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Hernon, P., Altman, E., & Dugan, R. E. (2015). **Assessing service quality: Satisfying the expectations of library customers** (3rd ed.). Chicago: ALA Editions.

What to say about a title, now in its third edition and available, in one edition or another, in thousands of libraries?

As a start, libraries have changed significantly since the first appearance of this book in 1998, when it won the Highsmith Library Literature Award for an outstanding contribution to library literature. Since that time, “academic and public libraries are continuing to transform as the information landscape changes and their parent organizations ... expand their missions and as libraries envisage a future that leads to new service roles and improved organizational performance and accountability” (p. xi). Given “some new perspectives on evaluation and assessment,” the American Library Association asked the authors to update the content.

The list of authors has also changed. The original two were Ellen Altman and Peter Hernon. Altman, now retired, was, in her prime, both a faculty member at various universities in North America and New Zealand, and a recognized expert in public libraries. Hernon, a professor emeritus at Simmons College Boston, is a recognized expert in academic librarianship and, not incidentally, the author or co-author of 57 books. This time, Robert E. Dugan was asked to join the team; currently Dean of libraries at the University of West Florida, Dugan is experienced in both public and academic libraries and co-author (not infrequently with Peter Hernon) of 13 books and innumerable articles.

What has not changed, however, is the authors’ burning commitment to customer service. “It is important for libraries,” they write, “to demonstrate their value while simultaneously delighting customers with the service they receive. Service quality and satisfaction are not incidental matters to customers who become repeat users” (p. xii). Regardless of the edition, the overall purposes of the book have not changed either. The authors aim to:

- Suggest new ways to think about the evaluation and assessment of library services;
- Present different ways for libraries to become more customer-centric;

- Explain service quality and customer satisfaction, and their theoretical bases, and clarify the differences between them;
- Identify procedures for measuring both service quality and satisfaction;
- Challenge conventional thinking about the utility of input, output, and performance metrics;
- Suggest possible customer-related metrics and provide insights useful for library planning and decision making; and, finally
- Encourage libraries to take action—action leading to improved service and accountability. (p. xiii)

The book itself sets out to achieve these goals in thirteen well-written chapters. As might be expected, the tools available to libraries to obtain feedback from their customers have changed with the information landscape. References to Facebook and Twitter appear in the text, and certain commercial services such as Counting Opinions (pp. 149ff.) and LibQUAL+® (pp. 158ff.) are examined and recommended.

Almost all chapters come with figures meant to illustrate and clarify points raised in the text. For example, in Chapter 3, “Your mission, should you choose to accept it...,” which discusses core values that shape every organization, Figure 3.2 sets out the Core Values guiding the Rochester Minnesota Public Library in a very clear way. All chapters also come with slews of references for further reading.

Readers will also experience many “Ah ha” moments as they make their way through the book. For this reader, one of the earliest was in the chapter “Measuring and evaluating the components of high-quality service,” which contains a chart outlining “A sample academic library institutional return on investment spreadsheet” (p. 47). Who would have guessed that the \$3,440,556 that this library received from the university budget committee could be leveraged to \$29,028,155 in total value! In another chapter, “Different ways of listening to customers,” who would have thought of sending in a “Mystery Shopper” who was carefully programmed to evaluate the experience (p. 76). Clearly the authors have not just relied on library literature to get their inspiration.

About the only limitation of the book (other than its 8.5” x 11” size!) is that it does not specifically address customer service in school and special libraries. However, the case could be made that librarians in these libraries could adapt many of the ideas outlined here.

In sum, this is a splendid book that deserves to be obtained by every library that cares about its customers and wants to do its best by them—even if the library already has an earlier edition!

Ashley Thomson, Bed, MA, MLS
J.N. Desmarias Library
Laurentian University
athomson@laurentian.ca