
LibQUAL+™: Defining and Promoting Library Service Quality

What is LibQUAL+™?

LibQUAL+™ is a suite of services that libraries use to solicit, track, understand, and act upon users' opinions of service quality. These services are offered to the library community by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). The program's centerpiece is a rigorously tested Web-based survey bundled with training that helps libraries assess and improve library services, change organizational culture, and market the library. The goals of LibQUAL+™ are to:

- Foster a culture of excellence in providing library service
- Help libraries better understand user perceptions of library service quality
- Collect and interpret library user feedback systematically over time
- Provide libraries with comparable assessment information from peer institutions
- Identify best practices in library service
- Enhance library staff members' analytical skills for interpreting and acting on data

As of spring 2003, LibQUAL+™ has more than 400 participating institutions, including colleges and universities, community colleges, health sciences libraries, law libraries, and public libraries -- some through various consortia, others as independent participants. LibQUAL+™ has expanded internationally, with participating institutions in Canada, the U.K., and Europe. The growing LibQUAL+™ community of participants and its extensive dataset are rich resources for improving library services.

How will LibQUAL+™ benefit this library?

Library administrators have successfully used LibQUAL+™ survey data to identify best practices, analyze deficits, and effectively allocate resources. Benefits to participating institutions include:

- Institutional data and reports that enable you to assess whether your library services are meeting user expectations
- Aggregate data and reports that allow you to compare your library's performance with that of peer institutions
- Workshops designed specifically for LibQUAL+™ participants
- Access to an online library of LibQUAL+™ research articles
- Opportunity to become part of a community interested in developing excellence in library services

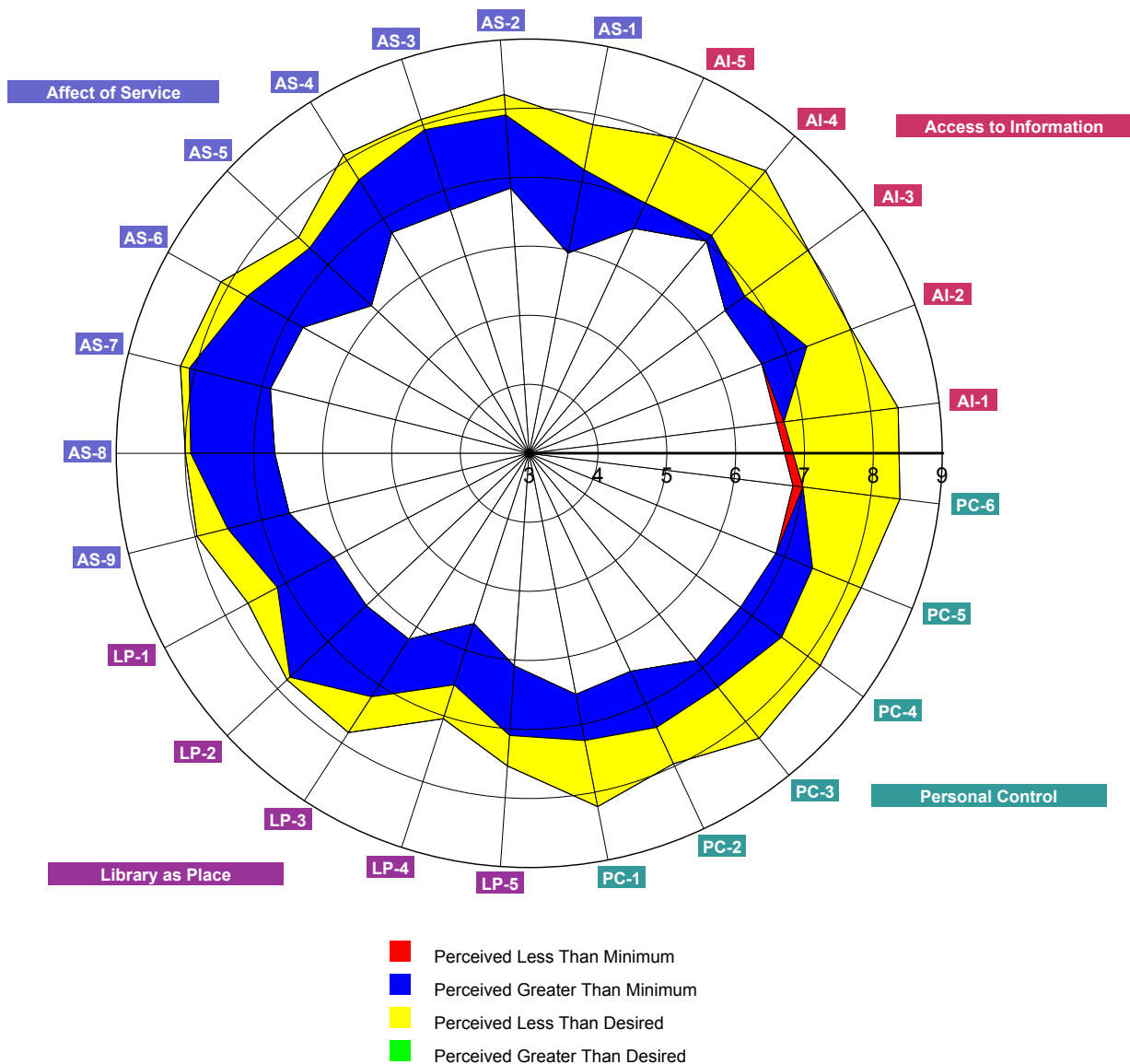
How does LibQUAL+™ benefit you as a library user?

LibQUAL+™ gives you a chance to tell us where our services need improvement so we can respond to and better manage your expectations. We can develop services that better meet your expectations by comparing our library's data with that of peer institutions and examining the practices of those libraries that are evaluated highly by their users.

Summary of Core Questions for UNM Health Sciences Library and Informatics Center (The list of core categories follow this chart)

This radar chart shows aggregate results for the 25 core survey questions. Each axis represents one question (a code to identify each question is displayed at the outer point of each axis). While questions for each dimension of library service quality are scattered randomly throughout the survey, here they are grouped in quadrants: Affect of Service, Access to Information, Library as Place, and Personal Control.

On each axis, respondents' minimum, desired, and perceived levels of service quality are plotted, and the resulting "gaps" between the three levels (representing service adequacy or service superiority) are shaded in blue, yellow, green, and red.



Explanation of a Radar Chart

What is a radar chart?

Radar charts are useful when you want to look at several different factors all related to one item. Sometimes called "spider charts" or "polar charts", radar charts feature multiple axes or "spokes" along which data can be plotted. Variations in the data are shown by distance from the center of the chart. Lines connect the data points for each series, forming a spiral around the center.

In the case of the LibQUAL+™ survey results, each axis represents a different survey question. Questions are identified by a code at the end of each axis. The four dimensions measured by the survey are grouped together on the radar charts, and each dimension is labeled: Access to Information (AI), Affect of Service (AS), Library as Place (LP), and Personal Control (PC).

How to read a radar chart

Radar charts are an effective way to graphically show strengths and weaknesses by enabling you to observe symmetry or uniformity of data. Points close to the center indicate a low value, while points near the edge indicate a high value. When interpreting a radar chart, it is important to check each individual axis as well as the chart's overall shape in order to gain a complete understanding of its meaning. You can see how much data fluctuates by observing whether the spiral is smooth or has spikes of variability.

Respondents' minimum, desired, and perceived levels of service quality are plotted on each axis of your LibQUAL+™ radar charts. The resulting "gaps" between the three levels are shaded in blue, yellow, green, and red. Generally, a radar graph shaded blue and yellow indicates that users' perceptions of service fall within the "zone of tolerance"; the distance between minimum expectations and perceptions of service quality is shaded in blue, and the distance between their desired and perceived levels of service quality is shown in yellow. When users' perceptions fall outside the "zone of tolerance," the graph will include areas of red and green shading. If the distance between users' minimum expectations and perceptions of service delivery is represented in red, that indicates a negative service adequacy score. If the distance between the desired level of service and perceptions of service delivery is represented in green, that indicates a positive service superiority score.

Core Questions

ID	Question Text
Access to Information	
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
Affect of Service	
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
Library as Place	
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
Personal Control	
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

LibQUAL+™ Demographic Summary for UNM Health Sciences Library and Informatics Center

User Group	Respondent n	Respondent %
Undergraduate		
First year	1	0.33%
Second year	5	1.63%
Third year	10	3.26%
Fourth year	7	2.28%
Fifth year and above	3	0.98%
Non-degree	2	0.65%
Sub Total:	28	9.12%
Graduate		
Masters	14	4.56%
Doctoral	53	17.26%
Non-degree or Undecided	5	1.63%
Sub Total:	72	23.45%
Faculty		
Adjunct Faculty	3	0.98%
Assistant Professor	42	13.68%
Associate Professor	17	5.54%
Lecturer/Instructor	9	2.93%
Professor	31	10.10%
Other Academic Status	5	1.63%
Sub Total:	107	34.85%
Library Staff		
Administrator	1	0.33%
Manager, Head of Unit	2	0.65%
Public Services	5	1.63%
Systems	0	0.00%
Technical Services	2	0.65%
Other	0	0.00%
Sub Total:	10	3.26%
Staff		
Administrator/Manager	20	6.51%
Basic Science Staff (non-faculty)	12	3.91%
Clerical Staff (non-exempt)	11	3.58%
Clinical Staff (non-faculty)	11	3.58%
Resident, Fellow, or Intern	6	1.95%
Technical Support Staff	12	3.91%
Other staff positions	18	5.86%
Sub Total:	90	29.32%
Total:	307	100.00%

The complete results of The HSLIC 2003 LibQUAL+™ survey are available on reserve.