# Using LibQual+ ® "Library as Place" Results to Inform Space Planning Decisions
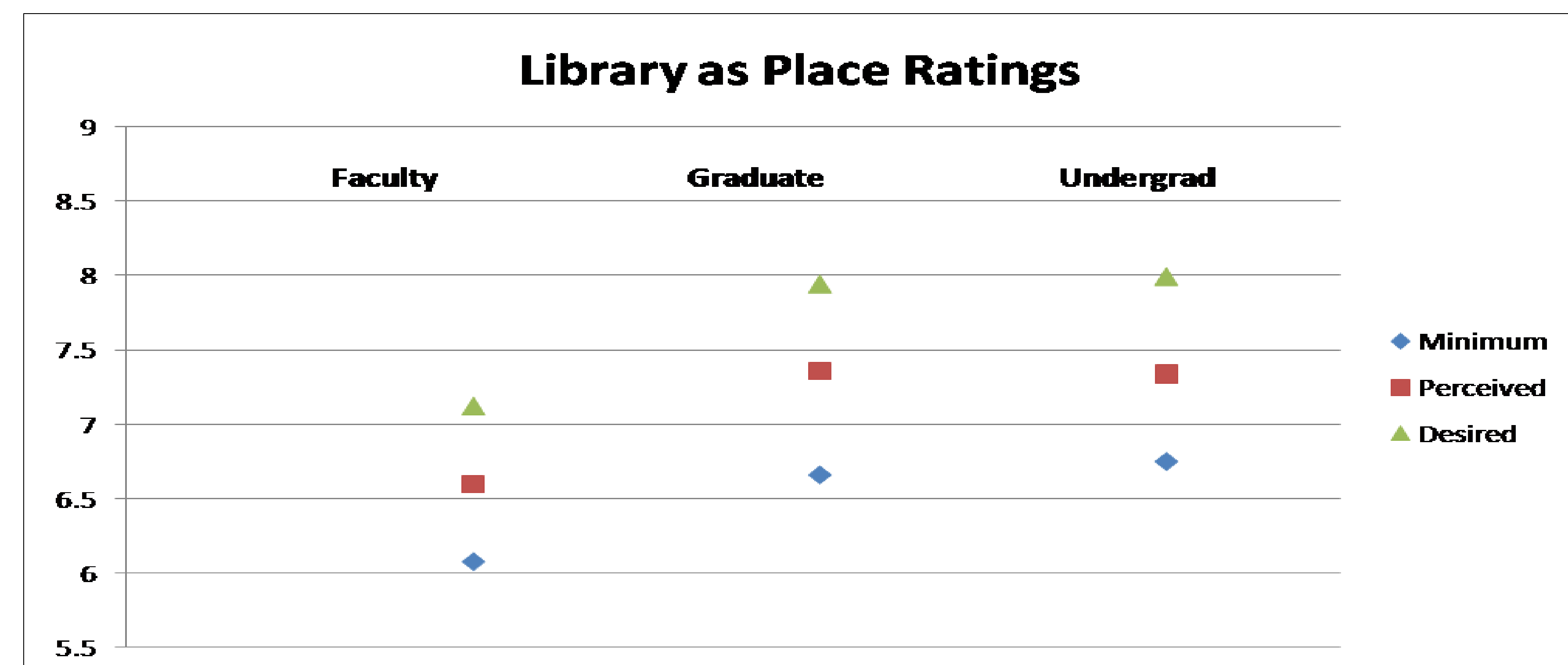
## Space Planning @ Joyner Library

Joyner Library is East Carolina University's main library. Originally built in 1955 for a student population of 3,300, it was renovated and expanded in 1999.  It now serves a student body of 27,000. Students tell us that they need more group space for collaborative work and projects, as well as additional quiet study space.   Space is needed for special collections growth and instruction, as well.

In 2008, the Library embarked on an extensive planning project to try to meet these and other space-related needs.  We hired an architectural firm to design a comprehensive space plan. Library staff worked closely with the firm to obtain user input concerning features they want in the redesigned space. We obtained input through focus groups, surveys, meetings, and individual interviews.

Having already planned to administer LibQual+ in Spring 2009, we decided to select local questions focusing on "Library as Place".  This poster compares our LibQual+ results with other data obtained from our users and discusses how it informed our planning process.

## LibQual+ "Library as Place" Items

The five LibQual+ items that address "Library as Place" are used to derive the mean score for this dimension.  LibQual+ results indicated that the Library met minimum service expectations, but fell short of desired service levels for all user groups. Undergraduate and graduate students did not differ appreciably in their rankings. Faculty had the lowest ratings for each level of service.  While this is a common finding in LibQual+ surveys, it was of interest to us, because a number of our faculty had been vocal in expressing concerns about plans to reduce the space devoted to stacks, enlarge the café, and provide more collaborative space.



## LibQual+ Local Items

The pool of local service quality assessment items includes 34 items relevant to "Library as Place" (LP).  The ECU Faculty Senate Libraries Committee helped select 5 of these items to include on our survey.

One of these items, *Using the library for research,* received the highest overall Desired Mean score of all 10 LP items:  8.44

Three of the local items were in the lowest five Desired Means for all items:

➢ Access to equipment not readily available in my dept: 7.41

➢ A place for reflection and creativity: 7.55

➢ A center for intellectual stimulation: 7.63

<u>Faculty Concerns:</u>
Two local items ranked among the 5 items with the largest superiority gaps for faculty.  Each also had an adequacy gap.  This is particularly notable since only 7 items in the entire survey had an adequacy gap; the other 5 were for Information Control items.  Local items with large service gaps were:

➢ **Using the library for research**
  ➢ Adequacy gap -0.40 (3rd highest )
  ➢ Superiority gap -1.23 (3rd highest)

➢ **Library materials being available for browsing in open stacks**
  ➢ Adequacy gap -0.18 (4th highest)
  ➢ Superiority gap -0.1.16 (4th highest)

➢ LibQual+ comments showed a marked contrast between faculty who want to preserve the traditional quiet library environment and those who recognize a need for more collaborative spaces.
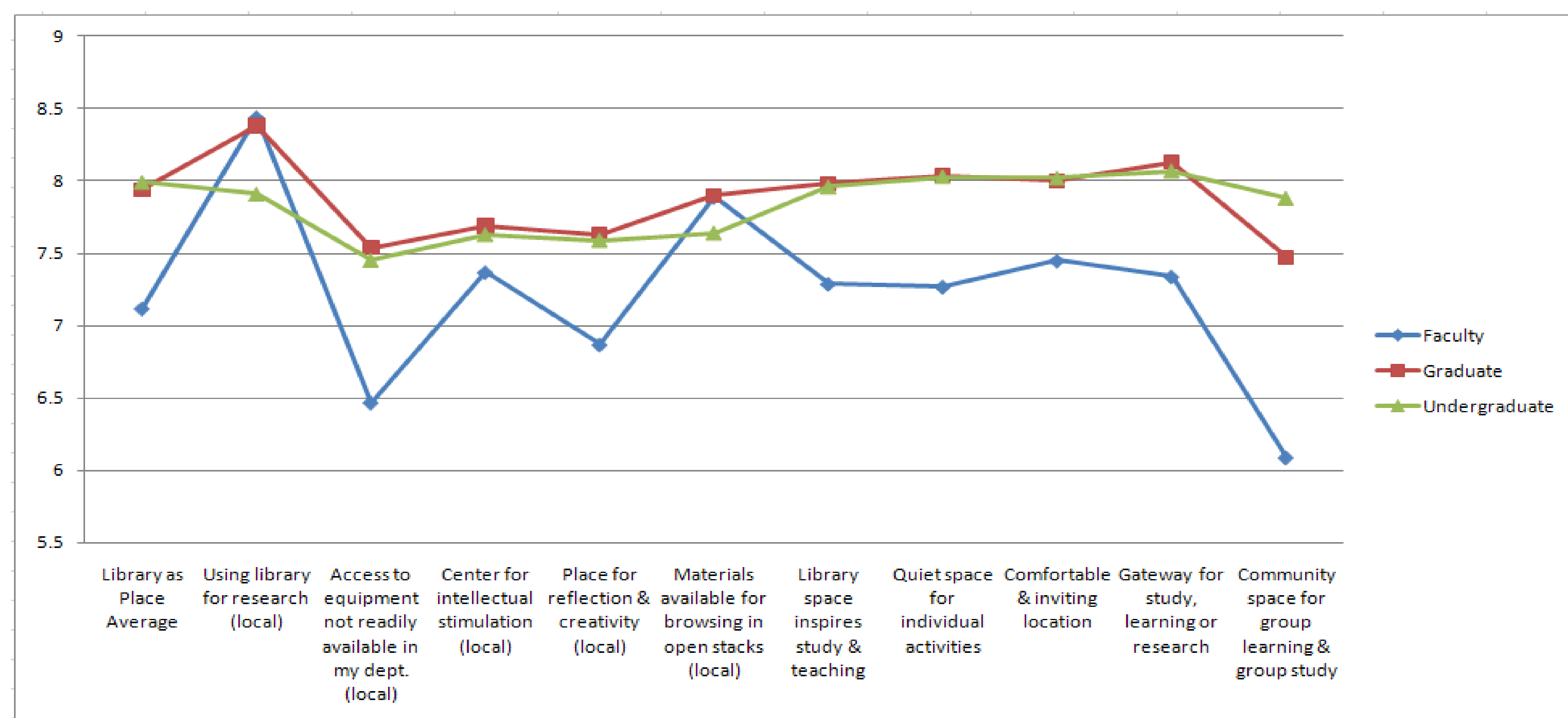
## Desired Means for all Library as Place Items



➢ Graduate students and faculty value:
  ➢ Using the library for research
  ➢ Ability to browse in open stacks

➢ For other items, graduate student responses closely mirror those of undergraduates.  They value:
  ➢ A gateway for study, learning & research
  ➢ Quiet space for individual activities
  ➢ Comfortable & inviting location
  ➢ Library space that inspires study & teaching

➢ These results are consistent with comments made on a recent student survey.  The need for quiet space was the most common comment made, followed by the need for "study" rooms (not clear if individual, group, or flexible spaces were meant), and group study/meeting rooms.

➢ Focus groups identified a need for group study rooms with computers and screens; comfortable and flexible group seating; and separation of group spaces from individual study areas.

➢ A surprise: the low value placed on *access to equipment.* The architect proposed an emerging technologies lab; survey results indicate this is not a priority for our users.  However, when focus group participants were prompted, they indicated that they did want more equipment for check-out, presentation practice rooms, and multi-media equipment and support.

## Proceed with Caution

➢ The faculty scores and comments caution us to move carefully with plans to aggressively de-select materials from the stacks and build an automated retrieval system.

➢ We will share additional information about the benefits of an ARS, our de-selection criteria and our long-term collection maintenance plan.  However, we do not want to overreact, as our faculty survey response rate was very low, and individuals who oppose the redesign plans may well be overrepresented.

➢ The low value faculty gave to *community space* points to a conflict among various types of users for quiet v. group spaces.  Finding a balance will be difficult, but we know that our primary user group – students – want both.

Contact information:
Jan Lewis
Associate Director
Joyner Library, East Carolina University
E-mail:  lewisja@ecu.edu