Colleen Zwanzig

Research Process

Anth 285, Ethnography

Fall 2009

Dr. Gina Hunter

Subject: #2 My research question  Topic: My Research Project

Author: Colleen Zwanzig  Date: September 9, 2009 7:48 PM

When thinking about the library as a research venture the following are some questions I would like answered:

What draws students to the library in the first place?
What special features does the library offer exclusive to students and faculty?
How do students use the library’s spaces?
Is there a primary feature most students use the library for?
Does the library keep track of where its patrons are throughout the day?
What tools or methods does the library use to draw students and faculty in?
What connections can the library make to a technologically advancing society?
How does the library maintain its status of being a primary place to study?
How often do students use the library (number of times weekly)?

My interest in researching the library is the result of being a long term, satisfied library patron and worker. I started working in a library my sophomore year of high school and I was instantly hooked. It is the only place that offers a vast body of free information and the tools to access it. Most libraries also offer quiet places to study and think, it’s like a sacred space to me.

Through this research project I want to discover what part the library plays in the lives of students and faculty and I want to know if they feel the library meets their needs. I think I will find most students are drawn to the library for a specific reason such as: the use of a computer if they do not own one, the need to make copies or to print something, in search of a specific book they need for a class or because their teacher has items on reserve they need to check out. Because there is so much information available online in this internet dominated age I believe patrons of the library no longer visit to simply linger and browse. I think I will also find students are using the libraries physical spaces less and less as more information the library offers is uploaded online. I believe in the end, in order to maximize the number of patrons using the library, it will have to conform to the present days technological demands.

In order to find answers to these questions I want to collect stats at different times of the day on where patrons are and what they are doing in the space they’re using. I also want to pass out a questionnaire asking students basic questions like how often they frequent the library and what they generally come there to accomplish.

Subject: #4 An Observation  Topic: My Research Project

Author: Colleen Zwanzig  Date: September 14, 2009 8:35 AM

Place: the Square outside Milner Library

Time: 2:30pm
1. I wanted my observation stake out to be around the library but not necessarily in it. The reason for this is because I am just beginning my research and I thought it would be more appropriate to start on the outside of the library so I can observe the answers to questions such as: who actually comes in and out of the doors? What do they bring with them? Do most of them come alone or go in pairs? How diverse are library users?

Before actually going out to find out the answers to these questions I decided to make some assumptions. Given that I work at Heartland library I knew that there are always a diverse amount of people coming in and out but I didn't know if it would be the same at ISU. I see the latter as a bit more of an academic library then HCC because Heartland gets a lot of support from community users and “non-traditional” students. I also assumed that most people bring in at least a backpack and/or something to drink with them and that the majority go in alone.

2. Setting:

A beautiful Sunday afternoon, it is slightly breezy and sunny. When I arrive the Square is relatively quiet, there are 5 tables grouped together in the center and 11 benches surrounding it. The ground is littered with cigarette butts, straw wrappers, napkins, ripped notebook paper and various others items of refuse.

3. Observations:

(“---” shows time has elapsed)

- A guy and girl are sitting at one of the tables. The guy has a red shirt and jeans on and looks to be about 19-21, his arms are crossed and he is sitting back in the chair, relaxed. The girl is wearing a blue shirt and jeans and looks about 18-20, sometimes she laughs or smiles while sitting very straight and forward. Occasionally they both look around as if thinking of what to say and the girl changes positions a lot. --- Eventually they get up and leave together.

- A guy in sunglasses, a hat, shorts and a T is texting and walking toward the library as if he will enter but turns sharply and sits down on the bench across from me. He finishes texting, hunts around in his backpack and puts in his earphones. --- A little while later he meets up with another guy who looks similar and they walk in together. --- Two African American males (One in shorts and a T and the other in a suit) meet up outside the library with a low five and enter together.

- Two Middle Eastern looking men walk out but stand so far apart I could hard tell they were walking together until one motions to the other toward the Bone. They pass another guy in a turban and they nod at each other.

- A guy in a long sleeved black shirt sits at a table alone with his fist to his forehead but occasionally looking around at other people. As he watches others walk past sometimes he adjusts his shirt or starts picking at something on his backpack. --- Another guy (African American, 20-22, modern, nice clothing) approaches a table alone, checks to see if it's clean enough and proceeds to sit down to eat his Burger King.

- A guy comes out, lights a cigarette and relaxes into a bench. --- Another guy comes out to smoke and as he does he paces around the entrance talking on his cell phone; when finished, he flicks his butt onto the ground and goes back in. --- Two more guys come out to smoke on one of the benches. One of them chats on his cell while the other kicks his shoes off and sits cross legged.
--- A guy and a girl approach the two guys on the bench and ask for a lighter, one of them hands it over and the lighter-less pair light up and move over to sit down on the nearest bench.

- A man (Asian, mid 40s) and a young boy (Asian, 6-10) walk toward the library. As they approach the doors the man motions for the kid to go through the side door but the kid takes the revolving door instead. --- Another little girl walks out of the library with her guardian (women) and she goes through the revolving door as well, leading her guardian.

- Four girls enter the library together carrying backpacks and drinks and one of them has two drinks in her hand. A group of 5 international students walk out of the library chatting in another language. One white male walks with them talking to one of the girls. Another large group of 3 girls and 3 guys walk in together.

4. Analysis:

The first thing I knew I wanted to keep track of was how many people were actually bringing books out of the library. I wanted to see if the majority of students were checking books out, using online materials or using library books in the library only. During the 30 minutes I was there I saw only 4 books brought out by 4 different people. I realize that many students might have put the books in their backpack after checking out but I still feel it's a relevant piece of information.

One thing I noticed that seemed pretty interesting was that I didn't see one student take the center revolving door in or out. The only patrons that did were the two children I saw and one of the kids’ guardians. Why do students avoid the revolving door while children are drawn to it? I think maybe it's because students feel it's unnecessary to push their way out in a circle when they can simply come and go through a typical doorway and children see the revolving door as something new and exciting they want to try.

I noticed that the groups I saw enter together never had electronic devices out as they were socializing with each other but a majority of people walking alone were either listening to their ipods or talking on the phone. I also assumed with the group of four girls that the extra drink one of them was holding was for someone they were meeting inside.

I noticed some particular mannerisms about certain people. The guy in the black shirt sitting alone seemed to be looking for someone he was supposed to meet and then let down or possibly he was simply somberly pondering things. The first guy I saw come out to have a cigarette who relaxed into the bench seemed to be relieved at being outside to smoke, away from whatever he was working on in the library.

As far as my assumptions go I feel I was right about not seeing as many non traditional students. The majority of those going in and out looked to be between 18-22 year old university students. I do feel I was wrong about students entering and leaving alone. The majority of students I observed either met friends outside the library or arrived with them. I was right about most students bringing drinks and backpacks in with them but I would also include cell phones and ipods after observing.

Some things I did not note typically because, in my perspective, they seemed too insignificant to my research questions. At first I was specific about what people wore or looked like but towards the end I tended to leave that out because I found it irrelevant. I was not close enough to any couple of Square dwellers to jot down or follow a conversation and I got only bits and pieces from passersby so I left dialogue out as well.

5. Reflections:
Emerson talks about in the reading how important it is to be immersed in the collection of people you are studying but since the only clear thing that connected the people I observed was using the library; my observations were as an outsider looking in on. I found this effective as a starting point though, I felt it was like an introduction to the library’s patrons. I did however feel that I was able to connect with the people I was studying by following their movements and recording my observations with assumptions and feelings attached. Even though I did not interact with them I still tried to form a relationship by being insightful about their lives and gaining a perspective through my observations. I found myself translating a lot of the things that were happening around me into inscribed text by reconfiguring what I saw into something that related or compared to something else – which is like applying meaning to action.

Observations of My Home Building:

It is the 14th of September on a Monday afternoon and the halls of the 3rd floor are quiet. Occasionally a student will wind through the maze of doorways leading to different offices and classrooms. Most of the office doors are ajar, allowing a clear view of those inside. As I walk past I glance in at each little room. Most of the rooms are packed with chairs, a large desk, papers, lamps, books, posters, shelving units, etc. As I journey back toward my classroom the hallway straightens and I see a few students clustered on the provided benches. Some of the students are hunched over a textbook and others are talking quietly with one another. Lining the walls I see flyers and posters for various study abroad programs and other anthropological opportunities. These flyers and informational poster remind me of what this building means to me – a home to study anthropology.

Reflections on Basso:

The Basso text encouraged my ownership of the buildings I spend time in four days a week. The naming of objects/structures brings them closer to me as if they were specifically constructed to meet my educational needs. When the Native Americans of the Appalachian Mountains gave descriptive names to places they would frequent, a deep understanding and relationship was formed between the person, place and action carried out there. When I consider Schroeder as My Home for Anthropological Study, I feel an attachment to it that I cannot glean from the original name because it has no personal meaning to me. It’s easy to walk in and out of buildings with an indifference or detached demeanor to the actual physical spaces but when personal value is applied in the form of a name or association, the understanding you have about the place deepens your concept of what it means to you. So, in a sense, the personal name you give to a structure bridges the gap between the unknown and the familiar.

The research questions I’m going to be focusing on are: How are students using Milner’s resources in the digital age and how are students researching topics at the library? My research group was originally going to divide up into groups to tackle these two questions but we decided since there is strength in numbers we could cover more ground by sticking together.

To investigate these questions I think it would be best to each pick a time that works best with our schedule to observe and take notes in the library. I also think it would be beneficial to have a couple people in our group interview students while the others interview staff. This way we can meet our research questions with a couple different points of view. As far as investigating how students research I liked the idea that each group member pick a student working on a paper to sit down with to observe and ask questions.
4) Can you explain the steps you take when collecting information for a research paper?

Well, typically I'll start by getting on google and entering a few search terms, not necessarily looking for research to use, just kinda get familiar with a topic and then I'll get a little more serious by looking online for books I could use.

5) Is there a specific thing you have difficulty with when trying to research?

I think the hard part comes after I have the books I ordered to write it. Sometimes I'll request books a week before the paper and I'll get them and realize they're not what I really need but the paper will be due soon and I won't have enough time to get the right ones so I'll just have to make it work.

6) Have you ever worked with a librarian on your research problems?

Um... No, I don't think so I mean I've had them get books from other libraries for me but never actually asked one to help me research.

I feel these three answers were particularly important because they were specific to our research question about how students go about their research.

I learned that "Jane" knew how to request books from other libraries but that sometimes she had a hard time finding applicable material which could end up negatively affecting her paper. The fact that Jane hadn't thought to ask a librarian to help her search for materials is also an important point because it asks the question, 'how can library staff be more forward/open to letting students know research is a special service they offer? ' I also noticed that Jane didn't mention anything about the use of articles, online journals, etc until I brought it up later on in the interview. There is a multitude of valuable information university students have free access to and I wonder how many 1. Know it exists 2. Know how to access it themselves.

I noticed during my interview that my prepared questions weren’t always the preferred questions I would ask after receiving certain answers. Many times I wanted to ask a question based on what Jane had just said.

---

On Sunday our group got together to make a couple surveys and talk logistics. Here are a few decisions we made about our responsibilities:

- Each group member will be assigned to a Floor # to observe and do research on
- Each member will observe their Floor at different times of day during the week to collect stats on things such as: how people are using the space, the number of people and if people are using computers or books

Our group also decided to create two surveys to use for our data entry. The Library Space survey is being overseen by Rachel and Torii and a physical copy will be given to patrons to fill out. The Library in the Digital Age is being overseen by Aaron, Jim and I and will be available for patrons to fill out via survey monkey. Here is a draft of the Digital Age survey to be handed out this week.
1. Demographics: Major, minor, year in school, how many years you have been at ISU
2. Do you have your own computer and/or printer?
3. How often do you come to the library specifically to use the technology (computers, printers, digital resources...)
4. Do you use Milner’s online resources when researching for a class assignment?
   Milner searches (books):
   Online journal searches:
   Interlibrary Loan:
5. From the following list, please indicate a) if you use it b) how often c) are you satisfied with it
   List of technology....
   Instant Message a librarian:
   Text/E-mail a librarian:
   Text call numbers:
   Laptop checkout:
   Ipod checkout:
6. Would you prefer reading online or real books?
7. Is it easier or harder for you to find credible sources now that most information is online?
8. Is the library is keeping up to date technology?
9. How satisfied are you with the speed and software the library uses?
10. Are there any changes/additions you could suggest that could make the library more suited to your needs?

Subject: #9 Revise Research Question/Plan Topic: My Research Project
Author: Colleen Zwanzig Date: October 3, 2009 4:11 PM

Our research questions have changed a little after gaining some knowledge/awareness of our topic. We are still studying ‘how the digital age is impacting the library’ but more specifically we are looking at how students are using the library now that changes have happened. Are they frequenting Milner more or less now that a majority of materials are found online? When they do come to Milner, why? Is it simply for a quiet place to study or do they need to use the technology/electronic devices Milner offers? These are the more specific things we would like to research.

As far as our plan we have decided to split our study of Milner up by floors. Each group member will be assigned a floor to research and observe, then we will collaborate our results/findings. We have also decided to conduct two surveys: one will be handed out in physical form about library space and the other will be offered online. The online version is what I am working on. My plan is to have it finished and distributed to patrons willing to fill it out this week.

Subject: #9 Interview Topic: My Research Project
Author: Colleen Zwanzig Date: October 6, 2009 2:39 PM

What online resources would you use when researching? Typically Milner’s website when I was on campus. I loved using the online journals like JSTOR - my options seemed limitless and I knew it was credible info

Did you have a computer at home? No, so I was at Milner a lot to study

Where did you frequently study at? If I needed to use a computer generally the lab on the main floor but I also liked to do homework on the 5th floor

Why that floor? I think I studied there with my friend Megan once and I kept going back because it was usually really quiet and there wasn’t a whole lot of traffic
Did you have any concerns or issues with Milner? Not really, well I guess I kind of felt that many of their books were outdated – not that they were irreverent or shouldn’t be there just that they a lot of them weren’t current enough info for whatever I was working on. That’s another reason I used the online stuff a lot.

Did you ever check books out for research? Not really, I remember browsing the stacks sometimes and using the books but not actually checking them out and taking them home.

Would you prefer reading a book online or having the physical text? I guess I always thought it really convenient to be able to read things online but I also really appreciate having the hard copy – I remember printing a lot of things off that I found online so I could highlight certain points and write notes in the margins. I guess it just really depends on what I’m reading and why.

My interviewee “Jane” graduated from ISU in the spring of this year. She majored in family and consumer sciences and received her bachelor’s degree. Since she didn’t have a computer at home, Jane got a lot of experience using Milner’s resources and its space.

I thought it was interesting that she always studied on the 5th floor instead of her home floor for her major because it felt more suited her needs of having a quiet place to study.

As far as her concerns with Milner I thought she had a valid point about some of the books being outdated. Maybe this could be improved on if the library weeded their collection more often in order to make room for more current publications. I think it would be important to ‘study up’ and talk to the staff about how they handle the in and out flow of texts.

The fact that Jane didn’t ever check things out but just used books while in the library made me wonder how many other patrons do this. It is now clear to me that circulation statistics are only a reflection of students who decide to bring books out of the library but the number of students who use them within the library is unknown.

I hadn't thought of the value of having a physical text over an online reading until Jane mentioned printing things off so she could take notes and highlight thus it seems having the physical text provides one with a more interactive and engaging study. So a more specific question would be, which is better: convenient or active studying?

Subject: #13 Literature Review  Topic: My Research Project
Author: Colleen Zwanzig  Date: October 12, 2009 3:26 PM

The Library That Isn’t There: Digital libraries transform books, photos and videos into bits and bytes

By: Richard Lipkin

Source: Science News, Vol. 147, No. 22 (June 3, 1995), pp. 344-345

Published: Society for Science and the Public

Lipkin’s agenda in writing this article was to summarize studies done by six different libraries whose goal was to find the ‘best way to organize, store and link data in a worldwide “library” so that everyone from academic researchers to casual browsers can use it easily’. These studies are based on the desire libraries have to adapt to the digital age by offering the majority of
their information online. The ‘information’ that is being sought to manage is not limited to text but also includes interactive mediums such as maps, charts, tables, sound, and video clips. In order to find a solution each library had to develop a method for studying human behavior in reference to seeking information. Asking basic questions such as why people go to libraries and what they hope to accomplish once they are there was found to be vital to the research process. Lipkin proposed that the typical library patron only has a vague sense of what they are looking for and how to find it. One particular library’s solution was to team up with a television station and offer video clips in response to students questions; for example: if a student were to ask, ‘how does former president George Bush feel about Obama’s plan to reform health care?’ the database, called Informedia, would pull up a clip of Bush’s direct response to such a question. In this way the article concludes that we need to expand and be creative with a changing definition of the library and its possible services. One commenter, Robert Wilensky from Berkeley, commented that libraries as physical spaces filled with objects may even become obsolete.

I think there are many benefits to moving textual, physical information to the web the first being that the information is no longer confined to a certain place but made readily available to anyone at any time an web connection is available. I think another major benefit is the opportunity for patrons to get creative with their research processes by using other mediums then text. Think about how much more influential a statement could be when heard directly from the person who spoke it rather than reading their words off a page. A multimedia, digital approach to information offered in cyber space expands the use and adds a unique dimension to the research process. I think our group can use this research to be more innovative with our questions and ideas of what the library could become.

Studying Students: The Undergraduate Research Process at the University of Rochester

By: Nancy Fried Foster & Susan Gibbons

Source: Association of College and Research Libraries, Chicago 2007

The purpose of this study was to gain data on how students ‘make papers happen’. To go about their quest to anthropologists studied the steps students took between being assigned a paper and doing initial research to the submission of the final draft. The first thing they did was to talk with instructors in order to clearly define what was expected of students in terms of paper writing. In this way they began by ‘studying up’ which we have learned is a great approach. Next they made a study of student’s use of facilities and library space which they used to determine how this affected their research results. The last step was to follow students through their process of researching the web for information.

The first important resolution they came to was that there is no ‘composite’ or ‘average’ student but a very diverse student body that has differing needs and desires. A libraries job therefore is not to comply with each individual need but take all needs/ suggestions into account and make encompassing choices that serve the student body and the academic institution the best. They concluded that a ‘user-centered’ design for a library may sometimes be at odds with the institutions educational needs and therefore may need to be reformed at times to fit within a universities ideal. For example: many students might express the desire to want a coffee shop in
the library to meet their desires of what a library should be but it is up to the library to decide if that is a need they feel they are required to spend their resources on. The result of this argument is that ‘things which can only be done in the library must have priority’.

I think the two anthropologists work can be very effective in reforming our ideas/questions/plans for the future of our project. The researcher’s discoveries about the diversity of the student body, the importance of library priorities and re-evaluating personal assumptions about students and their needs can help us ask better questions and therefore get more accurate results. Their successful project is also a reminder to ‘study up’ and immerse ourselves in the library culture in order to find solutions.

Subject: #12 Dipping Into the Archives
Topic: My Research Project
Author: Colleen Zwanzig
Date: October 18, 2009 7:46 PM

Archive: A Tribute to Perseverance: The Construction of Milner Library at ISU

By: Morag Boyd

As a way to look into the history of Milner’s past as a building in progress I accessed this article written by Morag Boyd about the initial plan ISU had for its new library and the construction that followed. Back in February of 1968 the construction firm Mackey and Murphey was hired to design and construct Milner for a profit of 11 million dollars as part of the “Super Block” which was a plan to expand the University by creating a number of student centered buildings. The concept of the building was to be centered around functionalism with the idea that a good building is ‘one that serves a purpose without unnecessary ornamentation or elaboration’. The style of the building was to reflect that of the European/International tradition which incorporates the large windows, open center stair, airy/voluminous feel and the emphasis of vertical/horizontal lines on the external structure. There was also an emphasis on regularity in the projected plans which explains why every floor (with the exception of the first 2) looks essentially the same.

In May of 1969 the cost of the building was cut down to 8 million and construction was scheduled to begin but because of the Vietnam war, race riots and labor disputes going on nothing happened for another year. The construction firm responsible for building was switched and the budget was reduced again to 7.2 million. The new firm eliminated features such as skylights, enclosed study areas and light fixtures accommodate the new cost. A final firm change happened in 1975 and in 1976 Milner finally opened its doors.

The new Milner stats:

- Capable of holding 800,000 volumes
- 2,733 chairs
- 2,063 carrels
- 176 faculty studies
- 117 tables
- 12 conference rooms
In 1981 the State of Illinois filed a lawsuit against the appointed construction firm over the leaking plaza and roof and the debate over whose responsibility it is to pay for it is ongoing. In 2000 a renovation of the 2nd Floor was completed and plans for the off site storage facility was underway.

I was intrigued to learn about how Milner came to be the building it is today and the article really supported my understanding of its somewhat difficult beginnings. The idea of functionalism being the central idea of the library explains the formality of the floors and the no nonsense interior design. The leaking plaza and roof problem has majorly effected the library space by displacing offices and exposing the books in the basement to mildew and mold. I speculate that the budget cut of 3 million might have an impact on the underdevelopment of the building. The renovation of the 2nd floor is something I’d like to read up on for the sake of finding out how they decide what renovations/ updates are necessary to make. The article has also inspired me to 'study up' by asking Milner staff about possible plans to update other floors and also about who oversees library renovation projects.

**Subject:** #14 More Data  
**Topic:** My Research Project  
**Author:** Colleen Zwanzig  
**Date:** November 2, 2009 3:48 PM

Meeting and talking with my group members over the weekend helped me place our research in terms of what we have accomplished and what still needs to be done. Our outline I believe gives a solid and diverse amount of topics we’ve covered through our research and writing it up helped to conceptualize our progress and accomplishments. There are two major things that I believe hold great weight in our research and have yet to be completed which are staff interviews and giving out the digital age survey.

Speaking of the staff interviews our group came up with a small but diverse list of questions we believe only librarians would know or could talk on extensively. They are as follows:

How long have you been working here?

What are your typical tasks (such as: working behind the scenes, reference or circulation desk, etc)?

How has the library changed in the years you have been working here (space & technology)?

What are some known improvements made in the library? Are there any needed improvements?

What times of day do you find the library is being used most?

Can you identify some questions that are frequently asked?

Do you feel most students’ exhibit competent research skills when you talk to them about specific questions?

In what way are you most often contacted (e-mail, text, IM, in person)?

In your opinion how is the library evolving/adapting in the digital age?

Since we have already identified an important feature of research is ‘studying up’ I believe these staff interviews will provide us with the kind of information necessary to validate or findings.

Speaking of the digital age survey I have finished it and thus prepared it to be distributed in the library to students interested in taking it. I have made necessary modifications to the originally copy that I believe will maximize its relevance for our benefit. We plan on distributing it Tuesday at 5pm inside the entrance of Milner.
I. Thesis statement
A. What is the purpose of this ethnography?
B. Methodologies
C. Past Research/discussion of research we have found
D. What we intend to find in this study

II. Historical overview
A. When/why The library was built
B. Why it was expanded
C. The digital age: what it did to research and studying at ISU, what it did to Milner’s space

III. Data: Students
A. Interviews
B. Surveys
C. Observations / inside settings/ mapping
D. Personal point of views and experiences
E. Photos

IV. Data: Staff
A. Interviews
B. Personal point of views and experiences

V. Discussion
A. Food, coffee, coffee shops and the role they play
B. Library: quiet? Loud?

VI. Analysis of data
A. What did we learn from all the data collected?
B. What needs to be changed if anything?

VII. Conclusion
A. What did we learn from the study?
B. Was the original intention of the study correct?
C. How do our results compare to past research?
D. Limitations/implications for future research.

Subject: My Rough Draft Section  
Topic: My Research Project

Author: Colleen Zwanzig  
Date: November 14, 2009 10:42 AM

Background/ Past Research

Studying Students: The Undergraduate Research Process at the University of Rochester

By: Nancy Fried Foster & Susan Gibbons

The purpose of this study was to gain data on how students 'make papers happen'. The anthropologists thought it would be beneficial to observe a student go through each step of the writing process from the initial research to the final submission in order to get a clear picture of how it’s done. First they talked with instructors to get idea about the content and expectations that were necessary to get positive feedback on the paper. Next they recorded the student’s use of facilities and library space and the last step was to follow students through their process of researching the web and other mediums for information. They then compiled their data and used it to broaden the scope of their understanding of student’s writing methods.

The first important resolution they came to was that there is no ‘composite’ or ‘average’ student but a diverse student body that has differing needs and desires. This lead them to believe libraries job is not to comply with each individual need but take all needs and suggestions into account in order to make all encompassing choices that serve the student body and the academic institution the best. They concluded that a ‘user-centered’ design for a library may sometimes be at odds with the institutions educational needs and therefore may need to be reformed at times to fit within a universities ideal. For example: many students might express the desire to want a coffee shop in the library to meet their desires of what a library should be but it is up to the library to decide if that is a need they feel they are required to spend their resources on. The result of this argument is that ‘things which can only be done in the library must have priority’.

Data: Student Observation

In Colleen’s observation of the library, which took place on a Sunday afternoon, she sought to identify who was coming in and out of the doors and to monitor the behaviors of these individuals in order to answers questions such as: What do most patrons they bring with them? Do most of them come alone or go in pairs? How diverse are library users?

During the 30 minutes spent observing she saw only 4 individuals bringing books out of the library. While this does not account for individuals who store their books in a backpack, it’s still a surprisingly low figure when compared to the 50 plus patrons walking out the doors. This tells us it is probable that most students are relying much more on materials found online and the internet and less on physical books. Colleen also noticed that the groups that enter together usually meet up outside the library or inside the door. Since they are not coming from the same destination this could mean these individuals are in a loose knit network brought together only by an assignment.
related to a class. This is reinforced by the fact that she observed the groups going separate ways when they left the library. Counting a single group as one unit and an individual as one, the patrons coming in as groups outweighed the number coming in as individuals. (Add data for amount of group meeting rooms or people who said they want more rooms)

Data: Student Interview

I learned that “Jane” knew how to request books from other libraries but that sometimes she had a hard time finding applicable material. When I asked her if she had thought to ask a librarian help her search she stated, “I’ve really never considered that,” This reaction is unsettling and it begs the question: ‘how can library staff be more forward in letting students know research is a special service they offer?

Data: Staff Interview

“Katie”

‘Katie’, a reference librarian Colleen interviewed, has been working at Milner since 1990 and has seen many of the changes Milner has undergone firsthand. She learned from Katie that each librarian has a field they specialize in and, when not at the desk, work exclusively with students under their expertise. Katie works with primarily graduate students and also teaches an average of 4 to 5 library classes a week. Katie said she felt the environment of the library had changed a lot in the years she had been working; now it is a much more casual place for groups of students to meet and hang out. Food and beverages are overlooked and the restraint on noise level is much more lax. Katie mentioned that there is a huge push to get the library digitalized in order to keep it up to date and also to reduce cost and make all items accessible. In reference to research, Katie stated that many students assume online databases are free and relatable to anything else they could find on the web but since the opposite of this is true there is a need to educate students on the value and use of subscription databases. Katie backed the findings in the Rochester study by stating that there is no ‘average’ student researcher but that every student has a different understanding of how to search and where. The only common correlation between students is that most start with Google in there initial research and branch out from there. Speaking of Milner’s physical space, Katie mentioned that Milner is in dire need of complete reconstruction but lack the fiscal means for certain necessary renovations.

“Lyra”

Lyra, a librarian at Heartland Community College, has been working in public and academic libraries since 1993. She has many responsibilities most of which include interactions with the students. When she first started working, the technology available for use was limited to a card catalog, a couple CD rom catalogs and only one computer with a dial up internet connection for public use. The changes since then have obviously been drastic; now libraries are packed with computers and are pushed to get more and more information online for fast and accessible use. In response to these changes Lyra stated that, “The nature of the questions has changed (…) we aren't answering simple questions; we are guiding them to find their own answers.” In terms of research for an assignment Lyra felt many students lack competence searching for, “the ever elusive credible source,” and states that our ‘viral culture’, the feeling that everyone can be an expert, is a contributing factor to this problem. Solving this issue, she believes, is as easy as being open to talking with a librarian before and during research in order to sharpen searching skills and gain valuable knowledge about available databases and other materials.

Subject: #17 Recommendations

Topic: My Research Project

Author: Colleen Zwanzig

Date: November 16, 2009 4:01 PM
Based on our research findings I feel that ISU administration should pay closer attention to unfulfilled needs that students have in the library and then rate these needs based on what is best for the library as an academic institution. For example: I feel there is a real legitimate need for students to have enclosed spaces with accessible media where they can study and work on projects together without disrupting others. Another need the students expressed is the availability of a coffee bar in the library but since this need has no direct impact on academic success or failure, I believe it should be considered after needs the library is responsible for.

In order to feel their voice is being heard I feel it might be useful for the staff to employ a “suggestion box” which could come in the form of written cards placed sporadically around the library asking students about their experience or possibly a forum on the library website where students can engage staff with their problems/concerns/hopes for the future of the library.

Basically I feel there needs to be ways to implement more talk and negotiation between the student body and the administration of the library in order for the library to maintain a dialogue between authoritative decisions and student’s needs.

Subject: #11 Visual Data
Topic: My Research Project
Author: Colleen Zwanzig
Date: December 7, 2009 3:32 PM

On the Wednesday before finals I went to the fourth floor and took multiple pictures of large groups of students studying together. The picture I chose to write about is one that represents the most diverse use of library space. In this picture five students are shown crowded around one of the long tables with their books, notebooks, writing utensils and a large poster board spread around the table. Three of the students are sitting and writing while the other two are standing over the poster board with their heads together. One gets the impression that all the students are whispering back and forth ideas and questions. On another long table, a group of four is spread out much in the same way except instead of a poster board being the focus, a large box of Papa John’s pizza dominates the table. On the table adjacent from them two students are facing each other working diligently on Milner laptops. Behind this scene the door to a group study room is open a crack and presumably being used by a group who needs the privacy a partially closed door and wall can afford them. This scene incorporates some of the major themes of our project including:

- The use of Milner’s laptop checkout for study purposes most likely involving online research, the desire for food while studying, the need for an enclosed study room and also the spatial accommodations required for a group to study and work on projects together. The two students with laptops might decide that the other two groups they are sharing the space with are getting too loud and decide to move to a quieter area. Unfortunately most spaces are dominated by the largest group present so the group most likely wouldn’t move to accommodate the quieter, smaller study session. The use of space in the picture gives the impression that students are comfortable working in the areas provided but since the students weren’t surveyed or interviewed it’s hard to say whether they would have like things to be different or more suited to their needs.

Subject: Final Product
Topic: My Research Project
Author: Colleen Zwanzig
Date: December 7, 2009 5:06 PM

Abstract:

The purpose of our study is to see how Illinois State students use spaces to study and investigate how technology has affected the use of those study spaces. We will be doing this via participant observations of Milner Library, by conducting interviews with Illinois State students as well as Milner Library staff, and giving out questionnaires at Milner Library and other public study spaces. This study is useful to Milner Library because they will be able to better serve students based on how other study spaces, as well as Milner Library, are used.

Keywords:
digital age, academic institution, Milner Library, library patrons, viral culture, credible source, information accessibility, user centered design, technological revolution, Super Block, digital
technologies, community users

*Attached is the final paper (1st) & Power Point
Attachments: Ethnography of Milner Library-.docx; Milner%20Ethnography%20send.pptx;