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USE AND SATISFACTION OF LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICES BY HOSPITALITY EDUCATION PATRONS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

Faye Hall Jackson, Heidi Sung, Lateka Grays, and Joyce K. Thornton

A great challenge for present day libraries is to move from the thought process of being a destination location with a captive audience to positioning its services to meet the needs of its users. This paper explores the frequency of library use and satisfaction of library resources and/or services by hospitality education patrons. Using data collected with patrons (N=368) of five Hospitality Management programs across the country, the study found significant differences in library access, use, and satisfaction based on gender, academic status, and international versus non-international patrons.

Keywords: Libraries, hospitality, databases, library atmosphere

INTRODUCTION

Libraries have been a part of the institution of higher education for many years and are central in the educational process. Once upon a time, library patrons relied on a card catalog, microfiche, and a reference librarian to assist with research. From that beginning to the present, the microfiche machine can probably still be found in some remote corner of the library, the

reference librarian is still present, but the physical card catalog that once upon a time existed in a stately looking intimidating wooden structure has given way to the online public ‘card catalog’ databases. As technology has progressed, library patrons have become more astute in information collection. The need to spend countless physical hours on site in the library has given way to accessing libraries from the comfort of countless remote locations.

The need for the library structure as sanctuary for books, magazines, and periodicals cannot be understated. A great challenge for present day libraries is to move from the thought process of being a destination location with a captive audience to positioning its services to respond to the transforming information needs and expectations of users. User needs relate to availability of resources, especially electronic resources; academic status – undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty/staff; accessibility

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concerns – hours of operations and patron access; and environmental factors such as physical surroundings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Electronic resources are used with greater ease by younger library patrons. In fact, its use is the most preferable way of accessing library resources. Waldman (2003) found that computers are definitively present in students' lives and that most students, especially new students were also very familiar with the Internet. Whitmire (2001) and Watson (2001) reported undergraduate use of technology was a primary reason for using academic libraries. Gupta and Jambhekar (2002) and Norlin (2000) continued this thought by suggesting that library patrons do not need tremendous instruction on using modern technology, rather they need assistance with navigating the plethora of information available through the electronic resources. Norlin's suggestion of the need for technology friendly resource guides is echoed by Von Elm, Trump, and Dugan (2001) who admonish librarians to keep pace with technological enhancements related to the information industry as a means to establish competitive advantage and "ensure both easy and enduring access to information resources available in, or through, the library."

These sentiments are applicable to the mature/seasoned library patron including faculty and support staff. For this group, there is a growing literacy and dependency on electronic resources (Heterick, 2002). Increasing numbers of faculty support the idea that electronic resources are valuable tools for their research endeavors and will be increasingly valuable in the future. The resources most frequently used are

online catalogs, full-text electronic journal databases, and abstracting and indexing databases (Heterick, 2002; Reed & Tanner, 2001). Further, faculty perceive a time when a physical visit to the library will be obsolete. Even with an increase in the number of faculty who choose to use electronic resources, Reed & Tanner (2001) reported that faculty members participating in their study continued to use hard copies even though remote access to electronic versions were available.

The majority of the published research on library access, use and satisfaction focused on faculty or students (Carter, 2002; Kotter, 1999; Reed & Tanner, 2001; Waldman, 2003; Watson, 2001; & Whitmire, 2001). Only one author (Quinn, 1997) examined multiple user groups of the library to include students, faculty, and university administrators. Complicating the challenges of servicing these distinct patrons says Quinn (1997) is "that these various constituencies may compete for library services, and make contradictory demands on the library." Whitmire (2001) and Watson (2001) report differences in student use of library resources during the collegiate experience. What begins says Whitmire (2001) as a place to use electronic resources and study evolves into lower attrition rates, greater academic performance and higher standardized test scores (Watson, 2001) as students matriculate through college.

Faculty in academic hospitality college/programs are diverse, both in their range of professional activities and in their specialized research interests. Their information needs center around their teaching, research, and service requirements. Library services for the faculty should be directed toward

increased awareness of library services and offer support for classroom activities and librarian/faculty partnerships in classroom projects (Carter, 2002; Kotter, 1999). Nurturing faculty relationships is a positive step toward greater interaction and greater use of the library resources for both faculty and students. These positive relationships will result in increased faculty support of library services and can positively affect the visitor traffic in libraries resulting from the research based projects that have been collaboratively developed (Carter; Kotter).

Accessibility concerns are varied and are a very important part of patron satisfaction. Hayden (2004), immediate past president of the American Librarians Association (ALA) stated that equity issues encompass almost every area of librarianship, including how our physical environments can influence or inhibit access. It is therefore important that patron physical access is insured as well as hours of operation.

Demographically, international library patrons spend several hours daily at the library. Li (1998) reports that these patrons would prefer extended library hours especially earlier hours to prepare for morning classes. This echoes the findings of Whitmire (2001) and Watson (2001) who suggested that a primary function of the library for undergraduates is a place to study.

The library atmosphere is important to the ecology of the servicing environment and the perceptions of service by library patrons (Quinn, 1997). Although in large part, the library deliverable is intangible, the tangible service components such as furnishings, signage, and equipment play a large part in perceptions of satisfaction as do the layout, design, temperature, lighting, and

noise levels (Quinn, 1997; Li, 1998; Watson, 2001). Thus, the more inviting the physical elements, the more likely patrons are to initially experience the library offerings. "Students seem to believe they acquire an understanding of different people and cultures when they perceive the library to be a place where they can communicate and discuss classes with their friends, although they do not report meeting for a social purpose (Watson, 2001)."

STUDY PURPOSE AND RATIONALE

In the wake of multiple venues to retrieve information that once could only be retrieved from a physical library structure, the need to document user tendencies of frequency of use and satisfaction of resources and/or services cannot be overlooked. There exists a need to document from the multiple users' perspective factors that help to describe a library that meets the needs of its patrons rather than a library that simply meets its internal standards of performance (Heron, Von Elm, Trump, & Dugan, 2001). This new measure of service quality will ultimately measure customer perceptions of service delivery and will help to identify gaps existing between the library patrons' expectations and the librarians' perception of patron expectations.

The current study was launched as a benchmark for future study in library services delivery as it identifies heavy patron access periods and patron satisfaction of tangible and electronic resources. This study examines library use and satisfaction data which can be used to address curriculum, research, quality of academic life, and budgetary issues. In the midst of budgetary cuts and the necessity to justify service

values to administration, this project will help to identify dominant areas of library use and satisfaction from the perspective of students, faculty and support personnel. It will also offer insight into gaps of service delivery that could be closed. Finally, this study will offer strategies to enhance the competitive advantage of libraries.

Research Hypotheses

Three hypotheses were developed to guide data analysis in this study.

H1: There are significant differences in library access, use, and satisfaction of using library services and/or resources between gender – male and female.

H2: There are significant differences in library access, use, and satisfaction

of using library services and/or resources between academic status - faculty/staff, undergraduate students and graduate students.

H3: There are significant differences in library access, use, and satisfaction of using library services and/or resources between international and non-international patrons.

METHODOLOGY

This exploratory study employed a cross-sectional sampling of students, faculty, and staff affiliated with five universities offering undergraduate and graduate instruction in Hospitality Management. All study subjects were at least 18 years of age. A convenience sample was drawn from each of the five universities, totaling 368 subjects.

TABLE 1. Summary Statistics of Demographic Variables

Variable	N	Frequency	%
Gender	365		
Male		158	43.3
Female		207	56.7
Age	364		
18-39		337	92.6
40-65		27	7.4
Academic status	365		
Faculty/staff		62	17.0
Graduate student		97	26.6
Undergraduate		206	56.4
International standing	367		
International		52	14.2
Non-international		315	85.8
Ethnicity	366		
Black or African American		17	4.6
Asian/Pacific Islander		55	15.0
Hispanic		57	15.6
White Non-Hispanic origin		217	59.3
Others		20	5.5

Of those, female respondents (56.7%) slightly outnumbered males (43.3%). Almost all respondents (92.6%) were between 18-39 years of age. There were more undergraduate students (56.4%) than graduate students (36.5%) or faculty/staff members (17.0%). Table 1 provides summary statistics to characterize the survey respondents.

To assess the access, use, and satisfaction of library resources and/or services by hospitality education patrons, a self-administered questionnaire was developed. Section one of the research instrument elicited demographic information: gender, age, ethnicity, academic status, and international standing. Sections two and three of the research instrument were designed to assess library access and use as well as levels of satisfaction among selected variables. Section four was identified library instruction areas of interest to the respondents.

The instrument was tested for face validity and clarity in the questions with a convenience sample of 20 faculty, students, and staff. The initial responses to the questionnaire were reviewed focusing on directness, simplicity, and clarity of the questions. After some modification of questions, the survey instrument asked respondents to rate satisfaction of 17 library resources and/or services and frequency of library access by time and type of library visit - site or virtual. On average, questionnaire completion time was less than five minutes.

In conjunction with the self-administered questionnaire, a cover letter was used to inform the potential subject about the purpose of the study and to request subject participation. Each university contact person was mailed an instrument package consisting

of surveys with attached cover letters, instructions for administering the survey, and return packaging materials.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study proposed an exploratory analysis to understand how the library resources and/or services are being utilized and satisfied by hospitality education patrons. Results from data analysis are reported to compare the following three groups by library access, use, and level of satisfaction: (a) gender – male and female; (b) academic status – faculty/staff, graduate students, undergraduate students; and (c) nationality – U.S. citizen or permanent resident versus international. Preliminary data analysis included Cross Tabulation and Chi-Square statistics which initially examined group characteristics and indicated significant differences among groups. Results of MANOVA further revealed and contrasted significant differences in group means across multiple categories. As shown in Table 2, significant differences were found in frequency of use and satisfaction of using library resources across Gender (H1), Academic Status (H2), and Nationality (H3). Figures 1 through 3 graphically depict frequency of library access and use and satisfaction of library resources and/or services by different patron groups across categories.

Gender

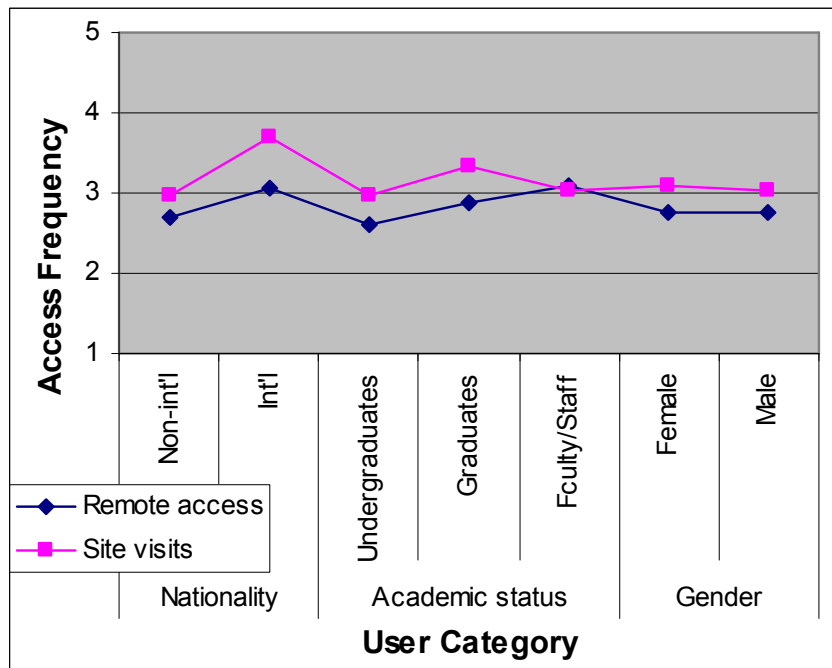
The first research hypothesis examined differences in access, use, and satisfaction of library resources and/or services between gender-male and female. As shown in overall F statistics (Table 2), gender did not appear to be a significant variable in the utility of library (See also Figures 1 and 2).

TABLE 2. MANOVA Results of Independent Variables

Source	Multivariate Tests				
	Value ^a	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Library access					
Gender	0.9993	0.1152	2	344	0.8912
Academic status	0.9612	3.3983	4	680	0.0092 ***
International standing	0.9567	7.7634	2	343	0.0005 ***
Use frequency					
Gender	0.9925	0.4125	6	327	0.8706
Academic status	0.9081	2.6751	12	650	0.0016 ***
International standing	0.8908	6.6784	6	327	0.0000 ***
Satisfaction of using library resources					
Gender	0.9762	1.3243	5	272	0.2539
Academic status	0.9359	1.8247	10	542	0.0537 **
International standing	0.9626	2.1110	5	272	0.0644 *

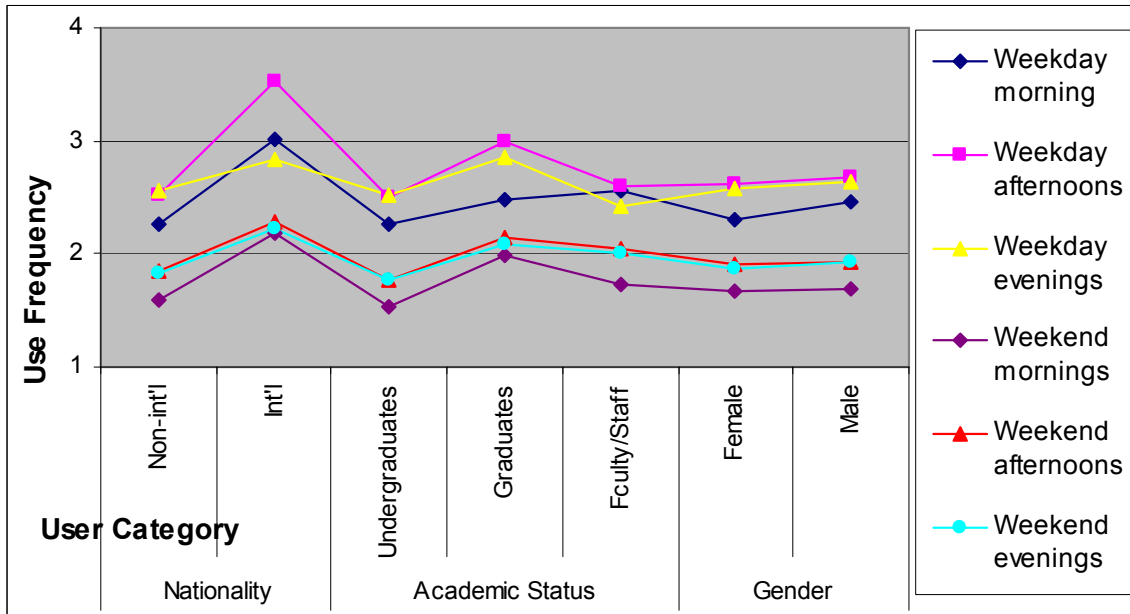
Note: ^a Drawn from Wilk's Lambda statistics
 * Significant at .10 level
 ** Significant at .05 level
 *** Significant a .01 level

FIGURE 1. Library Access by User Category



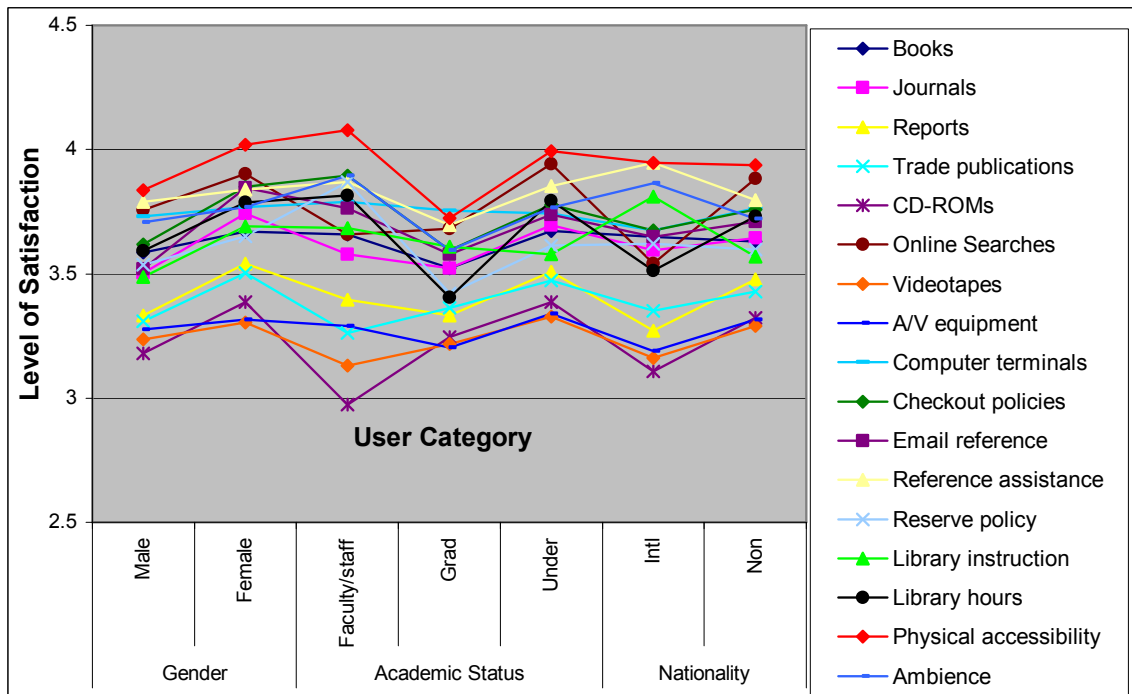
Note: Level of access frequency is measures in a 5-point scale with score 1 being “Never” and score 5 being “Very frequently.”

FIGURE 2. Library Use Frequency by User Category



Note: Level of use frequency is measured in a 5-point scale with score 1 being “Never” and score 5 being “Very frequently.”

FIGURE 3. Satisfaction of Library Resources by User Category



Note: Level of satisfaction is measured in a 5-point scale with score 1 being “Very dissatisfied” to score 5 being “Very satisfied.”

Females reported significantly greater satisfaction with library resources such as journals, reports, check-out policies, and e-mail references than male patrons (N=158 or 43.3%). Anecdotally, this difference might be attributed to greater preferences by females for variety in service delivery.

Nationality

International patrons (N=52 or 14.2%) access and use the library significantly more frequently overall than the non-international patrons (N=315 or 85.8%). Significant differences were reported in all access periods except 'weekday evenings'. This finding is consistent with Li (1998) who reported heavy use of the library on a daily basis by international patrons. Table 2 provides statistical evidence of significant differences in these two groups by all three categories – library access, use frequency, and satisfaction of using library resources and/or services.

Non-international library patrons reported greater satisfaction with online searches than international patrons (p<.05). In part, this finding can be attributed to a limited understanding of free access to resources in particular electronic resources by undergraduates born and mostly educated outside the United States (Li, 1998).

Academic Status

Varied library access preferences were found in both time of visit and type of visit – site or virtual. Remote access was significantly more popular among faculty or staff members (N=72 or 17.0%) than undergraduate students (N=206 or 56.4%) p<.05). This follows the writing of Heterick (2002) who reported that faculty can foresee a future

in which they will never actually go in the library. Presumably, this thought is anchored in the fact that most faculty/staff have individual technology to assist with remote library use and assist with the use of electronic desktop delivery. Whitmire (2001) and Watson (2001) also validate this finding in their reports that students view the library as an essential resource especially for use of technology.

Graduate students reported significantly more frequent access to the library via site visits than undergraduate students (p<.05). Coupled with this finding, graduate students also reported significantly more frequent library access in the weekday afternoon (p<.01) and weekend afternoon (p<.01) than undergraduate students. Likewise, graduate students also reported more frequent weekday evening library access than faculty/staff (p<.05). Faculty/staff reported significantly more frequent morning library access than undergraduate students (p<.01).

Relative to resources and services offered by libraries, significantly more undergraduate students reported satisfaction with both CD-ROMs (p<.05) and reserve policies than faculty or staff respondents (p<.05). The later is an interesting finding since colloquial observations often report student frustration with the stringency of reserve policies. Significantly more faculty/staff (p<.05) reported satisfaction with library hours and physical accessibility of the library than graduate students (p<.05). This finding is most likely attributed to fewer site visits to the library on the part of faculty/staff. Some patterns of different levels of satisfaction of library resources by user category can be further illustrated in Figure 3.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The importance of library use and satisfaction studies is vital to bottom-line impact of library viability. Customer satisfaction is important as library patrons who once had limited choices in where to redeem their customer service vouchers, now have multiple choices – site visits, remote access, mega bookstores, and a plethora of online resources. Service providers now must shift gears from a production orientation to a service orientation that vies for competitive advantage through distribution of a hybrid product – physical facility resources and remote access resources. The findings of this exploratory study provide strong evidence of an increasing tendency between undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty/staff to remotely utilize library resources and services.

Findings also show agreement in satisfaction of the personal service provided by reference librarians. Still, evaluation and measurement is key to the success of the academic library. In particular, implications from this exploratory study suggest that library staff and faculty must become proficient in current technology to service their user patrons and better facilitate the students' academic success. Further, comparisons should be made between resources that are actually used and resources that are purchased for use in an effort to leverage already dwindling funds with the organizational goals. And, perhaps the most visible finding from this study was an apparent need to align operating hours with patron needs.

As this was an exploratory to describe and analyze the access, use, and satisfaction of library resources and/or

service by hospitality education patrons, the authors suggest that future studies should be done to: (a) examine the use and frequency of electronic media in a traditional library; (b) more clearly identify gaps in the services delivery process of libraries; and (c) measure the impact of library use on academic success.

LIMITATIONS

Limitations of this study relate to convenience sampling of library patrons. This sampling technique may invite additional discussion regarding to the scope and size of the sample. Unlike stratified random sampling, the cross-sectional design implemented in this study did not allow the researchers to control the size of respondent groups across five different study sites. The authors concede the assumption that there will be limited difference within individual demographic profiles as it relates to the questionnaire.

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