



LibQUAL+ 2008

Executive Summary: The Case Libraries

Background

In the fall of 2008, the libraries of Case Western Reserve University invited the Case community to participate in LibQUAL+, a survey that measures users' perceptions of service quality. Nearly 600 students, faculty, and staff took the time to complete the 10-15 minute questionnaire. In addition, many respondents added comments and suggestions. Together, the survey's quantitative data and the added comments provide valuable information about how our users view library services, spaces, and resources. **We thank you for your participation!**

Contact Us

Confidentiality is a hallmark of the LibQUAL+ survey. Yet, in so many instances we wished we had had the opportunity to respond to specific comments and observations. If at any time you have questions, comments, or suggestions please email: askalibrarian@case.edu or earnestine.adeyemon@case.edu.

About LibQUAL+

Produced by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), LibQUAL+ is a suite of services that libraries use to solicit, track, understand, and act upon users' opinions of service quality. The program's centerpiece is a web-based survey that measures the gaps between desired expectations of service quality, perceived performance, and minimum expectations of service quality.

LibQUAL+ asks users to rate the level of library service received in three dimensions:

1. Information Control—rates satisfaction with print materials, electronic resources, the library website, and ease of access to information.
2. Library as Place—rates satisfaction with physical space as a place for independent and group study and learning.
3. Affect of Service—rates satisfaction with customer service provided by library employees.

The survey instrument uses 22 core and demographic questions to rank respondents' perceptions. Case has been involved in three iterations of the survey—2002, 2003, and 2008. Full reports for each year may be found here: [LibQUAL+ Survey Notebooks](#)

Changes Made Since the 2003 Survey

In 2003, the Kelvin Smith Library emailed survey invitations to a sample of Case students, faculty, and staff. Current rankings are more meaningful when viewed in the context of service gaps perceived by respondents in 2003. Below are key changes in the environment since the previous survey.

Ratings from 2003	Actions/Responses
Hours Library should have longer hours (major theme)	KSL has instituted 24/7 building access
Research Materials Not enough journals or books	Even with budget constraints, each year the Case libraries add materials to collections including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eJournals—the libraries provide access to over 60,000 journal titles, up from 5,638 titles in 2003. • Books—print and electronic collections grew from 1.5 million holdings in 2003 to 1.9 million in 2008. You may suggest titles here.
Leisure Materials Not enough leisure or recreational materials	KSL has partnered with the Cleveland Public Library to offer <i>CPL@Case-KSL</i> , a collection of the latest bestsellers, popular magazines, and audiobooks.
Space Not enough quiet space	KSL has added study rooms on the lower level and on the 3 rd floor
Technology Outdated computers, printers, photocopiers	Since 2005, KSL has been replacing computers, printers, and photocopiers.
Software Need office applications on computers	Beginning in 2006, KSL added MS Office to public computers.
Website Website is confusing	The KSL website was redesigned in 2007
Catalog Catalog needs to be improved	The public catalog was most recently updated in 2008.

2008 Survey Results

The committee analyzed results from three perspectives:

1. Case scores compared to the aggregate scores of all ARL libraries that participated in the 2008 survey.
2. Comments made by Case survey respondents.
3. Ratings of five “local” questions that were interspersed throughout the survey.

Following is an analysis of each of these components.

Case Aggregate Scores

The committee compared Case’s LibQUAL+ results with the results of all ARL libraries that participated in the 2008 survey. The scores in the following tables show that Case’s rankings are comparable to those of other ARL libraries. The tables display mean scores for each dimension of library service quality measured by the survey.

ARL Libraries

Service Dimensions	Minimum Mean	Desired Mean	Perceived Mean	Service Adequacy Mean*
Affect of Service	6.34	7.77	7.14	0.79
Information Control	6.79	8.18	7.20	0.41
Library as Place	6.24	7.76	6.89	0.65
Overall	6.49	7.29	7.11	0.61

Case Libraries

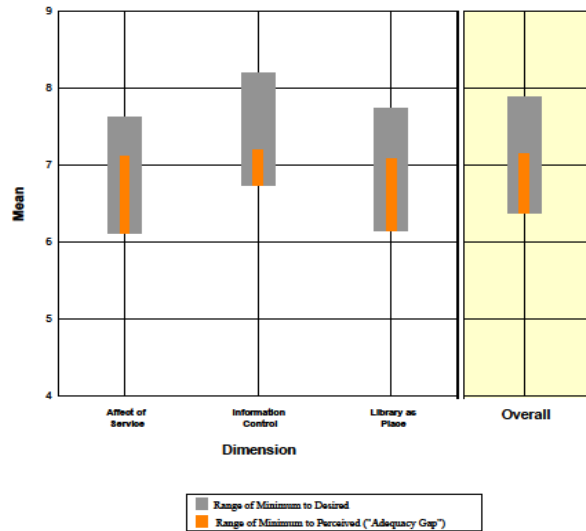
Service Dimensions	Minimum Mean	Desired Mean	Perceived Mean	Service Adequacy Mean*
Affect of Service	6.12	7.62	7.11	0.99
Information Control	6.73	8.19	7.20	0.47
Library as Place	6.15	7.74	7.08	0.93
Overall	6.37	7.88	7.15	0.77

*In general, service adequacy is an indicator of the extent to which a library is meeting the minimum expectations of its users. The service adequacy gap score is calculated by subtracting the minimum score from the perceived score on any given question, for each user.

The ‘temperature’ chart below is a graphical representation of Case scores. The gray exterior bars represent the range of minimum to desired mean scores for each dimension of service quality. The orange interior bars represent the range of minimum to perceived mean scores (the service adequacy gap) for each dimension. (If an interior bar drops below its surrounding exterior bar, a service dimension is perceived to be outside users’ ‘zones of tolerance.’)

3.2 Core Question Dimensions Summary

On the chart below, scores for each dimension of library service quality have been plotted graphically. The exterior bars represent the range of minimum to desired mean scores for each dimension. The interior bars represent the range of minimum to perceived mean scores (the service adequacy gap) for each dimension of library service quality.



Language: American English
 Institution Type: College or University
 Consortium: None
 User Group: All (Excluding Library Staff)

What We Did Best in 2008 (trait closest to maximum expectation for all categories):

- ✓ All populations: Community as space for group learning and group study
- ✓ Undergraduate: Employees who are consistently courteous
- ✓ Graduate: 1) Giving users individual attention and 2) Willingness to help users
- ✓ Faculty: 1) Giving users individual attention and 2) Community as space for group learning and group study
- ✓ Staff: 1) Giving users individual attention and 2) Community as space for group learning and group study

Areas that Need Improvement (libraries do not meet users' minimum expectation):

Case's gap scores are similar to the gap scores of all ARL libraries that participated in the 2008 survey.

- ✓ Graduate students: Print and/or electronic journal collections required for work
- ✓ Faculty: A library website enabling me to locate information on my own
- ✓ Faculty: The printed library materials I need for my work
- ✓ Faculty: The electronic information resources I need
- ✓ Faculty: Modern equipment that lets me easily access needed information
- ✓ Faculty: Easy-to-use access tools that allow me to find things on my own
- ✓ Faculty: Making information easily accessible for independent use

2003 vs. 2008 Results

Library as Place was the key concern in both 2003 and 2008.

Improvement noted: "Making electronic resources available from my home or office" was below the minimum expectations for both graduate students and faculty in 2003, and was **above** the minimum in 2008. Faculty rated "Information Control" below the minimum in both 2003 and 2008.

Observation

"Information Control" is the one dimension that generated negative gap scores across all ARL libraries that administered the survey. Martha Kyrillidou, Director, ARL Statistics and Service Quality Programs, observes:

The socio-economic and technological changes that are taking place around us are affecting the ways users interact with libraries. We used to think that libraries could provide reliable and reasonably complete access to published and scholarly output, yet we now know from LibQUAL+® that users have an insatiable appetite for content. No library can ever have sufficient information content that would come close to satisfying this appetite (Case LibQUAL+ 2008 Notebook, p.5).

2. Survey Comments

We received 215 comments ranging from remarks on how well the libraries are serving constituents to dissatisfaction about not having access to specific materials. Many comments cross several service dimensions and some express both praise and dissatisfaction. Collectively, comments illustrate the challenges involved in trying to satisfy the needs of many. For example, one comment may praise the availability of group and individual study space while the very next comment will condemn the lack of space. However, for the most part, comments support the survey's quantitative data.

Comments—Undergraduate students: Library as Place

Undergraduate students tend to *live* in the Case libraries more than other groups. *Library as Place* was their major concern.

—What they liked (key themes)

The majority of respondents thought the libraries did a good job across all service dimensions and made particular note of:

- ✓ 24/7 building access (a major plus)
- ✓ Willingness of staff to help
- ✓ Variety of spaces for study and learning
- ✓ Comprehensiveness of online journals and other resources
- ✓ OhioLINK

*“It is amazing to have
the library open 24-7!!”
Undergraduate student*

—What they perceived to be problems (key themes)

- ✓ Not enough group or individual study rooms
- ✓ Too much noise in study spaces
- ✓ Library service/help centers are too noisy
- ✓ Library employees are too noisy
- ✓ Not enough information access (print and electronic journals and books)
- ✓ Don’t know how to find resources
- ✓ Trouble navigating website

“In the silent room upstairs, all food or noisy items should be banned. It is very disruptive to read there when someone is ruffling through a bag of potato chips or crunching loudly.”

Undergraduate student

Comments: Graduate Students: Information Control

Graduate students found *Information Control* to be the greatest issue (perceived less than minimum).

—What they liked (major themes)

- ✓ Willingness of staff to help
- ✓ Ability to access information outside of library
- ✓ Online self-help (e.g., ability to renew books and locate information)
- ✓ OhioLINK

“Overall, I am highly impressed with the quality of service that the library provides. All library staff is extremely friendly and pleasant to work with. Everyone is knowledgeable and is eager to help. Great job! Thank you!”

Graduate student

—What they perceived to be problems (major themes)

- ✓ Not enough print or online materials
- ✓ Library website does not enable researchers to find information on their own
- ✓ Not enough quiet spaces to read and study
- ✓ Technical problems in accessing materials

“I am very disappointed in the journals available online through CWRU”.
Graduate student

“There are many resources but no proper means to understand how to use which for what purpose.”
Graduate student

Comments: Faculty and Staff: Information Control

This user group also rated *Information Control* as the major concern.

—What they liked

- ✓ Willingness of staff to help
- ✓ Ability to access information outside of library
- ✓ OhioLINK

“I am always amazed at the resources we have available to us especially on-line. The journal collection is amazing.”
Faculty member

—What they perceived to be problems (major themes)

- ✓ Not enough print or online materials
- ✓ Library website does not enable researchers to find information on their own
- ✓ Not enough space for research
- ✓ Technical problems in accessing materials
- ✓ Hours at libraries other than KSL
- ✓ Catalog not easily searchable
- ✓ Not enough outreach to staff

“I would like the catalog to be easier to search on the KSL main page. I would like more information on the services available in the library that aren't available online. I would also like the web page to be less cluttered. And lastly, I would like information on the front page instructing me on ways I can find information, like the electronic journal collection.”
Staff member

User comments confirm the differences in needs and expectations among user groups. While all users are concerned about the level of service quality across all dimensions, “zones of tolerance” by group differ for specific dimensions. The Case libraries will attempt to respond to all survey comments. We have already begun this process and will complete it by the fall of 2009. You may link to [Responses to Comments](#) from the main [2008 Results](#) page. The individual web pages of the Case libraries will also post library updates. However, please keep in mind that libraries, like most organizations, require time to implement significant changes.

3. Local Questions

Libraries had the option of selecting five additional questions to be interspersed throughout the LibQUAL+ survey. The Case libraries asked users their perceptions of the following.

- Availability of online help when using my library's electronic resources
- Providing help when and where I need it
- Availability of subject specialist assistance
- Librarians teaching me how to effectively use the electronically available databases, journals, and books
- Librarians providing help that assists in finding information needed now while improving my research skills

The tables below show that users responded positively while indicating that there is room for improvement.

The following table displays mean scores for each dimension of library service quality measured by the LibQUAL+® survey, where *n* is the number of respondents for each particular dimension. (For a more detailed explanation of the headings, see the Introduction to this notebook.) A complete listing of the survey questions and their dimensions can be found in Appendix A.

Dimension	Minimum Mean	Desired Mean	Perceived Mean	Adequacy Mean	Superiority Mean	n
Affect of Service	6.12	7.62	7.11	0.99	-0.51	556
Information Control	6.73	8.19	7.20	0.47	-0.99	558
Library as Place	6.15	7.74	7.08	0.93	-0.66	554
Overall:	6.37	7.88	7.15	0.77	-0.74	558

The following table displays standard deviation for each dimension of library service quality measured by the LibQUAL+® survey, where *n* is the number of respondents for each particular dimension. (For a more detailed explanation of the headings, see the Introduction to this notebook.) A complete listing of the survey questions and their dimensions can be found in Appendix A.

Dimension	Minimum SD	Desired SD	Perceived SD	Adequacy SD	Superiority SD	n
Affect of Service	1.41	1.13	1.11	1.38	1.13	556
Information Control	1.27	0.85	1.06	1.48	1.21	558
Library as Place	1.56	1.28	1.27	1.75	1.59	554
Overall:	1.24	0.90	0.99	1.34	1.09	558

Language:	American English
Institution Type:	College or University
Consortium:	None
User Group:	All (Excluding Library Staff)

Conclusion

LibQUAL+ is but one of several tools that the Case libraries use to continuously evaluate service quality. We also use focus groups, other surveys, and (one of our most valued quality thermometers) user's comments and suggestions collected at service points. The 2008 survey garnered a substantial amount of information and tells us that:

- All groups, but especially undergraduates, rate highly 24/7 access to KSL.
- All groups expect (and usually receive) excellent customer service at all libraries.
- Even when they are less than satisfied with other service dimensions, users' overall experiences are usually improved by interfacing with library employees.
- Because they *live* in the libraries, undergraduates desire unlimited access to a variety of spaces for group and independent study.
- All groups desire and expect convenient and comprehensive access to print and electronic collections at the point of need.
- OhioLINK is an invaluable resource for the libraries.
- All groups realize that the Case libraries provide access to a huge quantity of scholarly information yet they still feel that this is not enough.
- Noise, including that from cell phones, has to be managed better by the libraries and their users.
- With the amount and variety of information available, the ability of all groups to locate information on their own is becoming essential. In order to do this, all groups desire library websites and tools that enable this process.

Overall, students, faculty, and staff indicate that library services fall within their 'zones of tolerance.' However, the goal of the Case libraries is to build excellent user experiences across all service dimensions. LibQUAL+ aides in this process by providing us with benchmarks for assessment and development as we compare our data with that of other ARL libraries. LibQUAL+ also provides us with longitudinal data for self-assessment as we compare results over time. We have tentatively proposed a 2-3 year cycle for administering LibQUAL+ at Case. This gives us time between each implementation to review, analyze, interpret, and share results. It also gives us time to make realistic changes.

Again, thank you for your participation in the LibQUAL+ 2008 survey and thank you for your support!

LibQUAL+ Committee

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