



# Assessing Library Spaces with an Undergraduate Ethnographic Methods Class. A Spooky Proposition?

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## Background

Partnered with Dr. Jan French and her ANTH 211 Ethnographic Methods class (7 undergraduate students) in Fall 2011 to study use of library spaces. Findings would contribute to a 3 million dollar renovation planned for Summer 2012.

## Methods

Each student chose a section of Boatwright Library to study. Methods included:

- Mapping & photographing
- Participant observation
- Interviews
- Focus groups

## Results

Students each wrote research reports and presented their findings as a group to library staff and other stakeholders. Based on this information, the library's Ethnographic Team identified the following needs.

- Mobile-device friendly spaces
- Clear separation between quiet and collaborative areas
- Tables and desks with room to "spread out"
- Numerous group study rooms
- Private/Semi-private areas
- Good lighting
- Atmosphere conducive to study ("scholarly" surroundings)

## Findings

Working with faculty and students created new connections, brought added interest to the renovation project, and reinforced the importance of participatory design.

## Conclusions

Ultimately, the study led to real-life improvements during summer 2012 renovations. Main ideas implemented were additional power outlets, clearly-defined and increased group and quiet areas, additional study rooms, and overall, a more inspiring learning environment.