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Observing Graduate Students' Use of Library Space

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Observing Graduate Students' Use of Library Space

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Based on a "sweeps" study in public libraries (Given & Leckie, 2003), this observational research tracks how the physical space and resources are used in a faculty-supported graduate library. We create a snapshot of what is going on in the library at a given moment in time, and then compile the results to determine how users behave in our space. These results will inform planning for an upcoming move.

What is a "library sweep"?

- Non-obtrusive, observational research method
- Walk through the library space and record the activities and possessions /objects / resources in spaces being used
- Produces snapshot of library use at a given time

What is the Graduate Resource Centre (GRC)?

- Faculty-supported library
- Provides information resources and services (human, print and digital) to support Faculty of Information and Media Studies' graduate programs
- Non-circulating resources

Resources include:

- 2000 monographs
- 520 reference volumes
- 120 print and electronic journal subscriptions
- 135 audio-visual resources

***Space* is also an important resource for graduate students:**

- Individual study
- Group work
- Socializing

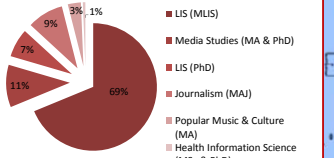
Variety of graduate students, variety of needs:

Level I - Research

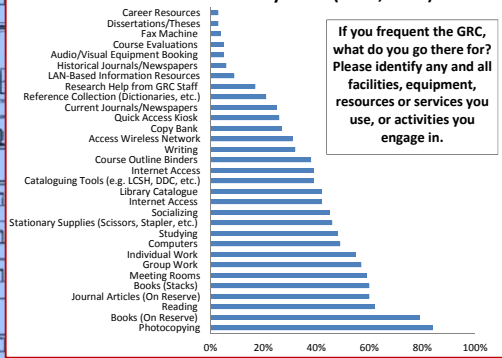
- Media Studies
- Popular Music & Culture
- Library and Information Science
- Health Information Science

Level II - Professional

- Journalism
- Library and Information Science



Feedback from 2010 Survey N=96 (Mills, 2010)



If you frequent the GRC, what do you go there for? Please identify any and all facilities, equipment, resources or services you use, or activities you engage in.

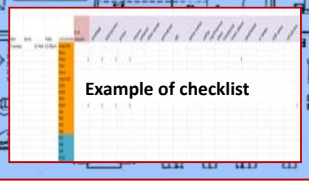
What space requirements (quality and quantity) are required for an upcoming move?

GOALS:

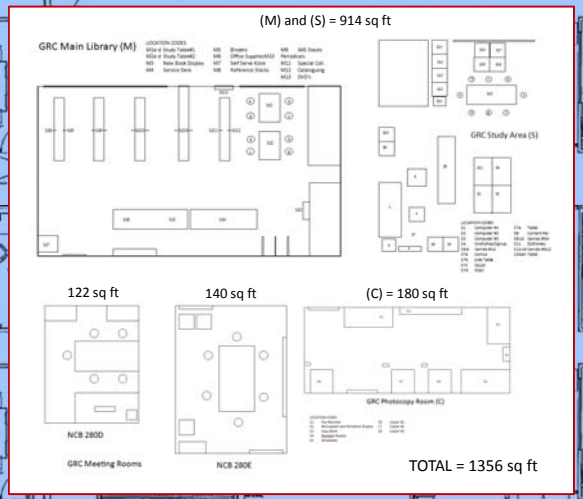
- Investigate graduate students' use of physical space
- Investigate graduate students' interaction with resources and other materials

Methodology:

1. Create a map of the GRC space
2. Create codes for various locations within GRC in a logical sequence
3. Create checklists to track numbers of individuals and their activities and possessions
4. Observe the space three times per term (beginning, middle, end) sampling a variety of times during operational hours (morning, noon, afternoon, evening, weekend) recording what you see
5. Compile repeated measures data and analyze



Example of checklist



What's happening in these spaces?

What materials are used in these spaces?

Preliminary Results (N=178):

- 18 sampling times – 3 times of day: 2 mornings, 2 afternoons, 2 evenings; 3 times per term: beginning, middle, end

Area	Capacity	Mean	Maximum
Group Work Tables	16	4	10
Individual Study Carrels	11	3	8
Computers	3	2	3
Social Area	4	1	5

Example of use:

- Eating/drinking: Mean=0.1 – no policy changes

TOP 5 OBSERVATIONS	
Activities	**Materials / Resources**
• Using laptop (30%)	• Bookbag (78%)
• Conversing (23%)	• Binders / papers (52%)
• Reading (14%)	• Laptop (41%)
• Interacting with staff (10%)	• Books, reserves, etc. (34%)
• Sorting / stapling (6%)	• Coat / jacket (26%)

Activities:

- ✓ Reading
- ✓ Writing
- ✓ Searching/Retrieving
- ✓ Charging Laptop
- ✓ Using Laptop/Cell/iPad/e-reader
- ✓ Using Computer/Copier
- ✓ Listening to music
- ✓ Eating
- ✓ Drinking
- ✓ Sleeping
- ✓ Watching/Sitting
- ✓ Waiting for Staff
- ✓ Interacting with Staff
- ✓ Conversing with Others

Resources and materials:

- ✓ Reserves
- ✓ Other Books
- ✓ Backpack/Book bag
- ✓ Laptop
- ✓ Music Player (iPod)
- ✓ iPad/Tablet
- ✓ eReader
- ✓ Water Bottle
- ✓ Coffee Cup / Thermos
- ✓ Other Food / Drink
- ✓ Jacket
- ✓ Binders/Paper
- ✓ Cell Phone
- ✓ Purse

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Use "sweeps" with other data-gathering methods for space planning:

- Headcount statistics (ongoing)
- Facebook polls (ongoing)
- Graduating surveys (ongoing)
- Comment cards(ongoing)
- Needs assessment (updated)
- Focus groups (future)

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