LibQual

Introduction

During the spring 2010 semester, Texas Woman's University Libraries participated in a LibQual survey. Offered by the Association of Research Libraries, LibQual has been used by over 1000 libraries around the world to analyze and improve services. TWU Libraries saw LibQual participation as an opportunity to help the Libraries better understand user perceptions of library service quality and make improvements.

The Libraries encouraged everyone to participate in the survey. In an attempt to include as many members of the campus community as possible, the Libraries offered an incentive prize and sent email announcements and distributed flyers and table tents announcing the purpose of the survey and the prize for participation. Participation came from every part of the University – 885 undergraduates, graduates, faculty and staff representing every discipline, every campus and distance education completed the survey. The survey was open from February 15 - March 15, 2010.

Methodology

LibQual compares user perceptions of service against expectations. The survey measures three dimensions of service: Information Control (ease of finding information), Affect of Service (helpfulness of staff), and Library as Place (conduciveness of the physical environment for individual study, group work and inspiration). LibQual uses three scales to indicate the minimum level of service users would find acceptable, their desired service level, and the level of service they believe the libraries provide. To clarify their responses survey takers can add comments.

Survey results are measured with two scores -- the service superiority gap and the service adequacy gap. The service superiority gap is calculated by subtracting the desired score from the perceived score on any given question. Service superiority equals perceived minus desired service. The service adequacy score measures the difference between the minimum and the perceived score. The higher the service superiority and service adequacy scores, the better the library's performance. In general, scores fall into a zone of tolerance that is less than desired and greater than the minimum. We are pleased that overall survey results indicate TWU Libraries are meeting user expectations.

The user perceptions results are summarized in charts and tables. Color coded radar charts aggregate the data and provide an overall understanding of user perceptions of service quality at a library. Radar graphs shaded in blue and yellow indicates that users' perceptions fall within the zone of tolerance. Green indicates superior service and red indicates less than minimum service. Bar charts represent the difference between the zone of tolerance and the perceived service. Tables summarize the data numerically.

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Interpreting the Survey

The 2010 survey results tell us that TWU Libraries are meeting and in some cases, exceeding expectations. The survey also has information about respondents' service desires that library staff can use to improve service.

Follow up:

Library staff analyzed the LibQual data in detail to determine where improvements could be made to reduce the gap between users' expectations and perceptions of service.   The 2010 survey results indicated that while the Libraries are meeting respondents expectations, there are service areas in which library staff can improve service.   To respond, the Libraries began incorporating information about areas in which respondents indicated the greatest difference between expected and desired levels of satisfaction into the strategic planning process.

Library staff sought to improve Information Control.   Respondents indicated the a satisfaction gap with "Making electronic resources accessible from my home or office", "A library Web site enabling me to locate information on my own" and "Modern equipment that lets me easily access needed information".   In responses to questions asked to determine perceptions of services (Affect of Service), library users indicated areas for improvement are "Readiness to respond to users' questions".   Library as Place was generally given high marks; however, upon analyzing the users' comments a theme emerged. Students desire more comfortable, quiet space for study and longer service hours.   Other areas in which comments indicated a consensus that service could be improved were equipment, print collections, and Interlibrary Loan (ILL).

Changes made during Summer and Fall 2010 in response to LibQual:

The Libraries have responded to LibQual data in the following ways:

Information Control (ease of finding information):

- Redesigned the Libraries' web pages to facilitate locating needed information. The redesign pages were based on student input gathered through focus groups to create the redesign. The Libraries placed one large search box for all information sources in a central location on the homepage and linked to a Research page that uses the vocabulary suggested by students to help them locate resources.
- Analyzed search results and improved search ease of finding information by refining search parameters, reweighting indexes and correcting records in the online catalog.
- Improved ease of finding print materials by inventorying the print collection, editing records, and replacing lost items or removing records for items no longer on the shelf.
- Added "ebook" signs in the stacks to remind browsers that more resources are available over the internet.
- Increased the number of finding aids to provide improved access to archival materials.
- Decreased logon time for access to the network from ten to less than two minutes. .

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- Redesigned subject guides to include more user centered instructional content and make it easier for students to locate key resources in their areas of study.
- Introduced social media and mobile applications to embed the most used library services and resources into the lifestyle and work style of our users.
- Began evaluating Discovery Systems, commercial products that simply the discovery of library information resources by providing a single point of entry.
- Completed implementation of a new ILL system that was in process when the survey was administered. The new system allows users to track the status of their ILL requests and staff is assessing processes for new efficiencies.
- Removed damaged and unused materials to make room for requested materials.

Library as Place:
- Arranged additional lounge seating on the third floor of Blagg-Huey to provide more comfortable seating in a quiet area.
- Replaced public service printers with faster, quieter machines.
- Improved signage at the circulation desk to help orient students.
- Installed an online booking system enabling students to reserve study rooms.
- Added new print titles in response to comments that the shelves were looking "shabby".
- Evaluated research area services, activities, and staffing and proposed a furniture arrangement to better serve the students and more effectively utilize the reference staff, and improve work flow and pathway to and from print stations. Design changes will create a welcome/help station. Expected completion is summer 2011.

Affect of Service (helpfulness of staff):

- Removed a glass wall in circulation to reduce the barriers between circulation and ILL staff and library users.
- Designed a new reference desk to create a welcome/help station in order to improve support services in reference and increase proximity to students needing help with technology.