

Library Space Planning Survey: the Results

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As part of the university libraries master space planning effort, [first mentioned](#) in Galter Library News in May 2008, library staff conducted two separate surveys this past summer soliciting user feedback about the library's physical space. Over 450 users responded: 150 students and 300 faculty, staff, residents and post-doctoral fellows. The responses were terrific both in the numbers and the thoughtful comments. The Galter staff thanks everyone for their time and effort in providing positive feedback on directions to take toward improving the library's physical facilities.

In a series of eleven questions Galter staff wanted to know how users utilize the library's physical space. The results of both surveys are summarized below.

The Faculty, Staff, and Residents Survey Results

- From the faculty-staff-resident-fellows surveys, Galter staff learned that users prefer to do library research on their own and that they do not delegate the search for scholarly information to others.
- Of the 16 different library services listed in the survey, users think downloading articles from the library's website is the most important service (90% of respondents).
- Other key library services include accessing articles from within resources like PubMed (87%); accessing e-journals from the library's website (86%) and accessing a variety of databases (81%).
- Not surprising to library staff, most users in this survey say they do not come to the Galter Library and prefer to access the library online (51%).
- For those who do come to the library, their primary reason is to use a quiet and reflective space (56%).
- Of those faculty, staff, and residents who do come to the library, their seating-work area preference is for study tables and chairs (56%), followed by individual study carrel (48%) or desk and lounge-type seating (39%).
- While in the library, a strong majority of users want to work alone (62%), need access to the university network (54%) and need to plug in a computer (61%).
- Another majority - 58% -- want to use one of the library's computers.
- Of the 20 items - such as lighting, seating, signage, etc. -- that users were asked to rate as excellent, good, satisfactory or poor, the vast majority of users in the survey rated the library as "good."
- When asked what should be improved in a library redesign, the majority of users recommend more leisure seating and a technology help desk.
- In two open questions, users were asked to comment on what they liked best and least about the Galter Library. What users liked best include: access to e-journals, interlibrary loan service, the décor and architecture, the helpful staff, and the library website. What users do not like include: the cold temperature, not enough journals, study seats, or group rooms, or the library's location (too far from the hospital).
- When asked to complete the sentence about how the library could be more useful for teaching and learning, some users commented that the collection should expand and grow to include more journals and that they be available online, that the library should have longer hours, and be physically accessible to the hospital. Many users expressed the desire to have more time so they could take advantage of the library's space, its collections and educational services.
- The last question asked faculty, staff, and residents about their preference for other libraries in the Chicago area. This question was asked in order to find any model that Galter staff could emulate for physical features or services. Most of the faculty, staff, and residents responded that they never used other libraries. For those responding to using other libraries at least once per week, the majority reported using the Evanston Campus library or their suburban public libraries.

The Students Survey Results

The students survey was slightly different so that data more particular to this group could be captured.

- Students were asked which areas of the library they use most to which over 75% responded with the group study rooms. Other popular areas are study seats in open areas, the LRC and the second floor study carrels.
- Student preference for study seating was more varied. The majority of students selected "sometimes" in preferring individual carrels to chairs at tables or small group seating.
- A majority of students (77% of respondents) always like having a place to plug in their laptop.
- In terms of facility features, like lighting, furniture, and signage, the majority of students rated the Galter Library as "good." Satisfactory marks were given to such features as group study rooms, temperature and security.
- When the library is closed, students most often study at home (87%).
- When asked what to add or change in the Galter Library if the space was redesigned, the majority of students (77%) said we should add a 24-hour study space. The next most popular response is to add more group study rooms.
- Like faculty and staff, the majority of students say they never use alternative libraries for their studies. Libraries that are used are the Evanston Campus library



(8%) and the Pritzker Legal Research Center (19%).

Overall, Galter Library staff is very pleased with the survey results and in many cases the results confirm staff observation about library use. The results will be used to better inform the overall master plan study to create an architectural program that aligns the uses and designs of library facilities with new services and strategies.

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