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Library Service Quality in Academic Libraries: Assessment and Action

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Presentation

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Library Service Quality in Academic Libraries: Assessment and Action

ALC 2003

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Overview

- General introduction
- Survey specifics
- Summary of results
- Next steps
- Questions



Why Assess Service Quality?

- Survival
- Accountability
- Benchmarking
- Improvement
- Focus resources



“Academic libraries are facing...major threats in the global digital environment and an increasingly competitive environment, and must improve the quality of their services in order to survive”

(2001, Rowena Cullen, *Library Trends*, 49:4)



Current Measures

- Input and Output
- Resources
- Local initiatives to gain user feedback



ServQual is the Antecedent

- Developed for the for-profit sector
- 15 years of research and application
- Standard measure of service quality



Why Measure Quality?

- “A measure of library quality based solely on collections has become obsolete.” Nitecki 1996
- “Within a service-quality assessment model only customers judge quality; all other judgements are essentially irrelevant.” Zeithaml, Parasuraman, Berry, 1990



How is Quality Measured?

- Based on users' and non-users' perceptions and expectations
- Gap analysis between perceived level of service, and minimum and desired service level



What is LibQUAL+?

- An ARL New Measures Initiative project
- 3 years in test mode, one more remaining
- With Texas A & M
- Funded through US Dept. of Ed. Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE)



Total Market Survey

- A way of listening to users
- Measurement of competitors' service quality
- To allow for benchmarking and identification of best practices



LibQUAL+ Goals

- Establish a library service quality assessment program at ARL
- Develop a web-based tool for assessing library service quality
- Develop mechanisms and protocols for evaluating libraries
- Identify best practices in providing library service quality



Why LibQUAL+?

- U of A is a member of ARL, U of C is not
- Allows both to see their libraries in relationship to academic libraries across North America over time
- Demonstrates a commitment to participate in ARL measures
- Complements other local assessments
- Quick, easy and inexpensive



Benefits of LibQUAL+

- Customer focus
- Seen to be listening to all on campus
- Identify our strengths and areas for improvement
- Help set up benchmarks for performance measures over time
- Provides library with basis for systematic feedback
- Provides an opportunity to highlight library's accomplishments to the university



LibQUAL+ is....

- A tool for identifying areas for service improvement
- A place to start



LibQUAL+ is not....

- An answer sheet – further analysis of the data is important
- The only assessment tool. Others include:
 - Focus groups
 - Surveys
 - Feedback comments
 - Quantitative statistics
 - Interviews



The Survey



Survey Administration

Local:

- Campus ethics review
- random samples drawn from campus populations
- e-mail invitation to participate
- remote web survey, with option of completing paper survey
- Campus communication



Survey Administration

Texas A&M / ARL:

- data collection and storage
- data analysis: standard set of data analysis provided for local results, ARL results and Aggregate results
- SPSS file of raw data for further analysis

LibQUAL+ 2002

Survey Specifics

- 164 institutions from across North America participated - including 40 ARL Libraries, OhioLink Consortia and Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries (AAHSL)
- 4 Canadian institutions: McGill, York, U of A, and U of C
- 78,000 respondents


LibQUAL+

Spring 2002 Survey



Overview:

- 25 service quality survey questions
- demographic & usage questions
- one open comments box



LibQUAL+

Spring 2002 Survey

25 Survey Questions in 4 Service Quality Dimensions:

- Information Access (5 questions)
- Service Affect (9 questions)
- Library as Place (5 questions)
- Personal Control (6 questions)

LibQUAL+

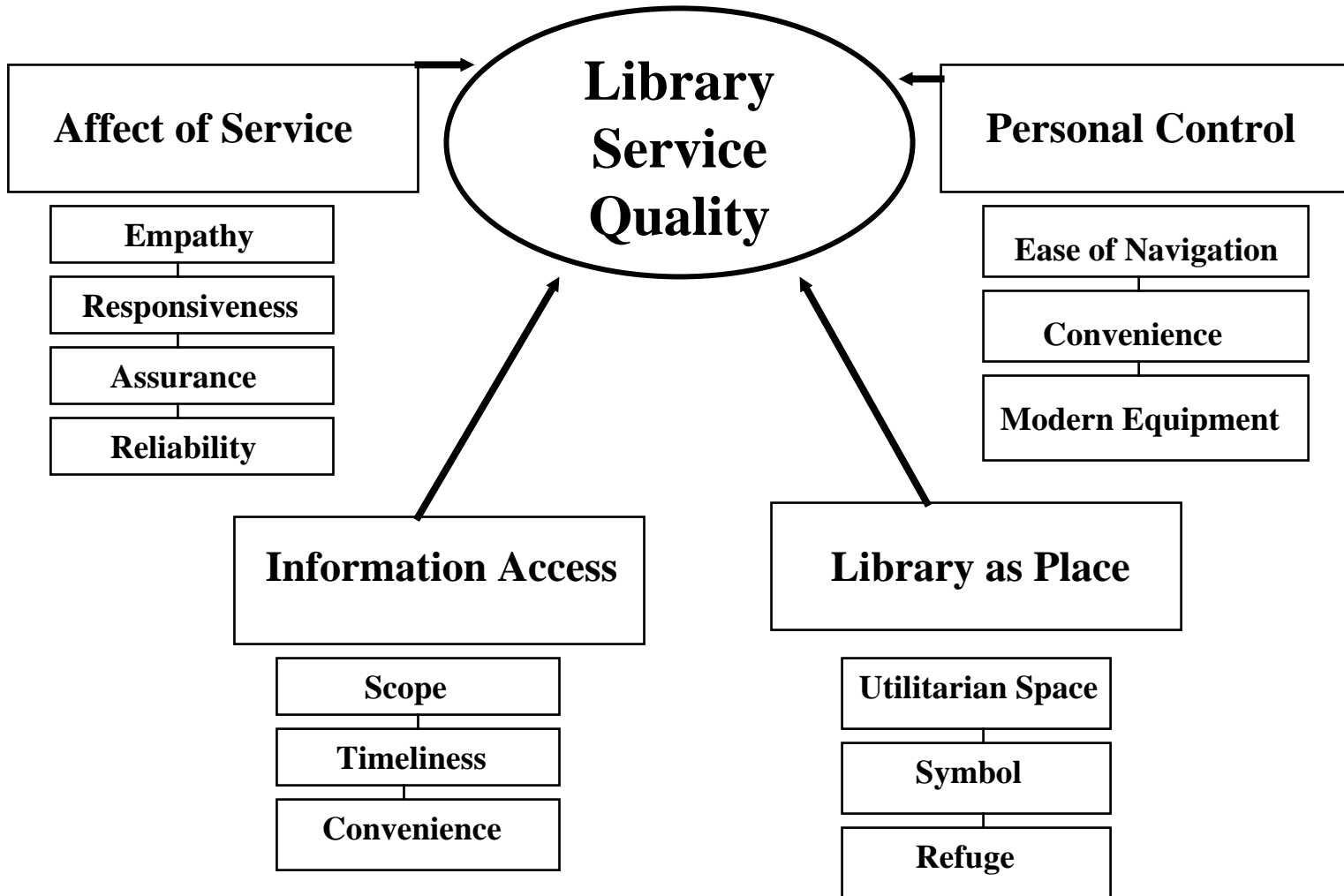
Spring 2002 Survey

4 Service Quality Dimensions:

Dimensions developed over the last 3 years:

- developed from the results of extensive user group interviews by the research project designers at the institutions that participated in the first two years of the research project
- modified with the respondent results of the two surveys rounds in the service areas identified as the most important

Service Quality Dimensions





The Results

University of Calgary Experience



UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY
INFORMATION
RESOURCES

The logo of the University of Calgary, featuring a stylized yellow and purple circular emblem with a central square and concentric circles, set against a purple background with a yellow border.

University of Calgary Experience

- Sample
- Undergraduate
- Graduate
- Faculty
- Key results and comparisons



UofC Sample

- All full time-faculty:1400
- Random stratified:
 - 1200 full-time undergraduates
 - 800 full-time graduates
- Response: 28.6%
- Completion: 59.76%

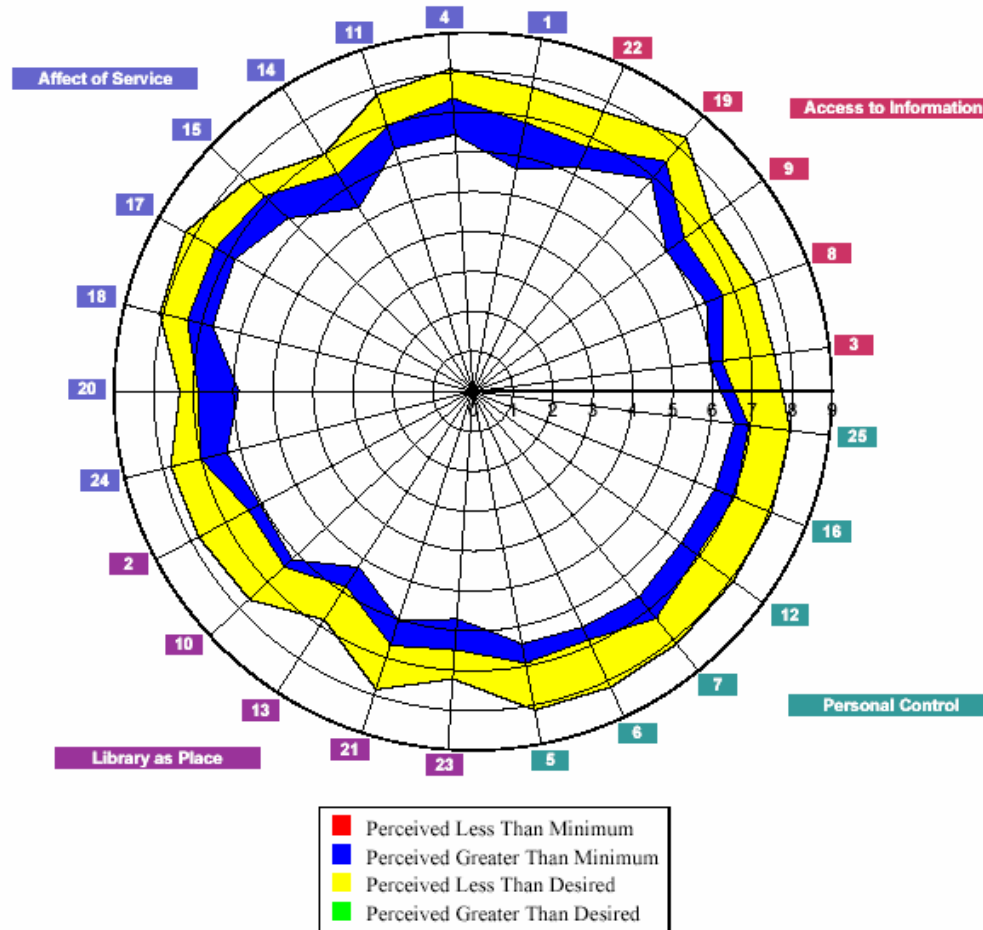


Results

User Group	#	%
Undergraduate	243	24.97%
Graduate	324	33.30%
Faculty	402	41.32%
Library Staff	0	0.00%
Staff	4	0.41%
Total Participants	973	100.00%

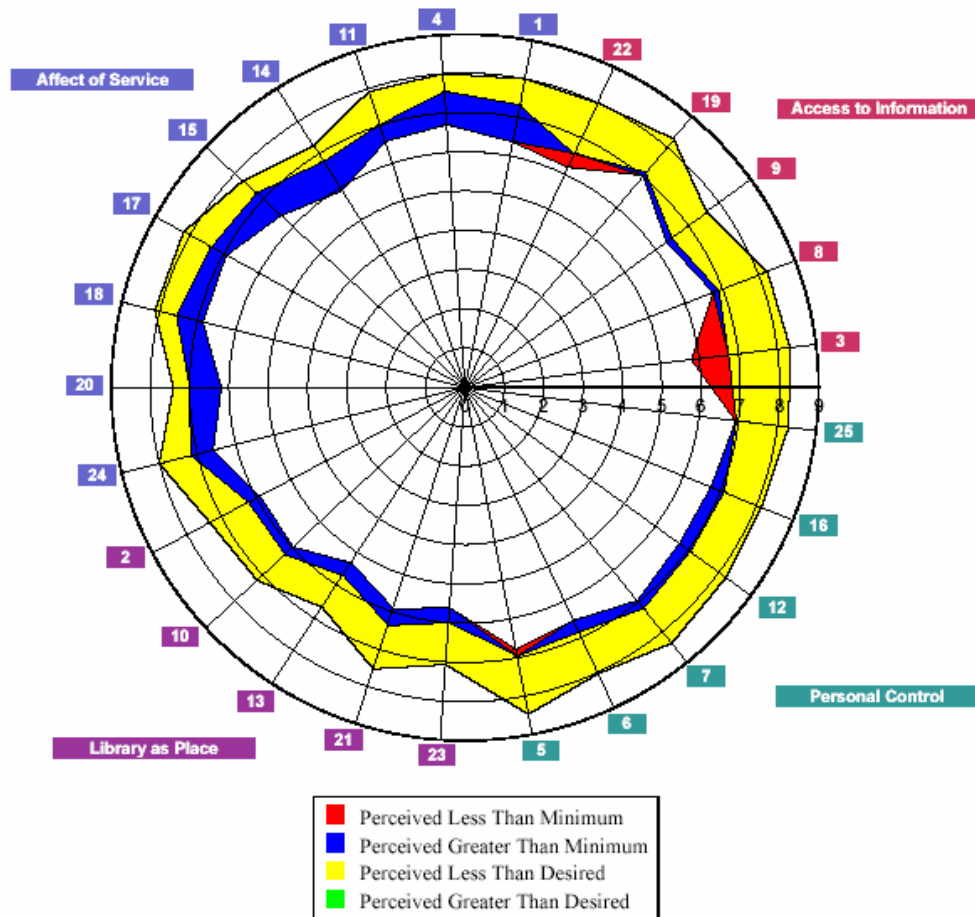


Gap Analysis University of Calgary Undergraduates

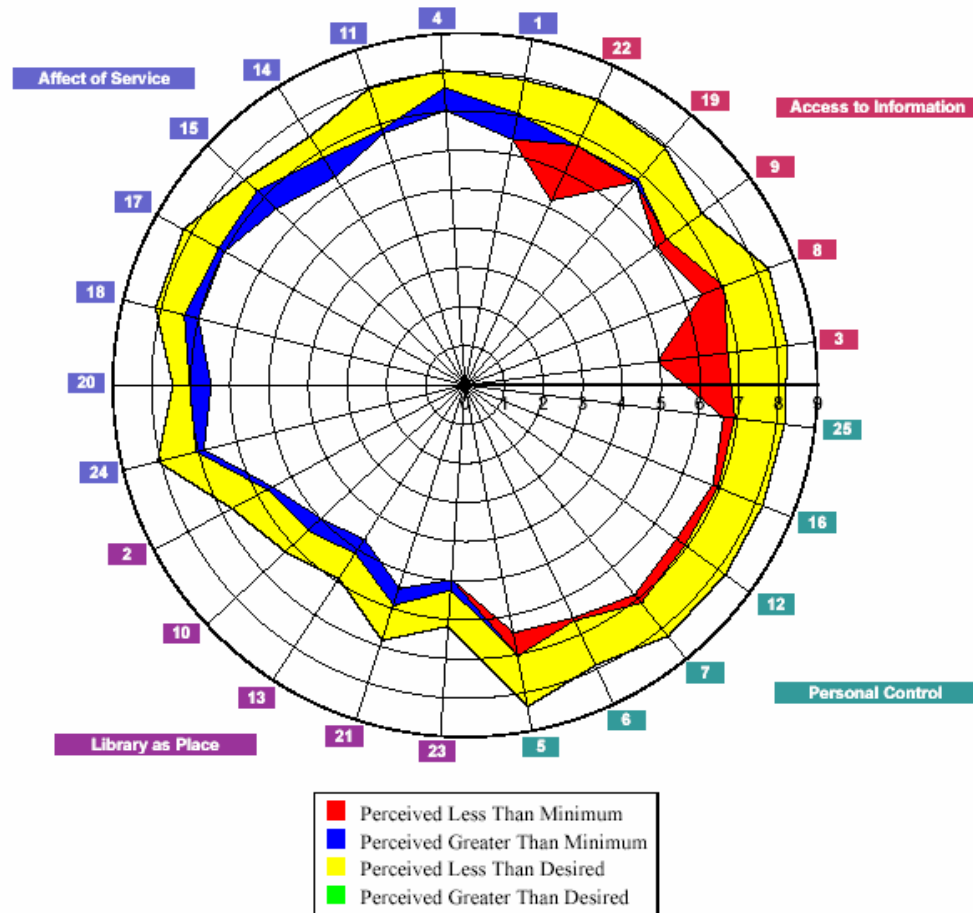


Gap Analysis

U of C Graduate Students

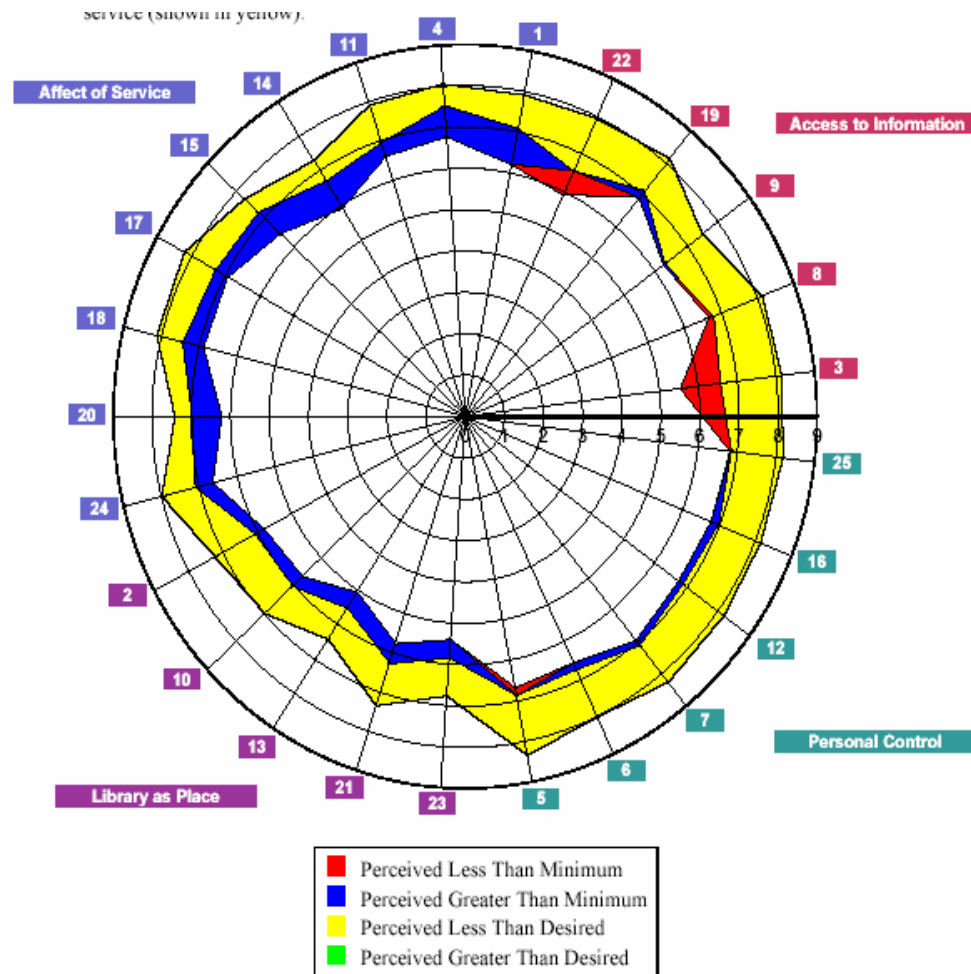


Gap Analysis - U of C Faculty



Gap Analysis

All University of Calgary Responses





Gap scores: Affect of service

Question	undergrad	grad	faculty	All U of C	4 year institutes
Willingness to help	1.18	.95	.68	.89	.82
Knowledgeable employees	.56	.44	.16	.36	.55



Gap scores: Personal control

Question	undergrad	grad	faculty	All U of C	4 year institutes
e-resources accessible	.49	-0.18	-0.61	-0.19	.22
Easy-to-use access tools	.50	.35	-0.27	-0.13	.30



Gap scores: Access to Information

Question	undergrad	grad	faculty	All U of C	4 year institutes
Complete journal run	0.33	-0.95	-1.80	-1.03	-0.11
Business hours	0.57	0.11	0.10	0.22	0.21



Gap scores: Library as Place

Question	undergrad	grad	faculty	All U of C	4 year institutes
Facilitates quiet study	0.33	0.33	0.15	0.26	0.51
Comfortable and inviting	0.64	0.45	0.45	0.51	0.57



Qualitative data: Comments

- 486 respondents commented
- Wide range of understanding of library services including collections and access
- Currently being further analyzed
- Positive: staff, extended hours, home access, fines, free ILL
- Negative: journal runs, uneven collection, inconsistent service and hours, need to improve environment for quiet research and study



Initial Results: No surprises

- Meeting or exceeding the expectations of the undergraduate
- Concerns over collections and access to collections surface with the graduate students
- Faculty have the greatest concern and expectation regarding collections: runs of journal titles, comprehensive collections
- Accessibility is a significant issue for the faculty



The Results

University of Alberta Experience



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
LIBRARIES



Survey Sample

- undergraduate students -1500, graduate students - 1000, faculty - 750
- both FT & PT included
- populations from registrar (students) and HR (faculty) not from group of known library users i.e. library patron database



Survey Sample

- all library staff were invited to participate and asked to answer in the perspective of their users
- Library staff answers were reported separately from the final analysis



Response Rate

- Told to expect between 10% and 30% response rate with undergraduates lowest and faculty highest
- UofA response rate:
 - UG: 22%
 - GS: 32%
 - FAC: 33%

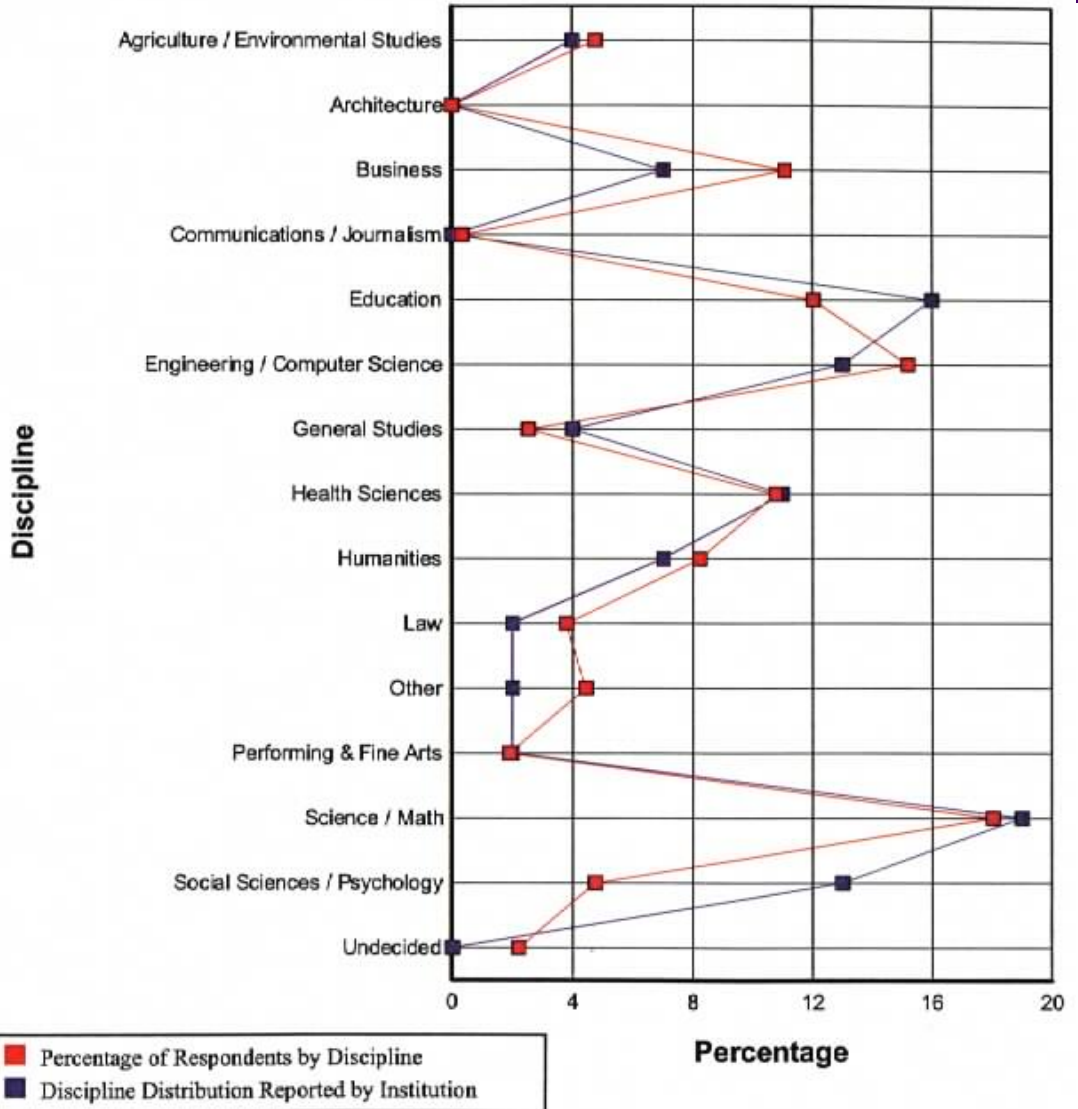


Representativeness

- As long as not everyone completes the survey, we can not be sure of data that is perfectly representative of our campus populations
- We can compare the demographic profiles of our complete populations against the profiles of our survey respondents

Representativeness

Undergraduate
Students



Where are we NOT meeting the Minimum Service expected?

Undergraduate Students (3):

- Convenient business hours
- Quiet study space
- Making electronic resources accessible from home or office.

Graduate Students (1):

- Complete runs of journal titles

Where are we NOT meeting the Minimum Service expected?

Faculty (8):

- Complete runs of journal titles
- Timely ILL
- Convenient business hours
- Comprehensive print collections
- Making electronic resources accessible from home or office

more.....

Where are we NOT meeting the Minimum Service expected?

Faculty:

- A library website enabling me to locate information on my own
- Easy-to use access tools that allow me to find things on my own
- Convenient access to library collections

Where are we NOT meeting the Minimum Service expected?

Library Staff (13):

- Complete runs of journal titles
- Timely document delivery / ILL
- Interdisciplinary library needs being addressed
- Employees who are consistently courteous
- Dependability in handling users' service complaints
- Employees who have the knowledge to answer user questions

more....



Where are we NOT meeting the Minimum Service expected?

Library Staff:

- Employees who understand the needs of their users
- Space that facilitates quiet study
- A comfortable and inviting location
- Making electronic resources accessible from my home or office
- Modern equipment that lets me easily access the information I need

more.....



Where are we NOT meeting the Minimum Service expected?

Library Staff:

- A library website enabling me to locate information on my own
- Easy-to use access tools that allow me to find things on my own

Where ARE we meeting the Minimum Service expected?

With Faculty & Students:

- Making information easily accessible for independent use
- Interdisciplinary library needs being addressed
- Modern equipment that lets me easily access the information I need
- **ALL but 1** Library as Place question
- **ALL 9** Affect of Service questions

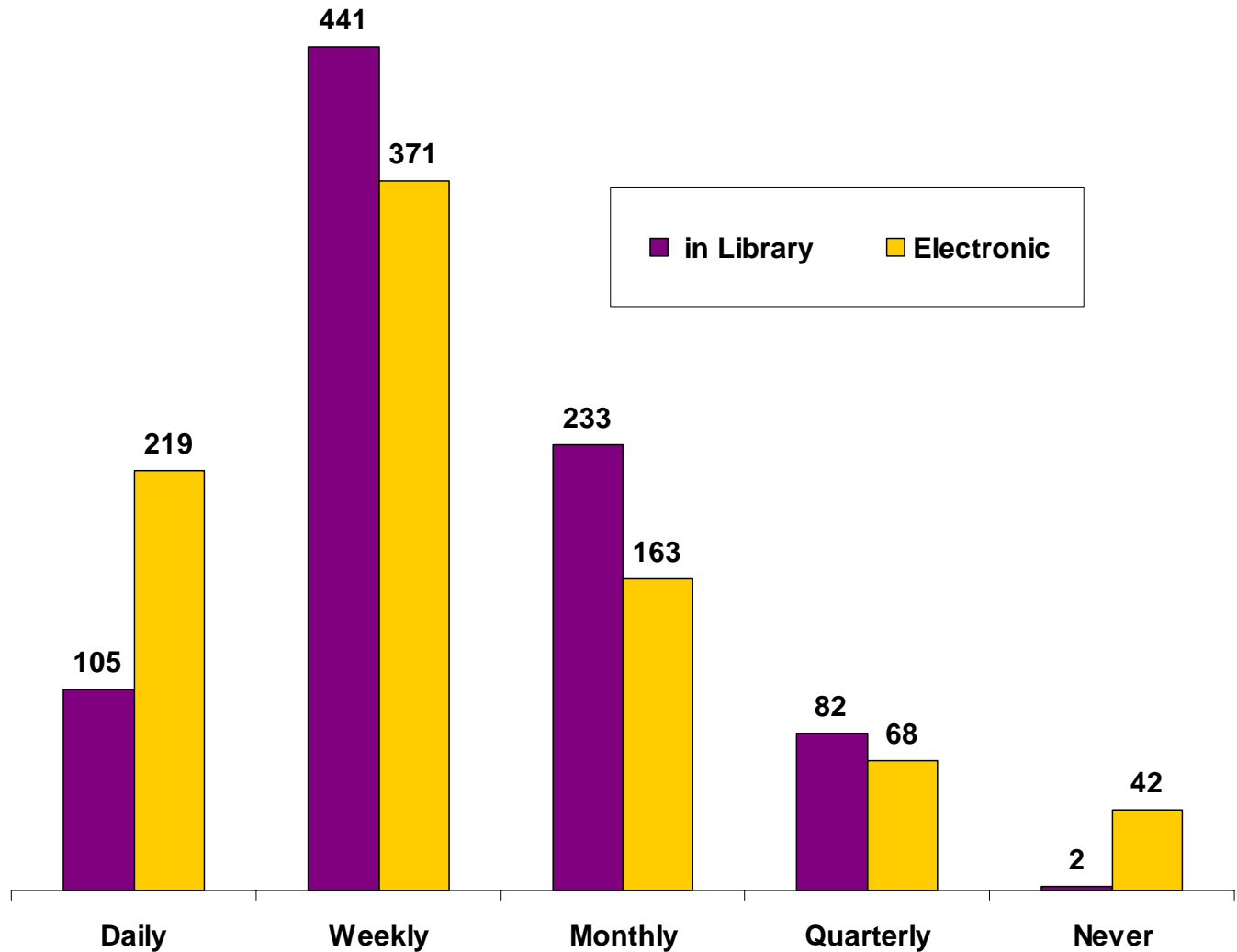


Observations

- Each user group has the highest desired service levels with questions of Personal Control or self-sufficiency
- Library staff responded that our users have the highest desired service levels with questions of Service Affect or focused on mediation

Library Use - Frequency

UofA LibQUAL+ 2002





The Comments

- ~ 35% (366 / 988) of the respondents chose to make a submission in the “Please enter any comments about library services” box.
- rich data that requires further analysis – helps to provide context for some of the numerical results.



Next Steps



Next steps - U of C

- Develop communication plan to clarify collections advances
- Identify questions for finer analysis of data
- Develop action plan to address negative gaps integrating these results from information gathered on other recent surveys
- Share results and response with community



Action update - 2003

- **Communication plan developed and partially implemented**
 - Focus on getting the news to faculty about the collection improvement – both monograph and serials
 - Collection improvements described in the Gazette
 - Information update and template for librarians to use in faculty presentations
 - LibQUAL+ results announcement and action plan with links to articles



Action update - 2003

- **SPSS analysis:** negative gap, by user group, by discipline
- **Continuous addition of electronic resources** e.g. ScienceDirect
- **Comments sorted** by faculty/dept. and sent to liaison librarians, branch heads, service dept. heads as appropriate for further action
- **Service enhancement to faculty: ACS** (Article Copy Service) trial fee-based service to have articles from journals, books, proceedings copied and forwarded to the faculty
- **Librarian embedded in department** (pilot for one year)



Next steps - U of A

- Letting our users know what we've measured, and what we've heard, where we're having success and what needs further analysis for improvement
- Addressing areas where our services are below minimum – Projects underway include:
Increasing Library Hours & Designating Group & Quiet Study Space in all campus libraries.
- Gather more information from our user groups to find out how best to make service improvements



Next steps - U of A

- LibQUAL+ Spring 2003 to gather time-series data, compare / confirm results and measure for improvement in any areas we've made and communicated service improvement initiatives.



Favorite comment (UofC):

“ I once made a Freudian slip when talking to a student: I said that I would meet him.., but that I had to go to the university first. I was already at the U of C, standing in my dept. But for me the heart of the university, the place we all depend on (or should), is the library. It was easy to make the slip, because I feel in touch with university tradition and purpose most days in the classroom, but always in the library.”

Faculty member

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Favorite comment (UofA):

“Thanks for asking.”

Graduate Student



Questions??

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