

Cowles Library LibQUAL+ Survey 2003 and 2005

In 2003 and 2005 Cowles Library conducted the web-based LibQUAL+ survey which is used to measure library service quality and identify best practices across university and special libraries world-wide. Cowles Library was one of 308 institutions participating in the 2003 LibQUAL+ survey. Two hundred and fifty-six institutions participated in 2005. Drake students, faculty, and staff were surveyed.

Major Concerns and Library Responses from the 2005 Survey:

The major concerns from the 2005 survey as expressed in comments were (1) service assistance from student library workers; (2) noise level, specifically study groups and cell phone usage; (3) condition of the facility which includes furniture, lighting, available space for group, individual, and quiet study; (4) equipment which includes the age and number of computers and the print facilities; and (5) the reserve system is awkward and confusing. The issues will be addressed in the discussions of the comments as they relate to the three dimensions.

Affect of Service – 64 comments. Most comments concerned the service given by librarians and their attitudes. About 75% were positive comments and respondents thought librarians were helpful and knowledgeable. Twelve comments were about student workers. Eleven were negative and respondents felt they were not properly trained.

Response: A new position was created -- Service and Training Coordinator. This person supervises student training and performance, as well as handling training needs for the entire library staff. We hired this individual, Karen Jurasek, in March 2006.

Information Control – 144 comments. This was a difficult area to analyze because many of the concerns were expressed in the form of suggestions or additions to the library. In general, respondents felt that the computers were out-of-date, the retrieval system for reserve items was unsatisfactory, and some respondents were satisfied with resources in their areas and some were not.

Response: OPAC terminals/computers were replaced near the Reference desk, Circulation desk, and on the 2nd floor. Also, the reserve filing system was reverted to the previous system for easier location of materials. Updated printing software was installed on the copiers before the fall 2006 semester began. Resources are always being reviewed and updated and are more readily available off-campus since a remote server is now in service in the library.

Library as Place – 139 comments. Most of the comments concerned the need for more study areas for individual, group, and quiet study. Noise was another factor, with loud study groups and cell phone usage cited as being the main problems. Also, the library environment was a factor. This area included the condition/age of the furniture, the lighting, the heat/cold. Hours the library is open is frequently mentioned.

Response: Any improvements to or expansion of study areas in the library building is determined by the physical layout and condition of the building. At this time we are limited in many types of changes due to the lack of a bigger building and budget constraints. Signs have been posted concerning cell usage. We do expect and hope for cooperation by the cell phone users. The library is open 105 hours during a typical week, which is typical and even more than other academic libraries in Iowa.

Other – 45 comments. Eighty-seven percent were positive comments and compliments about the library and the staff.

Major Concerns and Library Responses from the 2003 Survey:

□ Both faculty and students frequently cannot find the resource materials they need to support their studies in the Cowles collection. There was overall dissatisfaction with gaps in the book and journal collection. *Students in Pharmacy and the Sciences expressed the most frustrations and concerns with the lack of journal holdings and databases.*

Response: Largely via the Information Technology student fee the library has made concerted efforts to rectify this situation by beginning subscriptions to a number of key science and pharmacy databases, including: ScienceDirect, Scopus, Nature, Natural Standard, JSTOR Biological Sciences Collection, and OVID (in conjunction with COPHS). The library also instituted site-licenses to electronic versions of JAMA and New England Journal of Medicine. The 2005 LibQUAL survey results show an improvement as a result of these (and other) additions, but it should be noted, that user expectations are rising as well.

□ Students may start research on Google, but most turn to the Library website to locate authoritative resources and electronic full-text. *The survey indicated the need to improve the library website and create a more “seamless” and easy to use electronic service.*

Response: The Faculty of Cowles Library initiated a multi-phase project to redesign the library web presence. This included hiring an outside consultant, Solutions, Inc., for the initial design phase of the product. The overall goal of the project was to produce a library website that advances the usability of the myriad number of electronic resources and services currently available to faculty and students through the Cowles website. The library also instituted an internal staff reallocation process whereby a staff position was reallocated to this area. We hired a Web Developer in December 2004. The library was recently nominated for a national award for innovation. "In partnership with WebFeat, all of the libraries nominated have crafted cutting-edge information systems to meet the specific needs of the communities they serve," said WebFeat President Todd Miller. "Despite the diversity of institutions represented by this year's group of nominees, they all embrace innovation in the course of creating information systems to serve their users."

□ Students indicated they would like to see *more up to date computers and technology in the library.*

Response: Since taking over the "Maclab" in August of 2002, Cowles Library has become the "court of last resort" for public access to computers on campus. The Library has begun steps to develop a more comprehensive set of tools for access to computing technology. These steps have included establishment of a wireless network,

upgrading workstations, and the implementation of "diskless" network workstations in the building for public usage.

Now, however, a more long-term and systematic approach is required. Cowles Library formed a taskforce to combine the two computing areas and more effectively integrate the two areas of service, namely, information support and computing report. The goal of this taskforce was to provide a unified point of access for users by the beginning of the Fall 2004 semester. The result of the taskforce was the creation of the Information Commons.

Within the Information Commons are 45 workstations (PC and Mac), dedicated workstations (two for CDs such as government documents on disk and one for DVD viewing), and a scanner station. Users may use this area for researching databases, working on projects with installed software, and email.

Eight OPAC terminals were installed within the building; four in the Reference area and one in the Circulation area (both on the main floor); two on the second floor; and one on the ground floor.

The library had a wireless access system installed in the building in 2001, and checked out Ethernet cards to users. In the summer of 2005, the rest of the Drake campus became wireless. Students and others with Ethernet connections on their own laptop computers now may access library resources anywhere inside the building, as well as anywhere on campus.

A proxy server was installed in 2004 that allows distance learners and others reliable remote access to the databases, to request interlibrary loans, or to use other features