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The Library as a Safe(r) Space: Student Thoughts about the Library's Role on Campus

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THE LIBRARY AS SAFE(R) SPACE

Student thoughts about library spaces

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Why Safer Spaces?

We focused on this idea of Safe Spaces after incidents of vandalism in the Library and on campus in 2018 and 2019. Unidentified persons vandalized dispensers for period products placed in men's and gender neutral restrooms. We were concerned that these incidents in the Library were contributing to an unsafe environment and wanted to collect student feedback about how to improve.

We recognize that the term "Safe Space" is not preferred because BIPOC and LGBTQ+ folx can never truly feel "safe" in these spaces. Instead, we are adopting the term Safe(r) Spaces as a reminder that we can improve and create safer spaces for our BIPOC and LGBTQ+ users.

Getting Started

- 🎯 **IRB proposal and approval**
- 🎯 **Initial survey to inquire about interested students**
- 🎯 **Research Funding to support focus group**
- 🎯 **Incentives for participation**

Partners & Support

The Office of Social Justice and Activism - Helped with crafting and distributing the e-survey to student groups
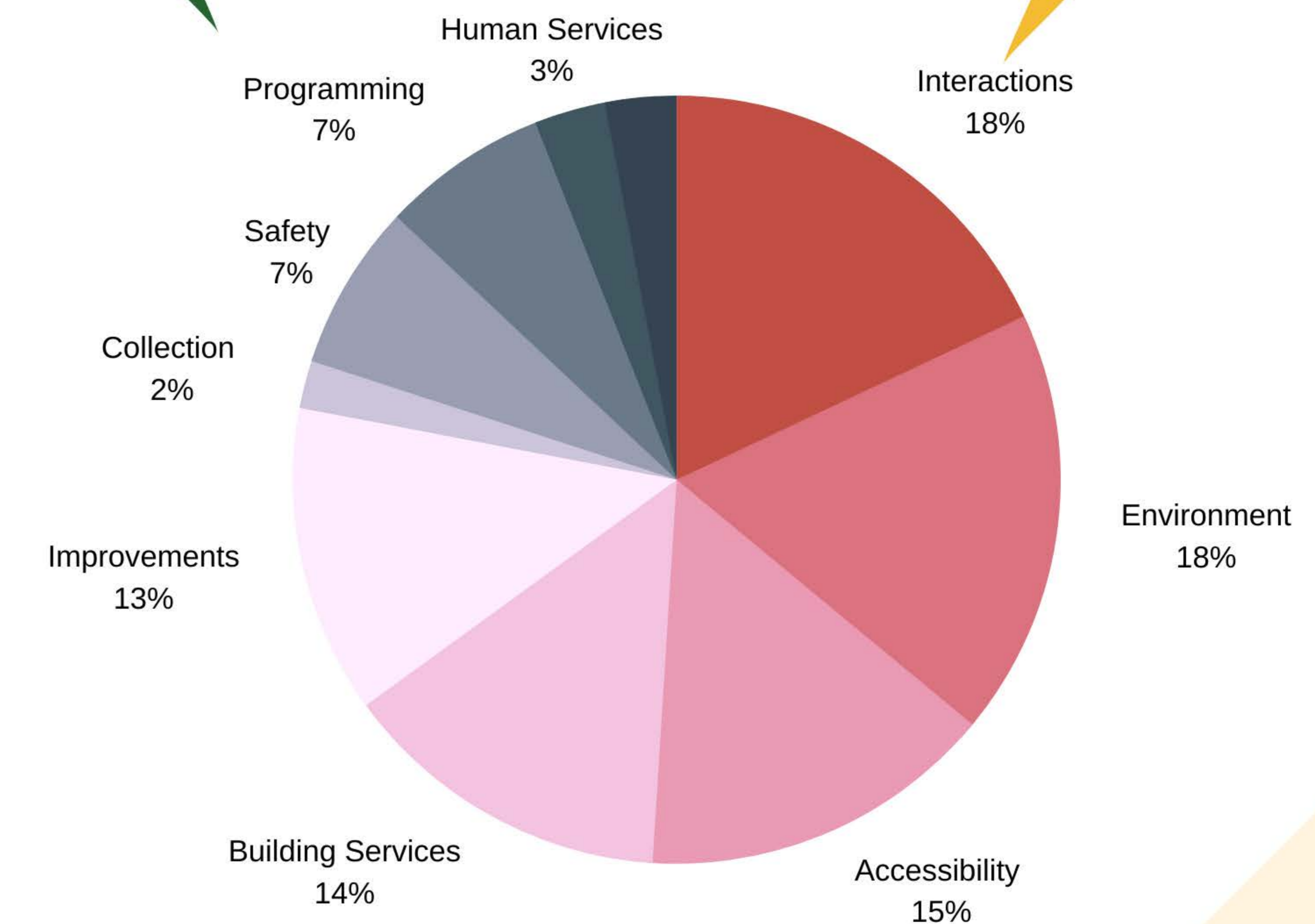
Faculty Advisor for Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies program - Helped with designing demographic questions

Academic Library Association of Ohio (Ohio Chapter of ACRL) - Provided grant funding for incentives for students who participated the in the e-survey and focus groups.

Process

- Conducted focus group sessions
- Created transcripts from session and anonymized
- Generated a codebook
- Imported transcripts into Excel
- Assigned a code to individual sentences
- Compiled like codes and calculated statistics

Results

"I don't know who's in charge of like the Ask a Question online, but that is the best thing in the whole, wide world. It's literally the best thing in the whole, wide world."

...if they have books and displays from diverse authors and things, then that helps make it feel like different identities are being, you know, put in the spotlight in this space."

Pie chart:
- Human Services 3%
- Programming 7%
- Interactions 18%
- Safety 7%
- Environment 18%
- Collection 2%
- Improvements 13%
- Accessibility 15%
- Building Services 14%

The Future

Since the completion of this study, we have taken the following actions to improve our equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts in the Library:

- 💡 Created an EDI culture statement
- 💡 Applied for a Celebrating Ohio Awards & Authors grant to create EDI-themed reading kits
- 💡 Increased purchases of materials by diverse authors
- 💡 Offered cultural competency training to Library staff
- 💡 Revised policies to use gender neutral language