

Participatory Design in Redesigning an Academic Library

Asking Students About Their Favorite Study Places

University of Maryland, College Park

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Purpose

This poster session focuses on one of the three sets of participatory design activities undertaken in the Fall 2011 by a library-led project team to build an informational basis for a total redesign of the central library serving the University of Maryland, College Park.

This poster session will present the data, findings, and findings' significance for the on-the-spot interview activity about where undergraduate students do their academic work and why.



Methodology

In three high traffic outdoor locations on campus, the interview team, in pairs, approached undergraduate students and asked open-ended questions. Interviews were conducted between noon and 3:00pm on three days. Each participant received a \$5 copy card at the end of the interview.

Questions Asked

- 1 When did you last study for an exam?
 - A. Date and time?
 - B. For how long?
 - C. Where were you?
 - D. Why did you study at that place?
- 2 When did you last work on a class project or lab (but not a research paper)?
 - A. Date and time?
 - B. For how long?
 - C. Where were you?
 - D. Why did you study at that place?
- 3 When did you last work on a full-blown research paper?
 - A. Date and time?
 - B. For how long?
 - C. Where were you?
 - D. Why did you work on your paper at that place?

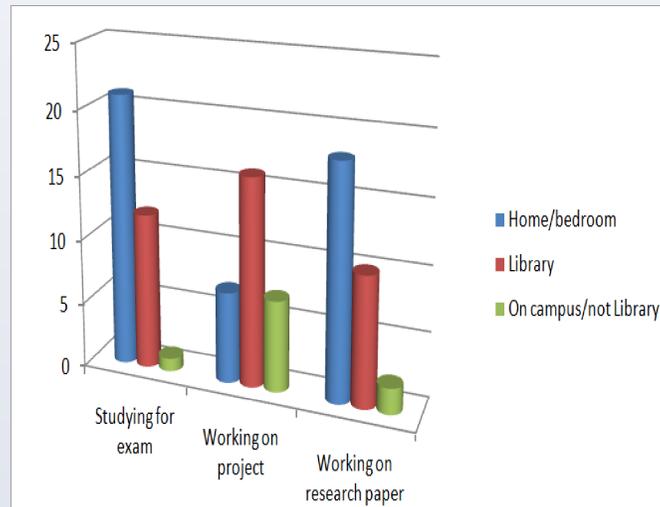
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What Our Students Tell Us

Favorite Study Places



Why the Places Were Chosen



What Time Do the Students Study?

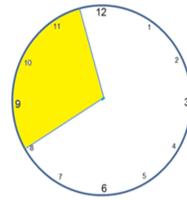
MORNING

8 am – 11:30 am

21% respondents do academic work between 8:00 - 11:30 AM.

Of this group, 1/2 are studying for exam; the rest are either doing project or research work.

Most respondents reported studying for an exam in increments **under 4 hours**.



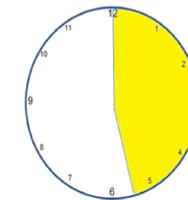
AFTERNOON

12 pm – 5:30 pm

42% of respondents do academic work in the afternoon between noon and 5:30 PM.

Of this group, 2/3 are working on projects or a research paper.

Most respondents reported working in increments of **2 hours or less on a project**. They spend **1 to 4 hours working on a research paper**.



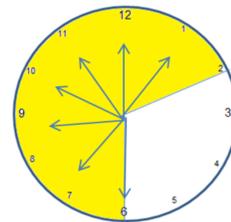
EVENING

6:00 pm – 2:00 am

48% of respondents do academic work in the evening between 6:00 PM and 2:00 AM.

About half are studying for exam, and the rest are either working on a project or research.

Most respondents **study for an exam in increments up to 4 hours**; **work on a project for up to 2 hours**; and **work on research paper in periods from 1 to 4 hours**.



On Why McKeldin Library-

"Everybody else is studying. Like if you go to the gym and people are working out, it motivates you. The positive influence is getting pushed on me as well."

On Why At Home or Own Bedroom-

"It's easier to focus when you're by yourself."

"Food, books, access library through internet, comfy, familiar, could play music."

General Findings

Place

- Students' preferences for the environment chosen to perform academic work are driven by:
- type of activity (group study vs. individual work);
 - proximity to their residences;
 - control over the environment;
 - availability of resources, and/or ambience.

Time/Duration

Morning is the least favored time to do academic work. Most students:

- study in increments under four hours;
- work on projects for up to two hours;
- work on research paper up to four hours.

Practical implication for renovations

Students have a strong desire and need to perform different academic tasks in different environments. The library should include spaces:

- for individual and group work;
- that allow quiet and noisy activities;
- where resources are easily available (computers, printers, or online resources);
- where ambience will motivate and inspire students to do their academic work away from home.

What We Would Change

Question wording: Given the timing of the interviews, the research paper question was confusing and did not elicit the desired data that will consider the spaces used in all phases of research. A better question may be **"When was the last time you did research for a full-blown paper?"**

Add a new question: A second question that would improve the data about the places students chose to study would be, **"What does this space allow you to do?"** This new question would allow the students to describe their individual meanings of conceptual terms such as **comfortable and noisy**.

Overall, the interview process was a positive experience for both the student participants and interviewers. Students were very cooperative and gave thoughtful answers that the copy card incentive was unnecessary.