ATG Familiar Faces

Editor

Follow this and additional works at: http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg

Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

Recommended Citation
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.4328

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.
Back Talk
from page 94

• Put descriptions of databases online [we
do somewhat].
• Too many broken links to Websites.
• Too many clicks are required to view my
circulation record [we require users to
authenticate].
• [an alum complained] I want access to all
the databases, not just the ones to which
Circle of Friends organization members
are entitled.
• Three color copies made from e-journals
are not as good as the printed journals.

The first two of these complaints express
the difficulties that many of our users are expe-
riencing with their digital library. When there
were mainly printed books and a few electronic
databases we were all excited. Now that we are
buried in e-content, many users are drowning
in digital ink. Having said that, an equally loud
demand is for more digital ink in the form of
more eBooks, more e-journals, more e-journal
back runs, etc. Other complaints refer to simple,
but still frustrating, technical problems: I need
a better mouse, my bandwidth is too slow, your
catalog isn’t nice like Amazon.com’s, I hate bro-
ken links, and the color copies aren’t good
enough. Since we developed an e-package for
alumni access [titles for which licensing per-
mission has been secured], we have received
numerous complaints that we have disenfran-
chised them compared to the access they en-
joyed as students. Many of these problems can
be solved, but they result in some patrons feel-
ing like the one who simply stated: “I feel frus-
trated all the time.”

Some of the other complaints reflect the new
level of expectations that the current Web gen-
eration, steeped in instant gratification, possess:
• I want the catalog to tell me what floor,
row, and shelf my book is on.
• Translate western European books into
English.
• Why can’t your Hong Kong materials
catalog include references to materials at
the Public Records Office, the Historical
Museum, etc.? 
• You need to catalog all the articles in an-
thologies, catalog all the titles in e-jour-
nal databases [we do mostly].
• You pick up and deliver books from li-
braries at other universities, why not from
other branch libraries on our own cam-
pus? I don’t want to have to come to cam-
pus to return my books, please set up re-
turn boxes at all the extension centers in
the city.

Twenty-five years ago I would complain that
students simply wanted to know where the penci-
lar sharpeners, drinking fountain, and rest rooms
were - but this generation seems to have higher
expectations (in addition to drinking fountains
and rest rooms). The last comment in the list
just above relates to another phenomena in
higher education today: More life long learn-
ers who have personal needs that conflict with
library rules. They come into our library after
9 PM at night once classes are over, rush around
gathering books and making photocopies to
supplement what they find online, but subse-
quently are emailed that they need to return a
book or get fined — and that is not a day on
which they have a class. A student’s life is sim-
ply not easy.

So, are Hong Kong students different in their
library demands? I don’t think so. Globalism
produced our collection of skyscrapers amidst
green mountains and the lives of our students
are quite similar to those of their counter parts
on the other side of the Pacific. The survey also
suggests that while many of the problems en-
countered by students in libraries are the same
as decades past, we are indeed already in the
digital future.