STUDENT EXPERIENCE SUB-COMMITTEE

Communication Title: Library Survey 2013 Report: Initial Findings

Purpose of Communication:

At the request of the Student Experience Sub-Committee, a Report on the Library Survey 2013 presents the survey’s headline findings. The rationale for the survey is presented along with explanation of key areas where the Library is performing most successfully and least adequately for its customers, and its undergraduate and postgraduate students in particular. Findings highlight that the breadth and depth of the collection are of principal concern to students. Indicative criticism and comments from the student body, recorded via free-text comments in the survey, suggest areas where the Library might improve. The Report sets out proposed actions to help increase student and wider customer satisfaction with the University Library and Heritage Collections.

Consultation to Date:

Planning and rationale for the Library Survey 2013 have been communicated throughout last year to Library staff, DSU, Library customers, and to Library Steering Group and Library Users’ Committee. Initial findings were shared and discussed in December 2013 with the LibQUAL+ Project Group, chaired by the author of this Report. Key findings have been discussed with Library Users’ Committee in February 2014 by means of a brief report, without the consideration of free-text comments, a focus on students’ needs in particular, or proposed actions.

Action Requested:

Ratification from the Sub-Committee of the proposed key action areas outlined in the Report, recommendations of wider dissemination within the University required for this Report, and additional suggestions for actions.

Deadline for Action/Response Required:

Comments and suggestions may be emailed to the author of this Report by 7 March 2014, individually by Sub-Committee members or collectively by its Chair.

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1. **Introduction:**

1.1 Initial findings from our Library Survey, which ran at the end of 2013, indicate that the University Library and Heritage Collections received 2,114 completed, valid survey returns, representing around 11.67% of the total Durham University profile of current students and staff, breaking down as follows:

- 1,222 undergraduates
- 492 postgraduates
- 235 academics
- 114 managerial, support, and other non-academic staff
- 51 University Library and Heritage Collections colleagues

1.2 This amounts to the largest ever response to a library survey at Durham. Almost 88% of respondents cite the Bill Bryson Library as the library they use the most often; over 61% of respondents were female; and among academic schools and departments, the largest number of responses came from students and staff from Durham University Business School. The Survey was planned and administered by the author of this Report.

1.3 Respondents answered 22 core questions, nine broadly relating to customer service, eight to collections and access to information resources, and five to our physical library buildings and space. In addition they answered five questions, selected by the Library from a possible list of over one hundred, to illuminate areas of possible relevance to the Library’s pursuit of Customer Service Excellence accreditation.

2. **Purpose of the Survey and Methodology Employed:**

2.1 It is critical that University Library strategy and policies are aligned with customer expectations and the University’s strategic priorities, and that the student voice can inform changes we implement now and our future planning. So, it is important for us to know what our customers think about our services and resources so we can see where we are falling short and where we might best make improvements.

2.2 The Library Survey utilised an industry standard, LibQUAL+® survey instrument which has been developed by the Association of Research Libraries and has been used by other major academic libraries in the UK and around the world, including the Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, Cambridge University Library, Edinburgh University Library, and Manchester University Library.

2.3 It used a web-based tool designed to assess library service quality and identify areas for improvement, based on library users’ (and non-users’) perceptions of current service provision and their expectations for these, across a range of key areas.

2.4 The Library Survey used a gap analysis methodology to measure the extent of the difference between customers’ perceived levels of service, the minimum service levels that would be acceptable to them for different aspects of the University Library and Heritage Collections, and customers’ desired service levels. In other words, we are determining where the Library is meeting, surpassing, or – and this is the information we most need to find out – failing to meet our customers’ expectations and requirements.
3. **Durham University Headline Findings:**

3.1 The encouraging news is, that among our population of survey respondents, in none of the 22 core areas do our customers as a whole think that we are delivering less than the minimum quality level they require. According to the results of the survey, the University Library and Heritage Collections are most often meeting or exceeding the *minimum expectations* of their customers in the areas of:

1. Space for group learning and group study
2. Library staff who are consistently courteous
3. Giving users individual attention
4. Library staff who instil confidence in users
5. Library staff who deal with users in a caring fashion

3.2 It is a similar, though not identical, picture with regard to where we are most exceeding the *desired expectations* of our customers:

1. Space for group learning and group study
2. Library staff who are consistently courteous
3. Giving users individual attention
4. Library staff who instil confidence in users
5. Willingness to help users

3.3 But the Survey has indicated clearly what currently seems of most importance, interest, or concern to our customers. The Library is least often meeting or exceeding our customers’ *minimum expectations* with regard to:

1. Print and/or electronic journal collections I require for my work
2. Making electronic resources accessible from my home or office
3. Dependability in handling users’ service problems
4. The printed library materials I need for my work
5. Making information easily accessible for independent use

3.4 Similarly, we are least exceeding the *desired expectations* of our customers in relation to:

1. Print and/or electronic journal collections I require for my work
2. The electronic information resources I need
3. Making electronic resources accessible from my home or office
4. The printed library materials I need for my work
5. A haven for study, learning, or research

4. **Undergraduate Students Headline Findings:**

4.1 In none of the 22 core areas do undergraduate students as a whole think we are delivering less than the minimum quality level they require. Their expectations, with regard to a level of service that would meet their needs, are at their lowest, and therefore most easily filled, with regard to: Giving users individual attention. Undergraduates are, however, most demanding in terms of a minimum satisfactory service level when it comes to: Print and/or electronic journal collections I require for my work.
4.2 The Library is most often meeting or exceeding undergraduates’ minimum expectations in the areas of:

1. Space for group learning and group study
2. Library staff who are consistently courteous
3. Giving users individual attention
4. Library staff who instil confidence in users
5. A comfortable and inviting location

4.3 But we are least often meeting or exceeding their minimum expectations with:

1. Print and/or electronic journal collections I require for my work
2. Making electronic resources accessible from my home or office
3. Dependability in handling users’ service problems
4. Making information easily accessible for independent use
5. The printed library materials I need for my work

4.4 It is evident, then, that the Library needs to work harder to fulfil the content and collections needs of undergraduate students, and we must ensure we robustly deal with service difficulties they encounter. However, the overall value of the Library to undergraduates is powerfully expressed via the data. On a scale from 1 to 9, they rate the Library as a 7.14 in terms of: How would you rate the overall quality of the service provided by the library? And similarly, on a scale from 1 to 9 (‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’) there is a score of 7.12 for: The library aids my advancement in my academic discipline or work. The University Library and Heritage Collection are indispensable to undergraduates, with 33.31% of them using resources within the Library on a daily basis, 53.85% on a weekly basis, and only 0.49% never using Library resources.

5. Postgraduate Students Headline Findings:

5.1 Our postgraduate students are as a whole less satisfied than our undergraduates with the quality of the Library. And whilst we are over-delivering in terms of the group learning and group study space we are offering, providing a level of service which exceeds even their desired expectations, it is evident that the Library has even more work to do to fulfil content and collections needs for this customer group.

5.2 We most often meet or exceed postgraduates’ minimum expectations in ways which are broadly similar to those of undergraduates. But we are least often meeting or exceeding postgraduates’ minimum expectations with:

1=. A haven for study, learning, or research
1=. Making electronic resources accessible from my home or office
3. The printed library materials I need for my work
4. Print and/or electronic journal collections I require for my work
5. A library web site enabling me to locate information on my own

5.3 Lower scores with regard to the overall value that the Library provides to postgraduates may well be indicative of some concern over the breadth and depth of the Library’s collections, especially where research needs are concerned. Postgraduates rate the Library as a 7.06 in terms of: How would you rate the overall quality of the service provided by the library? And there is a score of 7.01 for: The library aids my advancement in my academic discipline or work. But the University Library and Heritage Collections remain
indispensable to this customer group too: 29.88% of postgraduates use resources within the Library on a daily basis, 50.00% on a weekly basis, and only 0.81% never use the resources.

5.4 However, when we consider doctoral research postgraduates as a sub-group in their own right, it is a matter of real concern to the Library that in five out of the 22 core areas, we are failing to deliver the minimum quality level they require. Four areas relate to collections and access to information resources, whilst the fifth area (‘A haven for study, learning, or research’) possibly also pinpoints inadequacies in terms of research provision as well as a perception that the physical libraries better suit the requirements of undergraduates than postgraduates. As far as the limitations of its budget allow, the Library needs to take action to build and expand its collections. A university with world-class aspirations needs a world-class collection.

6. Representative Student Comments:

6.1 Comments representative of general or frequent interest or disquiet voiced by students are drawn from the responses to question 45 in the Library Survey 2013 (see the appendix to this Report). They indicate areas of most concern or relevance to the Durham University student body. 833 respondents (39.4% of the total number) provided free-text comments; comments from only students are discussed here and are listed, unedited:

- “Thank you for this incredible library”
- “I visit a lot of other university libraries and Durham’s is the best”
- “I think the library is generally of a very high standard, as one would expect from a top university. The new extension to the Bill Bryson is excellent”
- “I want to go to a library to find a book, sit on a seat at a desk and read it, I could not care less how the library actually looks”
- “The facility is beautiful but it is a bit of an empty shell when it comes to information and access to it”
- “Having access to the majority of published books as well as electronic resources is my complete priority when it comes to the library: all other aspects at secondary”
- “I consider books as the main service”
- “What I see the library for: books, online resources, IT facilities, study space […] Looking pretty, being inspiring, having user support is much less important”

6.2 The Bill Bryson Library is almost universally admired and praised. The successful completion of the East Wing represents a major achievement for the University Library and the University as whole. But with an excellent and inspirational physical environment now ensured, the comments above are indicating that the bottom line for many students is, quite simply, content.

6.3 Physical Library Buildings and Space:

- Lovely place to work
- The library environment in the Bill Bryson Library inspires reading and learning
- The improvements to the Bryson Library are a significant step forward
- The Bill Bryson is an amazing and inspiring place
- Library extension is ace
- The new extension to the Bill Bryson Library is an inspiring place to work and a great improvement
• Facilities in general are excellent
• For the most part, I am incredibly impressed with the library […] the inside is stunning and very well-maintained and I find myself being a much more efficient worker in the library
• The newer parts of the library are nice, but the older parts look somewhat shabby
• The older part of the building is very dark and unappealing
• The biggest problem with the library is lack of space to work
• There are often not enough spaces to study or to use a network computer
• Definitely need more computers
• It isn’t big enough!
• The library is almost too big
• The cafeteria is way too small
• There is a serious lack of space for eating
• I would particularly benefit from communal eating space outside/near the library
• Abysmal café/social space for times to rest after a study session
• I miss a place to eat brought food. Some of us are poor students, tuition is high, it would be nice to be able to eat somewhere in the library
• The library really needs a suitable place for users to eat lunch/take breaks
• Put off using library by lack of kitchen facilities/eating areas
• It often gets very cold in the library
• The main problem is the temperature – it is generally either too cold or too hot to work comfortably
• The entry system is a nightmare
• Why do they have such outdated technology on the front gates?
• A better way of entering the library would be appreciated
• The barricades at the front of the library are very annoying
• Queen’s Campus library could do with policing for noise levels

6.4 Customer Service:

• I am here as an Erasmus student and I am deeply impressed
• Unfailingly helpful and courteous
• Very friendly and helpful staff
• Really helpful staff, particularly with regard to use of the ICT facilities
• I am very satisfied with the quality of services and facilities in the library
• Durham libraries are a wonderful resource, with knowledgeable and helpful staff
• Internet access, printing, scanning, and ease of checking out/renewing books are all really good services, thank you
• Good support for disabled students
• Closing times could perhaps be a bit later in the evenings
• The lack of a 24/7 library throughout term time is also a major drawback
• The crucial main fault with the library is that is it NOT open 24 hours
• Would like to see 24hr opening times all year round
• It seems to take a long time to get books out of store these days

6.5 Collections and Access to Information Resources:

• The quality of resources and availability of good workspaces in the library is really top-notch
• I make extensive use of the electronic journals accessible via the library webpage and greatly appreciate the document delivery service
• The library could have more copies of basic/introductory textbooks
• Could do with more of the essential texts
• The library does not stock enough of some essential texts
• There are not enough copies of key books
• It would be useful to have more multiple copies of books
• I just wish we had more books to borrow
• I would really like more online resources as copies of key books for modules are often already checked out
• It would be great if there were more resources available online, i.e. full e-books
• There should be a move to make as many texts as possible available online
• More online books would be good
• I would like to have all of the resources I need online, as often all of the students on a module need the same book
• The online resources are 10/10
• The library catalogue search function would be greatly enhanced by integrating external database and e-journals into a unified library catalogue search
• My field of research […] is very poorly served by the Library
• Limited resources for more specialist work
• I was expecting the library to have better resources than it does
• We do lack access to some important publications
• I also find that many texts printed abroad […] are not in the library
• The movement of social sciences books in the 300s range to movable shelving is an unmitigated disaster
• My only real criticism is the difficult in accessing the electronic shelves
• The electronic rolling stacks are a nightmare!
• I dislike the moving bookcases
• Moving bookcases sometimes prevent me from searching for required reading at my leisure
• Please, PLEASE move the theology/religion/sociology section out of the electronic shelves!
• Putting so many books in mobile shelving – which always breaks – means it is not easy to get [to get] hold of the item you require
• Would appreciate staff around to help with mobile shelving on a weekend (maybe during a time frame?)… Can never work them right and nobody was around the other day!

7. **Conclusion and Recommendations:**

7.1 Results from the survey and a gap-analysis approach are suggesting that some areas ‘matter’ far more to our customers than others. For example, whilst the Library performs very well with regard to group study-space provision, being consistently courteous with customers, and giving customers individual attention, our customers’ actual needs in these areas seem to be lower in comparison with what they are requiring in terms of the information resources they need from the Library to carry out their work.

7.2 On average, the score (from 1 up to 9) that Durham University customers assign to physical space aspects of the University Library and Heritage Collections such that these aspects might meet their minimum needs is 5.87; for customer service aspects, it is higher, at 6.28; but for information resources aspects, it is highest of all, at 6.47. In terms of the provision of collections and information resources, then, Durham University customers have the highest expectations.
7.3 Preliminary analysis, therefore, suggests areas where the Library might focus attention are:

- Electronic (or print) journal collections our customers require
- Making electronic resources accessible to customers from their home or office
- Ensuring dependability in handling users’ service problems
- Providing a web site that enables customers to locate information on their own
- And provision of and access to collections and resources generally

7.4 This applies to all segments of the Library’s customer base – undergraduates, postgraduates, academics, Library colleagues, and other staff beyond academic departments. But looking more closely at the data, it is evident that postgraduates and most especially academic staff at Durham University are perceiving shortfalls, or ‘gaps’ – in some cases significant ones – in terms of information provision and access.

7.5 Assumptions that can be made from the data include, perhaps, that the wonderful East Wing extension to the Bill Bryson Library is accounting to a large degree for such high levels of satisfaction with the physical library as a place; the investment made is impacting powerfully on customer satisfaction. Another may be that we are succeeding in providing a pleasing level of customer care to our users. Another indication, perhaps, is that as our customer base across the University ranges from first-year undergraduates through to senior academics, so the importance to our customers of the physical library lessens correspondingly whilst their information-provision requirements become more acute and demanding, and harder to fulfil.

7.6 A range of measures to help address students’ and other customers’ general and specific concerns will be mapped out over the course of 2014. The author of this Report would welcome suggestions and comments from the Student Experience Sub-Committee.

7.7 Specific areas to improve library services for the student body which are or will be addressed include:

- Advocating the need for a generous information resources budget for the Library
- Managing a robust reading list process, to ensure that required key texts are acquired and made available in a timely way
- Resolving problems relating to the availability via DUO of key texts (book chapters and articles) digitised by the Library and/or deep-linked via its catalogue
- Implementing a Resource Discovery System by the beginning of the 2014/2015 academic year, to improve the findability of and access to the full range of University Library and Heritage Collections resources
- Developing and expanding the Library’s provision of ebooks
- Accelerating the Library’s migration from print to electronic resources
- Carefully monitoring occupancy of the Library across service hours with a view to adjusting and/or expanding opening hours on the basis of evidence of usage
- Providing customers with greater assistance in using mobile shelving and disseminating more information with regard to how the Library manages this service and the options available for holding heavily used materials onsite during extensive refurbishment works
- On a University-wide basis, addressing the issue of the provision of adequate food and drink facilities in the vicinity of the Bill Bryson Library
- Improving the reliability and ease-of-use of the entrance gates to the Bill Bryson Library
8. **Author and Date of this Report:**

Dr Christopher Skelton-Foord  
Head of Policy and Planning  
Durham University Library and Heritage Collections  
12 February 2014

9. **Appendix: The Library Survey 2013 (full version):**

9.1 To minimise the burden on respondents with regard to completing our survey, we opted to deliver to all respondents a ‘lite’ version of the survey, which research indicates can maximise completion rates. From the 22 core areas we questioned customers about, all respondents answered a few key survey questions, with the remaining survey questions presented to a randomly selected subsample of respondents, ensuring we received data about all 22 areas, but helping to keep the response time needed manageable for every respondent. The full version of the Library Survey 2013 (five pages) is appended below.
The Library Survey

Welcome!

We are committed to improving your library services. Better understanding your expectations will help us tailor our services to your needs.

We are conducting this survey to measure library service quality and identify best practices through the Association of Research Libraries’ LibQUAL+® program.

Please answer all items. Thank you for your participation!

Information supplied on this form will be processed in the United States. Data protection legislation requires us to make clear that supplying information on the form is entirely voluntary.

Please rate the following statements (1 is lowest, 9 is highest) by indicating:

Minimum – the number that represents the minimum level of service that you would find acceptable

Desired – the number that represents the level of service that you personally want

Perceived – the number that represents the level of service that you believe our library currently provides

For each item, you must EITHER rate the item in all three columns OR identify the item as "NA" (not applicable). Selecting "NA" will override all other answers for that item when the survey is submitted.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>My Minimum Service Level Is</th>
<th>My Desired Service Level Is</th>
<th>Perceived Service Performance Is</th>
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<tr>
<td>1) Library staff who instil confidence in users</td>
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<td>2) Making electronic resources accessible from my home or office</td>
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<td>3) Library space that inspires study and learning</td>
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<td>4) Giving users individual attention</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>5) A library Web site enabling me to locate information on my own</td>
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<td>6) Space that facilitates quiet study</td>
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<td>7) Library staff who are consistently courteous</td>
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<td>8) The printed library materials I need for my work</td>
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<td>9) Quiet space for individual work</td>
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<td>10) Readiness to respond to users' enquiries</td>
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<td>11) The electronic information resources I need</td>
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<td>12) Convenient service hours</td>
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<td>13) Library staff who have the knowledge to answer user questions</td>
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<td>14) Providing help when and where I need it</td>
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<td>15) A comfortable and inviting location</td>
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<td>16) Library staff who deal with users in a caring fashion</td>
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<td>17) Modern equipment that lets me easily access needed information</td>
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<td>18) Library keeping me informed about all of its services</td>
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<td>19) Library staff who understand the needs of their users</td>
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<td>20) Easy-to-use access tools that allow me to find things on my own</td>
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<td>21) A haven for study, learning, or research</td>
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<td>22) Willingness to help users</td>
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<td>23) Making information easily accessible for independent use</td>
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<td>24) Print and/or electronic journal collections I require for my work</td>
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<td>25) Space for group learning and group study</td>
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<td>26) Employees who appear to enjoy what they do</td>
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<td>27) Dependability in handling users' service problems</td>
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Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements:
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<td>28) The library helps me stay abreast of developments in my field(s) of interest.</td>
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<td>29) The library aids my advancement in my academic discipline or work.</td>
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<td>30) The library enables me to be more efficient in my academic pursuits or work.</td>
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<td>31) The library helps me distinguish between trustworthy and untrustworthy information.</td>
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<td>32) The library provides me with the information skills I need in my work or study.</td>
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<td>33) In general, I am satisfied with the way in which I am treated at the library.</td>
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<td>34) In general, I am satisfied with library support for my learning, research, and/or teaching needs.</td>
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<td>35) How would you rate the overall quality of the service provided by the library?</td>
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Please indicate your library usage patterns:

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<td>36) How often do you use resources within the library?</td>
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<td>37) How often do you access library resources through a library Web page?</td>
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<td>38) How often do you use Yahoo™, Google™, or non-library gateways for information?</td>
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Please answer a few questions about yourself:

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<td>39) The library that you use most often:</td>
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Position: (Select the ONE option that best describes you.)

- Undergraduate
  - First year
  - Second year
  - Third year
  - Fourth year
  - Fifth year and above
  - Non-degree

- Postgraduate
  - Taught Masters degree
  - Research Masters degree
  - Doctoral Research degree
  - Non-degree
  - Undecided

- Academic Staff
  - Professor
  - Reader
  - Senior / Principal Lecturer
  - Lecturer
  - Research Staff
  - Other Academic Status

- Library Staff
  - Senior Management
  - Department Head / Team Leader
  - Professional Staff
  - Support Staff
  - Other

- Other Staff
  - Administrative or Academic Related Staff
  - Other staff positions

45) Please enter any comments about library services in the box below:


46) Enter your e-mail address in the box below if you would like to enter an optional drawing for a prize. Your e-mail address will be kept confidential and will not be linked to your survey responses. (Not required)

Thank you for participating in this library service quality survey!