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LibQUAL+™ 2007 Survey Results *Executive Summary*

INTRODUCTION

During the Spring Semester of 2007, the University Library administered the LibQUAL+™ survey. LibQUAL+™ is a suite of services that libraries use to solicit, track, understand, and act upon users' opinions of service quality. These services are offered to the library community by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). The program's centerpiece is a rigorously tested Web-based survey bundled with training that helps libraries assess and improve library services, change organizational culture, and market the library. The LibQUAL+™ survey evolved from a conceptual model based on the SERVQUAL instrument, a popular tool for assessing service quality in the private sector. Participating in the LibQUAL+™ 2007 survey administration were 218 colleges and universities, community colleges, health sciences and hospital/medical libraries, law libraries, and public libraries, which resulted in 152,111 completed surveys.

RESEARCH QUESTION(S) AND SUBJECTS

This survey instrument attempts to measure library users' desired level of service, minimum acceptable level of service, and the level of library service they actually perceive by asking them to rate each dimension on a scale of 1 to 9, with 9 being the highest level of service imaginable. The survey has 22 standardized core questions, divided among three aspects of library service: affect of service, information control, and library as place. There are also five questions chosen by the local library from a standardized list, three questions related to general satisfaction with library services, five related to information literacy outcomes, and three related to frequency of library use. The survey also includes a free-text box where respondents can include comments. Demographic information about the respondents, including a variety of academic and personal characteristics, is gathered via the online survey and cross-tabulated with the responses to each question.

METHODS, EVIDENCE, AND ANALYSIS

The Office of Institutional Research provided email addresses for a random sample of 600 sophomores and 600 juniors. Invitations were sent via e-mail to the 1,200 potential participants each week over a five week period. Sixty-six of the 1,200 addresses were invalid, making the total sample size of the survey 1,134. Gift certificates worth \$25 each were offered to 50 participants selected at random as incentives to participate. Seventy-three responses were received over the course of the administration, yielding a response rate of approximately six percent, which is about the same rate achieved in the previous administration in 2005. As in 2005, the bulk of the 2007 responses came during the first two weeks of the survey. Because of the low response rate, results of the survey cannot be generalized to the larger population of CSU Stanislaus sophomores and juniors. However, a number of interesting conclusions about the quality of library service can be drawn from this administration of the survey.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the 73 survey responses received in this administration, the following general conclusions can be reached:

- Although respondents' perceived level of service, reflected by a mean rating of 7.23 on a scale of 1 to 9 for the 22 core questions, is lower than their desired level of service, rated 8.00, the gap between actual and ideal is relatively small. This is consistent with the results of more than 150,000+ survey administrations world wide in 2007, as well as the results of the 2005 administration at CSU Stanislaus.
- Responses to questions related to information control reflect the widest gap between desired and perceived level of service. This result reinforces the results of the 2005 administration, in which undergraduate responses mirrored the responses of the sophomores and juniors who participated in the 2007 administration.

- Similarly, the mean responses to the five locally selected questions reveal relatively small gaps between the perceived level of service and the desired level of service.
- Respondents' general satisfaction with library services is reflected in a mean rating of 7.27 on a scale of 1 to 9 for the five related questions, which is almost identical to the mean rating reported in the 2005 administration.
- Satisfaction with information literacy outcomes received a mean rating of only 6.70, which indicates that respondents are somewhat less satisfied with the library's contribution to meeting their information needs and developing their information skills. A similar result was reported in the 2005 administration.
- Responses to the questions related to library use indicate that respondents use non-library gateways (such as Google and Yahoo) for information with greater frequency than library resources available either on site or via a library Web page. This result is also consistent with that reported in the 2005 administration.

Like the results of the 2005 administration, the 2007 administration revealed no areas where undergraduate students' perceived level of library service is lower than their minimum acceptable level of service. With regard to the dimension of information control, however, the results of the 2007 administration appear generally to reinforce those of the 2005 administration in reflecting the largest gaps between undergraduates' desired level of service and their perceived level of service. In the 2005 administration, the gaps were even more pronounced for faculty and especially graduate students, whose responses to the questions in this dimension suggest that the level of information control provided by the library is below the minimum acceptable in several respects. Both administrations suggest the need for further investigation in this area, which relates to whether users are able to find the required information in the library in the format of their choosing in an independent and autonomous way. Results of the CSU Stanislaus administrations suggest that undergraduate students and to a greater extent graduate students and faculty, require considerably more information resources, print and electronic, than are being provided by the library. Tools available to help find and retrieve needed resources also seem to be notably inadequate.

Another result of the 2007 administration reinforces results from the 2005 administration and also bears further investigation. The five questions related to information literacy outcomes received the lowest satisfaction rating in both administrations. The results suggest that library efforts to increase or enhance the information seeking skills of students may be inadequate. It could also be the case that students are unaware of or indifferent to such efforts. Since information literacy is a core element of the library mission, the apparent disconnect between library efforts and students' perceptions in this regard also bears a closer examination.

A detailed analysis of the LibQUAL+™ 2007 survey results is available online via the Web at <http://library.csustan.edu/cbengston/LibqualResults2007.pdf>. The analysis, which was prepared by ARL, provides background information about development of the survey instrument and its reliability, as well as full results of this administration at CSU Stanislaus.