Carli Counts Project Report
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Site and study lead information

Elmhurst University is a private liberal institution with approximately 3400 FTE. There are 17 university library employees; 5 librarians and 12 staff.

Jacob Hill (Reference/ Instruction Librarian) was study initiator and lead in conjunction with 2 colleagues (Elaine Page, Associate Librarian, A.C. Buehler Library, Tina Kazan, Assistant Dean, Academic Affairs) and several student assistants.

Carli Counts project title:

Working title: *Checking Out Library Spaces: How University Students Use Academic Libraries and Learning Spaces (And Attracting Those Who Don't).*

Abstract

This project was designed as a comprehensive library space use study, attempting to determine how library users use the library space, services, and resources, how these factors relate to student success, and how our library can attract non-users. Using cognitive mapping, focus groups, survey instruments, interviews, and quantitative data, our goal was to determine the answers to 3 questions: 1. What do students use the library building for when they visit? 2. (If they don't come to the library) how can the library faculty tailor its resources to attract users? 3. How is library resource use correlated with student success?

Motivation

Student and administrative space is at a premium on campus, and retention support is a major strategic factor in space utilization discussions. Librarians at our library, in cooperations with various allied institutions that share space (e.g. the university learning center) wanted to make data-informed decisions and recommendations on space and service utilizations in the university library. More specifically, how can the library and library-allied institutions address retention, through an investigation of library usage among exceptional and at-risk students. As part of that process, we hoped to determine if any specific categories (e.g., first-year students, transfers, veterans, etc.) or demographics (e.g., gender, race, etc.) constitute a substantial category of nonusers and what we can do to reach them through physical changes, programming and other strategies.

Partners and Stakeholders
- Partners
    - Team members
        - Facilitate student research and literature review
    - Library director
        - Support team research, ensure compliance

- Stakeholders
  - Administration
    - Data-evidenced recommendations for existing library space usage, future library-related capital projects and alumni development as it relates to dedicated funds
  - Granting bodies
    - Tangible research data disseminated to peers
  - Students
    - Participant in research as subjects

Inquiry Questions

        Our goals are to identify outcomes for library resource users vs. non-users, learn how we can enhance our offerings to better support existing student users, and how we can attract non-users. We are focusing on three research questions:

1. What do students use the library building for when they visit?
2. (If they don't come here) how can the library faculty tailor its resources to attract users?
3. How is library resource use correlated with student success (as defined by multiple criteria)?

Study Participants/Population

        Several key groups were selected as our primary focus.
- Mandated library users (scheduled for library sessions)
  Targeted subsets:
    - students from our our first-year English 105 and 106 class sections
    - selected FYS (first year seminar) sections
- Library user and non-user populations
  - Primary
    - first-year students
    - at-risk students (multiple criterion)
  - Secondary
    - transfer students
    - student athletes
    - honor students

Method(s) of Data Collection and Analysis

        Our study methodology was informed by the Ethnographic Research in Illinois Academic Libraries (ERIAL) Project[1]. Initially, we planned to do a cognitive mapping exercise with students from English 105 and 106 sections and selected FYS sections. In addition, we planned a

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[1] Asher, Andrew and Miller, Susan. http://www.erialproject.org/. Accessed 15 September 2020

Qualtrics survey to reach students who are not active library users, and track library resource use by current library users via existing tools and others to be implemented (point-of-service user documentation software, grant funded).. We also planned student interviews and journaling exercises with students who volunteered (some whom were likely to be recruited through the mapping exercises), which would be compensated with gift cards funded through a pair of existing approved grants[2].

Findings

Covid-19's impact on library traffic and usage resulted in an indefinite delay in this study. Although some preliminary cognitive mapping sessions were performed, resources purchased (software and incentivization merchandise), and a survey designed just prior to the pandemic, study authors agreed to delay the study in spring 2020 until normative library operations resume in an opened campus on a date TBD (est. fall 2021).

Next Steps and Other Results

The research team has met and discussed a potential rollout of the study for Fall 2021, based on the status of institutional re-opening. Grant support received to this point necessitates a final product.
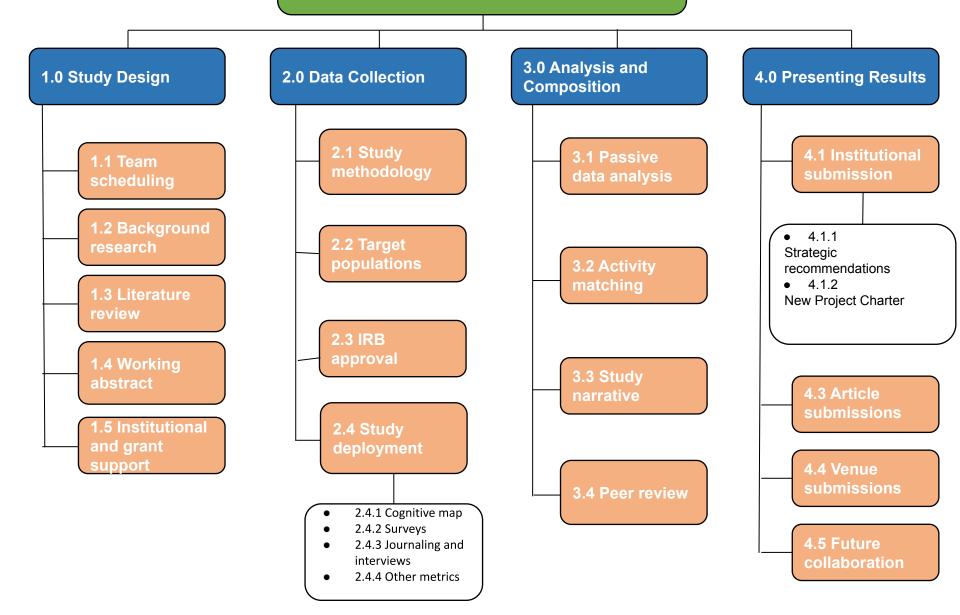
Additional Reflections

The research team still believes that this study remains a priority of the team members and library, especially as we transition directors in the summer of 2021. However, new library director priorities might change the planned timeline.

Timeline (revised for future implementation)

See appendix A.

Appendix A: Elmhurst University Library Usage Study Components

1.0 Study Design

- **1.1 Team scheduling**
- **1.2 Background research**
- **1.3 Literature review**
- **1.4 Working abstract**
- **1.5 Institutional and grant support**

2.0 Data Collection

- **2.1 Study methodology**
- **2.2 Target populations**
- **2.3 IRB approval**
- **2.4 Study deployment**
  - 2.4.1 Cognitive map
  - 2.4.2 Surveys
  - 2.4.3 Journaling and interviews
  - 2.4.4 Other metrics

3.0 Analysis and Composition

- **3.1 Passive data analysis**
- **3.2 Activity matching**
- **3.3 Study narrative**
- **3.4 Peer review**

4.0 Presenting Results

- **4.1 Institutional submission**
  - 4.1.1 Strategic recommendations
  - 4.1.2 New Project Charter
- **4.3 Article submissions**
- **4.4 Venue submissions**
- **4.5 Future collaboration**

Project timeline and work breakdown

1.0 Study Design				
1.1 **Team scheduling**	1.2 **Background research**	1.3 **Literature review**	1.4 **Working abstract**	1.5 **Institutional and grant support**
Description: Assess availability for upcoming fall and spring school terms, meeting dates	**Description**: Identify existing literature and model studies based on project scope statement	**Description**: Review sources and exclude studies which do not fit the working study model and/or institution	**Description**: Compose working abstract for grant submission, and future article & venue submissions	**Description**: Identify grant opportunities and submit abstract for supporting funds from internal and external sources
Resources: Jacob Hill, Tina Kazan, Elaine Page (hereby referred to as "JET Research Team")				
Cost: ~ $n/a				
Approval of Deliverable: Peg Cook, Tina Kazan				
Target Milestone Date: 12/15/20		Start Date: 5/01/21		End Date: 01/31/23

2.0 Data Collection

2.1 **Study methodology**	2.2 **Target populations**	2.3 **IRB approval**	2.4 **Study deployment**
			- 2.4.1 Cognitive map - 2.4.2 Surveys - 2.4.3 Journaling and interviews - 2.4.4 Other metrics
Description: Design specific study methodology based on literature and opportunities	**Description**: Identify likely target groups based on feasible candidates and availability	**Description**: With identified populations, gain Institutional Review Board approval for human subjects	**Description**: Deploy multiple survey tools and conduct qualitative & quantitative analysis

Resources: Learning Management System (LMS), , WCOnline student tracking tool, video and audio support, room reservations, focus group materials, incentivizing tools (gift cards)

Cost: ~$2100

Incentivizing artifacts (gift cards for journaling and focus groups) - $20 X 20	**$400**
Student tracking software license (WCOnline) to identify specific effects of services - $800/year annual license for 2 years	$1600
Research documenting materials (markers, paper, Post-It easel pads)	$100

Target Milestone Date: 10/15/21	Start Date: 3/15/21	End Date: 12/22	

3.0 Analysis and Composition

3.1 **Passive data analysis**	3.2 **Activity matching**	3.3 **Study narrative**	3.4 **Peer review**
Description: Compile and analyze all passive datasets from library records and web and support tool records, as well as pre-study evidence (if available and relevant)	**Description**: Map student records and narrative to physical space and passive datasets for pattern analysis and inference. Coding work on behalf of student workers	**Description**: In article format, compose research study narrative and present quant. and qual. data in context. Append datasets and supportive media	**Description**: Submit article drafts for colleague review and external peer review. Use Association of university and Research Libraries contact (ACRL) as potential external reviewer

Resources: Research team, student workers, peer reviewers

Cost: ~ $315 Student transcription and coding services @ $10.50/hr, approx 30hrs

Approval of Deliverable :Library and Learning Center colleagues will serve as initial Reviewers; ACRL Publications will identify terminal Reviewers

Target Milestone Date: 11/31/21	Start Date: 3/1/21	End Date: 9/15/22

4.0 Presenting Results

4.1 Institutional submission	4.2 Article submissions	4.3 Venue submissions	4.4 Future collaboration
● 4.1.1 Strategic recommendations ● 4.1.2 New Project Charter			
Description: Submit and present white paper to ACSP/university board with implementation recommendations. Propose project charter outline for future stages	**Description**: Identify professional journal for publication, submit abstract and manuscript	**Description**: Identify potential venues for presenting findings, submit abstract ● 4.3 conference presentation could be staged as part of deliverable 3.0 if used as a peer feedback tool	**Description**: Analyze feasibility of workshop model for future scholarship, possibility or truncated follow-up quan. and qual. study to gauge effectiveness of initial study recommendations
Resources: Research team			
Cost: ~$TBD travel funds for research team to present at regional and national conferences			
Approval of Deliverable: Research team, submission sites			
Target Milestone Date: 12/15/22	Start Date: 6/15/22	End Date: Based on conference dates, est. spring 2023	