

**LibQUAL+™ at Rhodes University Library:
An overview of the first South African implementation**

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Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Mission (Im)possible?

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LibQUAL+™ at Rhodes University Library: An overview of the first South African implementation

ABSTRACT

When Rhodes University Library closed its LibQUAL+™ survey on 29 August 2005, it became the first of seven university libraries in South Africa to complete this Web-based survey, which measures library users' perceptions of service quality and identifies gaps between desired, perceived, and minimum expectations of service [1].

This paper focuses on the Rhodes Library's implementation of the 2005 LibQUAL+™ survey. Results are looked at within the broader context of aggregate scores and score norms from the South African cohort. The library's first efforts to address areas where perceptions of service quality differed from users' expectations are described and plans for future efforts are indicated. The paper also details some lessons learnt by other LibQUAL+™ participants, as documented in published case studies.

Background

Rhodes University was founded in 1904. With an enrolment of 6,245 students and a full-time faculty of 305, it is the smallest university in South Africa. It boasts the highest undergraduate pass rate in the country and, with the highest research output per capita, is one of the leading research institutions in the nation.

Rhodes' primary emphasis is on undergraduate education, with undergraduates comprising approximately 80% of the total student population.

The largest faculty is Humanities (37.54%), followed by Commerce (21.69%), Education (16.4%), Science (15.82%), Pharmacy (5.68%) and Law (2.87%).

The Rhodes Library has a staff complement of 43 full-time equivalents (FTEs), of which the majority are based at the Main Library. In addition to the Main Library, several additional libraries support collections in education, ichthyology, law (*Alastair Kerr Law Library*), music, pharmacy, physics and Southern African history (*Cory Library for Historical Research*). Thus, in this paper, the term "library" refers collectively to all of the above Libraries.

The Library has 26,517 current, unique periodical titles in print and online format and a book stock of 400,000 volumes. It supports undergraduate programmes at baccalaureate level, through to postgraduate programmes at honours, masters and doctoral degree levels.

The decision to embark on the LibQUAL+™ survey was prompted by the Library's need to benchmark the quality of its service provision against that of other university libraries in South Africa, to fulfil the requirements of the Institutional Audit, conducted by the **H**igher **E**ducation **Q**uality **C**ommittee (**HEQC**) [2].

The seven South African campuses that participated in LibQUAL+™ during 2005 were:

- Cape Town University
- Free State University
- North-West University (Mafikeng Campus)
- North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus)
- Pretoria University
- Rhodes University
- Stellenbosch University

Decisions taken

Because of Rhodes' size, a decision was taken to survey the entire university population. LibQUAL+™ project managers recommend a *minimum sample* of 900 undergraduates, 600 graduates and 600 academic staff for *large libraries*. Smaller libraries are advised to survey their entire population. (Hoseth and Kyrillidou, 2006).

After much deliberation, we decided we would **not** offer our users any incentive prizes for participating in the survey. We wanted to avoid having to ask respondents for their e-mail addresses, as we were afraid they would feel that their anonymity would be compromised by this, and would then be reluctant to take the survey.

When we registered for the survey we decided to run only one survey implementation instead of multiple implementations. When separate handling and deliverables are requested for different libraries, a separate fee is charged for each distinct library that participates, since each library registration constitutes a separate unit of analysis. For example, if an institution wants to have separate survey implementations and separate results notebooks for their law library and their main library, a separate fee will be charged for each library (Hoseth and Kyrillidou, 2006). This fee is currently set at \$2,500 per library.

We felt it would be more economical to add a question to the demographic section of our survey questionnaire that asked users to identify "the library you use most often". This enabled us to customize the survey options for that question (for example, "Main Library", "Law Library", etc). We were assured by the LibQUAL+™ project managers that, although our results notebook would not break out our results using that variable, we would nevertheless receive our raw data files in Microsoft Excel and, *on request, at no charge also in SPSS format*, and would then be able to use the raw data to analyse our results by individual library.

Since no member of staff in the Library was trained in using SPSS [4], we knew we would need to ask for help from another department, but we are really fortunate in having a particularly helpful Statistics professor at Rhodes. At the conclusion of our survey, however, we felt that additional analysis of our raw data would not be necessary, after all, since we had - by then - gained considerable insight from our respondents' copious and candid comments in terms of how they perceive the services rendered at our main library and branch libraries. The survey response rates from branch library clientele were, moreover, too small to yield reliable SPSS results.

Publicity

LibQUAL+™ was administered during 1-29 August 2005. We e-mailed the link to the survey to the entire Rhodes community and followed this up with an e-mail reminder on 10 August 2005. Apart from tackling items 10-14 on the list below, we also worked very closely with our *Communications and Development Division* and our *Graphics Department*, who assisted us with the creation and distribution of items 1-9 (below):

1. Customized LibQUAL+™ posters
2. Customized LibQUAL+™ bookmarks
3. Customized LibQUAL+™ fliers (for distribution in the residences)
4. A LibQUAL+™ announcement in RHODOS (the University's monthly newsletter) as well as in THIS WEEK @ RHODES (the University's weekly newsletter)
5. A spotlight on the Rhodes Website
6. A spotlight on the Student Zone Website
7. Radio jingles every hour on the hour, on Rhodes Music Radio (RMR)
8. Two interviews about the LibQUAL+™ Survey at Rhodes, on RMR
9. Helium filled balloons
10. A spotlight on the Library's Website
11. A Frequently Asked Questions page [3]
12. An exhibition in the entrance foyer of the Main Library
13. Staffed tables in the Library quad
14. A banner above the Library steps

The slogan we chose for our marketing campaign was "Help us Help You".

Problems encountered and lessons learned

RETURNED MAIL

Student e-mail lists are usually limited to students who obtain and regularly use campus e-mail accounts, as inactive accounts cannot be maintained ad infinitum.

A large percentage of students use *Yahoo* and *Google* e-mail accounts instead of their official student e-mail accounts.

Many libraries encounter difficulty in obtaining cooperation from other campus units that control e-mail lists (Dole, 2002).

The professional literature contains numerous case studies that draw attention to the aforementioned problems and, had we not been cautioned about this during our pre-survey readings, we would not have thought to enlist the help of the very talented staff in our *Communications and Development Division* and our *Graphics Department* in developing *non e-mail* strategies in our survey publicity campaign.

SCALING MEASUREMENT ERROR - DEMOGRAPHIC ITEMS

Many of our Honours students pointed out that “Honours” was not one of the possible responses under the “Postgraduate” drop-down menu. This problem, termed as *scaling measurement error*, “occurs when inaccuracies are designed into the various scale measures used to collect the primary raw data” (Hair *et al.*, 2000, p. 275).

A possible explanation for the omission of the “Honours” sub-group in the Postgraduate drop-down menu is that the survey instrument was designed in North America, where students proceed directly from Baccalaureate level to Masters level.

The LibQUAL+™ project managers have intimated that they can implement changes to the questionnaire for the South African cohort, once a year for the following year, with the proviso that they are given the name of an *official* contact person for the South African libraries, so they can communicate in an authoritative way with this person. This person will be responsible for collecting all the needed feedback and building consensus among the South African institutions regarding any changes they, as a group, would like to see in the LibQUAL+™ survey.

The addition of an “Honours” sub-group for the South African libraries would require the development of a new library “type”, to reflect this. The parameters for new consortia, new types and new languages are set up once a year. The LibQUAL+™ project managers would, therefore, need to receive this request several months in advance of the scheduled survey implementation, and it would moreover need to come from the *official* contact person for the local cohort.

Any changes proposed would need to be implemented in the English version as well as the Afrikaans version.

LOW RESPONSE RATE

Although the Rhodes community’s response rate of 10 percent was low, it was generally representative of the different user groups and disciplines on campus. We were nevertheless a bit disappointed, as we had been hoping for a more favourable response rate. In hindsight we realize that we would probably have achieved greater success had we offered incentive prizes.

We were also concerned that our users would become irritated if they received too many reminders to fill in the questionnaire. We therefore sent out only one e-mail reminder. We realize now that this was an injudicious decision. The LibQUAL+™ project managers suggest sending 2-3 reminder e-mail messages at 3-5 day intervals to prompt users to take the survey, because research indicates that the number of follow-up messages is the single highest predictor of the response rate for a Web-based survey across the disciplines (Hoseth and Kyrillidou, 2006).

AMBIGUITY AND VAGUENESS OF SOME SURVEY QUESTIONS

Some of the survey questions proved difficult to answer, especially those relating to respondents' perceptions of library staff. For example, one respondent commented "Some of my answers may seem inconsistent. This is because this questionnaire does not distinguish between the library staff behind the main counter (main library) and the library staff in the back offices (especially electronic resources). There is a vast difference in their willingness to help, friendliness and competence. The staff in the back offices score much higher in all three of those categories..."

Our users were exceedingly outspoken and candid in their comments relating to the "Affect of Service" dimension. This obviated the need to establish post-assessment focus groups to ask respondents what they thought certain questions meant and what their responses meant. We were also fortunate in that a very high proportion (51%) of our users chose to use the comments section (box) to express their opinions in a free and unstructured way. Usually less than 40% of respondents provide comments using the box (Hoseth and Kyrillidou, 2006).

There are case studies in the literature that highlight the invaluable role that post-survey focus groups and local surveys can play in amplifying the understanding of the LibQUAL+™ survey results, especially in cases where initial data analysis yields conflicting information (Dole, 2002; McCord and Nofsinger, 2002).

Huff-Eibl and Phipps (2002) underscore this observation by saying "LibQUAL+™ gives our teams direction for gathering further information... It is meant to be *one* indicator in an overall assessment strategy, not a tool to be used alone".

Library usage patterns of LibQUAL+™ respondents

Survey respondents were asked about the frequency with which they used the library, on-site and electronically.

Chart 1 – Daily / Weekly Use of Library Resources WITHIN the Library

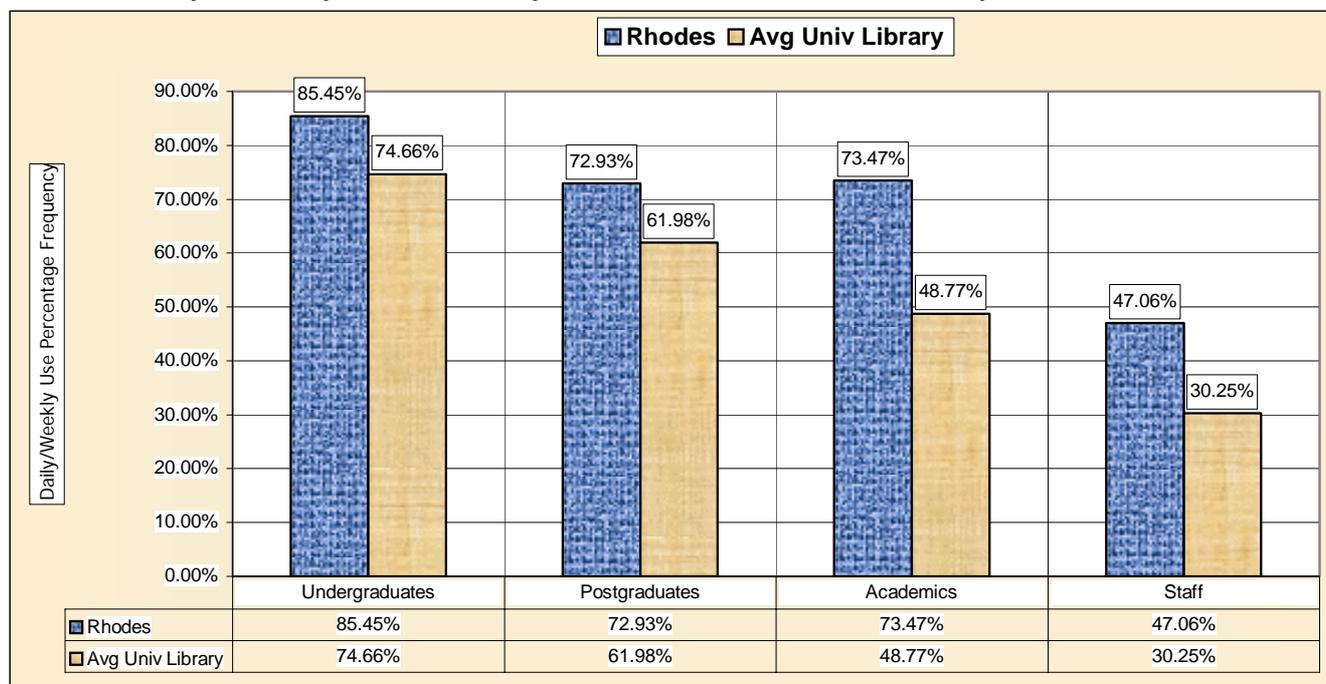


Chart 2 – Daily / Weekly Use of Library Resources through a Library Website

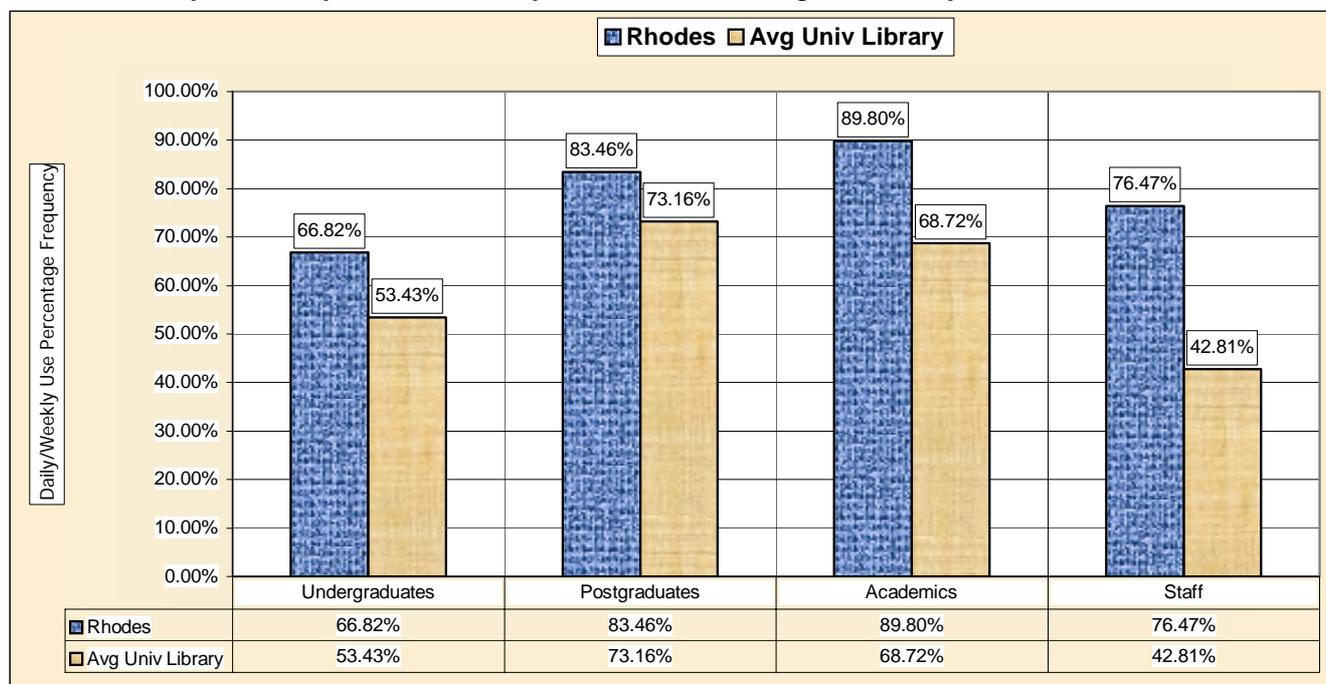


Chart 1 shows that Rhodes undergraduates are the most frequent *on-site* users of the Library's resources. **Chart 2**, by contrast, shows that they are also the least frequent users of the Library's *remote access facilities*. Staff usage patterns, on the other hand, show *low on-site usage*, but *high remote usage* via the Library Website.

Charts 1&2 also show that library users at Rhodes use library resources, whether it be on-site or remotely, **more frequently** than do the aggregate of respondents making up the South African LibQUAL+™ cohort.

Findings in terms of overall satisfaction and the 22 core questions

LibQUAL+™ rated participants' responses to **22 core questions** on **three service dimensions**. For each dimension, there were several questions.

For each question, the participant was asked to indicate, on a scale of 1-9, their minimum acceptable service level, their desired service level, and their perception of the service level currently provided by the library. The dimensions and their associated items to be scored included those delineated in **Table 1**.

Table 1

AFFECT OF SERVICE (AS)	INFORMATION CONTROL (IC)	LIBRARY AS PLACE (LP)
Library staff who instil confidence in users	Making electronic resources accessible from my home or office	Library space that inspires study and learning
Giving users individual attention	A library Web site enabling me to locate information on my own	Quiet space for individual work
Library staff who are consistently courteous	The printed library materials I need for my work	A comfortable and inviting location
Readiness to respond to users' enquiries	The electronic information resources I need	A haven for study, learning, or research
Library staff who have the knowledge to answer users' questions	Modern equipment that lets me easily access needed information	Space for group learning and group study
Library staff who deal with users in a caring fashion	Easy-to-use access tools that allow me to find things on my own	
Library staff who understand the needs of their users	Making information easily accessible for independent use	
Willingness to help users	Print and / or electronic journal collections I require for my work	
Dependability in handling users' service problems		

OVERALL SATISFACTION

As a validity check and to gather expressions of more general satisfaction with the library, respondents were asked three questions, which they had to provide a rating for, **on a scale of 1-9**, with 1 being "strongly disagree" and 9 representing "strongly agree":

- In general, I am satisfied with the way in which I am treated at the library
- In general, I am satisfied with library support for my learning, research, and/or teaching needs
- How would you rate the overall quality of the service provided by the library?

The results, in terms of the above, are reflected in **Table 2**.

Rhodes' satisfaction scores for all three questions were higher for *academics*, *administrative* and *support staff* than for *undergraduates* and *postgraduates*.

Although Rhodes ranked below the national average where service quality to **undergraduate students** was concerned, it ranked above average and, in some cases, significantly above average where service quality to **all other user groups** was concerned.

Rhodes' below-average scores are reflected in italics, in **Table 2**.

Table 2

OVERALL SATISFACTION		Rhodes Library	Average SA Univ Library (excl Rhodes)
Undergrads			
	In general, I am satisfied with the way in which I am treated at the Library	<i>5.97</i>	6.70
	In general, I am satisfied with library support for my learning, research, and/or teaching needs	<i>6.13</i>	6.41
	How would you rate the overall quality of the service provided by the library?	<i>6.28</i>	6.66
Postgrads			
	In general, I am satisfied with the way in which I am treated at the Library	<i>6.36</i>	6.52
	In general, I am satisfied with library support for my learning, research, and/or teaching needs	<i>6.46</i>	6.28
	How would you rate the overall quality of the service provided by the library?	<i>6.56</i>	6.48
Academics			
	In general, I am satisfied with the way in which I am treated at the Library	7.52	7.04
	In general, I am satisfied with library support for my learning, research, and/or teaching needs	7.15	6.56
	How would you rate the overall quality of the service provided by the library?	7.39	6.81
Staff			
	In general, I am satisfied with the way in which I am treated at the Library	7.65	7.27
	In general, I am satisfied with library support for my learning, research, and/or teaching needs	7.56	7.04
	How would you rate the overall quality of the service provided by the library?	7.82	7.14

INFORMATION LITERACY OUTCOMES QUESTIONS SUMMARY

The table below displays the mean scores for each of the Information Literacy outcomes questions. Libraries with high mean scores for these five questions, with whom Rhodes may wish to consult, in terms of best practices, are **Libraries 4 and 6**.

Table 3

		Rhodes (Library 1)	Library 2	Library 3	Library 4	Library 5	Library 6	Library 7
1	The Library helps me to stay abreast of developments in my field(s) of interest.	5.94	5.87	5.87	6.16	5.98	6.27	5.29
2	The Library aids my advancement in my academic discipline.	6.72	6.62	6.52	6.64	6.35	6.69	5.75
3	The Library enables me to be more efficient in my academic pursuits.	6.66	6.67	6.72	6.78	6.50	6.87	5.83
4	The Library helps me distinguish between trustworthy and untrustworthy information.	5.55	5.60	5.53	5.73	5.63	6.11	5.57
5	The Library provides me with the information skills I need in my work or study.	6.14	6.16	6.16	6.42	6.30	6.69	5.93
Average Score		6.20	6.18	6.16	6.35	6.15	6.53	5.67

CORE SURVEY QUESTIONS

The 22 core survey questions, comprising the three service dimensions, are listed in **Table 1**.

Table 4 (below) shows the global comparative results for each of these three service dimensions, as rated by each of the four user groups. (These are the *perceived means*). All below-average ratings are reflected in italics.

Table 4

	Undergraduates			Postgraduates			Academics			Staff		
	AS	IC	LP	AS	IC	LP	AS	IC	LP	AS	IC	LP
Average SA Library's Score	6.45	6.49	6.61	6.56	6.33	6.34	6.85	6.52	6.26	7.08	6.97	6.72
Rhodes Score	5.91	6.69	5.90	6.31	6.96	5.68	7.34	7.41	5.75	7.51	7.36	6.10

The greatest overall concerns were related to **Library as Place (LP)** and **Affect of Service (AS)**, while **Information Control (IC)** emerged as an area of strength.

LIBRARY AS PLACE (LP)

It was anticipated that concerns would surface with **Library as Place**, as the Rhodes Library was built 45 years ago. When it opened in 1961, it was intended to house 100,000 volumes. The number of volumes has, in the interim, increased by fourfold and so, too, has the number of students. The library must, moreover, accommodate 117 computers.

Rhodes performed very poorly in this service dimension. A negative gap was noted between the minimum and perceived levels of service in the overall results, meaning that **Library as Place** fell outside the zone of tolerance. All user groups rated **Library as Place** lower than their LibQUAL+™ counterparts at other South African libraries. (See **Table 4**).

In fact, Rhodes received the lowest overall LP score of the South African cohort. (See **Table 6**). The national average score for this service dimension was 6.55, with the highest score being 6.92 and the Rhodes score being 5.85.

INFORMATION CONTROL (IC)

Rhodes performed very well in terms of **Information Control**, with an overall score of 6.87. All user groups accorded this service dimension an overall rating significantly higher than the national average of 6.49. (See **Tables 4&6**).

The two **Information Control** questions that generated the highest performance scores were:

IC-2 “*A library Website enabling me to locate information on my own*” (perceived rating was 7.17)

IC-4 “*The electronic information resources I need*” (perceived rating was 7.10)

In both of the above questions, Rhodes exceeded the scores for all six of the other South African participants. (See **Table 6**).

Rhodes also scored higher than all six of its counterparts in terms of **IC-1** “*Making electronic resources accessible from my home or office*”. The rating here was 6.76. (See **Table 6**)

AFFECT OF SERVICE (AS)

Academics, administrative- and service staff all rated **Affect of Service** a good deal higher than their counterparts at other South African Libraries.

Undergraduates and postgraduates, however, accorded this service dimension a far lower rating than their local counterparts. (See **Table 6**). Their perceived level of service (**5.91** and **6.31** respectively) was lower than their minimum acceptable service level, and thus fell outside the zone of tolerance. These ratings are supported by their comments.

Table 5 shows the Rhodes-specific survey results. Specific items on which we might prioritise our focus for performance improvement are those for which the *perceived* level is below the *minimum*. These would include “space for group learning and group study” and “quiet space for individual work”, amongst others.

Table 5
DETAILED RHODES-SPECIFIC SURVEY RESULTS FOR THE 22 CORE QUESTIONS
All User Groups (Excluding Library Staff)

	Question Text	Minimum Mean	Desired Mean	Perceived Mean	Adequacy Gap Mean	Superiority Gap Mean
Affect of Service						
AS-1	Library staff who install confidence in users	5.65	7.61	5.74	0.09	-1.87
AS-2	Giving users individual attention	5.70	7.26	5.81	0.11	-1.45
AS-3	Library staff who are consistently courteous	6.35	7.83	6.03	-0.31	-1.80
AS-4	Readiness to respond to users' enquiries	6.67	7.98	6.50	-0.17	-1.48
AS-5	Library staff who have the knowledge to answer users' questions	6.61	7.93	6.63	0.02	-1.30
AS-6	Library staff who deal with users in a caring fashion	6.24	7.68	6.07	-0.16	-1.60
AS-7	Library staff who understand the needs of their users	6.54	7.82	6.52	-0.02	-1.30
AS-8	Willingness to help users	6.61	7.91	6.43	-0.18	-1.48
AS-9	Dependability in handling users' service problems	6.40	7.70	6.32	-0.08	-1.38
		6.31	7.75	6.23	-0.08	-1.52
Information Control						
IC-1	Making electronic resources accessible from my home or office	6.25	7.94	6.76	0.51	-1.19
IC-2	A library Website enabling me to locate information on my own	6.67	8.09	7.17	0.49	-0.92
IC-3	The printed library materials I need for my work	6.60	7.91	6.38	-0.22	-1.53
IC-4	The electronic information resources I need	6.79	8.12	7.10	0.31	-1.02
IC-5	Modern equipment that lets me easily access needed information	6.84	8.11	7.03	0.18	-1.09
IC-6	Easy-to-use access tools that allow me to find things on my own	6.56	7.95	6.84	0.28	-1.12
IC-7	Making information easily accessible for independent use	6.72	7.96	6.90	0.17	-1.07
IC-8	Print and / or electronic journal collections I require for my work	6.80	8.05	6.75	-0.05	-1.31
		6.65	8.02	6.87	0.21	-1.16
Library as Place						
LP-1	Library space that inspires study and learning	6.33	7.90	5.77	-0.56	-2.13
LP-2	Quiet space for individual work	6.49	7.79	6.00	-0.49	-1.80
LP-3	A comfortable and inviting location	6.10	7.61	6.27	0.17	-1.34
LP-4	A haven for study, learning, or research	6.57	7.94	6.18	-0.39	-1.76
LP-5	Space for group learning and group study	5.41	6.83	5.01	-0.40	-1.82
		6.18	7.61	5.85	-0.33	-1.77
Overall		6.41	7.82	6.39	-0.03	-1.44

Table 6 shows the comparative perceived mean scores for each of the 22 questions in the three service dimensions.

Peer libraries with high scores for *perceived* levels of service are **Libraries 3, 4 and 6**. These are libraries we may wish to approach for further information regarding the practices, procedures and policies that contribute to their users' favourable perceptions, especially with reference to Affect of Service and Library as Place.

Table 6
COMPARATIVE PERCEIVED MEAN SCORES FOR THE 22 CORE QUESTIONS
WHERE RHODES SCORED BELOW AVERAGE, THIS IS REFLECTED IN ITALICS

		Rhodes Library (Library 1)	Library 2	Library 3	Library 4	Library 5	Library 6	Library 7	Avg SA Library
AS-1	Library staff who install confidence in users	<i>5.74</i>	6.05	6.40	6.34	5.84	6.89	4.97	6.08
AS-2	Giving users individual attention	<i>5.81</i>	6.03	6.52	6.38	5.92	6.95	5.42	6.20
AS-3	Library staff who are consistently courteous	<i>6.03</i>	6.75	6.87	6.89	6.20	7.38	5.61	6.62
AS-4	Readiness to respond to users' enquiries	<i>6.50</i>	6.90	7.24	7.06	6.59	7.54	5.59	6.82
AS-5	Library staff who have the knowledge to answer users' questions	<i>6.63</i>	6.66	6.97	7.03	6.52	7.27	5.84	6.72
AS-6	Library staff who deal with users in a caring fashion	<i>6.07</i>	6.63	6.92	6.95	6.34	7.47	5.51	6.64
AS-7	Library staff who understand the needs of their users	<i>6.52</i>	6.61	6.79	6.88	6.38	7.19	5.74	6.60
AS-8	Willingness to help users	<i>6.43</i>	6.87	7.11	7.09	6.58	7.54	5.84	6.84
AS-9	Dependability in handling users' service problems	<i>6.32</i>	6.58	6.96	6.79	6.35	7.29	5.27	6.54
AS Total		<i>6.23</i>	6.56	6.86	6.82	6.30	7.28	5.53	6.56
IC-1	Making electronic resources accessible from my home or office	6.76	5.99	6.53	6.59	6.20	6.50	4.81	6.10
IC-2	A library Website enabling me to locate information on my own	7.17	6.82	6.93	6.92	6.69	7.12	6.00	6.75
IC-3	The printed library materials I need for my work	6.38	6.45	6.69	6.69	6.49	6.81	4.79	6.32
IC-4	The electronic information resources I need	7.10	6.67	6.85	6.88	6.71	7.06	5.11	6.55
IC-5	Modern equipment that lets me easily access needed information	7.03	6.80	6.95	6.80	6.85	7.12	5.31	6.64
IC-6	Easy-to-use access tools that allow me to find things on my own	6.84	6.68	6.71	6.77	6.65	6.97	5.97	6.63
IC-7	Making information easily accessible for independent use	6.90	6.73	6.82	6.89	6.68	7.00	5.44	6.59
IC-8	Print and / or electronic journal collections I require for my work	6.75	6.71	6.68	6.70	6.48	6.87	4.84	6.38
IC Total		6.87	6.61	6.77	6.78	6.59	6.93	5.28	6.49
LP-1	Library space that inspires study and learning	<i>5.77</i>	6.30	6.80	6.57	6.54	6.63	6.34	6.53
LP-2	Quiet space for individual work	<i>6.00</i>	6.15	6.92	6.46	6.56	6.62	5.85	6.43
LP-3	A comfortable and inviting location	<i>6.27</i>	6.92	7.60	7.08	6.84	7.66	6.03	7.02
LP-4	A haven for study, learning, or research	<i>6.18</i>	6.61	6.93	6.70	6.62	6.92	5.48	6.54
LP-5	Space for group learning and group study	<i>5.01</i>	6.22	6.34	6.23	6.09	6.59	5.86	6.22
LP Total		<i>5.85</i>	6.44	6.92	6.61	6.53	6.88	5.91	6.55
GRAND TOTAL		<i>6.39</i>	6.55	6.85	6.76	6.46	7.07	5.52	6.54

* See **Table 1** for a list of the 22 core questions comprising the 3 service dimensions.

EARLY STEPS TO IMPROVE SERVICES

Circulation Staff

In direct response to the large number of negative comments about staff service at the issue desks, the entire Circulation Staff complement, including Student Assistants, attended a customer services training course on 07 September 2005.

Electronic Resources

While the Library received many compliments about its holdings of these resources, other comments were less complimentary and mentioned the need for access to more databases and back issues of electronic journals, and noted problems with searching the databases.

Seventeen new electronic resources were acquired in response to the above-mentioned comments, including seven collections of back-files.

In order to simplify the process of searching the Library's databases, the Library launched a new product called "MetaFind" in February 2006. This federated search tool, developed by Innovative Interfaces Incorporated, allows library users to search up to 50 databases simultaneously.

Library Website

The Library Website underwent a face-lift during April 2006. The outcome of this is that the visibility of many valuable e-resources has been enhanced. (In the past, they were included under category headings, which were retrievable only via a drop-down menu. They are now accessible via a new page called *Virtual Reference and Cyber Shelf*, which can be accessed at:

[Http://www.ru.ac.za/library/electronic_resources/virtualref.html](http://www.ru.ac.za/library/electronic_resources/virtualref.html)).

We identified and fixed sixty-nine inactive links, and also implemented news blogs and RSS feeds on our Home Page at: [Http://www.ru.ac.za/library](http://www.ru.ac.za/library).

Library Building

A large proportion of the negative comments related to the above. The good news is that the proposed expansion of the Library received University Council approval on 26 April 2006. A fund-raising campaign for the expansion of the present building is underway. The renovations, which will double the size of the library, as well as modernize its facilities, are expected to cost between R65-million and R85-million.

The concept document and plans for the new envisaged library are accessible at [Http://www.ru.ac.za/libraryproject](http://www.ru.ac.za/libraryproject) (Boddy, 2006).

The project will see enhanced computer technology, and facilities for interactive learning. The proposed extended library will also include better training facilities, a large group study area, silent reading rooms, and improved access and facilities for disabled users.

The print collection will be divided into four sections in order to give proper attention to users' requirements for reference and location of items – Humanities; Social Sciences (including Education); Commerce; and Science (including Pharmacy), each overseen by a Subject Librarian (De Wet, 2005).

Conclusion

The use of the LibQUAL+™ Survey at Rhodes University Library in 2005 has been most valuable and we look forward to participating again in two or three years time.

Assessment projects of this nature provide baseline data for future measurements of service quality and changes in perceptions of service, particularly where scores are already outside the zone of tolerance (McCord and Nofsinger, 2002).

They also present a wonderful opportunity to listen to what our clients have to say, and respond to their comments, while simultaneously informing them about our services (Sessions, Schenck and Shrimplin, 2002).

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Notes

1. See <http://www.arl.org/libqual/>. LibQUAL+™. Retrieved 16 May 2006 from source.

2. See <http://www.che.ac.za/heqc/heqc.php>. Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). Retrieved 16 May 2006 from source.
3. See <http://www.ru.ac.za/library/libqual/faqs.html>. Frequently Asked Questions. Retrieved 16 May 2006 from source.
4. See <http://www.spss-sa.com/index.html>. SPSS. Retrieved 31 May 2006 from source.

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