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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

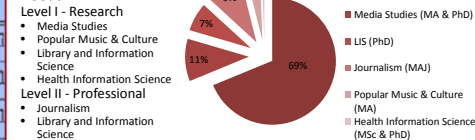
## Resources include:

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

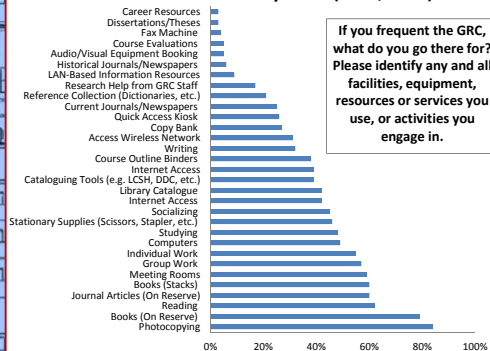
## Space is also an important resource for graduate students:

- Individual study
- Group work
- Socializing

## Variety of graduate students, variety of needs:



## 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.

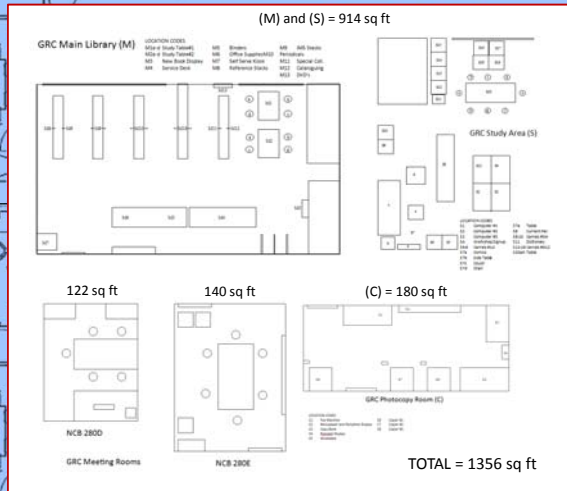
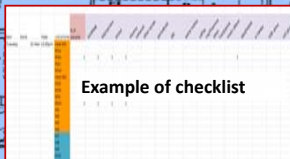
## What space requirements (quality and quantity) are required for an upcoming move?

### 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



## 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

What's happening in these spaces?

What materials are used in these spaces?

## 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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