Report on Library Student Survey of Northwestern State University of Louisiana from Fall Semester 2008

The members of the Library Planning and Evaluation Committee decided to resume doing library surveys as part of the library planning procedures. Abbie Landry and Gail Kwak, working with Veronica Biscoe, University Planning, Assessment and EEO Director, developed two instruments to provide input on how faculty and students use library collections or services. After several revisions and approval of the final draft by the committee, Ms. Biscoe converted the instruments to Zoomerang, (a computerized survey program), and sent copies out on the university wide email program, Messenger.

Faculty and students had four weeks to respond to the survey. The surveys were launched October 20, 2008 and closed November 21, 2008. These dates were chosen since Midterm grades would already be turned in and prior to Thanksgiving break. The following is a report of the survey results. The first part of the report is a summary of the survey results, the second concerns the comments, and the third is a list of recommendations based on the surveys.

Student Survey

The student responses to the survey were very low 116 out 8848 or 1.3%. The data from the survey can be used only as possible trends rather than giving a relevant picture of student library use.

Questions 13 to 17 provide information on the students who answered the survey.

Question 13 Campus
2 (2%) Rapides Learning Center
9 (8%) Leesville/Fort Polk
17 (15%) Shreveport Nursing Campus
19 (17%) Distance Learning
75 (66%) Natchitoches

Question 14 Major
4 (4%) Scholars College
10 (9%) Business
17 (15%) Science & Technology
25 (22%) Education
27 (24%) Liberal Arts
30 (27%) Nursing
Total 113 (100%)
Question 15 Classification
28 (25%) Graduate
85 (75%) Undergraduate
Total 113 (100%)

Question 16 Traditional/Nontraditional
53 (46%) Nontraditional
61 (54%) Traditional

It is difficult to draw a profile of the students who answered the survey. Most were undergraduates from the Natchitoches campus. The other answers were too close to make a meaningful distinction.

The next set of questions focuses on how students use the library.

Question 1 Beginning research (select one)
1 (1%) other
6 (5%) textbook
22 (19%) library resources
86 (75%) internet
Total 115 (100%)

Question 2 Learn about the library (multiple answers)
6 (5%) email
6 (5%) telephone call
6 (5%) users’ guides
8 (7%) other
25 (22%) online tutorials
32 (28%) links to myNSU
37 (32%) in-person help
41 (36%) other students
63 (55%) library instruction
75 (65%) teacher

Question 3 Where use library resources (One)
26 (23%) on-campus other than library
27 (23%) in the library
62 (54%) off-campus
Total 115 (100%)
Question 4 Three main reasons to use the library
3 (3%) meet friends
5 (4%) Student/Faculty Reading Room
14 (12%) helpful library staff
16 (14%) Other
22 (28%) group study rooms
32 (28%) computer lab (Natchitoches campus)
40 (35%) quiet place to study
77 (68%) availability of information
84 (74%) electronic resources

Question 5 Library services used in last 12 months
3 (3%) Writing Center Outpost
5 (5%) peer tutoring
6 (5%) other
15 (14%) research consultation with library staff
15 (14%) Orientation 1010
19 (17%) Ill
19 (17%) reserves
31 (28%) wireless internet
38 (34%) meeting spaces
104 (94%) online databases

Question 6 Library collections (Note discovered a redundancy so combined the question on archives (34) and Louisiana Collection (8)*)
5 (5%) Other
13 (14%) best sellers/new books
17 (18%) government information
17 (18%) a/v
38 (40%) e-books
42 (45%) archives and Louisiana Collection*
49 (52%) print journals
58 (61%) books

Question 7 Library Website
13 (12%) reference email
17 (15%) ILL
19 (17%) library services
34 (30%) library hours and locations
77 (69%) NSU catalog
107 (96%) online databases
Question 8 Library staff
7 (8%) other
7 (8%) outside interests
9 (10%) identify information
9 (10%) prevent plagiarism
14 (16%) choose topic
54 (60%) use electronic resources
63 (70%) find books or articles

The next questions use a five item Likert scale.

Question 9 Find books
5 (4%) strongly disagree
11 (10%) disagree
12 (10%) strongly agree
23 (20%) no opinion
64 (56%) agree

Question 10 Find print journals
6 (5%) strongly disagree
12 (10%) disagree
16 (14%) no opinion
24 (21%) strongly agree
57 (50%) agree

Question 11 electronic resources
1 (1%) strongly disagree
3 (3%) disagree
7 (6%) no opinion
47 (41%) strongly agree
57 (50%) agree

Question 12 Interlibrary Loan
2 (2%) strongly disagree
7 (6%) disagree
20 (17%) strongly agree
36 (31%) agree
50 (43%) no opinion

One opinion additional question was added to the survey to try and ascertain how well prepared students felt when using the library.
Question 17 Did your high school prepare you to use the NSU library?
13 (12%) not sure
41 (36%) no
59 (52%) yes

Comments

Of the 116 students taking the survey 31 included comments. In order to protect the privacy of individuals, the comments were counted and summarized. Since more than one idea may be expressed in the same comment, those have been divided and placed in appropriate sections.

Note: Those comments, which mention a library faculty or staff member by name, will be shared with that individual.

Negative
Hours (3)
ILL is difficult
Better labeling
Need more group study rooms
Leesville copy machine does not work
Never use the library
Catalog is difficult to use
Online resources hard to obtain
Need internet ports in group study rooms
Need library research course as a requirement

Library Resources (6)
More variety of books needed
More ebooks
Leesville needs more current info
Need more current information
Resources are not adequate
Science resources inadequate and out of date

Positive
Databases good (5)
Shreveport librarians are great (3)
ILL is good (2)
Library staff is helpful (2)
Library is great
Distance learner will look into resources now
Excellent resources
Student workers are helpful
Can find what I need
Great group study rooms
Library asset to educational experience

Other
Mostly use reference and copy machines
Nontraditional student did not use computers as undergraduate
Never visit Natchitoches campus so could not answer questions
Learned to use the library at previous institutions
Did not like the likert questions—too vague
High school prepared for library but nothing else for college
Natchitoches Parish library doing well

Observations and Recommendations

Although the number of respondents is too small to draw any firm conclusions, one can identify some trends.

The student respondents confirmed what the literature has verified that students use the internet for the bulk of their research. They learned about the library from two sources: their teacher and library instruction. The majority of students access library resources off-campus. The three main reasons they use the library are electronic resources, information, and quiet place to study. By an overwhelming number they use the online databases more than any other resource (95%), The most used library collections are the books, followed by the print journals, and with a respectable 45% the Cammie G. Henry Research Center. They primarily use the library website for online databases. Their main contact with the library staff is to help them find books or articles.

The items from the likert part of the survey go as follows:
The majority of students 56% agree they can find books. 71% agree or strongly agree they can find print resources 91% agree or strongly agree that they can use electronic resources They number for no opinion on interlibrary loan is 43%

The final question on their high school preparing them to use the NSU library was a high number 52%.

The negative comments ran a broad spectrum from complaining about using interlibrary loan to the copy machine in Leesville does not work. The highest number of complaints involved lack of adequate library resources. The positive
comments involved that databases, the library staff especially Shreveport Library staff.

As with the faculty survey, the student survey indicates that the lack of a materials budget is negatively impacting their library use.

Some of the comments reflect that the library faculty need to do more to inform distance learners about online library resources. One comment from a distance learner helps illustrate this point that the survey inspired him/her to look into library resources.