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# Design Implications of the Evolving University Library as a Student-Learning Center

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# Design Implications of the Evolving University Library as a Student-Learning Center

## **Abstract**

The university library has developed into a center of learning and collaboration that can truly become the heart of campus within the university community (Hisle, 2005). Third places are “public places on neutral ground where people can gather and interact. The character of a third place is determined most of all by its regular clientele and is marked by a playful mood, which contrasts with people’s more serious involvement in other spheres” (Oldenburg, 1989). The library is neither home nor work, but a “third place” for students to study and socialize (Codispoti and Frey, 2010).

## **Disciplines**

Interior Architecture | Library and Information Science

## Design Implications of the Evolving University Library as a Student-Learning Center

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### ABSTRACT

The university library has developed into a center of learning and collaboration that can truly become the heart of campus within the university community (Hisle, 2005). Third places are “public places on neutral ground where people can gather and interact. The character of a third place is determined most of all by its regular clientele and is marked by a playful mood, which contrasts with people’s more serious involvement in other spheres” (Oldenburg, 1989). The library is neither home nor work, but a “third place” for students to study and socialize (Codispoti and Frey, 2010).

Recent trends in the design and renovation of libraries concentrate principally on the library as place, and as a social space (Bisbrouck et al., 2004). The third place role of the library has led the design of the physical environment to include a café, collaborative areas to gather and interact, and large open spaces in lieu of small study rooms (Hisle, 2005).

How do university students currently use the library? Do students primarily use the library to gather and interact, or are they using it to learn as in the suggestive traditional role of the library? What physical, social, and psychological effects do environments have on student study behavior in the library?

A case study of a main library at a midwestern university was used to examine these research questions. Observation of three study areas within the library was conducted, including individual study carrels, group study area, and student learning commons. An undergraduate student survey was used to engage users of the space and recognize how they use the library. The analysis from this mixed method approach was used to reveal how students use the study spaces

in the library and how the interior spaces of the university library can be designed to respond to student behaviors and preferences.

Student survey results revealed that students value the library. The most significant finding was that sixty-two percent of survey respondents stated the main reason they choose to study at the library is for quiet study space. This finding is in opposition to the literature on the library as a social space (Codispoti and Frey, 2010). While we are designing libraries to foster collaboration, we must also maintain the notion that libraries should provide patrons with a welcoming and comfortable quiet study environment that promotes prolonged use. The survey also examined group and individual study preferences related to space, and current versus ideal study environments.

Two 36”w by 24”h posters present the observation and survey results in an info-graphic format. The first poster layout defines the three areas of observation (Appendix A-C). A photograph and floor plan depicting each area observed give the viewer reference to the space. The results are displayed in the form of bar graphs and pie charts. The second poster focuses on the survey results. Information about student perceptions of study spaces at this library is displayed, along with data on individual and group study environmental preferences.

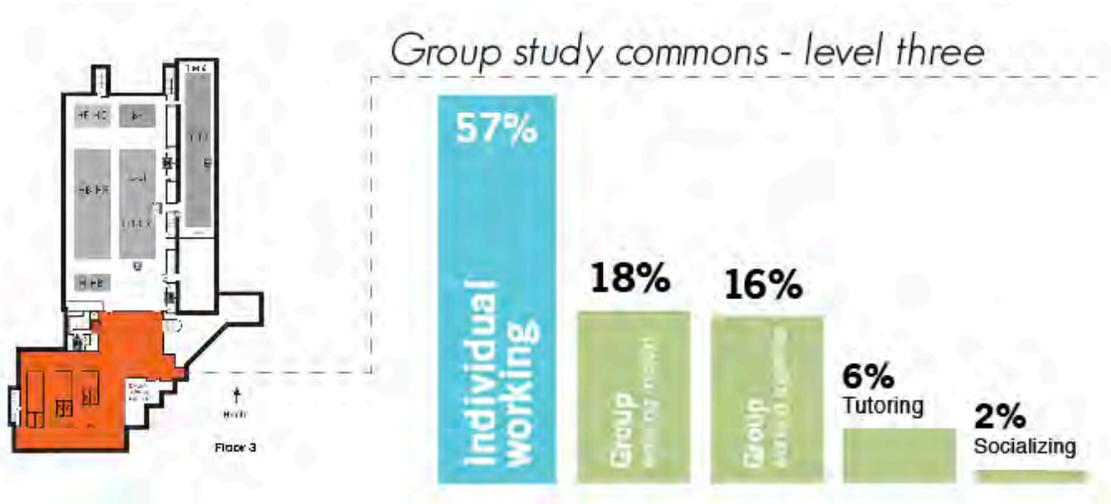
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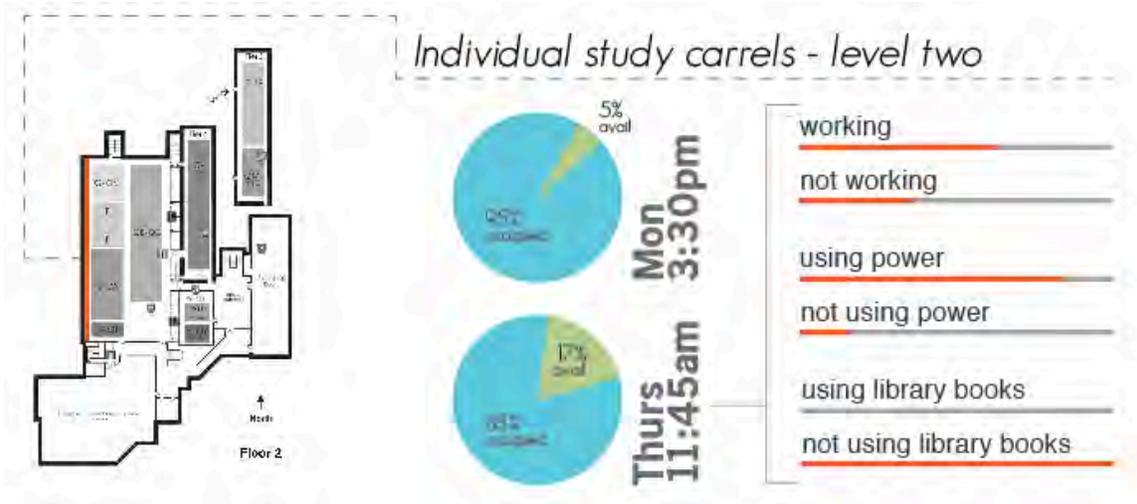
## APPENDIX A

### Observation of group study area



## APPENDIX B

### Observation of individual study carrels



## APPENDIX C

### Observation of student learning commons

