

NON-USER PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE LIBRARY SERVICE QUALITY

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Abstract:

The goal of this quantitative research project is to explore perceptions of community college library services among those who never or rarely use them ('nonusers'). The purpose is to fill a gap in the Library and Information Science (LIS) literature related to non-users and use this new understanding to illuminate the broad base of support libraries enjoy among all those who positively perceive the library, whether they use it or not. A fuller understanding of non-user perceptions could allow library leaders to better demonstrate the value they bring to their campuses beyond mere usage through functions such as recruiting students and faculty, signaling quality, and promoting a culture of scholarship. This may allow them to garner additional resources or avoid resource cuts and thus more effectively achieve their missions. The theoretical base in this study is drawn from Signaling Theory and Stakeholder Theory. The current project analyzes 1,200 respondents collected using the Association of Research Libraries' (ARL) LibQUAL+ survey instrument at a large, Midwestern community college in the Spring of 2016 using a 3 x 5 mixed-design ANOVA. Non-users are defined as those who report never making use of the library premises. Their perceptions of service quality along three dimensions were compared with four other respondent groups, those who report using the library daily, weekly, quarterly, and never. Results indicate non-users' perceptions of library services are largely positive and similar to more frequent user groups. Just 2% of the differences in perceptions of service quality are explained by usage level. Pairwise comparisons indicate no significant difference in perceptions between non-users and quarterly users, and found small effect size differences between non-users and daily users, non-users and weekly users, and nonusers and monthly users. These findings suggest that non-use of the library does not necessarily indicate low perceptions of its quality. Library leaders looking to improve usage should focus instead on curriculum integration, faculty outreach, or stronger marketing. Having services that are perceived to be of high-quality is not enough to drive traffic to community college libraries. Excellent marketing, outreach, and a broader understanding of stakeholders is also vital.

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