



The results are in! Service Quality @ the Monmouth University Library

In the spring of 2008, the Monmouth University Library invited faculty, graduate students and undergraduate students to complete a library service quality survey called LibQUAL+®. The results are now in and analysis continues. An overall first impression indicates that there is excellent news. Measured against the 2005 study results, the Library is improving in all three dimensions tested by the survey instrument:

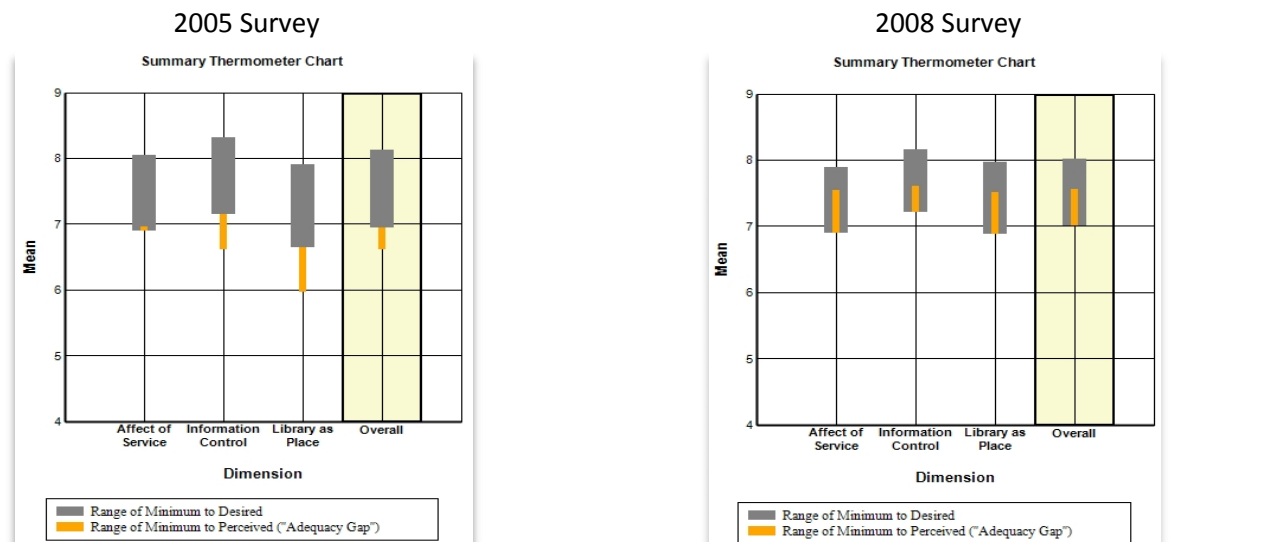
- **Affect of Service**, such as personal service provided at the service desks in the libraries
- **Information Control**, including collections, both electronic and print, and access
- **Library as Place**, which focused on the physical space.

The survey instrument included 22 questions, as well as five local questions to address specific issues across participating New Jersey academic libraries. For each question, faculty and students were asked to indicate the minimum level of service acceptable, their desired level of service, and their perceived level of service. Each of these levels was given a rating of 1 – 9, with 1 being the lowest rating and 9 being the highest. In 2008, 342 people completed the survey: 186 undergraduates, 74 graduate students, and 60 faculty members.

Moving in the Right Direction

In comparison with the benchmarks of the 2005 survey, the Library appears to be better meeting the library service and resource needs of the campus community. Our patrons continue to have high expectations of library services and we have made significant improvements since 2005. Major renovations to the Library have made it a welcome destination for students to study - receiving high scores on the survey and numerous positive statements in the comments received. Working together with faculty and students, the Library staff has been able to strengthen some of the services that were perceived as weak in 2005, as well as further develop areas of strength. However, according to results there is still room for us to grow and to do better.

The thermometer charts below illustrate the improvements in all three measured dimensions. The gray bars represent the range of minimum to desired scores for each dimension. The interior gold bars represent the range of minimum to perceived scores for each dimension. In 2008 service quality was improved in all areas, while in 2005 we met minimum user needs only in Affect of Service.



What is most important to our patrons?

- Making electronic resources accessible from my home or office
- Print and/or electronic journal collections I require for my work
- Modern equipment that lets me easily access needed information
- Making information easily accessible for independent use
- Easy to use access tools that allow me to find things on my own

Clearly, patrons want easy access to electronic resources, particularly journals. Their approach to using resources is also very independent in nature. On the other hand, the area where the Library received the highest ratings was in providing user support, including individual attention and willingness to help users. The area where the most significant improvement was made was in the Library as a comfortable and inviting location. This had the second to the lowest ratings of all questions in 2005 (aggregate perceived mean of 5.70), but is now one of the top categories with a perceived mean of 7.70.

What do we do best? The areas where the perceived levels of service provided by the library were the highest included:

- Giving users individual attention
- Employees who deal with users in a caring fashion
- Employees who understand the needs of their users
- Willingness to help users
- A comfortable and inviting location.

Faculty

The Library has maintained our strength in personal service, with faculty being particularly satisfied with the level of assistance they receive from library staff. In most disciplines, faculty are not heavy users of the physical library and 50% of faculty come to the library on less than 4 times a year. However, 75% of faculty visit the Library's website on a daily or weekly basis. Of all patrons, faculty were the least satisfied with Information Control, or the Library's collection of books and journals and access to the resources. Although this is a problem area for all college and university libraries, including research institutions, the Library will continue to communicate with faculty regarding their needs for library materials to improve support for faculty's curricular needs as well as conduct of their scholarly research. Faculty were also interested in being kept informed of developments in their disciplines and more tools to help them find the materials they need.

Graduate Students

Overall, graduate students were the most satisfied with personal services provided by Library staff. Similar to faculty, the Library as a place to study was not a high priority. This is not surprising since graduate students spend fewer hours on campus, but 81% responded that they use the Library's website on a daily or weekly basis. This heavy remote access and a high level of desired service support indicate that graduate students are likely to seek assistance by calling or emailing the reference desk. Graduate students were the group with the highest needs for access to electronic resources, particularly journals. Also, Interlibrary Loans were important to graduate students in order to access materials not available on campus.

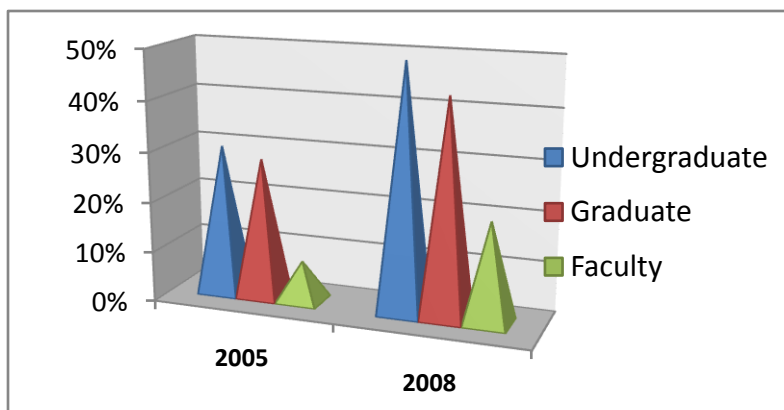
Undergraduate students

The physical library was very important to undergraduate students, especially quiet space for individual activities and modern equipment to access electronic resources. The Library collection seemed to satisfy their needs for both print and electronic resources. Undergraduates were also more likely to visit the library, with 49% using the facility on a daily or weekly basis. However, their usage of electronic resources on a regular basis was much lower than graduate students and faculty.

Use of Library Facility and Website

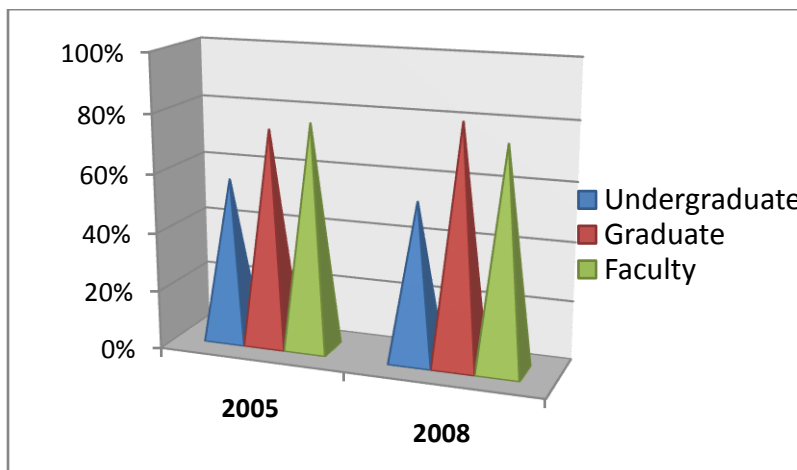
A significant increase of the library facility by all patron groups was noted in survey results. During the 2005 survey, the library was undergoing a major renovation to the facility, and a number of the collections had to be moved off-site. The renovated facility and improvements in services have clearly made an impact on library use.

Use Library on premises daily/weekly



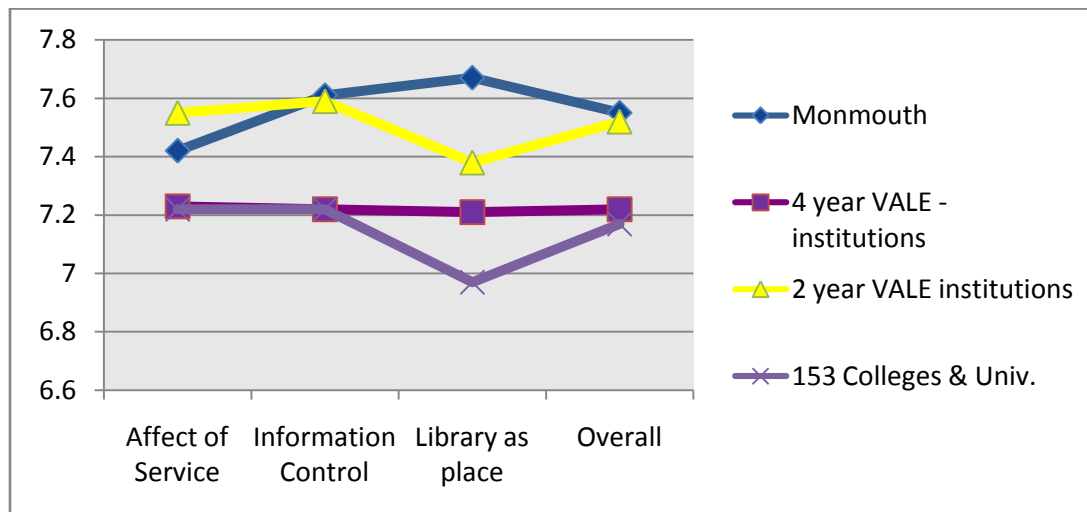
Use of the library website remained constant among undergraduates and faculty. An increase in usage of electronic access to library resources was noted only by graduate students.

Use Library Resources via Web site



Comparison with other Academic Libraries

Monmouth participated in the 2008 LibQUAL survey as part of New Jersey's VALE (Virtual Academic Learning Environment) consortium. This year, seven 4-year institutions (Fairleigh Dickinson, Monmouth, Montclair, Richard Stockton, Rowan, The College of NJ, and William Paterson), and four 2-year institutions (Bergen Community College, Cumberland Community College, Raritan Valley Community College, and Union Community College) administered the survey. Across the country, a total of 153 Colleges and Universities collected data from their patrons. As shown on the chart below, Monmouth's results were strong compared to other institutions, especially in the Library as Place dimension.



User Comments

In addition to the 27 questions (including local questions), the LibQUAL survey includes a box for comments. This is a very significant tool in providing feedback that is specific to Monmouth University. Approximately 35% of survey respondents provided comments and we are grateful for this additional information which helps us interpret the survey scores and identify key issues.

Comments on the quality of service provided by Library staff were overwhelmingly positive, praising staff for excellent assistance in helping with research and interlibrary loans, as well as guiding patrons to improve their research results. In terms of improvements, additional hours and more instruction for graduate students were requested.

“Library has consistently offered support for all my classes” Faculty – Education

“Interlibrary loans requests are handled extremely efficiently.” Graduate student – Nursing

“The library staff is knowledgeable, helpful and outstanding in their willingness and ability to assist faculty.” Faculty – Social Work

“I wish there was an information session or sheet on the different tools that the library had to offer” Graduate student – Social work

“I wish the library would be open 24 hours.” Undergraduate student - Communication

“Thank you for the Library !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!” Undergraduate student – Criminal Justice

Comments on the Library facility were also extremely positive. The renovations have clearly made a difference in how patrons can use the library. Furthermore, features such as the café, group study rooms and commuter/faculty parking were hits with patrons. Parking still seems to be an issue and another problem is finding quiet areas for individual study.

“Guggenheim is gorgeous and the rooms offer much needed silence/solitude. It’s a comfortable place” Undergraduate student – Performing Arts

“There is currently no space in the library for quiet individual study” Undergraduate student – Sciences

“The library should offer more commuter parking spaces...The new café is great” Under – Poli Sci

The library is the best resource we have on campus. I would hope other areas of this school would learn from them.” Undergraduate student - Communication

In terms of the Library’s collection of resources, some improvements were noted since the earlier survey. However, the majority of the comments were to increase funding and add more current resources, both print and electronic. Again, students were generally satisfied with the resources, while faculty would like more resources for their research.

“More funding dedicated to building the collection” Faculty – Communication

“Need more journal articles!!!” Graduate student - Nursing

“The library has always been great at Monmouth” Graduate student - History/Anthropology

“The library has been very useful when I need information. The online facilities have improved in the four years I have been here. Good work.” Undergraduate student - Communications

“MU’s library is WOEFULLY DEFICIENT in historical resources... nor is there adequate research space...” Faculty – History/Anthropology

Next Steps

The Library is continuing to analyze the data from the 2008 LibQUAL study to better understand the perceptions of patrons regarding current services. As we review the needs voiced by patrons we will address key issues that still need improvement and implement changes. We will also compare Monmouth’s survey results with other institutions to identify benchmarks for excellent service.

We would like to thank students and faculty members who participated in the 2008 study. Your assessment of service quality will help us make user-centered improvements to our library services and resources.