

Library Assessment Task Force Report

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The Library Assessment Task Force, in partnership with the reference staff of the library created, conducted and tabulated a Library User Satisfaction Survey during April 16-30, trying to reach a broad spectrum of library users. We especially wanted to reach those students who seldom use the library. To this end surveys were handed out at each of the service desks (circulation, information, periodicals and reference) often including a piece of candy as an incentive. Importantly, several reference librarians went over to the MSC during lunch time and passed out (and collected) surveys from students- having students fill them out while they were not necessarily in the library both made for perhaps more honest answers, as well as input from non-regulars. There was a link on the library home page for the survey, but the vast majority of respondents chose the paper version. All paper entries had to be manually entered, and this again was done by the reference staff and library webmaster.

Our weeklong survey was more than successful; we had informally hoped to reach around 300 people, and in fact reached over 600. Most of the respondents were students, but there was a fair representation from faculty, staff, community members and administration.

The majority (63%) were between 18-22 years old, but a solid 19% were over 31- this includes both graduate students and university employees. 86% identified as African American / Black, and there was a good distribution across the racial spectrum.

Most (31%) were from the College of Education; descending we saw College of Arts and Sciences (15%), College of Juvenile Justice (10%), College of Nursing (9.5%), College of Business (8.6%), College of Engineering (8%), and so on.

26.5% choose to use remote access; over 4% prefer to primarily use another campus (raw data for this exactly matches those who identified as 'Northwest Campus').

Weekdays 5-9 PM continues to be the preferred time for research, which does not match the data for reference headcount or for activity at the reference desk. This might lead to the conclusion that for many students, 'research' has become an online activity. This justifies our move toward ERes, online tutorials and so forth. A substantial 34%, in fact, prefer to do research when the Library is closed.

Circulation and reference were the most utilized areas (23% and 34% respectively), 'using a computer' and 'research' were tied for reasons why people came into the library (21%). Books and journals, both print and online were all used, but a large number (30%) rate the A/V material as 'not applicable.'

Information was easy to find, and the reference desk was the first stop for help (34.4%). Strikingly, the information desk was a close second (28.25%); this might be due to confusion in signage: over one of the reference desk terminals hangs a sign indicating 'Reference,' and over the other terminal is a sign for 'Reference Information.' It is quite understandable why patrons might be unclear.

70% reported no problem in finding quiet study areas. Satisfaction with all areas was high, except 8% reported being 'never' satisfied with the computers. Judging by the written responses, this might be due to more confusion. Almost every patron erroneously believes the Computer Lab is under the aegis of the Library, and students continue to this day to complain to the reference and circulation desks about the staffed hours in the Computer Lab.

Although 43% reported not having had an instruction class, an encouraging 21.4% plan to in the future; hopefully advertising will pay off. And while 34.2% are satisfied with the current library hours, 34.6% want longer evening hours, 7.3% would want us open earlier on the weekday, and almost 25% want longer weekend hours.

Perhaps the most discouraging is where students go to do research: Internet was the clear winner with 26%, followed by the reference librarians (17.7%), and the OPAC (17%).

The written responses show that students clearly want a fax machine, scanner, color copier and even a laminate machine. This might be something to consider as we ruminate on the idea of an Information Commons. Other wishes include food, camcorders, more typewriters, vending machines stocked with pencils and floppy discs, textbooks, 24 hour access... the list goes on.