Executive Summary

of LibQUAL+ 2001

A Web-delivered survey

to measure library service quality

LibQUAL+ is a web delivered assessment tool to measure library service quality. The Association of Research Libraries (ARL) along with the library administrators and researchers of Texas A&M University manage the project. BYU became involved in the project during the spring of 2001.

LibQUAL+ was initiated to move libraries towards more outcome-based assessment efforts. Its principal goals are:

1) Develop tools & protocols for evaluating library service quality,
2) Develop effective web-based survey delivery mechanisms,
3) Identify best practices,
4) Establish an ARL service quality assessment program.

For the BYU Lee Library, it is hoped that through this effort:

1) A better understanding of how the BYU community rates library services will be gained,
2) A benchmark of results will be established to compare with other institutions,
3) The library will see where service improvements could be made.
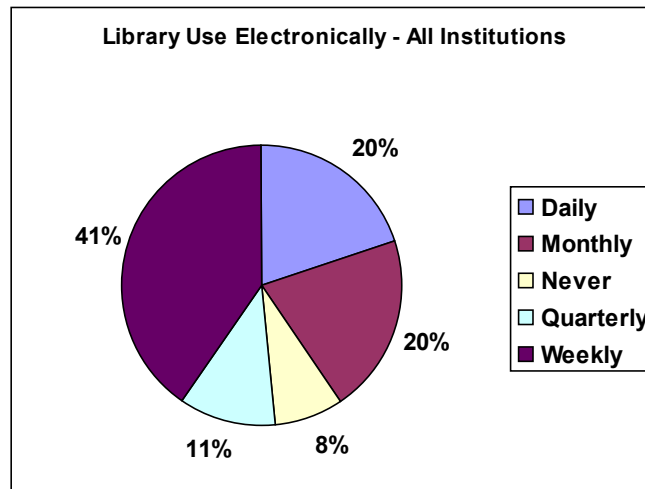
A total of 43 institutions participated in the study (including Utah, Arizona, Washington, Oregon, Kentucky, Indiana, and Colorado, to name a few) and some 134,000 individual emails were sent to undergraduates, graduates, faculty, and staff. They were asked to take a survey where they rated library service quality on a Likert scale of 1 to 9 from three perspectives – their minimum service expectation, their desired service expectation and their perceived level of service received from their home institution. They were also asked several other service related questions. BYU sampled 3702 individuals, receiving back 789 completed, usable surveys.

Of the many questions in the survey, two were of particular interest to BYU. Those surveyed were first asked how often they used resources on library premises – daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, or never. The pie chart below summarizes the results. Virtually every institution showed that those surveyed tended to use the physical facilities to satisfy their needs, coming to the library at least once a week or month. Only 1% indicated they never entered the library. These results were very similar across all institutions, including the likes of Virginia Tech – a perceived high-tech, high-wired university.

Library Use on Premises - All Institutions

- Daily — 15%
- Monthly — 29%
- Never — 1%
- Quarterly — 12%
- Weekly — 43%
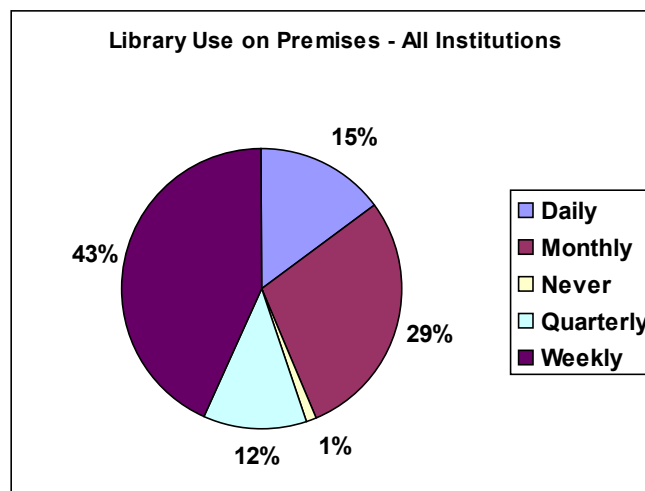
As a follow-up question, patrons were asked how often they would use electronic library services remotely. Like the previous question, all institutions showed similar tendencies. It was

particularly interesting to note that for every institution, there was a greater percentage of patrons that indicated they never use electronic services than those that said they never entered the premises to access library services. The summary for all institutions is shown in the pie chart below.

Library Use Electronically - All Institutions

Legend: Daily, Monthly, Never, Quarterly, Weekly

20%, 20%, 8%, 11%, 41%

The bulk of the study focused on individual library services and user's perceptions of the quality of the service they receive. In general, survey respondents rated the quality of service as positive (averaging about 6 on a scale from 1 to 9). However, their perceived level of service tended to be just above the minimum expectation of service, thus implying room for improvement. BYU patrons, on the other hand, tended to be more optimistic in their perceptions of the Lee Library than did those of other institutions. At BYU, the general consensus was that the library was doing a good job of meeting the patron's service expectations. In particular, they loved the new addition to the library and found it a safe and secure facility. BYU patrons also felt that the staff at the Lee Library made concerted efforts to help patrons meet their immediate needs for study and research.

The study did point out at least two areas where improvement can be made at BYU. One was improving the tools (those on the premises and electronically) that would help the patron be more self-sufficient. The other was to improve the accuracy of library catalog, borrowing, and overdue records.

LibQUAL+ has a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to continue its efforts for several more years. For the spring of 2002, it is anticipated that 200 institutions will take part in the survey. The Lee Library will not participate at that time but does anticipate joining again in the survey during the spring of 2003.