

The ERIAL Project: Ethnographic Research in Illinois Academic Libraries

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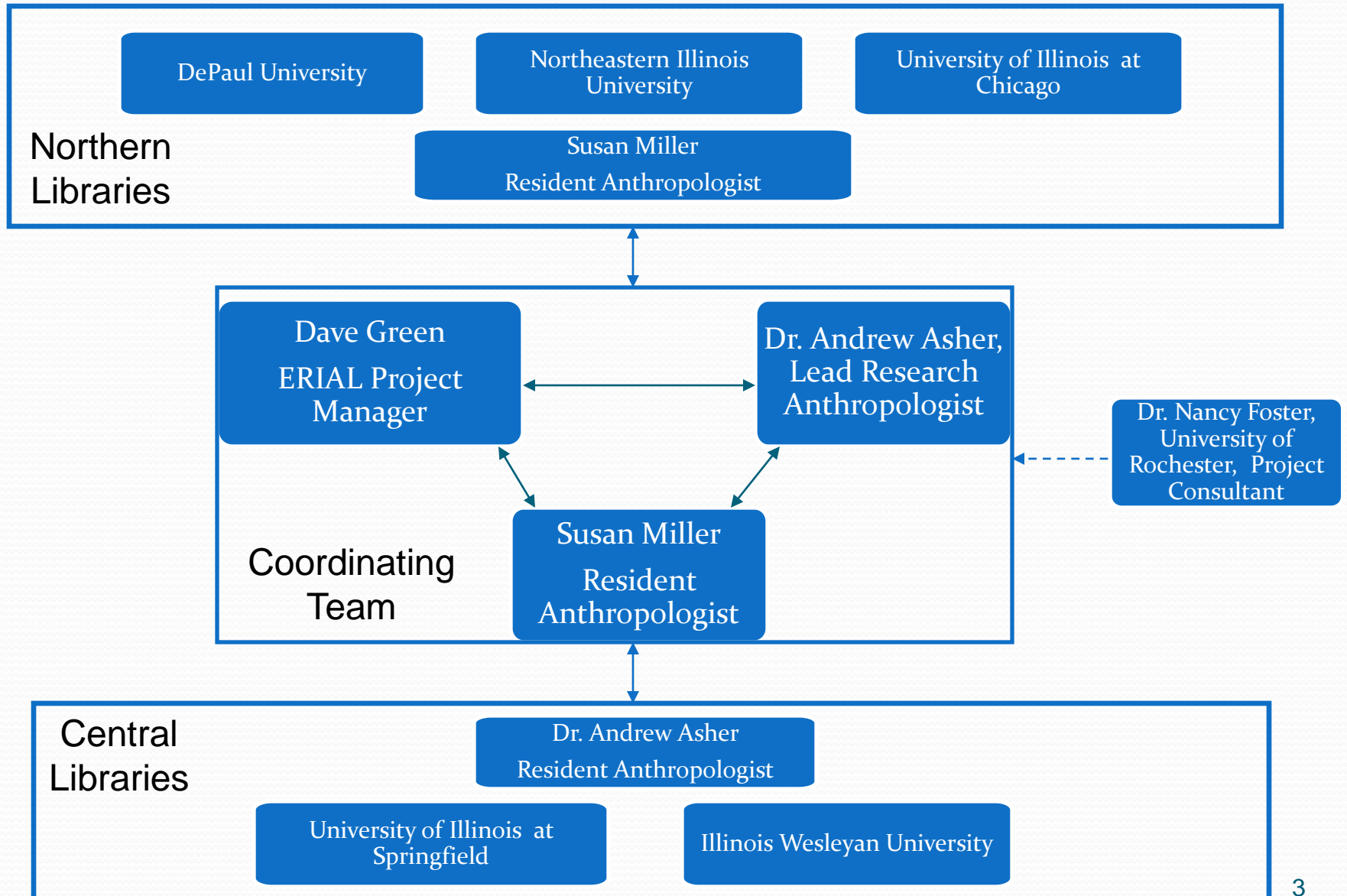
Dave Green

ERIAL Project Manager

Introduction to ERIAL

- Funding: LSTA Grant from the State Library totaling \$337,000
- Timeline: Two years (closer to 20 months)
- Participants: Five institutions / 30 Librarians

The ERIAL Project: Ethnographic Research in Illinois Academic Libraries

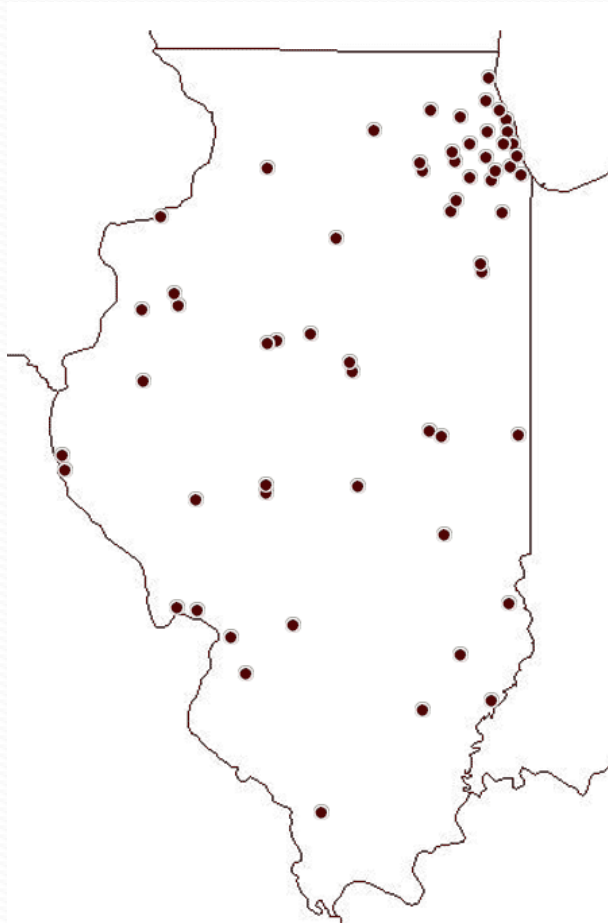


Collaboration and the Logistics of Project Management

ERIAL was possible only because of our cooperative & collaborative environment.

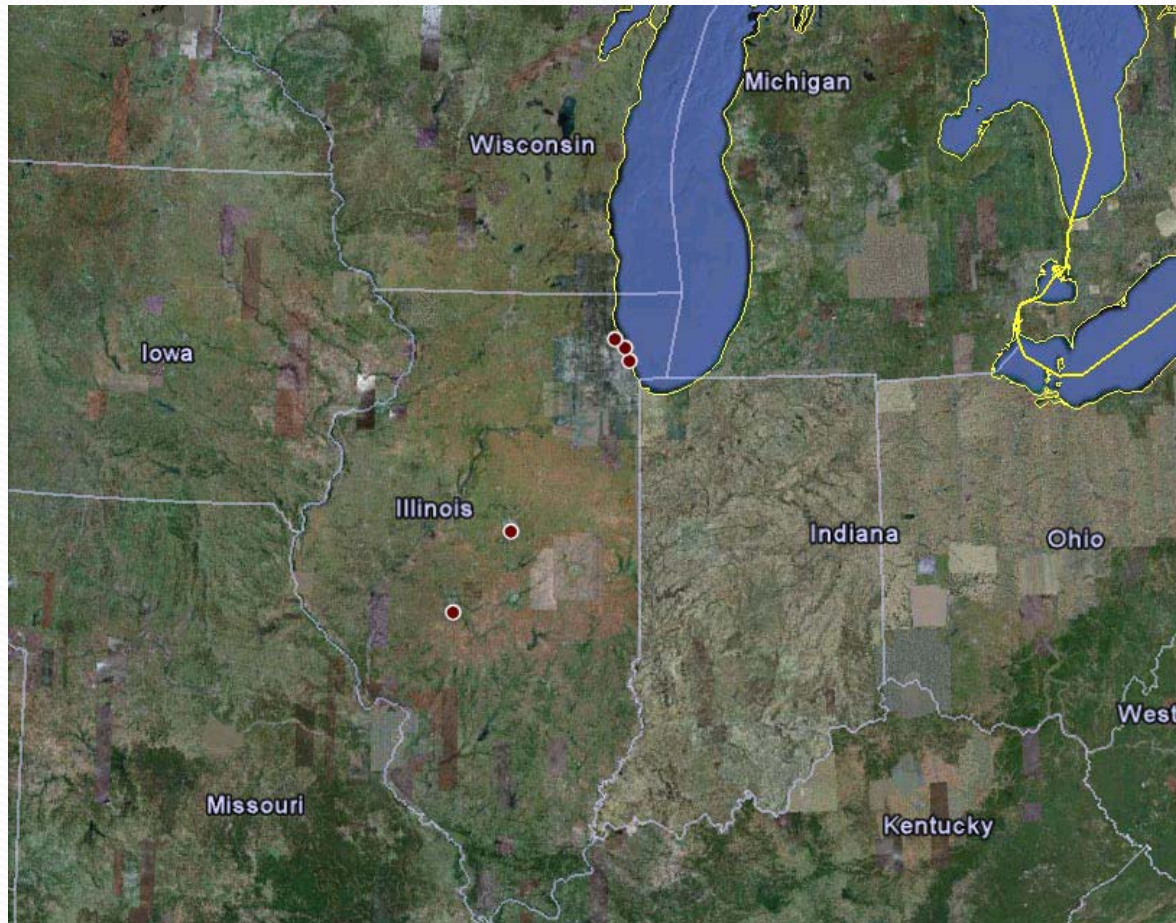
Collaboration

among Libraries



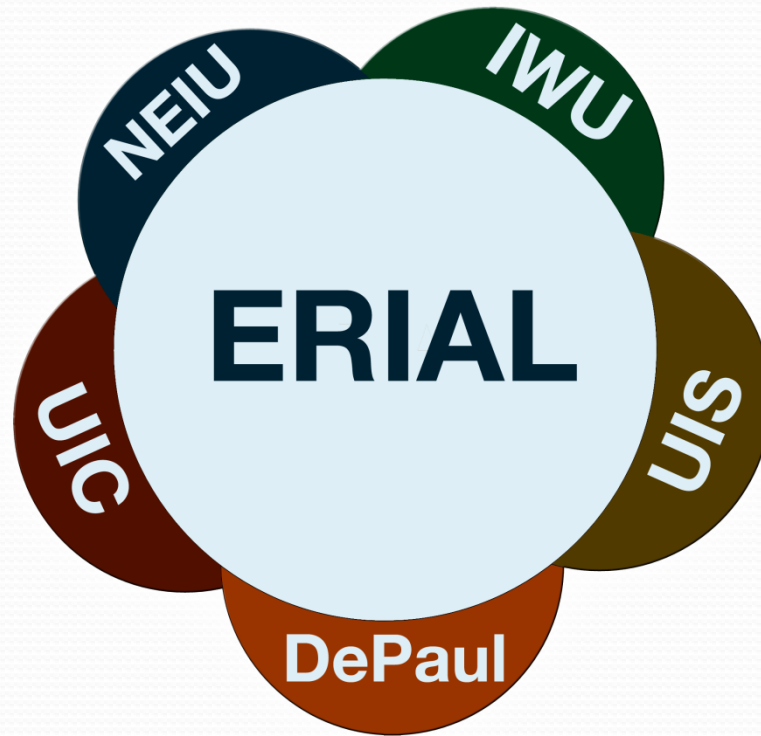
Collaboration

among 5 ERIAL Libraries



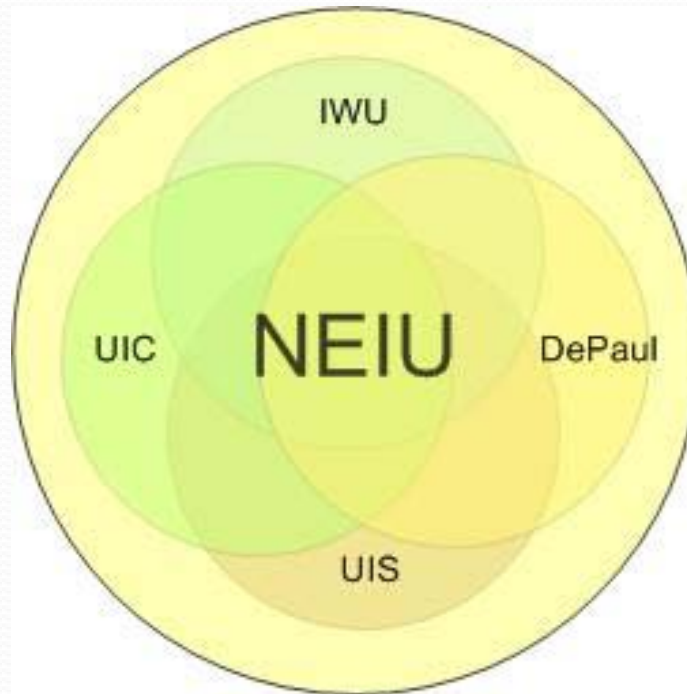
Collaboration

among ERIAL Participants on Research



Logistics

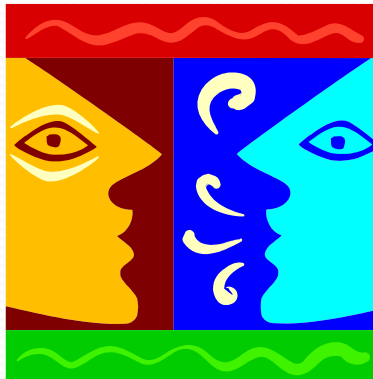
Centralized Administrative Structure



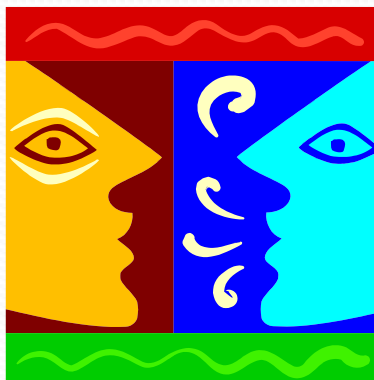
Logistics

Communication Structure

Face-to-Face
20 Meetings per month



Face-to-Face +
Phone Conference
5 Meetings per month



Logistics

Communication Structure

Phone

4 Meetings per month

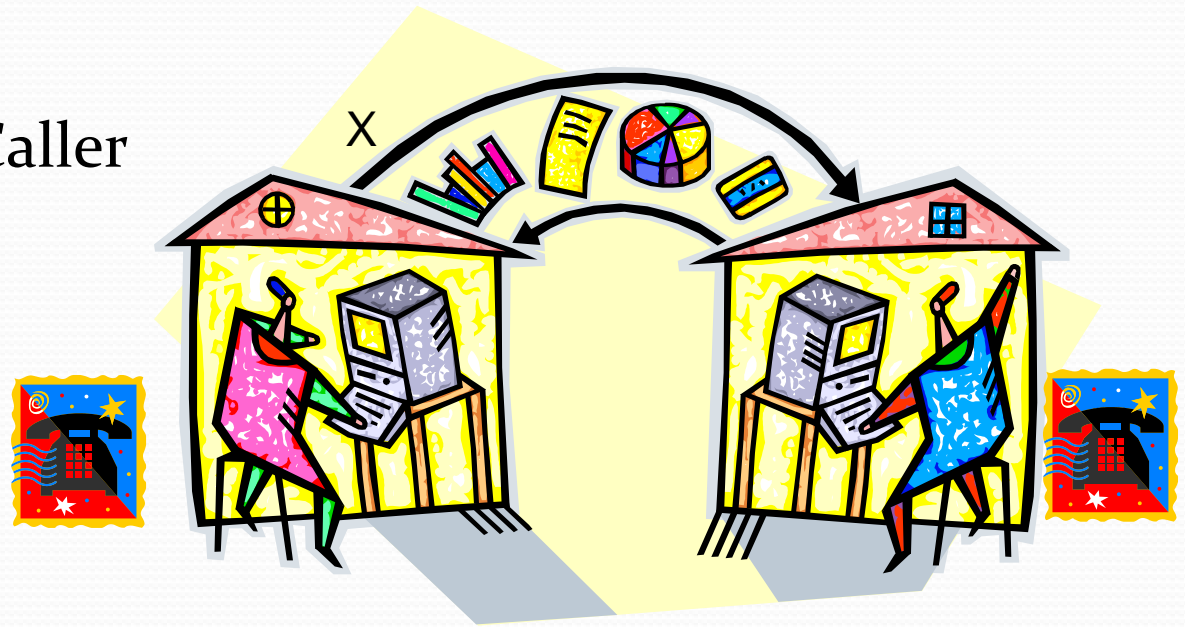


30 Regularly Scheduled Meetings Each Month

Logistics

Communication Structure

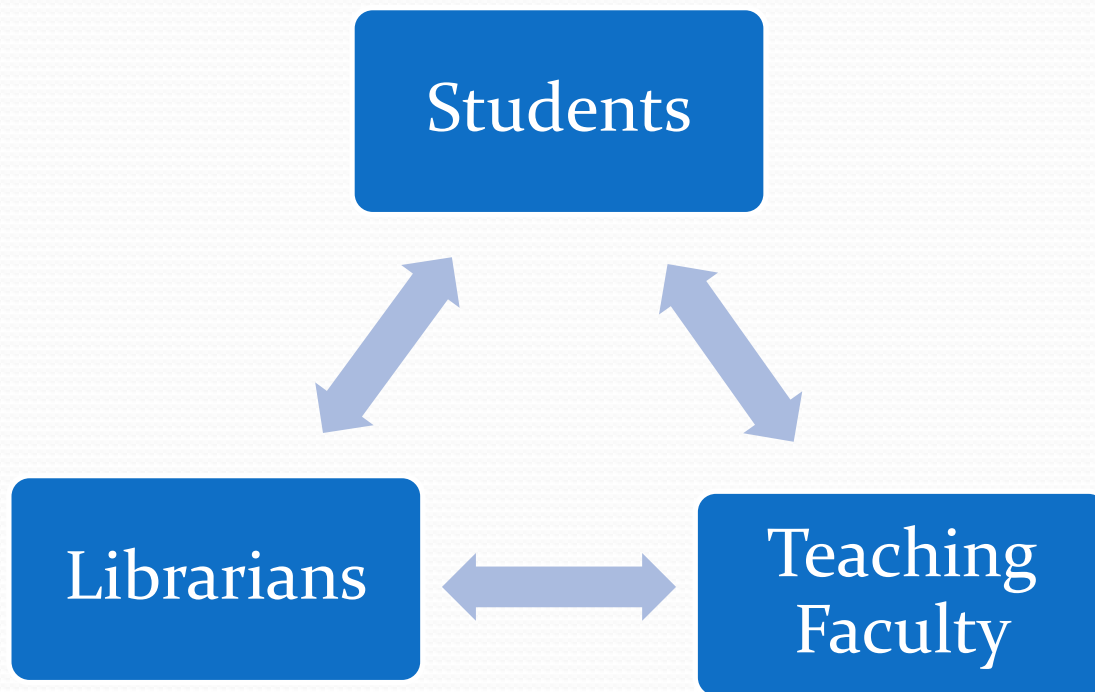
- Communication as needed
 - BaseCamp by 37 Signals
 - Dropbox
 - ConferenceCaller



Two Research Questions

- One: What do students really do when they are assigned research projects for class?

- Two: What expectations do students, teaching faculty and librarians have of one another for the student research process?



ERIAL Participating Universities

	IWU	UIS	DePaul	UIC	NEIU
Location	Bloomington	Springfield	Chicago	Chicago	Chicago
Environment	Residential	Residential	Urban	Urban	Commuter/ Urban
Public/Private	Private	Public	Private	Public	Public
Type	Liberal Arts	Liberal Arts/ Professional	Catholic- Affiliated	Research	Hispanic- Serving
Total Enrollment	2125	4711	24,352	25,835	12,320
Undergraduate Enrollment	2125	2889	15,782	15,665	10,114
Graduate Enrollment	0	1822	8570	10,170	2206

	IWU	UIS	DePaul	UIC	NEIU
<u>Enrollment</u>					
Full-time	99%	62%	81%	92%	56%
Part-time	1%	38%	19%	8%	44%
<u>Age</u>					
24 and Under	100%	55%	79%	87%	54%
Age 25 and over	0	45%	20%	13%	35%
Unknown					11%
<u>Gender Ratio</u>					
Male	41%	44%	45%	47%	42%
Female	59%	56%	55%	53%	56%
<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>					
Black/African American	6%	12%	8%	9%	10%
Hispanic/Latino(a)	3%	3%	12%	17%	30%
White/Caucasian	76%	74%	57%	45%	41%
Asian	4%	3%	8%	23%	11%
Unknown	5%	6%	11%	5%	7%
<u>International Students</u>	6%	1%	0%	1%	0%
<u>Transfer Students</u>	27	661	1534	1447	1127

ERIAL Graduation/Retention Rates

	IWU	UIS	DePaul	UIC	NEIU
<u>Graduation Rate</u>	83%	57%	64%	48%	18%
<u>Transfer Out Rate</u>	No data	No data	25%	No data	33%
<u>Retention Rate</u> (first year, fulltime students)	90%	67%	85%	78%	64%

Why ethnography?

Ethnography allows us to see...

- A nuanced view of a process
- The richness and diversity of individuals' experiences
- How culture affects individuals' behavior and vice versa

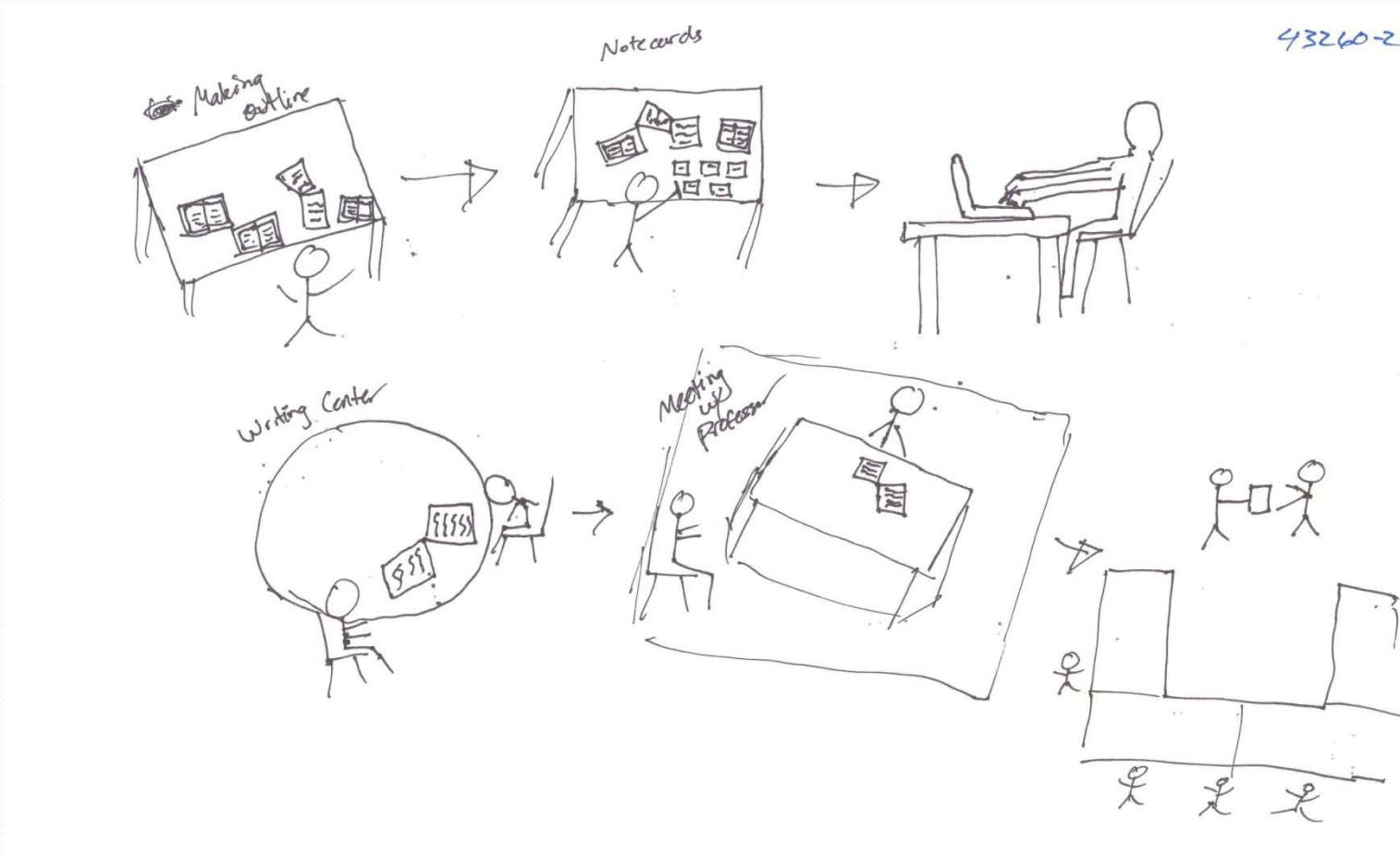
Ethnography involves...

- Study of a local culture
- Fieldwork
- Multiple methods and data sources to develop a full picture of a process and its context

ERIAL Research Participants

	DePaul	IWU	NEIU	UIC	UIS	Total
Librarian Interview	9	9	12	13	5	48
Librarian Photo Journals	7	5	6	N/A	3	21
Faculty Interview	14	15	16	15	15	75
Student Interview	34	30	29	33	35	161
Student Photo Journals	11	13	10	10	10	54
Student Mapping Diaries	N/A	24	10	N/A	N/A	34
Students in Web Design Workshops	N/A	30	10	N/A	N/A	40
Faculty in Web Design Workshops	N/A	4	8	N/A	N/A	12
Librarians/Staff in Web Design Workshops	N/A	15	N/A	N/A	N/A	15
Research Process	10	30	10	10	N/A	60
Student Cognitive Mapping	37	44	37	N/A	23	141
Student Research Journals	N/A	17	N/A	N/A	N/A	17
Research Paper Retrospective Interview	N/A	9	N/A	N/A	N/A	9
Student Space Design Workshops	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	19	19
Total	122	245	148	81	110	706

Retrospective Research



Cognitive Maps

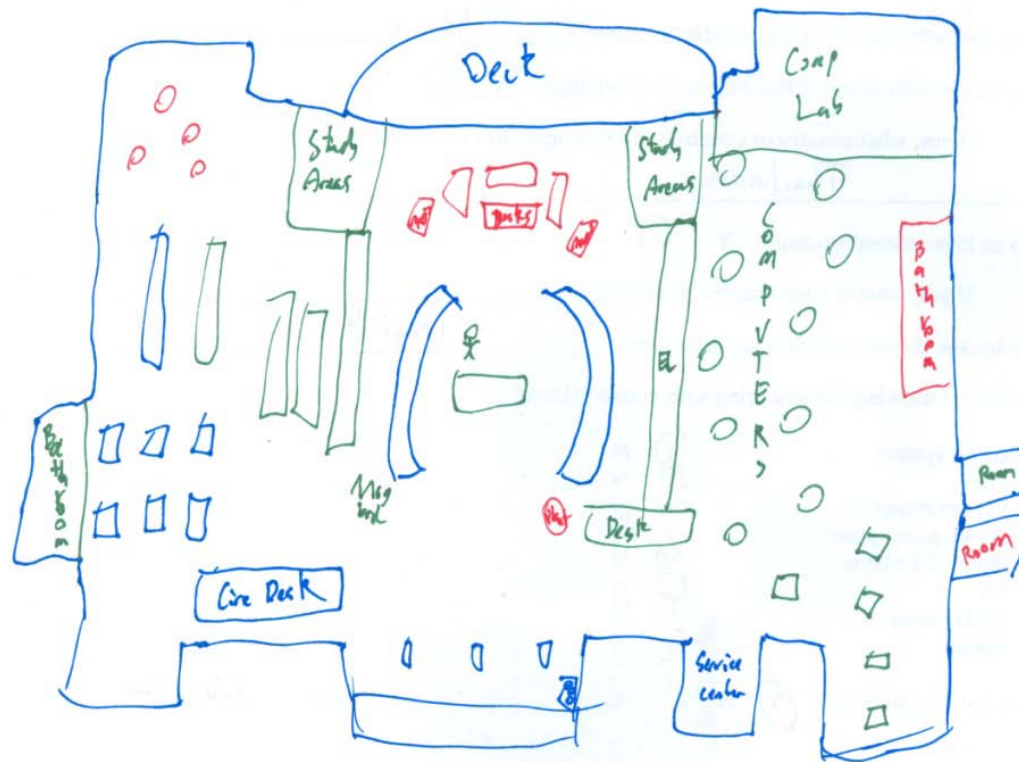


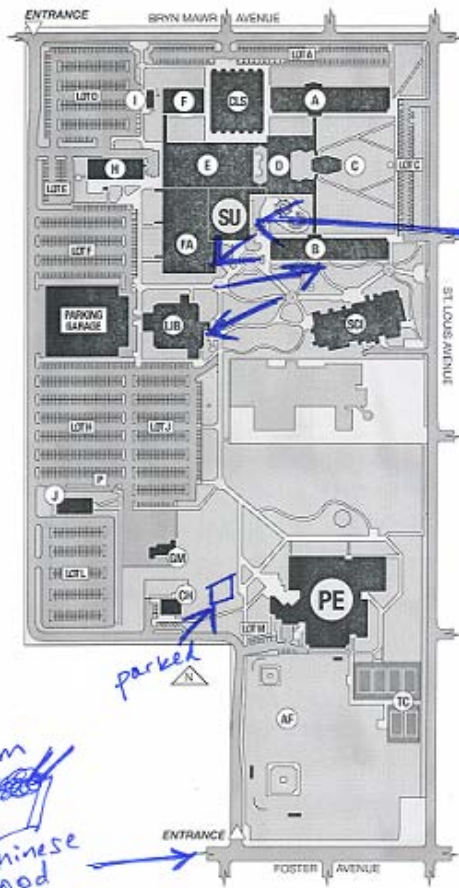
Photo Survey

- ___ The computer you use to do academic research, showing its surroundings
- ___ All the stuff you take to class
- ___ Something that you would call "high tech."
- ___ Something really weird
- ___ One picture of the library to show to a new freshman
- ___ Your favorite place to study
- ___ The place you keep your books
- ___ A person, any person
- ___ Your favorite person or people to study with
- ___ Something you've noticed that you think others don't notice
- ___ Your communication devices
- ___ A picture of where you study at home, showing your computer if you have one
- ___ Another view of where you study at home
- ___ How you manage your time or keep track of your work
- ___ Your favorite part of the day
- ___ The tools you use for writing assignments
- ___ The things you **always** carry with you
- ___ A place in the library where you feel lost
- ___ Something you can't live without.
- ___ The night before a big assignment is due

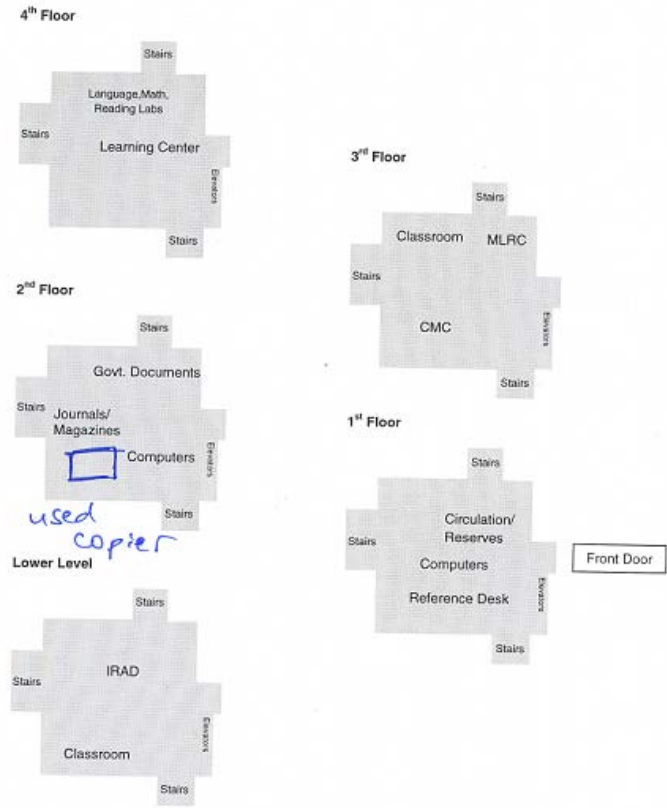


Mapping Diary

Main NEIU Campus



NEIU Ronald Williams Library

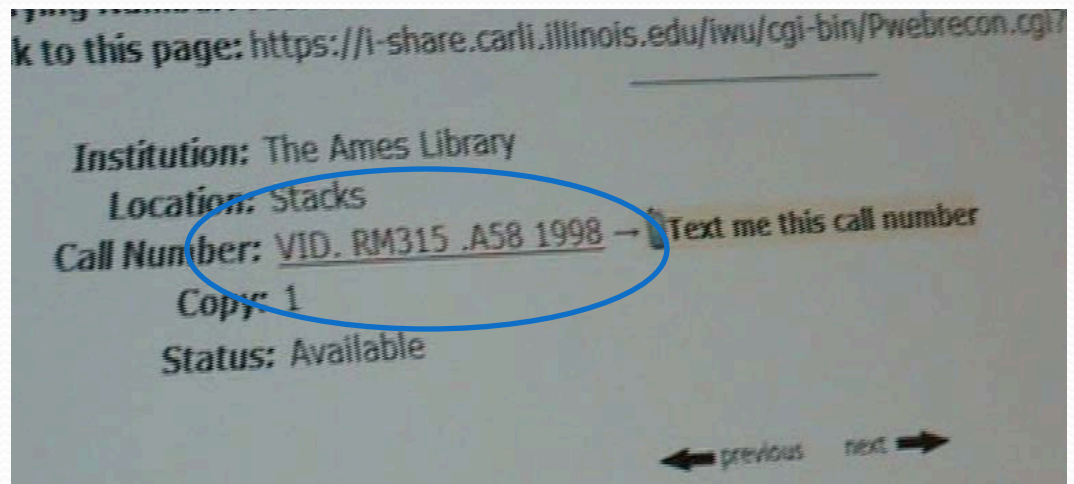


Research Process

- First-year IWU student attempting to locate a video to use as a source for a research assignment.
- Confused about where to look for materials in the catalog, as well as LC call numbers.
- Student had two library instruction sessions

Step 1: Identifies Item in Catalog

- Misinterprets call Number as “Video”
Room 315
- “RM” shelving is located on the fourth floor
- Not sure about where to go, the student goes to the reference desk for help



Step 2: At the Reference Desk

- The student staffing the reference desk is not there, leaving no one to help
- The student consults a bookmark giving call number locations, decides that the item is on the fourth floor based on where “V” call numbers are shelved



“I’m guessing--it starts with VID so that’s on the fourth floor”

Step 3: Try the Circ Desk

- Decides to ask at the circulation desk
- Is given incorrect information: “*Videos are on the third floor*”
- Videos are shelved in the stacks by call number



Step 4: Ask at the Media Center



- The student goes to the third floor, but is confused because she can't find "Room 314."
- Asks for help at the media center, but the student tells her that she should ask at circulation.

"The circulation desk downstairs deals with where things are. We're mainly to check out equipment. . .things like laptops. I'm sorry"

Step 5: Read the Floor Plan

- The student consults the third floor signage, but can't find the call number on the map because it shows only one floor.

“This is not helping me. . .”



Step 6: Return to the Circ Desk

- The student returns to circulation desk, and is finally given correct information
- Finds video in the stacks
- Total time to find item:
10 minutes
- Very few students will persist this long



Summary

- A minor gap in the student's information literacy knowledge led to a major problem in finding the material.
- Student approached three different service points and did not receive adequate help with her problem
- Small obstacles can lead directly to a failed search, negatively affecting student's learning outcomes

Service Implications

- More emphasis on information literacy basics in instruction sessions
- Potential ambiguity in LC call numbers
- Additional directional signage
- Maps and/or locations displayed in catalog page alongside call number
- Common basic service requirements and training at all service points
- Increased training for library student employees

Many to Thank

- Dean Bradley Baker
- Dr. Nancy Foster
- Metropolitan Library System
- Librarians who helped develop the grant
- Illinois State Library & Secretary of State's Office
- Librarians who worked with the anthropologists

The ERIAL Project: Ethnographic Research in Illinois Academic Libraries

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