Part 3: Weaving it All Together: Discussion and Recommendations

There is a 1944 song written by Johnny Mercer (lyrics) and Harold Arlen (music) and made popular by Bing Crosby in the movie, *Here Come the Waves*\(^3\), which goes:

You've got to accentuate the positive  
Eliminate the negative  
Latch on to the affirmative  
Don't mess with Mister In-Between

The goal of this entire project was to:
- Establish a baseline assessment of users’ perceptions of our services  
  - what are we doing well; what can we improve on  
  - what we need to focus on fixing  
  - what we need to learn more about re: expectations  
- Provide direction about where to focus our efforts and resources  
- Provide a foundation for developing performance indicators for library services

Noting those aspects of library services that made the users’ experiences easier and more enjoyable is an apt beginning to discussing these results and recommending some things for the Library to turn its attention to.

The Baseline Assessment

Library as Place

The Library is considered a central meeting place for students and is their preferred study space as evidenced from the demand on study spaces and distributed computers. The Library is described by users as being cleaner, brighter, fresher smelling and quieter than other places such as the Atrium’s 24-hour Study Centre that are designated for study. On all five questions pertaining to the dimension, “Library as Place”, the perception of the Library exceeded the minimum expectations for faculty and graduate students. In the case of “community space for group learning and group study”, the Library exceeded even the desired expectations for these two constituencies.

\(^3\) Information about this song, including the chorus, were retrieved from many places on the website of The Johnny Mercer Foundation (c2002-2005) accessed on 2005 November 15 and available at [http://www.johnnymercerfoundation.org](http://www.johnnymercerfoundation.org)
The Library also exceeded the minimum expectations of undergraduate students for all five questions relating to “library as place” although it was here that the issue of noise arose; the Library barely met the minimum expectation of the undergraduate user on the question on “quiet space for individual study.” The issue of noise elicited a number of comments on the topic (more negative than positive) and focus group participants emphasized that there is an overall concern with noise among the student body. “Three Lines Free,” a regular section in the student newspaper, The Melorist, is apparently used by students to voice their frustrations with the noise issue in the Library. Therefore while the Library is quieter, relatively speaking, than other places on campus designated for studying, it appears that noise is an issue calling for some attention if the Library is to build on the inherent strengths of the facility itself. Library staff were aware of this issue and had started to think about how to address it prior to executing the LibQUAL+™ survey. However, as the most tangible of the issues pursued, the suggestions of the focus groups discussing noise were quite concrete and not outside the bounds of possibility. There were three main thrusts to their very explicit suggestions: re-evaluating library space, creating an awareness of the issue, and creating a “culture of quiet”.

**Affect of Service**

Despite a couple of concerns, another area of strength was the dimension, “affect of service”, or, the public service quality of staff-mediated services. Overall the Library staff was viewed positively through the survey, comments and focus group discussions. This view was demonstrated in the survey results where the Library exceeded the minimum expectations on all nine questions for both graduate students and undergraduate students. Faculty, however, were not as generous in their assessment overall. While the Library exceeded the minimum expectations of faculty on most questions asked, it was not by much and two trouble spots in particular showed up in the aggregated results for faculty: a) courtesy where Library staff barely met faculty’s minimum expectations and b) understanding user needs where Library staff failed to meet faculty’s minimum expectations.

Overall the quantitative results were reinforced by the comments submitted, not necessarily by faculty *per se* but by the respondents in general. More kudos than complaints surfaced in the comments, especially with respect to helpfulness. However, the comments expressed did highlight the issues of courtesy and of understanding of (or sensitivity to) user needs as specific concerns. The comments also raised concerns about the knowledge and competency of the staff, primarily with respect to the abilities of the General Services Desk staff in relation to media equipment but this may have been due to a decision, made just the semester previous, to circulate the media equipment from that service point.

When it came to the focus group on “quality of services provided directly by staff”, it was primarily undergraduate students who were interested in discussing the issue.
Participants in the discussion again reiterated that, overall, the public service quality of the staff was good but that perhaps there were members of the staff that exhibited “attitude” when it came to dealing with undergraduates, something especially frustrating to “mature” students who, after an extended absence from an educational institution, felt especially intimidated by the university environment. While some participants indicated this “attitude” seemed to be pervasive across campus, it may still be worthwhile for Library staff to reflect on how their own interactions may feed this perception.

These focus group discussions also highlighted another issue with respect to where users go and who they approach to ask for help. Specifically the Library seems to lack staff presence even though the Library has two service points on the main floor (Level 10), one of which is staffed all of the hours that the Library is open. So what is going on? Subsequent musing about this observation and discussion with students “off the record” suggested that there is no one to “greet” the users entering the Library. The Information Desk is around the corner to the right as one enters and is out of sight of the entrance; users looking to the right as they enter, see only a bank of computers over by the windows so they turn to the left. To the left, there is a huge General Services Desk with staff concentrated either on the far side closest to the exit checking out materials or behind the back counter checking in materials. As well, one student described how the curvature of the desk pulls the user around and away from the Information Desk and away from the assistance they may well be looking for. How much opportunity for student contact is the Library missing by not having staff situated within view of the entrance?

The other point raised was the reluctance of undergraduate students to approach staff. While there is a stated preference for self-sufficiency, there is also a desire to have help handy when they need it. It seems particularly difficult for students to overcome their reluctance to approach a staff member. Two things cropped up when exploring this reluctance: a) who is a librarian (given that for a user, anyone who works in a library is a librarian) and b) can the librarian spend the amount of time that the students think they may require? In this latter case, if students don’t think they will have the undivided attention of the librarian for the time period they think they require, then they will not bother to even initiate the contact. Again, how many opportunities for student contact is the Library missing by not identifying library staff, in general, and the academic librarians (or reference staff), in particular? How many opportunities is the Library missing by not having enough staff to allay the students’ concerns for quality contact time?

The survey did not ask about online self-serve options specifically and commentary about these options was not prominent in the survey comments. However, the Library’s efforts to “push out” particular services using the Library’s website was commented on favourably by those focus group participants who had literally “discovered” them while mining the website. Word of these online self-services was received with some excitement by participants who were not previously aware of them. As well, the Library
received praise for implementing courtesy notices for library materials out on loan (these notices alert users that their library materials are coming due soon) and for the improvements made to facilitating access to the electronic resources available through the University of Lethbridge Library. Obviously building on this success is one thing and making the University Community aware of the services is another.

**Information Control**

The final dimension for the LibQUAL+™ project was “information control”—the quality of and access to the information resources of the Library. The survey results demonstrated that undergraduate students were the least frustrated by the collection, the Library collection exceeding their minimum expectations on all eight questions although there was noticeable concern about the print collection relative to the rest of the questions asked.

Graduate students were explicitly concerned about both print and electronic resources as well as the journals in either, print or electronic format, required for their work. For these three questions, the Library failed to the meet minimum expectations of the graduate students.

The Library also failed to meet the minimum expectations of the faculty in six of the eight questions asked in this section. Faculty did allow (albeit barely) that the Library was making the attempt to provide access through modern equipment and to make information more accessible for independent use.

Not to make light of things but the survey response by faculty and graduate students was not unusual and reflected, for the most part, what is considered a “normal” response by faculty and graduate students in all libraries as evidenced by the LibQUAL+™ total results for all participating libraries. (See Figure 52)
Figure 52: University of Lethbridge Faculty (Radar Chart) compared to Overall Faculty response from all colleges and universities participating in the Spring 2005 LibQUAL+™

This is not to say the concerns raised can be ignored. It was mentioned more than once how faculty tend to denigrate the Library collection to their students which in turns shapes the perceptions undergraduate and graduate students have about the collection, possibly negatively.

Comments clarified that users:
- Wanted more of everything,
- Preferred electronic delivery,
- Found loan periods for particular collections frustrating,
- Found hours of access frustrating,
- While it is an excellent service, felt there was too much dependency on interlibrary loans, and
- That it took too long (confirming the perceptions about timely delivery asked in the survey).

Obviously, the Library needs to take steps to address the concerns raised about collections including how to make the transition from a primarily undergraduate focus to one that can also support an expanded graduate program. In the end, however, it is perhaps less about the actual collection and more about how to communicate the
challenges posed by the information industry at this time and what actions are being undertaken by libraries to address them.

Focus groups confirmed the sentiments expressed by the comments on collections and added another insight to the perception of collection quality; namely, how undergraduate students in particular use (or do not use) the Library. This was an obvious source of frustration for some faculty participants. In discussing this particular thread, the subject librarian model was highlighted as a “rare luxury” and faculty, graduate students and undergraduate students who knew about “their” subject librarian, found having such a point of contact in the Library was a great asset. However, while most faculty may be aware of the subject librarian from a collection liaison point of view, not too many amongst the University Community know that the academic librarians are organized as subject specialists in order to provide instructional and, to some extent, specialized reference assistance for them.

Information Literacy

The issue of instruction in how to use the library also raises the issue of responsibility for the same. Faculty see themselves filling this role but as the faculty participants described their approach to such instruction, it was obvious that they were simply passing along their experiential knowledge of library skills which focused on serendipitous research in a paper-based world. While this is one way to approach using the library, the information universe has changed dramatically and shifted in the last 10 years with growth in electronic access and the existence of the Web. One faculty focus group participant acknowledged that his/her approach was not necessarily the only way and that perhaps things had shifted.

Students, on the other hand, felt that, for the most part, a general tour was all that was required for them to know how to use a library—that is, until they tried to complete their assignments and either didn’t know who to approach (i.e., the identification issue) or felt they needed more help than could be provided (i.e., the quality time issue). As well, more general challenges facing students today came up across the focus groups: increased tuition and cost of education leading to greater student debt. To offset the cost of education, many students work part-time. Therefore, while education may be important, it is the real-life issues of balancing school, work and recreational time that determine how much time a student has to complete their assignment, when students do their research, where they go for information, and what they ultimately choose to use to complete their assignments and papers.

While there was little discussion of this issue from the graduate student perspective, what there was, was positive in viewpoint. As well, their perception of the Library’s role in instructional activities was highlighted in the results of the survey, specifically the local questions on information literacy. These results, demonstrated that graduate students
differed from faculty and undergraduate students in their opinion of the Library in facilitating their information literacy, having both higher expectations of the Library and a higher perception of the service they receive in this respect. Meanwhile, faculty and undergraduate students shared relatively lower expectations and perceptions of the Library’s role in knowing how to use the library on two out of the three local questions on the topic. These differences between graduate students and undergraduate students and between graduate students and faculty may be due to a variety of reasons but two plausible suggestions are that a) it is more likely they have been exposed to a subject librarian in their educational past and/or b) they may be more aggressive about asking for (and receiving) help.

By virtue of the work they do, academic librarians have been immersed in the information world as it has evolved and changed from paper-delivery to electronic-delivery, from structured information “containers” to “anything goes”. They share the faculty’s concern about how students use the library, make their choices and ultimately use information resources. Is there perhaps opportunity to sit down with faculty to co-operatively develop some options for addressing these shared concerns and to develop ways of working with students that go beyond what has worked (or not) in the past?

The Academic Librarians

In many of the focus groups, it seemed the Library was seen as a place, a collection and the General Services Desk where staff located themselves “back in the corner” and had to be called out to help. Rarely did the role of the academic librarian emerge in the discussions as even a wee part of the solution to the issues being raised. The academic librarians in particular should be concerned about this perception. Anyone who works in the Library, from the “Student Assistant” to the “Professional Librarian”, is a “librarian” in the eyes of the user and this confusion made it very hard sometimes to sort out who was being referred to when users referred to “the librarian”. Faculty and graduate students may know that there is a “subject librarian” for them to work with but they didn’t seem to really know what the responsibilities of that role were. Undergraduate students, who perhaps interacted with a subject librarian in a class or because they had been sent specifically to consult with one, thought that it was more luck than anything else that they had found such a person in the Library. It seemed, as well, that neither graduate nor undergraduate students were really very aware that there were educational differences among the staff of the Library that might make some difference to the kind of help they could expect. If a user has a specific expectation of the kind of help they need but thinks that any one who works in a library is a “librarian”, they may be disappointed or at the very least, may not receive the assistance they actually required. Perhaps it is worthwhile for the Library to think about this observation and to consider what steps might be taken to ensure users get the assistance they may not even know they need.
Library Relations with the University community.

Finally, it may also be worthwhile asking whose Library is this? Throughout the comments and focus group discussions, there was an implicit (sometimes explicit) thread of concern that the University Library of today has evolved without the participation of and the consideration for the University community. This is a fundamental problem. Regardless of whether Library staff feel this is the case or not, it is a perception that exists and one that the Library should be concerned about for very practical reasons—funding and support for initiatives undertaken.

The University community, faculty in particular, wants to be engaged in those aspects of the Library that affect how they do their work. Despite criticism of the LibQUAL+™ instrument (which was to be expected), participants were generally happy to have been asked their opinion. Focus group participants thanked the moderators for organizing an opportunity for users to “engage” with the Library. The point is that having the Library reach out to the University community was important to those who took the time to participate. Are there other ways that the Library can re-engage with the University community?

Focusing efforts and resources

What are the themes that have emerged from the results and this discussion? It is tempting to take the suggestions of focus group participants at face value. The reality is that while they expressed their understanding of the concerns, these understandings were sometimes misinformed and lacked context. One key focus for the Library, fundamental to everything else, must be communication, communication, communication.

Communication

Recommendation #1: That the Library seek every opportunity to engage the University community and communicate with it for the purposes of sharing information, presenting a Library perspective on University issues, educating the Community about Library policies, roles and services, making the Community aware of issues and challenges faced, etc.
This is a tall order and the list is far from exhaustive. Three things are worth mentioning:

a. As was learned from the undergraduate focus group participants, variety in the message, the messenger and the medium is very important. The Library plays to a wide audience of users who range from “millennials” to “baby boomers” and each group has their unique preferences for what they pay attention to and how they receive information. What works for one group may not work for the others. Know your audience.

b. Also learned from the undergraduate focus group participants: attention spans are short so the message must be repeated in a variety of ways and reinforced on an unpredictable, irregular, and periodic basis.

c. Communication cannot just be one-to-many (i.e., Library to University Community). To ensure that communications are received, engagement should be the mode of communication. Engagement is best served by a multi-pronged approach to communication meaning that it becomes the responsibility of all staff to know what is going on, and why, so that they can share this information with the users they come into contact with. The message should be the same regardless of who is saying it.

One campaign of awareness specifically identified relates to the issue of noise. Focus group participants went into some detail about how to create an awareness of noise as an issue in the Library and how to control it. With undergraduate students the likely audience for such a campaign, their advice, including partnering with the Students Union, may be well taken. [See Part 2, the Results Section, “Noise in the Library” for details.]

Collections

Expectations are formed on the basis of the information available. In the absence of any understanding of the challenges posed by the evolving information industry (quantity, cost, format, access) users have made assumptions about what they should be able to expect from the Library’s collection and, based on these expectations, there is a degree of dissatisfaction. There are three things (and maybe more) that the Library can focus on to begin the process of finding alignment between the challenges faced by the Library and the users’ expectations. They are engagement, evaluation, and negotiation.

Recommendation #2: That the Library engage the University Community, faculty in particular, in a discussion with respect to the strategic directions that the Library faces with respect to collections.

Not only is this an opportunity for communication (see Recommendation #1), it is also overdue (in the eyes of the faculty focus group participants) and necessary if the Library is to act responsibly and in the best interests of the University. Some of the strategic directions that the Library may want to discuss include (in no particular order and far from a complete list):

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• Issues around electronic journals and databases, for example:
  o Limitations, embargos, backfiles, etc.
  o Database selection versus journal selection
  o Funding and sustainability
• Issues around balancing the collection, for example:
  o Foundational collection support for liberal education at the first and second year versus subject level collection support
  o Undergraduate student needs versus graduate student needs versus faculty needs
  o Support for distance programs versus local programs
  o Disciplinary needs re: monographs, journals
  o Subject level collection development versus disciplinary level collection development versus format-driven collection development
  o Erratic funding vis-à-vis one-time versus continuing costs
• Issues around access to the collection
  o Direct access: electronic versus print vis-à-vis journals and vis-à-vis monographs
  o Intellectual access and the role of the subject librarian
• Issues around abandoning print back files for journal titles, for example:
  o Conversion of University assets to operating expenditures
  o Access versus ownership in the event of cancellation

Recommendation #3: That the Library undertake an evaluation of its collection.

There has been some research done on the OCLC service to evaluate library collections. This service, or something similar, should be pursued to evaluate the the collection for currency, breadth and depth—the three main criticisms leveled against the Library’s collection.

Recommendation #4: That the Library undertake to review the existing assortment of documentation with respect to collection decisions made, the results of the collection evaluation, and the knowledge gathered by engaging faculty in discussion with the express purpose of developing something like a “statement of philosophy” for the Library’s collection.

There is not an overall understanding about or agreement on the purpose of the Library’s collection. Overall, the balance in the collection has been corrupted by erratic funding cycles and opportunities which benefited some areas and not others. As well, the University focus has shifted to encourage growth in graduate programs. The rise in interdisciplinary studies and research further complicate a collection which is being built at the subject level. It is perhaps time to step back and re-evaluate our collection philosophy, policies, and procedures in order to take into account directional changes of the University, the needs of the University community, and changes to the information industry.
The Building

Library service and interactions with our users changed when the Library moved into its new facility in 2001. The building offered new opportunities and, at the same time, new challenges. After having “lived” in these new surroundings for the past four years, it is time to review the layout in light of some of the issues and comments raised by users.

Recommendation #5: That the Library review the floor plans of the building giving consideration to:

a. The layout of service points.

With respect to concerns around staff-mediated services, we have learned that there is not a staffed service point to greet users as they enter the Library. The activities of the General Services Desk place staff on the opposite side of this service point and the Information Desk cannot be seen from the entrance. Compounding the problem is the curvature of the General Services Desk that draws users away from the Information Desk and puts increased pressure on activities of the General Services Desk.

b. The layout of the services

While the layout of service points relative to their location within the building is one aspect to consider, another may well be to re-evaluate how the activities of the service points are organized with some thought to positioning staff in the immediate vicinity of the entrance or, at least, in the case of the General Services Desk, closer to the counter so that they are more accessible to users needing assistance.

c. The layout of furniture (tables, carrels, and computers) relative to the noise issue.

With respect to the noise issue, we have learned that tables encourage conversation, hence, noise and that this furniture should not be located within areas designated for quiet study. We have learned that computer use generates noise either directly or through the social interactions of those using them for group work and that we should give some consideration to clustering the computers in specific areas of the Library. We have learned groups requiring the use of a computer migrate out of the group studies areas. While we are building a collection of computer/projector carts for use in the group studies, students felt computers should be installed directly into them. We have learned that carrels promote quiet study and should be the furniture of
choice in quiet study areas. We have learned that the curve of the wall on Level 9 North/East channels noise from the tables in that area to the quiet study area in Level 9 North/West so using carrels along this wall may help to “slow down” the sound waves.

d. Zoning for noise

With respect to the noise issue, we also learned that the activities of users contribute to the noise issue and that perhaps zoning for particular activities would help. Examples given included zoning for conversation (i.e., no conversation or, perhaps, conversation friendly zones), for cell phone use (e.g., implementing cell phone booths), for group friendly areas, worker-friendly areas (e.g., the study space adjacent to the re-shelving and sorting area or the service points), etc.

e. Improving signage

Signage came up with respect to the noise issue as a way to create more awareness of quiet study areas. We learned that the current signage for quiet study areas hangs too high with the result that users are unaware that they are in a quiet study area. We learned that the signage cannot blend into the décor of the Library but must stand out if it is to be noticed. Variation in style and placement to accommodate the variation in users was suggested. Have we thought about signage on the floor with the message created via the carpet tiles?

Staff also suggested that signage at the entrance alerting users to the types of study spaces (e.g., quiet study, group study, etc.) and directing them accordingly might be in order.

There was the suggestion of putting signage in each carrel reminding users of what kind of study area they were in and providing guidelines for appropriate behaviour while in the area. This also applies to the group study rooms where it was suggested that the guidelines for use be made bigger, more noticeable, and posted on the outside of the door for reference by both individual and group users of this space.

From the perspective of staff-mediated services, we learned that users cannot see the Information Desk from the entrance. As an interim measure, signage may have a role to play in directing users needing assistance to this service. A suggestion provided by a guest to the Library was to change the carpet tiles and create a path to the Information Desk that would visually draw users to this service point.
One other idea for signage is to post “Caution staff working” signs either on the book carts or in the areas that are being re-shelved just so that those studying know to expect some level of work-related noise.

f. Demarcation of designated areas

Signage was seen as one idea for helping to create awareness of the different types of study areas available in the Library. There was also the suggestion that awareness might be served by creating physical demarcations of space such as an entry way to an area reminiscent of the reading rooms that exist in some libraries. A supplementary suggestion by staff was to perhaps change the colour of the carpet in these areas and otherwise colour code the areas to create an awareness for the user that they were in a different space.

Recommendation #6: That the University conduct “remedial work” on the Library, taking specific aim at:

a. Installing electricity on Level 11 East.

Level 11 East has emerged as a natural quiet study area for students despite the noise that bleeds from the group study rooms immediately adjacent. It was acknowledged that this area did not have electricity which precludes use of the reading lights in the carrels. Students do find it dark, especially at night. However, as one student put it when the discussion turned to alternative study spaces on the campus and in the Library that were noisier:

“If I had to make a choice between lighting and noise, I would come up here [Level 11] because it’s quieter.” (Undergraduate student)

The point is that students are seeking out and using this space because it is a quiet area. It behooves the University and the Library to provide the right facilities for the health of these students.

b. Insulating the group studies and meeting rooms for noise

Level 11 East has emerged as a natural quiet study area for students. However, through the discussions around noise issues, it was noted that the group study rooms are not sound proof and are barely sound-reducing. Group activities generate noise and this noise bleeds both between rooms and out into the quiet study space immediately adjacent. This is the same situation for the group studies (or edit suites) and meeting rooms located on Level 11 North and the group studies on Level 10.
c. Expanding the number of computers and the study spaces (quiet, conversational, and group studies) to the extent possible

They said it in the comments and they said it in the focus groups: the Library is the primary and preferred study space for undergraduates on campus. The University enrollment has increased; suitable study space apparently has not. There are not enough study spaces of any type and there are not enough computers.

Relationships with the University Community

1. Individual responsibility

The Library building was built with a vision of how it would function in terms of services. The vision relied, to a large degree either to an expansion in staff or a redeployment of staff from traditional “backroom” activities to public service duties. However, the staff complement has not expanded and traditional activities have not disappeared as quickly as was assumed. Much of what is perceived by users as service issues (e.g., a lack of staff presence) may, in fact, be attributed to a conflict between the vision of how the building was designed to function and the reality of staffing it. As a result, a review of the building, as proposed in Recommendation #5, will begin to address service issues as described by users. A review of the building, however, does not address those issues specific to attitudes of individual staff towards their public service activities which inform user perceptions about the staff they interact.

Recommendation #7: That each Library staff member honestly reflect on their attitudes towards public service considering:

• The role of the Library,
• Their role as a staff member within the Library,
• The user perceptions of staff-mediated services as summarized in this document and those experienced first hand,
• Why they make the choices they do when dealing with specific individuals,
• What they can do personally about those things that get in the way of having a positive interaction with users,
• What they can do personally about working around any issues they have with respect to public service, in order to improve their interactions with users,
• What skills (e.g., technical, communication, empathy, etc.) they feel they need to develop or what they need to learn in order to be more comfortable in a public service role.

There is truth in the saying, “you can lead a horse to water but you can’t make it drink.” While there was the opinion that the Library has the greatest control over
this issue, in reality this is not the case. Over the years, the Library has provided many “customer service” workshops and professional development opportunities via the Annual Staff Retreat. However, mandatory participation in workshops is not the answer if a staff member does not see themselves, or their attitudes, as a problem.

By design and somewhat of necessity, all staff share the responsibility of the public service points. Hence, it is hard to hold any single staff member accountable for their actions given that staff, in their public service role, are a rather large, amorphous and quite indistinguishable (at least to the user’s eye) lot of people.

Given the present organization of work, the solution to issues of “attitude” really rests with the individual staff taking responsibility for themselves and their commitment to public service since they can only be as helpful and approachable as they themselves choose to be. The Library can articulate expectations of service and, through supervisors, model appropriate service behaviours, coach staff with respect to meeting these expectations of service, challenge staff to think about the attitudes they hold and support the actions they want to take. In the end, though, it is up to the staff members to take ownership of and take action on their attitudes and their approach to public service.

In response, to this individual reflection, Library Administration can support staff attempts to resolve the issues affecting their work. Examples of such support might include: negotiation and clear articulation of expectations for service, providing access to professional development and continuing education as requested, addressing systemic issues within the Library that affect staff performance in general and public service attitudes specifically, etc.

2. Reassessing opportunities for student contact

Recommendation #8: That the Library, the academic librarians in particular, give consideration to reassessing the existing opportunities for student contact with a view to increasing the opportunities for quality contact time with students and considering the role that can be played by faculty.

The students want to interact on their own terms with librarians. They want self-sufficiency but they want to know that when they approach a librarian, they will have the librarian’s attention for as long as it takes to get them to the next step in their project. Students who knew they could contact a subject librarian appreciated knowing this was an option available to them. Suggestions coming from the students included increasing staffing levels at the Information Desk during peak hours of the day and peak times of the semester and/or increasing opportunities for in-depth help such as “research Q&As” around mid-term.
Another idea suggested by a staff member was to have subject librarian “office hours”.

It is one thing to increase the opportunities for quality contact time with students. It is another to get the students to overcome their intimidation and reluctance to take advantage of these opportunities. Much of the frustration developing non-credit workshops, etc. stems from the lack of student interest. Recognizing that most students need external motivation (e.g., credit of some form, etc.), a lesson might be taken from the fairly recent development where faculty are assigning students to take a library tour. Involving faculty both in the identification of the kind of additional library instruction opportunities that would best support their instruction and in aid of promoting these opportunities might go some distance to increasing student interest in the opportunities finally decided upon.

3. Reassessing the relationship with faculty

Recommendation #9: That the academic librarians, as a group, give consideration to ways that they may play a more prominent role in the work of the faculty.

Faculty play a significant role in the education of the graduate and undergraduate students. So much of the success of the Library rests with the faculty knowing what is happening in the Library and communicating positively with students. The relationship with the faculty is the responsibility of the academic librarians. Faculty perceptions about the collection, about the role of the academic librarian in instructing students, about services, and about decisions taken are all informed by the relationships built between the faculty members and the academic librarian, either as Professional Librarians or as subject librarians. It would seem then that reassessing and renewing relationships with faculty and educating them with respect to what they might expect from the academic librarians is a first step to addressing issues of library service quality.

4. Expanding self-service options

There will always be users that want someone to tell them how to do something and then there are others who really just want to do it themselves. Helping users to help themselves is seen as a good thing. The Library needs to continue this emphasis with its online self-services and consider expanding into the physical world.

Recommendation #10: That the Library remain cognizant of opportunities to expand the options for self-service.
Suggestions made include “critical paths” (signage) for such things as how to put money on campus ID cards, more strategically located maps, subject specific finding aids, the ability to monitor the status of ILL requests and quotas, etc.

5. Policy Review

Policies are a negotiated understanding between the user and the Library of their respective rights and responsibilities. It is worthwhile to periodically review policies to see if the assumptions upon which they were negotiated are still valid.

*Recommendation #11: That the Library undertake a schedule of review for the various policies and procedural interpretations of policy with a view to:
  a. Ensuring they are relevant to the environment of the University and the needs of the University community
  b. Ensuring the procedural interpretations of the policies are consistent with the intent of the policy
  c. Ensuring there is a consistency of message being conveyed to the users with respect to policy (i.e., enforcement).

The idea has already been proposed of reviewing the decisions that have shaped our collection with a view to developing an overall statement of philosophy. Enforcing the Library position on noise is another immediate issue to address. Loan policies for non-circulating collections and special collections were questioned. Issues with quotas and loan policies for interlibrary loan materials were also raised. It was suggested that the guidelines for the appropriate use of group studies and quiet study spaces be bolstered and enforced. Hours, of course, is something that remains controversial and always in need of review. It may also be worthwhile reviewing the current non-identification of staff in light of some of the feedback received.

*Foundations for performance indicators*

The LibQUAL+™ survey, in and of itself, is likely the best tool for measuring performance in libraries. It is the most mature tool in the set of “new measures” being worked on by the Association of Research Libraries. In larger institutions, such as the University of Alberta, LibQUAL+™ is run every year and the results are the library’s performance indicators. While there is merit in running LibQUAL+™ on a regular basis, annually is perhaps too much for the University of Lethbridge. The University of Calgary seems to have picked a two-year cycle and three years is the maximum interval recommended by ARL.
Recommendation #12: That the Library develop a regular cycle of performing comprehensive survey of the University community every three years using LibQUAL+™.

A regular and standardized comprehensive survey of user perceptions, such as LibQUAL+™, will have many benefits:

- To maintain a tangible engagement of users in the affairs of the Library,
- To determine how effective the Library is overall in addressing issues raised by users,
- To develop longitudinal data on changes in user perceptions over time, and
- To uncover problems before they become serious issues with potentially expensive solutions.

Executing such a survey on a reasonable basis should not be seen as an expense but as an investment in Library services and in the University of Lethbridge.