University of Chicago Libraries

LibQUAL+ Survey 2004

Discussion Paper

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Assessment Interest Group
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LibQUAL+ Discussion Paper

Introduction

The University of Chicago Libraries participated in the LibQUAL+ survey in the spring quarter of 2004. LibQUAL+ is a survey tool developed by the Association of Research Libraries and Texas A & M University. It is designed to measure how well a library is meeting the perceived needs of its various user groups.

LibQUAL+ has been in use since 2001. Over 400 libraries have participated in the survey in the past 4 years. The University of Chicago Libraries decided to participate in the Spring 2004 survey as part of an ongoing campaign by the Library to assess the quality of service the Library offers its patrons. The Library believes that the results of the LibQUAL+ survey can be used to inform and provide context for implementation of the recommendations made by the University Library Strategic Planning Group, whose report was issued in June, 2004.

Purpose of this Discussion Paper

The University Library assigned to the Assessment Interest Group the task of analyzing the survey results and recommending methods of communicating those results to the University community. The survey results contain a large amount of data, both statistical and anecdotal.   The AIG concluded that the most important results need to be distilled into a form suitable for use as a springboard for discussion by the Library Council and consideration of what actions should be taken in response to the opinions and perceptions revealed by the survey results.

At nearly the same time, Judith Nadler, the Director-elect of the University Library, disseminated a discussion document dividing the Library's mission into 6 core areas. These are: breadth and depth of information resources, discovery of information resources, access to information resources, preservation of information resources, creation of an environment conducive to providing services and enjoying Library space, and developing and engaging in outreach activities and branding of the institution. Judith Nadler's memorandum detailing these core areas is attached to this Report as Appendix 1. The AIG decided to organize the results of the LibQUAL+ survey based on these 6 areas of concern and create a document, this discussion paper, that would provide charts illustrating the results of questions that fit into each of these areas, explanatory text, and illustrative comments from the comment section of the survey. The Library Council may then use this document as a springboard for their discussion of the survey results.

Participation in the Survey

The LibQUAL+ survey was administered by the Library as a whole and also by the D'Angelo Law Library independently. The decision of the D'Angelo Law Library to administer the survey on its own "…was influenced in part by the University Library's participation and also by a desire to obtain separate results tailored to the Law School's demographics."[1] As a result of this decision, Law School participation in the University Library's survey was minimal: .4 % of the population responding to the University Library survey designated the Law Library as their preferred library. (See *Frequencies for Charts* at the end of this document). Consequently, for the questions that rely heavily on preferred libraries (Library as Place), all Law responses have been ignored. Responses from Yerkes Library were similarly sparse, and are likewise left out. Comments made in response to the comment box on the survey by both of those libraries have been included in the comment reports and are reflected here.

Responses to the University Library survey were numerous enough in other respects to give confidence in the results. E-mail requests for participation were sent to 7726 users (1906 undergraduate, 3211 graduate, 1243 faculty, 1366 staff) for the library-wide survey and to 718 Law School faculty, students and staff for the D'Angelo Law Library survey. Response rates were 1,058 responses (12%) for library-wide and 163 responses (23%) for law. Of the 1,058 responses received for the library-wide survey, 843 resulted in complete and valid survey responses that could be used for further analysis. Respondents were 57.3% male and 42.7% female. The 843 valid responses were distributed as follows: 24.1% undergraduate, 49.1% graduate (30.3% doctoral/18.5% masters, 0.3% other), 16.7% faculty, 10.1% staff. Graduate students were slightly underrepresented in the responses, and staff were slightly over represented. Among individual disciplines, business was most underrepresented while humanities and social sciences were most overrepresented.
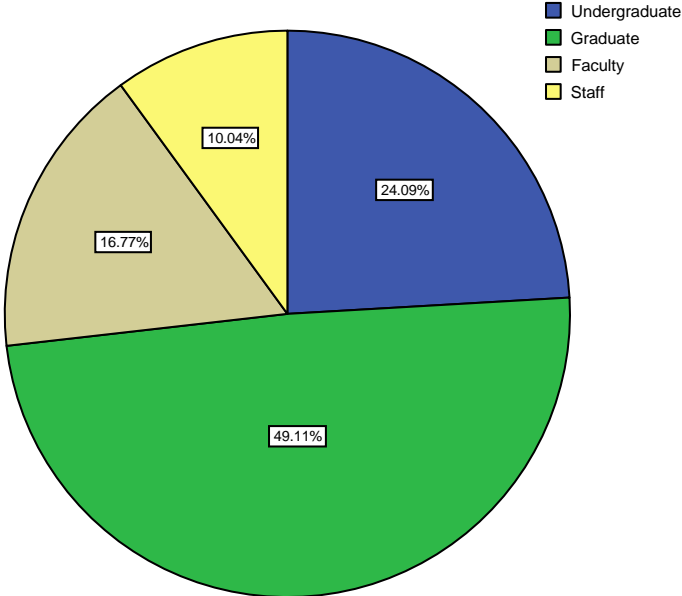
In the analyses and charts contained in this document, all staff responses have been excluded. Feedback on the survey from staff, the nature of the responses to the LibQUAL+ items, and comments received indicated fundamental differences in attitude toward the library compared with faculty and student responses. Staff generally indicated that they used the library much less frequently than other groups: two-thirds of staff responders indicated they used the library on premises only monthly or quarterly, compared to over 70% of graduate students who indicated they used the library on premises daily or weekly. Therefore, results presented in this document focused on the library's primary constituents: faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students.

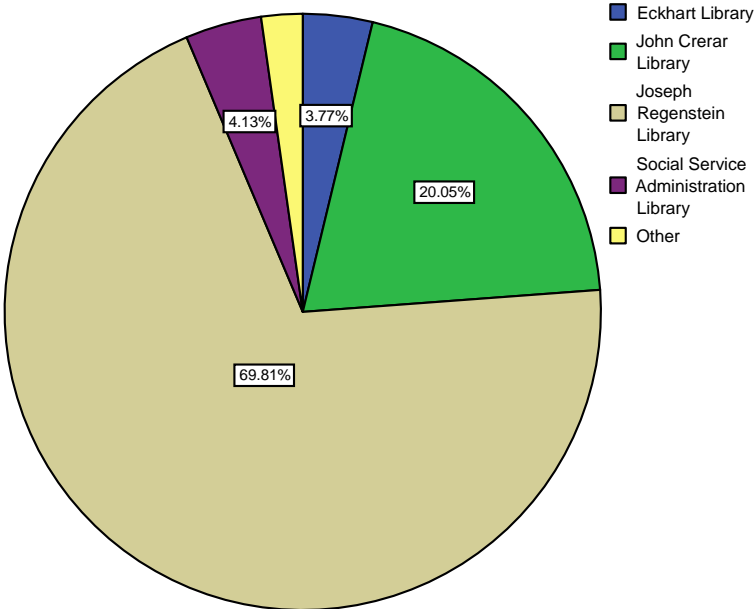Frequencies of responses by primary library used, and by user groups are shown here:

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[1] Lewis, Sheri, LibQUAL+ Survey 2004 Results Summary, July 27, 2004, p. 1.

Responses by user groups

Legend:
- Undergraduate
- Graduate
- Faculty
- Staff

- 10.04%
- 24.09%
- 16.77%
- 49.11%

Primary library used

Legend:
- Eckhart Library
- John Crerar Library
- Joseph Regenstein Library
- Social Service Administration Library
- Other

- 4.13%
- 3.77%
- 20.05%
- 69.81%

Note: Harper Library, D'Angelo Law Library and Yerkes Library were selected as the primary library in very few cases (8, 3 and 2, respectively, in total less than 4 % of responses). In charts and results tracking primary library used, D'Angelo and Yerkes were excluded.

The Survey and the Charts

The survey contains a core group of 22 questions and a box for comments. The questions are grouped in 3 groups: affect of service, information control and library as place. The questions are:

Affect of Service (AS)	Information Control (IC)	Library as Place (LP)
Employees instill confidence in users (AS-1)	Making electronic resources accessible from home/office (IC-1)	Library space that inspires study/learning (LP-1)
Giving users individual attention (AS-2)	Library website enables me to locate information on my own (IC-2)	Quiet space for individual activities (LP-2)
Employees are consistently courteous (AS-3)	Library has the printed materials I need for my work (IC-3)	Library is a comfortable and inviting location (LP-3)
Readiness to respond to users' questions (AS-4)	Library the electronic resources I need for my work (IC-4)	Library is a getaway for study, learning and research (LP-4)
Employees have the knowledge to answer my questions (AS-5)	Library has modern equipment to easily access needed information (IC-5)	Community space for group learning and study (LP-5)
Employees deal with users in a caring fashion (AS-6)	Easy access tools permit me to find things on my own (IC-6)	
Employees understand the needs of users (AS-7)	Library makes information easily accessible for independent use (IC-7)	
Willingness to help users (AS-8)	Library has the print/electronic journal collection required for my work (IC-8)	
Dependability in handling users' service problems (AS-9		

Method of Organizing Data for This Paper

First, the questions were resorted into the 6 areas Nadler identified. Because the 5th area Nadler identified (creation of an environment conducive to providing services and enjoying Library space) has within it both the concepts of Library as Place and Affect of Service, we divided it in two. Then, within each area, we selected the three questions on which the user's desired level of service was the highest. Two areas had no questions applicable to them; one area had 5, of which we selected 3 with the highest desired level of service, and another 9 questions, of which we selected 3, also with the highest desired level of service. The questions, as resorted, and selected, are as follows:

Core Item	UC desired	UC Adq Gap	DLL Adq Gap
Breadth and depth of information resources (Information Control)			
(IC-8) Print/electronic journal collection required for work	8.59	*-0.02*	0.99
(IC-4) Electronic information resources I need	8.39	*0.45*	0.94
(IC-3) Printed library materials I need for work	8.2	*0.18*	1.4
Discovery of information resources (Information Control)			
(IC-2) Library web site enables me to locate information on my own	8.47	*0.37*	0.65
(IC-6) Easy access tools allow me to find things on own	8.36	*0.39*	0.57
Access to information resources (Information Control)			
(IC-1) Making electronic resources accessible from home/office	8.53	*0.41*	*0.48*
(IC-7) Making information easily accessible for independent use	8.31	0.54	0.88
(IC-5) Modern equipment to easily access needed information	8.28	*0.45*	*0.47*
Preservation of information resources (Information Control)			
No pertinent items in survey			
Creation of an environment conducive to providing services and enjoying Library space (Library as Place)			
(LP-4) Getaway for study, learning, research	7.75	0.79	*-0.32*
(LP-1) Library space that inspires study/learning	7.69	0.53	*-0.85*
(LP-3) Comfortable and inviting location	7.69	0.62	*-0.8*
(LP-2) Quiet space for individual activities	7.61	0.84	*-0.61*
(LP-5) Community space for group learning and studying	6.88	1.3	*-0.7*
Creation of an environment conducive to providing services and enjoying Library space (Affect of Service)			
*(AS-9) Dependability handling users service problems	8.02	*0.4*	*1.15*
*(AS-5) Employees have knowledge to answer questions	7.98	0.71	1.2
*(AS-4) Readiness to respond to users questions	7.89	0.91	1.43
(AS-8) Willingness to help users	7.79	0.99	1.58
(AS-7) Employees understand the needs of users	7.78	0.81	1.38
(AS-3) Employees are consistently courteous	7.71	1.14	1.71
(AS-6) Employees deal with users in a caring fashion	7.39	1.10	1.83
(AS-1) Employees instill confidence in users	7.23	1.22	1.86
(AS-2) Giving users individual attention	6.82	1.27	1.85
Developing and engaging in outreach activities and branding of the institution (Affect of Service)			
No pertinent items in survey			

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Negative adequacy gaps (library does not meet minimum acceptable levels of service) and very small positive adequacy gaps (library is barely exceeding minimum acceptable levels of service) are indicated in **bold italic.** As adequacy gaps grow larger, this is an indication that library services are approaching desired levels. Superiority gaps for all items were negative, i.e., the library did not exceed desired levels of service in any area. Items excluded from discussion in this document generally had lower desired scores and better library performance scores.

Then Andrea Twiss-Brooks used the SPSS program to produce charts illustrating graphically the survey responses to each of these questions. Each set of charts is followed by *illustrative comments* from the users, contributed by them to the comment box on the survey. All of the comments were coded according to their subject matter by members of the AIG, using the *Atlas-ti* software purchased by the Library. *Atlas.ti* is a software program that manages large amounts of verbal data, by coding it according to codes generated by the users of the program, so that comments on the same or similar issues may be grouped and compared. AIG, directed by Andrea Twiss-Brooks and Agnes Tatarka, spent the last month coding the comments made in response to the survey. The charts and comments are attached to this Paper as Appendix 2.

Charts, Comments and Discussion

Each tabbed section contains the charts and selected comments applicable to the identified area of concern. The brief discussion set out here is intended to be food for thought, not a comprehensive review of conclusions to be extracted from the charts and comments.

Breadth and depth of information resources   **Tab 1**

The information resources of the Library are clearly central to our users' concerns. The desired level of service is very high. What is more significant is that the minimum acceptable level of service is very high also, hovering around 7 out of 9. We have a demanding user population, but generally an appreciative one. The interaction between the views expressed by data in the charts and verbally in the comments is interesting. The overall tone of the comments is very positive: our users greatly appreciate the print and electronic materials we hold, especially the electronic journals. The charts make it clear that our users want more – that we are currently just barely meeting their minimum acceptable level of service. The data indicate that the University Library's traditional focus on collections reflects our users' perceived wants and needs.

Discovery of information resources   **Tab 2**

Both the data displayed in the charts and the majority of the comments indicate that the web page is an area for improvement. Expectations are high (the desired level of service for Question IC-2 is 8.47 and for Question IC-6 8.36) and perceived performance is low. The faculty responses, especially, were low on both questions. It is interesting that the undergraduates' responses here were generally more favorable than either the faculty or the graduate students. It is possible that these results are revealing, not inadequacies of our web page design or organization, but the level of technological sophistication of the user population. The younger the user, the more generally technology-savvy. Other possible explanations include the fact that undergraduates are not asked to undertake significant research until well into their undergraduate education, usually not until their senior year, so they may have little motivation to explore the webpage thoroughly. Because of their inexperience at in-depth research, undergraduates may have little or no idea of the wealth of resources available to them and be satisfied with whatever resources they are able to locate on their own. The question may be, not so much how to improve the webpage, but how to find better ways to train our user population to make optimal use of it.

Access to information resources   **Tab 3**

The charts reflect users' perceptions of adequate performance in this area.   The comments reflect a wide range of sophistication about electronic means of accessing the Library's resources, and some problems with remote access, suggesting that the Library needs to take a more aggressive approach both to ensuring that its users know about off-campus access issues and providing assistance to users when they do not. It is interesting that many of the comments are critical of the Library's computer access and photocopying arrangements. This reflects a changing view of the mission of the Library: electronic means of access to the collections, both electronic and print, are viewed as central to the mission of the Library, similar to work tables and lighting. This argues that, in the future, the current institutional separation between NSIT and the Library may not provide the best institutional structure to adequately meet Library user needs. The comments offer further support, if any is needed, for the value to users of the ability to physically browse the print collections.

Preservation of information resources   **Tab 4**

None of the questions address the issue of preservation directly, so there are no charts for this area. There are also only a few comments, setting aside those comments relating to the importance of maintaining the collections as browsable, which relate to preservation only tangentially. This makes sense because users generally do not focus on preservation, especially in response to a survey that primarily addresses adequacy of collections, access and use.

**Creation of an environment conducive to providing
services and enjoying Library space (Library as Place)**   **Tab 5**

Reviews on this area of concern are mixed. Eckhart receives consistently high marks on the charts and the comments are generally approving. The charts comparing Crerar to other libraries are generally positive, but there are many disapproving comments. This result is illuminated by the individual charts for Crerar Results. Faculty responses as to Crerar for all 5 questions are very positive, beyond the desired level of service. Graduate student and undergraduate responses are far more mixed. The charts for SSA and JRL show mixed but generally satisfactory results. The comments, however, are almost uniformly negative. The comments for Law are negative as well. These responses support a conclusion that the library as a physical place is important to Library users – remote access to information has not replaced the function of the library as a place to study and to access information. They also support the conclusion that (with the exception of Eckhart), our libraries do not meet users' expectations in this regard.

**Creation of an environment conducive to providing
Services and enjoying Library space (Affect of Service)**   **Tab 6**

Affect of service is an area of strength for the Library. With the exception of the Social Services Administration Library, the data in the charts support a conclusion that the Library is doing well generally in its users' perceptions of Library services. The comments, in general, back up the chart data. The positive comments are often enthusiastic, while the negative ones are frequently specific and can be addressed on a case-by-case basis, rather than requiring fundamental change.

**Developing and engaging in outreach activities and
branding of the institution**   **Tab 7**

To the extent that this category is directed at the relationship of the Library to the academic community in general, both locally and further afield, few of the comments addressed it, as the survey was directed at our own users, rather than the outside world. Some users expressed a desire for more training and instructional opportunities; better usage of such opportunities could address some of the misconceptions and difficulties in using Library resources expressed in comments addressing other areas.