

Leslie Sult. A Qualitative Analysis of Internal Marketing Practices at Academic Libraries that have Undertaken Service Quality Studies. A Master's paper for the M.S. in L.S. degree. April 2002. 41 pages. Advisor: Evelyn Daniel

This study was undertaken in order to examine the extent to which academic libraries that have undertaken LibQUAL+ surveys are engaging in internal marketing initiatives. Six personnel librarians from academic libraries that participated in the 2000 or 2001 rounds of LibQUAL+ surveys answered a series of interview questions designed to gather qualitative information on the types of programs and initiatives that academic libraries have in place to support, recognize, and reward excellent service delivery.

Interviews with the six librarians revealed that although the participating libraries do not specifically identify the various programs and initiatives they have in place to promote their respective service missions and goals as internal marketing, they are engaged in internal marketing practices. Interviews also revealed that the libraries are using three major channels to practice internal marketing in their libraries. These channels operate through a library's organizational structure, its communication methods, and its recognition and rewards programs.

Headings:

Personnel -- Administration.

Research libraries --Evaluation.

Total Quality management.

Working Conditions.

College and University libraries -- Staff.

A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF INTERNAL MARKETING PRACTICES AT  
ACADEMIC LIBRARIES THAT HAVE UNDERTAKEN SERVICE QUALITY  
STUDIES

by  
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## Introduction

Jane Doe's workday generally begins around 7:30 each morning when she finds herself embarking on a long and dull walk or bus ride from her staff parking space in a distant lot on the university campus where she is employed. Throughout her commute she considers the day ahead and determines that she has little to anticipate. Upon arriving at her small, and as she calls it, "depressing" cubicle in the academic library where she works, she turns on her computer, logs in, and spends the better part of an hour emailing her friends and family. She feels somewhat badly about her behavior but does little to overcome it because she believes that her job is unimportant. Whenever Jane's supervisor stops by to ask how she is doing, she always smiles and says that everything is fine. She likes her supervisor as well as most of her co-workers but her ambivalence is apparent to most of her colleagues as well as to the library patrons that she has contact with each day. She is often indifferent in her attempts to help patrons when they approach her and ask for assistance and is slow in producing and delivering on the "behind the scenes" work to which she is assigned. Every so often she makes an effort to accomplish what she believes she ought to in a given day but no one seems to notice, so she slips back into emailing, taking long breaks, and counting the seconds until 5:00PM arrives and she can execute what she likes to think of as "the great escape".

John Doe (no relation to Jane) begins his day in much the same way as Jane's. He parks in a campus lot a good distance from the academic library in which he works, but instead of dreading the daily commute, he uses the time to ponder and plan. When he arrives at his desk, he turns on his computer, logs in, and goes to work. He doesn't like to waste time at work for he believes that he has many important and meaningful things to

accomplish. He endeavors to take care of most of his personal communications at home and is conscientious about the amount of time he spends on break and at lunch. He perceives that his input and work make a difference and he enjoys what he does. He feels a strong sense of commitment to his job and considers himself an important member of his work community. His feelings of loyalty and satisfaction are obvious to those whom he has contact with each day. Patrons as well as colleagues often comment on their positive and productive interactions with John and they view the library in which John is employed in a positive light.

Jane and John work in the same type of library, make comparable salaries, and have similar health and fringe benefits. Despite this, John is a far more engaged and productive employee than Jane. Given the outward similarities of their circumstances, one is likely to conclude that the individual attitudes that Jane and John bring to work with them each day have a direct influence on their job performance. While this conclusion has been verified by numerous research studies into job satisfaction and performance,<sup>1</sup> many practitioners, researchers and authors of popular management texts have developed convincing arguments for the role that an organization's culture and climate plays in eliciting positive performance behaviors from its employees.

Although positive performance behaviors are crucial in any organizational setting, certain organizations, like libraries, are particularly reliant on cooperative, caring, and competent employee behaviors. This reliance stems from the fact that for the most part, libraries do not produce tangible goods. Rather, their primary function is to deliver information (like books and e-journals) and services (like bibliographic instruction and

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<sup>1</sup> Dennis W Organ, Organizational Citizenship Behavior: The Good Soldier Syndrome, (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1988) 4.

reference assistance) to their varied clientele. This service delivery function has become increasingly important as libraries find that information delivery entities like the Internet and large bookstores like Barnes and Noble are cutting in on a market that was once relatively secure. As competition mounts, libraries are turning to service delivery as a means of distinguishing themselves within the information market. This differentiation is designed to not only hold on to market share, but also to ensure continued support of the library by its various stakeholders and patrons.

To address market pressures, numerous academic libraries have turned their attention to a service quality measurement tool known as LibQUAL+.<sup>2</sup> This tool assists libraries in developing an understanding of the expectations that patrons bring to the library service experience. It also helps academic libraries identify where “gaps” occur between patron’s expectations of library services and the actual services they receive. To date, studies using LibQUAL+ have yielded quite a bit of interesting data and have highlighted the important role that library employees play in assuring that patron service expectations are met or exceeded.

Many practitioners, researchers, and pop-management authors subscribe to the belief that an organization’s culture and climate have a powerful influence on employee attitudes and behaviors. This belief has given rise to numerous theories, research studies, and management self help books. One of the most promising theories to come out of this vast body of motivational management literature is the idea who organizations that create positive working environments through the internal application of standard marketing techniques will have employees that experience higher levels of job commitment. These

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<sup>2</sup> Shelley Phipps, “Beyond Measuring Service Quality: Learning from the Voices of the Customers, the Staff, the Process, and the Organization”, Library Trends, 49.4 (2001): 637.

higher levels of commitment lead to better job performance and service delivery which, in turn, lead to higher levels of customer satisfaction. This premise, known as internal marketing (IM) has gained a number of adherents within service-oriented organizations, including the managers of the perennially successful Southwest Airlines.<sup>3</sup>

Because of its positive associations with improved service quality, the activities associated with IM are a natural fit for the many libraries that have taken up service quality studies and initiatives. In spite of this fact, there is little library literature devoted to the topic of internal marketing. This study is being undertaken in the hopes of better elucidating the extent to which libraries are engaging in internal marketing initiatives. Evidence gathered through interviews with library personnel directors at academic libraries that have undertaken LibQUAL+ studies will form the basis for identifying whether or not academic libraries are engaging in this important step in the customer service delivery chain. Results of the interviews will also provide a framework from which libraries can develop initiatives that foster “John”, rather than “Jane” like behaviors and thus improve the overall quality of services.

## **Literature Review**

### **What is internal marketing?**

In its simplest form, internal marketing (IM) is exactly what one would presume it to be: the application of marketing techniques to the internal workplace. As straightforward as this may sound, once the concept moves off the page and into the workplace, it becomes far more complex. Some practitioners and scholars adhere to the

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<sup>3</sup> Andrew Czaplewski, et al, “Southwest Airlines: How Internal marketing Pilots Success,” Marketing Management, Sep. / Oct. 2001: 14 – 18, Ebsco MasterFILEPremier, 1 Dec. 2001.

conceptualizations offered by Berry<sup>4</sup> and Gronroos<sup>5</sup> that treating employees as internal customers and their jobs as internal products will raise employee job satisfaction.

Supporters of this definition focus the major portion of their IM programs on seeing to it that an organization's personnel are viewed as partners in service delivery efforts.

Because of this view, adherents strive to ensure that employees receive emotional and growth benefits along with their paychecks. This conceptualization also emphasizes the idea that all employees are external as well as internal "part-time marketers."<sup>6</sup> According to Gronroos,<sup>7</sup> part-time marketing behaviors assist organizations in building and maintaining a service culture because they create a chain of service delivery that starts with an organization's back room, moves through to front line staffers, and then out to customers.

Other practitioners and scholars approach IM from a slightly different standpoint. A major literature review undertaken by Rafiq and Ahmed indicates that a number of IM researchers have expanded the definition of IM to include the concepts of change management and organizational strategy implementation.<sup>8</sup> Supporters of this expanded definition believe that it is important to address issues of change management and organizational strategy implementation because they provide a means by which organizations can encourage departments and the employees within them to overcome the inertia and resistance associated with organizational change. Although this understanding of IM represents a revision and expansion on Berry's as well as Gronroos' offerings, it is

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<sup>4</sup> L.L. Berry. "The Employee as Customer." The Journal of Retail Banking March 1981: 25-28.

<sup>5</sup> Christian Gronroos, Service Management and Marketing: A Customer Relationship Management Approach. 2nd ed. (Chichester, England: John Wiley & Sons, 2000) 330-355.

<sup>6</sup> Gronroos 336.

<sup>7</sup> Gronroos 335 – 337.

<sup>8</sup> Mohammed Rafiq and Pervaiz K. Ahmed, "Advances in the Internal Marketing Concept: Definition, Syntheses and Extension," Journal of Services Marketing, 14. 6-7 (2000): 449-163, Ebsco Business Source Elite, 11 Jan. 2002.



neatly tied together by the definition that Rafiq and Ahmed developed after conducting their review. According to the two authors, IM is:

A planned effort using a marketing-like approach to overcome organizational resistance to change and to align, motivate and interfunctionally co-ordinate and integrate employees towards the effective implementation of corporate and functional strategies in order to deliver customer satisfaction through a process of creating motivated and customer oriented employees.<sup>9</sup>

This definition gives those interested in the practical application of IM a place from which to proceed. First, it encourages managers and those interested in implementing IM programs to understand that IM is an ongoing process. Second, it addresses the role that motivation plays in an employee's willingness to deliver quality service to internal as well as external customers. Third, the definition addresses the importance of enlisting every employee in every department in efforts to deliver high quality customer service. Finally, the definition adheres to IM's basic tenet that employee commitment, service quality, and customer satisfaction are undeniably linked.

### **Why is internal marketing useful for libraries?**

Until recently many academic libraries measured their quality by the number of items in their collections, their door counts, and their circulation numbers. While these numbers do provide a convenient and easily quantifiable measure, they fail to provide any gauge of how well the library is performing in its role as a service provider to its academic community. Libraries rarely produce tangible products. Instead, their primary function is to deliver the services necessary to assist patrons in accessing, understanding, and using their collections. This view of academic libraries has recently guided many to design and test a service quality measurement tool known as LibQUAL+. This tool, which was

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<sup>9</sup> Rafiq and Ahmed 6.

developed from the well-validated for-profit service measurement tool, SERVQUAL,<sup>10</sup> asks library users to respond to pairs of statements. Responses are then used to measure the difference between a library user's expectations for service and the actual service that a library delivered. The difference between the two ratings indicates the extent to which service "gaps" exist and provides academic libraries with information about patron expectations as well as the quality of service that a library has delivered.

In its first round of testing, the LibQUAL+ tool reflected the following broad categories of library service: Tangibles (appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communications materials), Reliability (ability to perform promised services dependably and accurately), and Affect of Library Service (a combination of the more subjective aspects of library service like responsiveness, assurance, and empathy).<sup>11</sup> These broad categories were identified through extensive interviews and represent the first step in efforts to design an accurate tool. Though the LibQUAL+ tool is still being developed, analysis of the first sets of data reveal that issues associated with affect of service and reliability have the greatest bearing on users' perceptions of library service.<sup>12</sup> According to the LibQUAL+ data, users want library employees to be ready to respond to their questions, willing to help, knowledgeable, and able to perform services right the first time. They also expect library catalog records to be error free and want easy access to library materials through their desktop computers.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Colleen Cook, Fred Heath, and Bruce Thompson, "LibQUAL+: One Instrument in the New Measures Toolbox", *ARL Bimonthly Report*, 212 (2000), 20 Jan. 2002 <http://www.arl.org/newsltr/212/libqual.html> 1.

<sup>11</sup> Colleen Cook, et al, "The Search for New Measures: The ARL LibQUAL+ Project - - A Preliminary Report", *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 1.1 (2001): 103 – 112, *Project Muse*, 20 Jan. 2002.

<sup>12</sup> Cook, Heath, and Thompson *ARL Bimonthly Report* 2.

<sup>13</sup> Cook, Heath, and Thompson *ARL Bimonthly Report* 2-3.

These findings reveal just how important a role employee behaviors play in patrons' perceptions of quality service. Since IM can help maintain or improve patron's affect of service perceptions by ensuring that employees are satisfied and actively engaged in their jobs, the LibQUAL+ findings provide a powerful impetus for academic libraries to develop and apply useful IM strategies. Furthermore, IM strategies can help libraries overcome factors associated with organizational resistance to change as they move toward developing a culture that measure itself on the quality of service delivered rather than the number of books in its collection.

### **Job satisfaction, affect of service, and internal marketing**

While there may not yet be a direct link established between IM and the delivery of quality services, links between the two can be established by following the literature on job satisfaction. One concept that offers particularly promising links is the theory of organizational citizenship behaviors. In his book Organizational Citizenship Behavior: The Good Soldier Syndrome Dennis W. Organ suggests that job performance may be linked to job satisfaction by something called organizational citizenship behaviors. According to Organ, organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), “represent individual behavior that is discretionary, not explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization.”<sup>14</sup>

Organ divides OCBs into the following categories: altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, and courtesy. Altruism includes “all discretionary behaviors that have the effect of helping a specific other person with an organizationally relevant task or

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<sup>14</sup> Organ 4.

problem.”<sup>15</sup> Conscientiousness includes such behaviors as punctuality, cooperativeness, and tidiness. It usually benefits the organization as a whole rather than a specific individual. People who demonstrate sportsmanship “avoid complaining, petty grievances, railing against real or imagined slights, and making federal cases out of small potatoes.”<sup>16</sup> Courtesy includes behaviors like sharing information and giving advance notice of plans.

While the presence of OCBs in a work environment may not guarantee a quantifiable increase in service delivery behaviors, their occurrence is likely to indicate the existence of a positive work climate. This positive climate, with its associated internal and external helpful behaviors, lays a foundation from which organizations can assure good performance. A literature review conducted by Posdakoff and Mackenzie confirms this postulation. Due to their concern over the mounting evidence that belief in the connection between OCBs and organizational effectiveness was based “more on conceptual plausibility than direct empirical evidence,”<sup>17</sup> Posdakoff and Mackenzie undertook an examination of studies that tested whether or not OCBs had a positive influence on organizational effectiveness. Not surprisingly, their analysis revealed that OCBs accounted for about “38% of the variance in customer service indicators.”<sup>18</sup> These indicators included customer satisfaction as well as customer complaints and give credence to the assertion that a link exists between the presence of OCBs and the delivery of high quality services.

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<sup>15</sup> Dennis W Organ, Organizational Citizenship Behavior: The Good Soldier Syndrome, (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1988) 8.

<sup>16</sup> Organ 11.

<sup>17</sup> Philip M. Posdakoff and Scott B. Mackenzie, “Organizational Citizenship Behaviors: A Critical Review of the Theoretical and Empirical Literature and Suggestions for Future Research”, Journal of Management, 26.3 (2000): 543.

<sup>18</sup> Posdakoff and Mackenzie 546.

Based on this finding, libraries that are interested in delivering excellent service to their patrons would do well to create an environment where organizational citizenship behaviors are facilitated and nurtured. Posdakoff and Mackenzie also examined empirical research on the antecedents of organizational citizenship behaviors. Their analysis identified individual employee characteristics (the attitude that an employee carries to work each day), task characteristics (the nature of the work an employee performs), organizational characteristics (the climate of the organization), and leadership behaviors (the ability of a leader to articulate a vision, maintain high performance standards, reward and punish behaviors, and communicate job expectations) as the primary aspects of OCB antecedents. Their investigation revealed that while all four categories have an influence on the likelihood of employees delivering OCBs, organizational, leadership, and task characteristics show the strongest connections.<sup>19</sup>

Recognizing that strategies associated with IM can be used to directly address organizational and leadership characteristics, which are two of the most powerful antecedents to OCBs, a link can be readily established between IM, employee satisfaction, and effective service delivery. This link can guide and support libraries as they develop IM strategies that will enable them to sustain and promote the employee behaviors that best facilitate the positive service climate that academic library patrons desire.

### **Internal marketing and organizational resistance to change**

In an article published in 1999, Peter Hernon, Danuta A. Nitecki, and Ellen Altman analyze the service quality literature associated with academic libraries, make a convincing argument for the adoption of service-based evaluations, and examine why

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<sup>19</sup> Posdakoff and Mackenzie 532.

academic libraries may resist accepting the ideas posited by service quality enthusiasts.

According to the article's authors at least sixteen reasons exist as to why some in academic library organizations may be opposed to adopting a service-oriented approach.<sup>20</sup> The reasons (adapted from the article) are as follows:

1. Librarians may not regard students as customers.
2. Some library staffers may believe that a service orientation represents a move away from a library's core values.
3. Library staff may believe that service improvement initiatives indicate that current service delivery is inadequate.
4. Staff may believe that service quality only applies to those working in jobs that require contact with the public.
5. The financial constraints that lead to downsizing and reorganizing may make it difficult for library staff to focus on patrons instead of production.
6. Staff may be concerned that improved service will lead to increased use of the library which is likely to result in increased workloads.
7. The library administration may not actually support improved service quality measures or may not know how to implement them.
8. Some libraries may assume that they already know what it is that their patrons want.
9. Library staff may believe that service quality initiatives only apply to for-profit organizations.
10. Staff may think that they know better than their patrons about what is and is not good library service.
11. Staff may believe that academic libraries face little competition.
12. Staff may believe that service has little bearing on a library's growth.
13. Staff may doubt that the investment in training that service quality initiatives require would yield a large enough pay-off in patron use and support.

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<sup>20</sup> Peter Hernon, Danuta A. Nitecki, and Ellen Altman, "Service Quality and Customer satisfaction: An Assessment and Future Directions," The Journal of Academic Librarianship, 25.1 (1999): 12-14.

14. It is easier to collect circulation and collection development data.
15. There may be a perception that the status of a library would be diminished by a focus on customer service delivery.
16. Staff may fear that focusing on customer expectations may make them seem less professional.

Although IM may not be able to override all sixteen of the reasons academic libraries might resist change, many of them can be addressed and even corrected by the application of IM techniques. For example, if leaders within an academic library determines that competition from outside organizations and budget cuts aimed at the library merits developing a more patron centered approach, they could begin by committing energy and effort to refocusing the library's mission statement. This refocusing would provide libraries the opportunity to put patron service front and center. From there, library leaders could foster a service culture throughout the library by calling attention to it at meetings, writing it into all job descriptions, and recognizing and rewarding behaviors that represented excellent patron service. The full and ongoing support of the program by library leadership, combined with continuous staff recognition and rewards would, after a time, do much to promote the customer service goals and the resulting patron satisfaction that IM techniques have been designed to facilitate.

While the IM strategies discussed above may not be a panacea for the various pressures that academic libraries face, they can help them address and even overcome the personnel and organizational issues that often stand in the way of excellent customer service delivery. By providing a way to clear the hurdles related to job satisfaction and organizational resistance to change, IM initiatives can assist libraries in meeting or

exceeding patron expectations. This meeting or exceeding of patron expectations will go far to ensure that libraries continue to receive ongoing support from the academic communities in which they serve.

### **Experimental Methodology**

The qualitative interview method was selected for this project because it offers one of the best means of gathering initial data on the extent to which selected academic libraries are engaging in internal marketing practices. Interview questions (see Appendix A) were designed following Patton's guidelines for the standard open-ended interview described in Qualitative Evaluation Methods.<sup>21</sup> This particular approach was selected in order to reduce possible bias, stay within interviewee time constraints, and provide a similarly structured set of information from which to discern patterns and share findings.

Personnel directors at academic libraries that have recently completed LibQUAL+ studies were identified as interview subjects for the following two reasons. The first was the strong likelihood that libraries that have committed time and resources to completing service quality studies have an interest in delivering such service to their patrons. Since a review of the literature indicates that organizations that are interested in delivering quality service should heed their employee's attitudes and perceptions toward their work environment, it seemed natural to choose this segment of academic libraries. The second reason was based on the belief that the nature of the work performed by personnel librarians puts them in an excellent position to share their inside knowledge of the types of internal marketing initiatives occurring at their libraries.

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<sup>21</sup> Patton, Michael Quinn. Qualitative Evaluation Methods. (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1980) 202-204.



Libraries were selected at random from the Association of Research Libraries' list of 2000 and 2001 LibQUAL+ participants.<sup>22</sup> In order to gather a sample, personnel directors were contacted via an email approved by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Academic Affairs Institutional Review Board (see Appendix B) and invited to participate in the study. A total of thirty-six libraries were contacted before an appropriate sample size was secured. Ultimately, six of the thirty-six contacted libraries agreed to participate. Although this number represents just over 12.5% of the total number (48) of academic libraries that have participated in the LibQUAL+ studies to date, the in-depth nature of these initial interviews provides a basic framework from which further research on the use, application, and effects of IM techniques in academic libraries can be designed and carried out.

Interview questions were designed to reflect current thinking on the activities that make up an internal marketing campaign and were developed after a thorough review of the literature. Those who agreed to participate in the study took part in a thirty to forty-five minute tape-recorded phone interview. Anonymity for the librarians as well as for the library was guaranteed as a part of the interview agreement. Consequently all names as well as other identifying information have been removed from this paper. As a means of surfacing major patterns as well as comparing and contrasting various internal marketing programs, notes as well as tape-recorded data were analyzed and cross-referenced at the conclusion of the interviews.

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<sup>22</sup> "LibQUAL+ Spring 2000 & 2001 Participants", LibQUAL+ Participant's Area 4 Oct. 2001, 15 Jan. 2002 <http://www.arl.org/libqual/geninfo/partsp2001.html>.

## **Findings**

In order to share findings on the specific programs that are in place at the libraries that participated in this study, they will be identified as Libraries A, B, C, D, E, and F.

Librarians will be identified by the same letter as their libraries. To provide a framework from which patterns can be identified, interviews will first be examined as independent entities. This initial examination will provide grounds from which individual programs can be compared and contrasted, conclusions can be drawn, and suggestions can be made.

### **Library A:**

Library A is a team based organization and this greatly influences the organization's climate and culture. According to Librarian A, the team environment contributes a great deal to the positive climate and culture that she observes within the library. However, Librarian A did make a point of indicating that the team environment is not for everyone. She said that some employees have had a hard time adjusting to the flexibility and ongoing interaction that successful teaming requires. Although Library A has historically assessed people's satisfaction with their work environment through formal employee surveys, they have recently decided to forgo them in favor of less formal inter-team as well as cross-team communications.

When asked about the importance of patron service, Librarian A responded that excellent patron service was one of the driving forces of Library A and was one of the reasons that they decided to move to a team structure. Librarian A believes that the team structure is allowing Library A to provide "faster and more flexible" services to their varied external and internal clientele. The library's strong service orientation is written into its mission statement and each team has identified its customer base. Teams are

aware that they serve both external and internal customers and understand that it is highly important to deliver quality service to both groups.

An example of this orientation toward the internal customer can be seen in Library A's Technical Services Team's mission statement. The first sentence reads as follows:

We provide our internal and external customers with high quality, accurate, and timely access to information by purchasing, licensing, cataloging, maintaining, and preserving those resources in all forms.

Team goals like the one shared above provide a framework for the self-evaluations and reports that teams submit three times a year. The goals also provide other teams within the library a structure from which to praise team success and / or critique team shortfalls. Teams that are struggling to meet their stated goals can avail themselves of various training opportunities. These opportunities include sessions on decision-making and communication skills. Unfortunately, Librarian A stated that it was sometimes difficult to fit ongoing library wide training and staff development into an already crammed schedule; however, many teams voluntarily request training sessions.

Finally, when asked about formal rewards and recognition, Librarian A shared that four times a year, teams that have exemplified quality customer service and demonstrated positive team behaviors are recognized and rewarded by the library's director.

### **Library B:**

Library B is also organized into teams. According to Librarian B, the team orientation at her particular library came about as a result of Library B's director determining that the library was not performing as well as it could. This realization led Library B's director to guide a reorganization process that altered Library B's longstanding culture. Interestingly, Librarian B said that while many of the professional staff adapted quite

readily to Library B's reorganization, a number of individuals that make up the technical and clerical staff had a difficult time. In fact, Librarian B stated that some individuals on the staff felt that the library used to be "more of a family" before it reorganized into teams. Librarian B also shared that many staff members in the technical services do not view those involved in patron services as internal customers. The technical services staff also believes that those on the public service end do not see or appreciate the work that they do to keep the library moving forward.

Librarian B believes that the library is doing the best it can to address and balance the different needs and perceptions of its employees through "communicating and articulating verbally and in writing, in person, in large and small groups, through leadership and through people where it [the library] is trying to go." Library B has stated its vision for providing excellent patron service in its mission statement and all library job descriptions contain a customer service component. Librarian B also believes that the library has been doing "an incredible job of attempting to move the organization and the people within it towards seeing how each individual fits in and contributes to the big picture." When questioned about how Library B rewards and encourages team and customer service centered behaviors, Librarian B said that the library tries to allow individuals who have shown commitment to the library's ideals to work in areas that allow them to "impact the bigger picture". These individuals are also encouraged to take on leadership roles. These roles allow them to continue to develop their skills and capabilities. Furthermore, the Library offers a number of team training workshops on communication, conflict resolution, meeting management, and the learning organization. Finally, Library B has hosted a few library wide celebrations to recognize improvements

in productivity and user survey results. In spite of these attempts, there are still conflicts between the “old organization” and the organization that the library is working to become. Librarian B hopes that time, combined with a continued emphasis on the “big picture,” will help the library merge its old and new work cultures.

**Library C:**

Library C attempted reorganization into teams, but has since moved back into a more traditional department based structure. In spite of this move back to a departmental structure, Librarian C believes that they have learned how to “tap into” people from across the library to get the “input that they need.” She feels that the library works very hard at including all levels of staff in its decision-making processes. She also believes that people feel comfortable and are willing to participate and share their thoughts and ideas across the library organization.

When questioned on whether or not the library had ever undertaken formal job satisfaction surveys, Librarian C responded that while the library does not have a survey that specifically addresses employee satisfaction with their work environment, they have asked library employees questions about “what makes them feel more a part of the workplace” and “what sort of communication they like” on employees’ annual self-evaluation forms. While Librarian C believes that this type of information is useful, in the last year they have decided to remove this component from the self-evaluation form so that they can institute a separate organizational evaluation. Librarian C stated that she hopes that the new form will be coming out in the next year.

In discussing whether or not Librarian C believes that library employees have a sense of internal as well as external customers, she said that the library talks a lot about their

internal and external customers and that over the last few years it has become “ingrained” into the functioning of the library. She also believes that the library’s decision to move away from a group of bibliographers making selection decisions to individual reference librarians making selection decisions has done much to facilitate cross-departmental communications. Since the shift, Librarian C reports to have noticed that the reference librarians and the technical services employees have established stronger lines of communication and are better able to understand and appreciate the work that each is doing.

When asked about Library C’s approach towards patron service, Librarian C spoke about the central role that patron service plays in the organization. This approach is clearly stated in Library C’s vision statement, and it is communicated to all new employees during the orientation process. The library also communicates its patron service vision in an ongoing way through less formal channels. During the interview, Librarian C indicated that the library is currently working to determine how to make its customer service goals even more visible to its employees. Currently, the library strives to keep employees focused on high quality service delivery by sharing the funding information that the library receives. She believes that service delivery plays an enormous role in the amount of funding that Library C receives and when the budget increases, efforts are made to communicate the success to the entire library staff. Librarian C believes that this sharing helps to keep the staff “looking at the library and its overall functions” and that the concrete nature of the information provides a solid piece of motivational evidence.

Library C also has a formal rewards structure in place. These rewards are used to recognize customer service as well as to build a sense of community within the library. Each month the entire library staff is invited to come together to discuss what is happening in the library, hear a special presentation, or celebrate a success. During this meeting, the library also recognizes individuals who have been nominated by colleagues for going out of their way to be helpful. The library has an annual celebration where long-term employees are recognized and presented with a variety of inexpensive gifts like certificates to local businesses and flowers. Library C makes discretionary funds available to the entire tenured faculty to spend on attendance at conferences and the library has a “large pot” of funds available for both staff and faculty to pay for various continuing education activities and courses. There is a scholarship fund for staff members seeking advanced degrees and the library is flexible in allowing people to attend classes during the workday provided that employees make up the lost time. Finally, the library, through a program initiated by the university, is able to offer extra discretionary leave time to employees who have a documented record of outstanding performance.

#### **Library D:**

Library D considers itself a matrix organization. Although it looks as if it is structured hierarchically, Librarian D explained that the organization is “so complex” that “it really isn’t feasible for the library to run without cooperation and collaboration.” In order to address the complexity of the organization, cross-functional teams come together to work on various library projects and initiatives. These teams are comprised of representatives of various libraries and disciplines and are mainly composed of professional staff. When asked where “non-academic staff” fit into the organizational scheme, Librarian D

responded that they do a lot of the technical, personnel, and facilities support work at the library.

In examining whether or not Library D had ever undertaken formal job satisfaction or workplace evaluation surveys, Librarian D shared that the library had undertaken a skills needs assessment. This assessment asked employees about the types of skills that they needed to have in order to be successful in their jobs. The information gathered from this needs assessment was used to shape various employee training programs. In her elaboration on the question of employee perceptions of their work environment, Librarian D explained that a strong social network exists at Library D and that information gathered in informal conversations and meetings directs what the library does. Librarian D believes that the existing social network “takes less time and gets to the heart of what’s going on in the place.”

When asked to examine the role that customer service plays in her organization, Librarian D responded that customer service “drives” the organization. She believes that all decisions are made with the end user in mind and that it is a value that is ingrained in the library’s culture. As far as communicating this orientation to library employees, Librarian D believes that “people can tell right when they walk in the door that the library exists to serve its patrons.” According to Librarian D, “the library’s service orientation is present in every document and library discussion, so much so that it is interwoven into the fabric” of all library communications. She also believes that the library attracts people who are very patron focused and that those who aren’t would not be happy working within the culture present in Library D and would thus be motivated to seek employment elsewhere.



When questioned about formal and informal rewards structures, Librarian D responded that the library has a program in place where people can be nominated for delivering exceptional service. People who earn these service awards receive a number of rewards including gift certificates to the bookstore and a one-day parking pass in a prime spot on campus. Once a year, the library has a luncheon and recognition award program that honors staff for excellent service. In closing, Librarian D indicated that the library is currently working on codifying and making more explicit the customer service values that underlie Library D's culture.

### **Library E:**

Library E has recently reorganized itself into teams because the library was finding that:

as services were evolving and changing, it was less intuitive to determine where to organizationally place things and in that emerging patchwork quilt of an organization, it [the uncertainty] was affecting the flow of communication and decision-making.

According to Librarian E, the original intent was to “just look at” decision-making and communication. However, upon realizing how important those two factors were to the health of the organization, the library, in spite of not setting out to do so, began a reorganization process that has led them to the team structure they have today.

Librarian E said that what ended up working best for Library E was to maintain traditional divisions or offices and then construct teams, made up of both professional and staff employees, under each division. Divisions have anywhere from one to five teams depending on the nature of the work that is being performed. When asked about how well library employees had responded to the reorganization, Librarian E shared that some individuals had adapted very well but that others were finding the new

organizational structure difficult to deal with – especially those individuals who were comfortable and happy working independently. Librarian E believes that it is taking a while for some people to “go through that transition to feel like gathering together is a worthwhile use of [their] time.” As the discussion on Library E’s reorganization continued, Librarian E pointed out that early on the library

recognized that you cannot change a piece of paper, and you cannot change job titles, and you cannot change places in the organization and have your mind change; and so we have what we call a team start-up process in place where we developed a set of training modules that would be structured to develop the kind of culture that we are trying to create.

An example that Librarian E shared was that Library E worked with an outside consultant to train team-selected facilitators. These facilitators were responsible for taking part in training modules that taught them how to bring a team together to develop mission statements, visions, and service goals. Librarian E believes that this work is helping people come together and reorient themselves toward group-based goals. In discussing this process, Librarian E said that many library employees, through their participation in these group-building activities, have begun to warm-up to the new organizational structure. In analyzing the adaptation process, Librarian E shared that “if you believe that everybody wants to do a good job, but not everybody knows what the job is or how to do it, then you realize where the organization has to focus its efforts.” Besides working with team facilitators, Library E has also focused its efforts on helping its employees do well in their duties by developing a “roles and responsibilities” statement. This statement outlines expectations for job performance and places the responsibility for knowing what is expected squarely on the individual employee. This

statement is an integral part of the library's culture and serves to provide a large framework from which employees can guide their day-to-day work.

In moving into the role that customer service plays in the organization, Librarian E discussed how wanting to become a "user focused, flexible organization" was what led the library's charge to reorganize and adapt. This focus is present in Library E's vision statement and the library has created a division to assess how well the library is meeting customer needs and expectations. This division also works to ensure that a focus on customer needs and expectations is integrated into the "entire library's work." As an extension of this conversation, Librarian E indicated that the reorganization has created an added emphasis on the feeling that "one's dedication to the user is actually valued and validated" and that it has "sharpened many employees' sense of purpose" as well as their sense of internal and external customers.

When asked about the various rewards and recognition programs that the library has in place, Librarian E explained that the library has not yet begun to change its recognition and rewards structure. She shared that it was one of the elements that the library had decided to hold off for a couple of reasons. The first was that the library wanted to focus on getting people settled into their new places and accustomed to their new roles. Second, Library E realized that it was "very hard when you're in the old organization to define expectations and things that you are going to want to recognize in the new organization." Therefore, Library E has decided to wait on recognizing and rewarding customer service. As this conversation developed, Librarian E also discussed how other libraries that had reorganized had moved their rewards and recognition structures aside because they felt that keeping the existing structures in place or rushing to create a new and possibly

poorly defined structure could prevent people from “stepping out and taking risks, learning new things, and learning from their mistakes.” In concluding this examination, Librarian E said that they have put in place a structure, through the creation of the evaluation team that was discussed above, that allows the library to have an ongoing assessment of how it is doing. She said that these ongoing assessments will eventually provide the library with a “mechanism of knowing” where the library is doing its best work and how that work is getting done. From there, Librarian E believes that they will be able to accurately and effectively recognize and reward the work that employees are doing to contribute to the library’s service mission.

#### **Library F:**

Library F is organized hierarchically. A dean is at the top of the organizational chart and serves as the library’s primary leader. Under the dean, the library is organized into functional units that are usually headed up by a librarian with faculty status. When asked about Library F’s service orientation, Librarian F said that there is a strong service orientation present at the library. This service orientation is implicit in the library’s mission statement and is explicit in its strategic plan. According to Librarian F, meeting user needs will be one of Library F’s primary measures of evaluating its success over the next two years. In its strategic plan, Library F states that it intends to move away from

traditional quantitative measures, especially those dealing with the size of [the] collection [...] to ensure that our users have the greatest possible access to the information they need.

Library F’s strategic plan also recognizes that the staff plays an important role in delivering quality services. The strategic plan states “the libraries have a strong commitment to supporting the staff in their efforts to achieve the library’s goals.” Further

discussion with Librarian F revealed that the library has written customer service components into all reference, government documents, and technical services job descriptions, and evaluates all employees on the customer service that they deliver.

In discussing the various rewards and recognition structures in place, Librarian F stated that, besides the employee evaluation forms, the library hosts town meetings where the dean goes over goals for the library and shares successes and accomplishments. Finally, Librarian F said that the library has a user services group that meets a couple of times a month to discuss suggestions that library employees make as well as internal and external complaints.

### **Analysis**

Analysis of interview data reveals that although the libraries that agreed to participate in this study do not specifically identify the various programs and initiatives they have in place to promote their respective service missions and goals as internal marketing, they are engaged in a variety of internal marketing practices. Further analysis of data patterns reveal that they are using three major channels to practice their respective forms of IM. These channels operate through a library's organizational structure, its communication methods, and its recognition and rewards programs and address the leadership and organizational characteristics that are essential to the development of organizational citizenship behaviors. While the literature review on links between internal marketing and organizational citizenship behaviors created an expectation that communication methods and rewards and recognition programs would make up a large part of the investigative data, some of the most interesting data emerged as librarians discussed the role that their library's structure plays in affecting overall work climate.

While organizational structures varied considerably from library to library, all six of the librarians indicated that their particular library's organizational structure focuses the library and its employees on delivering high quality services and that, except in the case of the information shared by Librarian B, the structures that were in place fostered an overall sense of employee commitment. Two of the libraries (A and E) have moved to team based structures and believe that teaming enables faster communication and better service delivery. They also believe that most employees feel the team structure fosters a positive sense of climate and culture. Two of the most interesting cases of the influence that an organization's structure can have on its culture came from the interviews conducted with Librarians B and C. Information provided by Librarian B indicated that Library B found its decision to embrace a team based environment has moved the library away from what many members considered a "family like" culture to a culture that is perceived as more formal and business like. According to Librarian C, Library C's attempts to reorganize into a team based structure did not work out the way they had planned, so they moved back into a more traditional organizational structure. According to Librarian C, both the initial reorganization as well as the subsequent move back to the traditional structure enabled the library to tap into its employees' ideas and attitudes and has fostered a positive climate overall. The remaining librarians (D and F) indicated that they believe their libraries have a positive climate and culture. The effect of the library's organization as an influencing factor did not present itself as strongly in these two interviews for the likely reason that both libraries have maintained a somewhat stable organizational structure.

Not surprisingly, and in direct agreement with much of the literature that was reviewed, communication styles and channels comprise a major part of the means by which all six of the libraries endeavor to promote employee engagement and loyalty. According to the interview data, all of the libraries rely quite heavily on their informal communication networks to promote initiatives and solidify employee commitment. In talking with all of the librarians, it became obvious that much of the information they shared about employee perceptions and attitudes came not from formal employee surveys, (only one of the interviewed libraries had done a job satisfaction survey in the recent past) but from their participation in informal conversations and social networks. In fact, when asked about formal employee surveys, Librarian D indicated that she believed that the informal network in place in her library was a much more effective conduit than a formal survey could ever be. In spite of this heavy reliance on informal networks, it also became obvious through the interviews that all six of the libraries are using formal communication channels to achieve specific organizational ends.

When it comes to communicating the library's mission and vision to all employees, all six seem to share a similar reliance on a written mission statement. All of the librarians indicated that their written mission and/or vision statement provides an important touchstone from which to gauge how the library and in some cases, the individuals within it, are performing. Despite the similarities, all six of the libraries seem to communicate their mission and/or vision in different ways. Library A, with its team based structure, has identified separate missions for each team. The missions are written into team statements and discussed at meetings. Library B uses its employee job descriptions as a means of communicating the importance of delivering high quality services. Library C

communicates its vision during employee orientation and, according to Librarian C, is currently working on ways to make its customer service goals “even more visible” to its employees. Librarian D says that her library has made an effort to ensure that its customer service mission is “present in every library document” and Library E uses an assessment team to keep the library informed as to how well it is meeting its customer service mission. Finally, interview data revealed that Library F has written customer service components into many of its job descriptions and into all of its employee evaluation forms.

Interview data also showed that employee rewards and recognition are another way that the various libraries are trying to ensure that they have motivated and committed employees. All six of the librarians interviewed shared the various programs and plans present in their organization. Rewards and recognition programs range from informal sharing and celebrations of team successes at meetings to formal evaluations of employees’ service delivery behaviors during their annual reviews. Librarian C reported that her organization holds monthly meetings that the entire staff is invited to attend. During the course of these meetings, individuals that have been nominated by their colleagues for going out of their way to be helpful receive recognition and thanks. Librarian A said that four times a year teams that have exemplified quality customer service are recognized and rewarded by the library’s director. Librarians B, C, D, and E all indicated that their respective libraries hold annual celebrations where people come together to socialize and recognize the contributions of the library’s employees. Additionally, many of the librarians shared that their libraries use a number of



inexpensive tangible rewards, like gift certificates and parking passes, to promote and reinforce the service behaviors that they want to have in place in the organization.

### **Conclusion & Suggestions**

Though the relatively small scope of this study makes it difficult to generalize, it appears that academic libraries that are interested in delivering quality services to their patrons understand that a library's staff plays an instrumental part in ensuring that patrons are getting the responsive and reliable service that LibQUAL+ surveys show they desire. Shelley Phipps, in an article that examines how libraries can use LibQUAL+ data to create a customer-oriented culture articulates this awareness by explaining that

In this new customer-focused culture, every staff member cares about results. They partner with customers and seek to understand what is needed now and in the future. They know what future to prepare for and know when their work is progressing toward desired results. They know how to analyze their work processes for continuous improvement. All staff members make radical changes in how they organize and manage their work processes and they learn the new skills and knowledge required for new services and products. And last, they are fully supported by an organization designed to tap their full potential and reward their efforts to succeed.<sup>23</sup>

While interviews with the six librarians revealed that all of their libraries practice some form of internal marketing, none indicated that they had a specifically articulated internal marketing plan in place. Since proponents of IM suggest that the most effective programs unify and focus an organization's various human resource and staff development activities toward specific employee satisfaction and service delivery goals,<sup>24</sup> libraries that want to ensure that they have a staff that is largely comprised of John rather than Jane Does (referenced in the opening vignette), could benefit from investing time

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<sup>23</sup> Phipps, Shelley, "Beyond Measuring Service Quality: Learning from the Voices of the Customers, the Staff, the Process, and the Organization", *Library Trends*, 49.4 (2001): 637.

<sup>24</sup> Gronroos 334.

and energy to bringing their various activities together under one specifically articulated plan.

In order to make certain that their internal marketing plan is effective, libraries can begin by polling their employees on their preferences for communication styles, work environments, and rewards. This polling would enable library management to have a clear understanding of how well the current organization contributes to creating motivated and committed employees. Employee surveys can also provide libraries with specific data from which they could work to consider and work for changes in the environment. Libraries may also benefit from setting up formal or informal management networks where internal marketing information and ideas can be shared on a continuous basis.

Finally, in spite of tight schedules, libraries must endeavor to find the time to have regular training and planning sessions. Training sessions can ensure that library employees have the skills they need to continue adapting and growing with their organizations as they strive to meet and exceed patron expectations. Planning sessions can provide library management an opportunity to articulate and recognize the important role that each employee plays within the organization. This articulation can serve as a cornerstone for a library's internal marketing program because it would assist in developing and reinforcing an employees' sense of both internal and external customers. Most importantly, ongoing articulation would recognize and reinforce the understanding that each employee plays a necessary role in creating a competitive and user-centered organization.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

Researchers may be interested in administering an organizational citizenship behavior survey like the one developed by Paul Spector<sup>25</sup> and comparing the data to the customer satisfaction information that is captured by LibQUAL+ studies. This comparison would provide a researcher a useful set of data concerning the extent to which the satisfaction of library employees influences the satisfaction of library patrons. Libraries may also want to develop and test a survey tool that examines library employees' perceptions of the various internal marketing programs in place at their libraries. This tool can offer libraries a means of determining whether or not existing programs are helping to develop the types of user focused and committed employees libraries recognize they need to remain competitive now and in the future.

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<sup>25</sup> Spector, Paul E. *Job Satisfaction: Application, Assessment, Cause, and Consequences*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997).

## Appendix A



THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA

AT

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### **A Qualitative Analysis of Internal Marketing Practices at Academic Libraries that have Undertaken Service Quality Studies**

April 15, 2002

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am writing to invite you to participate in a study that will examine the extent to which at least five academic libraries that have undertaken service quality studies are engaging in internal marketing initiatives. Your institution has been selected because you have recently used the LibQUAL+ tool to evaluate patrons' perceptions of service quality at your library. Because of internal marketing's positive links to improved service quality, the activities associated with internal marketing are a natural fit for the many libraries that have taken up LibQUAL+ studies and initiatives. The purpose of this study is to gather qualitative information on the types of programs and initiatives that your library has in place to support, recognize, and reward excellent service.

I would very much like to learn about the internal marketing programs occurring at the \_\_\_\_\_ Library. Because I believe that your insights as \_\_\_\_\_ would contribute a great deal to this study, I am requesting an interview of approximately 30 minutes. Interviews will be conducted by telephone throughout the month of March and will be tape recorded with your consent. Because I understand that the interview will require a significant amount of your valuable time, I will make every effort to make it as convenient as possible. Furthermore, all information about yourself and your library will be kept strictly confidential. Information obtained from the interview will be used only to discuss general findings. If you are interested, I will provide you with a summary of my findings after the study is complete.

This study for which I am requesting your participation is being carried out with the support and approval of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and its Academic Affairs Institutional Review Board. If you would like further information or have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at (919) 929-5283 or [lsult@email.unc.edu](mailto:lsult@email.unc.edu) or my faculty advisor Dr. Evelyn Daniel at (919) 962-8062 or [daniel@ils.unc.edu](mailto:daniel@ils.unc.edu). Please address any questions you have regarding your rights as a participant in this study to the Academic Affairs Institutional Review Board at [aa-irb@unc.edu](mailto:aa-irb@unc.edu).

I would greatly appreciate if you would let me know within the next couple of days whether or not you believe that you will take part in this study. Once again, if you are

willing to participate, I will strive to make the interview process as convenient as possible. I thank you for your time and consideration and am looking forward to your participation.

Sincerely,  
Leslie Sult

School of Library and Information Science  
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

## Appendix B

### Interview Questions

#### **Preliminary consent:**

This study has been designed to examine that extent to which five academic libraries that have undertaken LibQUAL+ studies are engaging in internal marketing initiatives. As a voluntary participant in this study, you have the right to withdraw at any time. You also have the right to abstain from answering any specific questions. All information gathered during our interview regarding yourself or the library in which you are employed will be kept strictly confidential. Do you understand your rights as a participant and agree to participate in this study? At this point, I would also like to request your permission to tape record our conversation. Do you agree to our interview being tape-recorded?

#### **Interview Questions:**

##### **#1 Could you start by briefly describing your organization's climate and culture?**

- A. Has the library ever undertaken formal employee surveys to examine attitudes toward the library's climate and culture or are evaluations based on more informal interactions and observations?

##### **#2 How important is the idea of customer / patron service in your organization?**

##### **#3 How is this orientation communicated to library employees?**

- A. Is it written into the library's mission statement?
- B. Does it appear in employee job descriptions?
- C. Is it discussed at library or department meetings?
- D. Are there formal programs within the library to recognize and reward excellent service?
  - a. If so, what are the details of the plan?
  - b. How are library employees made aware of and / or reminded of the plan?
- E. What kind of informal behaviors have you observed that recognize and reward customer service?

##### **#4 How well would you say that all library employees (from the director down to the part-time shelveers) understand their role in promoting the service mission of your library?**

- A. Is service of greater concern to the individuals and departments that interact with the public?
- B. Do you believe that library employees have a clear understanding of the way their individual jobs affect and contribute to the service goals of the library?
- C. Do you believe that most employees understand and support the library's service mission?
  - a) What type of inter-department or patron service behaviors have you seen that indicate that employees have "bought-in" to the service mission of the library?

**#5 How well would you say that library leaders promote and support the service mission of your library to all library employees?**

Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you so much for your time and assistance. Once I have completed my interviews and analysis, I'll be happy to share my findings with you. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at [lsult@email.unc.edu](mailto:lsult@email.unc.edu).

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