LibQUAL+™ is a research and development project which aims to define and measure library service quality across institutions. It was initiated in 1999 and spearheaded by Texas A & M University. It has grown rapidly, with 12 libraries participating in 2000, 43 in 2001, 164 in 2002 and 308 in 2003. In 2003 Liverpool was one of 20 UK libraries that participated in a SCONUL pilot of the on-line library survey instrument, LibQUAL+™ and we ran the survey again in 2004, intending to participate every two years thereafter.

The Survey

The 2006 LibQUAL+™ survey instrument consists of 22 core questions grouped into three areas: ‘affect of service’ or staff support (9 questions); ‘information control’ or collection quality (8 questions) and library as place (5 questions). In addition there are 5 local questions which were chosen from an approved list. For benchmarking purposes the SCONUL consortium selected 5 questions but participants were free to choose different questions if desired. As in 2004, we used 4 of the SCONUL questions and 1 local question.

For each of the 27 statements respondents are asked to indicate their minimum acceptable level of provision, then to score the perceived current level of provision and finally to enter a score for the ideal ‘desired’ level of provision, all on a scale of 1-10. They are also asked to answer 3 questions on general satisfaction, 3 questions on frequency of library use and 6 demographics questions. In addition, respondents can add free text comments if they wish.

Response Rate

The Library ran the survey for three weeks in March 2006:

- 3,200 e-mails were sent; 2,000 to undergraduates and taught postgraduates, 600 to academic/related staff and 600 to research postgraduate students
- there were 573 responses, an overall response rate of 17.9%; a response rate of 20% is considered good for this type of survey
- 324 respondents (56.5%) were undergraduates, a response rate of 16.2%
- 164 respondents (28.6%) were postgraduates, a response rate of 27.3%
- 85 respondents (14.8%) were academic/related staff, a response rate of 14.1%
- 78.2% of respondents were full-time students and 7.3% were part-time

Results

A report is produced by LibQual for each participating Library. It consists of a summary followed by separate results for each of the three groups surveyed. The minimum, desired and perceived means were calculated for each of the questions and the following scores calculated:

- **Service Adequacy Gap** = perceived service level minus minimum service level
- **Service Superiority Gap** = perceived service level minus desired service level
The results are presented in tabular form and also using radar or ‘spider’ charts. On each axis, respondents’ minimum, desired and perceived levels of service quality are plotted and the resulting ‘gaps’ between the levels are shaded blue, yellow, green or red. A red score indicates that the service provided is perceived as being of a lower standard than the minimum acceptable; blue indicates the extent to which the perceived level is above the minimum acceptable.

In both 2004 and 2006 the level of satisfaction varied significantly between the three groups of respondents.

The main areas of concern for our users, where respondents rated the service lower than the minimum acceptable, are shown below.

**NB:** The greater the deviation from zero, the greater the dissatisfaction (negative numbers) or satisfaction (positive numbers) of the respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affect of service (Staff support)</th>
<th>U/grad</th>
<th>P/grad</th>
<th>Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Dependability in handling users' service problems (2004)</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score for 2006</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information control (Collection quality)</th>
<th>U/grad</th>
<th>P/grad</th>
<th>Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Making electronic resources accessible from my home or office (2004)</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score for 2006</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The printed library materials I need for my work (2004)</td>
<td>-0.48</td>
<td>-0.46</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score for 2006</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>-0.42</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Print /electronic journal collections I require for my work (2004)</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>-0.30</td>
<td>-0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score for 2006</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>-0.42</td>
<td>-0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The electronic information resources I need (2004)</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score for 2006</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Making information easily accessible for independent use (2004)</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score for 2006</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library as place</th>
<th>U/grad</th>
<th>P/grad</th>
<th>Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Library space that inspires study and learning (2004)</td>
<td>-0.57</td>
<td>-0.28</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score for 2006</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>-0.60</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Quiet space for individual work (2004)</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score for 2006</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.48</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A haven for study, learning, or research (2004)</td>
<td>-0.23</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>-0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score for 2006</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>-0.23</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Space for group learning and group study (2004)</td>
<td>-0.41</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score for 2006</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local questions</th>
<th>U/grad</th>
<th>P/grad</th>
<th>Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Access to photocopying/printing facilities</td>
<td>-0.31</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score for 2006</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Main texts and readings I need for my work</td>
<td>-1.29</td>
<td>-0.64</td>
<td>-0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score for 2006</td>
<td>-0.57</td>
<td>-0.71</td>
<td>-0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Availability of subject specialist assistance</td>
<td>-0.57</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score for 2006</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There were, however, some areas where the results were more positive. The Library scored relatively well in the areas below although there was still some variation between categories of user:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affect of Service (Staff support)</th>
<th>U/grad</th>
<th>P/grad</th>
<th>Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Library staff who instil confidence in users</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Score for 2006</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.82</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.62</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.95</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Giving users individual attention</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Score for 2006</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.70</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.30</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.91</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Library staff who are consistently courteous</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Score for 2006</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.52</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.45</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.05</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Readiness to respond to users’ enquiries</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Score for 2006</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.56</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.33</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.85</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Library staff who have the knowledge to answer user questions</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Score for 2006</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.70</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.43</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.85</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Library staff who deal with users in a caring fashion</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Score for 2006</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.92</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.34</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.10</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Library staff who understand the needs of their users (2004)</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Score for 2006</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.76</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.32</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.62</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Willingness to help users</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Score for 2006</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.73</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.23</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.80</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Control</th>
<th>U/grad</th>
<th>P/grad</th>
<th>Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• A library website enabling me to locate information on my own (2004)</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Score for 2006</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.78</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.29</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.08</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Modern equipment that lets me easily access needed information (2004)</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Score for 2006</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.69</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.34</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.55</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Easy-to-use access tools that allow me to find things on my own</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Score for 2006</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.62</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.07</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.15</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local questions</th>
<th>U/grad</th>
<th>P/grad</th>
<th>Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Library orientations/instruction sessions</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Score for 2006</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.17</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.64</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.07</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provision of information skills training</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Score for 2006</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.77</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.39</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.91</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, undergraduate responses were much more positive this year. The number of areas of dissatisfaction in the main survey has fallen from 9 to 2. Most notably, the quality of the print and electronic journal collections have gone from being perceived as inadequate to comfortably adequate and the availability of printed library materials has gone from being regarded as seriously inadequate to being perceived as adequate. The biggest improvement of all has been in perceptions of ‘dependability in handling users’ service problems’ which have again moved from inadequate to comfortably adequate.

The results of the postgraduate survey reveal considerable levels of dissatisfaction, highlighting twice as many areas of discontent as in the 2004 survey. There has been a marked decline in scores relating to library collections and all the questions relating to ‘the Library as place’ elicited a more strongly negative reaction than in 2004. Indeed, even in areas where quality is regarded as acceptable, the extent to which Library provision is perceived to be above the minimum acceptable has declined. It
would appear that postgraduate students have higher expectations about the level of service the Library should provide. We hope that our plans to create a postgraduate study area in the newly extended Sydney Jones Library will lead to increased levels of satisfaction amongst postgraduate library users.

**Frequency of Use (2004 figures in brackets)**

- **46.07%** (45.3%) of respondents stated that they used Library resources weekly and **27.57%** (29.2%) used them daily
- **41.19%** (46.2%) of respondents accessed resources through the Library web pages at least once a week with **36.47%** (29.5%) doing so on a daily basis
- **72.08%** (60.7%) of respondents used Google/Yahoo or other non-Library gateways on a daily basis and only **1.57%** (29.4%) never used them

**General Satisfaction and Information Literacy Outcomes (2004 figures in brackets)**

The mean scores on a scale of 1-9 for these 8 questions were higher than 6 with three exceptions:

- The Library helps me to keep abreast of developments in my field(s) of interest: **5.86** (5.82)
- The Library helps me to distinguish between trustworthy and untrustworthy information: **5.34** (4.90)
- The Library provides me with the information skills I need in my work or study: **5.87** (5.44)

**Free Text Comments**

252 respondents (44%) included free text comments and, as one would expect, most of these reflected the areas of concern outlined above. Many respondents cited specific examples of problems/complaints they had relating to the Library and several included praise and complements about the Library and its staff.

A paper covering the Library’s response to the most common comments has now been produced and is available here

The next LibQual survey will be run in 2008. If you have any comments about the survey results or you would like any further information then please contact Carol Kay, User Services Manager (SJL)

Carol Kay
November 2006