

2013 LibQUAL+ Summary

Actionable Results

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Contents

BACKGROUND..... 3

METHODOLOGY 3

COMPARISON OF U OF S RESULTS (2013 VERSUS 2010)..... 3

 Perception: 2013 vs 2010 3

 Adequacy Gap: 2013 vs 2010..... 3

 Superiority Gap: 2013 vs 2010 3

COMPARISON OF U OF S RESULTS VERSUS U15 AVERAGE (2013)..... 4

 Perception: U of S vs U15 average..... 4

 Adequacy Gap: U of S vs U15 average 4

 Superiority Gap: U of S vs U15 average 4

SUMMARY BY USER GROUP (OVER TIME AND PEER COMPARISON) 4

 Undergraduate Students..... 4

 Graduate Students 4

 Faculty..... 5

OVERALL SATISFACTION (2013 VS 2010)..... 5

2013 QUESTION SUMMARY (STRENGTHS/AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT)..... 5

 Undergraduate Students..... 6

 Graduate Students 6

 Faculty..... 7

2013 CONNECTION TO QUALITATIVE RESULTS 7

 Affect of Service 7

 Information Control 7

 Library as Place..... 8

CONCLUSION..... 8

Background

LibQUAL+ measures library users' (undergraduate/graduate students and faculty) perceptions and expectations of library service quality in 3 dimensions:

- Affect of Service – customer services provided by library staff
- Information Control – library resources, collections, and access to resources
- Library as Place – library spaces, facilities and amenities (for study, meeting, etc.)

Methodology

All users are asked to rate their minimum, perceived and desired levels of service quality for each question in the LibQUAL+ survey under each of the 3 dimensions.

The gap between minimum expectations and perceived levels of service quality = adequacy gap (which provides an indication of the extent to which minimum expectations are being met).

The gap between desired expectations and perceived levels of service quality = superiority gap (which provides an indication of the extent to which desired expectations are being met).

The following analysis provides a comparison of the LibQUAL+ results at the U of S in 2013 and 2010. It also focuses on the 2013 U of S results compared to our U15 peers.

Comparison of U of S Results (2013 versus 2010)

Perception: 2013 vs 2010

Undergraduate perceptions of current level of service decreased in 2013 for all 3 dimensions while graduate/faculty perceptions of current level of service increased for all 3 dimensions.

Adequacy Gap: 2013 vs 2010

In 2013, undergraduate/graduate/faculty perceptions were closer to minimum expectations for all 3 dimensions (meaning that the gap between perceived level of service and minimum expectations decreased). This is due to lower perceptions for undergraduate students; higher minimum expectations for graduate students; much higher minimum expectations for faculty.

Superiority Gap: 2013 vs 2010

For undergraduate/graduate students, perceptions were farther from desired expectations in 2013 for all 3 dimensions (except Information Control in graduate students) meaning the gap between desired expectations and perceived level of service increased. This is due to lower perceptions and slightly higher desired expectations in undergraduate students; higher desired expectations for graduate students.

For faculty, perceptions were closer to desired expectations in 2013 for each dimension except for Affect of Service (meaning the gap between desired expectations and perceived level of service decreased) due to higher perceptions.

Comparison of U of S Results versus U15 Average (2013)

Perception: U of S vs U15 average

Undergraduate/graduate/faculty perceptions of current level of service at the U of S were higher for all 3 dimensions (except Information Control in undergraduate students) compared to the U15 average.

Adequacy Gap: U of S vs U15 average

Compared to the U15 average, U of S undergraduate perceptions were farther from minimum expectations (positively) for all 3 dimensions (meaning the gap between perceived level of service and minimum expectations increased) due to lower minimum expectations and slightly higher perceptions.

U of S graduate/faculty perceptions were closer to minimum expectations compared to the U15 average for all 3 dimensions except for Library as Place (meaning the gap between perceived level of service and minimum expectations decreased) due to higher minimum expectations.

Superiority Gap: U of S vs U15 average

Compared to the U15 average, U of S undergraduate/graduate/faculty perceptions were closer to desired expectations for all 3 dimensions meaning the gap between desired expectations and perceived level of service decreased. This is due to lower desired expectations and slightly higher perceptions for undergraduate students; higher perceptions and slightly lower desired expectations for graduate students; lower desired expectations and higher perceptions for faculty.

Summary by User Group (over time and peer comparison)

Undergraduate Students

In 2013, undergraduate perceptions of current levels of service decreased for all 3 dimensions bringing them closer to minimum expectations and farther from desired expectations compared to 2010. The latter was also a result of slightly increased desired expectations.

Compared to the U15 average, U of S undergraduate students had slightly higher perceptions of current levels of service for each dimension (except Information Control). Combined with lower expectations, U of S undergraduate perceptions were closer to desired expectations and farther from minimum expectations (positively) for all 3 dimensions compared to the U15 average.

Graduate Students

In 2013, graduate perceptions of current levels of service increased for all 3 dimensions. However, this increase in perception was not enough to offset the increases in minimum and desired expectations resulting in perceptions being closer to minimum expectations and farther from desired expectations (except for Information Control) compared to 2010.

Compared to the U15 average, U of S graduate students had higher perceptions of current levels of service for all 3 dimensions. Combined with slightly lower desired expectations, U of S graduate perceptions were closer to desired expectations for all 3 dimensions. However, the gap between perception and minimum expectations decreased for each dimension (except Library as Place) compared to the U15 average.

Faculty

In 2013, faculty perceptions of current levels of service increased for all 3 dimensions (except Affect of Service) bringing these perceptions closer to desired expectations for each dimension. However, an increase in perception was not enough to offset the large increases in minimum expectations resulting in a smaller gap between perceptions and minimum expectations for all 3 dimensions compared to 2010.

Compared to the U15 average, U of S faculty had higher perceptions of current levels of service for all 3 dimensions. Combined with lower desired expectations, U of S faculty perceptions were closer to desired expectations for all 3 dimensions. However, the gap between perception and minimum expectations decreased for each dimension (except Library as Place) compared to the U15 average.

Overall Satisfaction (2013 vs 2010)

In 2013, satisfaction with “overall quality of service provided by the library” slightly decreased for undergraduate and graduate students and slightly increased for faculty compared to 2010. Similarly, satisfaction with “the way in which I am treated at the library” slightly decreased for undergraduate and graduate students and slightly increased for faculty compared to 2010. Finally, satisfaction with “library support for my learning, research, and/or teaching needs” slightly decreased for undergraduate students and slightly increased for graduate students and faculty.

Overall, satisfaction decreased for undergraduate students while it increased for faculty in each question. Graduate student satisfaction decreased with respect to overall quality of service and treatment at the library but increased for library support for their learning, research, and/or teaching needs. Compared to each other, undergraduate students had the lowest satisfaction for each question while faculty had the highest satisfaction and graduate students were in between.

2013 Question Summary (Strengths/Areas for Improvement)

In order to determine strengths and areas for improvement, the following process was taken using the results from LibQUAL+ 2013.

Strengths were based on selecting questions where perceptions were farthest from minimum expectations and closest to desired expectations. In other words, the questions with the top 10 adequacy gaps and top 10 superiority gaps across all questions were selected in the first cut. Only questions which had both a top 10 adequacy gap AND top 10 superiority gap made the final cut for a “strength”.

Areas for improvement were based on selecting questions where perceptions were closest to minimum expectations and farthest from desired expectations. In other words, questions with the bottom 10 adequacy gaps and bottom 10 superiority gaps across all questions were selected in the first cut. Only the questions which had both a bottom 10 adequacy gap AND bottom 10 superiority gap were selected in the second cut. Final “areas for improvement” were determined by those questions that also ranked in the top 10 for desired level of service.

Table 1 summarizes the strengths and areas for improvement that were identified for undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty at the U of S based on this process using the LibQUAL+ 2013 results.

Undergraduate Students

Strengths were largely found in the Affect of Service dimension with 4 strengths related to customer treatment and 3 strengths related to job knowledge. Another strength was found under Information Control related to information resources.

Areas for improvement were largely found in the Information Control dimension with 4 areas related to information delivery and 1 related to information resources. Other areas for improvement included 3 areas under Library as Place.

Graduate Students

Strengths were largely found in the Affect of Service dimension with 3 strengths related to customer treatment and 2 strengths related to job knowledge. Another strength was found under Library as Place.

Areas for improvement were all found in the Information Control dimension with 4 areas related to information delivery and 2 related to information resources.

Table 1: Identified Strengths and Areas for Improvement for the U of S (LibQUAL+ 2013 Survey)

	Question Text	Under-graduate	Graduate	Faculty
Affect of Service				
Customer Treatment	Giving users individual attention	★	★	★
Customer Treatment	Employees who deal with users in a caring fashion	★	★	★
Customer Treatment	Employees who are consistently courteous		★	★
Customer Treatment	Readiness to respond to users' questions	★		★
Customer Treatment	Willingness to help users	★		
Job Knowledge	Employees who instill confidence in users	★	★	★
Job Knowledge	Employees who understand the needs of their users	★	★	
Job Knowledge	Employees who have the knowledge to answer user questions	★		☹
Job Knowledge	Dependability in handling users' service problems			☹
Information Control				
Information Delivery	Making electronic resources accessible from my home or office	☹	☹	☹
Information Delivery	A library Web site enabling me to locate information on my own	☹	☹	☹
Information Delivery	Easy-to-use access tools that allow me to find things on my own	☹	☹	☹
Information Delivery	Making information easily accessible for independent use	☹	☹	☹
Information Delivery	Modern equipment that lets me easily access needed information			
Information Resources	Print and/or electronic journal collections I require for my work	☹	☹	☹
Information Resources	The electronic information resources I need		☹	☹
Information Resources	The printed library materials I need for my work	★		★
Library as Place				
Library as a Place of Study	Community space for group learning and group study		★	★
Library as a Place of Study	Library space that inspires study and learning	☹		★
Library as a Place of Study	Quiet space for individual activities	☹		★
Library as a Place of Study	A comfortable and inviting location	☹		★
Library as a Place of Study	A getaway for study, learning, or research			

*Stars highlighted in green denote "strengths"

*Unhappy faces highlighted in orange denote "areas for improvement"

Faculty

Strengths were largely split between the Affect of Service and Library as Place dimensions. For Affect of Service, 4 strengths were related to customer treatment and 1 strength to job knowledge. Another strength was found under Information Control related to information resources.

Areas for improvement were largely found in the Information Control dimension with 4 areas related to information delivery and 2 related to information resources. Other areas for improvement included 2 areas under Affect of Service related to job knowledge.

2013 Connection to Qualitative Results

In 2013, much of the qualitative data (comments) related to each dimension support the findings in the quantitative data (question ratings). While it is sometimes difficult to understand specifically what strong or weak ratings mean for particular questions, it is possible to gain some insight through a review of the qualitative findings where specific comments or themes can be identified that relate to the overall strengths and areas for improvement found in the quantitative data.

Affect of Service

The large majority of comments for the Affect of Service dimension support the quantitative findings which identified several “strengths” at the U of S. In particular, there was an overwhelming number of comments about library employees providing exceptional services. Comments also point out how friendly, helpful, and informative staff were and how much they were appreciated by users of the library. These comments directly tie to the quantitative results found for questions related to both customer treatment and job knowledge in this dimension. In a few cases, various branches or specific staff were identified and openly recognized for their efforts.

One area for improvement that came up in a few comments related to the need for staff to be more knowledgeable about technical issues and/or knowing who to contact to resolve them. There were a few comments pointing to the run-around users sometimes encounter when trying to deal with computer/printer problems. While handling technical issues might not be the responsibility of frontline library staff; these issues reflect on the library as a whole. Therefore, processes should be in place to ensure that everyone knows how to appropriately and efficiently handle technical issues related to computers/printers to reduce run-around.

Information Control

One strength that came up in a few comments was related to the various workshops, seminars and presentations offered by the library (e.g. Refworks sessions) that were rated as being very valuable to users.

Although some positive comments were received for the Information Control dimension, the large majority support the quantitative findings at the U of S which identified several “areas for improvement”. In particular, there was an overwhelming number of comments related to information delivery. Users mentioned the difficulty in navigating the library website and how they find it confusing and not user-friendly. Many also pointed out their confusion and frustration with the online/electronic journal system stating it is cumbersome and tedious, has too many links to click, and logs off too quickly.

USearch was singled out as difficult to use where users cannot find the right articles, need to be right on with words in searches, and have to deal with time out issues. Many noted how they do not like the system and find it frustrating. Several comments indicated users were opting to use Google Scholar stating it's easier to use than the U of S tool. Other issues included the number of electronic journals that the U of S doesn't subscribe to or false statements of availability leading to subscription sign-up pages or broken links. In cases like these, suggestions were made to offer a quick link to inter-library loan services to make it easier to request items not available at the U of S.

Finally, several comments mentioned the need for more electrical outlets for charging/use of personal computing devices. These comments are tied to the quantitative results which show that users are not happy with information delivery in general and want easier access to information.

Library as Place

The comments related to the Library as Place dimension were mixed depending on the specific user group. Similarly, the quantitative results were also a mix with respect to strengths and areas for improvement. One strength that came out in many comments was related to the overall physical environment of the library. Many users suggested that the library offered a quiet, relaxed and comfortable setting to work, which is conducive to productivity and focused study. These comments tie to the strengths in the quantitative results seen for both graduate students and faculty with respect to the library offering community space for group learning and group study.

Although many positive comments were received, a few areas for improvement were noted as well. Some users mentioned the need for more space for group and individual study including more seats and tables. Others referred to the lack of cleanliness of the library (most of which was directed at the upper floors of Murray but was also mentioned on lower floors of Murray and at other branches) which appears to be a recurring problem.

Finally, noise was repeatedly brought up as an issue. This was mostly tied to the ground and first floors of Murray but was also mentioned for other branches. In this case, a few users offered a possible solution of zoning specific quiet versus group study areas (e.g. quiet versus group study floors in Murray). This ties back to the library being a "quiet space for individual activities" which was identified by undergraduate students as an area for improvement. Users further explained that these zones would need to be enforced by library staff in order to ensure that the quiet areas stay quiet.

Conclusion

The quantitative results of LibQUAL+ 2013 provided information on U of S library users' perceptions and expectations of library service quality in 3 dimensions (Affect of Service, Information Control, and Library as Place). These results were compared to our results in 2010 and to our U15 peers. In general the U of S results from 2013 were less favourable than the 2010 results especially for undergraduate students. However, when comparing our 2013 results to the U15 average, the U of S results were generally more favourable especially for undergraduate students. Therefore, although our results were less favourable than 2010, we are still doing better compared to our U15 peers.

More specific analysis of the LibQUAL+ questions allowed for identification of strengths and areas for improvement. The large majority of strengths were found in the Affect of Service dimension related to

customer treatment and job knowledge. The large majority of areas for improvement were found under the Information Control dimension related to information delivery and information resources. The Library as Place dimension had a mix of strengths and areas for improvement depending on the user group.

Compared to the quantitative results, much of the qualitative data (comments) support the general findings of library service quality in the 3 dimensions measured in LibQUAL+.