

ABSTRACT

This case study described how a simple, low cost survey of library users was conducted at the Engineering Library of the University of Saskatchewan in order to better understand user needs and prepare for the service and space planning.

The results show that students wanted more computers, more group and individual study space, and longer library hours. Based on the results, quick actions have been taken. The results also provided valuable information for the planning of the rejuvenation of the Engineering Library.

Allowing each member of the team to showcase their talents, this project was a great team building exercise, and resulted a stronger , more cohesive working environment.

CONTACT

Tasha Maddison
Email: tasha.maddison@usask.ca
Phone: (306) 966-5977
@tmmaddison

Li Zhang
Email: li.zhang@usask.ca
Phone: (306) 966-6049
@lizhang95

University of Saskatchewan Library
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, SK, S7N 5E2
Canada
Website: <https://library.usask.ca/>

INTRODUCTION

Like many other academic libraries, the Engineering Library of the University of Saskatchewan strives to transform ourselves to be the central hub of student learning. The Library is located in the Engineering Building, and primarily serves about 2100 undergraduate and gradate students, and about 230 faculty and staff in the College of Engineering. In recent years, there has been a strong interest from the College in the renewal and expansion of the Engineering Building, including in Library space.

In the midst of planning the renewal and expansion of the building, a catalyst about the study space for students has emerged. In 2014, the College of Engineering went through the accreditation process by the Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board. One of issues identified by the Board is the lack of enough study space, particularly group study space within the building. Therefore, the College and the Library started conversations on how to transform the current library to meet the new needs of the College.

In order to prepare for the transformation, we decided to conduct a survey of the users to find their perception about the library collection, space, and services.

Team Collaboration

The Engineering Library team consists of 2.5 library assistants, 0.8 librarian, and a shared branch head. Most of our staff are relatively new to the University Library or to the Engineering Library. Therefore, the survey was also an experiment of finding new ways to know our users better.

The team worked collaboratively on this project from start to finish. In this process, the library assistants played a large role from initial idea, to the creation of the survey, to the promotion of the survey, and to the collection of the data. Allowing for creativity and innovation, we were able to utilize the talents of each team member. Because all of the team members were actively involved in and contributed to the surveying process, the project received greater buy-in from both the participants and the staff. As a result, the surveying process enabled us to build a stronger, more cohesive working environment.

User Feedback Survey – TELL US

The first part of the survey was conducted from November 17 – December 5, 2014. In order to find as much information as we could, we decided to include only 3 open ended questions:

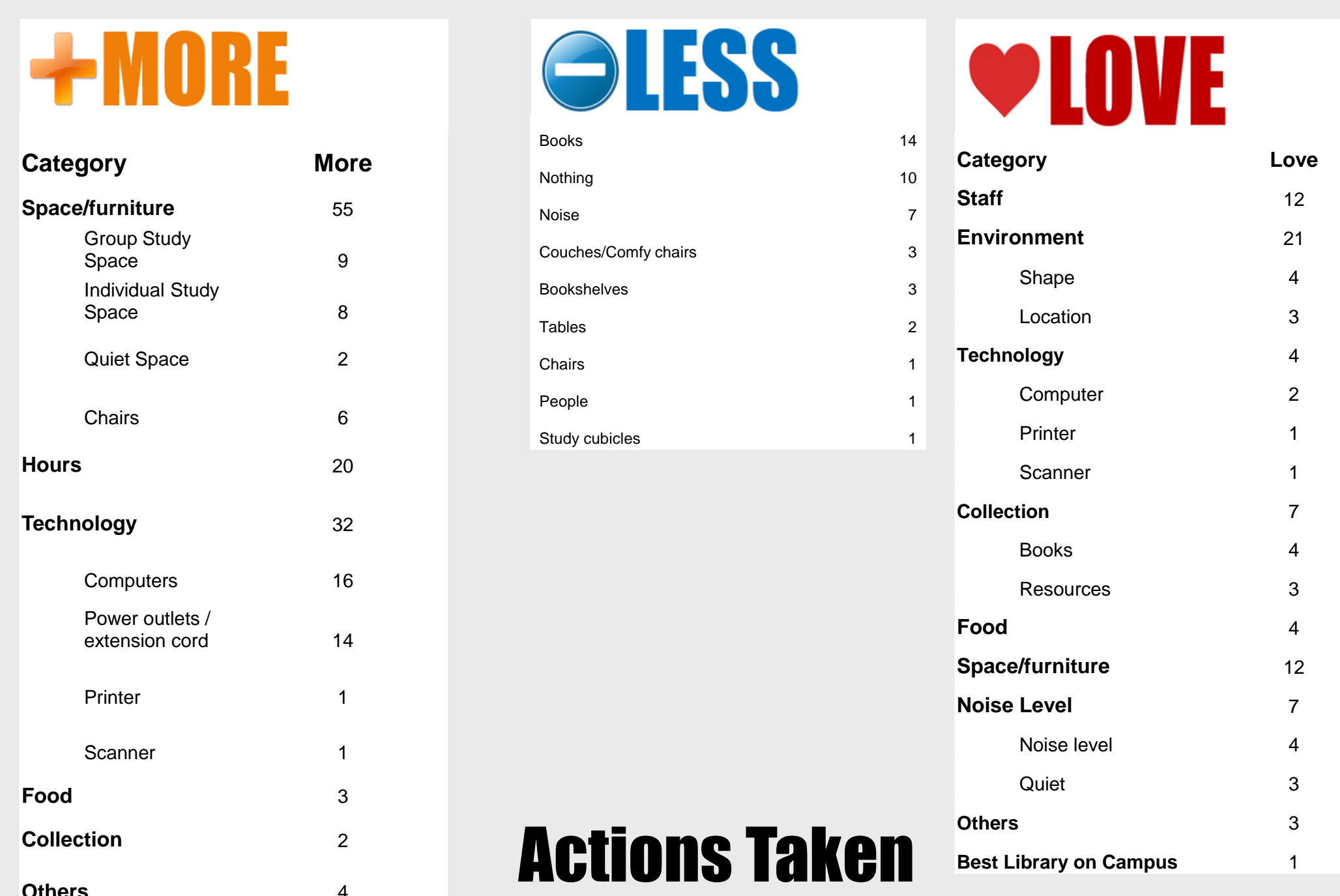
What do you want more of at the library?

What do you want less of at the library?

What do you love about the library?

The survey was available online through Google Forms or in print.

<http://tiny.cc/morelesslove>. A total of 43 responses were received: 33 online and 10 in paper



Actions Taken

- 2 Power towers were added to solve some of the issues on lacking plug-ins, which added 19 power plugins and 12 USB charging ports.
- 2 study tables along with 12 seats were added.
- Multi-function machine replaced old photocopier.
- Continue to work with the College of Engineering to support extended hours during exam times

Actions for the Summer

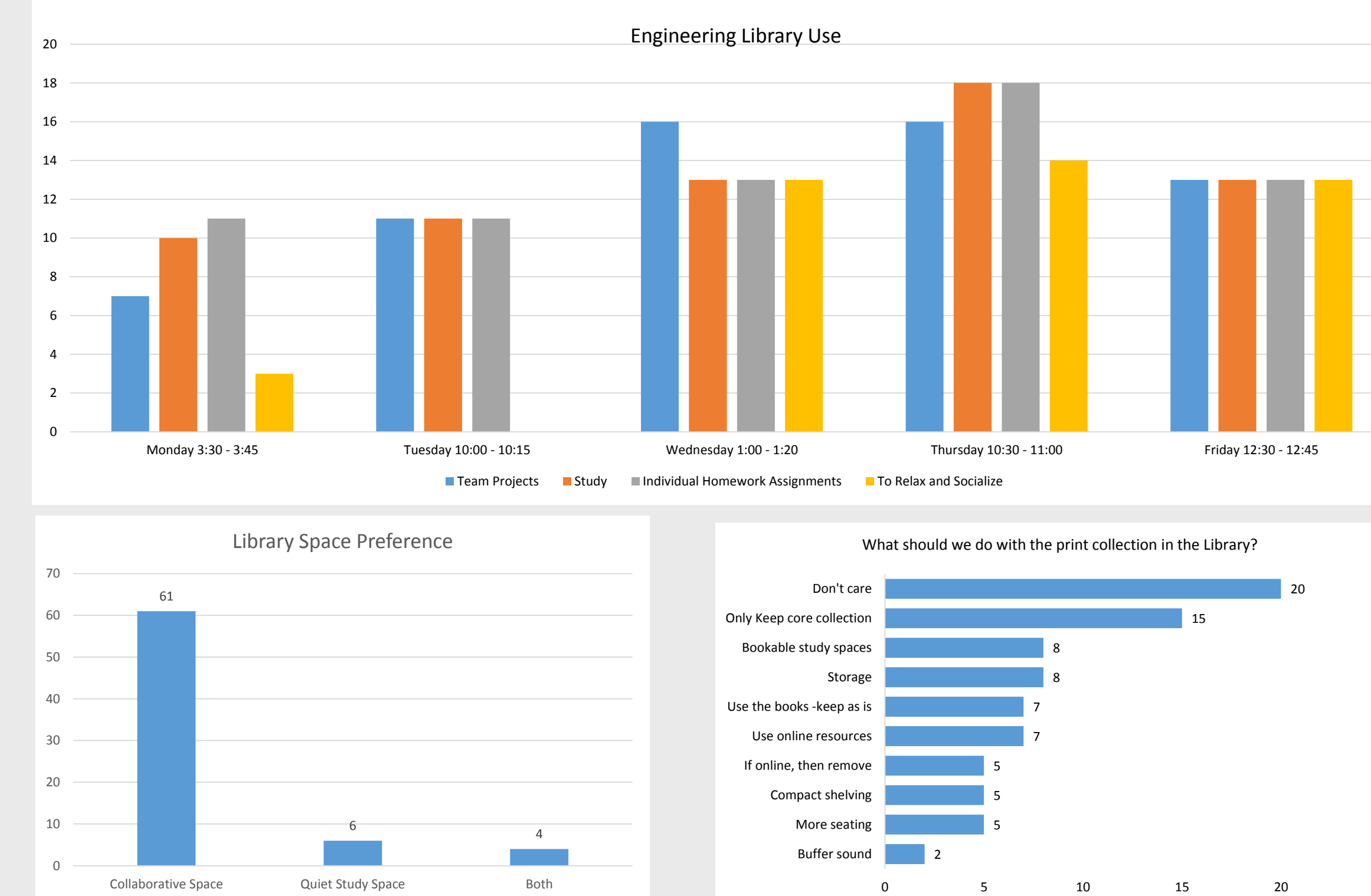
- Change the layout of library to separate collaborative spaces from relatively quiet study spaces
- Review and reduce current journals space to create additional seating for students
- Move current journals to the space outside the librarians' office to encourage collaboration and strengthen relationship between students and librarians

Face-to-face Interview – JUST ASK

The second part of the survey was face-to-face interview, which was conducted from March 23 – March 27, 2015. We chose a busy time for the library on purpose as it was 2 weeks in advance of final exams.

The interviews were conducted both in the morning and in the afternoon in order to reach a variety of students. The questions asked were based on the user feedback survey: space, collection, and noise.

A total of 69 library users participated the interviews.



Observations

Students felt ownership of the library and its space; when we approached students for face-to-face interview, most students were very happy to participate.

Our results were somewhat different from the LibQual 2013 results regarding the noise level. In the LibQual, many users were asking for more quiet space, but our survey showed that both types of spaces are needed for different purposes.

Students did not mention non-traditional library services, such as 3-D printing or makerspaces. New offerings of technology and services are still at the early stage, and students may not realize they could be part of the library services. If we do decide to implement them in the library, promotion and marketing are definitely needed.