MISO: Measuring Information Service Outcomes

In Spring of 2014, the University Libraries partnered with Information Technology Services to administer a user survey called MISO (Measuring Information Service Outcomes). MISO is a qualitative survey developed in 2005 by David Consiglio, the Head of Research Support and Educational Technology at Bryn Mawr College. It has since been adopted at a variety of colleges and universities nationwide. In 2014, 40 institutions participated.

The survey is designed to measure several different facets of users' interaction with our services and collections. Among them are frequency of use, importance of, and satisfaction with our services, skill level with various tools, interest in learning more about various topics, and opinions on general service quality. Each item is scored on a 4-point scale: not important, somewhat important, important, and very important; or dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, somewhat satisfied, and satisfied. The number 4 is assigned to the positive end of the scale, so 4 is the highest possible score and 1 is the lowest.

The Assessment Committee chose four different user groups to survey: faculty, undergraduates, graduate students in the College of Arts and Sciences, and graduate students in the professional schools. The survey instrument is customized to each different user groups, so the questions that appear are not exactly the same on each survey. For example, faculty are asked about “Research support for your students scholarly needs,” while undergraduates do not see that question.

Invitations to take the survey were sent via email to sample groups of the student populations, as well as to all faculty members. Of the 5,381 people who received an invitation to participate in the survey, 2,013 completed and submitted the responses, for a 38.7% response rate. These responses were approximately evenly divided among the user groups (faculty, undergraduate students, and graduate students.)

Responses are also fairly evenly divided among users of the different library buildings. Undergrads are the least likely to say that they don’t visit the library building, and graduate students in the College of Arts and Sciences are the most likely not to visit the library at all. Unsurprisingly, undergraduates are the heaviest users of the IC, while faculty and CAS grad students use Cudahy most often. Grad students in the professional schools are the most likely to use Lewis primarily.
We received the greatest number of responses from students and faculty in the sciences within the College of Arts and Sciences. Humanities, social sciences, and business are also well represented.

In terms of importance, the same items are in the top three for faculty, graduate students in the College of Arts and Sciences, and graduate students in the professional schools. They are: 1) Access to online resources from off-campus, 2) Library databases, and 3) Overall library services. Undergraduates also rank access to online resources highly, but physical comfort and quiet work space in the library round out their top three. In general, there is not a lot of variance in scores among the different user populations, for either importance or satisfaction scores.

**Most important: faculty**
- Access to online resources from off-campus: 3.87
- Library databases: 3.57
- Overall library service: 3.56

**Most important: undergraduates**
- Physical comfort in the library (e.g. seating, lighting): 3.69
- Access to online resources from off-campus: 3.65
- Quiet work space in the library: 3.49
Most important: CAS graduate students
Access to online resources from off-campus 3.79
Library databases 3.67
Overall library service 3.51

Most important: professional school graduate students
Access to online resources from off-campus 3.72
Library databases 3.40
Overall library service 3.38

All user groups report a high level of satisfaction with the library web site, and undergraduate and graduate students are very satisfied with the current library schedule. Other selections differ by patron category. People are least satisfied with the library’s e-book collection, Pegasus, and their input into library decision-making.

Most satisfied: faculty
Subject librarian 3.83
Library reference services 3.77
Library web site (e.g. library hours, policies) 3.77

Most satisfied: undergraduates
Current library schedule 3.66
Library web site (e.g. library hours, policies) 3.65
Library databases 3.64

Most satisfied: CAS graduate students
Current library schedule 3.71
Library web site (e.g. library hours, policies) 3.69
Library circulation services 3.67

Most satisfied: professional school graduate students
Access to online resources from off-campus 3.68
Overall library service 3.68
Library web site (e.g. library hours, policies) 3.67

Least satisfied: faculty
Your input into library decisions that affect you 3.37
Library e-book collections 3.35
Access to online resources from off-campus 3.35

Least satisfied: undergraduates
Pegasus 3.46
Library e-book collections 3.43
Your input into library decisions that affect you 3.42
Least satisfied: CAS graduate students
Physical library collections 3.28
Pegasus 3.27
Library e-book collections 3.25

Least satisfied: professional school graduate students
Your input into library decisions that affect you 3.44
Pegasus 3.38
Library e-book collections 3.38

Physical facilities

We also looked at how users assessed the importance and quality of several aspects of the physical library, broken down by which library they used most. Physical library collections are the most important to Cudahy patrons. Physical comfort and group study space are most important to Lewis Library patrons. IC users rate quiet study space as the most important. Unsurprisingly, users who do not visit the library building rank all of these elements as less important.
Satisfaction scores are somewhat more uniform than importance scores. There is only a small variation among the different library spaces. Some items that stand out are that Cudahy users are more satisfied with group study space, and IC users are less satisfied with physical library collections and finding physical library materials.

**Collections**

We also explored the ways in which patrons from different academic divisions differ in attitudes related to our collections. Library databases are the most important across almost all academic divisions. People in the humanities give higher marks to physical library collections, and those in the School of Education and in nursing rank the importance of e-books the highest.

Patrons are also more satisfied with databases than with e-books or physical library collections, regardless of their subject area. For the most part, people are less satisfied with e-books, but people in the school of nursing are more satisfied with the library’s e-books. Patrons in the humanities and the social sciences are less happy with both physical library materials and e-books than people in the professional schools.

*Full data is available in the supplementary charts.*
Skills

Among the survey questions are several that ask users about their skill level with various library and ITS tools, their interest in learning more about those tools, and their preferred method of instruction. We explored each academic division, and each library location, to see where there were opportunities for user education. Curiously, high skills scores often seem to correlate with high interest in learning more, whereas low skills scores generally coincide with a low desire to learn more about library tools.

In terms of what users most want to learn about, the library-related ones that are most frequently high-scoring (above 2.5) across patron groups, library locations, and academic divisions are: “Finding and evaluating sources” and “Library databases”. Faculty have the greatest number of high-scoring items, and graduate students in the College of Arts and Sciences have the least. Finally, Communication has the greatest number of highly scored items, followed by Social Work. Each item that scored above a 3.0 is listed in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graphics software</th>
<th>Undergraduate</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>3.17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finding and evaluating sources</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio/video editing</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio/video editing</td>
<td>Grad student: professional programs</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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<td>Communication</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding and evaluating sources</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>IPS</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avoiding computer problems</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding computer problems</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Undergraduates

Undergraduates in business and communication show the most confidence in their skills overall, while nursing students are the least confident. Undergrads in the humanities are least interested in learning new skills, while those in business and communication are most interested.

In general, undergraduates who use Lewis Library rate their skills the highest, and are the most interested in learning more. Undergrads who don’t visit the libraries rate their skills the lowest, and their interest in learning is also the lowest. Cudahy users are second from the bottom.

Undergraduates who primarily use Cudahy are most interested in workshops, but undergrads who use the other 2 locations prefer a self-directed tutorial. Oddly, the people who report that they don’t visit also prefer in-person training.

Faculty

Faculty in the social sciences are the most confident in their skills, while nursing and social work rate themselves lower. Nursing and social work faculty are the most interested in learning new skills, and
faculty in education are the least interested. In general, faculty feel the least confident about their WCL skills (2.47) followed by their Pegasus skills (2.6). They are most interested in learning about finding and evaluating info and library databases, and less interested in WCL and Pegasus. There’s very little difference in skills among faculty who use Lewis, the IC, or Cudahy, but those who don’t visit the library report lower skills overall.

**College of Arts and Sciences: graduate students**

Graduate students in the humanities and the social sciences rate their skills more highly than do graduate students in the sciences. They also are more interested in learning more. This group shows a strong preference for learning via online tutorials, and is also comparatively more interested in learning about library databases than other tools. These results are particularly strong in the social sciences. Differences among those who use different library facilities is not very pronounced, but IC users are most interested in learning about graphics software, whereas Cudahy and Lewis users want to learn about library databases. Those who do not visit the library show very little interest in learning about any of the tools.

**Professional schools: graduate students**

Students in the School of Communication are much more interested in learning more about any of the tools than those in other programs. Their top two interests are “Audio/video editing” and “Finding and evaluating information.” Students in nursing and the Institute for Pastoral Studies are least confident in their skills, particularly with Pegasus and WorldCat Local. As with graduate students in the College of Arts and Sciences, there is not a lot of variation among users of the different library buildings.

*Full data is available in the supplementary charts.*

**Free-text comments**

The creators of this survey instrument encourage libraries to focus more on the quantitative results and not to over-emphasize the comments. This is in part because the number of comments is small related to the total number or responses, and in part because the people most motivated to leave a comment are likely to have very strong opinions, thus skewing the data. In our case, less than ¼ of the respondents chose to leave a comment, and less than half of those are about the library. (The others are about ITS or about the survey instrument itself.)

Upon analysis, the free-text comments are widely scattered as related to library issues. The most frequent of the free-text comments that relate to the library is general praise for the library’s services and staff. There are also many requests for enhancements to collections of various types. The lack of doors to Cudahy library was mentioned a number of times, sometimes coupled with general sense that Cudahy is "neglected". Other frequent requests include better search interfaces, more training and information about the library, quieter study spaces, and more comfortable furniture.
Comparative analysis

Forty institutions participated in the MISO survey in 2014, and we received comparative notebooks that compare our results to the other libraries. Only the surveys for faculty and undergrads are compared, though, as the graduate student groups are considered “special populations.” Also, each institution was able to customize their surveys to some extent. Therefore, not all questions are available in the comparative notebooks. The institutions that have participated in MISO in the past are not particularly similar to Loyola, and none of them are part of our peer or aspirational schools as established by the university administration. We decided to look at 3 different peer groups: Jesuit institutions who took the survey in 2013 or 2014; large schools (enrollments of over 5,000 undergraduates) who took the survey in the past 2 years, and everyone who took the survey in 2014.

Looking at the items with the highest variance, where our scores differ most from our peers, some interesting trends emerge. One would expect some degree of overlap as these are different slices of the same data, but there is consistent variance in the frequency of use of online resources from off campus, the importance of the ebook collection, and importance of the library subject guides, all of which are higher for Loyolans than for our peer institutions. On the negative side, our users are overwhelmingly less confident in their ability to use the online catalog than users at other libraries. That one question showed the greatest variance across all user groups and all peer groups. Averaging out all of the results, the strongest variance is use of online resources from off campus, which is 34% higher than our peers, followed by skill level with the catalog, which is 20% lower. Skill level with the library discovery layer (WorldCat Local or other) and the importance of laptop borrowing are both 15% lower than our peers.

We also examined services that are highly important to our users, and also significantly more important to our users than to those of our peers. Access to online resources from off-campus, library e-book collections, and the ease of finding physical materials in the library are all notably more important to Loyolans. On the flip side, our users report that borrowing laptops, the institutional repository, and the library schedule are less important than they are at our peer institutions. One note about the library schedule: we postulate that it might score low in importance because satisfaction is high: i.e., if users were not happy with our schedule they might find it more important.

It’s also interesting to know areas where our scores do not differ from peers. Questions that relate to the library staff’s service skills are high across the various schools, while interest in learning new skills is low across the various libraries. Interest in borrowing laptops is low for undergrads, and how informed faculty feel about copyright is low across all of the schools.

Peer Groups

Large Schools
- The College at Brockport
- Brigham Young University
- Georgia College
- Grand Valley State University
- St. Joseph’s University
• University of North Carolina Charlotte
• University of Massachusetts Boston
• University of Nevada Reno

**Jesuit Schools**
• Canesius College
• Fairfield University
• Loyola University Maryland
• Rockhurst University
• St. Joseph's University
• Xavier University

*Full data is available in the supplementary charts.*