

Questioning LibQUAL+: Expanding Its Assessment of Academic Library Effectiveness

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LibQUAL+

- From ARL's New Measures Initiative
- Since 2000
- Advertised as 'total market survey' of users
- Over 500 libraries
- Universities, colleges, community colleges, health sciences, law libraries
- WWW.libqual.com

LibQUAL+

- Instrument: Survey of undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, and library staff
- Research Design: Users' *perceptions of service delivery*



LibQUAL+ 2005 Instrument for Duke University

Core Questions: Affect of Service

- AS-1 Employees who instill confidence in users
- AS-2 Giving users individual attention
- AS-3 Employees who are consistently courteous
- AS-4 Readiness to respond to users' questions
- AS-5 Employees who have knowledge to answer questions
- AS-6 Employees who deal with users in a caring fashion
- AS-7 Employees who understand the needs of their users
- AS-8 Willingness to help users
- AS-9 Dependability in handling users' service problems



LibQUAL+ 2005 Instrument for Duke University

- Core Questions: Information Control
- IC-1 Making electronic resource accessible from my home or office
- IC-2 A library Web site enabling me to locate information on my own
- IC-3 The printed library materials I need for my work
- IC-4 The electronic information resources I need
- IC-5 Modern equipment that lets me easily access needed information
- IC-6 Easy-to-use access tools that allow me to find things on my own
- IC-7 Making information easily accessible for independent use
- IC-8 Print and/or electronic journal collections I require for my work



LibQUAL+ 2005 Instrument for Duke University

- Core Questions: Library as a Place
- LP-1 Library space that inspires study and learning
- LP-2 Quiet space for individual attention
- LP-3 A comfortable and inviting location
- LP-4 A getaway for study, learning or research
- LP-5 Community space for group learning and group study



LibQUAL+ 2005 Instrument for Duke University

- Localized Questions
- Library keeping me informed about all of its services
- Teaching me how to locate, evaluate, and use information
- Efficient interlibrary loan/document delivery
- Convenient service hours
- Providing services as promised



LibQUAL+ 2005 Instrument for Duke University

- Information Literacy Questions
- The library helps me stay abreast of developments in my field(s) of interest.
- The library aids my advancement in my discipline.
- The library enables me to be more efficient in my academic pursuits.
- 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



Conceptual Background

- ServQUAL: Generic instrument
- Service marketing literature
- Business focus
- Customer survey
- Quality: Customer's 'perceived quality'
- Customer expectations of service vs. received service



LibQUAL+: For Each Question

- Gap between minimum and perceived expectations
- Gap between desired and perceived expectations
- Zone of tolerance: Difference between desired and perceived scores
- Outside zone of tolerance: Lose support



Critiquing LibQUAL+: Eight Questions

- Arise from any method of determining library effectiveness, including LibQUAL+
- Arise from instrument
- Arise from fundamental assumption
- Arise from research design



LibQUAL+: Functional Model of Service Effectiveness

- Instrument: User survey
- Fundamental Assumption: Exclusive customer judgment of quality
- Research design: User perceptions of service delivery on users' emotions, their self-reliance, and library place



Functional Model of Service Effectiveness

- Christian Gronroos (1983) and Walfried Lasser (2000)
- Functional quality: *How* service is provided
- Functional quality: Care and manner of doctors and nurses in delivering service
- Provided with sensitivity, for user self reliance



Technical Model of Service Effectiveness

- Technical quality: *What* is provided
- Technical quality: Accuracy of diagnosis and
- Technical quality: Impact of medical procedures



Functional/Technical Model

- Examines perceptions of service delivery
- Examines experience of service essence
- Integrates these



Question 1: How do Libraries Operate to Serve Users?

- Ross Atkinson (1996)
- Professional activities and results
- Selection and collections
- Organization and classification pattern
- Representation and item descriptions
- Acquisition and legal control
- Place management and place



Question 1: How Libraries Serve Users

- General forms of access: User need
- Consistent intellectual: Intellectual similarities within collections
- Dependable legal: Time of access
- Rapid physical: Place of access



Question 1: LibQUAL+ and General User Needs

- IC 3 and IC8: Print materials and electronic journals needed for work
- Disciplinary affiliation
- No direct examination of collections, classification patterns, item descriptions
- No direct examination of consistent intellectual access or collections' intellectual similarities



Question 1: LibQUAL+ and General User Needs

- Local question: Convenient service hours
- No direct examination of legal control
- No extensive examination of dependable legal access or time of retrieval



Question 1: LibQUAL+ and General User Needs

- Address place of retrieval
- LP 1-5: Place for study and research
- No direct examination of building or computing environment
- No direct examination of rapid physical access or time of retrieval



Question 2: What is the Value Provided to Library Users?

- Immediate vs. Eventual value
- LibQUAL+: Eventual value
- Improved grades
- Advancement in discipline
- Currency in field



Question 2: Library User Value

- Immediate Outcomes: Change in mental state
- Education to improve grades
- Persuasion to advance in discipline
- Understandings, skills, beliefs, attitudes



Question 3: Are Library Users Able to be Self-Reliant?

LibQUAL+ IC 1-8: Locate information at
home or office

- Work independently
- Sporadic, as needed user-librarian contact
- Students: Ignorance of collection similarity, legal control, library place
- Need professional assistance



Question 4:

Are Users Happy with Delivery Well Served by Library Service Essence?

- LibQUAL+ AS 1-9
- Knowledgeable employees,
- Willingness to help users
- Courteous assistance
- Reliable individual attention
- User satisfaction



Question 4: User Satisfaction

- It depends upon user
- Knowledge of user as to essence of service
- Undergraduate: Knowledge of intellectual similarity, times and places of retrieval



Question 5: Are Academic Library Users Also its Customers?

- LibQUAL+'s fundamental assumption asserts that "only customers judge quality; all other judgments are irrelevant"
- Relation between library use and funding
- Customer: Pays to make possible the service he/she has received
- Many academic library users are not its customers



Question 5:

Three Funding Models

- Model: Type of user
- Users: Undergraduates, graduates, faculty
- Customer model: Graduate students
- Voluntary contribution model:
Undergraduates (parents)
- Community model: Faculty



Question 5: User/Customer

- User is larger category
- Customer: not on/off
- Undergraduates usually not customers
- Faculty usually not customers



Question 6:

Claims to Library Effectiveness

- No universally accepted definition of organizations/organizational effectiveness
- No one constituency is preeminent
- Multiple valid definitions for organizational effectiveness exist
- Constituencies: customers, investors, employees, managers, community members



Question 6: Who has Legitimate Claims as to Library Effectiveness?

Robert Orr (1973)

- Resources: Inputs
- Capability: Process capacity
- Utilization: Outputs
- Value: Outcomes or Impacts



Question 6:

Claims to Library Effectiveness

- Value to multiple library constituencies:
- Employees: Worthwhile work experience (process capacity)
- Managers: Goal achievement (outputs)
- Users: Intellectual outcomes (impacts)
- Funders: Efficiency (inputs)



Question 7: What is the Basis of an Academic Library's Obligations?

- LibQUAL+: Use of library
- Functional/Technical Model: Activity contributed to it
- Activity provided directly by users or indirectly by employees and managers
- Activity provided indirectly through money by funders



Question 7:

Academic Library Obligations

- Effectiveness means meeting needs of all four constituencies
- LibQUAL+: Only partially addresses needs of current users
- LibQUAL+: Does not address needs of future users
- LibQUAL+: Does not address needs of employees, managers, and funders



Question 8: How Do Users' Perceptions of Service Delivery and its Reality Relate?

- LibQUAL+ Research Design: Perceived Quality
- LibQUAL+: People react to service based upon short term perceptions of its delivery
- LibQUAL+: Perceptions of service delivery rapidly reflect underlying reality or ignores issue



Question 8: User Perceptions

- Perceptions and reality gradually converge
- Multiple constituencies: employees, managers, users, funders
- For each constituency, these converge across intellectual similarity, time, and place of library
- Example: Astronomy collection
- Need to sample perceptions and reality



Evaluation of LibQUAL+: Functional/Technical Model

- Encompass functional and technical emphasis
- Encompass place, collection similarity, and times of access
- Encompass subsequent and immediate epistemological outcomes
- Encompass user self-reliance and professional assistance
- Encompass user satisfaction with delivery and experience of service essence



Functional/Technical Model

- Encompass customer, voluntary, and community models of library funding
- Encompass need for value by library users, funders, employees, and managers
- Encompass short term perceptions of service delivery and long term experience of service's technical quality



Two Recommendations

- First, examine the multidimensional nature of academic library effectiveness for
 1. Intellectual outcomes/impacts (users)
 2. Work experience (employees)
 3. Goal achievement (managers)
 4. Input efficiency (funders)
- Determine interactions across them (Orr)



Two Recommendations

- Second, balance studying perceptions and the underlying reality they reveal for all four constituencies
- LibQUAL+: Functional element of service quality recognizes perceptions of service delivery, its *how*
- Technical element recognizes long-term quality of service, its *what*



Academic Library Effectiveness

- Academic libraries are not business, despite intense competitive pressures
- Strengthen society by serving users, employees, managers, and funders
- Use customer, voluntary contribution, and community model of funding



Academic Library Effectiveness

- Academic library community: universities, colleges, and community colleges
- Integrate input, process, output, and outcome perspectives



Academic Library Effectiveness

- Disciplinary communities: psychology, philosophy, education
- Examine users' outcomes from library service: Understandings, skills, attitudes, beliefs
- Examine users' perceptions of outcomes



Academic Library Effectiveness

- Business, government, and non-profit communities
- Examine influence of customer, voluntary, and community funding models upon the types of information access and generic user needs



Conclusions

- Body of theory: predicting and explaining the interactions across a series of phenomena.
- Functional Model:
 1. Perceptions of library service delivery
 2. Satisfaction with library service delivery



Conclusions

- Technical Model:
 1. Academic library's professional activities and their results
 2. Three major forms of information access: Consistent intellectual, dependable legal, and rapid physical
 3. Three major forms of information need: (Collection similarity, time, and place of access)



Conclusions

- Technical model continued:
 4. Forms of value provided to library constituencies: work experience, organizational achievement, intellectual change, input efficiency
 5. Self-reliance of library users
 - 6 Library's funding models



Conclusions

- Answering eight questions
- Demonstrate immediate and long-term effectiveness
- Encourage discussion and practice of evaluating academic libraries
- LibQUAL+: A solid start
- Much remains to be done



Questioning LibQUAL+

- Full Publication:
- Edgar, William B. (2006). Questioning LibQUAL+: Expanding its Assessment of Academic Library Effectiveness: *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 6(4), pp. 445-465.
- Thank you
- Questions?

