Internal customer service assessment of cataloging, acquisitions, and library systems

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that an internal customer service survey approach to assessment delivers many benefits to technical services and library systems units. Findings from such a survey provide the evidence needed to implement process improvements, conduct strategic planning and more. The survey used in this case study can be adapted by other libraries or library units to conduct assessment, gauge customer satisfaction and identify areas for process improvements.

Design/methodology/approach – The Technical Services and Library Systems Division of the University at Albany Libraries conducted an internal customer service survey to gauge customer satisfaction with its services.

Findings – Survey results demonstrated that customer surveys are a valuable assessment tool and can be used as an evidence-based approach to library management. Technical services and library systems units should use this tool to identify whether customers are satisfied with the services provided, whether the services are still needed, whether additional services are needed and more.

Practical implications – This paper provides an approach to conducting a customer service survey, an analysis of potential benefits and a survey instrument that others could adapt to use in their own libraries. The survey instrument can be used not only for assessment of technical services and library systems, but by other functional units in all types of libraries.

Originality/value – This paper and approach is original research; there are no other papers on this topic in the library and information science literature.

Keywords Management, Assessment, Technical services, Administration,
Internal customer service, Library systems

Paper type Case study

Given the increased interest in assessment within libraries, it is beneficial for technical services and library systems units to explore a variety of assessment methods to evaluate and improve their effectiveness. The evidence provided by assessment activities can be used by library administrators and managers in many ways. For example, assessment is used to identify ways to streamline or improve processes, make better decisions, lower costs, reallocate staff or other resources, identify activities and services that can be eliminated, inform strategic planning activities and communicate with customers or administration. In addition to the collection and analysis of statistical measures, there are a number of qualitative assessment methods that technical services and library systems administrators can use to evaluate the effectiveness of their

services. These include formal workflow analysis, interviews, focus groups, benchmarking and surveys.

The use of a customer service survey is an appropriate and effective method to help managers understand whether they are meeting their customers' needs. Technical services and library systems units should periodically use this tool to identify process improvements, gauge customer satisfaction with services provided, determine whether services are still needed and whether additional services are required and more. This paper provides an approach to conducting a customer service survey, an analysis of potential benefits and a survey instrument that others could adapt to use in their own libraries.

At the University at Albany, the Technical Services and Library Systems Division department heads (TSDH), consisting of the four department heads and the Associate Director, decided to conduct a customer service survey to gauge their customers' satisfaction with the Division's services and to discover any areas that might need improvement. Although the Libraries' ultimate customers are the faculty, staff and students of the University, for the purposes of this assessment project, the Division defines its immediate customers as faculty and staff throughout the Libraries who depend on the work of Division staff. Essentially, this definition covers all staff throughout the Libraries. Public Services and Collections staff members depend on the work that Technical Services employees perform. For example, Technical Services staff are responsible for ordering library materials, cataloging collections, licensing databases, resolving catalog problems, managing the library storage facility, binding workflow and much more. Most of this work is at the behest of public services and collections librarians and staff. Everyone in the Libraries depends on staff in the Library Systems Department for integrated library system (ILS) support, Web support, desktop support and more. Even employees within the Division are customers of the other departments in the Division. For example, the three technical services departments: Acquisitions Services, Cataloging Services and Catalog Management Services, are heavily dependent on each other and on Library Systems. Because of these interrelated dependencies across the Division and the Libraries, we realized that all Libraries' staff members are customers of the Technical Services and Library Systems Division. We designed the customer service survey to assess whether and how we meet the needs of our customers, including each other.

Background
The University at Albany is one of four university centers within the State University of New York (SUNY) System, which includes 64 institutions. Whereas many of the smaller institutions within the SUNY System share some centralized information technology (IT) staff support for their respective online catalogs, the four university centers operate more independently and each manage their own ILS. The University Libraries consist of three libraries on two campuses: the University and Science Libraries on the Uptown Campus, and the Dewey Graduate Library on the Downtown Campus. All three libraries are headed by one Dean and Director, and the Technical Services and Library Systems Division supports the work of all three libraries. There are two other divisions within the University Libraries: the Public Services Division and the Collections Division, both headed by Associate Directors. All three Associate Directors as well as the Head of the

Dewey Graduate Library report to the Dean and Director, and compose the Library Policy Group (LPG).

The Technical Services and Library Systems Division includes four departments: Acquisitions Services, Cataloging Services, Catalog Management Services and Library Systems. There are 6 librarians, 15 professionals (one position vacant at the time of writing) and 11 clerical staff. Acquisitions Services handles the purchase, receipt and payment for library materials (the only exception being some special collections materials that are acquired through dealers), as well as licensing for electronic resources and databases. Cataloging Services catalogs all library materials in our ILS, Aleph, and oversees *ad hoc* batchloading of cataloging records into the online catalog for electronic and microform collections. Catalog Management is responsible for managing cataloging records after the point of cataloging, such as transfers and withdrawals, and also oversees the electronic resources knowledgebase, regularly scheduled batchloads of bibliographic records for electronic resources, bindery operations, the library storage facility and physical processing of library materials. Library Systems manages all staff workstations and some public workstations, although the bulk of the public workstations are managed by the University's Information Technology Services unit. Library Systems also manages the Libraries' Web pages, database applications, most ILS functionality and the Libraries' physical and virtual servers (with the exception of the ILS servers).

Goals of the customer service survey
The primary goal of conducting a customer service survey was to gauge customer satisfaction with the services that the Division provides. Identifying process improvements that would improve services for our customers was a high priority for us. In addition, we identified six additional outcomes that we anticipated as a result of conducting the survey. First, we expected to gather new information about our customers' perceptions and opinions about our services. That is, we expected to learn things from our customers that we did not already know. Serendipitous feedback can be a valuable source of data about customer perceptions, satisfactions and dissatisfactions, but we expected that a systematic approach through the use of a survey would generate new information. Another anticipated outcome was that the survey results would corroborate things that we already suspected. Anecdotal reporting had given us the impression that our customers were very happy with some services but felt that other services needed to be changed or updated, and we expected to gather more information that would corroborate whether these anecdotally reported perceptions were widely held.

Another expected outcome of the survey was the identification of service gaps. We hoped to learn whether there were activities or services not currently offered which would be useful to our customers, and conversely, current services no longer needed. We crafted several questions in the survey to elicit this type of information. A fourth outcome or benefit of conducting customer service surveys is that the survey results may be used to support change, request funding or provide direction to managers pursuing further assessment efforts. UAlbany Libraries conducts regular strategic planning activities, and the Division periodically reviews a running list of future projects. We expected that the survey results would provide us with additional ideas about potential projects and library priorities.

The final two benefits or outcomes of conducting a customer service survey are related. First, simply conducting a customer service survey conveys to customers the importance of their opinion. It opens the door for more feedback, and if received openly and without defensiveness, customers will feel comfortable providing additional feedback. Such communication is essential to a healthy relationship. Letting customers know that providing input is acceptable, and even welcome, encourages honesty. It also demonstrates an openness to making changes that improve overall effectiveness. A related benefit is that the follow-up actions taken based on the results of a customer service survey can serve as a public relations or marketing tool for a division or unit. After analyzing the survey results and developing an action plan, sharing the results and plans becomes a public relations or marketing activity in itself. Ongoing progress should be shared with stakeholders so that they can see progress being made on issues that are important to them.

Literature review

Assessment has been of interest to library managers for many years. The Association of Research Libraries (ARL) created the LibQual suite of tools (www.libqual.org) to assess academic library services; however, its focus is on student learning, reference services and library facilities. ARL has sponsored a biannual conference since 2006 on library assessment, but has not addressed the assessment of technical services or library systems departments in any of its conference programs. *The Value of Academic Libraries*, a report sponsored by the Association of College and Research Libraries (2010), advocated for more assessment of academic library activities in an effort to document the value that academic libraries contribute to the mission of their parent organizations. This report did not address the value that technical services and library systems added to the organization.

In *Assessing Service Quality: Satisfying the Expectations of Library Customers*, Hernon and Altman (2010) addressed many aspects of library assessment. Although their focus was on meeting the expectations of external library customers, they do devote some attention to the use of surveys and focus groups to conduct internal customer service assessment. They state "[i]nternal customers are fellow staff members" (Hernon and Altman, 2010, p. 97) who:

> Must feel empowered and appreciated by the organization if they are to go out of their way to meet the needs and preferences of customers, and thus, maintain satisfied and loyal customers (Hernon and Altman, 2010, p. 97).

In a 2012 study on the assessment of technical services activities in Pennsylvania academic libraries, Mugridge (2014) found that 90 per cent of responding academic libraries conducted some form of assessment of technical services activities. Collection and evaluation of statistics, reported by 84 per cent of responding libraries, was the most commonly used assessment method. Qualitative assessment methods, such as the use of a customer service survey, were used far less frequently. Mugridge (2014, p. 107) concluded by recommending further research on specific assessment methods such as focus groups, benchmarking and customer service surveys.

A review of the Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts and Library and Information Science Abstracts databases found that very little has been published

in the library and information science literature addressing the use of customer service surveys to assess internal customer satisfaction with technical services and library systems units in academic libraries. In her study on technical services assessment mentioned above, Mugridge (2014, p. 103) found that some libraries have conducted customer service surveys to assess technical services activities, although these have not been reported in the library and information science literature. Findings revealed that 25.4 per cent (16 libraries) reported they had conducted customer service surveys to assess technical services activities between 2007 and 2012. Wright and White (2007) reported on the results of a study they conducted that gathered information about assessment activities in ARL member libraries. Their findings indicate that 14.5 per cent of responding libraries used customer surveys to evaluate acquisitions functions, 4.8 per cent of libraries used surveys to assess cataloging functions and 19.3 per cent used surveys to assess library systems functions (Wright and White, 2007, p. 22). However, they did not ask whether the surveys used in these cases were of internal or external customers.

Two studies report on the use of internal customer surveys to determine service quality. Harer (2008) conducted a survey of ARL member libraries to learn whether they use employee satisfaction surveys to elicit feedback about service quality. Harer received responses from 30 of the ARL libraries, which reported use of one employee satisfaction survey, four organizational climate surveys, eight exit interview surveys, 11 employee self-assessment evaluations and three administrator evaluation surveys. Thirteen libraries responded that they did not have or use such instruments. From this point forward in the article, Harer limited the discussion to the four organizational climate surveys that were submitted, and found that only one of them specifically asked employees for their opinions regarding quality.

Authors Jia and Reich (2011) took a unique approach to service quality assessment. Making the point that the climate of an organization can affect the quality of services offered to customers, they took it one step further and maintained that an organization's internal climate can predict customers' perceptions of quality service. To investigate this further, they developed a 10-question instrument useful in assessing the internal organizational climate. The authors' research consisted of asking IT staff in four organizations, 10 questions about their work climate. They then compared the responses to the results of an IT service quality assessment survey of their respective customers. They found that, in fact, the impressions of IT staff about their own climate correlated with the impressions their customers had about quality of service. This relationship indicated that managers who work to improve internal organizational climate would have the result of improving customer perceptions of service quality.

Two articles in the non-library and information science literature address the importance of internal customer service. Seibert and Lingle (2007) conducted a series of studies that demonstrated that "[s]uperior levels of internal service quality continue to be associated with superior business performance". They also found that:

[c]ompared to their poorer performing counterparts, superior service organizations were more likely to report they effectively surveyed their internal customers (60 per cent vs. 35 per cent) and had a formal internal customer service tracking system (69 per cent vs. 43 per cent) (Seibert and Lingle, 2007, p. 39).

The use of systematically conducted internal customer service surveys, as well as benchmarking, made companies more effective and more successful.

In a follow-up study, Seibert and Schiemann (2010) found that even in a recession, the companies that rated highly in internal customer service were twice as likely as those who rank lower to be "industry leaders on the key metrics of financial results, productivity, customer satisfaction and quality". Interestingly, they found that one of the greatest negative impacts from a recession was when companies cut services to customers or cut services between internal departments (Seibert and Schiemann, 2010, p. 29). Process improvement methods and closing internal service gaps ameliorated these negative impacts (Seibert and Schiemann, 2010, p. 30). With this article, the authors demonstrated the importance of internal customer service and its impact on organizational success.

Research method and planning
Planning
Planning for the implementation of a customer service survey began with discussions among the members of the Technical Services Department Heads group. The Associate Director shared examples of similar surveys conducted at another institution and discussed the potential benefits that might accrue from carrying out such a survey. With all of the department heads in support of a survey, the discussion broadened to include all members of the Division at the June 2014 monthly meeting. Because such a survey had never been done before, the Associate Director assured everyone that the goal was not to identify personal failings or target any one person or group. We intended this survey to be a positive experience for everyone, not something that should be intimidating. After the meeting, the Associate Director sent a draft survey to everyone in the Division for feedback. After incorporating the feedback into the survey, it was shared with the LPG for additional feedback and approval.

Potential concerns
Participation in a customer service survey can cause anxiety when the possibility exists that there will be criticism of you, your department or your division. Some staff members shared their concerns with the Associate Director via e-mail. These four questions were discussed at a TSDH meeting; the responses were recorded in the minutes of the meeting and shared with all Division staff. These concerns, our approaches to resolving them, and the reasoning behind our approaches are summarized here:

- *Q1.* How will we ensure that the survey is anonymous, and does not collect information that allows the respondents to be identified?

  - *Response*: We will select the option to not capture the IP address of the survey participants when setting up the survey in SurveyMonkey.

  - *Reasoning*: It was important for individuals throughout the Libraries to feel comfortable giving us feedback without repercussions. If someone wanted to report dissatisfaction with something, there should be no chance that someone might note who they are and hold it against them. If someone wanted to report something favorable, there should be no worry that it appear they were garnering favor. As the survey would be open to all Libraries' employees, it was important to take away any *angst* someone might have about sharing their opinions or feedback.

Q2. What will happen with the information that may be included in responses from survey participants that pertains to an individual or an individual's work?

- *Response*: The Associate Director and the Technical Services Department Heads will see all of the responses in their entirety. If any individual is named or identified in any response, it will be up to their respective Department Head to decide how to handle it, whether to share the information with the individual or other department employees or not.

- *Reasoning*: We did not want individuals to be concerned that we would share something negative with everyone in the Division or include it in their evaluations. It was not the goal of the survey for respondents to evaluate individuals, but we also could not predict how people would respond to the open-ended questions. We wanted to make every effort possible for Division staff to feel comfortable with this process and trust our discretion with the results.

Q3. According to the policies on the campus Web site, surveys of campus populations, including surveying within your own unit, need to be shared with the institutional review board (IRB).

- *Response*: Yes, we will submit our final draft for review following the campus policy.

- *Reasoning*: We were interested in reporting on the process and benefits of conducting a customer service survey. Although UAlbany's IRB does not require review of surveys used solely for internal assessment, because we were planning to write an article on the process of conducting a survey, they felt we should pursue the expedited review process to make sure that we were compliant with the law.

Q4. What information from the survey will be published?

- *Response*: The process of conducting a customer service survey and its benefits will be the focus of any articles published from the survey. Some results may be included to illustrate our arguments about the benefits of conducting a customer service survey, but nothing will be included that would be embarrassing or reflect unfavorably on our organization.

- *Reasoning*: While we were conducting a customer service survey to gauge customer satisfaction and identify potential improvements in our services, the goal of this paper is to discuss the process of conducting the survey and the benefits of having done so. How the departments scored on the satisfaction scale would not be helpful to other libraries, but how we went about conducting the survey and the benefits accrued would be. Again, it was important to us to make sure everyone felt comfortable completing the survey and not be concerned about how we might look to others.

Survey design

The Technical Services and Library Systems Customer Service Assessment survey (Mugridge *et al.*, 2014) (Appendix 1) began with an introduction that included our goals for conducting the survey. It encouraged everyone, including division staff, to participate, but asked division staff not to complete the section on their own department.

It indicated that all responses were anonymous, all questions optional and respondents could quit the survey at any time.

The survey was divided into five pages; one for each department and a final page with a few general questions applicable to the entire division. Each department page began with an introductory paragraph giving the name of the department, the department head's name and a description of the department's responsibilities. We included the descriptions due to our concern about the amount of overlap in the responsibilities among the three technical services departments and we wanted to help respondents understand which department did what processes so that the respondents could evaluate these workflows more accurately. We suspected, in particular, confusion throughout the Libraries about the differences between Cataloging Services and Catalog Management Services, and in fact, one department often handles these responsibilities in other institutions. While our customers do not necessarily need to know the sometimes fine distinctions between technical services units' responsibilities, it would help us to analyze the survey results if they understood which department and activities they were assessing.

Following the mission statement, each department's section of the survey began with a Likert scale asking respondents to evaluate that department on 12 characteristics: accuracy, collaboration, communication, effectiveness, efficiency, follow-through, proactive sharing of information, outreach to stakeholders of major projects, personalized service or special requests, procedures and documentation, speed of response to reported problems and timely completion of routine work. Additional questions that pertained to all four departments included questions about whether respondents knew whom to contact when they had a question, how comfortable they felt asking for help, whether they had any suggestions about current or possible services and how they preferred to communicate with members of the department. A final question was included for each department that asked whether the respondent had any additional comments about the department.

In addition to the questions that were common to all four departments, each department had the opportunity to ask a few questions specific to their department. Both Acquisitions Services and Library Systems took advantage of this opportunity to ask additional questions. Acquisitions Services asked whether respondents were in need of training in using Aleph (the ILS), GOBI (YBP's monograph ordering system), the electronic resource ordering process, submitting orders, creating reports in Aleph or other. Library Systems asked respondents to evaluate the training provided by the department and the online help desk system used within the Libraries.

Finally, we included a small section at the end of the survey to ask a few general questions applicable to the entire division. First, we asked whether respondents were able to find specific staff offices in the division. The Technical Services and Library Systems Division occupies a large space that contains a warren of cubicles. We had recently renovated part of the space and relocated the Library Systems staff in the area (previously they were in small, individual offices on several other floors of the library). We were concerned that other library staff might have a hard time navigating our space and finding people. We also asked whether respondents found any of the questions confusing or unclear, and whether there were questions that we should have included but did not. We included these last two questions to help inform future planning efforts should we conduct another survey in the future.

IRB approval
We contacted UAlbany's Office of Regulatory and Research Compliance to determine whether the survey needed to go through the IRB review and approval process. As noted above, as we planned to share some of the results outside the "walls" of the university, they required us to go through the IRB approval process. We were able to apply for exemption from the full process, but we still had to complete certification in human subject research. This training is supplied at UAlbany by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI)[1], and consists of 15 training modules and associated quizzes, requiring an average score of 80 per cent. Although all four department heads and the Associate Director were carrying out this project, only two of us were planning to write the paper, so we both took and passed the CITI training. A certificate, valid for three years, was delivered to each of us by CITI and attached to the IRB Exemption Request Application. This was processed and approved very quickly and we were ready to begin testing the survey.

Survey deployment
After the department heads, the division staff and the LPG approved the survey draft, the survey instrument was created using SurveyMonkey software. We asked a small group of public services librarians to test the survey, and they provided valuable input into the final survey design. Once we finalized the survey, we sent an invitation to the UAlbany e-mail distribution list for full- and part-time faculty and staff (Appendix 2). This list included 105 employees; the Associate Director who was leading the project recused herself from participating, but encouraged the division department heads to participate, bringing the potential pool of respondents to 104. The survey deployed on September 12, 2014. A reminder was sent on September 18 and by September 26, the survey had garnered 46 responses. The survey deadline was extended to October 6, and the final tally included 52 complete surveys, a 50 per cent response rate. For the entire timeline of survey development through closing, see Appendix 3.

Results
The current study has been undertaken not only to gauge internal customer satisfaction and make process and service improvements, but also to demonstrate that the use of a customer service survey can provide a number of benefits to the unit. These include gathering new information about customer perceptions; corroborating what is already suspected about customer perceptions; the identification of service gaps; providing support for change, funding or further assessment; improving communication with internal customers; and marketing. The results reported in the following sections reflect the level of fulfillment of these six expectations, using specific survey data and responses as examples. In each case, we describe the survey feedback and discuss how we plan to address the respective issue. While these benefits are specific to the UAlbany Technical Services and Library Systems Division, the results presented in this section are shared to demonstrate the positive outcomes that the authors believe would accrue to any institution or library unit conducting a similar survey.

Survey results provide new information
The customer service survey did indeed provide us with new information about our customers' perceptions and opinions about our services. Overall, our internal customers gave very positive responses on the Likert scale. In most cases, 80 per cent of our

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responses fell into the "very satisfied" or "satisfied" categories. The survey garnered many positive responses in the open-ended questions as well. Customers praised recent process changes as well as particular services given by departments or individuals.

In addition to positive feedback, the survey results pointed out some issues that needed attention. These were identified through constructive comments provided by survey respondents to the open-ended questions, as well as from some of the responses on the Likert scale. These issues related to communication, changes in staff office assignments and a lack of awareness of services offered by departments within the Division.

One of the problems reported on the survey was that sometimes our processes changed without notification and documentation. This was a surprise to division staff because our perceptions were that we shared information about all procedural changes before making any change. The value to us in learning about this perception is that we need to make sure that we do in fact inform others when processes change, and we need to ensure that the message is heard and understood by everyone affected. In an academic environment, it can be difficult to get others' attention, and with the enormous amount of e-mail that everyone receives, it is easy to overlook a message. We should use multiple avenues to distribute information about procedural changes to our customers: e-mail, in-person delivery at staff meetings and documentation posted online.

Another problem reported by survey respondents was that sometimes they did not feel comfortable asking for help. There are several dimensions to this problem. In some cases, our customers did not know whom to ask and felt bad potentially asking the wrong person. In some cases, they felt bad bothering staff with a problem when they knew the staff member was already very busy. In all cases, it is important for us to communicate to our customers that they are welcome to ask us questions or ask us for help. If they ask the wrong person, we will make sure to get the correct person involved with the solution. Finally, we need to make sure that all division staff are welcoming to our customers and encourage our customers to contact us when they need help.

A third issue had to do with how we communicate with our customers. Some respondents indicated that they felt that they had to keep a record of all e-mail communications, perhaps to ensure follow-through of division staff to do what was promised in an e-mail communication. Another complaint concerned meetings; the survey respondent indicated that division staff members were too often inclined to propose a meeting to discuss any new issue. These issues reflect differences in how people prefer to work. Some employees prefer to meet to discuss any complicated process or question rather than having to write out a series of complicated e-mail messages. Others abhor meetings and find them tedious and hard to fit into their already packed schedules. We need to communicate in the method preferred by our customers, but we also need to clarify with them our understanding of our responsibilities, action items and possible target dates.

Another surprise to us was learning that some survey respondents reported that they did not know many of the staff in the Division. One respondent reported that they sometimes received e-mails from people whom they did not know. This was a surprise to us because we have a small staff (only 32 employees in four departments), many of our employees have worked at the UAlbany Libraries for many years and we have a low turnover rate. It is clear that we could be doing a better job of introducing staff and providing opportunities for all library staff to integrate more. A recent Libraries-wide

initiative to put pictures up on the staff directory should also help our customers identify employees within the Division. We are also planning to host an open house so the rest of the Libraries' staff can visit our newly remodeled space and meet Division employees.

Some survey respondents reported that they were not aware of training offered by the Acquisitions Services and Library Systems departments. Both departments occasionally offered training; some regularly scheduled and others on an *ad hoc* or one-on-one basis. Survey responses indicated that there was some interest in Acquisitions training in running Aleph reports, or the use of the GOBI book ordering system. Other survey responses indicated that there was interest in training offered by Library Systems and they would like to hear more about what was available. In both cases, it is clear that communication about potential training needs to be improved.

Survey results corroborate anecdotal reports
We were aware of several potential complaints due to anecdotal remarks made to division staff members in the past. Among them, our customers disliked filling out paper forms. Others had complained about the complexity of our processes and the length of processing time for new materials. Some open-ended responses in the survey corroborated what we had heard through anecdotal comments. We have already begun to address some of these issues, such as replacing paper forms with electronic equivalents.

Several survey responses revealed customer frustration that we were sometimes slow to respond to questions, problems or other requests. They also reported an occasional lack of follow-up. These complaints about slow response mentioned every department. We need to make sure that we respond to customer questions, requests and complaints in a timely manner.

Survey feedback also identified our online documentation as an area that needs attention. We had suspected that our customers were not satisfied with our documentation and have begun to discuss options for keeping it up-to-date and more accessible. Some documentation is currently posted in a shared directory, some is shared through e-mail and other documentation is posted on the division's intranet. Tentative plans include a review of our documentation, updating the intranet and sharing more documentation on public pages in the Libraries' Drupal-based content management system.

Our colleagues outside the Division have praised our recent changes, such as batchloading vendor records for electronic serials and e-book collections, or the reduction of our cataloging backlog. The comments on the survey corroborated this anecdotal feedback, and acknowledged the division's goal to provide better and timelier access to our electronic resources.

We have recently been evaluating the Libraries' online help desk ticketing system's form and triage procedures. One of the questions on the Library Systems section of the survey asked specifically for feedback about the help desk system, and as we expected, we received several suggestions for improvement. We plan to follow-up with further assessment and revision of our procedures and form.

One of the questions on the survey specifically asked about our customers' ability to locate staff within the Division offices. Like technical services divisions in many other libraries, we are housed in a non-public area, separated from many of our colleagues and customers. Many of the responses to this question indicated that our customers had a

hard time finding staff within the Division; a typical response referred to our offices as a "maze". To make our area more welcoming and help our customers feel comfortable, we plan to host an open house in the next few months. We also plan to create better signage, make sure that everyone has a nameplate on their office door or cubicle wall and develop maps of the office area that can be placed near each of the division office entrances.

Internal customer service surveys demonstrate to your customers that you care what they think
Conducting an internal customer service survey was an effort for us to convey to our customers that we care what they think about our services. Unlike the business world, our internal customers cannot simply take their business elsewhere if they are dissatisfied with our service. In essence, they have to use our services whether they are happy with them or not. Because of that, it is essential that we reach out to our customers and make sure they understand that we want their feedback and suggestions. Conducting this survey provided this opportunity for us, and our customers were pleased that they had this opportunity to provide feedback. Responses included that the survey was a "very good idea" and should be used by all departments. Another respondent wrote, "I'm glad you included this query". We also received several suggestions for improvement in current services and for new services to offer. The high rate of return (50 per cent) also indicates that our customers appreciated the chance to respond to our questions and took the time and effort to answer us thoughtfully. Both the comments and the high return rate demonstrate the usefulness of an internal survey for technical services managers.

Internal customer service surveys serve as a customer relations or marketing tool
In addition to the goodwill generated by conducting an internal customer service survey, such an effort can also serve as an ongoing customer relations and marketing tool. Survey results can provide further avenues for investigation and process improvements. Clear follow-up on the part of managers can generate positive feelings and improve customer relations. It is important that customers are made aware of survey follow-up activities; otherwise, respondents would feel like their responses were ignored and they wasted their time filling out the survey.

The division department heads have already shared the survey results with their respective departments. Next steps include sharing the survey results outside the Division, respecting the guidelines that we set up originally. The Associate Director created a PowerPoint presentation that will be used to share the survey results with the other divisions in the Libraries as well as with LPG. Areas that need attention, such as documentation and communication, will be shared with our customers and specific items will be added to the division's project list.

We will continue to mine the survey responses to identify further process improvements or other issues that need to be addressed, and market our accomplishments. For example, several survey responses revealed that some of our customers are unaware of the reduction of the cataloging backlog or the training that our departments offer. We plan to make improvements in our communications with our customers, both in formal meetings and with broadcast e-mails to announce major accomplishments.

Survey results support change, funding requests and further assessment efforts
Another benefit that we expected to result from conducting a customer service survey is
that we would gain insight into issues that would help us to support change within the
Division, request funding for projects or resources and pursue further assessment
efforts. The survey realized our expectations by identifying a number of areas that
needed further attention.

It became clear that we needed to consider some changes to our processes. We need to
assess and correct perceived inefficiencies in ordering and cataloging library materials.
We should review, simplify and update our online documentation, communicating any
changes to our customers. We have begun the review and improvement of the forms
used by our subject librarians for electronic resources purchase requests. We will
investigate an easy way for staff outside the Division to report cataloging or other errors
to us, another change suggested by the survey.

Feedback from the survey will also help us make a case for more funding.
Under-cataloged collections are of particular interest. We have cataloged some
electronic or microform collections with a collection-level record, which is not ideal for
usability and discoverability. The survey responses about under-cataloged collections
bolster our case to fund catalog record sets to batchload into the online catalog.

Responses to some of the survey questions indicated several areas in which to pursue
additional assessment efforts. The last question on the survey was "If there are
questions that we should be asking but which are not on the survey, please list them
here". Three of the seven responses to this question addressed organizational climate
issues. Although this survey targeted service issues, we believe a follow-up survey of
division staff on organizational climate issues would be fruitful.

The Library Systems Department's workflows merit further assessment. Several
respondents expressed difficulty evaluating the work of Library Systems as a whole,
primarily because the processes performed by the staff are very distinct from one
individual to another. While Library Systems' employees are cross-trained so there are
back-ups, in general, each staff member is responsible for a different type of work: ILS
support, desktop support, databases, Web development and system administration. We
would have greater knowledge of Library Systems' customer service from a more
in-depth survey about their responsibilities.

Finally, some survey respondents complained about the time it takes to get materials
through the ordering and cataloging processes. While recent process improvements
have eliminated almost all processing backlogs, we have not communicated these
improvements effectively to staff throughout the Libraries. Further assessment efforts,
such as a project to track materials through the acquisitions and cataloging process,
would provide us with hard data to share with our customers.

Survey results can identify service gaps
Our survey results identified several service gaps. First, we need to improve our
reporting of division activities. Regular updates on projects would keep our customers
informed and help them understand division processes and challenges. For example,
several comments expressed appreciation that the cataloging backlog has been
eliminated, whereas other comments indicated that the survey respondent believed that
a cataloging backlog still existed. Better reporting and more frequent updates would
help clear up this confusion.

Several survey respondents indicated that they were waiting for cataloging projects to be completed. The survey coincided with another division effort to identify under- and un-cataloged collections, so we will address this concern as soon as we have identified these collections and set processing priorities.

Survey feedback also indicated that our customers found it hard to find specific staff within the division offices. A set of maps near each of the entrances to the Division should help to alleviate this problem. Survey respondents would also like division staff to use "away" messages on voice-mail and e-mail. This will help division customers locate the appropriate staff member when needed. A contact list with staff names and responsibilities would also help to alleviate confusion about whom to contact for a particular problem.

What we would do differently if we did the survey again
In an effort to keep the survey simple, we offered four options in the initial question asking respondents to evaluate the work of each department in 12 categories. If we were to conduct the survey again, we would include a "somewhat satisfied" option between "not at all satisfied" and "satisfied". One survey respondent commented that the option would have been helpful because it was sometimes difficult to choose between "satisfied" and "not at all satisfied".

We might also consider posing more granular questions about the functions of each department. Survey respondents may have found it difficult to evaluate an entire department on "efficiency" when the department is responsible for many discrete activities. Perhaps the department is efficient in one area, but not another. In such cases, it would be challenging to give a general answer for the whole department. We would apply such an approach in any future follow-up assessment efforts.

Conclusion
The Technical Services and Library Systems Division of the UAlbany Libraries conducted a customer service survey that can serve as a model for librarians interested in conducting similar assessment projects within their libraries. Division department heads created a survey instrument incorporating feedback and suggestions from employees within the Division as well as public services staff and library administrators. The survey was intended to gauge customer satisfaction with division services and to identify areas for improvement. Half of the Libraries' staff completed the survey and provided a wealth of feedback about division services.

In addition to evaluating each of the division's four departments on 12 characteristics, the survey provided a number of other benefits. While the survey results reported in this paper are specific to UAlbany, they are representative of the benefits that would accrue to any unit that conducts such a survey, and were presented here to demonstrate these benefits. The survey results generated new information about the division's services and corroborated anecdotal evidence about customer satisfaction. It provided division managers with information and evidence that will help them make decisions, conduct strategic planning, implement change, request funding and facilitate additional assessment efforts. The survey helped to identify service gaps, and it continues to serve as a useful marketing and communication tool for the Division. It turned out to be a positive experience for all involved, and one that we will likely repeat at regular intervals.

Customer service surveys can serve as one element in an evidence-based approach to management and strategic planning. With simple adjustments, the survey methodology and instrument may be used by other libraries to assess not only their technical services and library systems units, but other library divisions and units as well. The timeline, survey instrument and survey invitation provided in the appendices may be adapted easily for use by other libraries. The authors hope that this paper will encourage more systematic assessment of technical services and library systems units, and that it furthers the discussion of the advantages and benefits of such assessment in the library and information science literature.

Note
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Appendix 1

Technical Services and Library Systems Customer Service Assessment

Introduction

The goal of this survey is to gauge satisfaction with the services provided by the Technical Services and Library Systems Division. Our internal customers have important and valuable insights into our work and we appreciate your feedback. We will use the information collected in this survey for planning and assessment, and to identify potential areas for process improvement.

Employees within the Technical Services and Library Systems Division are encouraged to complete the survey but to refrain from evaluating their own departments.

All responses are anonymous: neither IP nor email addresses are being collected with this survey.

All questions are optional and you may quit the survey at any time.

Thank you in advance for your valuable feedback!

Technical Services and Library Systems Customer Service Assessment

Acquisitions Services Department (Kate Latal, Department Head)

The mission of the Acquisitions Services Department is to order, document accessibility or receipt of materials, and process invoices for payment for all electronic resources obtained for the University Libraries' collections and all physical items housed in three library buildings: the University Library, the Dewey Library and the Science Library. Typical activities of the department include: searching OCLC and importing records into ALEPH, creating order records for one-time orders and continuations, placing orders through vendors and with publishers, receiving materials in ALEPH using arrival function or check-in, directing received materials to the appropriate department, preparing and paying invoices in ALEPH, using vendor web sites and other resources to place orders and research status of titles, and verifying correct disbursement of invoice payments.

1. Please rate your overall satisfaction with regards to the services provided from the Acquisitions Services Department for each of the following aspects:

	Not at all satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Not applicable/Don't know
Accuracy	○	○	○	○
Collaboration	○	○	○	○
Communication	○	○	○	○
Effectiveness	○	○	○	○
Efficiency	○	○	○	○
Follow-through	○	○	○	○
Proactive sharing of information	○	○	○	○
Outreach to stakeholders of major projects	○	○	○	○
Personalized service or special requests	○	○	○	○
Procedures and documentation	○	○	○	○
Speed of response to reported problems	○	○	○	○
Timely completion of routine work	○	○	○	○

Please describe specific services experiences in detail:

Technical Services and Library Systems Customer Service Assessment

2. Do you feel that you know whom to contact with a question or concern related to acquisitions?

◯ Yes

◯ No

Please explain

3. How comfortable do you feel asking for help?

◯ Very comfortable

◯ Somewhat comfortable

◯ Not comfortable

Please explain:

4. If you have any suggestions about the currently provided services or any new services that you would like to see offered by the Acquisitions Services Department, please describe them here:

Technical Services and Library Systems Customer Service Assessment

5. Do you need/want training from the Acquisitions Services Department in these areas?

☐ Using ALEPH regarding order status, receipt of materials and invoice payments

☐ Using GOBI

☐ Electronic resources ordering process

☐ Submitting orders

☐ Reports from ALEPH

☐ Other

Please describe "Other" here:

6. How do you best like to communicate with members of the Acquisitions Services Department?

○ By email

○ By phone

○ In person

Please explain

7. If you have additional comments about the Acquisitions Services Department, please enter them here:

Technical Services and Library Systems Customer Service Assessment

Catalog Management Services Department (Formerly DMPB; Wendy West, Departme...

The mission of the Catalog Management Services Department is to provide access to materials in all formats, ensure accuracy of the content of the data in the bibliographic and holdings records within our online public access catalog, physically process materials to be shelved, send materials to the commercial bindery, and maintain the records for inventory in the storage facility. Typical activities for the department include managing electronic journal records, creating call number labels, withdrawing materials, editing bibliographic and holdings records, transferring materials to storage, processing rush materials, and sending materials to a commercial bindery.

8. Please rate your overall satisfaction with regards to the services provided from the Catalog Management Services Department for each of the following aspects:

	Not at all satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Not applicable/Don't know
Accuracy	○	○	○	○
Collaboration	○	○	○	○
Communication	○	○	○	○
Effectiveness	○	○	○	○
Efficiency	○	○	○	○
Follow-through	○	○	○	○
Proactive sharing of information	○	○	○	○
Outreach to stakeholders of major projects	○	○	○	○
Personalized service or special requests	○	○	○	○
Procedures and documentation	○	○	○	○
Speed of response to reported problems	○	○	○	○
Timely completion of routine work	○	○	○	○

Please describe specific services experiences in detail:

Technical Services and Library Systems Customer Service Assessment

9. Do you feel that you know whom to contact with a question or concern related to catalog management?

( ) Yes

( ) No

Please explain

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10. How comfortable do you feel asking for help?

( ) Very comfortable

( ) Somewhat comfortable

( ) Not comfortable

Please explain:

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11. How do you best like to communicate with members of the Catalog Management Services Department?

( ) By email

( ) By phone

( ) In person

Please explain

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12. If you have any suggestions about the currently provided services or any new services that you would like to see offered by the Catalog Management Services Department, please describe them here:

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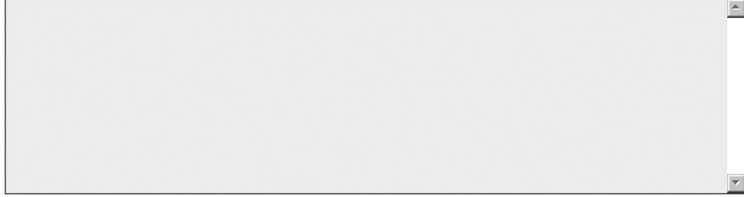
Technical Services and Library Systems Customer Service Assessment

13. If you have additional comments about the Catalog Management Services Department, please enter them here:

Technical Services and Library Systems Customer Service Assessment

Cataloging Services Department (Nancy Poehlmann, Department Head)

The mission of the Cataloging Services Department is to provide access to all resources selected by the Collections Division in a cost effective, efficient, and timely manner, concentrating on the users' needs. The Department catalogs materials in all formats, and in all European and East Asian languages, as well as Hebrew.

14. Please rate your overall satisfaction with regards to the services provided from the Cataloging Services Department for each of the following aspects:

	Not at all satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Not applicable/Don't know
Accuracy	◯	◯	◯	◯
Collaboration	◯	◯	◯	◯
Communication	◯	◯	◯	◯
Effectiveness	◯	◯	◯	◯
Efficiency	◯	◯	◯	◯
Follow-through	◯	◯	◯	◯
Proactive sharing of information	◯	◯	◯	◯
Outreach to stakeholders of major projects	◯	◯	◯	◯
Personalized service or special requests	◯	◯	◯	◯
Procedures and documentation	◯	◯	◯	◯
Speed of response to reported problems	◯	◯	◯	◯
Timely completion of routine work	◯	◯	◯	◯

Please describe specific services experiences in detail:

Technical Services and Library Systems Customer Service Assessment

15. Do you feel that you know whom to contact with a question or concern related to cataloging?

◯ Yes

◯ No

Please explain

16. How comfortable do you feel asking for help?

◯ Very comfortable

◯ Somewhat comfortable

◯ Not comfortable

Please explain:

17. How do you best like to communicate with members of the Cataloging Services Department?

◯ By email

◯ By phone

◯ In person

Please explain

18. If you have any suggestions about the currently provided services or any new services that you would like to see offered by the Cataloging Services Department, please describe them here:

Technical Services and Library Systems Customer Service Assessment

19. If you have additional comments about the Cataloging Services Department, please enter them here:

Technical Services and Library Systems Customer Service Assessment

Library Systems Department (Mike Sweeney, Department Head)

The mission of the Library Systems Department is to provide a broad range of IT solutions and services to support the teaching, research, and outreach missions of the University at Albany Libraries and the University. Library Systems provides technical leadership in research and development of library initiatives, explores and evaluates the suitability of new technologies to support the University Libraries' programs and services, and supports workstation and network services for the University Libraries.

20. Please rate your overall satisfaction with regards to the services provided from the Library Systems Department for each of the following aspects:

	Not at all satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Not applicable/Don't know
Accuracy	○	○	○	○
Collaboration	○	○	○	○
Communication	○	○	○	○
Effectiveness	○	○	○	○
Efficiency	○	○	○	○
Follow-through	○	○	○	○
Proactive sharing of information	○	○	○	○
Outreach to stakeholders of major projects	○	○	○	○
Personalized service or special requests	○	○	○	○
Procedures and documentation	○	○	○	○
Speed of response to reported problems	○	○	○	○
Timely completion of routine work	○	○	○	○

Please describe specific services experiences in detail:

Technical Services and Library Systems Customer Service Assessment

21. Do you feel that you know whom to contact with a question or concern related to library systems?

◯ Yes

◯ No

Please explain

22. How comfortable do you feel asking for help?

◯ Very comfortable

◯ Somewhat comfortable

◯ Not comfortable

Please explain:

23. How do you best like to communicate with members of the Library Systems Department?

◯ By email

◯ By phone

◯ In person

Please explain

24. How satisfied are you with the training provided from the Library Systems department?

◯ Very satisfied

◯ Satisfied

◯ Not at all satisfied

Please explain:

Technical Services and Library Systems Customer Service Assessment

25. How satisfied are you with the Libraries' information technology help desk system (http://libstaff/technology/ticket/)?

○ Very satisfied

○ Satisfied

○ Not at all satisfied

Please explain:

26. If you have any suggestions about the currently provided services or any new services that you would like to see offered by the Library Systems Department, please describe them here:

27. If you have additional comments about the Library Systems Department, please enter them here:

Technical Services and Library Systems Customer Service Assessment

General

28. Are you able to find specific staff offices in Technical Services and Library Systems (Rooms B34-B35)?

◯ Yes

◯ No

Please explain:

[text box]

29. If you found any of the questions confusing or unclear, please explain here:

[text box]

30. If there are questions that we should be asking but which are not on the survey please list them here:

[text box]

Appendix 2. Survey invitation (sent via e-mail)
I invite you to participate in a customer service assessment survey of the Technical Services and Library Systems Division. The goal of the survey is to gauge satisfaction with the services provided by the Division. We believe that our internal library customers have important and valuable insights into our work and we appreciate your feedback. We will use the information collected in this survey for planning and assessment, and to identify potential areas for process improvement.

Employees within the Technical Services and Library Systems Division are encouraged to complete the survey but to refrain from evaluating their own departments.

All responses are anonymous: neither IP nor e-mail addresses are being collected with this survey.

The survey should only take about 10 minutes to complete. All questions are optional and you may quit the survey at any time. The survey deadline is September 26, 2014.

Here is the link to the survey: [link removed]

Thank you in advance for your valuable feedback!

Appendix 3. Customer service survey project timeline

- *May 21, 2014*: Discussed the possibility of conducting a customer service in a Technical Services Department Heads meeting.
- *June 19, 2014*: Discussed plans for conducting a customer service survey at a Technical Services and Library Systems Division meeting. Shared a draft survey with everyone at the meeting, and sent it to everyone after the meeting.
- *June 19 to July 16, 2014*: Incorporated Division employees' feedback and suggestions into the draft survey.
- *July 16, 2014*: Discussed issues raised by division staff and shared responses through the meeting minutes.
- *July 29, 2014*: Shared revised (but still draft) survey with the Library Policy Group for feedback.
- *August 20, 2014*: Submitted IRB Exemption Application to UAlbany's Office of Regulatory and Research Compliance.
- *September 5, 2014*: Received IRB approval. Distributed survey to test participants with September 10, 2014, deadline.
- *September 12, 2014*: Deployed survey to all library staff with September 26, 2014, deadline.
- *September 18, 2014*: Sent reminder e-mail.
- *September 26, 2014*: Sent reminder e-mail and new deadline (October 6, 2014).
- *October 6, 2014*: Survey closed with 52 completed applications.

About the authors
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