

Model Student Satisfaction Survey

American Association of Law Libraries

ALL-SIS Student Services Committee

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INTRODUCTION

In Spring 2011, the ALL-SIS Student Services Committee asked law librarians to complete a brief survey about how they obtained feedback from students and to submit copies of their student surveys. The sample surveys collected and results of the survey are posted on the ALL-SIS Student Services Committee—Student Surveys Subcommittee website, and additional information on the methodology and results is available in the Executive Report.¹ The following model student satisfaction survey is based on the results of this survey.

Academic law libraries may seek feedback from patron groups in addition to students, such as faculty and staff, and employ a number of methods for obtaining feedback on various subjects. Respondents to the Committee’s survey, for example, utilized online comment boxes and blogs, Facebook, and focus groups as opportunities for feedback. They also conduct a number of surveys in addition to a traditional user satisfaction survey, such as surveys on technology use and research experience. The survey below, however, is meant to present a model for only one particular type of survey—a periodic survey of law student satisfaction with library resources and services.

This model survey is intended to provide suggestions on the type of questions to consider asking in a student satisfaction survey and to provide examples of questions (and examples of possible responses, when deemed useful) based on the sample surveys collected. It is not, however, necessarily the “best” survey because there is no single “best” survey. A survey design will inevitably vary from library-to-library to best suit the needs of the library and its student users. Furthermore, when creating a survey, a library should always carefully consider why it is conducting the survey, what information it wants to obtain, and what it will do with the

¹ <http://www.aallnet.org/sis/allsis/committees/students/studentsurveys.asp>

information.² For additional resources on creating successful surveys, including a bibliography of survey literature and a helpful checklist, see the ALL-SIS Student Services Committee—Student Surveys Subcommittee website.

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² Considering these factors will also help a library decide what questions are essential. A survey in most instances should not include more than approximately twenty questions in order to avoid survey fatigue, so libraries should identify the questions that are most important to ask. See Frances M. Brillantine, How to Create an Effective Survey, <http://www.aallnet.org/sis/allsis/committees/students/StudentSurveysSubcmte/howtocreateasuccessfulsurvey.pdf>.

MODEL PATRON SATISFACTION SURVEY

Demographics

Most student surveys obtain basic demographic information about respondents, including their year and membership in relevant constituencies, which is valuable not only for understanding who is using the library, but also for who is not. For the purpose of awarding prizes for participation in the survey or allowing students to sign-up for further information (e.g., to receive messages regarding instructional sessions), the survey may also gather identifying information, which should be separated from responses to preserve anonymity.

1. What is your year or status at _____ School of Law?
2. Are you involved in any of the following activities? (select all that apply)
 - a. Journal
 - b. Clinic/Institute
 - c. Externship
 - d. Moot Court
 - e. Research Assistant

Library Use (Physical Space)

The survey provides an opportunity to obtain information about when and how students use the library's physical space. In addition to questions regarding facilities (see below), these questions help gauge whether the library is providing an environment conducive to research and learning (e.g., are the operating hours appropriate) and to identify ways to improve facilities.

1. How often do you visit the library?
 - a. Daily
 - b. A few times per week
 - c. Once a month
 - d. A few times per semester
 - e. Never

2. What times of day do you visit the library? [select all that apply / select top ___ / rank in order of frequency]³
- a. Early Morning (open – x)
 - b. Morning (x-x)
 - c. Afternoon (x-x)
 - d. Evening (x-x)
 - e. Night (x-close)
3. The library's current hours during the academic year are _____.
- a. Are you satisfied with these hours?
 - b. If not, please explain: _____
4. What do you do when you visit the library? [select all that apply / select top ___ / rank in order of frequency]
- a. Study [alone/group/quiet]
 - b. Research [for class, journal, externship]
 - c. Use group study rooms
 - d. Use the [computers/printers/copiers/scanners]
 - e. Get research assistance at the reference desk
 - f. Get technical assistance of the IT department
 - g. Use or check out library materials
 - h. Relax/socialize
 - i. Other: _____

³ In many questions in this model survey, words and phrases appear in brackets []. This is meant to provide options for the survey question construction. Here, for example, this model question is providing options for how to instruct the student to respond to the question.

Library Use (Website)

In addition to asking students how and when they use the library building, a survey may ask students when and how they “visit” the library via the library’s website. A library should consider including questions regarding website use and usability because students can generally access many of a library’s resources and services virtually through the website, so the site may be the first—if not the only—interaction a student has with the library.

1. What resources do you access from the library’s website?
 - a. Library catalog
 - b. Research guides
 - c. Online tutorials
 - d. Exams
 - e. Library information (hours, contact information)
 - f. Course reserves
 - g. Group study room reservation system
 - h. Databases
 - i. Library blog
 - j. Other: _____
2. When you search for information in the library, how do you begin your search?
 - a. Library catalog
 - b. Ask at the circulation or reference desk
 - c. Ask professor or classmates
 - d. Browse the shelves
 - e. Use a library research guide
 - f. Other: _____
3. How easy is it to find what you need on the library’s website?
4. How easy it is to find what you need in the library catalog?

Collection/Electronic Resources

In addition to using available circulation and usage statistics, for example, a library can use a satisfaction survey to obtain valuable information from students on what resources they use and why as well as identify new materials and resources that would be useful to students.

1. How satisfied are you with the library's print resources?
2. How satisfied are you with the library's electronic resources?
3. When you go to retrieve a particular library book on the shelves, how often is it available?
4. What is your opinion of the currency of the collection and resources on the following specific subjects?
5. How often do you access electronic resources off-campus?
6. Which of the following online databases do you use the most?
7. The library provides a collection of [popular books/magazines, DVDs, study aids]. How often do you use these resources?
8. Is there anything you would like added to the library collection?
9. Which of the following resources would you like more of?

Service

As service-based institutions, libraries likely want to ask students about the quality of service they have received to identify ways in which service can be improved. This information will help ensure that students feel welcome in the library and see it as a place where they can receive accurate, helpful information and professional, courteous service.

1. How often do you ask for assistance at the [reference/circulation] desk?
 - a. Once a week or more
 - b. Several times a semester
 - c. A few times a semester
 - d. Rarely
 - e. Never

2. How would you rate your experience at the [reference/circulation] desk in terms of the following:
 - a. Approachability
 - b. Professionalism
 - c. Availability
 - d. Knowledge
 - e. Courteousness/Friendliness
3. How often have you used the library's [chat/email] reference service?
 - a. Once a week or more
 - b. Several times a semester
 - c. A few times a semester
 - d. Rarely
 - e. Never
4. The reference desk is currently open the following hours during the academic year:
_____.
 - a. Are you satisfied with these hours?
 - b. If no, please explain: _____
5. How can we improve service at the [circulation/reference] desk?
6. Have you requested materials from other libraries through InterLibrary Loan?
7. How often have you requested materials through InterLibrary Loan?
8. Are you satisfied with the InterLibrary Loan service?
9. The library recently offered [new service]. What is your opinion of [new service]?
10. The library is considering offering the following new services. In which of the following would you be most interested?

Facilities

As discussed previously, questions regarding the adequacy and use of the library facilities help to gauge whether the library is providing an environment conducive to research and learning and to identify ways to improve facilities. The survey can include questions on a range of facilities issues, from temperature and noise to the availability of study space and equipment.

1. When you study in the library, where do you typically sit?
2. Why do choose to sit where you do in the library?
3. How would you rate availability of [study space/seating] in the library?
4. The library has space for group study, quiet study, and silent study. Which of these study spaces would you like to see more of, if any?
 - a. More group study
 - b. More quiet study
 - c. More silent study
 - d. Fine as is
 - e. Other: _____
5. How would you rate the following aspects of the library environment?
 - a. Lighting
 - b. Temperature
 - c. Noise
 - d. Cleanliness
 - e. Security/safety
 - f. Air quality
 - g. Restrooms
 - h. Signage
6. Are you happy with the [printers/copiers/scanners/computers] in the library?
7. The library recently made [change to the library facility]. What is your opinion of [this change]?

8. If the library were to make one of the following changes to the library facilities, which would you prefer most?

Instruction

Libraries that offer instructional workshops and teach courses on legal research and related topics may want to obtain feedback on the quality and usefulness of these sessions, gather ideas for improvement, and identify gaps in instructional offerings. Additionally, if attendance is an issue, the survey could ask students when sessions should be offered and how best to advertise.

1. Did you attend any of the following classes offered by the library? (select all that apply)
2. If you did not attend any of classes offered by the library, why not? (select all that apply)
 - a. The topic(s) did not seem relevant to me
 - b. I could not attend at the day/time the class(es) were offered
 - c. I did not know about the class(es)
 - d. I did not have time
 - e. Other: _____
3. Would you be interested in attending any of the following classes if offered by the library? (select all that apply)
 - a. Case law research
 - b. Statutory research
 - c. Administrative law research
 - d. Legislative history research
 - e. Practitioner resources
 - f. ____ State Legal Research
 - g. Foreign/International Law
 - h. Preparing for practice/summer employment
 - i. Other: _____
4. What are the best [days/times] for you to attend library classes?

5. What is the best way to inform you about library classes?
6. Have you taken [advanced legal research class]?
7. What type of research instruction do you find the most helpful? [select all that apply / select top ___ / rank in order of preference]
 - a. Advanced legal research class
 - b. Presentations by librarians in law school classes
 - c. Presentations by librarians in the library/computer lab
 - d. Research guides
 - e. Online tutorials
 - f. One-on-one instruction
 - g. Classes taught by LexisNexis, Westlaw, and other database representatives
 - h. Library tours
 - i. Other

Other Comments

Since it is difficult to anticipate all the needs and concerns of users, a survey should include the opportunity for general comments. Questions can be entirely open-ended or request comments on particular topics. Such open-ended questions can be integrated throughout the survey, either at the end of a particular section (e.g., is there anything else you would like to tell us about the website, services, instruction, et cetera) and/or through the frequent use of the "other/please explain" response option.

1. If you have any other comments about the library...
2. If you could make one change to the library, what would it be?
3. What do you like [most/least] about the library?