Student Survey
Spring 2012
THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
Columbus School of Law

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In February 2012 the DuFour Law Library conducted its biennial student satisfaction survey. The biennial student surveys serve several purposes; they help us assess the law students’ satisfaction with existing library resources and services, they promote existing library resources and services, and they assist us in identifying potential new resources and services. These surveys enable us to determine what is most important to our students while also providing a forum for us to respond to their concerns. Hopefully, through conducting these surveys the library staff is able to demonstrate that we value the opinions of our primary constituency as part of our overall commitment to improving the library.

This survey measured three general areas:

1. Library service
2. Library resources and web page
3. Library facilities

This survey posed several new questions designed to determine what our students want most from the library. Responses indicate that a comfortable, quiet environment with space for both individual and group study is most valued. Good service and research assistance are also important to our students. We are pleased to find that the majority of students feel that we are fulfilling these needs. In almost all categories the students rated library service, resources, and web page either excellent or very good. Comments indicate that awareness of library services and resources continues to be a challenge, as some students were unaware of specific databases or equipment that the library offers. The majority of students rated the library facilities as comfortable and conducive to studying. However, as in 2010, the issues of temperature (too cold) and the need for more quiet and comfortable seating surfaced in the respondents’ comments.
Question 1

Analysis:

This was a simple demographic question, which enabled us to determine the percentage of day student respondents and evening student respondents. A total of 215 students took the survey, which is 28% of the total law student population. Thirty percent of the day student population responded and 28% of evening students responded to the survey. This rate is down slightly from 2010, in which 31% of the total law school student population responded.
Question 2

Analysis:

Thirty-five percent of the responses came from two groups of students who identified themselves as 1st or 2nd year law students. This was followed by 31.1% of journal staff students and 23.9% of students who identified themselves as 3rd year law students. Only 3.3% of respondents identified themselves as 4th year evening students.
Question 3
Question 3 (continued)

Analysis:

The library continues to play an important part in our students’ academic lives, with 85.7% of respondents using the library daily or a few times a week. Usage has increased slightly since our 2010 survey, when 85.2% of respondents reported using the library daily or a few times a week. However, daily usage is down slightly from past years. Not surprisingly, our biggest users are 1Ls, with 63% reporting that they use the library on a daily basis.
Question 4

Analysis:

Although this question was slightly revised from the 2008 and 2010 surveys, the results are not radically different; students primarily use the library to study for classes, to print documents, and to do research. Just under half of all the students who responded selected group study as a use, while over a third use the library to seek assistance from library staff. Only 1 in 10 students chose relaxing or socializing as a use, which questions the argument often made in library literature concerning the library as a ‘third place’ in the lives of patrons.
Question 5

Analysis:

The purpose of this question is to assist the library in improving the allocation of library resources. As expected, the majority of respondents do not use the library during any of the listed time periods, with 57 – 92% stating that they rarely or never use the library during these times. The least popular time is Friday evening during the summer, with 92% of respondents stating that they rarely or never use the library after 8:00pm. Students do make use of early hours during exam weekends, with 43% of respondents indicating that they use the library very often or often 7am – 9am on weekends. Surprisingly, only 28% and 22% report using the library after midnight during exams on weeknights and weekends, respectively.
Questions 6

Analysis:

This is a new question for us, aimed at determining whether there are specific areas in which we need to improve. We are pleased to find that the majority of respondents rated all areas as either excellent or very good, with professionalism receiving the highest rating. There is no statistical difference between the responses of Day and Evening students (not shown on the graph).
Question 7

Analysis:

Overall, satisfaction with service is high, with the majority of respondents rating service by all departments as either excellent or very good. Reference staff received the highest rating, with 83% of respondents stating that service is excellent or very good. As with the previous question, there is no statistical difference between the responses of Day and Evening students (not shown on the graph).
Question 8

Please rate your level of satisfaction with the library's interlibrary loan service.
Analysis:

This question served two purposes: to advertise the availability of interlibrary loan and to determine if students are satisfied with this service. Overall, students who use interlibrary loan are satisfied, with over 51% stating that they are very satisfied or satisfied. Nearly 30% of respondents were unaware of the service and 17% indicated that they know about it but would not use it. Surprisingly, 20% of journal staff and 28% of research assistants (our most frequent users) indicated that they didn’t know about the service or wouldn’t use it. Comments indicated that some students do know about ILL but have not yet had occasion to use it.
Question 9

How Often Do You Need Research/Reference Assistance During The Following Times?
Question 9 (continued)

How Often Do You Need Research/Reference Assistance During The Following Times?

Analysis:

The purpose of this question is to assist the library in improving the allocation of staff resources. Although the results may at first glance appear unsurprising (weekday afternoons are when students are most likely to seek the assistance of a reference librarian), there are some interesting take-aways from the data. In particular, there is slightly more demand for Saturday reference assistance than Sunday reference assistance. This statistic runs counter to the perception that law students are more likely to perform research later in the weekend.
Question 10

When You Start Your Research, What Are You Most Likely To Do First?

- Search Westlaw: 71.1%
- Search Google or another search engine: 20.1%
- Search Library Catalog: 45%
- Ask a Reference Librarian: 31%
- Other (please specify): 0.5%
Question 10 (continued)

Analysis:

The purpose of this question was to get a sense of how students initially approach their research. Although it was not surprising that Westlaw proved to be the most popular choice, the margin of victory was far greater than anticipated. In looking at the results there seems to be just two choices for students; do I use Westlaw to begin my research or do I use something else? That Google and other search engines lagged so far behind was also a surprise and runs counter to the general notion that students “just Google everything.” The one noticeable difference in responses occurred with the 3Ls. In their responses, the 3Ls indicated that Westlaw and the various search engines were almost identical in terms of being chosen as a starting place for research.
Question 11

Analysis:

This question served two purposes: to gather evidence that there is a need for a mobile-friendly website, and to determine if students do still use the computers offered by the library. As expected, the majority of students use laptops, netbooks, smart phones and tablets to perform research. We were a bit surprised to find that 25% of students still utilize the desktops in the library. A couple of respondents commented that they enjoy the convenience of a big screen to view their research data, and would use the desktops more frequently if they were of better quality.
Question 12

In response to a previous survey, the library now offers an "Ask a Librarian" chat service. How useful have you found this service?

- 17.6%: I didn't know about the service
- 90.7%: I know about it, but I would never use it
- 14.8%: I know about it, but I would use it
- 7.4%: I have used it and I am satisfied with it
- 5.3%: I have used it and I am not satisfied with it
- 4.2%: I know about it, but it's not available when I need it

I haven't used it, but I might in the future.
Question 12 (continued)

Analysis:

This question served two purposes: to advertise an underutilized service, and to obtain feedback on why this service might be underutilized. The results appear to indicate that lack of knowledge regarding the availability of the service might be the primary factor in why students are not taking advantage of it. There were a number of comments submitted which oscillated between praising the service for its convenience and complaining about the inconsistent nature of the service. One point of interest is the difference in the responses from the various classes as depicted in the chart above. The 1Ls appear to have a more positive few of the service compared to the 3Ls.
Question 13

Please indicate which of the following online resources you find most useful (check all that apply):

- [73.7%] [40.6%] [37.1%] [33.7%] [25.7%] [19.4%] [18.3%] [16.6%] [12.6%] [10.3%] [9.7%] [9.1%] [7.4%] [6.7%] [3.4%] [2.9%] [1.1%] [1.1%]
Question 13 (continued)

Analysis:

This is a question that has been used in previous library surveys, and once again HeinOnline proved to be the most popular of the databases (not including Westlaw and LexisNexis) among all the law students. A closer examination of the results shows that ½ of the databases listed were selected by only 10% or less of the respondents. Surprisingly, the results from respondents who self-identified as staff members of one of the journals were not radically different than the results from all the other respondents, although they did indicate a slightly stronger preference for some of the more popular databases (e.g., HeinOnline, Aladin) than the general student body. It should be noted that there was some movement among the top databases when comparing the responses from all respondents to the responses from the journal staff. For example, CALI proved to be the 3rd most popular database among all respondents, but dropped to sixth place among journal staff.
Question 14

Please indicate why you use the library web page (check all that apply):

Analysis:

As in 2010, the majority of respondents use the library website to access the Exams Database and the Study Room Reservation System. Usage of most website features rose by 2 – 5% from 2010, which we hope is an indication that usage of the library website is up overall. A sizable amount of respondents use the library web page to access: the online catalog (58.2%), library information (54.9%), course reserves (54.9%), and research databases (52.2%).
Question 15

Is there a service or resource you’d like the library to offer?

Analysis:

In asking this question, we hoped to obtain ideas for possible new services our students might want. Surprisingly, this question received only 21 responses. Most students used this space to complain about noise from fellow students, or policies with which they disagree. Two students requested more study rooms and five students requested that the library be open more hours (contradicting the results of Question 5). Other suggestions include reserved carrels, scanning from the photocopiers, automatic Bluebooking system, legal citation checker, free coffee, and puppies during exams.
Analysis:

Overall, our students find the library a comfortable place to work and study. The majority of respondents rated all aspects of the library as excellent, very good, or good. As in past years, temperature is a concern for many students, with 31% of the comments received indicating that it’s either too hot or too cold. Fifty-seven percent of respondents gave the temperature a positive rating, while 43% rated it as fair or poor (nearly identical to the ratings received in 2010). Also as in years past, the availability of group study rooms and casual seating is of concern. A few students commented on the presence of mice in the library, a problem of which the staff is well-aware.
Question 17

Analysis:

The vast majority of students are satisfied with both the availability and reliability of the printers, scanners, office supplies and access to the wireless network. Some of the respondents were unaware that the library had scanners available and requested more office supplies in the printer rooms.
Question 18

Analysis:

The main purpose of this question was to advertise that the library has this equipment available. As expected, the overwhelming majority of students did not know that the Dufour Law Library has a microform scanner. Over 55% of respondents indicated they might use the equipment now that they are aware of its availability.
Question 19

What do you feel is the primary purpose of a law library? To provide a... (please rank 1 to 5, 1 being the most important)

What do you feel is the primary purpose of a law library? To provide a... (please rank 1 to 6, 1 being the most important)
Question 19 (continued)

Analysis:

This “big picture” question attempted to get to the heart of how the law students perceive the library. When looking at the above graph it is essential to note that the lower number denotes a more important purpose. The results, while not surprising, do shed some light on how the law students view the library. Once again, the common perception that the Library should be a “third place” for the students is somewhat diluted by these results, a trend that was reinforced by some of the written comments which insisted that the library not be used as a social space. Although there was little differentiation in the responses from students in different classes, the Evening student body had a more equal view of the top three purposes (place to study, place to research, collection of print materials) than the Day student body.
**Question 20**

If you were in charge of the law library for just one day, what would be your top priority?

**Analysis:**

This open-ended free-text question has been asked in the past three surveys and provides an opportunity for the respondents to address issues that might not have been raised by the other questions on the survey. One notable difference this year was that the question was answered by less than half of all respondents (43% of the students who started the survey), whereas in 2008 and 2010 almost 70% of respondents completed this question. Whether this statistical drop-off is due to an increase in satisfaction with the library, survey fatigue, or a variety of other factors is difficult to discern.

This year we saw a slight change in the areas garnering the most comments, although the temperature of the library was still one of the biggest causes of concern, just as it has been since we introduced this question in 2008. The other issues that were commented upon included noise in the library and related requests for quieter, more comfortable study space. Noise presents a particular problem largely because the complaints centered on noise created by fellow students. While the staff of the library is sensitive to this we also realize that this has to be a self-policing issue among the law students. Some items that had been a major concern in previous surveys, including more laptop printers and better library security, were barely mentioned in this year’s survey. Perhaps this can be credited to the changes that were implemented following the previous surveys.