



# SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

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## REPORT ON THE RESULTS OF THE LIBQUAL+™ 2003 SURVEY

SUBMITTED TO THE LIBRARY ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In April 2003 Syracuse University Library (SUL) was among the 308 libraries that participated in the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) LibQUAL+™ Survey. The survey contains 25 questions grouped into four service dimensions: *Access to Information*, *Affect of Service*, *Library as Place*, and *Personal Control*. The survey asked users to identify the minimally acceptable level of service, the desired (or highest) level of service, and the level of service they actually perceive.

The *Access to Information* and *Personal Control* dimensions clearly stand out as the areas for which our users expect the highest levels of service. They are also the areas for which we show the lowest adequacy gap scores, i.e., we fail to meet minimum expectations by a significant margin. Five areas in these dimensions show negative adequacy gaps, especially among graduate students and faculty:

### *Lowest Gap Scores for Access to Information and Personal Control Items*

| Item  | Adequacy Gap |
|---|--------------|
| Print and/or electronic journal collections I require for my work | -0.51        |
| The printed library materials I need for my work                  | -0.37        |
| Making electronic resources accessible from my home or office     | -0.24        |
| The electronic information resources I need                       | -0.03        |
| Easy-to-use access tools that allow me to find things on my own   | 0.00         |

The *Affect of Service* dimension fared better, having resulted in the most favorable gap scores. While in general we exceed patron minimum expectations in this area, findings show that several items result in significantly lower scores among certain populations. For example, although we exceed expectations in terms of readiness, caring, willingness to help, and general knowledge, undergraduates and faculty gave very low scores for our ability to handle service problems.

### *Gap scores for Affect of Service Dimension (Highest to Lowest)*

| Item  | Adequacy Gap |
|---|--------------|
| Giving users individual attention                         | 0.77         |
| Employees who instill confidence in users                 | 0.52         |
| Readiness to respond to users' questions                  | 0.41         |
| Employees who deal with users in a caring fashion         | 0.41         |
| Willingness to help users                                 | 0.40         |
| Employees who are consistently courteous                  | 0.38         |
| Employees who have the knowledge to answer user questions | 0.20         |
| Employees who understand the needs of their users         | 0.20         |
| Dependability in handling users' service problems         | 0.11         |

The *Library as Place* dimension is interesting in that although items in this dimension resulted in favorable adequacy gaps, this is most likely a result of very low minimum expectations rather than particularly high perceived mean scores. In fact, when compared to other perceived mean scores, the *Library as Place* dimension overall perceived mean level of service was quite low. Examination of the

desired mean scores reveals that this is the area of least relative importance to our users.

*Desired Mean Scores (Highest to Lowest)*

| Text  | Desired |
|---|---------|
| A library Web site enabling me to locate information on my own    | 8.41    |
| Making electronic resources accessible from my home or office     | 8.37    |
| The electronic information resources I need                       | 8.36    |
| Easy-to-use access tools that allow me to find things on my own   | 8.32    |
| Timely document delivery/interlibrary loan                        | 8.25    |
| Modern equipment that lets me easily access needed information    | 8.24    |
| Print and/or electronic journal collections I require for my work | 8.21    |
| Making information easily accessible for independent use          | 8.21    |
| Readiness to respond to users' questions                          | 8.18    |
| The printed library materials I need for my work                  | 8.16    |
| Willingness to help users   | 8.13    |
| Dependability in handling users' service problems                 | 8.12    |
| Convenient service hours  | 8.11    |
| Employees who have the knowledge to answer user questions         | 8.10    |
| Employees who are consistently courteous                          | 8.06    |
| Employees who understand the needs of their users                 | 8.06    |
| Convenient access to library collections                          | 7.99    |
| Employees who deal with users in a caring fashion                 | 7.86    |
| A comfortable and inviting location                               | 7.72    |
| Employees who instill confidence in users                         | 7.63    |
| Library space that inspires study and learning                    | 7.59    |
| A getaway for study, learning, or research                        | 7.59    |
| Quiet space for individual activities                             | 7.52    |
| Giving users individual attention                                 | 7.51    |
| Community space for group learning and group study                | 6.57    |

Using statistical norms developed from LibQUAL+™ 2003 data we are able to determine that we generally rank in the 35<sup>th</sup> – 40<sup>th</sup> percentile in terms of overall mean scores as compared to similar participating institutions.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Score norms tables for LibQUAL+™ 2003 are provided for all participating institutions and for subgroups including ARL institutions, community colleges, health science institutions, etc. Our comparisons are based on overall norms provided for students and faculty at all North American colleges and universities participating in the survey. Two of the libraries participating in the study belong to a group of universities that Syracuse University (SU) regards as its aspirational peers, that is, the institutions that SU seeks to emulate. We have provided comparative data for these two institutions as well.

# INTRODUCTION

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## ABOUT LIBQUAL+™ 2003

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Developed as part of the ARL *New Measures Initiative* in partnership with Texas A&M University, LibQUAL+™ measures library users' perceptions of service quality and provides libraries with reliable and comparable benchmarking data. The survey contains 25 questions grouped into four service dimensions: **Access to Information** (comprehensiveness, organization, accessibility, and ease of acquiring information), **Affect of Service** (the human aspect of service interactions), **Library as Place** (the adequacy of physical public spaces in the library), and **Personal Control** (the ease with which users can independently navigate and carry out their research tasks). The 2003 survey included several additional questions dealing with **General Satisfaction** and **Information Literacy Outcomes**. The survey asked users to identify the minimally acceptable level of service, the desired (or highest) level of service, and the level of service they actually perceive. Respondents were also invited to add comments to their responses, which we analyzed as part of this Report. Analysis of the 2003 survey results can help us determine which services are most important to library users and identify patterns of satisfaction and dissatisfaction across user groups.

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## LIBQUAL+™ 2003 AT SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

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In April 2003 Syracuse University Library was among the 308 libraries that participated in the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) LibQUAL+™ Survey. Invitations to participate in the survey were mailed to 2,400 randomly selected SU faculty, students, and staff. We received 302 responses, for a response rate of approximately 13%. Based on the standard formula for computing appropriate survey sample size, we would have required a sample size of approximately 1,000 surveys in order to achieve the desired 95% (+/- .03) confidence rating. We received 302 surveys, of which 279 were usable. Thus, our confidence rating is 90% (+/- 4.7).

### REPRESENTATIVENESS

Representativeness of the sample is of concern, with undergraduates underrepresented (66% of the total population but only 18% of the sample) and faculty overrepresented (7% of the population versus 35% of the sample).

*Figure 1: Representativeness by User Group*

| User Group | # of Responses | % of Responses | # of Total | % of Total |
|------------|----------------|----------------|------------|------------|
| Faculty    | 107            | 35.43%         | 1,364      | 7.09%      |

|               |    |        |        |        |
|---------------|----|--------|--------|--------|
| Graduate      | 80 | 26.49% | 5,175  | 26.88% |
| Staff         | 62 | 21%    | 366    | 2%     |
| Undergraduate | 53 | 17.55% | 12,711 | 66.03% |

Looking at respondents by discipline shows that the sample was fairly representative of our population, the major exception being *Humanities* which was significantly overrepresented. It should be noted, however, that the discipline categories were determined by the LibQUAL+™ instrument and therefore not customizable to our local profile. This made it difficult to draw any conclusions from the survey results based on discipline breakdowns.

*Figure 2: Representativeness by Discipline*

| Discipline                          | Responses | % Resp | Population | % Pop  |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|--------|------------|--------|
| Humanities                          | 41        | 17.15% | 852        | 4.48%  |
| Social Sciences / Psychology        | 34        | 14.23% | 2,806      | 14.74% |
| Science / Math                      | 26        | 10.88% | 784        | 4.12%  |
| Other                               | 25        | 10.46% | 857        | 4.50%  |
| Engineering / Computer Science      | 24        | 10.04% | 1,599      | 8.40%  |
| Performing & Fine Arts              | 20        | 8.37%  | 2,127      | 11.17% |
| Communications / Journalism         | 19        | 7.95%  | 1,960      | 10.29% |
| Education                           | 16        | 6.69%  | 1,375      | 7.22%  |
| Business                            | 14        | 5.86%  | 1,954      | 10.26% |
| Architecture                        | 6         | 2.51%  | 495        | 2.60%  |
| Agriculture / Environmental Studies | 4         | 1.67%  | 0          | 0.00%  |
| Health Sciences                     | 4         | 1.67%  | 995        | 5.23%  |
| Undecided                           | 3         | 1.26%  | 1,401      | 7.36%  |
| General Studies                     | 2         | 0.84%  | 1,834      | 9.63%  |
| Law                                 | 1         | 0.42%  | 0          | 0.00%  |
| Military / Naval Science            | 0         | 0.00%  | 0          | 0.00%  |

## FOCUS GROUPS

The Assessment Team conducted focus group interviews with students in order to validate the results of the survey and to gain further insight from a group that was underrepresented in the sample. During two April 2004 focus groups we met with a total of thirteen undergraduate students and four graduate students. The results of these focus group interviews are reflected in this report.

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## LIBQUAL+™ 2003 NORMS

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Almost 130,000 users at more than 300 institutions participated in the LibQUAL+™ 2003 study, allowing us the opportunity to gain a comparative perspective on our users' perceptions of service quality. Score norms tables for 2001, 2002, and 2003 are available on <http://www.coe.tamu.edu/~bthompson/libq2003.htm>.

Norms tables can help us determine how our scores rank in relation to the scores of other institutions. These norms can be used to rank score results for each dimension. The LibQUAL+™ documentation cautions, "An unfortunate and incorrect misconception is that norms make value statements. Norms do not make value statements! Norms make fact statements" (LibQUAL+™ Spring 2003 Survey Institution Results, page 10).

Two of the libraries participating in the study belong to a group of universities that Syracuse University regards as its aspirational peers, that is, the institutions that SU seeks to emulate. Norms allow us to compare our percentile rankings with those of these institutions.

# SUMMARY OF RESULTS

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## EXPLANATION OF LIBQUAL+™ TERMS

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**Access to Information (AI)** – One of four LibQUAL+™ dimensions. Measures comprehensiveness, organization, accessibility, and ease of acquiring information.

**Adequacy Gap** – Service adequacy gap is calculated by subtracting the minimum score from the perceived score on any given question. A positive adequacy gap score indicates that we exceed minimum expectations of service quality for that particular item. A negative service adequacy gap score indicates that our patrons' perceived level of service quality is below their minimum expected level of service quality.

**Affect of Service (AS)** – One of four LibQUAL+™ dimensions. Measures the human aspect of service interactions.

**Aggregate** – Aggregate scores combine faculty, graduate student, undergraduate student, and university staff results. Library staff responses are not included in aggregate totals.

**Dimension** – The survey contained 25 items that represent four broad dimensions of library service: Access to Information (AI), Affect of Service (AS), Library as Place (LP), Personal Control (PC).

**Levels of Service** – LibQUAL+™ asks users to rate their minimum, perceived, and desired levels of service. These are defined as:

- Minimum – the minimally acceptable level of service
- Perceived – the level of service actually experienced or perceived
- Desired – the level of service deemed optimal by the user

**Library as Place (LP)** - One of four LibQUAL+™ dimensions. Measures the adequacy of physical public spaces in the library.

**Major Strengths** – As defined by the LibQUAL+™ instrument, major strengths are those areas for which the perceived level of service exceeds the desired level of service.

**Major Weaknesses** – As defined by the LibQUAL+™ instrument, major weaknesses are those areas for which the perceived level of service falls below the minimally acceptable level of service.

**Norms** – Norms have been developed for both perceived and gap service scores based on data collected from more than 130,000 LibQUAL+™ respondents at 308 institutions. Statistical norms represent “average” or “typical” results for a group. Detailed score profiles for peer groups are

available at <http://www.coe.tamu.edu/~bthompson/libq2003.htm>.

**Percentile** – When discussing peer group norms, percentile refers to the percentage of institutions whose score was lower than our score.

**Personal Control (PC)** - One of four LibQUAL+™ dimensions. Measures the ease with which users can independently navigate and carry out their research tasks.

**Strengths** – As defined by the LibQUAL+™ instrument, strengths are those areas in which the perceived level of service significantly exceeds the minimally acceptable level of service, resulting in a larger positive adequacy gap.

**Superiority Gap** - A *superiority gap* score is obtained by subtracting the score for the desired level of service from the score for the perceived level of service. A *positive superiority gap* occurs when the perceived level of service is greater than the desired level of service, resulting in a positive number. A *negative superiority gap* occurs when the perceived level of service is less than the desired level and the result is a negative number.

**Weaknesses** – As defined by the LibQUAL+™ instrument, weaknesses are those areas in which the perceived level of service exceeds the minimally acceptable level of service by a small margin, resulting in a smaller positive adequacy gap.

## DIMENSION: ACCESS TO INFORMATION (AI)

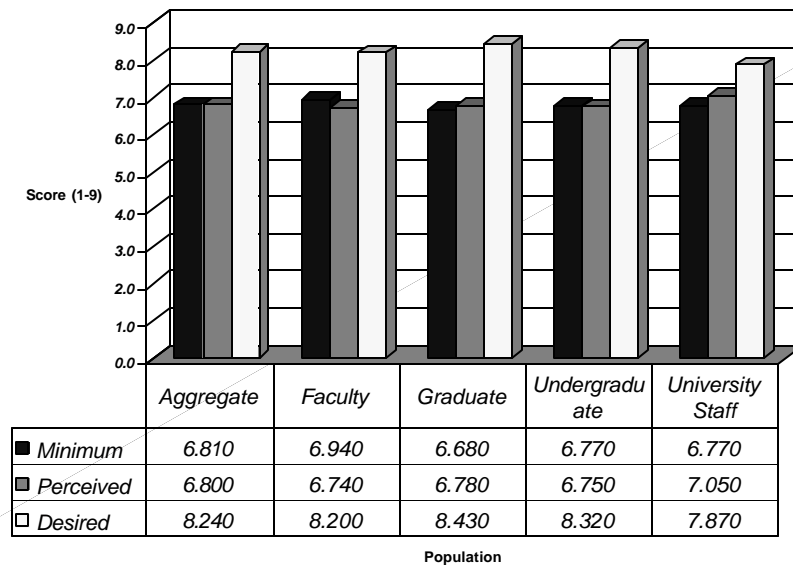
### DESCRIPTION

This dimension concerns issues related to the adequacy of print and electronic collections, library hours, and the timeliness of interlibrary loan services. Items include:

- AI-1 Print and/or electronic journal collections I require for my work
- AI-2 Convenient service hours
- AI-3 The printed library materials I need for my work
- AI-4 The electronic information resources I need
- AI-5 Timely document delivery/interlibrary loan

### RESULTS

Figure 3: Access to Information (AI) Raw Scores



Scores for the *Access to Information* dimension were fairly consistent across patron populations, with the lowest perceived mean ranking 6.74 by faculty and the highest perceived mean ranking 7.05 by university staff.

In this category the difference between the overall minimum expectation (6.81) and the overall perceived performance (6.80) yields an adequacy gap of 0.01. This can be interpreted to mean that in general we meet respondents' minimum expectations. It should be noted, however, that if we look only at faculty responses in this case we see that faculty minimum expectations ranked 6.94 versus their perceived performance rating of 6.74. This results in a negative service adequacy gap of  $-0.20$

for faculty respondents.

The desired service level overall was quite high for this dimension (8.24), indicating that respondents have a very high level of expectation in this area.

Compared to the norms for all participating institutions, our Access to Information service adequacy gap (+0.01) was below average. The mean adequacy gap reported by all institutions participating in LibQUAL+™ 2003 was +0.295, placing us in approximately the 40th percentile.

## KEY FINDINGS

Two areas in this dimension show positive adequacy gaps:

- Service hours show a positive adequacy gap of +0.60 overall, meaning that the perceived service mean is above the minimum expected by users.
- Timely document delivery/interlibrary loan service also scored well, especially among graduate students and faculty, with a positive gap of +0.77 and +0.11, respectively.

## COMMENTS

Comments submitted as part of the LibQUAL+™ survey support these findings. Many faculty and graduate students indicated satisfaction with library hours during the week, but noted that our weekend and break hours could be more accommodating. One faculty member wrote, “It is extremely frustrating to have to work around library hours during breaks.”

Respondents praised interlibrary loan services, describing the service and its staff as “phenomenal,” “rapid,” and “helpful.” However, one faculty member tempered that praise by adding, “I frequently have to order books by interlibrary loan that are neither rare nor extremely specialized.”

Three areas in this dimension show negative adequacy gaps, especially among graduate students and faculty:

- Print and/or electronic journal collections (-0.51 overall)
- Printed library materials (-0.37 overall)
- The electronic information resources I need (-0.03 overall)

Again, we find that student and faculty comments confirm these results. There were many comments relating to the perceived inadequacy of the collection, ranging from expressions of “disappointment” to “shock.” Many respondents commented on what they feel to be the Library’s lack of initiative in building collections that reflect the work of the “university’s professors, visiting faculty, and visiting writers.”

Faculty are concerned with the status of our print collections in particular, citing the lack of recent monographic materials and concerns about the shift from print to electronic journal subscriptions. A faculty member noted, “Examining journals is central to my ability to keep abreast of developments in my field” and that “decent archiving procedures—and rights—have not yet been

standardized across journals. This imperils scholarship.”

Some faculty acknowledged the Library’s budgetary constraints, noting, for example, that the “library budget has not kept pace with the information expansion in the sciences.”

Comments pertaining to the Library’s print and electronic collections are available and can be broken down by discipline, however, the discipline categories were determined by the LibQUAL+™ instrument and therefore do not correspond to our actual institutional profile. This made it difficult to draw any conclusions from the survey results based on discipline breakdowns.

## DIMENSION: *AFFECT OF SERVICE (AS)*

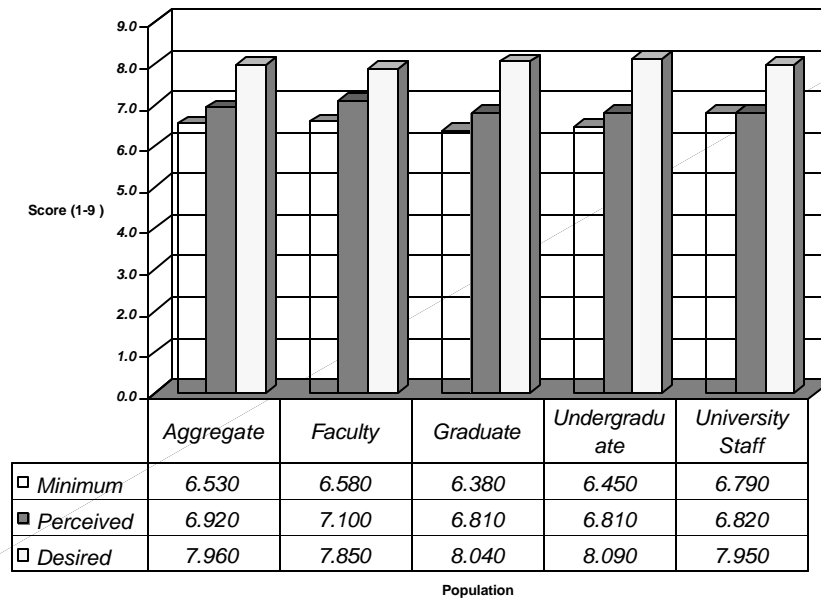
### DESCRIPTION

This dimension concerns staff responsiveness, reliability, and empathy. Items include:

- AS-1 Employees who instill confidence in users
- AS-2 Readiness to respond to users' questions
- AS-3 Willingness to help users
- AS-4 Dependability in handling users' service problems
- AS-5 Giving users individual attention
- AS-6 Employees who have the knowledge to answer user questions
- AS-7 Employees who are consistently courteous
- AS-8 Employees who deal with users in a caring fashion
- AS-9 Employees who understand the needs of their users

### RESULTS

Figure 4: *Affect of Service (AS) Raw Scores*



In this case the perceived service level for *Affect of Service* ranged from a mean low of 6.81 (both graduates and undergraduates) to a mean high of 7.1 (faculty). The aggregate mean perceived score was 6.92, which, when compared to the aggregate minimum score of 6.53, results in a positive service adequacy gap of +0.39.

The mean adequacy gap reported by all colleges and universities participating in LibQUAL+™

2003 was +0.686, placing us in the 42nd percentile. Scores for the desired level of service in this dimension range from a high of 8.04 (graduate students) to a low of 7.85 (faculty).

## **KEY FINDINGS**

The areas with positive adequacy gap scores (from highest to lowest) are:

- Giving users individual attention (+0.77)
- Employees who instill confidence in users (+0.52)
- Readiness to respond to users' questions (+0.41)
- Employees who deal with users in a caring fashion (+0.41)
- Willingness to help users (+0.40)
- Employees who are consistently courteous (+0.38)
- Employees who have the knowledge to answer user questions (+0.20)
- Employees who understand the needs of their users (+0.20)
- Dependability in handling users' service problems (+0.11)

While all the overall scores for this dimension resulted in positive adequacy gaps, it should be noted that several items were identified as having negative (or very low) service adequacy gaps among certain populations. For example, "dependability in handling users' service problems" had scores that ranged from a high of +0.20 (faculty) to a low of -0.09 (undergraduates).

Also, University staff were the most critical of the Library in this dimension, resulting in negative adequacy gaps for "readiness to respond to users' questions" (-0.33), "willingness to help users" (-.13), and "employees who are consistently courteous" (-.10)

## **COMMENTS**

Comments by students and faculty reflected the highly personal and subjective nature of this dimension. Respondents describe Library staff as "helpful, courteous and competent," or "outstanding and dedicated" on the one hand and "hostile, rude and unfriendly" or "unhelpful and lacking in courtesy" on the other hand. There were many positive comments regarding reference librarians and subject selectors. Negative comments regarding the Affect of Service dimension quite often refer to a perceived inability of staff to resolve service-related issues such as locating missing books and resolving issues related to overdue fines and fees.

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## DIMENSION: *LIBRARY AS PLACE (LP)*

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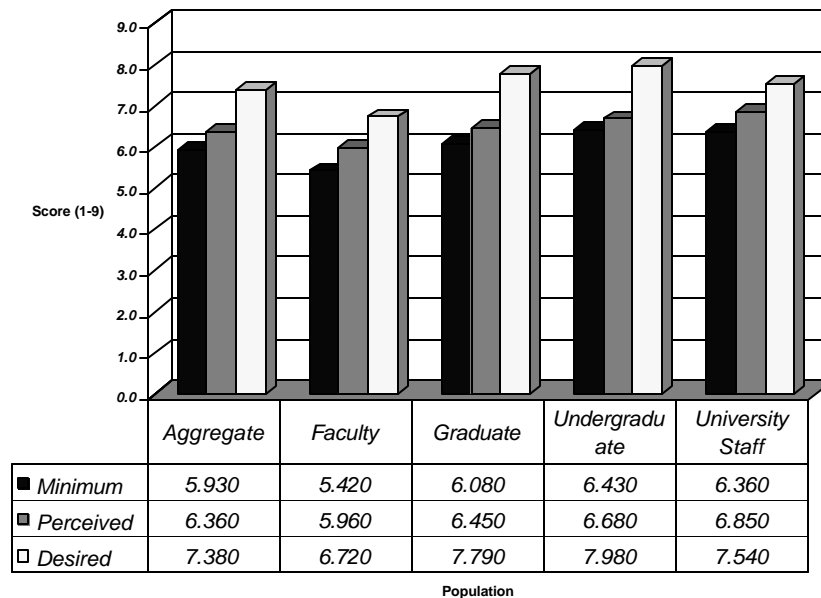
### DESCRIPTION

This dimension concerns the adequacy of physical public spaces in the Library. Items include:

- LP-1 Quiet space for individual activities
- LP-2 A comfortable and inviting location
- LP-3 Library space that inspires study and learning
- LP-4 Community space for group learning and group study
- LP-5 A getaway for study, learning, or research

### RESULTS

Figure 5: *Library as Place (LP) Raw Scores*



In this case the perceived service level for *Library as Place* ranged from a mean low of 5.96 (faculty) to a mean high of 6.85 (University staff). The aggregate mean perceived score was 6.36, which, when compared to the aggregate minimum score of 5.93, results in a positive service adequacy gap of +0.43.

The mean adequacy gap reported by all colleges and universities participating in LibQUAL+™ 2003 was +0.711, placing us in the 45th percentile.

Scores for the desired level of service in this dimension range from a high of 7.98

(undergraduates) to a low of 6.72 (faculty).

## KEY FINDINGS

Areas with positive adequacy gap scores include:

- Community space for group learning and group study (+1.05)
- Quiet space for individual activities (+0.49)
- A comfortable and inviting location (+0.48)
- A getaway for study, learning, or research (+0.21)

It should be noted that although these items result in positive adequacy gap scores, this gap could reflect a very low minimum expectation (5.93 overall) rather than a particularly high perceived mean. In fact, when compared to other perceived mean scores, the *Library as Place* dimension overall perceived mean level of service was quite low (6.36). Relative to other indicators of library service quality, the physical facilities are considered less important.

The only negative adequacy gap was for LP-3: Library space that inspires study and learning (scoring -0.10 for graduate students and -0.09 for faculty).

Two items in particular stood out as being of concern to undergraduates (although the gap scores were positive, not negative, they were ranked considerably lower than the other items):

- A comfortable and inviting location (+0.02)
- A getaway for study, learning, or research (+0.02)

## COMMENTS

Comments pertaining to the Library as a physical location for study and research were generally negative. Respondents referred to uncomfortable and uninviting study spaces, poor lighting, and noise.

“I think what the library needs is comfier chairs in private areas to read and study. The atmosphere could be better —the lighting and furnishings are harsh and maybe some special touches could be added to make it warmer and more inviting.”

“I suspect that some of the people who you would want using the university libraries for studying are going to Barnes & Noble instead. Not only is it a friendly and warm environment (with a cafe), but the parking is convenient.”

“Library space needs to be more inviting, warmer. Use of cold gray for colors makes for a boring corporate look.”

“Carnegie floor layout doesn’t make much sense and stacks are cramped; physical condition

decrepit and needs better maintenance...”

Respondents differed in their preferences, some preferring quiet space and others preferring space for group study space. “The first floor of Bird is more of a social scene than a studying scene. I don’t think it should change, but I think maybe an additional space or a break up of that floor for those of us who would like to read in peace would be nice.”

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## DIMENSION: *PERSONAL CONTROL (PC)*

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### DESCRIPTION

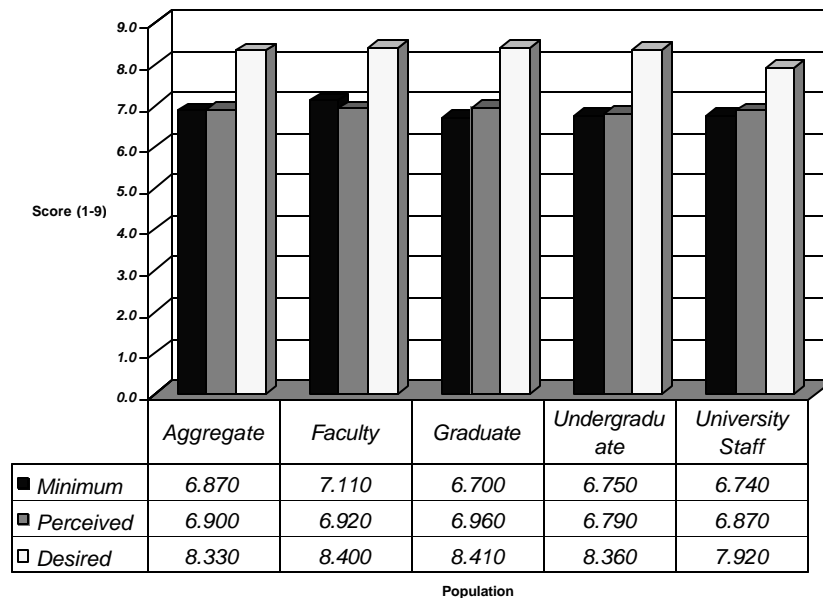
This dimension concerns issues related to the ease with which users can independently navigate and carry out their research tasks. Items include:

- PC-1 Easy-to-use access tools that allow me to find things on my own
- PC-2 Convenient access to library collections
- PC-3 A library Web site enabling me to locate information on my own
- PC-4 Modern equipment that lets me easily access needed information
- PC-5 Making information easily accessible for independent use
- PC-6 Making electronic resources accessible from my home or office

Although such issues as shelving and signage are not addressed specifically, we consider them part of the *Personal Control* dimension.

### RESULTS

Figure 6: *Personal Control (PC) Raw Scores*



The perceived service level for *Personal Control* was fairly consistent across user populations. Scores ranged from a mean low of 6.79 (undergraduates) to a mean high of 6.96 (graduate students). The aggregate mean perceived score was 6.90, which, when compared to the aggregate minimum score of 6.87, results in a positive service adequacy gap of +0.04, which means that we exceeded user minimum expectations by a small margin.

Faculty had higher expectations in this area than other populations, with a minimum expected level of service of 7.11.

The mean adequacy gap for this dimension reported by all colleges and universities participating in LibQUAL+™ 2003 was +0.415, placing us in the 40th percentile.

Scores for the desired level of service in this dimension range from a high of 8.41 (graduate students) to a low of 7.92 (university staff).

## KEY FINDINGS

The items with positive adequacy gap scores include:

- Convenient access to library collections (+0.18)
- A library Web site enabling me to locate information on my own (+0.03)
- Modern equipment that lets me easily access needed information (+0.03)
- Making information easily accessible for independent use (+0.09)

Although many items resulted in positive *overall* adequacy gap scores, we found that faculty were much more critical of service levels in this dimension (see below).

Two items resulted in negative or zero overall adequacy gap scores:

- Easy-to-use access tools that allow me to find things on my own (0.00)
- Making electronic resources accessible from my home or office (-0.24)

It should be noted, however, that faculty responses differed significantly from those of students in this dimension. Faculty gap scores were negative across the board, with the exception of a +0.01 score for “modern equipment that lets me easily access needed information.”

## COMMENTS

“I wish the library had more services available electronically and that it communicated better

what it DOES have.”

“I find the library system to be exceedingly disorganized. Many books are somehow missing or misplaced. FREQUENTLY.”

“It would be helpful to have more maps of the Library clearly indicating call number locations.”

“Access from home MUCH improved and web page redesign much more user friendly.”

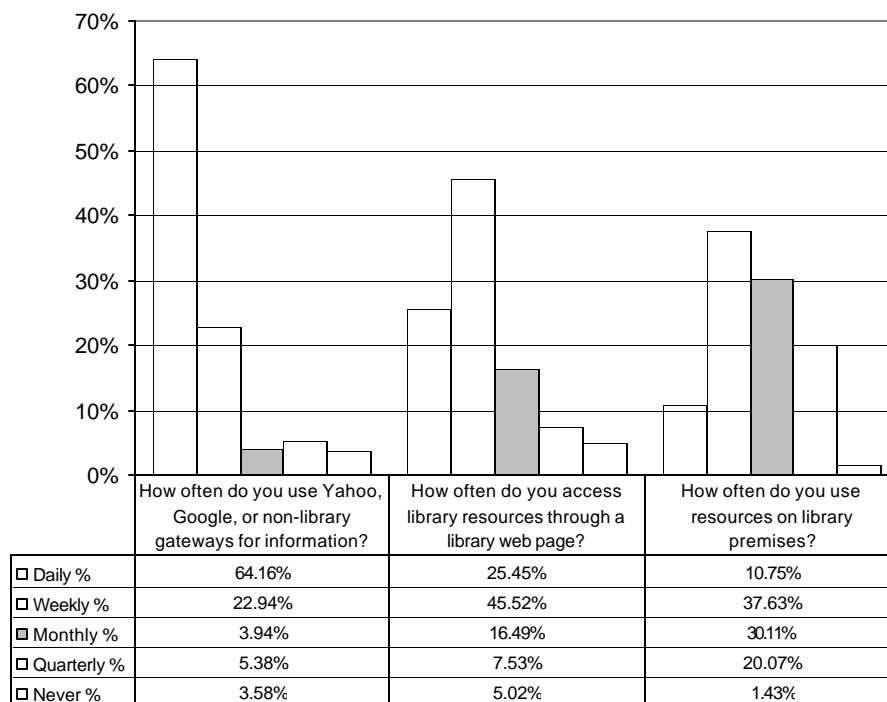
Focus group participants commented frequently on issues related to *Personal Control*. They mentioned the need for clearer, more obvious instructions on how the Library works: how to check out books, where to return books, what you need to check out a laptop, what services are available on which floors and how to access those services. One participant noted that finding a book is manageable but finding videos or music or finding something in journals can be more difficult.

# PATTERNS OF USE

## LIBRARY USE SUMMARY

Respondents were asked to measure their own library use (both on the premises and electronically) and their use of non-library information gateways such as Google™ and Yahoo™. The chart below shows the relative frequency with which respondents report using these resources.

*Figure 7: Patterns of Use*



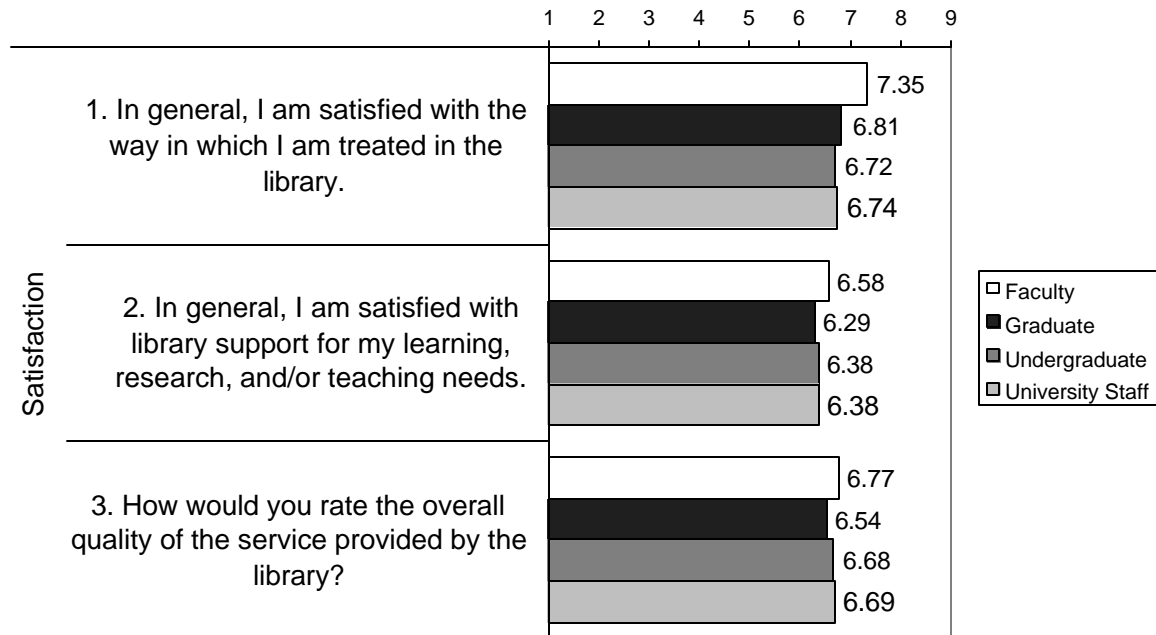
The results indicate that patrons are choosing non-library gateways for their daily information needs more often than the library and that when they do choose to use library resources it is via the web more often than the physical facilities. In order to draw more specific conclusions from this data further study into patron information needs and information-seeking behavior is required.

# GENERAL SATISFACTION AND INFORMATION LITERACY OUTCOMES

## DESCRIPTION AND RESULTS

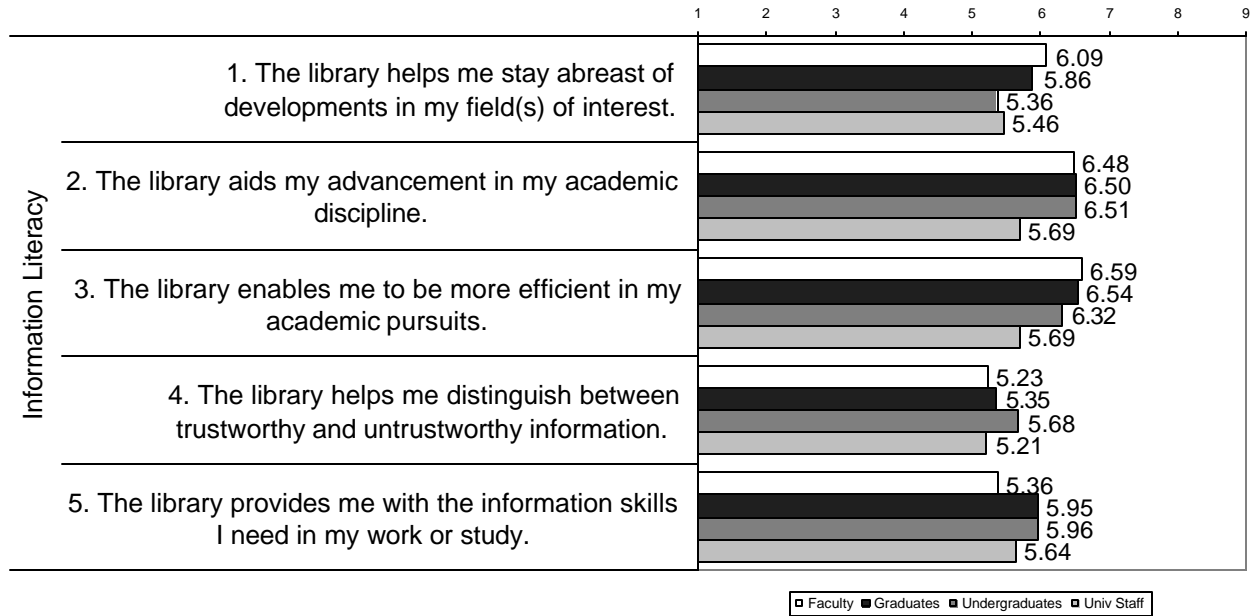
In addition to the 25 core questions discussed above, respondents were asked to rate their general level of satisfaction on a scale from 1-9 for three general service questions.

Figure 8: General Satisfaction Outcomes Scores



Respondents were also asked to rate their general satisfaction on a scale from 1-9 for 5 Information Literacy Outcomes items, with 1 being “strongly disagree” and 9 being “strongly agree.”

Figure 9: Information Literacy Outcomes Scores



## KEY FINDINGS

The scores presented in the General Satisfaction and Information Literacy Outcomes section of the survey do not follow the same minimum/desired/perceived score pattern that the 25 core questions follow. They are simply presented as raw scores. Nor are norms provided for these scores, making comparisons to peer institutions difficult.

Our scores are clustered at mid-range, with the lowest scores being assigned to Information Literacy Outcomes *Item 4: The Library helps me distinguish between trustworthy and untrustworthy information*. The scores can be considered benchmarks for use in comparative analysis during future LibQUAL+™ studies.

# ADDITIONAL PERSPECTIVES

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## DESIRED MEAN SCORES

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Desired mean scores reflect the optimum level of service desired by our patrons. The *Access to Information* and *Personal Control* dimensions clearly stand out as the areas for which our users expect the highest levels of service. *Library as Place* is relatively less important to our users, having received the lowest desired mean scores.

*Figure 10: Desired Mean Scores (Highest to Lowest)*

| Question | Text  | Desired |
|----------|---|---------|
| PC-3     | A library Web site enabling me to locate information on my own    | 8.41    |
| PC-6     | Making electronic resources accessible from my home or office     | 8.37    |
| AI-4     | The electronic information resources I need                       | 8.36    |
| PC-1     | Easy-to-use access tools that allow me to find things on my own   | 8.32    |
| AI-5     | Timely document delivery/interlibrary loan                        | 8.25    |
| PC-4     | Modern equipment that lets me easily access needed information    | 8.24    |
| AI-1     | Print and/or electronic journal collections I require for my work | 8.21    |
| PC-5     | Making information easily accessible for independent use          | 8.21    |
| AS-2     | Readiness to respond to users' questions                          | 8.18    |
| AI-3     | The printed library materials I need for my work                  | 8.16    |
| AS-3     | Willingness to help users   | 8.13    |
| AS-4     | Dependability in handling users' service problems                 | 8.12    |
| AI-2     | Convenient service hours  | 8.11    |
| AS-6     | Employees who have the knowledge to answer user questions         | 8.10    |
| AS-7     | Employees who are consistently courteous                          | 8.06    |
| AS-9     | Employees who understand the needs of their users                 | 8.06    |
| PC-2     | Convenient access to library collections                          | 7.99    |
| AS-8     | Employees who deal with users in a caring fashion                 | 7.86    |
| LP-2     | A comfortable and inviting location                               | 7.72    |
| AS-1     | Employees who instill confidence in users                         | 7.63    |
| LP-3     | Library space that inspires study and learning                    | 7.59    |
| LP-5     | A getaway for study, learning, or research                        | 7.59    |
| LP-1     | Quiet space for individual activities                             | 7.52    |
| AS-5     | Giving users individual attention                                 | 7.51    |
| LP-4     | Community space for group learning and group study                | 6.57    |

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## MINIMUM MEAN SCORES

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Minimum mean scores indicate the lowest acceptable level of service expected by patrons. It is interesting to note that the three items with the highest *desired* mean scores (above) are the same three items that received the highest *minimum* mean scores, indicating that users not only have high expectations in these areas, but also demonstrate a low tolerance for a perceived failure to meet those expectations.

*Figure 11: Minimum Mean Scores (Highest to Lowest)*

| Question | Text  | Minimum |
|----------|---|---------|
| PC-6     | Making electronic resources accessible from my home or office     | 7.05    |
| PC-3     | A library Web site enabling me to locate information on my own    | 7.04    |
| AI-4     | The electronic information resources I need                       | 6.93    |
| PC-5     | Making information easily accessible for independent use          | 6.86    |
| AS-3     | Willingness to help users   | 6.81    |
| AI-3     | The printed library materials I need for my work                  | 6.79    |
| AI-2     | Convenient service hours  | 6.79    |
| AS-4     | Dependability in handling users' service problems                 | 6.78    |
| PC-4     | Modern equipment that lets me easily access needed information    | 6.77    |
| AS-6     | Employees who have the knowledge to answer user questions         | 6.77    |
| AS-2     | Readiness to respond to users' questions                          | 6.72    |
| AI-1     | Print and/or electronic journal collections I require for my work | 6.71    |
| AS-7     | Employees who are consistently courteous                          | 6.70    |
| AS-9     | Employees who understand the needs of their users                 | 6.69    |
| AI-5     | Timely document delivery/interlibrary loan                        | 6.68    |
| PC-1     | Easy-to-use access tools that allow me to find things on my own   | 6.63    |
| PC-2     | Convenient access to library collections                          | 6.57    |
| AS-8     | Employees who deal with users in a caring fashion                 | 6.50    |
| LP-1     | Quiet space for individual activities                             | 6.17    |
| LP-5     | A getaway for study, learning, or research                        | 6.13    |
| LP-2     | A comfortable and inviting location                               | 6.10    |
| AS-5     | Giving users individual attention                                 | 6.08    |
| LP-3     | Library space that inspires study and learning                    | 6.06    |
| AS-1     | Employees who instill confidence in users                         | 5.82    |
| LP-4     | Community space for group learning and group study                | 5.23    |

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## PERCEIVED MEAN SCORES

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Unfortunately, only one of the five items in the list of highest desired levels of service (PC-3, “A library web site enabling me to locate information on my own”) appears in the list of highest actual *perceived* mean service level scores. The items with the highest actual perceived scores were:

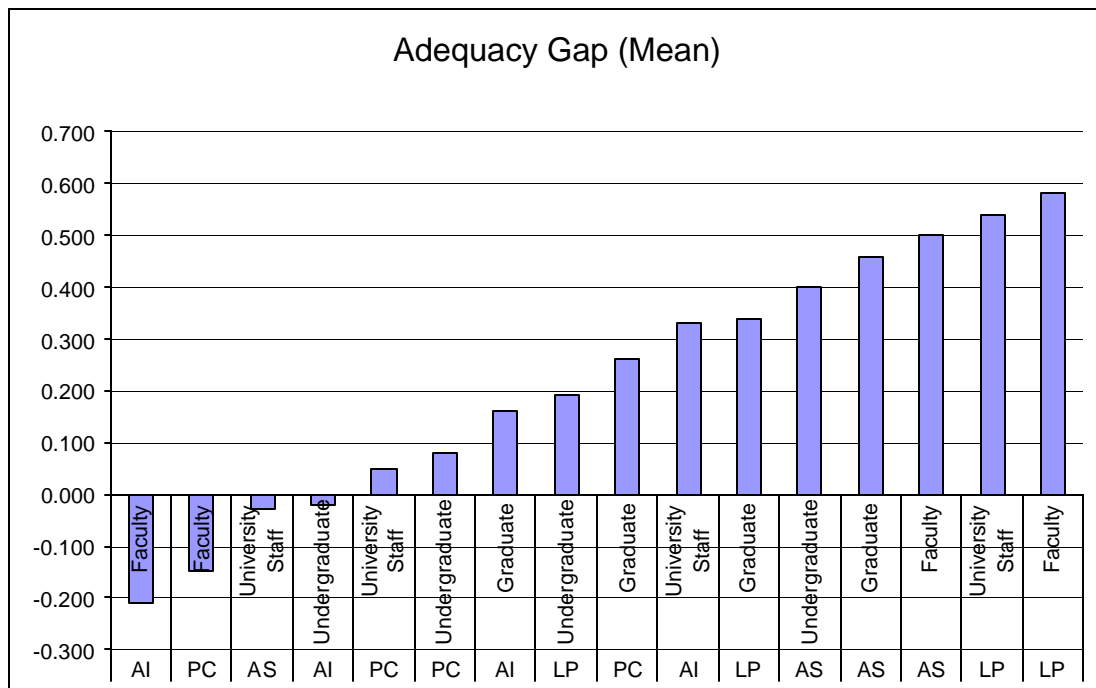
*Figure 12: Perceived Mean Scores (Highest to Lowest)*

| Question | Text  | Perceived |
|----------|---|-----------|
| AI-2     | Convenient service hours  | 7.39      |
| AS-3     | Willingness to help users   | 7.21      |
| AS-2     | Readiness to respond to users' questions                          | 7.13      |
| AS-7     | Employees who are consistently courteous                          | 7.08      |
| PC-3     | A library Web site enabling me to locate information on my own    | 7.07      |
| AI-5     | Timely document delivery/interlibrary loan                        | 6.99      |
| AS-6     | Employees who have the knowledge to answer user questions         | 6.97      |
| PC-5     | Making information easily accessible for independent use          | 6.95      |
| AS-8     | Employees who deal with users in a caring fashion                 | 6.91      |
| AS-4     | Dependability in handling users' service problems                 | 6.90      |
| AI-4     | The electronic information resources I need                       | 6.90      |
| AS-9     | Employees who understand the needs of their users                 | 6.89      |
| AS-5     | Giving users individual attention                                 | 6.84      |
| PC-6     | Making electronic resources accessible from my home or office     | 6.81      |
| PC-4     | Modern equipment that lets me easily access needed information    | 6.80      |
| PC-2     | Convenient access to library collections                          | 6.74      |
| LP-1     | Quiet space for individual activities                             | 6.66      |
| PC-1     | Easy-to-use access tools that allow me to find things on my own   | 6.63      |
| LP-2     | A comfortable and inviting location                               | 6.58      |
| AI-3     | The printed library materials I need for my work                  | 6.42      |
| LP-5     | A getaway for study, learning, or research                        | 6.35      |
| AS-1     | Employees who instill confidence in users                         | 6.34      |
| LP-4     | Community space for group learning and group study                | 6.27      |
| AI-1     | Print and/or electronic journal collections I require for my work | 6.20      |
| LP-3     | Library space that inspires study and learning                    | 6.02      |

## ADEQUACY GAP SCORES

An *adequacy gap* is calculated by subtracting the minimum score from the perceived score on any given question. A negative service adequacy gap score indicates that our patrons' perceived level of service quality is below their minimum expected level of service quality. A positive service adequacy gap score indicates that we exceed our patron's minimum expectations.

Figure 13: Adequacy Gap Mean Scores by Dimension and User Group



Examining adequacy gap scores allows us to quickly identify areas of weakness. For example, we fail to meet faculty minimum expectations in the dimensions *Access to Information* and *Personal Control*, but we exceed their expectations in the dimensions *Affect of Service* and *Library as Place*.

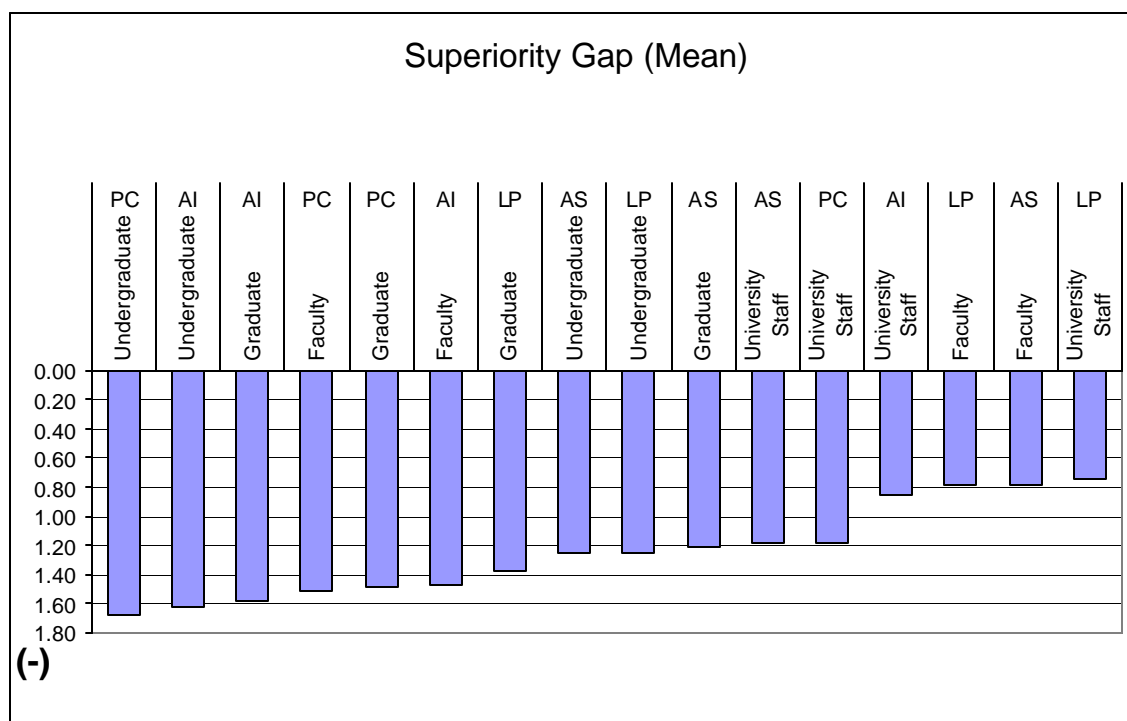
This trend is also seen among undergraduates and graduate students. Although we exceed minimum expectations by a small margin, the dimensions *Access to Information* and *Personal Control* also stand out as areas of weakness for these two user groups.

The *Affect of Service* dimension received the highest positive adequacy gap scores with the exception of the University staff user group. We fail to meet this population's minimum expectations in this area.

## SUPERIORITY GAP SCORES

A *superiority gap* score is obtained by subtracting the score for the desired level of service from the score for the perceived level of service. A *positive superiority gap* occurs when the perceived level of service is greater than the desired level of service, resulting in a positive number. A *negative superiority gap* occurs when the perceived level of service is less than the desired level and the result is a negative number. In interpreting superiority gap scores, it is helpful to remember that higher scores are more favorable than lower scores. For example, a superiority gap score of  $-1.23$  is better than a superiority gap score of  $-1.54$ . Negative superiority gap scores are common.

Figure 14: Superiority Gap Mean Scores by Dimension and User Group



Superiority gap analysis can provide a different perspective on the results of the LibQUAL+™ survey, especially in cases where the desired (or optimal) level of service is particularly high or low. For example, when looking at the scores from graduate students regarding *Affect of Service*, the positive **adequacy** gap score of  $+0.46$  tells us that we are slightly exceeding this population's minimum expectations. Looking at this population's **superiority** gap score of a relatively low  $-1.21$  shows us that although we exceed the minimum expectation we have quite a way to go to meet their optimum desired level of service.

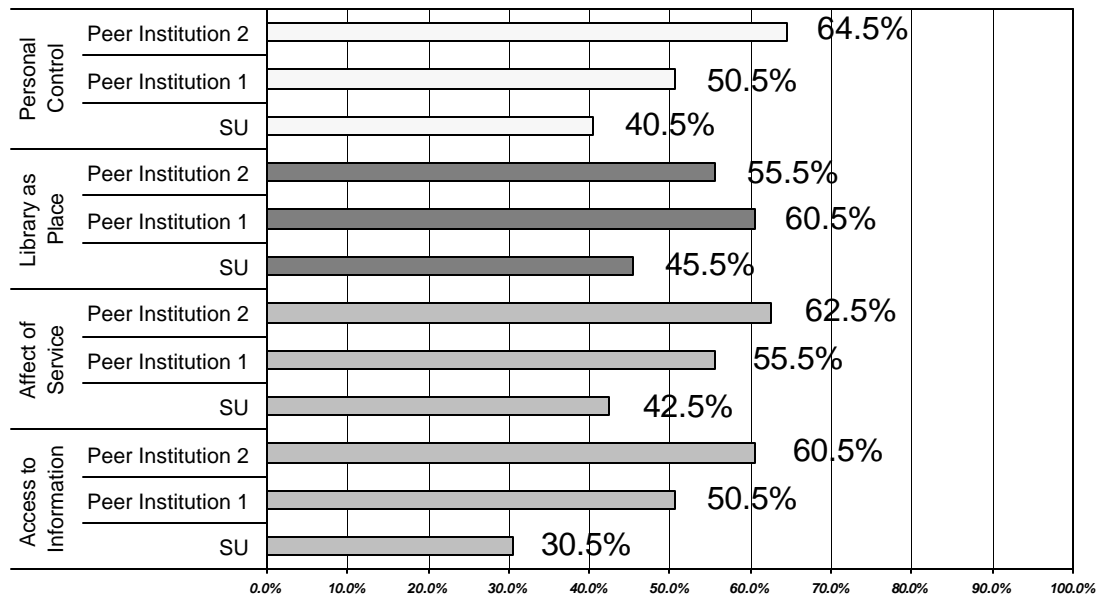
In general, analysis of our superiority gap scores confirms the conclusions drawn from analysis of the adequacy gap scores: *Access to Information* and *Personal Control* are the areas of greatest perceived weakness.

## PEER INSTITUTION PERCENTILE COMPARISON

Almost 130,000 users at more than 300 institutions participated in the LibQUAL+™ 2003 study, allowing us the opportunity to gain a comparative perspective on our users' perceptions of service quality. Score norms tables for 2001, 2002, and 2003 are available on <http://www.coe.tamu.edu/~bthompson/libq2003.htm>. Norms provide us the opportunity to determine our percentile ranking among groups of similar institutions.

Two of the libraries participating in the study belong to a group of universities that Syracuse University regards as its aspirational peers, that is, the institutions that SU seeks to emulate. Comparison of our percentile ranking to the percentile rankings for these two institutions is presented below.

Figure 15: Peer Institution Percentile Ranking Comparison



# OPERATIONAL IMPLICATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Analysis of the LibQUAL+™ 2003 survey results has allowed us to better understand our users' perceptions of Library service quality and identify patterns of satisfaction and dissatisfaction across patron categories. This report focuses on the actual levels of service quality perceived by our patrons and the relative importance they assign to those services. It is important to remember that in many cases we are assessing our service quality based on comparing actual perceived service levels to the *minimally acceptable levels of service* that patrons will tolerate. While in many areas the results show that we exceed patron minimum expectations (i.e., we show positive adequacy gap scores), it is important to keep in mind that we may exceed those minimum expectations by less than ½ of one point. National comparisons among colleges and universities participating in the study give a sobering perspective to our scores, showing that overall we rank in approximately the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile, slightly lower in our peer group.

The following operational implications are generalizations based on survey results and focus groups. Library service units should evaluate and identify potential improvements and other factors that impact user interactions with the Library.

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## ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND PERSONAL CONTROL

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The *Access to Information* and *Personal Control* dimensions clearly stand out as the areas for which our users expect the highest levels of service. They are also the areas for which we show the lowest adequacy gap scores. Five areas in these dimensions show negative adequacy gaps, especially among graduate students and faculty:

- AI-1 Print and/or electronic journal collections I require for my work
- AI-3 Printed library materials I need for my work
- AI-4 The electronic information resources I need
- PC-1 Easy-to-use access tools that allow me to find things on my own
- PC-6 Making electronic resources accessible from my home or office

Many improvements to these areas have been implemented since the completion of the LibQUAL+™ survey in April 2003, including easier authentication of remote users, improved organization of electronic resources on the Library web site, and changes to the online catalog interface. Clearly, however, these areas should be targeted for additional assessment.

Included in the *Access to Information* and *Personal Control* dimensions are issues relating to navigating the physical library facilities. Issues such as directional signage and instructional signage should be investigated. Difficulty in navigation and a perceived lack of organization of the print collections (particularly shelving problems) were also of concern and strategies should be put into place to better manage the shelving process.

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## LIBRARY AS PLACE

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When compared to other perceived mean scores, the *Library as Place* dimension overall perceived level of service was quite low. However, so was the level of service actually desired in this area. While the physical facilities did not rate very highly in relative importance to survey respondents (*Library as Place* items ranked at the bottom of the Desired Mean Scores list), it is important to remember that undergraduates were significantly underrepresented in the sample. Comments from the follow-up focus group sessions show that undergraduates are quite concerned about issues such as cleanliness, noise, and general comfort.

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## AFFECT OF SERVICE

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The *Affect of Service* dimension fared better, having resulted in the most favorable gap scores. While in general we exceed patron minimum expectations in this area, findings show that several items result in significantly lower scores among certain populations. For example, although we exceed expectations in terms of readiness, caring, willingness to help, and general knowledge, undergraduates and faculty gave very low scores for our ability to handle service problems (item AS-4 Dependability in handling users' service problems).

Some areas can be addressed by putting strategies in place to better manage patron expectations. For example, negative comments regarding the *Affect of Service* dimension quite often refer to a perceived inability of staff to resolve service related issues such as policy complaints. In this case, the issue of dependability should be examined further to determine if the low scores in this area should be attributed to lack of knowledge or training on the part of staff or on failure to adequately communicate our service policies to our users.

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## LIBQUAL+™ 2005

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The LibQUAL+™ survey will be repeated in spring 2005, providing an opportunity for comparison. Planning for LibQUAL+™ 2005 is underway and includes:

- Improvement of survey representativeness by bringing discipline categories more in line with Syracuse University's profile.
- Improvement of response rate, especially among undergraduates.

LibQUAL+™ 2003 will serve as a benchmark for subsequent studies, and will inform decision-making and service improvement efforts in the Library.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: TABLE OF SCORES

| <i>Dimension</i>      | <i>Population</i> | <i>Minimum (Mean)</i> | <i>Perceived (Mean)</i> | <i>Desired (Mean)</i> | <i>Adequacy Gap (Mean)</i> | <i>Superiority Gap (Mean)</i> | <i>Adequacy Gap (Mean Norm)</i> | <i>Adequacy Gap Percentile (%)</i> | <i>Perceived (Mean Norm)</i> | <i>Perceived Mean Percentile (%)</i> | <i>Superiority Gap (Mean Norm)</i> | <i>Superiority Gap Percentile (%)</i> |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Access to Information | Aggregate         | 6.810                 | 6.800                   | 8.240                 | 0.010                      | -1.450                        | <b>0.295</b>                    | <b>30.5</b>                        | <b>6.975</b>                 | <b>38.5</b>                          | <b>-1.139</b>                      | <b>34.0</b>                           |
| Access to Information | Faculty           | 6.940                 | 6.740                   | 8.200                 | -0.210                     | -1.480                        | <b>0.018</b>                    | <b>38.0</b>                        | <b>6.922</b>                 | <b>37.0</b>                          | <b>-1.277</b>                      | <b>39.0</b>                           |
| Access to Information | Graduate          | 6.680                 | 6.780                   | 8.430                 | 0.160                      | -1.590                        | <b>0.056</b>                    | <b>50.0</b>                        | <b>6.896</b>                 | <b>38.5</b>                          | <b>-1.354</b>                      | <b>38.5</b>                           |
| Access to Information | Undergraduate     | 6.770                 | 6.750                   | 8.320                 | -0.020                     | -1.620                        | <b>0.526</b>                    | <b>30.0</b>                        | <b>7.035</b>                 | <b>34.5</b>                          | <b>-0.980</b>                      | <b>25.5</b>                           |
| Access to Information | University Staff  | 6.770                 | 7.050                   | 7.870                 | 0.330                      | -0.850                        |                                 |                                    |                              |                                      |                                    |                                       |
| Affect of Service     | Aggregate         | 6.530                 | 6.920                   | 7.960                 | 0.390                      | -1.050                        | <b>0.686</b>                    | <b>42.5</b>                        | <b>7.143</b>                 | <b>37.5</b>                          | <b>-0.743</b>                      | <b>32.5</b>                           |
| Affect of Service     | Faculty           | 6.580                 | 7.100                   | 7.850                 | 0.500                      | -0.780                        | <b>0.700</b>                    | <b>46.0</b>                        | <b>7.470</b>                 | <b>31.5</b>                          | <b>-0.581</b>                      | <b>33.5</b>                           |
| Affect of Service     | Graduate          | 6.380                 | 6.810                   | 8.040                 | 0.460                      | -1.210                        | <b>0.620</b>                    | <b>47.5</b>                        | <b>7.109</b>                 | <b>35.5</b>                          | <b>-0.787</b>                      | <b>30.5</b>                           |
| Affect of Service     | Undergraduate     | 6.450                 | 6.810                   | 8.090                 | 0.400                      | -1.260                        | <b>0.710</b>                    | <b>42.5</b>                        | <b>7.009</b>                 | <b>39.0</b>                          | <b>-0.798</b>                      | <b>29.5</b>                           |
| Affect of Service     | University Staff  | 6.790                 | 6.820                   | 7.950                 | -0.030                     | -1.180                        |                                 |                                    |                              |                                      |                                    |                                       |
| All Dimensions        | Aggregate         | 6.540                 | 6.770                   | 7.980                 | 0.230                      | -1.210                        | <b>0.541</b>                    | <b>42.0</b>                        | <b>7.052</b>                 | <b>33.5</b>                          | <b>-0.914</b>                      | <b>34.0</b>                           |
| All Dimensions        | Faculty           | 6.560                 | 6.770                   | 7.870                 | 0.210                      | -1.100                        | <b>0.453</b>                    | <b>27.0</b>                        | <b>7.140</b>                 | <b>31.5</b>                          | <b>-0.852</b>                      | <b>36.0</b>                           |
| All Dimensions        | Graduate          | 6.430                 | 6.760                   | 8.120                 | 0.330                      | -1.350                        | <b>0.388</b>                    | <b>49.5</b>                        | <b>6.973</b>                 | <b>37.0</b>                          | <b>-1.044</b>                      | <b>33.5</b>                           |
| All Dimensions        | Undergraduate     | 6.550                 | 6.730                   | 8.130                 | 0.180                      | -1.400                        | <b>0.648</b>                    | <b>37.5</b>                        | <b>7.048</b>                 | <b>33.5</b>                          | <b>-0.885</b>                      | <b>27.0</b>                           |
| All Dimensions        | University Staff  | 6.680                 | 6.830                   | 7.800                 | 0.160                      | -0.970                        |                                 |                                    |                              |                                      |                                    |                                       |
| Library as Place      | Aggregate         | 5.930                 | 6.360                   | 7.380                 | 0.430                      | -1.040                        | <b>0.711</b>                    | <b>45.5</b>                        | <b>6.916</b>                 | <b>29.5</b>                          | <b>-0.750</b>                      | <b>34.0</b>                           |
| Library as Place      | Faculty           | 5.420                 | 5.960                   | 6.720                 | 0.580                      | -0.790                        | <b>0.862</b>                    | <b>43.0</b>                        | <b>6.740</b>                 | <b>27.0</b>                          | <b>-0.455</b>                      | <b>37.0</b>                           |
| Library as Place      | Graduate          | 6.080                 | 6.450                   | 7.790                 | 0.340                      | -1.380                        | <b>0.529</b>                    | <b>44.5</b>                        | <b>6.719</b>                 | <b>37.5</b>                          | <b>-0.919</b>                      | <b>33.5</b>                           |
| Library as Place      | Undergraduate     | 6.430                 | 6.680                   | 7.980                 | 0.190                      | -1.260                        | <b>0.724</b>                    | <b>35.5</b>                        | <b>7.082</b>                 | <b>32.5</b>                          | <b>-0.807</b>                      | <b>30.0</b>                           |
| Library as Place      | University Staff  | 6.360                 | 6.850                   | 7.540                 | 0.540                      | -0.740                        |                                 |                                    |                              |                                      |                                    |                                       |
| Personal Control      | Aggregate         | 6.870                 | 6.900                   | 8.330                 | 0.040                      | -1.490                        | <b>0.415</b>                    | <b>40.5</b>                        | <b>7.083</b>                 | <b>37.5</b>                          | <b>-1.090</b>                      | <b>34.0</b>                           |
| Personal Control      | Faculty           | 7.110                 | 6.920                   | 8.400                 | -0.150                     | -1.510                        | <b>0.182</b>                    | <b>39.0</b>                        | <b>7.126</b>                 | <b>36.0</b>                          | <b>-1.161</b>                      | <b>32.0</b>                           |
| Personal Control      | Graduate          | 6.700                 | 6.960                   | 8.410                 | 0.260                      | -1.490                        | <b>0.232</b>                    | <b>50.5</b>                        | <b>7.037</b>                 | <b>39.5</b>                          | <b>-1.239</b>                      | <b>39.5</b>                           |
| Personal Control      | Undergraduate     | 6.750                 | 6.790                   | 8.360                 | 0.080                      | -1.680                        | <b>0.602</b>                    | <b>36.0</b>                        | <b>7.084</b>                 | <b>32.5</b>                          | <b>-0.991</b>                      | <b>37.0</b>                           |
| Personal Control      | University Staff  | 6.740                 | 6.870                   | 7.920                 | 0.050                      | -1.180                        |                                 |                                    |                              |                                      |                                    |                                       |

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## APPENDIX B: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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LibQUAL: Charting Service Quality (ARL)

<http://www.libqual.org/>

LibQUAL+™ Survey Institution Results (ARL)

[http://libweb.syr.edu/local/Committees/Assessment\\_Team/libq.pdf](http://libweb.syr.edu/local/Committees/Assessment_Team/libq.pdf)

LibQUAL+™ 2003 Score Norms

<http://www.coe.tamu.edu/~bthompson/libq2003.htm>