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## 5 Years of User Research: Mary Idema Pew Library Learning & Information Commons, Grand Valley State University Libraries

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# 5 Years of User Research

Mary Idema Pew Library Learning & Information Commons, Grand Valley State University Libraries

Compiled by Kristin Meyer and Katie Alphenaar

9/26/2019

**Purpose:** This document highlights what we've learned about how students have used the Mary Idema Pew Library Learning & Information Commons since it opened in 2013.

Number of visitors compared to former library:

Approximately  
**1 million**  
visitors per year



**135%**  
increase from  
former library

Based on our 2014 Library Diary survey,<sup>1</sup> activities most frequently conducted by students were:

**68%**  
studied by self

**67%**  
printed

**64%**  
met a friend/classmate

**62%**  
used a computer or  
other library technology

**51%**  
used library resources  
for research

**50%**  
studied in a group

According to the Library Diary survey,  
students often visited **multiple times per day**.



Average  
length of stay = **3**  
**hours**



<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this survey was to determine how students spend their time when they visit the library. 654 students recorded how they used the library during a week-long survey period conducted March 15-March 21, 2014.

# FLEXIBILITY

The flexibility of our spaces has been a key success.

## COLLABORATIVE VS. QUIET

The library was designed to be 2/3 collaborative space and 1/3 quiet space. **In practice there is closer to a 50/50 split of collaborative and quiet use.**<sup>1</sup>

We have found there is a **need for quiet computer space**. Knowing this, we would have designed the serpentine computer desks to not all be adjacent to collaborative areas.

## USAGE IN THE <sup>1</sup> DAY VS. NIGHT



### individuals

were recorded more frequently during daytime hours



### groups

were recorded more often in the evenings

*During the evening, conversation levels were higher in collaborative areas.*

Based on the Library Diary survey, the percentage of students who conducted each activity varied only slightly based on the time of day that the students exited. Notable differences included the following:

### Before 6:00 pm

A greater percentage **studied by themselves** compared to students after 6:00 pm, although the percentage was large in both cases. **Printing and using a computer were also slightly more popular during the day.**

### After 6:00 pm

A greater percentage **used library resources for research, met a friend or classmate, and purchased something from Argo Tea** compared to students before 6:00 pm.

## EVENT SPACE

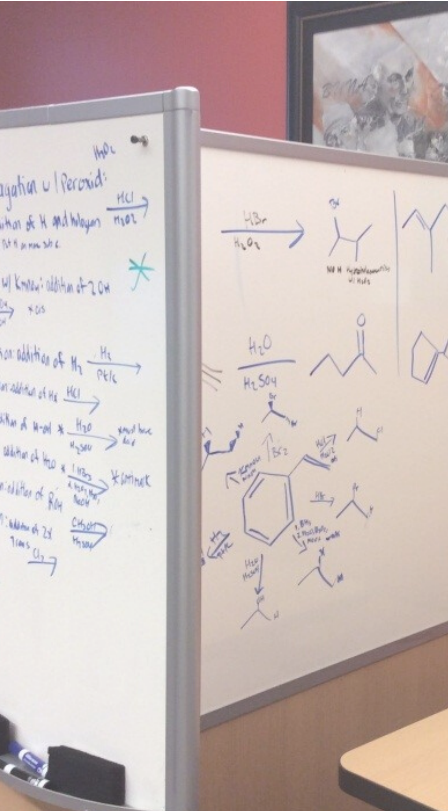
When not in use for scheduled events, the large Multipurpose Room is used as overflow study space. Our headcounts indicate that it is heavily used for study during peak times.



<sup>1</sup> Gullikson, S., & Meyer, K. (2016). Collecting Space Use Data to Improve the UX of Library Space. *Weave: Journal of Library User Experience*, 1(5). doi.org/10.3998/weave.12535642.0001.502

# STUDENTS MANAGE THEIR OWN LEARNING

Formal, post-occupancy assessment with Steelcase, Inc. showed that the **building design fostered student engagement.**<sup>1</sup>



## WHITEBOARDS

**Whiteboards were very popular based on the data staff collected in the 2014-15 academic year.**

In 2014-2015, we observed almost

**3,000**

instances of content being written on the whiteboards.

Recorded data indicated that whiteboards are often used for the following purposes:

- Academic work in a variety of disciplines but especially for science-related content
- “Just-for-fun” study/stress relievers
- Territory marking
- Rooms-on-the-fly
- Privacy screens
- Inspirational messages to fellow students

Our data indicated that whiteboard use, especially use for academic purposes, increased as student workloads increased at the end of the semester.

## SERVICE MODEL

**Library design should support service delivery.**

Peer-to-peer library services have been successful at Grand Valley State University Libraries.

We conducted LibQual<sup>2</sup> in 2011, before the new library and before we added our peer-led service elements, and in 2015, after the new library and new peer-led service elements.

**We improved in all 9 areas in the “Affect of Service” dimension.**<sup>3</sup>



<sup>1</sup> O’Kelly, M., Scott-Webber, L., Garrison, J., & Meyer, K. (2017). Can a Library Building’s Design Cue New Behaviors?: A Case Study. *Libraries and the Academy*, 17(4), 860. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/672187/pdf>

<sup>2</sup> “LibQUAL+,” Association of Research Libraries. Accessed March 15, 2019, <https://www.libqual.org/home>.

<sup>3</sup> Rodriguez, J. C., Meyer, K., & Merry, B. (2017). Understand, identify, and respond: The new focus of access services. *Libraries and the Academy: (Special issue) Public services and user engagement*, 17(2), 332.

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/653207>

# SPECIFIC SPACE INSIGHTS

## GROUP STUDY ROOMS

These recommendations are based on our 2018 Group Study Room Research and feedback from students through our chat and text services.



**2.12** average users

The average number of users in the room at one time was low. We recommend having **some smaller study rooms available.**

More **soundproofing** of the group study rooms or locating them **near collaboration zones.**

**9.44%**

The technology available in the group study rooms was used 9.44% of the time.

**Low technology use** suggests technology isn't necessary in all rooms.

**Tables are preferred.**

We added tables to group study rooms that had been "lounge" style (larger, comfortable chairs and no tables) after continuing to discover tables in these rooms at close.



## TRANSIENT SPACE

A library space designed to be a transient space outside instruction labs was underutilized and later rearranged to support the tutoring services.

*Original design*



*Reconfiguration based on student use*



## TABLES

**Originally, there was not enough table space in quiet areas.** Individuals were sitting in collaboration zones for the table, but then annoyed with the noise. This was first identified with our space use data collection.<sup>1</sup> Observations also indicate that students have a lot of stuff with them, so larger tables are ideal.

## OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

- Based on student feedback, it would be beneficial to **offer a sensory-friendly space.**
- It is important to think intentionally about **staff spaces** and how they promote internal collaboration.
- The automated blinds that promote energy efficiency do not prevent sun glare. This is a common complaint we receive through chat and text. **Sustainability efforts may conflict with user comfort.**
- Observations indicate that students often eat in the library. **Food options have been popular** and have not been problematic from a facilities maintenance standpoint.

<sup>1</sup> Gullikson, S., & Meyer, K. (2016). Collecting Space Use Data to Improve the UX of Library Space. *Weave: Journal of Library User Experience*, 1(5). doi.org/10.3998/weave.12535642.0001.502