



ASSOCIATION OF RESEARCH LIBRARIES

Knowing Your Users:  
Assessment of library service quality  
International Workshop & Symposium on LibQUAL+®

February 27, 2008 Workshop in Keio University  
February 29, 2008 Symposium in Osaka University

*Case Study for "Sacred Cows": a demonstration of "Nominal Group Technique"*

By Colleen Cook and Martha Kyrillidou

This case study will be used to teach how to use a structured focus group to brainstorm ideas. Focus groups are commonly used to gather data for a qualitative study. This particular exercise is used to teach the technique, so a provocative question is posed to engage participants quickly and intensely.

All library cultures have certain givens that everyone understands are sacred....policies, practices, ways of doing things are so ingrained into the culture that people seldom dare to think that things could be done differently. 'Sacred cows' is an expression used in English that denotes those sacred, holy and unquestionable beliefs we may hold.

It's important to learn how to question these given beliefs when brainstorming ideas, to encourage exploration of different ways of thinking. Participants will be asked to identify the "sacred cows" in their libraries in order to think about them critically and dispassionately. Why don't we allow eating in libraries? Why do we have to check out books? Do undergraduates need a loan period shorter than faculty members? Isn't library quality determined by organizational policies and procedures rather than 'customers'?

The "Sacred Cows" exercise will be used to demonstrate "Nominal Group Technique" - a group brainstorming technique that insures input from all participants.

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Case Study for "Sacred Cows": a demonstration of "Nominal Group Technique"

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図書館の文化においては、「（その組織における）皆の共通認識＝神聖なものである」、という考え方が、当然のこととしてまかり通っています。例えば、方針や習慣、物事の進め方などといったことは、その組織（図書館）の文化に非常に深く根ざしているものであるため、異なる方法が存在するとは、滅多なことではない限り、想像すらしないでしょう。このような、我々の持つ神聖、かつ疑う余地のない信念を指して、英語では「sacred cows（聖牛：聖域の意）」という表現が使われます。

従来の考え方に捕らわれない考え方をしていくためには、そういった当然と思われる信念に対して、疑問を持つことが重要です。参加者のみなさんは、それぞれの図書館（組織）における「sacred cows」を特定し、それらを冷静、かつ批判的に分析してみてください。なぜ図書館での飲食を許可しないのか。なぜ貸出手続きを取らせているのか。学部生の貸出期間を、教員の貸出期間より短く設定する必然性は？ 図書館の特色というものは、利用者によってではなく、方針や運営によって決まってくるものなのではないのだろうか。...

Sacred Cows in Japan (2/27/2008)

1. Door doesn't work properly, but it must remain in place.
2. You must always be quiet in the library.
3. There are books that you cannot check out.
4. Amusement books (e.g., comics) have less priority in academic libraries.
5. We can't get rid of the duplicate books, but the stacks are full.
6. Books ordered by faculty must be purchased, unless too expensive.
7. We cannot get rid of the paper-based journals, even though we have them in electronic format.
8. There are limitations on materials checkout.
9. Students are not allowed to use the closed stacks.
10. We must put labels on the books.
11. Non-affiliated members need to follow a troublesome procedure in order to enter/use the library. (In academic libraries)
12. If there is anything that you don't know about the library, you have to ask the librarians about it.
13. The library is not open 24 hours a day.
14. You can't use the return posts if the library is open.
15. You must use those heavy notebook PCs that the company gives you.
16. Drinks are allowed, but food is not.
17. The student browsing seats are crowded during exam periods, but the faculty seats are empty.
18. Librarians have their own values.
19. No talking on cell-phones in the library
20. You have to remove the nice book covers when preparing the books to be shelved.

21. Only those in high position can handle the valuable books.
22. Why don't we sell old and discarded books?
23. Renewal is only allowed once.
24. Those who have worked in the library for longer periods of time are more excusable when mistakes happen.
25. Copy machines in the library could be used only for copying library materials.
26. You are only allowed use the library if you are using library materials.
27. Web checkouts/renewals could not be put into practice. (Because a huge number of students come to the library everyday)
28. Some e-journals have limitations for the number of pages that you can print out.
29. Some of the library services are fee-based.
30. Meetings are held outside working hours.
31. Why do we have to arrange the books according to NDC?
32. We don't offer web references.
33. Photocopying in the library costs more than 10 yen (\*average cost for copying)
34. No eating allowed.
35. Children are not allowed entry in academic libraries.
36. Personal notebook PCs are prohibited.
37. Comics could not be purchased even if they might be educational.
38. We need to shelve the books from left to right.
39. Although it may be the ONLY book that exists in Japan, we don't allow the users to copy it because it may break. (We give priority to "preservation" rather than providing it for usage.)
40. You need a letter of introduction in order to use other academic libraries.
41. There are only specialized books on specific area.

42. Very few public libraries purchase e-journals.
43. Students cannot borrow back issues of journals. (Although faculty members can)
44. There is a perception that library regulations are perfect, and that can cause a reluctance to make any changes.
45. Loan period differs according to users' status.
46. Only academic faculty member can become dean of the library.
47. You need to pay overdue fines.
48. You need an ID card in order to get into your company building.
49. Almost all public libraries are closed on Mondays.
50. If any book is frequently checked out by students, shouldn't we buy another copy?
51. Users are not allowed to put the books back to the shelf themselves.  
(They should put them back on book trucks, so that library staffs will collect and put them back on shelves afterwards.)
52. Library websites don't allow ads.
53. We maintain stacks everyday. (Requires too much manpower)
54. There are things that only those who have worked at the library for a long time know about.
55. You can't use the internet freely on the PCs in the library.
56. There are different prepaid cards for copy machines and printing machines.
57. You are not allowed to write into the library books.
58. There are entrance gate systems in Japanese libraries.
59. Every university must have a library facility, and someone who has a professional education must work there.
60. I want to make a nice reading room in the library.
61. There are no sabbatical leaves for librarians.
62. We want a coffee shop in the library.

63. Sequence of the books in the library is different from that of bookstores in the town.
64. There are no librarians with a doctorate degree.
65. There are not many librarians who are well-versed in system.
66. Periodicals cannot be lent.
67. It is the librarians that use the library the most.
68. Librarians should never be grumpy.
69. Somebody wakes you up when you are sleeping in the library.
70. You are scolded if your books are returned, but are overdue.
71. You must obey what the academic faculty members say.