Assessing Physical Spaces to Maximize Student Learning Success

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Background

Research Project Objectives
Campus Demographics
Changes in the Physical Library Space
Library Space Study – Objectives

Objectives:

- To learn more about the present utilization of the William Allen White Library building by patrons (faculty, staff, students) in terms of its physical space
- To discover how patrons' library space preferences for individual and group study, recreation, cultural programs/events, and other aspects of academic life are informed by the current library building space
- To provide qualitative and quantitative evidence from patrons for more informed decisions about future library building projects

Why?

The library building has been the focus of several remodeling projects – particularly between the years of 2013 and 2017. We had a sense that patrons like and use many of the spaces, but we wanted to document their perceptions much more specifically.
Library Space Study:
Phases 1, 2, and 3

PHASE 1 (Spring 2018)
- Survey of all ESU faculty, staff, and students about their familiarity and use of the WAW Library building, and other preferred places for their study and research
- Focus group to follow up on initial survey findings

PHASE 2 (Fall 2018)
- Focus exclusively was upon ESU undergraduate and graduate students
- Survey about students’ familiarity and use of the WAW Library building, and other preferred places for their study and research
- Unobtrusive observations (AKA “seatings sweeps”) for two two-week periods (October 14-27 and December 2-14)

PHASE 3 (Spring 2019)
1. “Flip charts” – questions on whiteboards on floors and Learning Commons
2. Focus group and individual interviews of students
Emporia State University –
Headcount Enrollment, On- and Off-Campus

FY 2009 compared to FY 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Populations</th>
<th>Summer 2008</th>
<th>Summer 2017</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Fall 2017</th>
<th>Spring 2009</th>
<th>Spring 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UG on campus</td>
<td>847 (28%)</td>
<td>400 (15%)</td>
<td>4046 (63%)</td>
<td>3428 (60%)</td>
<td>3725 (61%)</td>
<td>3156 (59%)</td>
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<td>G on campus</td>
<td>545 (18%)</td>
<td>183 (7%)</td>
<td>769 (12%)</td>
<td>511 (9%)</td>
<td>729 (12%)</td>
<td>437 (8%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>UG off campus</td>
<td>294 (10%)</td>
<td>521 (20%)</td>
<td>221 (3%)</td>
<td>177 (3%)</td>
<td>229 (4%)</td>
<td>139 (3%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>G off campus</td>
<td>1302 (44%)</td>
<td>1517 (58%)</td>
<td>1397 (22%)</td>
<td>1616 (28%)</td>
<td>1462 (24%)</td>
<td>1639 (31%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>2988</td>
<td>2621</td>
<td>6433</td>
<td>5732</td>
<td>6145</td>
<td>5371</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: Emporia State University Fall 2018 Data Book.
https://www.emporia.edu/oira/documents/institutionalresearch/ESUDatabookFall2018XA.pdf
Emporia State University –
Student Residential Population

Fall 2018: 5796 headcount enrollment (Undergraduate and Graduate)

- 3809 students were classified as “on-campus” (66%)
- 2842 students were classified as living at “home/apartment/commuters”
- 787 students lived in residence halls
- 178 students lived in fraternities/sororities
  - 74 students -- fraternities
  - 104 students – sororities

SOURCE: Emporia State University Fall 2018 Data Book.
https://www.emporia.edu/oira/documents/institutionalresearch/ESUDatabookFall2018XA.pdf
What Do These Numbers Tell Us?

Initially:
- The majority of our **undergraduate** students continue to be on-campus;
- The majority of our **graduate** students are increasingly off-campus
  - SLIM and HPER graduate programs are online
  - Other graduate students may come to campus only once or twice a week for classes and may not live in or near Emporia

What, then, are the implications for the use of a physical library space for study, research, etc.?
William Allen White Library - Building
Remodelings of WAW Library

William Allen White Library building
1st portion - completed construction in 1951
- Four floors and six "decks" - the decks were closed to patrons and accessible only to library staff

2nd portion (addition) -- completed in 1971
- Addition: Library lobby
- Expansion of 1st-4th floors
- Relocation of entrance from south side of building to east side (leading into the library lobby)
- Circulation Desk moved to library lobby
- Decks "opened" to public
- Entrances to decks added to 1st, 2nd, and 4th floors
Remodelings of WAW Library

1996:
• Library Electronic Classroom – LEC - added to 2nd floor (relocated on same floor in 2010, with former LEC becoming the Writing Center)

Early 2000s:
• South side of library building remodeled and Library Seminar Room created for additional instruction needs
• 1st floor, Periodicals, renovated for more study and research space (6 study rooms; booths and tables; compact shelving for bound periodicals and microform materials)

2013:
• Based upon student feedback: Library lobby renovated into Learning Commons (open 24/7, 365 days a week)
• 2nd floor adapted to house Circulation Desk and Reference Desk in one central location
Remodelings of WAW Library

2015-2017:

- ACES (Academic Center for Excellence and Success) is created and housed on the library's 2nd floor
- 4th floor of the library is completely redone to house the ESU Honors College, an Honors College Seminar Room, and individual/group study spaces
- 2nd floor of the library receives a "facelift" of new paint, carpet tiles, additional outlets, and refacings of pillars to match the 4th floor
4th Floor – Before and After
2nd Floor – Before and After
Methodology

Ethnography: the examination and exploration of a culture and/or cultural setting with the purpose of learning about the lives of that specific cultural group (Ramsden, 2016)
Ethnographic Research in Libraries

- Purposes (Ramsden, 2016):

- Landmark examples
  - University of Rochester Undergraduate Research Project (Foster & Gibbons, 2007)
  - ERIAL project (Duke & Asher, 2012)
Examples of Ethnographic Methods Focused on Library Space

- Interviews
- Observation
- Cognitive mapping
- Activity mapping
- "Ideal Space" design sessions or drawings
- Photo responses to prompts
- Photo/research diaries
Methods Employed in this Study

- Mixed methods

- Why??? Data triangulation
Results

Disclaimer: Analysis is ongoing!
Phase 1: Spring 2018

- Campus-wide survey (P = 187)
Phase 1, Focus groups

- Mixed focus groups (P = 21)
- Content analysis using some pre-set themes and some emerging themes
- Dominant themes (selected):
  - Students
  - Resources
  - Behaviors
  - Awareness of relationship to space
  - Welcome/Comfort
  - Communication
Phase 2: Fall 2018

- Student survey (P=248)

40% of students who did not use a library space study/do research elsewhere
Phase 2, seating sweeps template
Phase 3: Spring 2019

- Flip charts
- 1 student focus group (P=7)
- Student interviews (P=14)
Trends in the Data

- Most survey participants visit the library less than once per week.
- When survey participants visit, they use the Learning Commons and 2nd Floor.
- Students like to study alone but not be alone. Also found in Hedge, Boucher & Lavelle (2018) and Oliveira (2016).
- Students want more!!!
- Faculty/students envision ideal library space with comfortable furniture, but they don't use our soft seating.
- Concerns in Fall SP2019 focus groups do not seem to echo concerns in SP2018 focus groups.
Implications & Future Directions

1) User centered design

2) **ESU Strategic Plan, 2015-2025** (proposed revisions)
   - **Goal 4**: “Create and support sustainable innovation and growth”
   - **Objective 1**: “Implement the Campus Master Plan”
   - **Objective 5**: “Employ shared data governance and comprehensive data information systems to inform decision-making”
Selected References


