A “Commons Within a Commons:”
Data-Driven Service Planning for Graduate Students

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“Two little mice fell into a bucket of cream. The first mouse quickly gave up and drowned but the second mouse struggled so hard that he eventually churned that cream into butter and he walked out.”

Frank Abagnale, Jr.  
*Catch Me If You Can* (2002)
How We Made Butter 😊

OR –

The History of Using LibQUAL+® Results to Make Informed Decisions
E. H. Butler Library

- Medium-sized academic library
- Sole library for the campus
- Over 675,000 print books
- Over 174,000 e-books
- Over 57,000 print and e-journals
2003: The Perfect (Bad News) Storm

Unprecedented decrease in:

- Gate counts
- Reference Desk statistics
- Library material circulation
2003: The Perfect (Bad News) Storm

Unprecedented increase in:

- Technology-related questions and complaints:
  - Username and password resets
  - E-mail account activation
  - Printer issues
  - Software issues
  - Lost work, etc.
2003: The Perfect (Bad News) Storm

“The BuffState Shuffle!”
2003: The Perfect (Bad News) Storm

The most overriding issues:

- Hello, Google!
- Library resources shifting from print to virtual
- Patrons finding new study spaces – not in the library
“Gate counts and circulation of traditional materials are falling at many college libraries across the country, as students find new study spaces in dorm rooms or apartments, coffee shops, or nearby bookstores.”

2003: The Perfect (Bad News) Storm

Most critical issues were staff/people issues:

- Morale at an all-time low
- Difficulty justifying filling vacant lines
- A department in decline and we all knew it!
The Library’s Challenge: Focus on Broad Goals

- To get patrons back into the library
- To identify and improve poor or confusing services and resources
- To empower staff, reward involvement, creativity and productivity
- To revitalize library space and library staff
The Library’s Most Important Goal:

Reclaim the library’s essential academic support role on campus
Our First Step…..Bring on LibQUAL+®

LibQUAL+® is a 22-core-item “total market” survey instrument designed to assess academic library service quality from the point of view of the library user.
Identify Specifics…

LibQUAL+® measures library user satisfaction across three service areas:

- Affect of Service
- Information Control
- Library as Place
What is LibQUAL+®?

A Total Market Survey:

- Designed to measure dimensions of perceived library service quality
- An “(inter)national” survey that permits comparisons across institutions (i.e. norms)
  - ++ Benchmarking!! ++
- Includes dimensions and elements that are common across most academic libraries
- Provides general feedback
What is LibQUAL+®?

Limitations of a Total Market Survey:

- Cannot provide specific, in-depth information about local library issues
  - e.g. problematic parts of library website; specific collection development areas; feedback about information literacy sessions; circulation service
A Total Market Survey designed to measure dimensions of perceived library service quality

**Information Control**
- Comprehensiveness of Collections
  - depth, breadth, age
- Barrier-Free Access
  - Availability of info. at the time of need

**Affect of Service**
- Assurance
  - knowledge & courtesy; conveyance of confidence and trust
- Empathy
  - caring, compassionate, individualized attention
- Responsiveness
  - ability & willingness to provide efficient service

**Perceived Library Service Quality**
- (Satisfaction)

**Library as Place**
- Community Socialization
  - A “gathering” place
- Creative & Scholarly Inquiry Space

** Formats**
- Print, digital, video, audio, etc.

**Utilitarian Space**
- “physical” space available for use
What do you perceive...?
2003: The Perfect (Bad-News) Storm

**Results:** compared against the instrument’s national norms, Butler Library fell short of average in all 3 service areas (i.e. Affect of Service, Information Control, and Library as Place) by up to 10 percentile points.

As compared to the 50th percentile (average)

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![Bar Chart]

**Percentiles**

- Yellow: Perceived Service Quality (Total)
- Blue: Affect of Service
- Red: Information Control
- Green: Library As Place

*as compared to 2003 norms*
In a Word

Yikes!
(some used a stronger word)
The Beginning of a Plan.....

The road to revitalization of the library required a completely new way of doing business.
Our Inspiration

Beagle’s Framework for Creating an Information Commons

- Emphasize strategic alignment with the teaching/learning mission of the campus
- Organizational/resource realignment from print to virtual
- Redefine the library’s use of physical space
- Redefine library services
- Redefine library culture
Beagle’s Framework for Succeeding as an Information Commons

Three dimensions of creating positive, sustainable change:

- Change People
- Change Resources
- Change Space
The Specifics - What We Did

Changing the structure, process, people

- Re-envisioned our mission statement
- Flattened the organizational structure
- Restructured around functional service areas
- Focused on cross-training, professional growth and development
- Focused on continuous improvement
- Focused on improving communication
- Created a culture of empowerment, pride, inclusion
The Specifics - What We Did

Changing the resources, services, content

- Concentrated efforts on providing access to online resources
- Cultivated collaborative partnerships with other academic service areas.
- Embraced technology and technology questions/enlisted Help Desk Staff
- Added new service areas: Equipment Loan, Application Support, Writing Help Center
- Enhanced our website
The Specifics - What We Did

Changing the physical space, context

- Moved Reference Desk
- Added an Information Commons sign
- Created quiet and collaborative study spaces
- Added a cafe
- Created comfy study spaces/group study spaces
Ideally…

2006 Results

- Hypothetically would highlight positive changes in users’ perceptions of overall service quality due to creation of Information Commons

2009 Results

- Hypothetically would indicate users’ satisfaction with the IC was sustained or was it just a “marketing fad?”
In 2006 and 2009, Butler Library administered second and third collection points of LibQUAL+® data as a means of assessing the impact of the Information Commons model on users’ perceptions of library service quality. These sets of results were compared to 2003 data.
Actual Results (2009)

- Creation of the Information Commons had a significant, positive impact on users’ perceptions in all three dimensions.

- Although the Information Commons would seem to have most impact on Library as Place, Affect of Service, and Information Control also improved.
(Self-)Benchmarking

Percentiles

- Yellow: Perceived Service Quality (Total)
- Blue: Affect of Service
- Red: Information Control
- Green: Library As Place

* Compared against 2003 Norms
** Compared against 2005 Norms
Actual Results (2009)

- Results between 2006 and 2009 were not statistically significant.
  - That’s good! Gains resulting from the creation of the Information Commons were maintained in 2009.

- Maintained improvements indicate this was not a marketing fad.
Interpretation of Results

- A three-dimensional approach to sustained change is necessary to substantially improve user satisfaction.
- This can only be accomplished by adopting a totally new model of service.
2012 LibQUAL+® Results Summary

But Our Work Continues…

- Graduate student satisfaction declined on all three dimensions:
  - Library as Place
  - Affect of Service
  - Information Control
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Question Text</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Desired Mean</th>
<th>Perceived Mean</th>
<th>Adequacy Mean</th>
<th>Superiority Mean</th>
<th>n</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Affect of Service</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>AS-1</td>
<td>Employees who instill confidence in users</td>
<td>6.60</td>
<td>7.91</td>
<td>6.53</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-1.38</td>
<td>47</td>
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<tr>
<td>AS-2</td>
<td>Giving users individual attention</td>
<td>6.48</td>
<td>7.85</td>
<td>6.39</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-1.46</td>
<td>46</td>
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<tr>
<td>AS-3</td>
<td>Employees who are consistently courteous</td>
<td>7.04</td>
<td>8.11</td>
<td>6.98</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-1.13</td>
<td>53</td>
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<tr>
<td>AS-4</td>
<td>Readiness to respond to users' questions</td>
<td>7.20</td>
<td>8.04</td>
<td>6.84</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
<td>-1.20</td>
<td>51</td>
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<tr>
<td>AS-5</td>
<td>Employees who have the knowledge to answer user questions</td>
<td>6.83</td>
<td>7.91</td>
<td>6.70</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>-1.21</td>
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<tr>
<td>AS-6</td>
<td>Employees who deal with users in a caring fashion</td>
<td>7.07</td>
<td>8.14</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>-0.40</td>
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<td>91</td>
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<td>AS-7</td>
<td>Employees who understand the needs of their users</td>
<td>7.07</td>
<td>8.13</td>
<td>6.72</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
<td>-1.41</td>
<td>54</td>
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<tr>
<td>AS-8</td>
<td>Willingness to help users</td>
<td>7.21</td>
<td>8.21</td>
<td>7.08</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>-1.13</td>
<td>53</td>
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<tr>
<td>AS-9</td>
<td>Dependability in handling users' service problems</td>
<td>7.48</td>
<td>8.25</td>
<td>7.05</td>
<td>-0.43</td>
<td>-1.20</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Information Control</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>IC-1</td>
<td>Making electronic resources accessible from my home or office</td>
<td>7.17</td>
<td>8.41</td>
<td>7.28</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>-1.13</td>
<td>54</td>
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<tr>
<td>IC-2</td>
<td>A library Web site enabling me to locate information on my own</td>
<td>7.05</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>6.98</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-1.35</td>
<td>57</td>
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<tr>
<td>IC-3</td>
<td>The printed library materials I need for my work</td>
<td>6.82</td>
<td>8.02</td>
<td>6.59</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>-1.43</td>
<td>49</td>
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<tr>
<td>IC-4</td>
<td>The electronic information resources I need</td>
<td>6.88</td>
<td>8.18</td>
<td>6.70</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>-1.48</td>
<td>94</td>
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<tr>
<td>IC-5</td>
<td>Modern equipment that lets me easily access needed information</td>
<td>7.46</td>
<td>8.30</td>
<td>7.24</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>-1.06</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IC-6</td>
<td>Easy-to-use access tools that allow me to find things on my own</td>
<td>7.48</td>
<td>8.15</td>
<td>6.92</td>
<td>-0.56</td>
<td>-1.23</td>
<td>52</td>
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<tr>
<td>IC-7</td>
<td>Making information easily accessible for independent use</td>
<td>7.25</td>
<td>8.11</td>
<td>6.65</td>
<td>-0.60</td>
<td>-1.45</td>
<td>55</td>
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<tr>
<td>IC-8</td>
<td>Print and/or electronic journal collections I require for my work</td>
<td>7.51</td>
<td>8.21</td>
<td>6.89</td>
<td>-0.62</td>
<td>-1.32</td>
<td>53</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Library as Place</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>LP-1</td>
<td>Library space that inspires study and learning</td>
<td>6.21</td>
<td>7.95</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>-0.46</td>
<td>-2.20</td>
<td>91</td>
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<td>LP-2</td>
<td>Quiet space for individual activities</td>
<td>7.06</td>
<td>8.06</td>
<td>6.42</td>
<td>-0.65</td>
<td>-1.65</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LP-3</td>
<td>A comfortable and inviting location</td>
<td>6.94</td>
<td>8.13</td>
<td>6.60</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>-1.53</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LP-4</td>
<td>A getaway for study, learning, or research</td>
<td>7.06</td>
<td>8.13</td>
<td>6.65</td>
<td>-0.42</td>
<td>-1.48</td>
<td>48</td>
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<tr>
<td>LP-5</td>
<td>Community space for group learning and group study</td>
<td>6.73</td>
<td>7.67</td>
<td>6.63</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>-1.04</td>
<td>52</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Overall</strong></td>
<td>6.85</td>
<td>8.09</td>
<td>6.59</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>-1.50</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2012 LibQUAL+® Results - The Plan for Improvement

- Use the success of the Information Commons as a model.
- Changes must occur along three dimensions – physical, cultural, virtual
2012 LibQUAL+® Results – The Plan for Improvement

- Library as Place/Changing the Physical Space
- Affect of Service/Changing Staff and Services
- Information Control/Changing Resources
2012 LibQUAL+® Results – The Plan for Improvement

- Library as Place/Changing the Physical Space
  - Creation of a Graduate Commons
  - Individual and collaborative work areas
  - Signs create an identity
  - Restrict to grads only
2012 LibQUAL+® Results – The Plan for Improvement

- Affect of Service/Changing Staff and Services
  - Creation of a grad student library support team
  - Graduate concierge service
  - Targeted library instruction/on demand
  - Use of QR codes
2012 LibQUAL+® Results – The Plan for Improvement

- Affect of Service/Changing Staff and Services, con’t.
  - Use of graduate school faculty for targeted instruction
  - Utilize services of the Writing Center/Graduate Level Writing Skills
  - Give-aways and focus groups
2012 LibQUAL+® Results – The Plan for Improvement

- Information Control / Changing Resources
  - Website redesign – RWD, targeted graduate student site
  - Digital Commons – repository for masters theses and projects
  - LibGuides and online tutorials for graduate students
  - Shift to electronic collections such as e-books, multimedia
  - Support for mobile devices
LibQUAL+® 2016

- Changing the big picture, not the little pieces
- Improvement is an evolution, not a static entity
- Change is three-dimensional. Put on your glasses!
Some Conclusions/Final Thoughts

- Bad circumstances create opportunities
- View everything as a “trial”
- We are here for our students
- We all want to feel productive
- Say yes to new ideas – create that vision

What are your ideas?
Thank you!

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