

# Participatory Design in Redesigning an Academic Library

## Asking Students About Their Favorite Study Places

University of Maryland, College Park

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Building Effective, Sustainable, Practical Assessment  
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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?

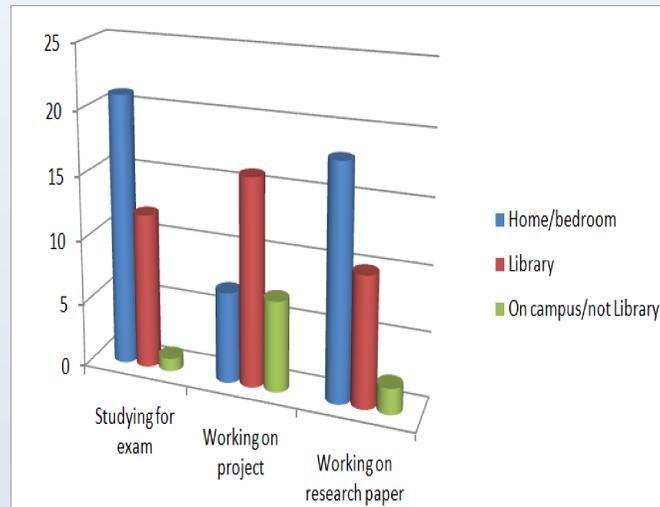
### Authors

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### What Our Students Tell Us

#### Favorite Study Places



#### Why the Places Were Chosen



### What Time Do the Students Study?

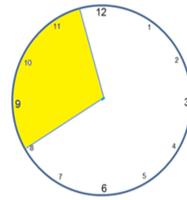
#### MORNING

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**.



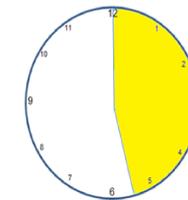
#### AFTERNOON

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**.



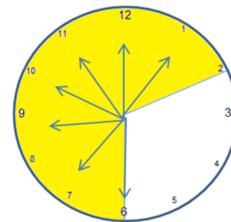
#### EVENING

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.