

# HOSTOS LIBRARY FALL 2008 SATISFACTION SURVEY: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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During the 2006-2007 academic year the library faculty identified learning outcomes as part of the department's assessment initiative. These outcomes focused primarily on student learning in our open workshop program as well as one-to-one teaching interactions with students. However, much of the work we do involves providing services and resources to students that enable learning, but does not constitute direct teaching. We wanted to be able to assess student satisfaction with the information they find through the library, points of service, such as circulation and photocopying, and learn about their perceptions of the library as a place to study, use technology, and interact with other students. We developed a simple survey with both free form answers and a Likert-type scale that addressed our programs and services which we posted on our newly-designed web page.

## RESULTS

The survey asked respondents to rate twelve aspects of library services and collections on a four-point scale: Excellent (4), Good (3), Fair (2), Poor (1) or No Opinion. No aspect of library services or collections averaged less than a 3 (Good), and we were happy to see that students rated us most highly in areas related to direct academic support. For instruction we averaged 3.45 (n=221), reference services averaged 3.41 (n=258), and the library's web site averaged 3.46 (n=256), making it the highest ranked of all aspects of library services and collections measured by the survey. Responses about collections were good but not as high. Online resources got higher marks than our print book collection, but overall neither was rated as highly as academic support services. Students were least satisfied with hours of operation, the laptop loan program, availability of computers and access to printing/photocopying and library hours.

The majority of students responded to a majority of the survey questions. The question about laptop loans received the fewest responses (n=158) and the question about seeking help at the reference desk received the most responses (n=258). There are overwhelmingly more reference transactions each year than laptop circulations, and

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it is possible that the number of responses roughly reflects the relative usage of each service.

The survey focused on specific services: workshops, laptop loans, photocopying and printing, but not users' opinions of the physical environment or how the library influences their overall experience of Hostos Community College. Nevertheless, some comments conveyed to us a sense of students' overall impression of the library: "library is very helpful" ; and "It is the best school library i have been to" ; and "I enjoy being in the library, sometimes its a little noisy" ; or just "Its ok."

## DISCUSSION

The survey has been available to students, faculty, and staff on the library web site since January 2006. However, for the Fall 2008 semester, the survey was included in the Hostos Rewards Points Program, which allowed users to be authenticated based on Hostos email usernames and passwords, which dramatically improved the integrity of the data, and also served as a vehicle for marketing the survey. Inclusion in this program, as well as the web-based nature of the survey, affects our data in other ways as well.

The Hostos Students Rewards Points Program, which was launched in the Spring 2008 semester, gives students opportunities to win prizes for completing tasks like filling out student evaluations, attending workshops offered by the library and the Office of Instructional technology, as well as a variety of other exercises meant to increase students' participation in their educational experience. Although including the survey in the Rewards Points Program did increase our number of survey responses, it did not encourage feedback from students who do not use the library regularly, as we had hoped it would. Most of our respondents (almost 78%) were regular library users. Another concern about the responses was how well they represented the student body in general. Did they represent a small subset of students who are interested in technology and motivated by the possibility of winning a free laptop or Ipod Touch? Regardless, feedback from a small subset of students still provides us with a basis for making improvements to library programs, services and collection.

Additionally, in order to complete the survey, students entered usernames and passwords. This lack of anonymity might have affected the survey's outcome. The benefit of associating students with their responses is that we can later compare student demographics to responses and learn even more about associations between student characteristics and their satisfaction with library services.

Finally, the survey was distributed entirely online. The students who responded were students who most likely saw the link on either the Hostos Rewards Points Website or the library's website, therefore increasing the likelihood that these respondents were comfortable using computers and the Internet. It would be interesting to see whether a survey distributed on paper would have had similar results.

## CONCLUSION

The main goal of conducting the survey was to find ways to improve library services to better meet the needs of students. The most obvious sources of dissatisfaction were hours, printing/copying, laptop loans, all of which are directly related to limited resources. The solution to these concerns-- staffing, equipment, and space, are very difficult to increase, especially during an economic downturn. Students have access to

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only five photocopy machines on campus, and all are in the library. Between classes and at other peak times, students wait in long lines for access to these machines. It makes sense that they would express concerns about printing/copy services.

However, we will continue to look for opportunities to address students' concerns while staying within our budget. For example, the library is advocating for increased access to printing and photocopying across campus--in computer labs and other student service areas which are open longer hours already. We might also examine the possibility of booking laptops rather than circulating them on a first come first served basis, to ensure more equitable access to them.

Additionally, some of the comments about indicate the long held belief among students (and some faculty) that the library should provide access to all required course readings. Most libraries do not provide current textbooks for students to photocopy. Not only does this practice violate copyright laws, it also diverts resources from the broader collection which is built to support the curriculum and remain relevant for years.

Overall, the survey gave us a useful indicator of our progress, and students' satisfaction with library services. We are pleased to report that we received good scores on all aspects of library services and resources that we surveyed. We look forward to re-writing the survey to elicit other kinds of information, as well as monitoring our progress in areas that need work. We always welcome feedback and dialogue with students, staff, and faculty at Hostos Community College. To access the full survey results, visit our webpage at: <http://www.hostos.cuny.edu/library/hcc/surveyresults-points.asp>

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