This study examines whether library service quality expectations particularly in the LibQUAL+® dimension of Information Control (IC) have increased significantly since the advent of the COVID-19 Pandemic. In March 2020, colleges and university libraries across the globe were closed for an indeterminable amount of time (ACRL, 2022). Library services, especially in the dimension of IC were still being provided virtually access to these resources was even more urgent due to facility closures. Universities and colleges responded by offering more online access to materials, such as through partnerships with HathiTrust since InterLibrary Loan services were suspended and/or limited through 2021 (ACRL, 2022). However, the pandemic “surfaced longstanding issues” (such as inaccessibility in libraries) (Anderson et al., 2021 as cited in ACRL, 2022). Made up of eight questions, IC relates to whether users can find the required information from the libraries in the format of their choosing. 

In the academic library literature, there do not appear to be many studies on the IC dimension related to user expectations (Sayekti et al., 2022). However, studies that did discuss IC found the following:

- Nicol & English (2012) found a national rise in IC expectations over time, especially with faculty, even while perceptions of service increased.
- Neshat & Delghani (2013) found that patrons’ minimum expectations in IC were not being met.
- Sayekti et al. (2022) demonstrated that the quality of IC falls short of minimum expectations and suggests improvement in content, search time, off-campus access, and more.

**INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND**

**PURPOSE**

- To examine whether there is a statistically significant increase in global expectations in the LibQUAL+® dimension of Information Control (IC) pre-to-post COVID
- Explore implications for academic libraries if this is a national and/or global trend.

**METHODOLOGY**

With the help of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), we reached out to academic libraries from 17 institutions worldwide with a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to request participation to compare their pre-to-post COVID LibQUAL+® administrations. ARL shared deidentified LibQUAL+® data upon receipt of the signed MOA and a short COVID Survey that asked the following questions:

- Was there a partial or full closure of the campus and/or of the library?
- What were the dates of full and partial library closures from 2020 to present?
- Have you fully reopened?
- Is there anything you would like to add?

In this first analysis, we compared pre-to-post COVID LibQUAL+®: minimum and desired means for each of the eight items in the dimension of Information Control for the four groups: Faculty, Graduate, Undergraduate, and All Respondents.

The comparison was carried out by using Python to clean the data and R programming to conduct the analysis with Welch’s t-test comparisons in order to account for differing variances. Once statistically significant year-to-year comparisons were extracted from the analysis, we operationalized higher expectations in two ways:

- A statistically significant increase in minimum mean year-to-year scores
- A statistically significant increase in desired mean year-to-year scores

To ascertain whether this is a global trend, we compared LibQUAL+® cohorts who have pre-and-post-COVID results. The hypothesis is that faculty and graduate student expectations increased in this dimension after the pandemic began affecting academic library services across the globe following March 2020.

**RESULTS**

Sixteen institutions participated, representing institutions from Africa, Europe, Central and North America.

**CONCLUSIONS & LIMITATIONS**

Most of the 16 institutions’ libraries fully closed at the start of the global pandemic in March 2020. Only one school reported fully closing twice. It has been 2 years and 8 months since March 2020 with thirteen of the participating libraries reporting full closure for an average of 5.5 months. Fifteen were partially open for an average of 8.7 months (2 partially open from the start, 8 partially open with start dates ranging from 4/2020 to 8/2020; one institution never closed).

Since 2020, most institutions have been fully open for 20 months on average. Only one institution remains partially open since 2021.

Many of the institutions administered LibQUAL+® post-COVID after they either partially or fully reopened between 2020-2022.

Most of the LibQUAL+® administrations were from pre-COVID with typically only one post-COVID administration to compare.

- Not every institution had multiple pre-COVID administrations to detect whether there was a trend of expectations that changed over time pre-post COVID.
- We have limited post-pandemic data since it happened so recently.
- We did not include institutional policies and practices in response to COVID that could have affected user satisfaction and expectations.
- We did not account for the location, size, and type of institution in the analysis (e.g., enrollment size).
- We did not account for sample size in our comparison.
- Some institutions have a higher number of changes in expectations than other institutions which is not displayed in this poster because we combined all institutions for each IC item.
- We were only able to analyze sixteen institutions.

**NEXT STEPS**

We will need to examine more post-COVID administrations to see if any significant findings related to the pandemic shift over time.

We also would like to look at how participants perceived libraries meeting these expectations pre-to-post COVID years:

- Is there a statistically significant increase in both the adequacy and superiority gap that demonstrates libraries meeting expectations to a higher degree?
- Is there a statistically significant decrease in both the adequacy and superiority gap that demonstrates participants’ standard of expectations being met has decreased?

We hope to continue to analyze the other dimensions of Library as Place and Affect of Service.

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**REFERENCES**