An Analysis of LibQUAL+® Recurring Comments in the 2008, 2011, and 2013 Surveys
13 September 2013
Allyson Washburn

Introduction

As the assessment librarian and the statistical officer worked with the comments from the 2008, 2011, and 2013 LibQUAL+® surveys, it appeared that some topics were addressed repeatedly over the years. The assessment librarian decided to do an analysis of these recurring comments to see what could be discovered. The questions addressed were: who was making the comments? Were the groups making the comments consistent? Were the comments similar each year or were different ones appearing? And which comments demonstrate that the perception of the participants is that the library has not addressed the problem or concern? Hopefully, the answers to these questions will illuminate issues in the library that are problematic for patrons and suggest actions the library might take to alleviate them.

Methodology

The six categories of comments that consistently recur each year are the website, promotion/lack of awareness of library services and resources, noise in the library, food in the library, lack of a south or additional entrance, and the wireless signal. Each of the comments for these categories was entered into an Excel spreadsheet along with the demographic information of the respondent. Demographics included university status (undergraduate, graduate, faculty, staff), class standing, major, age and sex. Each group of comments was sorted and read in various configurations to determine what the data revealed. The specific unit(s) of analysis for each group of comments will be described in the analysis section of each topic which follows.

Website

Website comments were analyzed based on the respondents age, university status, and topic. Knowing which age group made most of the comments is important because it influences where effort should be focused to make improvements. Undegraduates are the primary audience for the website, so more weight should be given to their concerns when making changes to the web page**.**

The website with 287 comments had—by far—the largest number of total comments, with the majority, 119 comments or 41%, from patrons in the 23-30 age group. Following closely, 77 of the comments were from the 18-22 age group, 27% of total comments. Since most undergraduates fall into the 18-22 and 23-30 age groups, a total of 68% of the comments about the website came from undergraduates. Comments from the 31-45 and 46 & older age groups hovered in the 40's and comprised 32% of the comments (see fig. 1).

2008	**#**	**%**	**2011**	**#**	**%**	**2013**	**#**	**%**	**Total**	**%**
18-22	14	17	18-22	34	28	18-22	29	35	**77**	**27%**
23-30	37	45	23-30	54	44	23-30	28	34	**119**	**41%**
31-45	13	16	31-45	15	12	31-45	15	18	**43**	**15%**
46 & older	18	21	46 & older	20	16	46 & older	10	12	**48**	**17%**
	82			**123**			**82**		**287**	**100%**

Fig. 1 Total number of website comments broken out by age and university status.

The data reveal that the number of comments from all age groups increased between 2008 and 2011. However, with the exception of the 31-45 age group, comments from all other age groups decreased from 2011 to 2013. The number of the comments in the 23-30 age group nearly doubled in 2011 and

then halved in 2013. Additionally, the data show that the 23-30 age group consistently made the largest percentage of comments except in 2013. In an attempt to determine what might have caused the number of comments to increase in 2011 and then decrease in 2013, I requested and received mages of the website from all three years. The image for the 2011 website revealed that the changes were mostly cosmetic and the 2013 website image was markedly different from both the 2008 and the 2011 image. However, keep in the mind that the way a website looks and the way it functions are two entirely different things and the functions a website cannot be determined simply by looking at the design. More than half of the comments (57%) addressed the search function(See fig. 2).

The issues that were exposed by the website comments included:
- Known items often cannot be located in the catalog
- Searching , especially for books, is problematic
- Locating documents and journal articles is difficult
- There are so many links, resources , references, etc. that it is hard to know where to start
- Accessing library databases off- campus is frustrating
- Searching returns completely irrelevant results
- Library website is confusing and poorly laid out; hard to navigate
- Some things are "hidden" or hard to find on the website

Grouping the web page comments into topics, three patron concerns became evident—search functionality, the organization/layout of the web page and problems with accessing resources from the web page (see fig. 2). The number of comments in this table do not correspond to the number of comments in the figure 1 table because individual comments may have addressed more than one topic.

		2008	2011	2013		Totals
18-22	**Search**	8	18	14		40
	Homepage	6	13	8		27
	Access	2	4	6		12
23-30	**Search**	29	36	19		84
	Homepage	7	19	11		37
	Access	6	1	2		9
31-45	**Search**	6	9	8		23
	Homepage	6	5	6		17
	Access	1	2	1		4
46 & older	**Search**	9	9	9		27
	Homepage	9	7	3		19
	Access	2	2	1		5
		91	125	88		304

Fig. 2 Number of comments about the webpage by age and topic.

When comments were broken down down by age group, we see the specific concerns of patrons differing by age over the years. The greatest concern to members of all age groups was the search functionality of the library webpage (57% of all comments about the webpage addressed this topic). The second greatest priority was the homepage/website itself (33% of comments about the webpage).

Respondents commented that the library website is hard to navigate, difficult to use, not user-friendly and poorly organized. The third most mentioned topic addressed access to resources (10%). While the access ranking doesn't differ much thoughout the different age groups, there was one subtopic in regards to the webpage that had an interesting age distribution.

Unfavorable comments about the constant changes to the homepage came primarily from respondents in the 46 & older age group. Over 75% of comments on the topic of changes to the homepage came from individuals in this age group, with only one comment from participants younger than 30.

Promotion/Lack of awareness of library services and resources
Comments about promotion were analyzed by university status as learning what the library offers early in a students time at the university would increase their knowledge of what the library contains and who can help them. Several comments indicated that students would use the library more if they knew what was available. Knowing what groups are making these kinds of comments and what they are saying can inform our current and future efforts.

The category of promotion includes patron comments regarding a lack of awareness of library resources, as well as promotional efforts on behalf of these resources. This category consisted of 160 comments, making promotion the issue with the second largest number of comments. This is not surprising as we have heard this in almost every study that the Anthropology course has done for the library Undergraduates made the most comments in this category each year, however it is interesting to note that overall the number of these comments dropped in 2013, primarily because of the drastic drop in undergraduate comments. One supposition is that the library is doing a better job of making students aware of library services and resources, but this may not be entirely true since the number of comments from graduate students increased by more than half in 2013. (see fig. 3).
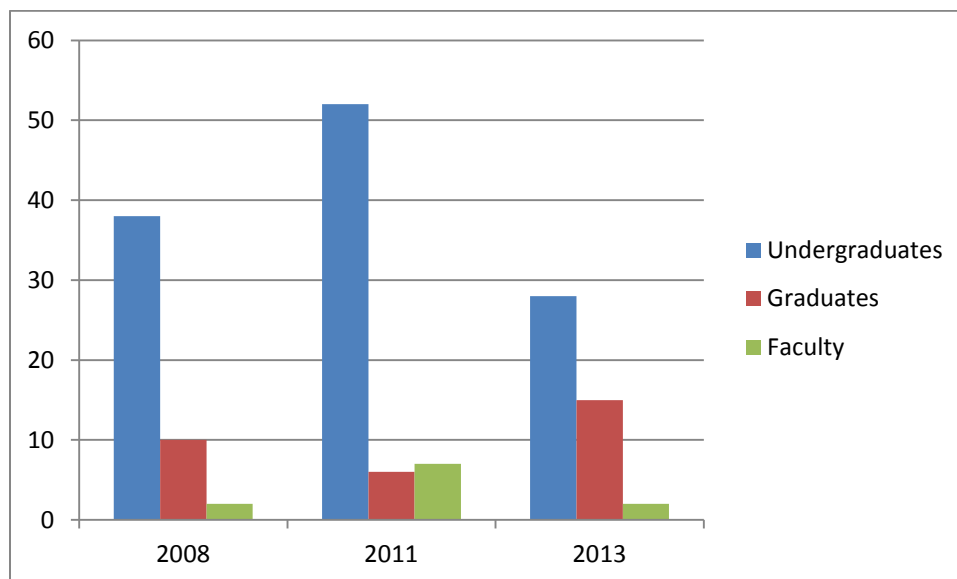

Fig. 3 Number of promotion comments broken out by university status.

The overriding theme of the comments on promotion was that students know there are a lot of resources and services in the library, but that they are not familiar with many of them. Freshmen, specifically, commented that there are many resources unknown to them, that they found the library

confusing, that the library needs to advertise its resources, that there is too much to take in during the NSO tour, and that transfer students have to learn what the library has on their own.

The major issue sophomores identified was that that they were not as familiar with all the resources as they'd like to be, indicating that Freshman orientation was a long time ago and that the library needs to find a better way to help students know about the resources and services it offers.

Juniors repeated the theme of being unaware of services until required to learn them in a class or a friend told them, usually late in their time at BYU. Subject librarians were mentioned as something they typically didn't know about. They, too, would like more advertising directed to them.

The seniors who responded to this survey repeated the same theme of not knowing what services and resources were available to them and that it was hard to search them out on their own. Six of the respondents lamented that they hadn't know about them earlier. Respondents suggested a better menu of services at the front of the library, better signage, and more navigation aids and information about the physical resources.

Noise

University status was the unit of analysis for noise in the library in order to understand who desires more quiet areas in the library. The issue of noise in the library or lack of quiet places to study was commented on by 62 respondents. This is also a recurring theme in the Anthropology studies. Of interest is the fact that comments from graduate students decreased a bit from 2008 to 2011 and then quadrupled in 2013. (see fig. 4).
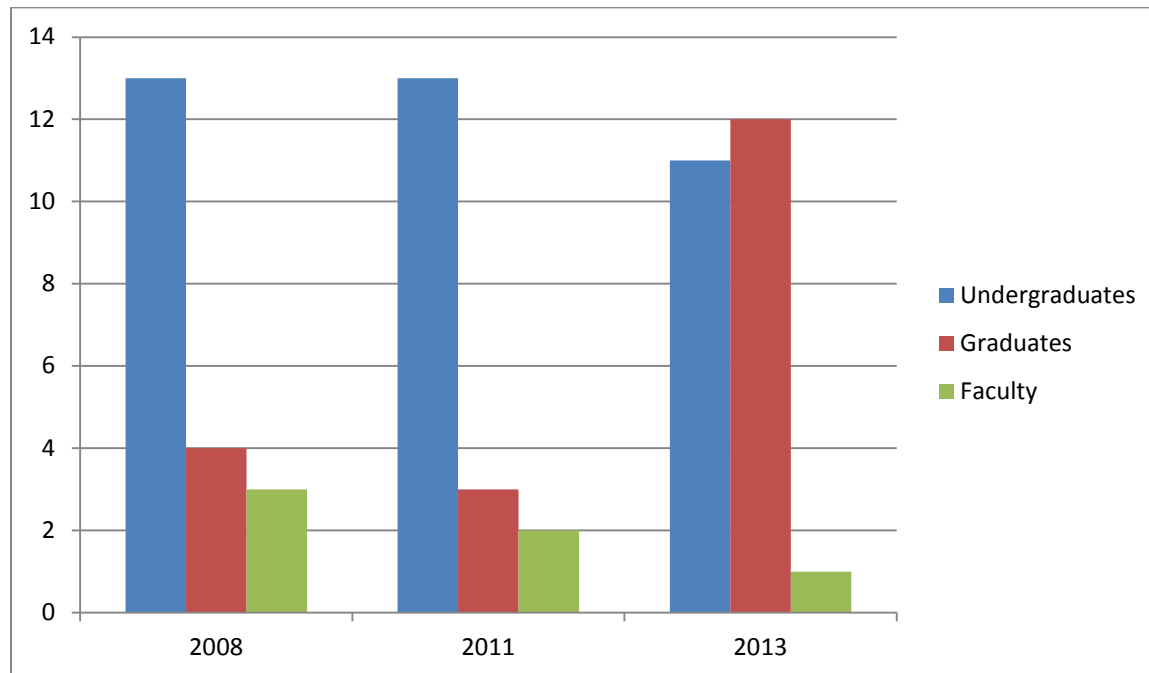

Fig. 4 Number of noise comments broken out by university status.

Comments by graduate students indicate that finding a quiet place to study is their biggest frustration. Graduates also indicated that sometimes the library employees are the loudest and requested enforcement of quiet areas or provision for areas where students can take a cell phone call. For

undergraduates, seniors echoed the same complaints as graduate students, but the issue was not as important for freshmen, sophomores or juniors.

Food
The issue of food in the library was also analyzed by university status to determine if this was a universal issue across all groups on campus. The topic of food in the library garnered 48 comments. Undergraduates made the majority of the comments, with their numbers remaining constant from 2008 to 2011 and more than doubling in 2013. Undergraduate comments increased in 2013 to exceed the total of the previous two years combined as well as the previous two years total number of comments. This has evidently become a big issue for them (see fig # 5).
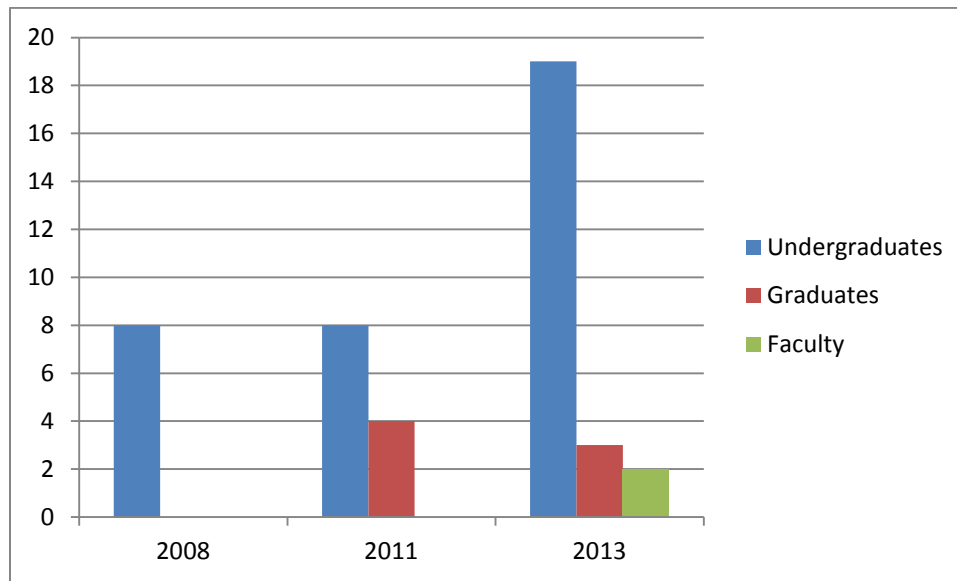
Fig. 5 Number of food comments broken out by university status.

The tenor of the comments has shifted over the years from respondents wishing that they could eat in the library and bemoaning long days studying in the library without a break for something to eat to the inconvenience of having to leave the library and get out of the "study groove" to get something to eat. Eight respondents suggested that a café, or even just vending machines would be nice along with a larger area of the library that allowed food. Two students indicated that they had changed their study locations to other areas of the campus and one did not like the fact that the library now allowed food. In 2013, new themes emerged, those being a desire for multiple eating areas, being able to eat food in quiet study areas and continued requests for vending machines and or a small café. The two faculty comments were that a café would be nice and that being able to buy food in the library would be nice since the WSC "is a long way to walk when one is in the middle of studying".

Additional library entrance
Desire for a south or an additional entrance to the library was analyzed by discipline and age to see if building locations or age was a factor. I hesitated to include this section, knowing that at this time there is no funding for another entrance, but felt that the information would be valuable when the opportunity arises to make the request again.

Thirty-one comments were made concerning another entrance into the library. The number of comments decreased by one from 2008 to 2011 and increased in 2013. A variety of disciplines were

represented in the comments with Science/Math (8) and Social Science/Psychology (7) respondents commenting most often. It is interesting to note that no discipline with a department located north of the library commented on this issue (see fig. 6).

Discipline	2008	2011	2013
Ag/Environ Stu	0	1	0
Business	0	0	0
Comms/Jrnlism	0	0	0
Education	0	0	1
Eng & Comp Sci	0	1	1
Health Sci	1	2	1
Humanities	1	0	2
Perf/Fine Arts	0	0	0
Sci/Math	4	2	2
Soc Sci/Psyc	2	3	2
Other	1	0	3
Undecided	1	0	1
Total	**10**	**9**	**13**

Fig. 6 Number of additional entrance comments by discipline.
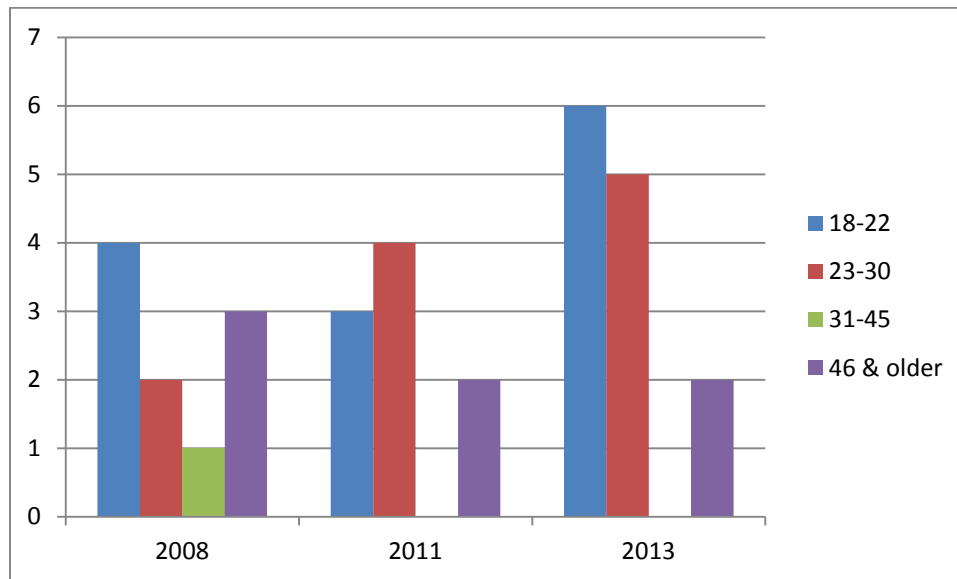

Fig. 7 Number of additional entrance comments by age.

The data reveals that the majority of respondents requesting either a "south" or "another" entrance were under the age of 30, i.e., the typical undergraduate student (see fig 7). This may be because many of their classes are in buildings south of the library. However, it was also interesting to note that 22% of the comments on this topic came from patrons within the 46 & older range, suggesting that some of our older patrons/faculty would find an additional entrance to be beneficial to them. Perhaps this is a result of the collective "memory" of what used to be, but this is not the case with the students today, as they would have no memory of the old entrance, but they still feel it is of importance. These respondents

also mentioned the long walk from the south of campus and additionally, indicated that once in the library, they walk to the south end of the building to retrieve materials and then have to walk back to the north exit and back south to their classroom building. Miscellaneous comments indicated that having only one entrance is a fire hazard, that having only one entrance discouraged them from coming to the library and that the Media Center should be moved closer to the front if there continues to be only one entrance.

Wireless service

 Age, gender, and university status were used to ascertain who is most concerned about the wireless signal. The library's wireless service received 26 comments during the years of 2008, 2011, and 2013. Graduate student and faculty comments together totaled six. However, the majority of total comments (77%)coming from undergraduates and the fact that undergraduate comments increased each year demonstrates their concern about this issue. Looking at the data by sex of the respondents shows that the greatest majority of comments (82%) came from younger male respondents. Only three females commented on the wireless issue (see figs. 8 and 9).
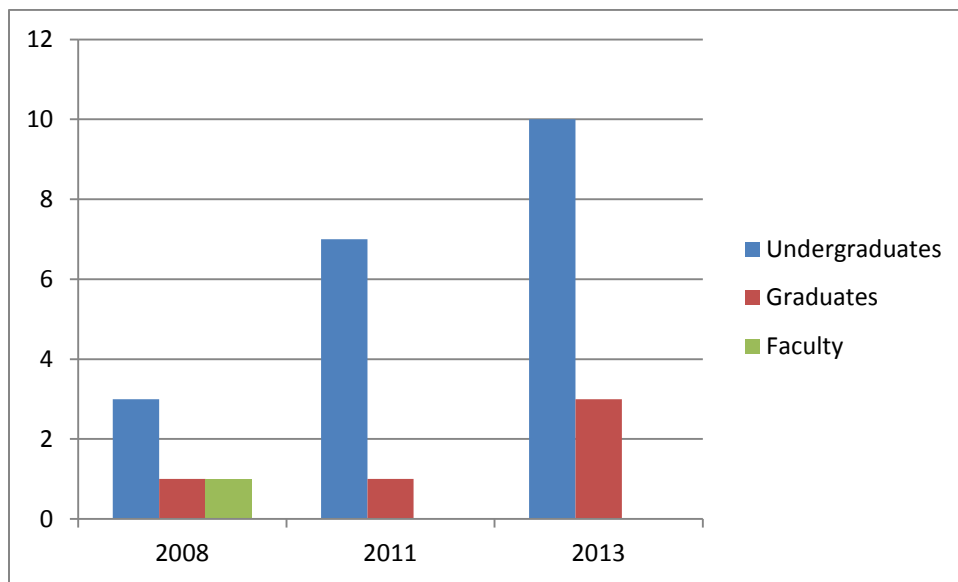

Fig. 8 Number of wireless service comments by university status.

Gender	Age	Comments		Gender	Age	Comments
Male	18-22	11		**Female**	18-22	0
	23-30	7			23-30	2
	31-45	1			31-45	1

Fig. 9 Number of wireless comments by age and sex of respondent.

Comments from the 18-22 year old age group focused on the speed, strength and reliability of the wireless signal, all of which they felt could be improved. The same theme was repeated with minor variations by the 23-30 year olds and the 31-45 year olds. Requests were made for a cell phone booster in the "basement", better connections in the Honors Reading Room, wifi at all study desks and in all group study rooms and a stronger signal on the 2nd and 5th floors.

Conclusion

This analysis of recurring comments revealed that some of the comments, like the wireless, food, and additional entrance topics did not have as many comments as I had believed, nevertheless they were important to some patrons. It is also interesting to note the association of the comments to the respondents age, university status or discipline. It can be discouraging to see that some issues like the website are still problematic for users in spite of the time and effort that has gone into trying to make it easier for patrons to search and find information. However, the comments also illuminate those areas where more work is needed. The issue of promotion/awareness of library services and resources is a second major recurring issue. Various approaches have been taken to alleviate this problem and it will be interesting to see if the efforts of the promotions carried out during fall semester make a difference. Additionally, the Library Orientation and Tour Study with the Anthroplogy 247 class may shed more light on possible solutions. Differing needs for quiet or noise allow us to examine different areas of the library and make noise/quiet determinations as well as decisions on how to inform students of the expected noise level in various areas of the library. All in all, this project exposed recurring issues that continue to be problematic for different groups of patrons and affords us the opportunity to take another look at them and consider how we might better meet their needs.