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Is Everything All Right At Night? Measuring User Response to Overnight Library Services

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Is Everything All Right At Night? Measuring User Response to Overnight Library Services

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Introduction

A multiple methods study was conducted over three academic terms during the 2015 academic/fiscal year at Santa Clara University Library to assess the impact and value of overnight library hours. A survey was conducted after midnight during times the Library was open 24 hours, five days a week (24/5), the last two weeks of the quarter. The survey was further informed by patron counts conducted hourly by library floor and which noted library activity types.

Six key Research Questions (RQ) were posed:

- RQ1: What are students doing in the library after midnight, and what type of seating /space is preferred in overnight hours? (Figures 1 and 3)
- RQ2: How many students make use of overnight hours? What is the pattern of use?(Figure 2)
- RQ3: What services do students use after midnight? (Figure 4)
- RQ4: Where else do students study after midnight? (Figure 5)
- RQ5: Do students associate 24/5 library access with academic success? Do their self-
- reported grade point averages confirm their opinion? (Figures 7 and 8)
- RQ6: What does "success" look like in overnight hours? How will we know if we've achieved it? (Conclusions)

Methodologies: Survey and Activity Counts

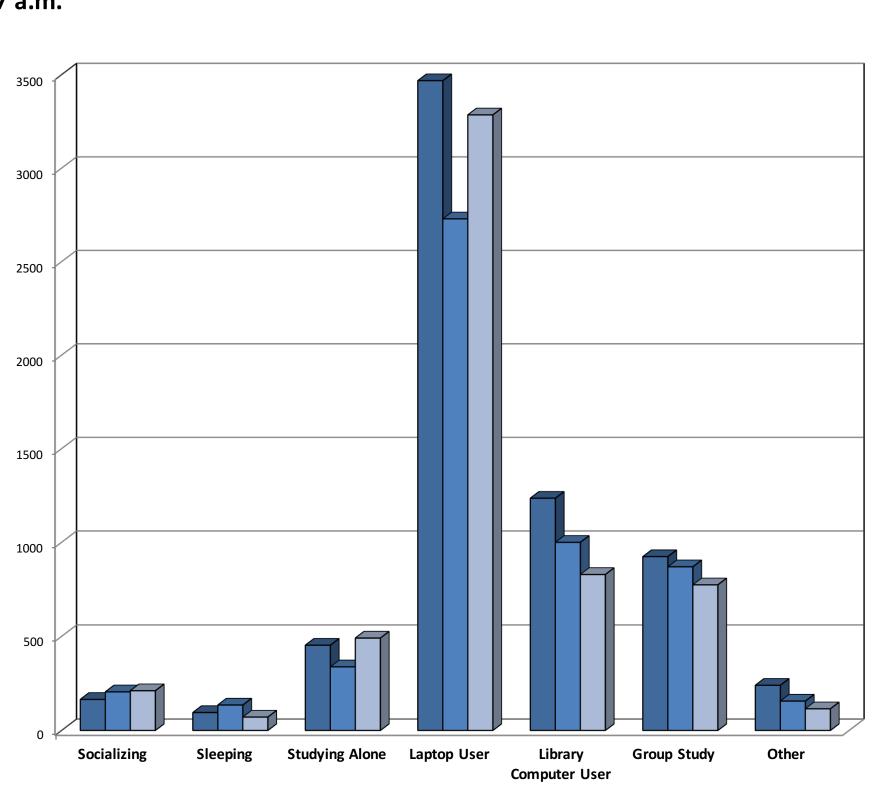
Survey of Users after Midnight

- A survey was conducted at SCU three times over the three primary quarters of fiscal year 2015.
- Paper surveys consisting of 16 questions on one double-sided page were distributed after midnight during the two weeks that the Library was open for the 24/5 schedule.
- The survey featured five demographic questions and 11 questions about overnight use, needs, and purpose. The full survey is found in Chrzastowski and Nutefall (2016).

. Hourly Patron Counts

- Student assistant workers counted the number of users and their library activity.
- Activity categories: socializing, studying alone, laptop user, library PC user, group study, sleeping, and other.
- An iPad was used to record results, and the hourly counts were automatically sent to a Google spreadsheet where they cumulated. Results are shown in Figures 1 and 3.

Figure 1 (RQ1). Total Patron Activity (Hourly count, midnight-7 a.m. / 10 days per quarter). Total count for three quarters of FY15 was 17,302 between midnight and 7 a.m.



■ WINTER 2015 TOTAL USERS=6580
■ SPRING 2015 TOTAL USERS=5433

TOTAL USERS=5776

Results

Figure 2 (RQ2). Heat map showing patron counts by hour during the two weeks each quarter of FY15 when the library is open 24/5. The darkest red depicts the highest counts, fading to green and then light blue, which depicts the lowest counts. This visualization shows not only how use varies by hour and day of the week, but also by quarters. The highest sustained counts occur during fall quarter. The heat map can also show where counts were missed (a light blue "0" among a sea of red).

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Figure 3 (RQ1). Survey responses to "What are your favorite types of Library Space? Please choose your top three." (n = 615) Note the survey was administered after midnight, so these responses purportedly reflect users' preferences during that time of day.

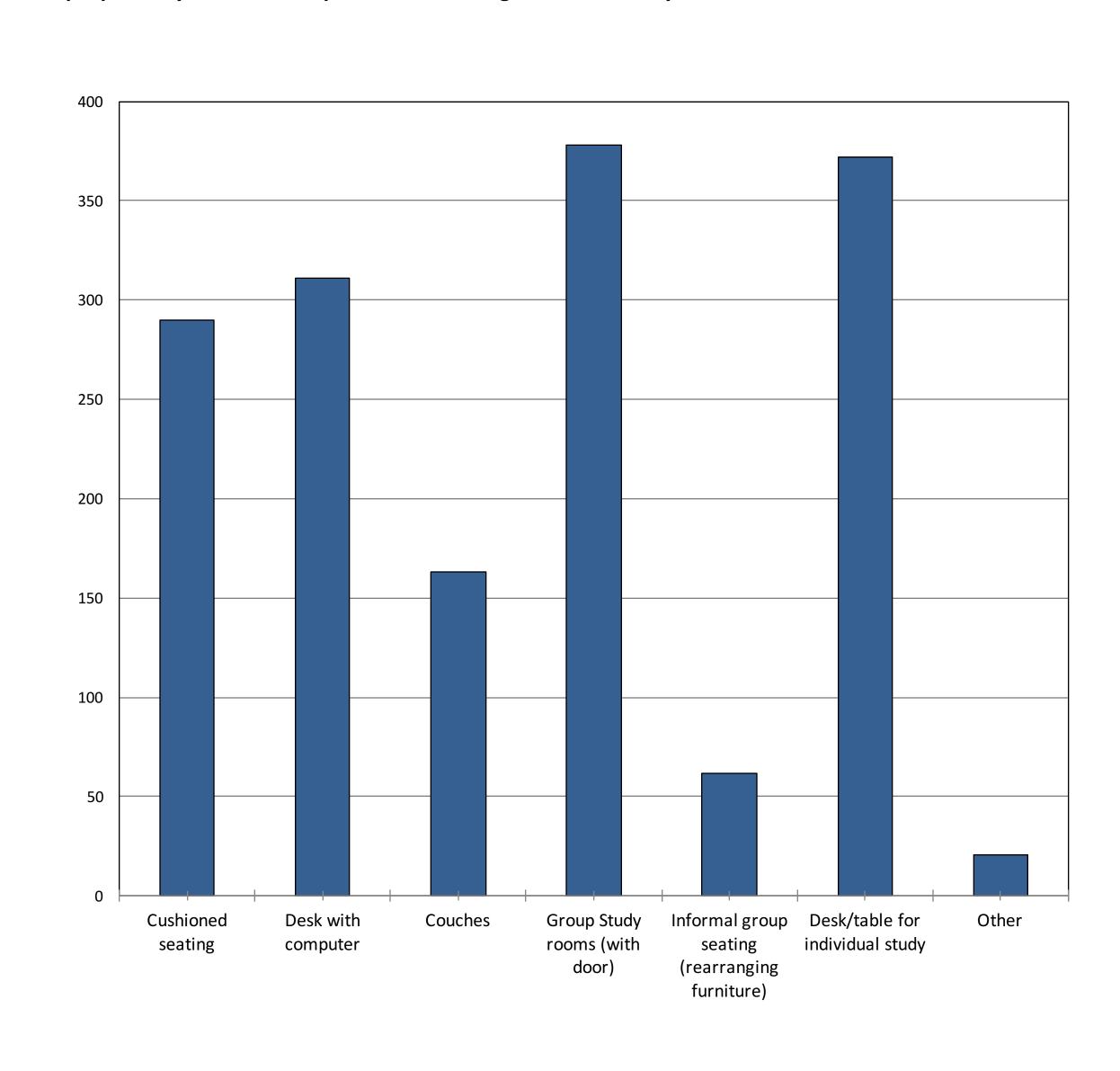


Figure 4(RQ3). Survey responses to "What services do you use in the Learning Commons/Library between midnight and 7 a.m.? Check all that apply." (n = 616).

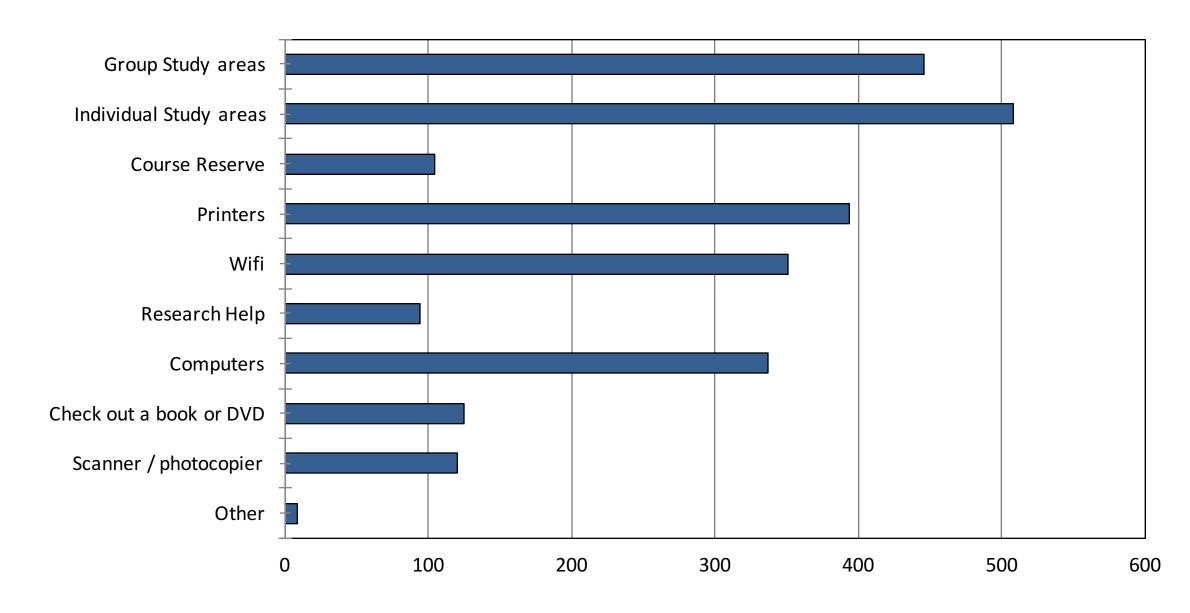
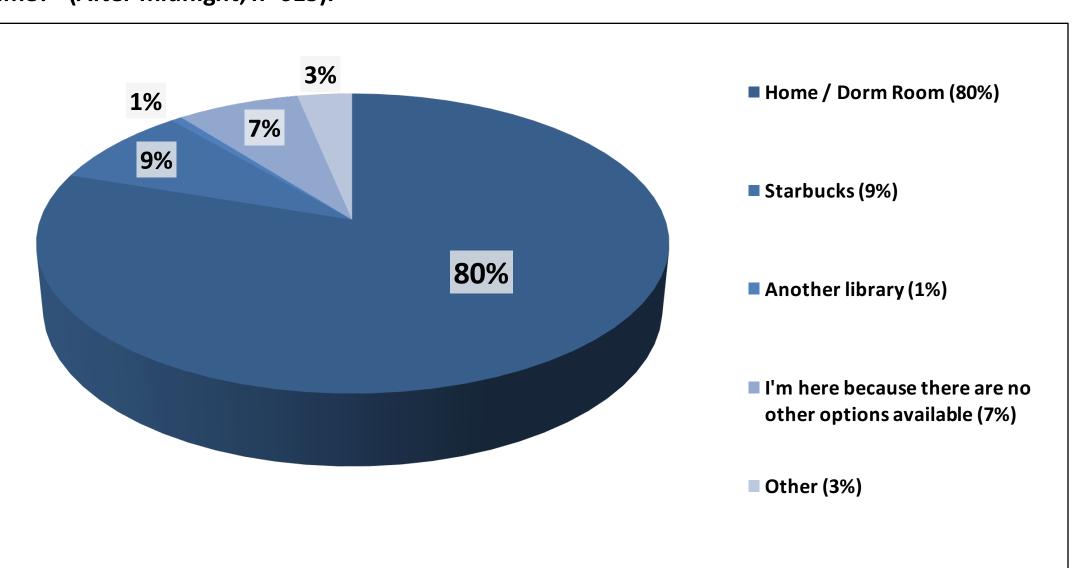


Figure 5 (RQ4). Survey response to "If you weren't in the Library, where would you go during this time?" (After midnight; n=615).



Do students associate 24/5 library access with academic success? Do their self-reported grade point averages confirm their opinion?

Figure 6 (RQ5). Survey responses to "How much do you agree or disagree with this statement: 'Having the ability to use the Learning Commons/Library during the overnight hours (midnight-7 a.m.) has made a positive difference for me academically." (n = 611).

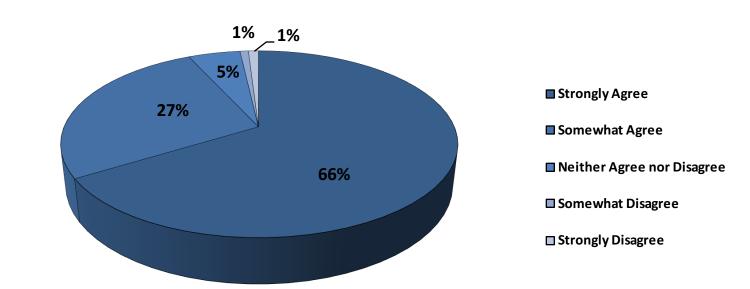
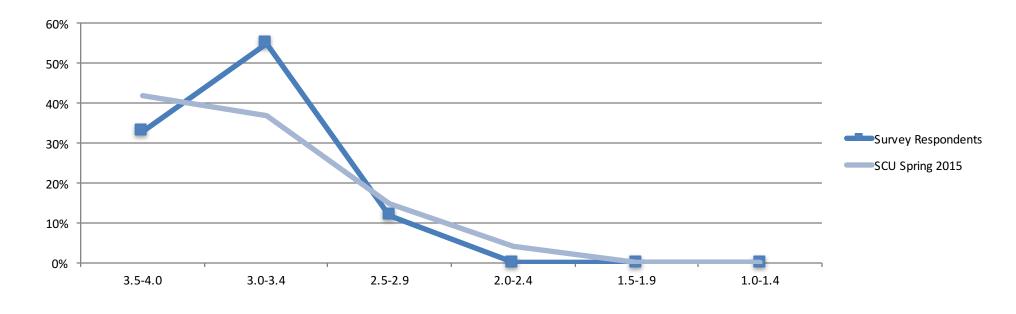


Figure 7 (RQ5). Self-reported GPA (n = 543) from FY15 survey compared to SCU Spring 2015 GPA data (n = 8,286 for campus data).



The majority of students (55%) using the overnight hours self-reported a GPA of between 3.0–3.4. While it is not possible to draw many conclusions from these data, it might be assumed, based on the self-reported GPA, that students who believe they are already doing well academically (more than 80% reported a GPA over 3.0) also use the Library during overnight hours.

Conclusions (RQ6)

Overall, everything *is* all right at night at the SCU Library. However, we now know quite a bit more about what overnight library users do in the Library. The survey results, along with activity patron counts, provide data that answer the questions posed by this research. We know not just how many students use the Library after midnight but their favorite spaces and activities. We know students typically leave the Library before 2 a.m., use laptops, and prefer a tabletop or desk to study. They require few, if any, traditional library services but do trend toward requiring technology, like computers, Wi-Fi, and printers, to assist them in their work.

In addition, SCU students do associate 24/5 library access with academic success. Additional support for this comes from patron counts showing most SCU post-midnight library users are awake and working, not socializing or sleeping. The Library can provide the space and the latenight hours, but the culture of the student body and their choice in how to use that space and time are the true determinants of success. Still, the Library's role is not inconsequential, and extended hours demonstrate the Library's commitment to student success.

Poster Source

Chrzastowski, T. E., & Nutefall, J. E. (2016). Is everything all right at night? Measuring user response to overnight library services. *Journal of Access Services*, 13(3), 179-198.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to all our student workers, who gather data every hour of every day the Library is open. We would not have the data we do without your help! We also thank former staff member Bethany Rust, who managed the late-night survey, collated the results, and created many of the figures used in this article. Special thanks to Judy Rodriguez for her graphic design expertise with this poster.