



*Article*

***Improving Customer Satisfaction: Changes as a Result of Customer Value Discovery***

Susan McKnight  
Director of Libraries and Knowledge Resources  
Nottingham Trent University  
Nottingham, United Kingdom  
**Email:** Sue.McKnight@ntu.ac.uk

Mike Berrington  
Deputy University Librarian, Customer Services  
Nottingham Trent University  
Nottingham, United Kingdom  
**Email:** Mike.Berrington@ntu.ac.uk

**Received:** 13 December 2007

**Accepted:** 10 February 2008

© 2008 McKnight and Berrington. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

---

**Abstract**

**Objective:** To identify Gold Standard Services for customers in an academic library and determine whether interventions following the identification of customer value increased student satisfaction.

**Methods:** “Customer Discovery Workshops” were undertaken with academic staff and undergraduate on-campus students to provide managers and library staff with information on the services and resources that customers valued, and what irritated them about existing services and resources. The impact of interventions was assessed two years after the research using a university student satisfaction survey and an independent national student satisfaction survey.

**Results:** The findings resulted in significant changes to the way forward-facing customer services were delivered. A number of value adding services were introduced for the customer. Overall customer satisfaction was improved.

**Conclusions:** The Customer Value Discovery research has created a culture of innovation and continuous improvement. An operational plan was introduced to track activity and performance against the objectives identified in the customer value research. However, there is a constant need to innovate.

---

## Introduction

In February and March 2005, Libraries and Learning Resources (LLR) at Nottingham Trent University (NTU), a large multi-campus teaching and research university in the United Kingdom, undertook a series of workshops to ascertain customer values and irritants. The purpose of this research was to provide detailed information, from the customers' perspective, as to what an excellent library service would look like. Through the Customer Value Discovery process, irritations caused by the current library service were also ascertained, as were perceptions of current performance against the valued services and attributes of the ideal library.

This paper focuses on a case study that uses customer feedback to change the delivery of forward-facing library services in a multi-campus library service, with the aim of improving customer satisfaction. It complements another research paper (McKnight "Acquisition") that focused on changes to acquisition and cataloguing processes as a result of Customer Value Discovery research.

Measuring customer satisfaction is not new in a library environment. Brophy cites a number of methodologies that can be used for this purpose: user surveys and questionnaires; the LibQual+™ benchmarking instrument; customer feedback analysis; and focus group interviews. Customer Value Discovery is another methodology and has been primarily used in the for-profit sector,

especially in retail, finance, and insurance. Some performance measuring techniques operate by benchmarking against other similar service providers. The Customer Value Discovery methodology does not lend itself to such comparisons, as it is about the service being researched today with current customers and current service providers engaged in the identification of values, irritations, and perceptions of performance.

A new Director of Library Services commenced employment at NTU in August 2004. It was a time of significant organisational change across the University. An academic restructure, created four academic colleges with nine schools that replaced ten faculties. It was necessary for LLR to realign its forward-facing organisational structure, especially its subject librarians/information specialists who were organised along faculty and campus-specific lines, to support the new academic arrangements. At the same time, a new university-wide strategic plan was published that included, for the first time, a key platform of 'Gold Standard Customer Service.'

## Objectives

A primary objective of this research was to establish library customers' perceptions of a 'Gold Standard.' The NTU strategic plan does not define 'Gold Standard' but rather challenges all parts of the University to strive towards delivering the best possible customer experience.

A related objective was to improve customer satisfaction. Prior to undertaking the

research in 2005, there was no definitive data on how students judged the library and IT resource room services. However, students are only one customer segment of an academic library. Academic staff members are also a significant customer group. Therefore, the research was aimed at the two largest customer segments: academic staff and on-campus undergraduate students.

The final objective was to actively engage library staff in the discovery process. This was to ensure that staff clearly understood customers' perceptions of the current services so that the library could see why changes may be necessary. Active engagement in deciding what actions should be implemented as a result of the research creates 'buy-in' to the changes, some of which could be quite significant. This was particularly important where changes to work practices, reporting relationships, and job descriptions were necessary.

### Methods

The new library director had previous experience in Australia using Customer Value Modelling, which uses a combination of focus group techniques and sophisticated technology, to identify customer values. Dr. Karl Albrecht ("Northbound Train") and Dr. Kevin Austin of Enzyme International (Aust.) have developed this concept over time (Albrecht "Corporate Radar"). Because of the positive outcomes of using the process in Australia, the same process was adopted for this research at NTU.

#### *Initial Planning*

A consultative approach was used to engage managerial staff in initial positioning and planning decisions. A number of events were conducted prior to the Customer Value Discovery workshops:

- In October 2004, there was an initial planning session with LLR Heads to reach agreement on an overall restructure. Up to this time, the following reported to the Director: Head, eServices; Head, Lending Services and Administration; Collection Development Manager; Acquisitions Manager; e-Services Manager; and three Information Managers representing the campus academic liaison teams. The new structure established three new business units: Customer Services (responsible for all student facing library services, including liaison with academic staff), Information Resources (responsible for library technical services work) and the Business Support Unit (responsible for administrative functions like human resource management, finance, and purchasing). Later in 2005, the Educational Development Unit was created with responsibility for developing and managing the University's new e-learning programmes.
- In December 2004, a Planning Forum with key LLR managers was conducted to identify barriers to success and agree top-level objectives for an LLR Operational Plan. Each LLR unit then wrote its own action plan to meet the objectives (and overcome barriers) in the Operational Plan.
- In January 2005, an LLR Customer Facing Teams Workshop was held to identify the changes required, especially in a structural sense, to align liaison librarian functions with the new academic structure of the University.

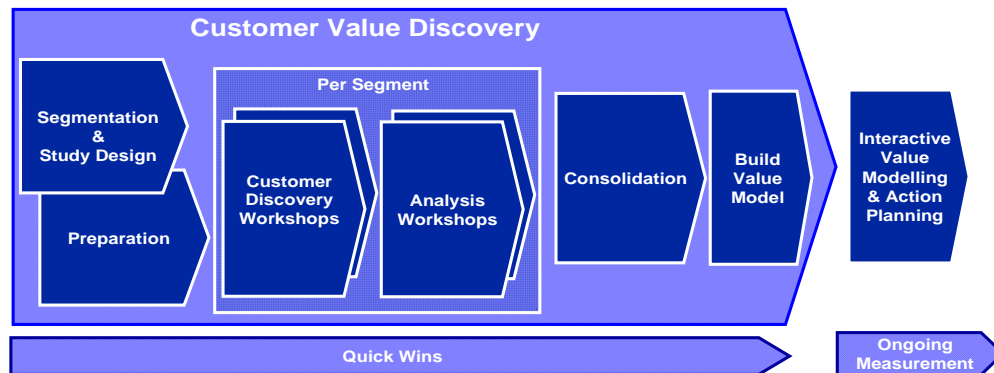
### Customer Value Discovery Workshops

These events were followed in February and March 2005 with facilitated Customer Value Discovery workshops. The process of Customer Value Discovery research involves holding workshops with the respective customer segments (in LLR's case: academic staff and undergraduate on-campus students) observed by library staff; a consolidation workshop to bring together the outcomes of the Customer Value Discovery workshops; and a process of Interactive Value Modelling that enables 'what if?' questions to be modelled using software that plots the impact of the proposed changes upon customer value and

satisfaction. In all, eight Customer Discovery Workshops were held (five student and three staff workshops over three different university campuses). Because of the small sample size at one campus, a number of one-on-one interviews were also held. In all, about 90 students and 35 academic staff were involved, with approximately 40 library staff acting as observers during the workshops.

Further information on the Customer Value Discovery workshop process can be found in McKnight ("Customer Value" and "Acquisition").

A diagram of the process follows:



"Customer" refers to a target group

Figure 1. Customer Value Discovery Process © Enzyme International (Aust.)

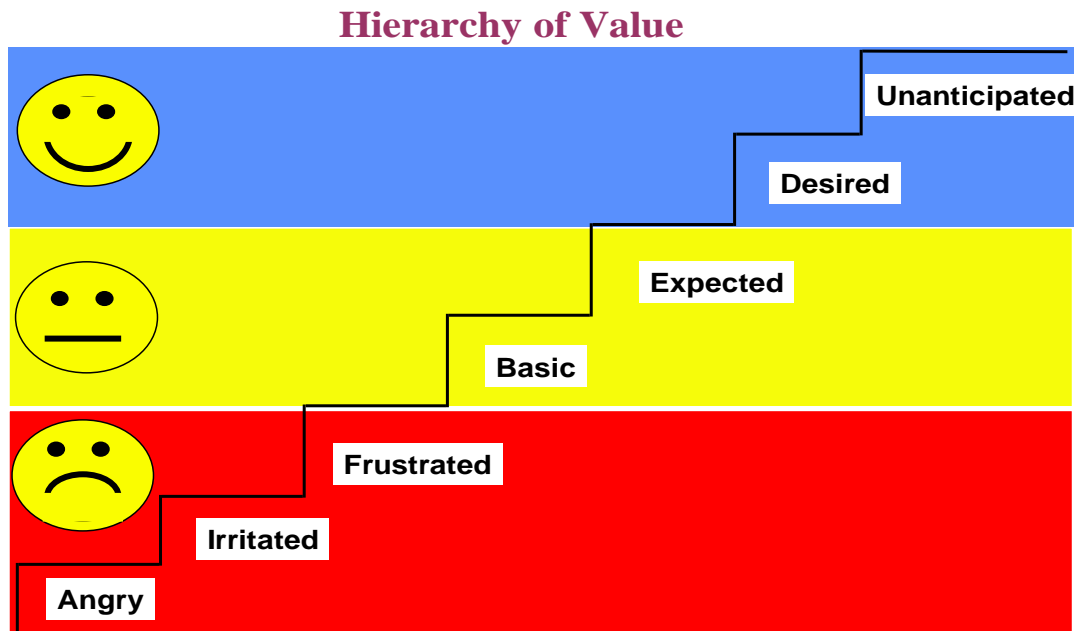


Figure 2. Hierarchy of Value © Enzyme International (Aust.)

Customer Value Discovery is based on a very simple model, the Hierarchy of Value (Figure 2). On its continuum, it describes the potential experiences that any interaction between a customer and service provider can provide. In a service industry, such as a library, all interactions, whether with a staff member or a resource (e.g. book) or service (e.g. web page) can both satisfy and irritate a customer at the same time.

The aim is to **consistently** deliver on the **basic and expected** services, and to deliver **desired and unexpected** services (but not at the expense of neglecting the basic/expected

services) and doing these without causing irritation to the customer.

The Hierarchy of Value (Figure 2), as designed by Austin/Enzyme International is similar to Kano's model of customer satisfaction (as described by 12Manage <[http://www.12manage.com/methods\\_kano\\_customer\\_satisfaction\\_model.html](http://www.12manage.com/methods_kano_customer_satisfaction_model.html)>). Kano describes six factors or dimensions: Basic Factors, Excitement Factors, Performance Factors, Indifferent Attributes, Questionable Attributes and Reverse Attributes. The following table shows how the Kano dimensions compare to the Hierarchy of Value model.

Kano Model Attributes	Hierarchy of Value & Irritant Model
Basic Factors	Basic and expected
Excitement Factors	Desired and unexpected
Performance Factors	Plotted on a performance graph for each Value/Irritant factor
Indifferent Attributes	Not identified by the customers in this model. Only important values and irritations are described
Questionable Attributes	Not valued, so not identified by the customers
Reverse Attributes	Irritants: angry, irritated, frustrated

**Table 1.** Kano Model and Customer Value Model Comparison

Despite some similarities, there are marked differences:

- In the Kano model, pre-defined pairs of questions are prepared for each service/product feature being scrutinised. In the Customer Value Discovery model, the **customers** describe their perceptions of excellence/value, and rate these against all other identified value (and irritant) factors for importance and performance.
- The Kano model provides customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction upon a complex diagram supported by complex tables. The Customer Value Discovery methodology produces multiple easy to interpret graphs depicting hierarchies of Value and Irritation.
- A further significant difference is the notion of service/product providers actively participating in the process of discovery. In the Customer Value Discovery process, service/product providers vote as they assume the customer will vote, thus providing a gap analysis of customer and provider perceptions. While the Kano instrument could be provided to the service/product providers to complete as they expect the customer will complete the

survey and the two diagrams and tables compared, it would not provide the emotional involvement of staff that the Customer Value Discovery process engenders.

The Customer Discovery workshops provide a wealth of information: a prioritised list of irritants, with the frequency of irritation and the severity of the irritation identified, as well as prioritised values, with the importance and perception of current performance against these value factors. The process utilises a mix of high and low technology: individual workbooks, sticky notes to capture individual priorities, affinity diagrams to develop thematic sets of customer priorities, wireless voting technology, and forced pairing software to ascertain the hierarchy of values and irritants.

An important and unique feature of the process is that library staff members observe the workshops in silence and vote as they think the customers will vote during the different stages (priority/importance and performance) of the workshop. This challenges staff assumptions and highlights just how important it is to really ask and listen to customers, as there are often significant gaps in perceptions. This personal involvement in the process and

active listening to the customers' comments helps staff to understand why changes are necessary if the organisation is to deliver the customer values and reduce the irritants.

*Student Satisfaction Surveys*

In 2005 and 2007, NTU conducted student satisfaction surveys. In 2005, 3400 students completed an online survey; in 2007, more than 5500 students undertook the survey. Questions relating to the services of LLR were included in both surveys and the changes in satisfaction level are shown in Table 6.

A separate government survey administered by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) was conducted in 2005, 2006 and 2007. These surveys, completed by graduating students, ascertain the level of satisfaction in a full range of

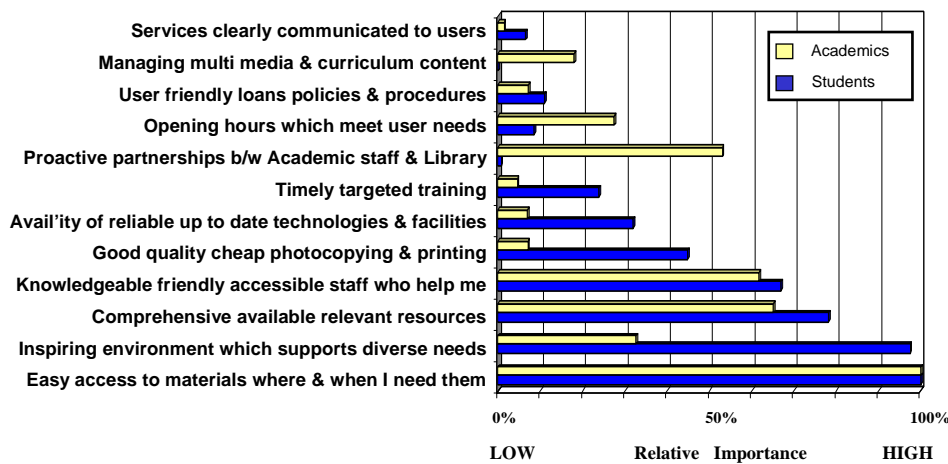
university services, including library and IT resources. The survey questions on library-related services were comparable in 2006 and 2007 providing changes in satisfaction level for the graduating cohorts. The results are included in Table 7.

**Results**

*Values and Irritations*

The Customer Value Discovery research provides hierarchies of values and irritations in graphical format. The highest value or irritation is given a value of 100% and the others are expressed as a percentage of the highest ranked item based on the voting results using wireless keypads that force tradeoffs of pairs of values and pairs of irritants. Sample graphical representations are provided below.

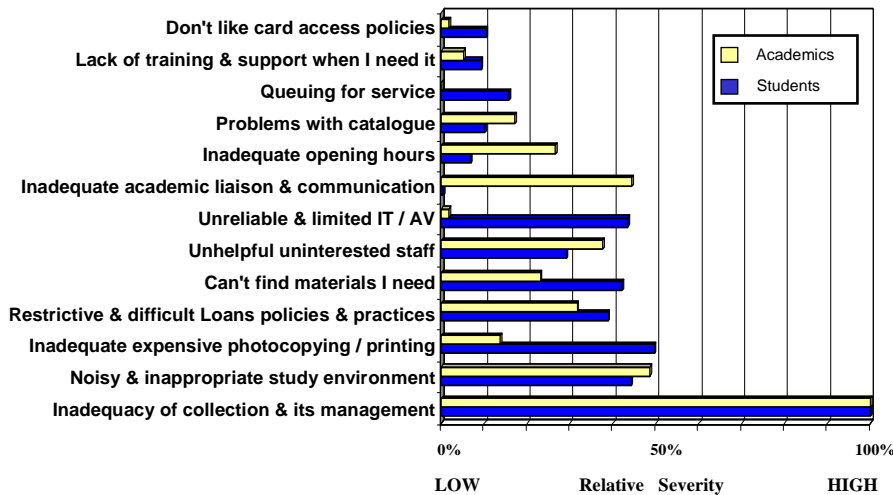
**Overall Hierarchy of Value – Comparative**



Note: Value Factors are ranked in order of Importance for all segments combined

**Figure 3.** Hierarchy of Value for Academic Staff and Students

## Hierarchy of Irritation – Comparative



**Figure 4.** Hierarchy of Irritation for Academic Staff and Students

There is a direct correlation between many of the irritants and values. Therefore, by focusing on reducing irritation, there is a corresponding improvement in value for the customer.

### Action taken following the Customer Value Discovery Process

The values and irritants obtained via the CVD process and the corresponding action taken are presented in the tables below. The values and irritants were actively used to inform operational planning, staff development activity and budget setting within LLR. Prioritising activity and expenditure in this way made it possible to secure sufficient funding or redirect funding from non-value adding services to deliver an ambitious portfolio of improvements at a time of constrained budgets within the University, safe in the knowledge that the time, effort, and funding was being effectively targeted. Many of the

improvements were straightforward and directly addressed customer concerns – unreliable photocopiers replaced were with new equipment for example. However the Customer Value Discovery process also provided additional insight into customer perceptions of LLR and its services as well as encouraging and challenging library staff to think more creatively about service delivery. They were also able to use their expertise to ‘make the connections’ between customer responses and the subsequent development of new services: the innovation in information skills provision is a good example of this. The Customer Value Discovery process was a public statement to customers that LLR was committed to improving services, therefore, it was important that feedback was provided about how it had responded. Hence, besides the usual promotion of individual service developments, a poster campaign, using a ‘you asked for ...’ and ‘we responded by ...’ approach was used to demonstrate LLR had listened and acted in a timely manner.



<b>Library Collections</b>	
<b>CONSOLIDATED VALUES and IRRITANTS</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
<p><b>Related Values</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy access to materials where and when I need them</li> <li>• Comprehensive, available, relevant resources</li> </ul> <p><b>Related Irritants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequacy of the collection and its management</li> <li>• Cannot find materials I need</li> <li>• Problems with the catalogue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed a Library Information Resources Policy to guide future collection development and collection management (approved by Academic Board after wide consultation)</li> <li>• Digitised short loan items, where possible, to maximize access to these in-demand resources</li> <li>• Purchased additional copies of core reading list resources</li> <li>• Established projects to improve reading list management</li> <li>• Secured additional funding for books and journals</li> <li>• Licensed additional eJournals so as to enable 24 x 7 access</li> <li>• Licensed more eBooks (e.g. from 200 titles to 34,000)</li> <li>• Reclassified the entire library collection to one scheme (from six)</li> <li>• Installed a new Library Management System to provide a much more user-friendly user interface to the catalogue</li> <li>• Enhanced the federated search service to enable easy access to digital databases and eJournals</li> <li>• Redesigned the LLR web site to make it more accessible (disabled users) and with richer in content</li> <li>• Implementing an Institutional Repository to archive research and scholarly publications and to make these publicly discoverable</li> <li>• Postal loans services available for students not regularly on campus</li> <li>• Implementation of secure electronic delivery and online requests for inter-library loans</li> </ul>

**Table 2:** Correlation of Values, Irritations and Actions – Library Collections

### *Library Collections*

It was no surprise that *'easy access to comprehensive, relevant resources which were available when needed'* would be highly valued. However, the significance placed on this relative to all other areas of service delivery demonstrated to the University that improvements to the collection should be the highest priority. This was addressed in two ways. First, an increase in the budget for the collection (particularly electronic resources) was agreed to address historical under-funding relative to other similar universities and to provide the means by which several new collection development initiatives could be funded. Secondly, a Library Information Resources policy to govern and direct collection development

and provide guidance to the liaison librarians over priority areas for expenditure was developed in consultation with the academic community. This policy framework was used to guide projects relating to targeted collection developments, digitisation of local content, introduction of new material formats such as eBooks, and management of reading list materials.

For a more complete account of changes in the Information Resources area, see McKnight ("Acquisitions"). The combination of increased funding and improved management of spending plans was expected to realise considerable benefits in this key area of concern to LLR's customers.

<b>The Library Environment</b>	
<b>CONSOLIDATED VALUES and IRRITANTS</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
<p><b>Related Values</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inspiring environment that supports diverse needs</li> </ul> <p><b>Related Irritants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Noisy inappropriate study environment</li> </ul> <p><b>Related Value</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good quality cheap photocopying and printing</li> </ul> <p><b>Related Irritant</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate and expensive photocopying and printing</li> </ul> <p><b>Related Value</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>User friendly loans policies and procedures</li> </ul> <p><b>Related Irritant</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restrictive and difficult loans policies and practices</li> </ul> <p><b>Related Value</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opening hours which meet user needs</li> </ul> <p><b>Related Irritant</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate opening hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identified silent, quiet and 'time out' zones in each library. SILENT areas are patrolled to maintain a conducive study environment</li> <li>Improved signage in all libraries</li> <li>Submissions to estates for major capital works approved resulting in refurbishment of library and IT spaces (new furniture, lighting etc)</li> <li>Student and staff artwork used to decorate library public spaces</li> <li>'Funky' furniture installed in student 'time out' rooms; Vending machines also installed</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New copiers introduced to improve reliability</li> <li>Reduced costs of photocopying</li> <li>Colour copying facilities provided at each campus</li> <li>Introduced self-payment kiosks for printing and copying</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revised loans policy and increased limit of items allowed for borrowing</li> <li>Revised inter-library loans policy with consistent implementation</li> <li>Consistent implementation of loans policies on all campuses</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extended Summer opening hours</li> <li>Review of evening and weekend opening hours with the intention of extending hours at key times during the academic year</li> </ul>

<p><b>Related Value</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of reliable up-to-date technology and facilities</li> </ul> <p><b>Related Irritant</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unreliable and limited IT / AV equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgraded IT Resource Room equipment</li> <li>• Established additional Resource Rooms (more PCs)</li> <li>• Introduced more consistent support for students in other University IT Resource Rooms</li> <li>• Wireless access implemented in all libraries</li> </ul>
---	--

**Table 3.** Correlation of Values, Irritations and Actions – The Library Environment

*The Library Environment*

The Customer Value Discovery research highlighted several factors concerning the day-to-day use of the libraries and resource rooms (noise, reliability of equipment, opening hours, attractiveness of the buildings, etc) that were a source of ongoing irritation to customers. In response to this a number of initiatives, including building refurbishment and equipment replacement programmes, were initiated resulting in a much improved customer experience. While staff already recognized many of the required improvements, the Customer Value Discovery process helped with the prioritisation and scheduling of improvements and securing funding to carry out the changes.

A particularly important irritant was the view that noise levels were excessive in the libraries and impacted negatively on their value as study locations. This was a complex

issue to address: the libraries needed to support a variety of different study activities including group work as well as individual silent study, and all within a constrained space envelope. After considering a range of options, the view was taken that the mix of group, quiet and silent study areas was essentially right, but that they were inadequately promoted and managed. Consequently, a small library staff working group was formed, led by a Senior Library Assistant, to develop new approaches to the management of the various study zones. This resulted in the novel and successful introduction of colour zoning across the libraries and IT resource rooms (red for silent, amber for quiet, and green for social areas), a development that was well received by the student users. This working group was a good example of teamwork and empowerment, as the staff involved in maintaining an appropriate study environment was directly engaged in defining the solutions.

<b>Front-line Staffing</b>	
<b>CONSOLIDATED VALUES and IRRITANTS</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
<p><b>Related Value</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledgeable, friendly, accessible staff who help me</li> </ul> <p><b>Related Irritant</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unhelpful, uninterested staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple front-line service teams restructured into a new single customer facing team to improve responsiveness</li> <li>• All staff reminded of importance of a welcoming environment; customer service training provided and included in annual staff training schedule</li> <li>• Increased budget for staff development with major focus on development of customer service skills</li> <li>• Introduced Performance Development and Review for all staff to help capture skill development needs and monitor performance</li> <li>• Revised the student charter to reflect the values identified by students, and established key performance indicators. Created a new service charter for directed at academic staff</li> </ul>

**Table 4.** Correlation of Values, Irritations and Actions – Front-line Staffing

*Front-line Staffing*

Before restructuring, provision of first-line student services in the libraries had been provided by multiple teams, organized according to functional areas with separate inquiry points reflecting a support model unchanged from the late 1990s. However, over recent years the demands on services from students and other customer groups has increased significantly with blurring and overlap among the teams. The Customer Value Discovery process identified that the current team structures led to “confusing help points” with library customers facing a number of desks depending on their needs. This confirmed assumptions that the customers of LLR view it as a single entity

rather than discrete teams and thus expect a seamless service provision.

As a result of this, an LLR Working Group was established which recommended a new organisational model based on the merger of the teams with the new team working from a new single Information Desk. From an organisational point of view, this provided increased flexibility in the staffing resource to improve responsiveness to service demand. From a customer point of view, a simplified arrangement for obtaining support was the result, as an inquirer no longer had to know which desk to approach for support. For the University, this was a major organisational change, affecting almost 100 members of staff, and required extensive negotiations with the staff

concerned and trade unions as it required major retraining/reskilling for staff. A few months into the new organisational arrangements, staff were acknowledging that while the change had been challenging

for them, it had helped improve inter-team working and improved their understanding of the importance of delivering joined-up services to the customer.

<b>Academic Liaison</b>	
<b>CONSOLIDATED VALUES and IRRITANTS</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
<p><b>Related Value</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pro-active partnership between academic staff and library</li> </ul> <p><b>Related Irritant</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate academic liaison and communication</li> </ul> <p><b>Related Value</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timely targeted training</li> </ul> <p><b>Related Irritant</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of training and support when I need it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restructured Information Team to provide support for University strategic priorities</li> <li>• Increased emphasis of sharing good practice across all Schools (e.g. information literacy training, research support)</li> <li>• Increased emphasis on support for e-Learning; trained librarians to support roll-out of new virtual learning environment</li> <li>• Included library information in 'Getting Started,' a six-week online induction programme for new students</li> <li>• Introduction of 'Welcome Desks' at the beginning of the academic year to help new students settle in</li> <li>• Significantly improved induction and information skills provision, with an increased emphasis on information skills training for all students and staff</li> <li>• Introduced online tutorials for just-in-time learning</li> <li>• Embedding information skills into first year programmes included in NTU Institutional Learning &amp; Teaching Enhancement Strategy, and being progressively introduced</li> <li>• Introduced drop-in sessions for information skills development</li> <li>• Introduced self-directed library induction tours using MP3 players</li> </ul>

**Table 5.** Correlation of Values, Irritations and Actions – Academic Liaison

### *Academic Liaison*

Nottingham Trent University had always placed great importance on the close

involvement of its professional librarians with the teaching, learning and research activities in the University. The Customer Value Discovery process emphasised the importance of this with a clear demand for more joint working with academics and skills development work with students. Prompted by a major restructuring of the University's academic departments, which would in itself have forced a matching realignment of the responsibilities of the professional librarians, LLR used this as an opportunity to fundamentally restructure the academic liaison team into a new single unit. This provided the flexibility to respond to unmet demand, and provide the librarians in the new structure with a coherent strategy for liaison work. The 'reinvented' team provided the impetus and resources to introduce a number of new developments: collaboration in eLearning projects, the use of Web 2.0 type

technologies to improve relevance and take up of student induction and skills sessions, development of additional online self-help information tutorials, introduction of a virtual reference service, support and involvement in the University's 'Welcome' programme for new students, and introduction of drop-in sessions to complement the existing programmed information skills sessions.

The Hierarchy of Values has also informed the revision of LLR's service charter, creating a new charter for services to academic staff. (See [http://www.ntu.ac.uk/LLR/about\\_us/service\\_charter\\_values/index.html](http://www.ntu.ac.uk/LLR/about_us/service_charter_values/index.html).)

### **NTU Student Satisfaction Survey**

The University's bi-annual student satisfaction survey demonstrates that the actions taken in response to the Customer Value Discovery research have had a positive impact on student perceptions of service.

Survey Area	2005 % actively satisfied	2007 % actively satisfied	Change
Library website	73%	81%	+8%
Opening hours	70%	76%	+6%
Helpful and accessible staff	67%	74%	+7%
Access to printers/ photocopiers	55%	73%	+18%
Availability of study places	64%	73%	+9%
Availability of e-journals and databases	66%	70%	+4%
Range of e-journals and database	61%	69%	+8%
Availability of group study rooms	n/a	68%	n/a
Range of books	61%	65%	+4%
Range of printed journals	61%	64%	+3%
Availability of PCs in libraries	48%	63%	+15%
Noise levels	52%	62%	+10%
Training and support for students in using library facilities	57%	61%	+4%
Range of audio and visual materials	61%	59%	-2%
Availability of books and materials from reading list	47%	53%	+6%
Loan periods	52%	57%	+5%
Loan of laptops for in-library use	n/a	51%	n/a

**Table 6.** Nottingham Trent University Library Student Satisfaction Survey Comparison, 2005-2007

This NTU survey, which only canvasses students, does not replace the Customer Value Discovery process. While there is a similarity between the needs of students and those of academic staff, the Customer Value Discovery research provided evidence about what academic staff valued, as well as the priority of services valued by on-campus undergraduate students.

#### National Student Satisfaction Survey

Although there is no comparable data available for 2005, the improvement in the three library-related questions in the UK HEFCE National Survey of Students from 2006 to 2007 shows a marked improvement in rating over the 12 month period and also satisfaction ratings that are above the sector average on all cases.



Q. 16 - The library's resources and services are good enough for my needs
– 82nd in 2006
– 59th in 2007 with a score of 81% (average sector score 77% satisfaction)
Q.17 – I have been able to access general IT resources when I need to
– 44th in 2006
– Joint 19th in 2007 with a score of 91% (average sector score 84% satisfaction)
Q.18 – I have been able to access specialised equipment, facilities or rooms ...
– Joint 66th in 2006
– Joint 30th in 2007 with a score of 78% (average sector score 73% satisfaction)

**Table 7.** National Survey of Student Satisfaction Results for Library-managed Services, Nottingham Trent University

## Discussion

### *Gold Standard Customer Service*

The first objective of the Customer Value Discovery research was to be able to articulate what 'Gold Standard' meant for the Library. The Hierarchy of Value provides the evidence regarding which services are most important, enabling focus on those areas that will make the greatest impact on student and academic staff satisfaction.

Within LLR, the notion of 'Gold Standard' is to consistently deliver the basic and expected services; to strive to provide the desired and unexpected services that would delight the customer; and, at all times, reduce the potential for irritating the customer in the course of service delivery. This implies continuous improvement as unexpected services become the norm.

### *Customer Satisfaction*

The second objective of the Customer Value Discovery exercise was to improve customer satisfaction. The evidence provided by the two student satisfaction surveys attest to the improvement in student satisfaction over a two year period. It is argued that the

improvement in all aspects (except 'range of audio and video materials') is due to the initiatives that were put in place as a result of the initial research in early 2005. The one criterion that did not improve was a service that is being deliberately phased out, involving the move from analogue resources (videos, slides, compact discs) to digital resources.

### *Engagement of LLR Staff*

The Customer Value Discovery process requires engagement of the organisation's staff. The observer status of staff is fundamental to the workshops with customers. The observers are required to listen and to vote as they think the customers will vote. This enables a greater understanding of customers' problems, values and expectations. The personal experience engenders greater commitment from staff to act on the feedback that they receive. This is supported by social science research on persuasion that identified that "public commitments, even seemingly minor ones, direct future action" (Cialdini 64). The very fact that the organisation is undertaking the research and has staff listening at the workshops demonstrates that commitment.

Through the forced-pair voting process during the Customer Value Discovery workshops, assumptions of staff are challenged. The staff observers vote as they expect the customer to vote. The gap analysis on performance and priorities can reveal of a lack of understanding of customer perceptions and needs.

Management commitment to act upon the evidence presented by the Customer Value Discovery process is vital to its success. To ignore the results would be to raise inappropriately expectations of both staff and customers. Therefore, the engagement of staff at all levels in the organisation (not just the observers) with the research outcomes and the identification of actions to improve value and reduce irritations is important.

In LLR, this engagement was achieved in a number of ways:

- The values identified by customers have been reflected in the LLR Operational Plan. The majority of objectives in the customer perspective come directly from the Customer Value Discovery research. The others come from emerging requirements and the University's strategic plan directions.
  - C1 Objective: Facilitating easy access to a comprehensive, relevant range of information resources
  - C2 Objective: Facilitating the Development of Informed and Independent Learners
  - C3 Objective: Creating an Inspiring Environment that meets the diverse needs of Learners, Teachers and Researchers
  - C4 Objective: Enhancing Support for e-Learning

- C5 Objective: Enhancing Support for Researchers
- C6 Objective: Strengthening our Support for the Widening Participation Agenda
- C7 Objective: Developing and Sustaining a Proactive Partnership between LLR and Academic Staff
- Managers within LLR engage their staff in the definition of actions under these objectives to identify what is to be undertaken in the planning period.
- Individual Performance Planning and Review (PDR) objectives are aligned with the operational plan so as to link individual performance with the overarching customer values.
- Teamwork and task groups are used extensively to deliver on the plan. From a customer's perspective, the organisational unit is 'just the library' or 'the university'; they do not see the different units that have to work together to deliver on the customer values. This has resulted in a reduction in the sense of organisational silos that existed before the Customer Value Discovery research.
- Monthly Managers' Forum meetings monitor and review actions within the Operational Plan, ensuring that there is broad understanding of all the initiatives and the related project dependencies.

### **Conclusion and Future Research**

Austin said:

"If you're going to get everyone in the organisation to concentrate on delivering customer value, you've

got to give them a concrete model of what that value is, as defined by the customers themselves. It's not enough to ask employees to smile and be nice. You need to give them a workable definition of the value they're expected to deliver, and then help them learn and use the critical work practices that deliver the value." (Albrecht "Corporate Radar" 91)

This is the concept that is driving change in LLR. The annual planning objectives for the customer perspective are couched in the terms of the customers' values; the PDRs are aligned so every individual can see how their actions link in to the achievement of the operation plan, which is aimed at delivering value to customers.

In an interview with the Australian Institute of Management, Albrecht said that organisational intelligence is "the capacity of an enterprise to mobilise all of its brainpower, and to focus that brainpower on accomplishing its mission." LLR is endeavouring to be an intelligent organisation. By understanding precisely what customers value; by striving for "Gold Standard" customer service; and by engaging staff at all levels to implement the necessary initiatives to deliver added value and to reduce irritation, LLR is using its collective intelligence.

There is much still to do in imbedding the new ways of working, with customer values at the centre of all decision-making. However, the framework has been established and there is significant buy-in by staff. The constant need to innovate is challenging, as staff grapple with finite budgets and increasing expectations of fee-paying customers. What was new yesterday will be an expected service tomorrow. So the process of consolidating new practices and services must be carried out in tandem with

designing and delivering new services to meet emerging customer expectations.

"Value Targeting" refers to aiming for whatever matters most to *individual* consumers. (Albrecht "Supertrends" 26). Library services in the past have been aimed principally at large cohorts of customers. Personalisation of services is an emerging issue to be addressed, especially when the Millennials (those born between 1982 and 2000) attend university. Their expectations of personalised services, their extensive use of portable IT devices and services, and their preferences to work and study in teams will require new interventions by higher education library services. Library management and staff cannot afford to be complacent, regardless of how satisfied today's customers are.

Further research is planned. A comparison of values and irritants between Australian and UK academic libraries will be undertaken to ascertain whether there are 'core library values' that transcend national barriers. The relationship of irritants with values will be examined and English and Australian irritations compared. Should core values be identified, these will be compared to the benchmarking areas and questions in the LibQual+™ instrument.

The Customer Value Discovery methodology is robust and well tested. However, limited library budgets may not extend to contracting the facilitators to undertake the research, although the cost, as a percentage of total budget, is very small and the benefits of targeting funding to services that add value is considered justification. Further work will be undertaken to see if any refinements of the process could be made to reduce the costs but still deliver useful results and thus make the model more accessible to library management teams.

## Works Cited

- 12Manage Management Communities. Customer Satisfaction Model (Kano), 24 February 2008. 2 Mar. 2008  
<[http://www.12manage.com/methods\\_kano\\_customer\\_satisfaction\\_model.html](http://www.12manage.com/methods_kano_customer_satisfaction_model.html)>
- Albrecht, K. Corporate Radar: Tracking the Forces that Are Shaping Your Business. New York: American Management Association, 2000.
- . "Eight Supertrends Shaping the Future of Business." The Futurist. (Sept-Oct 2006): 25-9.
- . The Northbound Train: Finding the Purpose; Setting the Direction; Shaping the Destiny of Your Organization. New York: American Management Association, 1994.
- . Interview with Australian Institute of Management. Karl Albrecht: Organisational Intelligence. 2003. 2 Mar 2008  
<[http://www.aim.com.au/resources/article\\_kalbrecht.html](http://www.aim.com.au/resources/article_kalbrecht.html)>.
- Brophy, P. Measuring Library Performance: Principles and Techniques. London: Facet Publishing, 2006.
- Cialdini, Robert B. "The Science of Persuasion." Scientific American (February 2001): 62-7.
- Kano, N., Seraku, N., Takahashi, F. and Tsuji, S. "Attractive Quality and Must-be Quality." Hinshitsu (Quality, the Journal of Japanese Society for Quality Control) 14.2 (1984): 39-48.
- McKnight, S. "Customer Value Research." Management, Marketing and Promotion of Library Services Based on Statistics, Analyses and Evaluation. Eds. Trine Kolderup Flaten and K.G. Saur. Munchen: IFLA Publications, 2006. 206-216, 2006.
- . "Acquisition and Cataloguing Processes: Changes as a Result of Customer Value Discovery." Evidence Based Library and Information Practice (EBLIP) 2.4 (2007):22-35. 2 Mar 2008  
<<http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/EBLIP/article/view/521/667>>.
- Nottingham Trent University. The NTU Strategic Plan 2004-2010. Nottingham Trent University, UK. 2 Mar 2008  
<[http://www.ntu.ac.uk/about\\_ntu/strategic\\_plan/12910.pdf](http://www.ntu.ac.uk/about_ntu/strategic_plan/12910.pdf)>.