and the University community how well the Library heard these concerns and responded.

List of Appendices

NOTE: The Appendixes are only available in the electronic version of this document.

Appendix A: Library Service Quality Survey – Print Version

Appendix B: Mapping of Local Subject Areas to LibQUAL Standardized Disciplines

Appendix C: Aggregated Results Notebook for the University of Lethbridge Library

Appendix D: LibQUAL+™ Highlights for Spring 2005

Appendix E: ANOVA of mean adequacy gaps across academic user groups

Appendix F: ANOVA of mean adequacy gaps by dimension within user group and across disciplines

Appendix G: ANOVA for local Information Literacy questions by user group

Appendix H: ANOVA for local awareness question

Appendix I: ANOVA for local interlibrary loan question

Appendix J: (Focus Group) Invitation to Participate

Appendix K: Online application – Indication of Interest to Participate (in Focus Groups)