

Re-envisioning a Sustainable Student Centered Info Commons: A Mixed Methods Research Study

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The Problem

Six years ago, LMU built the “perfect” Information Commons space designed to support individual and collaborative research and scholarship for the millennial student. Our Commons design was informed by research about the study habits of students from the mid-2000s. Modern day usage suggests current students are utilizing the Commons in unexpected ways and deviating from traditional “millennial” behavior.

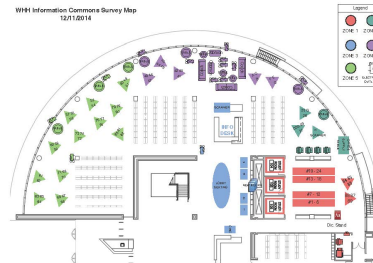
Methodology

Three data collection methods used:

- Direct observation by librarian (in Commons)
- Patron survey (online and print)
- Whiteboard polling

Procedure for Direct Observation

The Commons was divided into five “observation zones” and assigned to librarian observers. For two weeks at designated times, individual patron activity and use of library resources and technology was recorded through a Qualtrics form using iPads. General information about each zone (temperature level, noise level, cleanliness, and broken equipment) was also recorded in a separate survey.



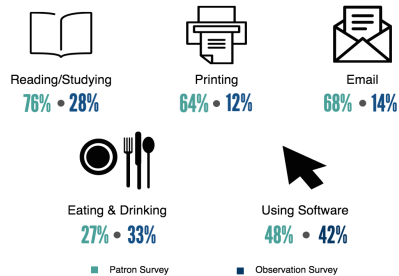
Data Collected

- 2,443 “direct observations” made on subjects who were physically present in the Commons
- Environmental data of the Commons including temperature level, noise level, cleanliness, and broken equipment
- 248 patron survey responses
- 46 whiteboard polls
- Photos of general observations

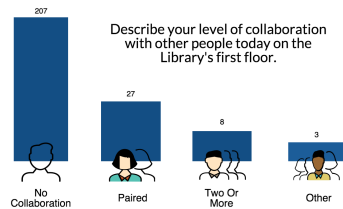
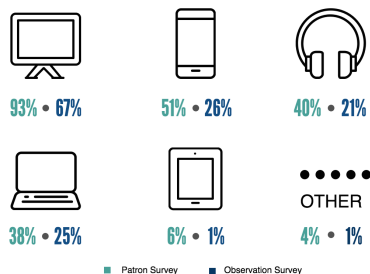
Key Findings

- Independent study dominates the space usage; students are not collaborating with others
- Students want space, privacy, quiet, and a clean environment
- Average temperature in Commons: 74; Average dba : 53
- The loudest areas are the Information Desk and the printer area
- There are a large number of unattended items
- Students multi-task with additional devices while using library iMacs
- Electrical outlets often broken
- Scanner heavily used

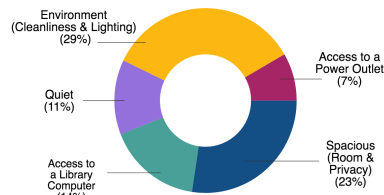
What are students doing in the Info Commons?



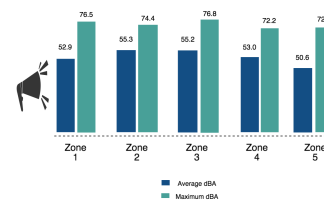
What devices are students using?



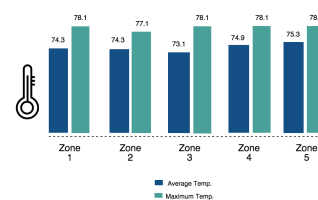
Top 5 Factors for Selecting a Library Spot



Average Noise Level in the Information Commons



Average Temperature in the Information Commons



Recommendations

- Replace low-use reference books with study tables
- Increase awareness of laptop lending program
- Create quiet zones
- Install disinfecting wipes dispenser
- Create map of electrical outlets & check regularly
- Purchase another computer scanner
- For more info, see our project website: bit.ly/LMUcommons

TL;DR : Although the Commons was conceived for group work, students overwhelmingly require a quiet space for individual work