

RE/ENVISION, RE/IMAGINE: STUDENT AND EMPLOYEE ASSESSMENT FOR A LIBRARY SPACE REDESIGN

AUTHORS

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UNC

University Libraries

INTRODUCTION

The University of Northern Colorado (UNC), a doctoral granting institution serving around 9,500 students, is located on the Front Range of northern Colorado. University Libraries is comprised of two buildings: the James A. Michener Library and the Howard M. Skinner Music Library.

In preparation for our university's new capital campaign, the University Libraries (UL) is working with Pfeiffer Partners to create a program design to remodel the Michener Library, which opened to students in 1971, and houses most of the libraries' collections. While there have been numerous smaller projects to enhance the student experience, there has been no major revisioning of the building until now.

Internal (UL employees) and external (students, faculty, and staff) stakeholders were asked to contribute to the revisioning of the building.



Sample image from student survey.
Respondents were asked to comment on what they liked or disliked about the furniture in the image.

"I like the round (shape), and I like that there would be a person there but maybe also have the option of using the technology."

"It's in a circle so everyone has access, and it's a space for humans and not just computers."

STAFF DATA COLLECTION

Hosted during our all staff meeting in November 2021, and coordinated by the Libraries Assessment Committee Libraries personnel from both libraries participated in a variety of activities to better understand employee space needs. While people were free to comment on any aspect of the building, this session had a greater focus on workspace needs than the student portion of the process.

The four activities included using blank floor plans to design their "dream layout" for the building; commenting on photos that showed various office layouts and designs; listing their top three priorities for the building; and completing a survey to provide additional thoughts and suggestions.

RESULTS

Surveys were submitted from students in every college. Because we used a convenience sample, there were also some faculty/staff submissions, but the majority of responses came from students, both graduate and undergraduate. The SRL analyzed the survey results and provided us with an executive summary and a full analysis (bit.ly/3TznZW7).

NEXT STEPS

These findings have informed our conversations with Pfeiffer Partners. They will be using the data to help us create a welcoming, student-centered space. The final renderings will be completed in December 2022. We plan to use the architectural renderings to guide future fundraising and renovations.

Regarding social justice, student respondents believe art / cultural displays and cultural events are the best ways for Michener Library to visually represent the topic. Respondents would also like to see more art from students and people of marginalized identities.

"Underrepresented artists from Colorado and the U.S. more broadly. Also, some students."

"I would like more Latino/a works displayed."

"I would love to see information about disability and disability justice displayed."

"I think it's important to further state the multicultural aspects of this university by displaying art by an array of artists."

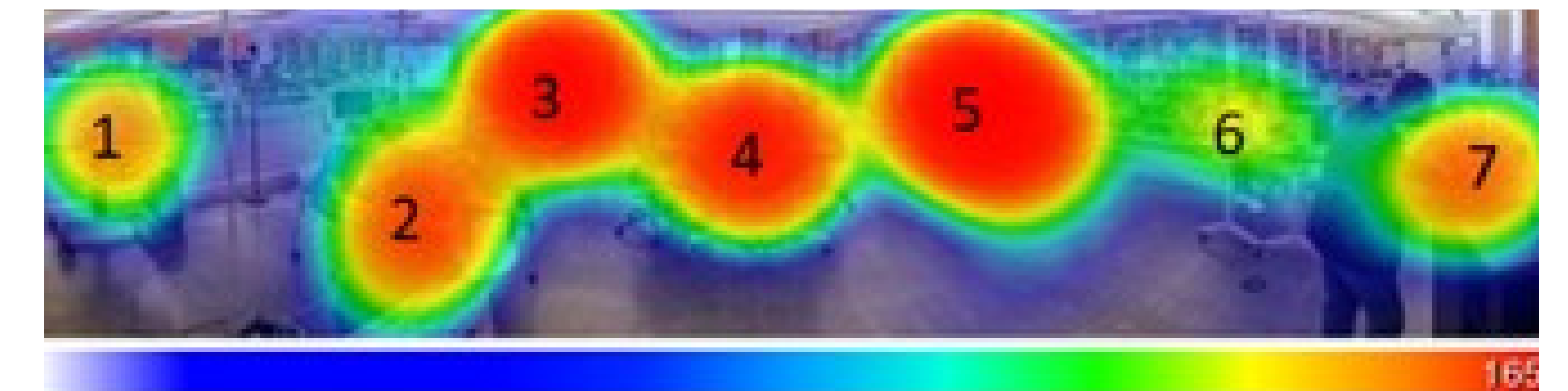
STUDENT DATA COLLECTION

The Assessment Committee worked with UNC's Social Research Lab (SRL) to develop a survey to gather student feedback on how they currently use Michener Library and how they would like to use it in the future. Using a variety of techniques, including Likert scales, ranking, hot spots, and open text, we were able to gain a better understanding of what students want from the library. The survey was promoted by advertising in the campus-coordinated student newsletter, hanging posters around campus, and posting on social media. Nearly 600 surveys were completed in spring 2022.

Sample image from student survey.
Respondents were asked to select areas on the image that they believed would foster innovation.



Areas that participants were most likely to select are in red, as illustrated in the following heatmap



The most clicked-on areas were:

- Region 3: Standing access to a large board / screen
- Region 4: A long, rectangular table with space for a large group. The table has computers and space for patrons to bring their laptops. This desk also has swivel chairs.
- Region 5: A round table with wheeled chairs, access to ports on the table, and a large screen

Overall, respondents express the desire to present and communicate their ideas through smartboards and whiteboards with their peers.

In addition, respondents express the desire to have flexible, comfortable seating and work arrangements.

Finally, respondents would like greater access to relevant software and technological equipment.

ADDITIONAL ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Darren Ilett, Teaching & Outreach Librarian
Dave White, Libraries Facilities Manager
Wendy Highby, Scholarly Communication Librarian
Laura Uglean Jackson, Archivist for University Archives Collections
(now with Denver Museum of Nature & Science)