

Concordia University Libraries
LibQual 2010 – Comparative report
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IMPORTANT NOTE

To preserve the confidentiality of the data obtained from the other Canadian comprehensive universities, their names have been deleted and replaced with generic identifiers such as University A, University B, etc.

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to compare the results obtained by Concordia University Libraries in the 2010 edition of LibQual with those of other Canadian university libraries and participating consortia. The first part of the report matches Concordia's results with those of ten other Canadian comprehensive universities, namely Carleton, Guelph, Memorial, New Brunswick, SFU, UQAM, Victoria, Waterloo, Windsor and York.¹ In order to see if there was any change in the rankings since the last LibQual Canadian consortium (2007), the results of the comprehensive universities are also presented for 2007. Note that the University of Regina, which is also considered a comprehensive university, did not participate in LibQual and SFU only participated in the 2010 edition. The second part of the report presents a comparison of Concordia's results in 2010 with the average scores obtained by a) CREPUQ universities; b) CARL universities; and c) all participating Canadian universities (LibQual Canada Consortium). The last section outlines the pros and cons of using LibQual as a comparison tool for Concordia Libraries.

Choice of metrics

The LibQual survey yields a massive number of results (or scores): for each question, as many as five scores are provided based on various calculations of the raw results. In order to obtain a general picture of library users' perception, it is best to look at the aggregate scores for each of the three dimensions (affect of service, information control and library as place) as well as the overall score that adds up the results of all 22 core questions. I chose to use both the *perceived mean* (the mean of the perceived scores, i.e. how users actually perceive the library services) and the *adequacy mean* which is the gap between the *perceived mean* and the *minimum mean* (the minimum level of service quality expected by users). The *perceived mean* can be seen as an absolute measure of the users' perception of service quality, while the *adequacy mean* is a measure of that perception relative to their minimum expectation. For detailed explanation of LibQual scores and methodology, see the LibQual resources page: http://www.libqual.org/about/about_lq/top_resources.

In addition to the comparison with Canadian comprehensive universities and consortia, in an effort to put our results in a broader perspective, this report will use *LibQual norms* as a way to benchmark Concordia libraries in the context of all North American participating institutions.

¹ In the following sections, the names of these institutions have been deleted and replaced with a generic identifier such *University A* or *University B* in order to preserve the confidentiality of the data.

LibQual Norms 2010

LibQual norms indicate where one institution ranks (among all North American participating institutions) in terms of percentiles. A percentile of 42 indicates that 42% of institutions have obtained lower *perceived mean*. The discussion of Concordia Libraries' performance in terms of LibQual norms is incorporated in the next section.

Concordia's percentile rank	
Overall	38
Affect of service	46
Information control	36
Library as space	31

Section I— Canadian Comprehensive Universities

Overall results—Discussion

The tables below show where Concordia ranks in terms of **overall** appreciation of library services. The overall scores incorporate all three dimensions of LibQual: affect of service (the interaction between users and library employees); information control (the collection-related issues); and library as place (the physical aspects of the library). Note that all LibQual scores are on scale of 1 to 9, 9 being the highest score.

In terms of perceived mean, in 2010 we ranked 8 out of 11 with a score of 6.77. Our adequacy mean (score: 0.21) placed us at rank 10. This is very similar to the results of 2007 where we ranked 8 out of 10 for both perceived (score: 6.82) and adequacy (score: 0.23) means. Looking at LibQual norms for 2010, our overall perceived score of 6.77 places us at the 38th percentile, close to the bottom third of North American institutions.

Overall results—Tables

LibQual 2007 Overall Perceived mean		
Rank		
1	University D	7.24
2	University B	7.11
3	University A	7
4	University C	6.98
5	University F	6.91
6	University E	6.91
7	University I	6.88
8	Concordia	6.82
9	University H	6.72
10	University J	6.71

LibQual 2010 Overall Perceived mean		
Rank		
1	University A	7.12
2	University B	7.11
3	University C	7.04
4	University D	7.00
5	University E	6.94
6	University F	6.86
7	University G	6.82
8	Concordia	6.77
9	University H	6.76
10	University I	6.70
11	University J	6.26

LibQual 2007 Overall Adequacy mean		
Rank		
1	University C	0.56
2	University B	0.54
3	University I	0.51
4	University D	0.48
5	University A	0.47
6	University F	0.33
7	University E	0.25
8	Concordia	0.23
9	University H	0.15
10	University J	-0.02

LibQual 2010 Overall Adequacy mean		
Rank		
1	University A	0.66
2	University B	0.56
3	University C	0.54
4	University G	0.52
5	University D	0.51
6	University I	0.49
7	University F	0.30
8	University E	0.26
9	University H	0.26
10	Concordia	0.21
11	University J	-0.02

Affect of service—Tables

LibQual 2007 Affect of service Perceived mean		
Rank		
1	University D	7.42
2	University B	7.35
3	University A	7.19
4	University F	7.08
5	University E	7.02
6	University C	7.01
7	Concordia	7
8	University I	6.99
9	University J	6.87
10	University H	6.74

LibQual 2010 Affect of service Perceived mean		
Rank		
1	University D	7.31
2	University E	7.25
3	University B	7.25
4	University F	7.22
5	University A	7.19
6	University G	7.13
7	Concordia	7.10
8	University C	7.09
9	University I	7.09
10	University J	6.84
11	University H	6.82

LibQual 2007 Affect of service Adequacy mean		
Rank		
1	University B	0.9
2	University I	0.86
3	University C	0.8
4	University A	0.76
5	University D	0.73
6	University F	0.64
7	Concordia	0.55
8	University E	0.48
9	University H	0.29
10	University J	0.27

LibQual 2010 Affect of service Adequacy mean		
Rank		
1	University B	0.95
2	University I	0.85
3	University A	0.83
4	University C	0.78
5	University G	0.77
6	University D	0.65
7	University J	0.65
8	University F	0.62
9	Concordia	0.45
10	University E	0.44
11	University H	0.37

Affect of service – Discussion

The *affect of service* dimension is where we obtained our best scores (compared with the 2 other dimensions). Nevertheless, in 2010, our perceived mean (score: 7.10) placed us at the 7th rank (among Canadian comprehensive universities) and our adequacy mean (score: 0.45) left us at number 9 out of 11. Looking back at 2007, we ranked 7th out of 10 for both perceived (score: 7.00) and adequacy (score: 0.55) scores. Here too our comparative performance is relatively stable.

Using LibQual norms to assess our performance in 2010 against all participating institutions, we obtained a percentile rank of 46 which situates us close to the middle of the distribution (46% of libraries obtained lower scores).

Information control—Discussion

As for *information control* (collection-related issues), we are 10th among Canadian comprehensive universities for the perceived mean (score: 6.78) and 9th if we look at the adequacy mean (score: 0.13). In 2007, we did a bit better ranking 8th out of 10 for both perceived mean (score: 6.93) and adequacy mean (score: 0.12). Here, LibQual norms place us at the 36th percentile for 2010, close to the bottom third.

Information Control—Tables

LibQual 2007 Information Control Perceived mean		
Rank		
1	University D	7.28
2	University B	7.12
3	University C	7.11
4	University F	7.1
5	University A	7.06
6	University I	7.02
7	University E	6.96
8	Concordia	6.93
9	University J	6.92
10	University H	6.86

LibQual 2010 Information Control Perceived mean		
Rank		
1	University A	7.19
2	University C	7.12
3	University B	7.08
4	University D	7.01
5	University G	7.00
6	University F	6.95
7	University H	6.91
8	University E	6.82
9	University I	6.79
10	Concordia	6.78
11	University J	6.54

LibQual 2007 Information control Adequacy mean		
Rank		
1	University C	0.36
2	University A	0.32
3	University D	0.32
4	University B	0.24
5	University I	0.22
6	University F	0.18
7	University E	0.15
8	Concordia	0.12
9	University H	0.12
10	University J	-0.18

LibQual 2010 Information control Adequacy mean		
Rank		
1	University D	0.49
2	University G	0.48
3	University A	0.45
4	University C	0.36
5	University I	0.31
6	University B	0.24
7	University E	0.16
8	University H	0.14
9	Concordia	0.13
10	University F	0.12
11	University J	-0.02

Library as place—Tables

LibQual 2007 Library as Place Perceived mean		
Rank		
1	University D	6.79
2	University C	6.68
3	University B	6.63
4	University E	6.61
5	University A	6.56
6	University H	6.45
7	University I	6.36
8	Concordia	6.32
9	University F	6.26
10	University J	6.02

LibQual 2007 Library as place Adequacy mean		
Rank		
1	University C	0.5
2	University B	0.43
3	University I	0.42
4	University D	0.3
5	University A	0.23
6	University F	0.03
7	University E	0.02
8	University H	-0.01
9	Concordia	-0.12
10	University J	-0.23

LibQual 2010 Library as Place Perceived mean		
Rank		
1	University A	6.98
2	University B	6.94
3	University C	6.78
4	University E	6.66
5	University H	6.48
6	University D	6.43
7	Concordia	6.15
8	University F	6.06
9	University G	6.00
10	University I	5.90
11	University J	4.84

LibQual 2010 Library as place Adequacy mean		
Rank		
1	University A	0.67
2	University B	0.65
3	University C	0.37
4	University D	0.35
5	University G	0.23
6	University I	0.23
7	University E	0.13
8	University F	0.06
9	University H	0.01
10	Concordia	-0.09
11	University J	-1.15

Library as place—Discussion

Finally, a look at the *library as place* component of the survey reveals that, in 2010, we ranked 7th in terms of perceived mean (score: 6.15) and 10th for adequacy mean (score: -0.09). In comparison with 2007 (perceived score: 6.32; adequacy score: -0.12), we went up one rank (from 8th to 7th) in terms of perceived score, but this is due to worse scores for other institutions, not a better score for us. As for adequacy mean we went down one rank (8th to 9th). Looking at the LibQual norms, we are placed at the 31th percentile in 2010, in the bottom third of participating libraries.

It is important to note that we obtained negative adequacy means in both 2007 and 2010 which indicates that we do not meet the minimum expectations of our users in the area of Library as place. University J is the only other institution that received negative scores in both LibQual iterations

Results summary

Compared to the other ten or eleven Canadian comprehensive university libraries for which we have data, Concordia Libraries ranks between the 7th rank and the 10th in users' perception of our services, collections and physical space. There are no radical changes between 2007 and 2010, but in several categories we went down one or two ranks. The only category where we climbed the rankings is the perceived mean for *Library as place* where we went from 8th to 7th place but this is actually the result of having more universities with lower scores rather than us having a better score. In fact, in that category our score went down from 6.32 to 6.15. A glance through the various comparison tables for 2007 and 2010 also seem to indicate that most institutions have remained relatively stable across the 2 iterations of LibQual. What is more, rankings tend to be similar across the 3 dimensions, meaning that libraries tend to either rank high in all 3 dimensions or low everywhere. For instance, University B, University C and University D are close to the top of the rankings across all dimensions for both 2007 and 2010. Concordia, University J and University H, on the other hand, are consistently closer to the bottom of the rankings. So there seems to be some stability in the perception of the users which may be hard to change in the short term. Note that this perception is only based on two iterations of LibQual and should be subject to caution.

Section II— Concordia vs. various Canadian Consortia

Affect of service			Information Control	
	Perceived mean	Adequacy mean	Perceived mean	Adequacy mean
Concordia	7.10	0.45	6.78	0.13
CREPUQ	7.49	0.72	7.04	0.41
CARL	7.27	0.69	6.98	0.29
Canadian Consortium	7.33	0.69	6.98	0.32
Library as Place			Overall	
Concordia	6.15	-0.09	6.77	0.21
CREPUQ	6.74	0.26	7.13	0.49
CARL	6.43	0.25	6.96	0.43
Canadian Consortium	6.50	0.23	6.99	0.44

Concordia’s overall scores are below those of all the consortia, both for perceived and adequacy means. This is also true of all three individual dimensions (affect of service, information control and library as place). These lower than average scores are congruent with our position (percentile rank) in the LibQual norms as discussed in the previous section.

Section III— Strengths and limits of LibQual as a benchmarking tool

One of the main selling points for the LibQual survey is the fact that it allows for comparison of results with hundreds of libraries in North America and dozens within Canada. In 2010 –as was previously done in 2007– a LibQual Canada Consortium was formed to encourage as many Canadian libraries as possible to participate to LibQual. This resulted in the participation of 47 libraries (mostly academic ones), including 25 CARL libraries and 10 CREPUQ institutions. At the conclusion of the survey, results from each institution as well as aggregate reports for the various groups (Canada, CARL and CREPUQ) are made available on the Consortium website. The present report is based on these numbers.

As every institution uses the same instrument (or at least variations of the same instrument, like LibQual Lite) composed of 22 core questions plus five “local” questions chosen at the consortium level, it is easy to draw comparison, either at the individual question level or at the dimension level.

However, one should be careful before drawing conclusions based on LibQual results. Here are a few factors to keep in mind:

- Some of the LibQual questions are very general in nature to the point of being rather vague. This is probably inherent to the nature of LibQual as the survey aims at providing questions that can be asked across a very broad spectrum of institutions. So if it is easy to compare the quantitative results of a given question, it is not always clear that respondents from different institutions have the same understanding of the question.
- It cannot be over emphasized that LibQual is a users' *perception* survey. The results, even if quantitative, represent very subjective impressions on the part of the respondents. Expectations and understanding of the questions are likely to vary due to local factors such as the type of services and collections provided by the library, comparison with other local institutions, general perception of the university, etc. It is also possible that more general cultural factors will impact the results: do library users in British Columbia have the same expectations as those in the Atlantic Provinces? This does not mean that the results are not useful, but they are *statements of values and expectations*, not factual data like collection or library use statistics.

LibQual as a benchmarking tool for the next 10 years

If Concordia Libraries decide to use LibQual on a regular basis in order to assess its evolution relative to other comprehensive university libraries, the following issues should be considered.

- There needs to be some sort of consensus among the Canadian universities (at least the comprehensive ones) on the frequency of the survey. There is little incentive in conducting LibQual every year if most other institutions do not.
- Survey fatigue is a concern. This may not be a major issue for our undergraduate population as it is large enough to avoid sampling the same respondents year after year. However, it is a real problem for faculty members and, to a lesser extent, for graduate students. For every iteration of LibQual, we sample approximately half of the faculty members and close to 25% of graduate students. A possible solution would be to sample faculty only once every two iterations of LibQual.

Recommendation

LibQual is a useful benchmarking tool as it is a unique look at users' perception of Canadian university libraries. The instrument is well tested and widely used by North American academic institutions. It also provides useful qualitative data in the form of users' comments. However, there are limits to what we can learn from such a macroscopic view. Provided that the limitations inherent to LibQual are understood, it can be used as one way to compare ourselves with other academic libraries but it should not be the only benchmarking tool and it should not be overused. Other more factual indicators like collection statistics, circulation and usage statistics, library norms and standards, should be employed and the results of LibQual should be used in conjunction with those other data sources.

Glossary

Adequacy mean

The gap between the *perceived mean* and the *minimum mean*. The *adequacy mean* is a measure of that perception relative to their minimum expectation.

Affect of service

One of the three *dimensions* of LibQual. It deals with the relationship of users and staff as well as the perception of library services.

Information control

One of the three *dimensions* of LibQual. It deals with library collections and the tools that give access to them.

LibQual norms

Standards developed by LibQual to measure where one institution ranks (in terms of percentile) compared to all North American institutions. A rank of 42 means that 42% of participating institutions obtain lower scores for that dimension (or for overall results).

Library as place

One of the three *dimensions* of LibQual. It deals with the physical space of the library.

Perceived mean

The mean of the perceived scores, i.e. how users actually perceive the library services. The perceived mean can be seen as an absolute measure of the users' perception of service quality.