Brigham Young University
Harold B. Lee Library
...by study and also by faith

Harold B. Lee Library
Brigham Young University

LibQUAL+™

A report on comparisons made from results collected from respondents at Brigham Young University during the spring 2003 and the spring 2001 efforts, as well as an assessment of comments made during LibQUAL+™ 2003

Prepared by
Brian C. Roberts
Process Improvement Specialist
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INTRODUCTION

During the spring of 2003, the BYU Harold B. Lee Library participated with 307 other libraries throughout the U.S., Canada and Great Britain in ARL's LibQUAL+™ survey to assess library service quality. BYU participated in a similar effort during spring 2001 with 42 other libraries (all North American). Though the intent of LibQUAL+™ 2003 had not changed from 2001, the survey instrument and the means to administer it had. Of particular interest was the addition of a comment box at the end of the survey. Together with these changes, as well as changes in Lee Library services and procedures, it was of interest to the Library Administration to participate in 2003 and observe how patron perceptions may have changed from 2001.

Formal reports of the results from the 2003 survey have been prepared by ARL and Texas A&M University for each institution that participated in the survey as well as for specific groups and consortia. These reports summarized the 2003 survey instrument questions only and did not include any analysis conducted from information provided in comments nor comparisons from past surveys. A copy of the report for Brigham Young University was obtained at the ALA meetings in Toronto. In addition, a copy of the summary for ARL institutions was sent to BYU. Both items are in possession of the Lee Library Process Improvement Specialist. Electronic copies of these documents (in PDF format) are also readily available and can be viewed through the library's web site. It is not the intent of this report to replicate the results presented in these documents. Instead, the purpose of this report is to focus on differences between the results from 2001 and the results from 2003 and to assess the 2003 comments along with those results.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overall, BYU's relative ranking against the other institutions that participated in 2003 dropped somewhat from 2001. However, BYU still was in the upper 25% in most all areas. Only one of the four analysis dimensions showed any measurable change from 2001 to 2003 at BYU. That was Library as Place. Affect of Service, Personal Control and Information Access showed virtually no change. Specific areas of positive note continue to be that the library is a comfortable and inviting location from which to study and learn. Specific areas for potential improvement focused on materials (the need for more extensive print and electronic journal collections), the library web site, access tools (to allow more self-reliance and availability from off campus), and relations with patrons (improving the way they are treated by all – faculty, staff and security).


SURVEY ADMINISTRATION SUMMARY

As in 2001, LibQUAL+™ required a minimum sample size of potential respondents of 900 undergraduates, 600 graduates and 600 faculty/staff. And as in 2001, it was determined that BYU would take a sample larger that the minimum to ensure as large a return as possible and account for rejects since the samples would be taken from a database of email addresses where experience had shown many to be bad. For 2003, 1800 undergraduates, 900 graduates and 900 faculty/staff were sampled. This varied somewhat from 2001 in that only 900 instead of 1200 graduates were sampled, and the 900 faculty/staff was not restricted to just faculty as in 2001, but ALL full and part-time employees of the University. After accounting for rejected emails, the final effective sample size turned out to be 1695 undergraduates, 828 graduates, and 826 faculty/staff.

The individuals sampled were sent an initial invitation on March 3, 2003 and the formal invitation with the URL attachment from which they could take the survey sent March 10, 2003. Initial responses were not as promising as was seen in 2001, therefore, follow-ups were sent. The first was sent on March 17 and the next the Monday following. A note on the second follow-up – due to a fowl-up with University Communications (one of the faculty/staff sampled worked in that office), the second follow-up was sent out to the entire University community (all full- and part-time employees). As such, an abnormal bump in responses came from faculty/staff before a retraction could be sent out. In principle, this would not

adversely affect the results as long as responses from faculty/staff remained representative, which it did. It did, however, result in many more responses from faculty/staff as compared to the other groups than would have been anticipated. A final follow-up was sent the following Thursday, March 27. Though formal sampling concluded at BYU on March 30, the link remained open until ARL closed survey activity for all participating institutions at the end of the month of April.

The final response numbers showed that though well over 50% of those sampled attempted to take the survey, only 972 actually completed it. Of that number, 39 of the surveys were deemed invalid due to either an inordinate number of N/A's or excessive inconsistent responses (minimum greater than desired). The final response size was therefore 933 for an effective response rate of 27.9%. The number of valid surveys returned was 15th among the participating schools, which favorably compared to the number from 2001.

The breakdown of respondents by group (Undergrad, Grad, Faculty, Lib Staff, and Staff) is shown in the chart below. Note that overall for all institutions, the percentage of responses from the various groups was consistent from 2001 to 2003. However, there was a significant change is percentages for BYU. Again, this could be accounted for by the fact that faculty AND staff was sampled in 2003, and because of the mix-up with the second follow-up. Despite this, other demographic categories tended to be somewhat representative of the overall University population based on the original number sampled from each group. It was felt that the responses would adequately reflect the tendencies of the whole.
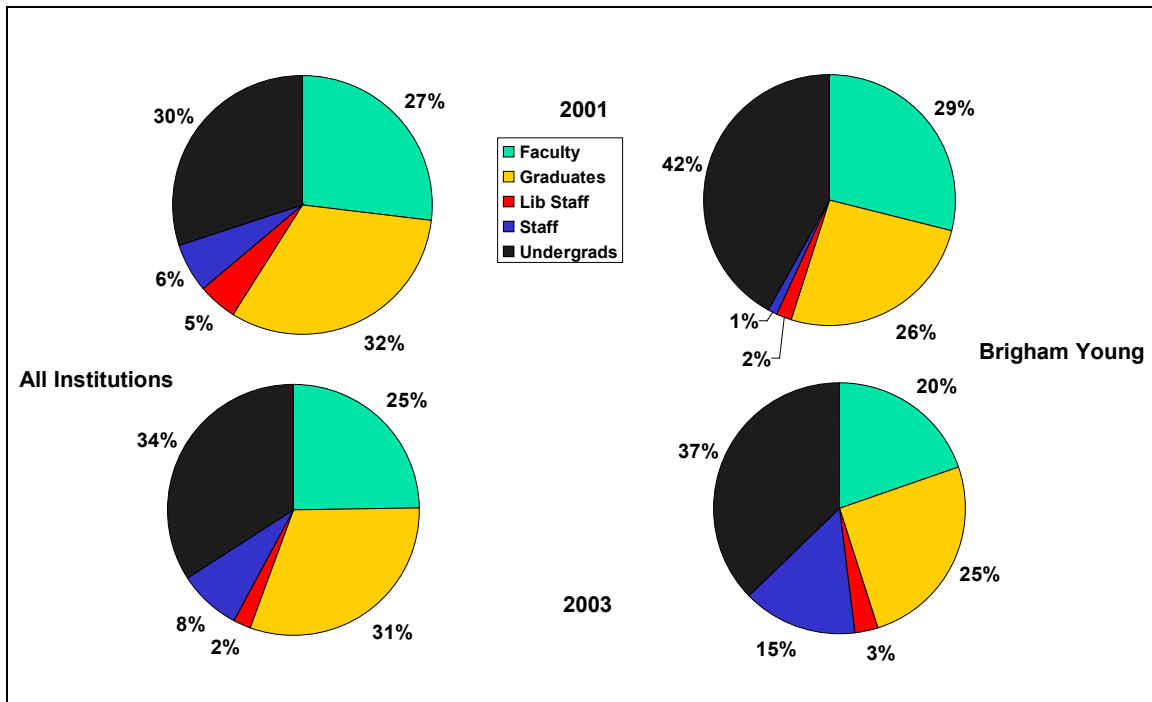
ANALYSIS RESULTS AND COMPARISONS

As in 2001, the point of LibQUAL+™ was to give the respondents a series of statements related to library service and rate them as to the minimum level of service they find acceptable, the desired level of service they personally would like to see, and the perceived level of service they feel the library currently provides. Those service expectation ratings were based on a 9 point Likert scale with 1 being low and 9 being high. For 2003, those sampled were asked to provide such ratings for 25 statements (as compared to 56 in 2001). Seventeen of the statements were identical to those posed in 2001. The remaining 8, though not exactly identical, were comparable to other 2001 statements. From those ratings, gaps were calculated to assess how well the institution met the minimum expectations of its patrons. The range from the

minimum score to the desired score is call the zone of tolerance – the idea being that perceived levels of service should fall within this zone. Perceived levels below the minimum level indicated a negative service adequacy. Perceived levels above the desired level reflected a positive service superiority score. These results are graphically displayed in the radar charts below (Note: the 2001 chart shows results for comparative questions to 2003 only in the same orientation as for the 2003 radar chart).
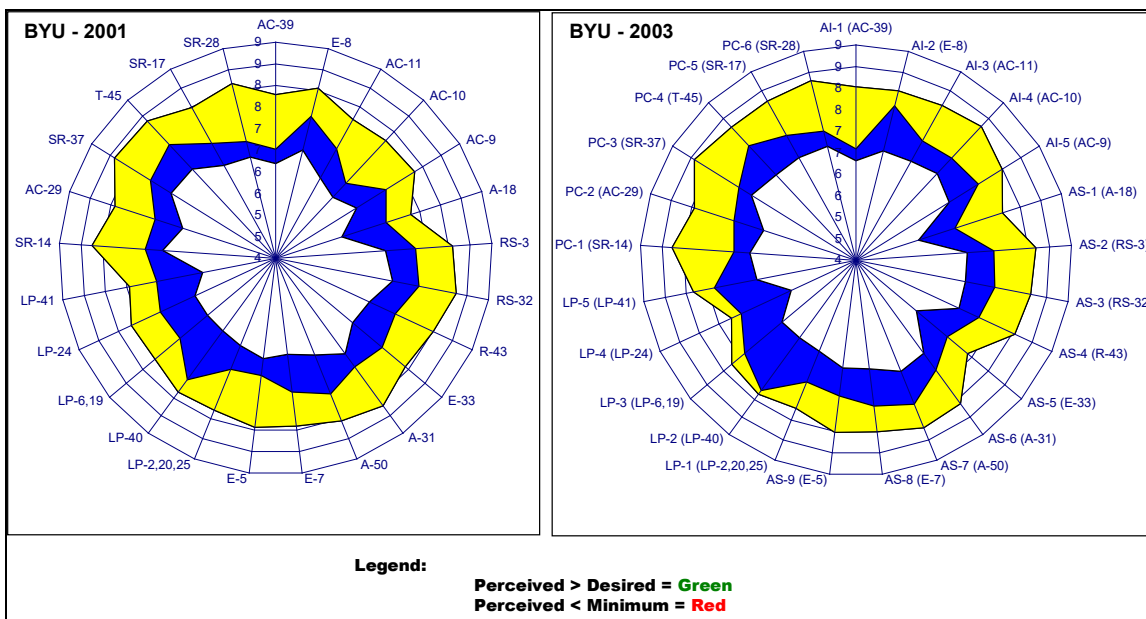
These charts feature multiple axes or "spokes" that represent the library service statements asked in the survey. The outer edge of the colored portion of the chart (generally yellow) reflects the desired level of service. The inner edge of the colored portion of the chart (generally blue) reflects the minimum level of service. If the chart shows green on the outer edge of the colored portion of the chart, that indicates that the perceived is greater than the desired, or in other words, service superiority. If the chart shows red on the inner edge of the colored portion of the chart, that indicates that the perceived is less than the minimum, or in other words, service inadequacy.

In 2001 the radar chart was primarily blue and yellow (there was one area with a small portion of green on spoke T-1, "Visually appealing facilities", but that statement did not appear in 2003 and hence not shown in the chart above for 2001). For the original 2001 chart where all statements were displayed, the "gaps" were not particularly consistent, which to some extent is due to the large number of statements that tended to make the chart busy looking. This was somewhat rectified in 2003 with the reduced number of statements. In 2003, the chart is exclusively yellow and blue and more consistent, with the LP spokes showing the largest gap between perceived and minimum. Note that the spokes in the 2003 chart are labeled to reflect the service dimension discussed below with the comparable 2001 spoke in parentheses and that the 2001 radar chart reflects only those statements that were comparable to 2003 statements.

As in 2001, the data was analyzed in four dimensions. Those dimensions were Affect of Service (AS) – how the patron is treated in the library, Library as Place (LP) – the overall look, feel and functionality of the building and its facilities, Personal Control (PC) – the ability of the patron to find information independently and remotely, and Access to Information (AI) – the extent of the collection and the ability of the patron to obtain the needed materials for study and/or research. Once again the spokes in the radar charts above are grouped by those dimensions to make them easier to interpret, with the 2001 chart showing only those statements that were comparable to like statements made in 2003. The actual values that went into the radar charts above are shown in the table below (see page 6). In addition, the adequacy gap is calculated for each statement. The changes in the results for the two years are also included in the far right columns. The rows are grouped such that matching questions for each year can be found on the same row. For those statements that are not exactly the same in 2003 as they were in

2001, the 2001 label is in italics. In the case of 2001, there were several statements that could equate to a 2003 statement, but were not an exact match. In those instances where a 2003 question had more than one equivalent, the average was determined for the 2001 questions. These dimensions were summarized individually as well as an overall assessment for all the 25 statements as shown in the table below. Of particular interest was service adequacy, the gap between the perceived level and the minimum level. The idea behind this being the greater the service adequacy gap, the better the institution was as meeting its patron's minimum expectation.

Where perceptions and attitudes change rapidly due to local circumstances, rankings may not have the same meaning as they would for other standards. However, for comparative purposes, ranks for these gaps were also determined. In 2001, BYU ranked favorably in service adequacy to that of the other institutions that participated. This simply meant that the patrons of the Lee Library at BYU rated the adequacy of its services higher than did patrons at other institutions rate the adequacy of their library services. This is NOT to imply that BYU was better than another institution; it was only doing a better job of meeting user expectations based on the adequacy gap score. The table below shows the rankings of BYU in 2001 against the other 42 institutions and their 2003 ranking against the other 307. The researchers and analysts for LibQUAL+™ also separated the institutions into comparable groups. The Lee Library Administration was also interest to observe how BYU fared against other institutions that are part of the Oklahoma State University Faculty Salary Survey Study that is used by the Human Resources Group at BYU. Additional ranks for 2003 are therefore shown for the three groups that BYU compares to – Colleges and Universities, ARL Institutions, and institutions included in the OSU Faculty Salary Survey Study. For the aggregate, BYU dropped somewhat in its ranking from what it was in 2001, however, it is still in the upper 25th percentile of all the institutions that participated in LibQUAL+™ 2003. That ranking improves just slightly in the groups of more comparable institutions.

Table of LibQUAL+™ Ranks for BYU

|	2001 Aggregate (N=43)	2003 Aggregate (N=308)	Colleges & Universities (N=221)	ARL (N=66)	OSU (N=27)
Affect of Service	6	136	93	30	12
Library as Place	4	41	28	11	4
Personal Control	4	105	74	15	5
Information Access	1	43	26	8	2
Overall	2	73	52	14	6

Table of LibQUAL+™ Results
(Matching questions for each year are shown on the same row – non-exact 2001 matches in italics)

BYU Results		2001						2003					Changes			
		Min	Des	Perc'd	Gap			Min	Des	Perc'd	Gap		Min	Des	Perc'd	Gap
Affect of Service	A-18	5.60	7.28	6.68	1.08		AS-1	5.52	7.57	6.41	0.89		-0.08	0.29	-0.27	-0.19
	RS-3	6.54	8.09	7.23	0.69		AS-2	6.58	8.17	7.20	0.62		0.04	0.08	-0.03	-0.07
	RS-32	6.74	8.24	7.37	0.63		AS-3	6.58	8.12	7.27	0.69		-0.16	-0.12	-0.10	0.06
	R-43	6.39	8.00	7.04	0.65		AS-4	6.63	8.06	7.14	0.51		0.24	0.06	0.10	-0.14
	E-33	6.32	7.90	7.21	0.89		AS-5	5.82	7.37	6.76	0.94		-0.50	-0.53	-0.45	0.05
	A-31	6.73	8.21	7.10	0.37		AS-6	6.67	8.11	7.15	0.48		-0.06	-0.10	0.05	0.11
	A-50	6.41	8.06	7.39	0.98		AS-7	6.78	8.19	7.60	0.82		0.37	0.13	0.21	-0.16
	E-7	6.24	7.91	7.11	0.87		AS-8	6.54	8.01	7.41	0.87		0.30	0.10	0.30	0.00
	E-5	6.33	7.94	6.73	0.40		AS-9	6.52	8.02	7.17	0.65		0.19	0.08	0.44	0.25
Library as Place	LP-2,20,25	6.17	7.79	6.77	0.60		LP-1	6.27	7.70	7.04	0.77		0.10	-0.09	0.27	0.17
	LP-40	6.07	7.83	7.47	1.40		LP-2	6.22	7.84	7.73	1.51		0.15	0.01	0.26	0.11
	LP-6,19	6.05	7.64	6.88	0.84		LP-3	6.23	7.75	7.36	1.13		0.19	0.12	0.48	0.30
	LP-24	6.05	7.67	6.94	0.89		LP-4	5.65	7.18	6.93	1.28		-0.40	-0.49	-0.01	0.39
	LP-41	5.71	7.43	6.79	1.08		LP-5	6.33	7.83	7.34	1.01		0.62	0.40	0.55	-0.07
Personal Control	SR-14	6.61	8.24	7.02	0.41		PC-1	6.46	8.26	6.83	0.37		-0.15	0.02	-0.19	-0.04
	AC-29	6.26	7.89	6.92	0.66		PC-2	6.25	7.93	6.97	0.72		-0.01	0.04	0.05	0.06
	SR-37	6.85	8.38	7.40	0.55		PC-3	6.85	8.41	7.19	0.34		0.00	0.03	-0.21	-0.21
	T-45	6.82	8.34	7.60	0.78		PC-4	6.71	8.23	7.64	0.93		-0.11	-0.11	0.04	0.15
	SR-17	6.46	7.99	7.04	0.58		PC-5	6.72	8.23	7.32	0.60		0.26	0.24	0.28	0.02
	SR-28	6.41	8.16	6.78	0.37		PC-6	6.72	8.30	7.09	0.37		0.31	0.14	0.31	0.00
Access to Info	AC-39	6.19	7.78	6.52	0.33		AI-1	6.31	8.03	6.59	0.28		0.12	0.25	0.07	-0.05
	E-8	6.59	8.06	7.38	0.79		AI-2	6.62	8.06	7.70	1.08		0.03	0.00	0.32	0.29
	AC-11	6.13	7.68	6.90	0.77		AI-3	6.63	8.11	7.17	0.54		0.50	0.43	0.27	-0.23
	AC-10	5.93	7.72	6.37	0.44		AI-4	6.75	8.25	7.25	0.50		0.82	0.53	0.88	0.06
	AC-9	6.20	7.78	7.00	0.80		AI-5	6.54	7.99	7.34	0.80		0.34	0.21	0.34	0.00

It is also of interest to note how BYU changed relative to the other institutions that also participated in the 2001 and 2003 surveys. Twenty-eight institutions, including BYU, took part in both efforts. BYU's relative position for 2003 together with the 2001 scores for all institutions can be seen in the graph below.
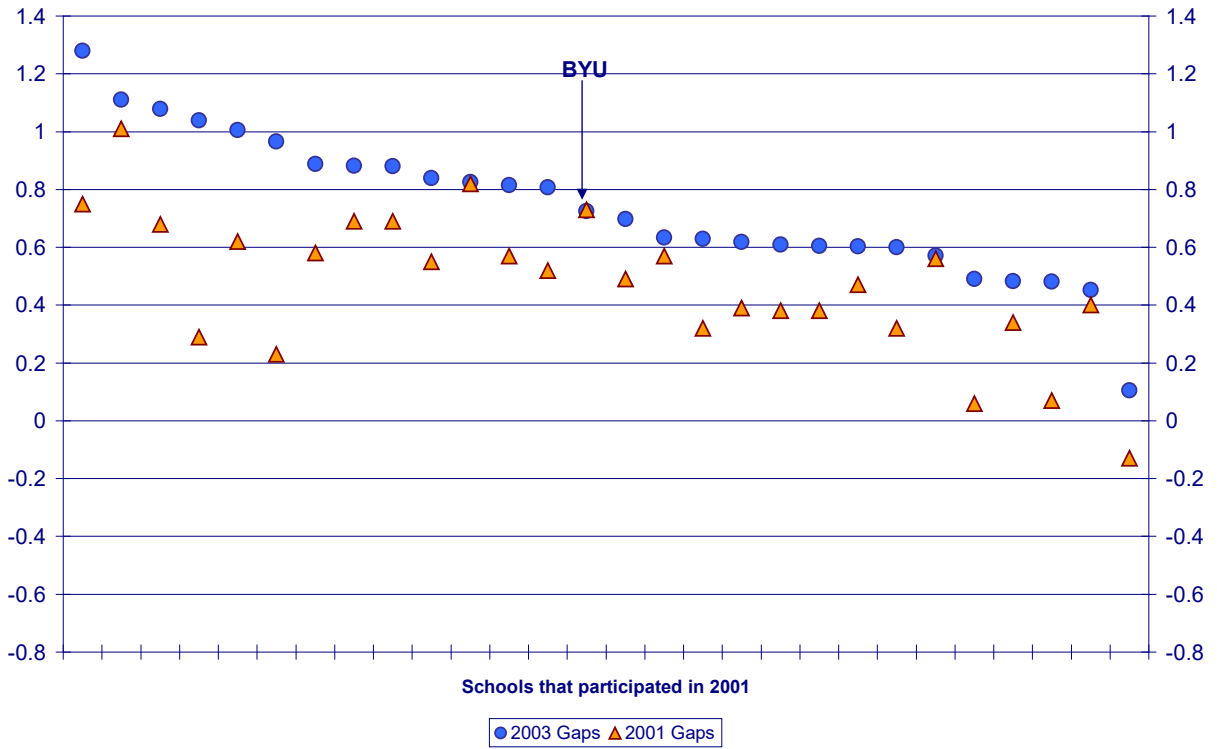
There are several interesting things to point out in the chart below. In 2001, BYU had the second highest overall service adequacy gap. Well over half the institutions in the group shown below did not have gaps that exceeded .4 and three institutions actually had gaps below 0 (where perceived was less than the minimum). Once again, the implication with this is simply that BYU patrons felt that the Lee Library adequately met their expectations, whereas patrons at other institutions felt their respective libraries were not able to meet their expectations.

In 2003, an interesting observation is evident. For the 2003 results, every single institution showed an increase in the overall adequacy gap. Moreover, no institution had a gap less than zero. A few still had gaps below .4, though no where near the number that had such in 2001. Many implications can be drawn from this; one being that the libraries involved in the 2001 study made sufficient changes in their respective services to such an extent as to raise the perception their patrons had of their library's ability to meet their minimum expectation for service. Another could simply be a shift in attitude in those sampled. Regardless, for the majority of the institutions, the increases in adequacy gap were quite substantial (note that one institution went from a near zero gap in 2001 to the 4th highest gap in 2003 for this comparative group). BYU, on the other hand, showed only a marginal increase in its overall adequacy gap. In fact, only one institution showed a gap increase smaller than BYU, while the rest had equal or greater gap increases. As such, BYU's relative position in relation to these schools shifted substantially, from 2nd in 2001 to 7th in 2003 for this group (note in the table above that BYU was 73rd for all 2003 libraries, 52nd for Colleges and Universities, 14th amongst participating ARL libraries, and 6th in the OSU group).
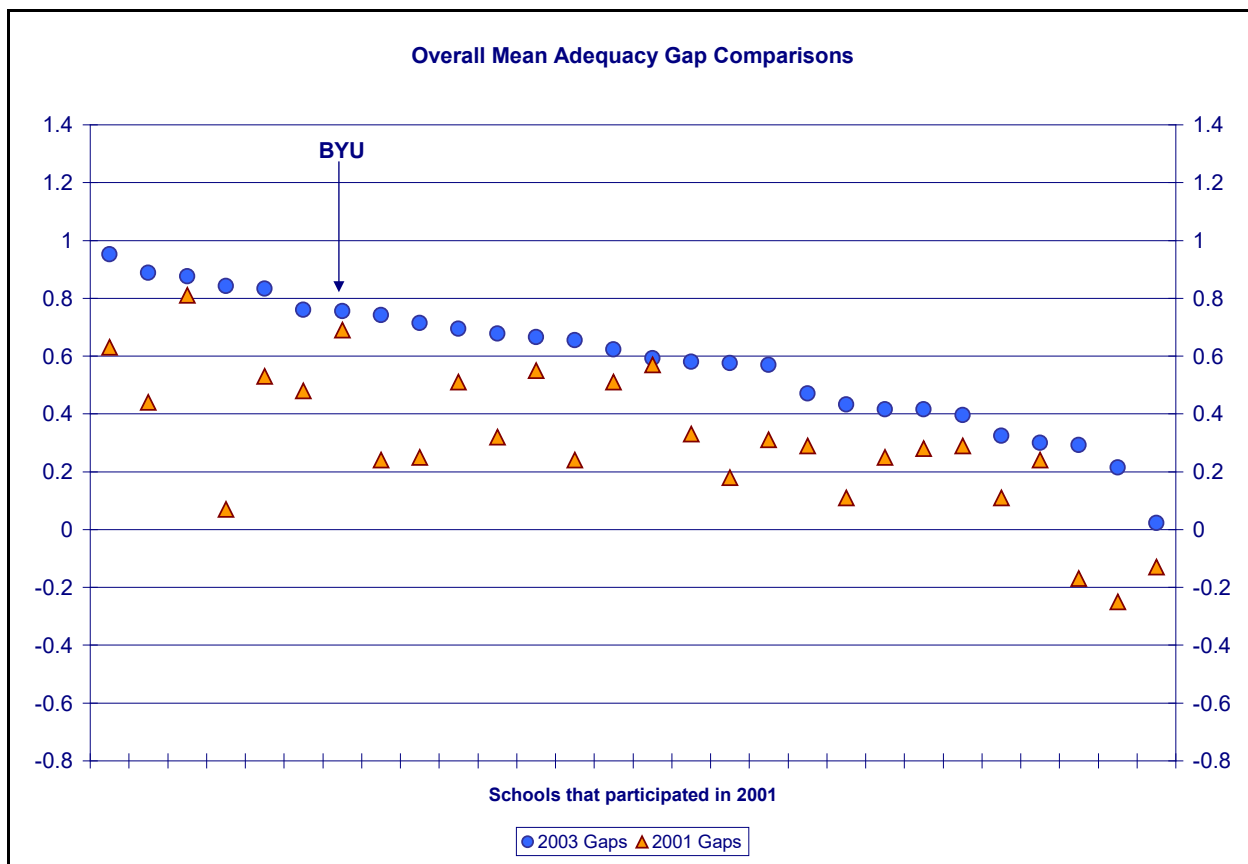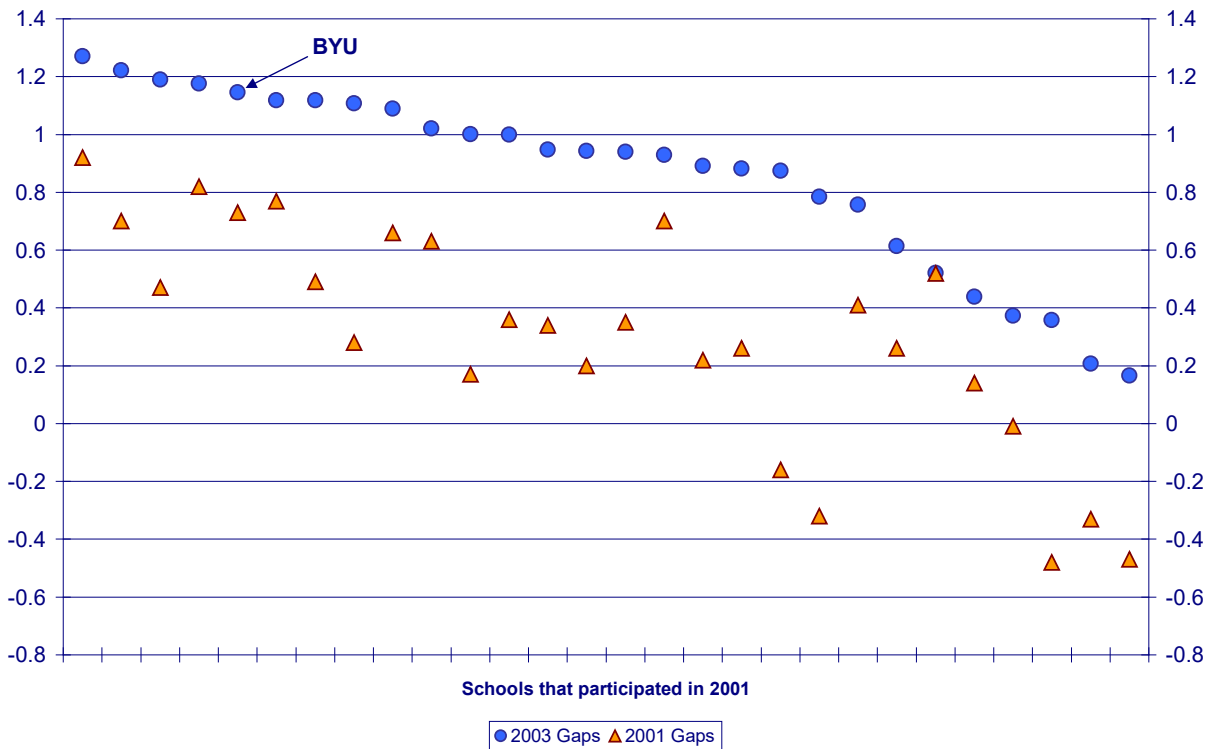

Similar graphs were constructed for each of the four service dimensions. They are also shown below.
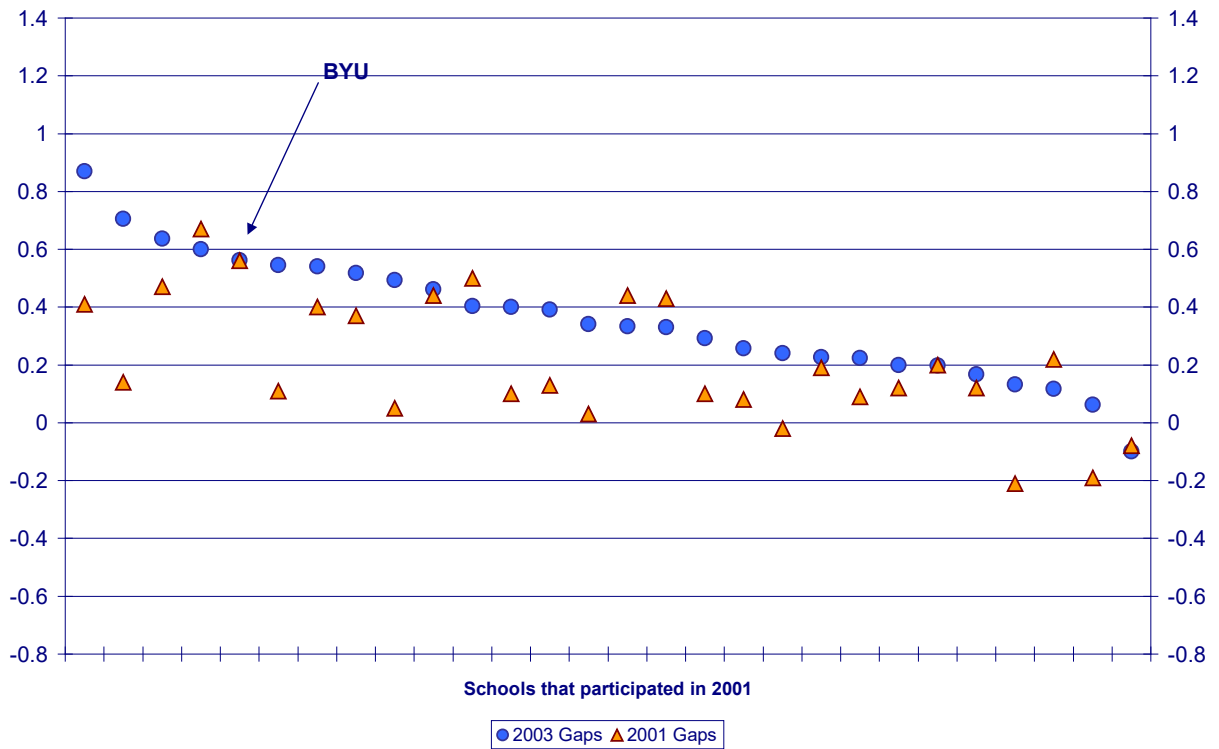
Affect of Service Mean Adequacy Gap Comparisons

BYU

Schools that participated in 2001

● 2003 Gaps ▲ 2001 Gaps

Library as Place Mean Adequacy Gap Comparisons

BYU

Schools that participated in 2001

● 2003 Gaps ▲ 2001 Gaps

Personal Control Mean Adequacy Gap Comparisons

BYU

Schools that participated in 2001

● 2003 Gaps ▲ 2001 Gaps

Access of Information Mean Adequacy Gap Comparisons

BYU

Schools that participated in 2001

● 2003 Gaps ▲ 2001 Gaps
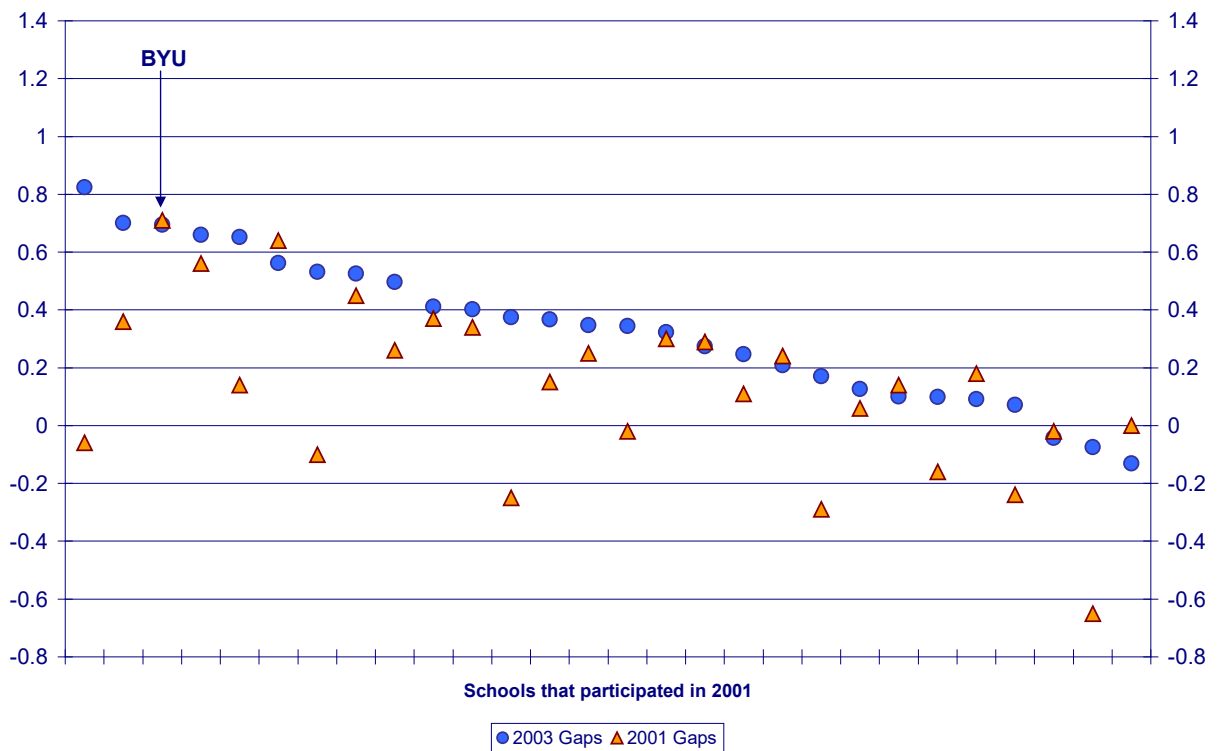
One final set of questions that were asked on both surveys dealt with general patron satisfaction. These questions were rated on a 9 point Likert scale with 1 being low (Strongly Disagree or Extremely Poor) and 9 being high (Strongly Agree or Extremely Good). One question rated the overall quality of the service provided by the library; one asked the patron, in general, to rate their satisfaction in the way in which they are treated at the library; and the last to rate their satisfaction with library support for learning, research and/or teaching needs. The only distinguishable change from 2001 to 2003, albeit very marginal, was in the support issue. Otherwise, there was no change evident in patron's responses to these satisfaction questions. The results have been summarized in the chart below.
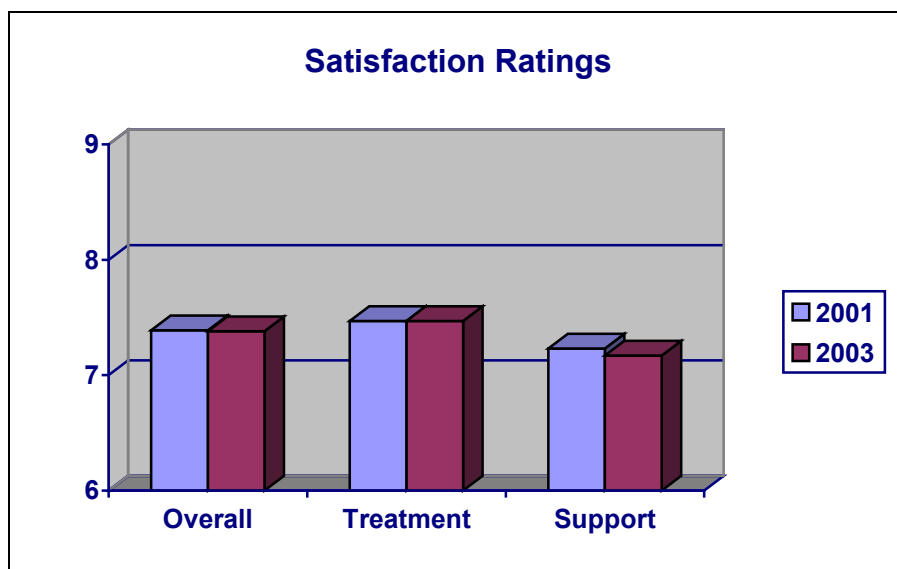

QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF COMMENTS

Unique to the 2003 survey that was not present in 2001 was the inclusion of a comment box where respondents were asked to enter any comment they might have about library services. Of the 972 completed surveys, 410 individuals made a total of 568 distinct comments about the services provided at the Lee Library.

The comments were grouped into 7 categories to better facilitate assessment and analysis. These categories included facilities (comments about the building and related issues), general (comments of no specific nature or related to the survey), library personnel (comments dealing specifically with personnel issues within the library including library faculty, library staff and library security), library polices (hours, circulation, restrictions, etc.), library resources (books, journals, etc.), online and/or electronic resources (electronic databases, online journals, etc.), and library web site. The general overtone of the comments was a mixed bag. Many were positive in nature – that the library was excellent, the staff helpful, great resources, etc. But many were also negative – needs improvement, staff impersonal, more resources needed.

The majority of the comments were directed to library personnel, general, and library resources. The library web site received the fewest number of comments. The breakdown in number of comments for each group has been summarized in the Pareto chart below (the number above each bar represents the total number of comments within the category).

LibQUAL+™ 2003 Comments Breakdown
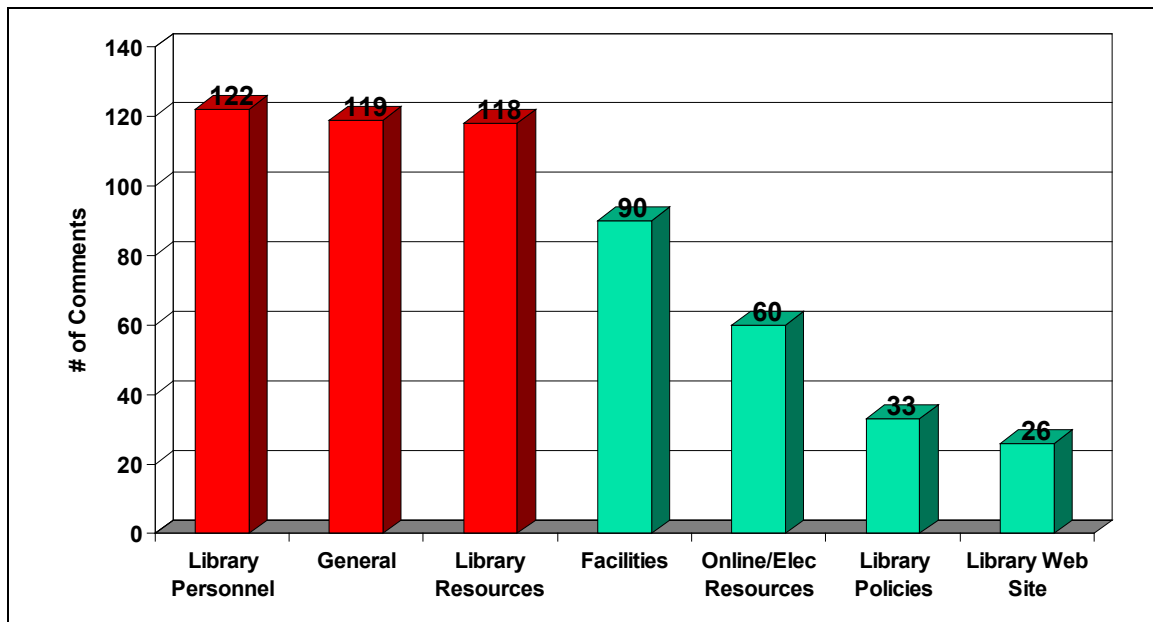
The two specific items to receive the most comments fell under the general category and library resources - the library was excellent (general) and more resources needed (library resources). But rather than look at each comment item overall, the comments were assessed separately within each category. For the purposes of this report, only the top scoring items within each category have been mentioned.

Starting with library personnel, the single item to receive the most comments was staff impersonal/not helpful. The implication from this is evident and certainly supports the idea mentioned earlier in this report where the ranking of BYU in the service dimension Affect of Service is the lowest of the four. However, it should be noted that the next three items to receive the most number of comments in library personnel were, in order, staff helpful, great staff, great subject librarians. This did somewhat offset the negative aspect of the top comment. But then, when all the comments in this category are assessed, half would reflect a positive comment towards library personnel, while the other half a negative comment. It should also be pointed out that more in depth analysis of these comments indicated that they were fairly well distributed across the several demographical groups. It would seem from the information here – coupled with that learned in the survey results above – the library could improve relations with its patrons.

In the general category, the single item to receive the most comments (and as mentioned above the most overall) was excellent. In this respect, the comment made by the respondent was in and of itself not specific enough to place it in one of the other categories. As such, it was simply labeled "excellent" and placed within the general category. The next three items that received the most comments were not library service related at all. They were, in order, survey issue, non-user of library resources, and limited library experience. In the first instance, survey issue, the patron had a comment, positive or negative – most often negative – about the survey itself. This included its length, redundancy, or even they thought the survey was a good thing. The only other comment in this group that of a nature would be library related was that the library was good but could always improve. Overall, the comments in this category pertaining to the library would certainly be deemed positive.

The next category to receive the most comments was library resources, which had more varied items than any other category. The item to have the most comments was more resources. It is of interest to note that a more in depth look at this item revealed that the Humanities and Faculty & Graduates were primarily the groups to make this comment. The next comments in this group were more positive in that the comments were great resources and ILL helpful. Interestingly, the next most common comment was that patrons had difficulty finding resources. This comment came exclusive from students

(undergraduates and graduates, both). It would appear that, as one would expect, the library could also add to the great resources it already has. But the library could also take steps to improve the way those resources can be located and/or utilized by patrons.

The facilities category was next in number of total comments. Within this category, the most often made comment dealt with the old south entrance – the pervading issue being to restore it to its original configuration (it is interesting to note that though there was no formal comment box in the 2001 survey, many unsolicited comments were made by respondents and the one item to receive a majority of comments was the restoration of the south entrance). More than a dozen respondents made such a reference to the south entrance, although the make up of those respondents were primarily faculty and graduates from disciplines generally associated with the south part of campus. The next several most frequent comments came generally from undergraduates and included, in order, quieter areas, great place to study, great computers & printers, and more group study rooms.

The next category, which easily could have been combined with library resources, was online/electronic resources. It was kept separate because the content of the comments dealt specifically with online and/or electronic resources as opposed to more general or printed library resources. More resources and great resources were again high on the count list, however, there was one comment that was made more often from respondents than did those mentioned, and that was improve access to information. This item has been an ongoing issue for some time, which has been evidenced in results from feedback surveys on the library web site. Often it entails a patron's inability to access such information from outside the library, particularly off-campus, but there are other issues that inhibit accessibility of online/electronic resources.

Library policies came next in count. The vast majority of these comments came from students. As such, it is easy to understand that the top comment in this category would be to extend hours. The next two highest were also of interest – cell phones (all complaining about the inconsiderate use of such that disturbs patrons) and food area (which coincides with the trend of late to include such at libraries across the country).

The category to receive the fewest amounts of comments was library web site. But, the two items to receive the overwhelming number were confusing/unfriendly (a general comment about the overall library web site) and search confusing (generally patrons having difficultly using the online catalog or other search capabilities in the site). These comments may be moot since at the time of the survey, the web site was undergoing a major redesign, which was implemented at the beginning of summer term and will be fully functional at the start of fall term. A new feedback survey is in place to elicit comments from patrons to see how the changes made in the site may have improved on the comments made in the LibQUAL+™ 2003 survey.

CONCLUSION

LibQUAL+™ has proven itself to be an invaluable asset in the Lee Library's efforts to improve the services it provides to the University community through understanding the patron's perceptions of those services. Overall, the patrons of the Lee Library at BYU continue to rate its services highly and such ratings compare favorably to that of other institutions that have participated in LibQUAL+™. The one dimension that appears to need the greatest attention is Affect of Service, the way in which patrons are treated at the library. Other areas of potential improvement include a continuing effort to expand the print and electronic resources in the library to effectively meeting the study and research needs of the University, improving the library web site (which is in process and will be assessed over the next few months through among other means a feedback survey), and allowing for more self-reliance and availability of resources by improving access tools. But, despite these areas, patrons continue to feel that the Lee Library is a comfortable and inviting location from which to study and learn.