MISO 2023

Information & Library Services conducted the MISO Survey (Measuring Information Service Outcomes) in March, 2023 with faculty, staff and students. Bates conducts the survey every three years and has been doing so since its inception in 2002. The results of this survey are an important measuring stick for ILS, allowing us to identify any issues with our service, gain insight into new ways that the campus is using technology and study temporal trends.

As in past years, our services are rated quite highly by all three groups (generally a 3+ out of 4). While we are generally pleased with how we perform, the survey consistently provides us with new insights and areas where we need to improve. We found it most useful this year to compare our results to 2017, providing sufficient time for previous changes to be enacted and recognized by the campus.

Please note that each of the three surveys (faculty, staff and student) have a somewhat different set of questions and that each time we run the survey, some questions are added and others omitted. One of the largest criticisms of the survey is its length, so we are always fine-tuning the survey and looking for ways to shorten the survey. That also means that we don't always have every piece of data for every group. The full 2023 results for each group (faculty, staff, students) are available for review.

Specific Findings

1) Not surprisingly, web conferencing became an important tool in 2023. Web conferencing jumped in frequency of use for faculty from 2.15 (2017) to 3.64 (2023) and in its importance for faculty: 2.68 (2017) to 3.59 (2023) and for staff: 2.95 (2017) to 3.43 (2023). The Zoom web conferencing tool met people's needs with high satisfaction (faculty: 3.90; staff: 3.85).

2) The pandemic required that faculty and students use far more technology to achieve their teaching and learning goals than ever before. We wanted to know whether the changes that they were forced to make in 2019 and 2020 had remained in 2023. The question "How much do the following contribute to the achievement of your teaching (faculty)/academic (student) goals?" was a potential measure (3 = moderately and 4 = greatly contribute). However, for both faculty and students, the ratings they provided were not significantly different from 2017 to 2023. Technology used in courses and classrooms (faculty: 3.75 vs 3.75; students: 3.32 vs 3.48), ability to access scholarly materials from wherever you are (faculty: 3.77 vs 3.77; students: 3.65 vs 3.68) and, for faculty only, working with technology professionals (3.20 vs 3.37). Of course, even in 2017, these ratings were already quite high, so there may simply not have been much room to move.

3) Campus printing had been an issue, with printers that were unreliable and jammed easily. These problems led us to change all of the printer hardware in 2021. Happily, satisfaction increased significantly from 2017 to 2023 in both students (3.16 to 3.46) and staff (3.22 to 3.52). Faculty had not been asked about printers in previous years, but their satisfaction in 2023 was 3.20.

4) Improving the services provided by the Help Desk has been a point of emphasis for ILS over the last several years. The Help Desk is available to all campus constituents, but we find that the students use it less frequently and find it less important than do faculty and staff. This is understandable since the services the Help Desk is able to provide to personal machines is far more limited than those it can provide to college machines.

For both faculty and staff, we measured a steady improvement (5% increase from 2017 to 2023) in their satisfaction with Help Desk services. Both groups are highly satisfied with the support when they have a computing problem (faculty: 3.52; staff: 3.69) and with the time it takes to resolve the problem (faculty: 3.32; staff: 3.62).

In the comments, concern was expressed that too often the phone is not answered during normal working hours. We were able to use the reporting available in Zoom phone to identify the peak calling periods and adjust our staffing levels during these times. We will be more closely monitoring the percentage of missed calls to ensure that this problem does not continue.

5) The relatively recent introduction of two-factor authentication (via Duo) has added a barrier when individuals are logging into campus systems. We tried to capture people's perception of that by asking about the "ease of logging into campus systems". All three groups believe that easily logging in is important (faculty: 3.80; students: 3.77; staff: 3.59). Staff are satisfied (3.67), but there is a significant drop in satisfaction for faculty (3.20) and students (2.89). Attributing these ratings to Duo is not assured, but the comments left by all three groups discussed Duo specifically and their unhappiness with having to use two-factor authentication. These results suggest that we need to improve campus awareness of the important role that Duo plays in our overall information security program.

6) The library as a space is uniquely a student issue since they are the ones who spend large amounts of time in the space. There were seven items on various aspects of the space that were asked for both importance and satisfaction. The two of greatest importance to the students were: availability of electrical outlets (3.70) and physical comfort (3.66). The students' satisfaction with those two were rated quite a bit lower (3.48 and 3.42) than the importance ratings and point to areas where we need improvement.

We also asked the students how much library spaces contribute to the achievement of their academic goals. While the rating has declined slightly from 3.56 (2017) to 3.47 (2023), it is still quite high (3 = moderately contribute and 4 = greatly contribute).

The one item that stood out in the written comments was the lack of light in the Library. Poor lighting has been an issue for a number of years, so in 2019-2021, the college undertook a multi-year project to improve the lighting throughout the building. These improvements included making it easier to see while in the stacks and making our lighting more sustainable (motion-detection throughout the building). Even with these changes, there were many negative comments regarding the lack of good light in the building. One of the consequences of motion-detection lights is that the stacks are quite dark when no one is in them. So, if a student is studying near the stacks, the lighting near their chair may be just fine, but when they look up, all they see are very dark stacks, leaving them with the feeling that they are in a dark space. Solving this issue will require much more extensive renovations.

7) We also use this survey to measure what devices our students own. In 2023, almost all of our students own a mobile phone (99.6%) and laptop computer (98.4%). Those laptops are primarily Macs (70%), with 20% having a Windows machine, 9% using a Chromebook and 1% using Linux.

We must caution here that these numbers reflect those individuals who took the survey. We know from requests to the Help Desk for loaner machines that not all students actually do own a computer or own one that is capable of doing the work required in their classes.