Participatory Design in Redesigning an Academic Library
Capturing Users’ Work through an Artistic Lens
University of Maryland, College Park

Purpose
In 2011 a library-led project team gathered user-based information for a total redesign of McKeldin Library, the central library serving the University of Maryland, College Park. In addition, graduate classes in anthropology and architecture provided other elements of user input. All of the above were provided to an Architecture Studio course to create actual designs for a reprogrammed library.

This poster focuses on data from one of the three sets of activities. In participatory design workshops library staff (21 participants), campus faculty (20), undergraduate (20) and graduate (17) students drew their ideal library workspaces. This poster presents drawings, gathered data and conclusions about stakeholders’ ideal study, research and work spaces in the library.

Methodology
Research Question
What do library users and potential users perceive as their needs in a library?

Study Limitation
Participant recruitment was difficult, resulting in a non-random pool. For example, of 203 randomly selected undergraduate students only 2 participated; others were recruited on the spot in the Library. Recruitment of other user groups had similar potential of skewing.

Script Used
Each participant received the following directions about what they should draw: “Imagine that we could create a new space inside the library that would be exactly as you want it. Imagine that we ask you to design it and then we get a team of people to come in and build it. You walk into the space and it’s perfect.”

Authors
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What Undergraduate Students Need
Solitude and concentration AND group interaction
Noisy AND quiet
Equipment
Library computers
Areas to spread out
Movable furniture with comfort
Be with others, whether socializing or just being together
Frequent shifts among courses, disciplines
Sustained energy from rest, food, coffee, etc.
Physical comfort, emotional security
Sense of self, opportunities to experiment/build identity

What Graduate Students Need
Ample light
Solitude, intense concentration
Noise containment
Equipment
Development of connection to one’s discipline
Focus: attain degree
Inspiration from “heart of the library”
Sustained energy from occasional rest

What Faculty Need
Library collections
Deep, sustained thinking, reading, writing
Inspiration from “heart of the library”
Connection to nature, culture
Solitary AND collaboration/seminars
- Being in one’s own space
- Conversation, community building
People to assist them
Equipment
Occasional break, sustained energy from food/coffee

What Library Staff Need
Light
Ability to see across space
Being in one’s own space
Meeting with others
Technology
Storage
Instructing/training users and ourselves
Specialized equipment
Maintaining a sense of self

Common Themes
- Microwaves/vending/food
- Personal/belongings security
- Service promotion
- Trash/general cleanliness
- Software on computers

The Future Is Here (What We Are Doing Now)
- Offer microwaves/vending/food
- Enhance personal/belongings security
- Promote services
- Reconfigure space
- Install art
- Implement room scheduling
- Install bike racks
- Enhance software on computers
- Improve general cleanliness

Selected Drawings
Undergraduate Artistic Visions
Graduate Artistic Visions
Faculty Artistic Visions
Library Staff Artistic Visions