

2017 Library Survey of Undergraduates: The Library as Space

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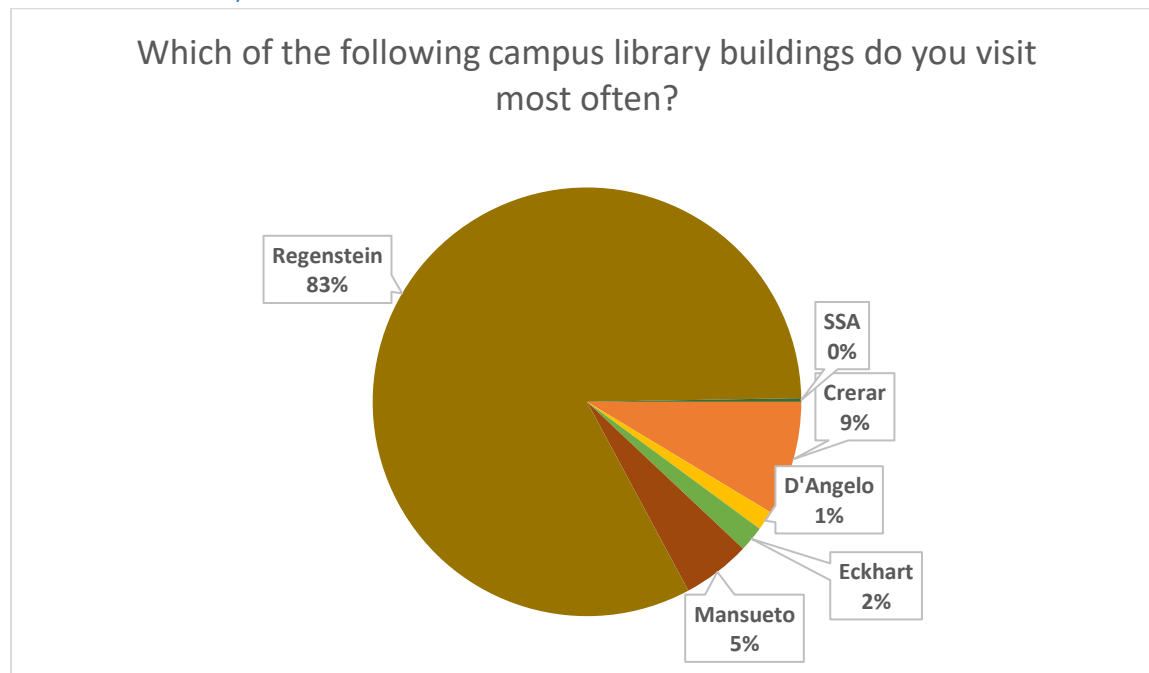
Introduction

The invitation to participate in the 2017 Survey of Undergraduates was distributed by email to all enrolled undergraduates¹ on February 7, 2017. Students were given until March 3, 2017 to complete the survey. Of the 5,689 students invited to complete the survey, 1,513 clicked the survey link, 1,343 started the survey, and 1,100 completed the survey, yielding a 19% response rate. While response rates by demographic groupings are generally representative of campus populations, women are overrepresented, and international students are underrepresented.

The following pages present selected questions from the Role of the Library module that provide context for the Library Space Planning module, which is discussed in the order it was completed by respondents. Throughout this report, it is useful to keep in mind that where analysis refers to users of a specific Library, it is based on this preference as expressed elsewhere in the survey. By contrast, where analysis refers to specific populations (i.e., members of a specific Division or House), it is based on demographic data obtained from the Registrar.

The majority of questions discussed in this report utilized one of several five-point or seven-point scales. Responses on these scales have been clustered for analysis based on the clustering practices used by Ithaca S+R; clustering is indicated below each chart or in footnotes. Finally, questions in the Library Space Planning module frequently follow a similar structure or are presented as a series of questions under the same heading; these questions have been similarly grouped in this report.

Preferred Library



n=1090

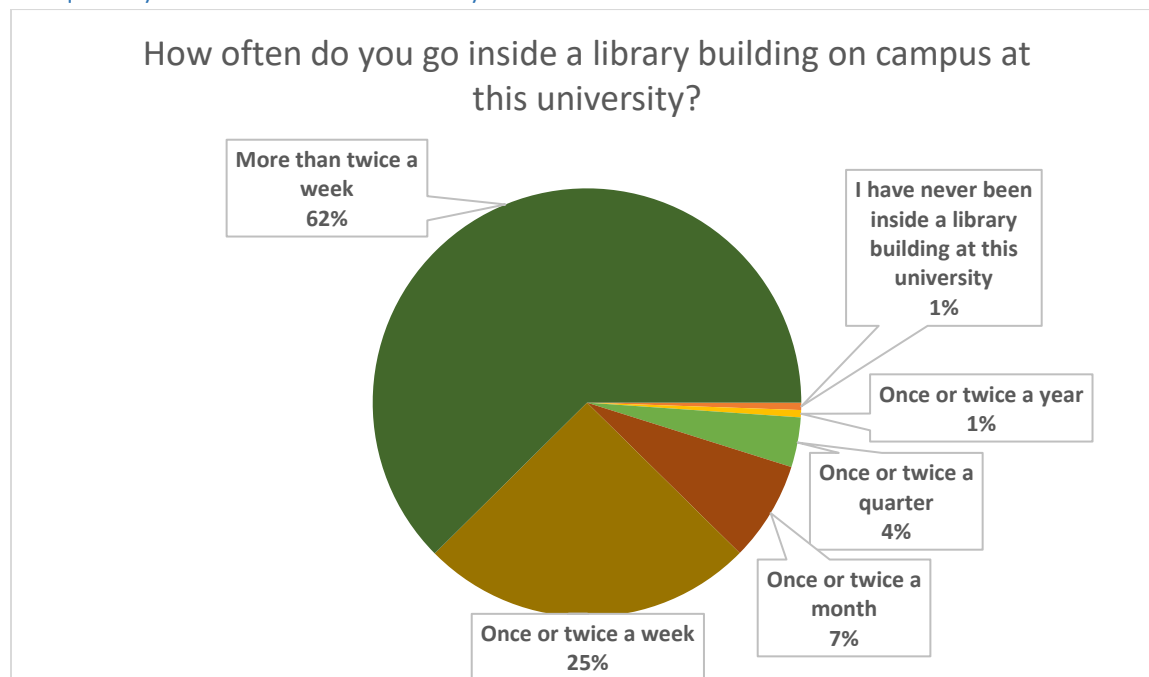
¹ The eligible population for the survey was identified by Shoshannah Cohen in the Office of the Registrar based on two criteria: participants must be enrolled in classes during the Winter Quarter 2017, and must be over the age of 18 by the close of the survey's data collection. A small number of potential participants was excluded prior to the survey's distribution due to the elective suppression of their directory information under FERPA.

While the survey differentiated between Regenstein and Mansueto, considering these two Libraries together gives a better picture of respondents' use. A clear majority of respondents (88%) indicated a preference for these two Libraries, with the strongest preference among respondents from the Social Sciences Collegiate Division (95%) and the Humanities (94%).²

The Collegiate Divisions most likely to prefer Crerar are, not surprisingly, the Biological Sciences (26%) and the Physical Sciences (20%), though these respondents still overwhelmingly prefer Regenstein.³ Off-campus students more strongly prefer Crerar than do on campus (10% vs 6%).

Respondents from the Physical Sciences were most likely to express a preference for Eckhart (6%), while respondents from the New Collegiate Division were most likely to prefer D'Angelo (6%). Only three respondents expressed a preference for SSA.

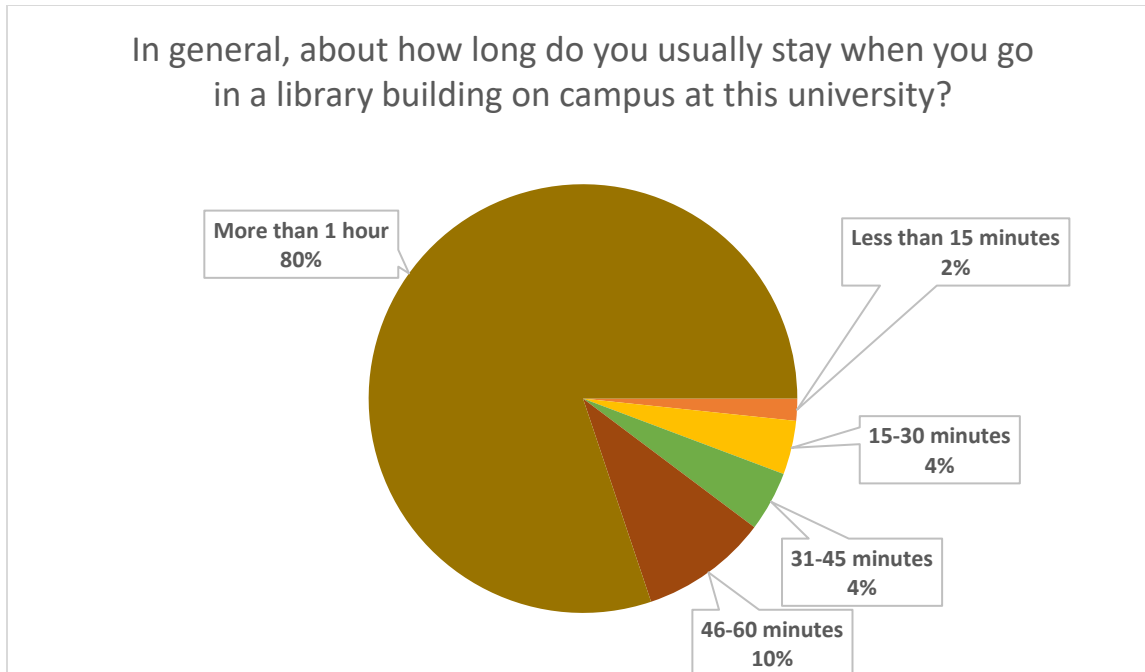
Frequency and duration of Library visits



n=1091

² Regenstein only: 83% overall. Strongest preference by Collegiate Division: 90% Social Sciences, 89% Humanities, 88% New Collegiate Division. While on and off campus students indicate similar preferences for Regenstein (81% vs 83%), on campus students' stronger preference for Mansueto (8% vs 4% from off campus students), resulting in a stronger overall preference for the combined campus location from on campus students (91% vs 85%).

³ Interestingly, while respondents associated with the Physical Sciences Collegiate Division preferred Mansueto at similar rates to most other Divisions (between 4%-5%), only one respondent associated with the Biological Sciences (1%) expressed a preference for Mansueto.



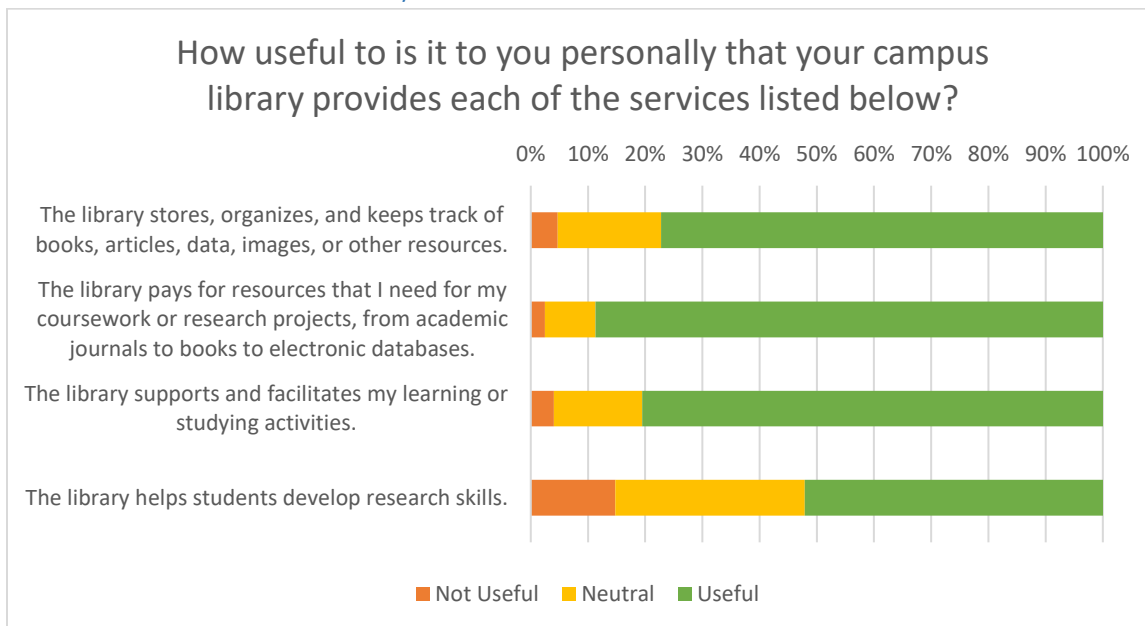
n=1083

88% of respondents visit the Library at least weekly, and 85% of those report staying for more than an hour during their visits. Of those who visit the Library most frequently,⁴ more than 90% stay for more than an hour. Off campus students visit somewhat more often than on campus students, and are more likely to stay more than an hour during their visits.⁵ Overall, at least 84% of respondents from all Divisions visit at least weekly, and 80% of all respondents indicate that they stay for more than an hour when they visit the Library.

⁴ 62% of respondents indicate visiting more than twice a week.

⁵ 90% of off campus students visit at least weekly. Of those who visit more than twice a week (67%), 92% stay for more than an hour. 85% of on campus students visit at least weekly. Of those who visit more than twice a week (55%), 89% stay for more than an hour.

Perceived roles of the Library



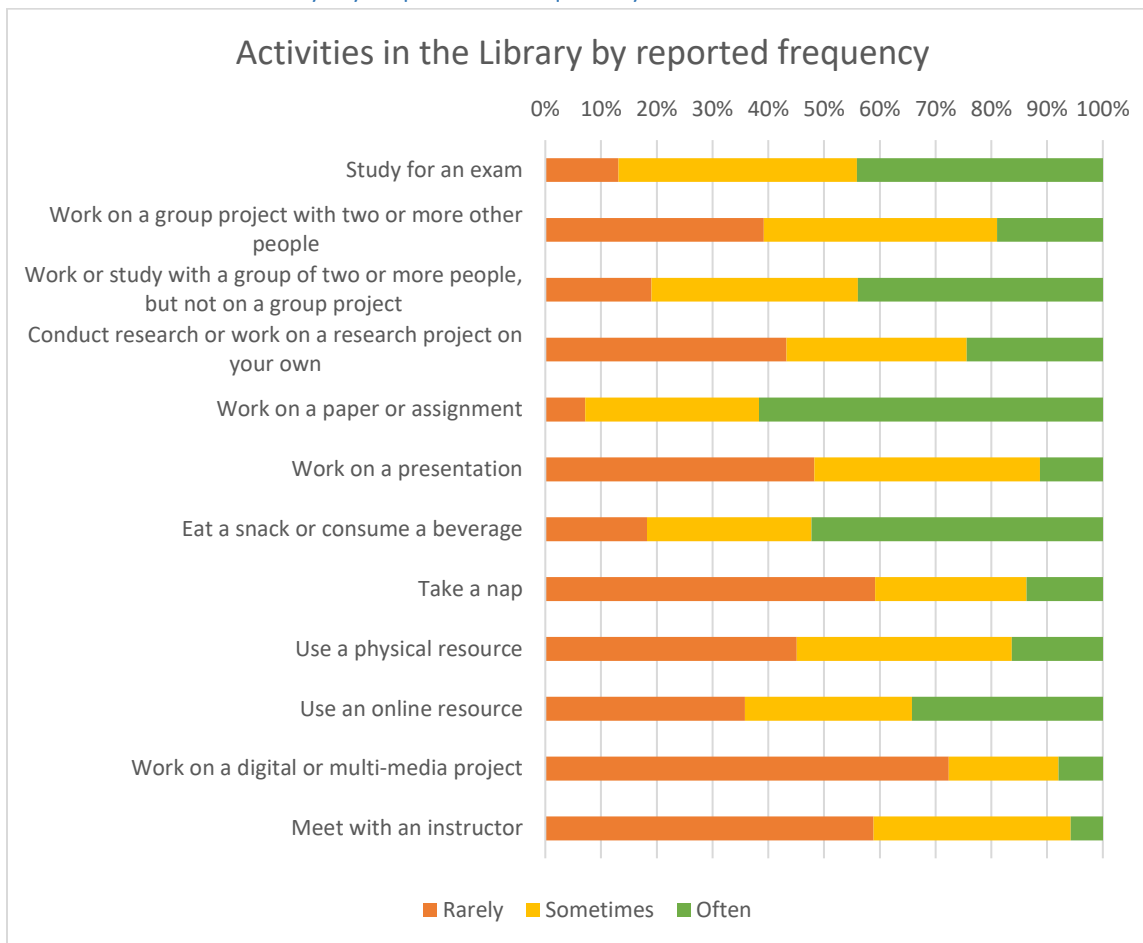
*n=1085-1089. **Not Useful:** Not Useful at all, Not too Useful. **Neutral:** Somewhat Useful. **Useful:** Very Useful, Extremely Useful.*

The first set of questions in the Role of the Library module asked respondents to rate the perceived usefulness of four broad categories of Library activities. While these questions are presented separately in the survey, it is useful to view them together because while they are not meant to be mutually exclusive, comparing the four roles gives a sense of the relative priorities of the respondents.

More than 80% of respondents find it very or extremely useful that the Library supports and facilitates learning and studying activities. While this question does not explicitly mention the Library's spaces, it is reasonable to infer that respondents would interpret the question as being about the Library as space, particularly since 84% of those who affirmed the usefulness of this role elsewhere affirmed the usefulness of the Library providing space where students are able to study. As such, it provides useful context for the questions that follow, while also demonstrating, along with the other categories, that the Library's space is not exclusively or even primarily valued by survey respondents – in fact, respondents place more value on the Library's commitment to obtaining resources that support learning and research, a value which is consistent across all Divisions.⁶

⁶ 89% very-extremely useful

Activities in the Library by reported frequency



n ranges from 1070-1078. **Rarely:** Never, Once or twice a year. **Sometimes:** Once or twice a quarter, Once or twice a month. **Often:** Once or twice a week, More than twice a week.

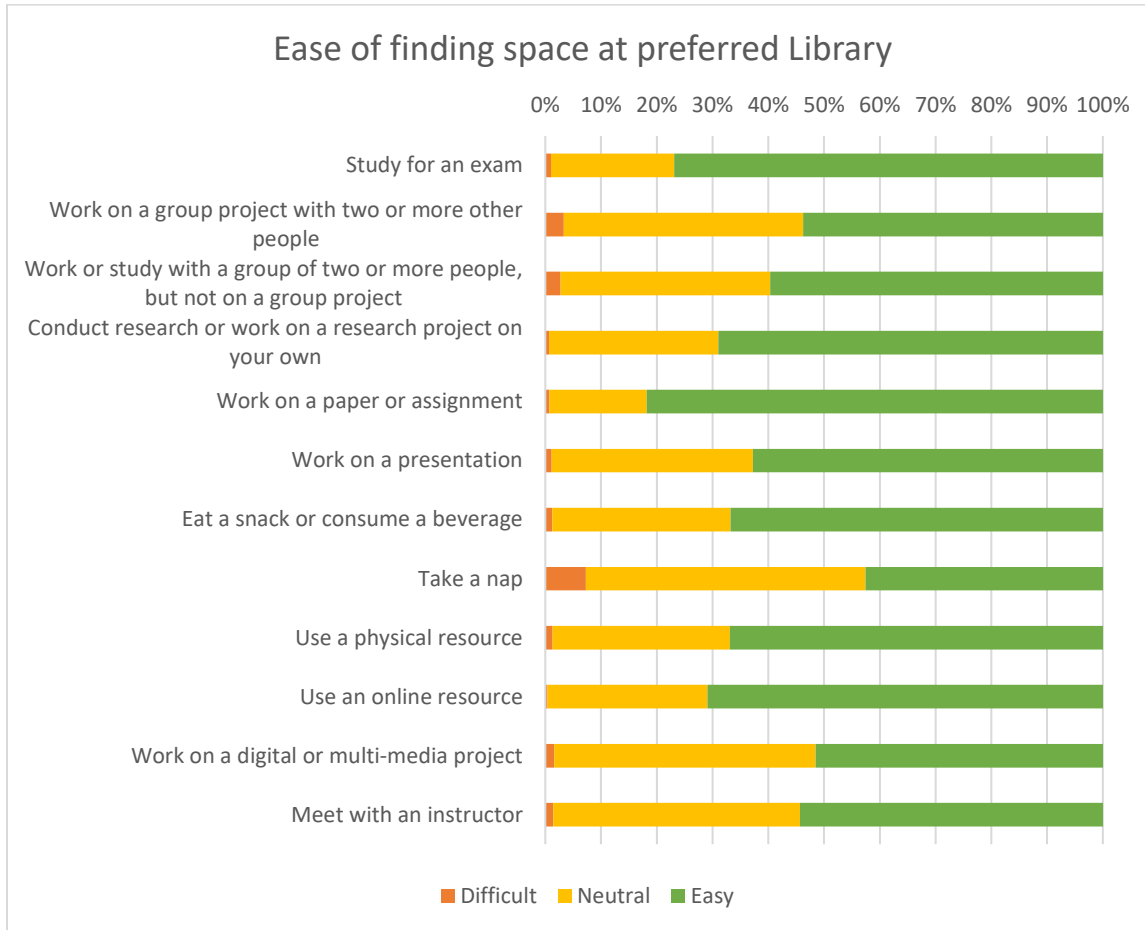
The majority of respondents visit their preferred Library *at least weekly* to work on a paper or assignment (62%) or to eat a snack or consume a beverage (52%). The majority of respondents report visiting their preferred Library *at least quarterly* in order to do the following:

- Work on a paper or assignment (93%)
- Study for an exam (87%)
- Eat a snack or consume a beverage (82%)
- Work or study with a group of two or more people, but not on a group project (81%)
- Use an online resource (64%)
- Work on a group project with two or more other people (61%)
- Conduct research or work on a research project on your own (57%)
- Use a physical resource (55%)
- Work on a presentation (52%)

The patterns of quarterly use for the most common activities are consistent across all Libraries.

Respondents are least likely to visit their preferred Library in order to work on a digital or multimedia project, take a nap, or meet with an instructor. This is not surprising given that presentations and multimedia projects are not frequently assigned.⁷ But even those respondents who report being assigned this type of work generally do not come to the Library to complete it.⁸

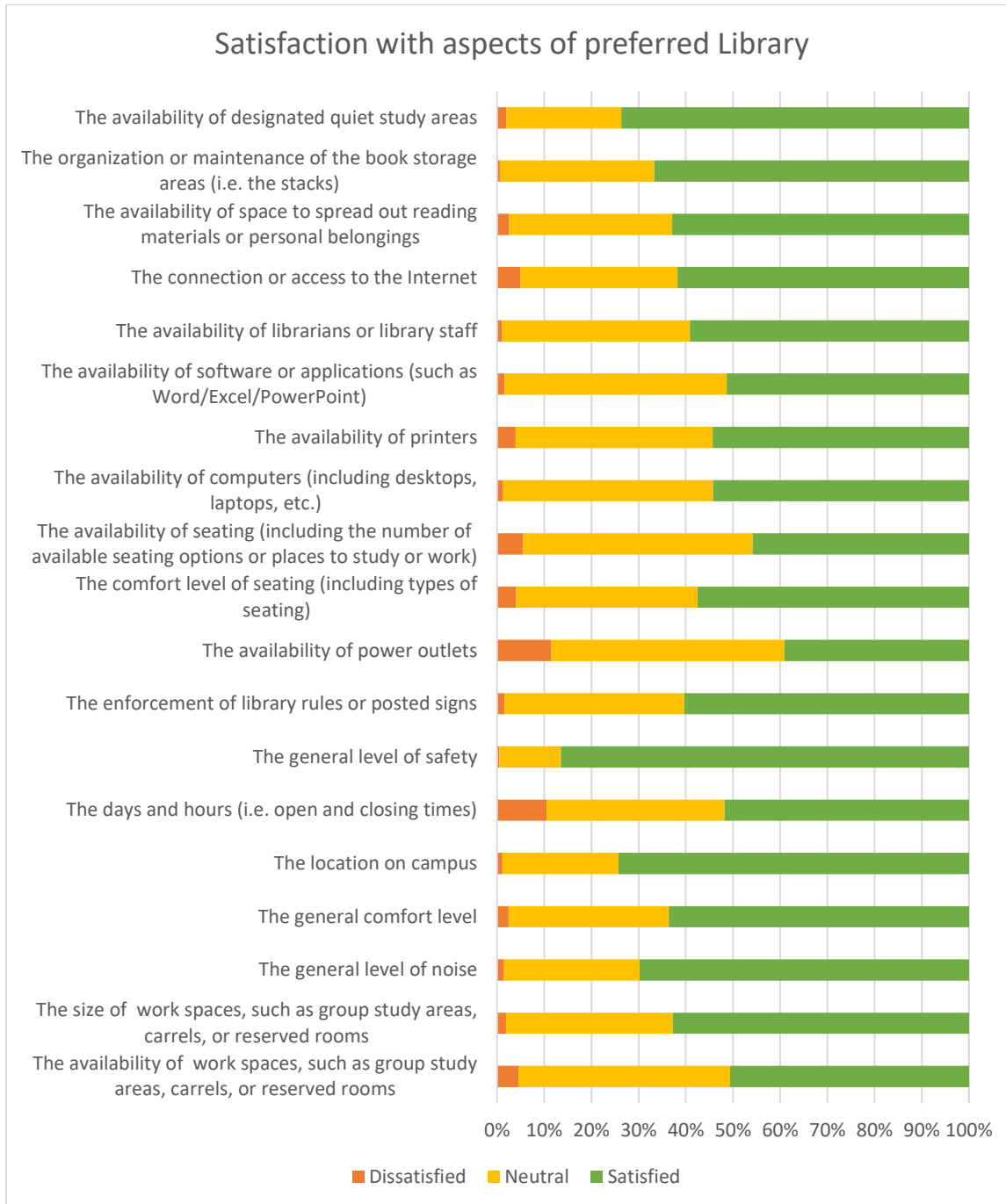
Ease of finding space in and satisfaction with aspects of preferred Library



n ranges from 1058-1063. **Difficult:** Extremely Difficult, Difficult. **Neutral:** Somewhat Difficult, Neither Easy nor Difficult, Somewhat Easy. **Easy:** Easy, Extremely Easy.

⁷ In the courses you are currently taking, how often are you assigned each of the following types of work? (CA1) Presentations or multimedia projects. Never 24%; Rarely 32%; Sometimes 38%; Regularly 7%. n=1093

⁸ Of the 73 respondents who are 'regularly' assigned these projects (CA1), 15 often, 18 sometimes, and 40 rarely work on them at the Library. Of the 398 who are 'sometimes' given these assignments, 43 often, 105 sometimes, and 250 rarely work on them at the Library.



n ranges from 1062-1068. **Dissatisfied:** Extremely Dissatisfied, Dissatisfied. **Neutral:** Somewhat Dissatisfied, Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied, Somewhat Satisfied. **Satisfied:** Satisfied, Extremely Satisfied.

The majority of respondents expressed their satisfaction with all but two aspects of their preferred Library⁹. The location on campus, the availability of quiet study space, the general level of noise, and the organization of the bookstacks received high marks from at least two-thirds of respondents. It is especially noteworthy that 87% of respondents indicated their satisfaction with the general level of safety.

Similarly, the majority of respondents indicated that it is easy to find space for nearly all of the activities they often conduct in the Library, with the only exception being space to take a nap. The two most common activities – working on papers or assignments and studying for exams – are also the easiest types of activities to do in the Library. The least common activities – working on digital or multimedia projects, taking naps, or meeting with instructors – also present the most difficulty when it comes to locating space.

While the majority of respondents were at least somewhat satisfied with all aspects of their preferred Library, the areas of expressed dissatisfaction could indicate opportunities for Library intervention, particularly since they seem to be location-specific.

Power outlets

Of all aspects of the Library listed in the survey, respondents were least satisfied with the availability of power outlets.¹⁰ An additional 20 open-ended responses expressing the need for more power outlets or for improvements to existing power outlets, particularly at Regenstein, where respondents were less satisfied with the availability of power outlets (50% neutral, 12% negative) than with any other listed aspect of the Library's physical space. These comments echo concerns expressed in response to a small survey conducted in January 2017 by the University's Health Promotion and Wellness unit, wherein respondents mentioned the lack of availability or function of power outlets in the Libraries.

Group study space

Survey responses provide mixed messages about the need for additional group study space in the Library. Satisfaction with the availability of work spaces, including for group study, is almost evenly divided between positive and neutral/negative responses. At the same time, respondents indicated that it is easy (60%) to find space to work independently in groups. And while the majority of respondents (55%) are rarely or never assigned group projects,¹¹ those who are given these assignments generally feel it is easy to find the needed space for this kind of work. A few open-ended responses specifically mentioned the need for space that can be used to participate in Skype or video calls.

Printers

The majority of respondents who prefer Libraries other than Regenstein expressed neutral or negative levels of satisfaction with the availability of printers.¹² Six open-ended responses expressed a desire for

⁹ All aspects of the Library listed in LS5 received at least 50% positive (satisfied, extremely satisfied) responses on the satisfaction scale except the availability of seating (6% dissatisfied, 49% neutral) and the availability of power outlets (12% dissatisfied, 49% neutral).

¹⁰ 12% dissatisfied; 49% neutral

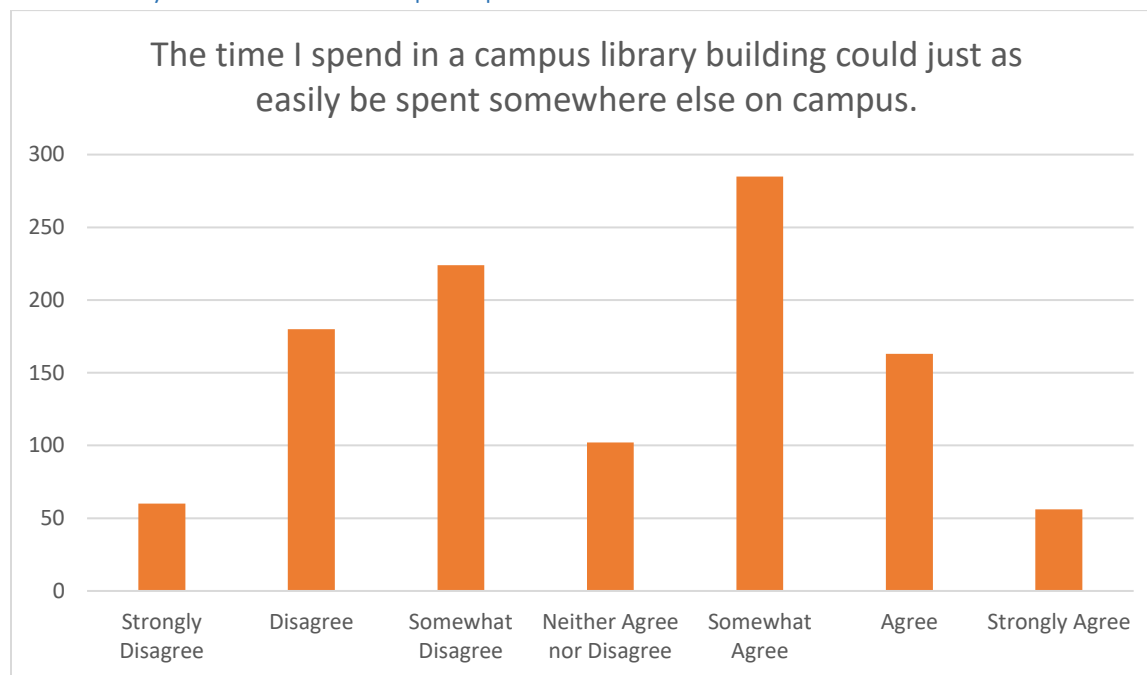
¹¹ CA1 In the courses you are currently taking, how often are you assigned each of the following types of work? Group projects. Never 23%; Rarely 33%; Sometimes 34%; Regularly 11%. n=1094

¹² Crerar 53% neutral, 2% negative; D'Angelo 53% neutral, 0% negative; Eckhart 38% neutral, 14% negative; Mansueto 48% neutral, 10% negative

free printing, with one respondent erroneously noting that Northwestern offers free printing to its students.

The Library rolled out a new printing system in August 2014 which included “upgraded equipment for printing, copying, scanning, and faxing.”¹³ These new devices were introduced and have been supported without passing on any costs to users; however, they were introduced a year after the Library made modest increases the cost of copying and printing, the first such increase in four years.¹⁴ While the majority of respondents had not have been at the University long enough to have experienced the (slightly) lower prices, some respondents still perceive the current costs to be too high, particularly in the context of other expenses associated with attending the University.

The Library versus other campus spaces



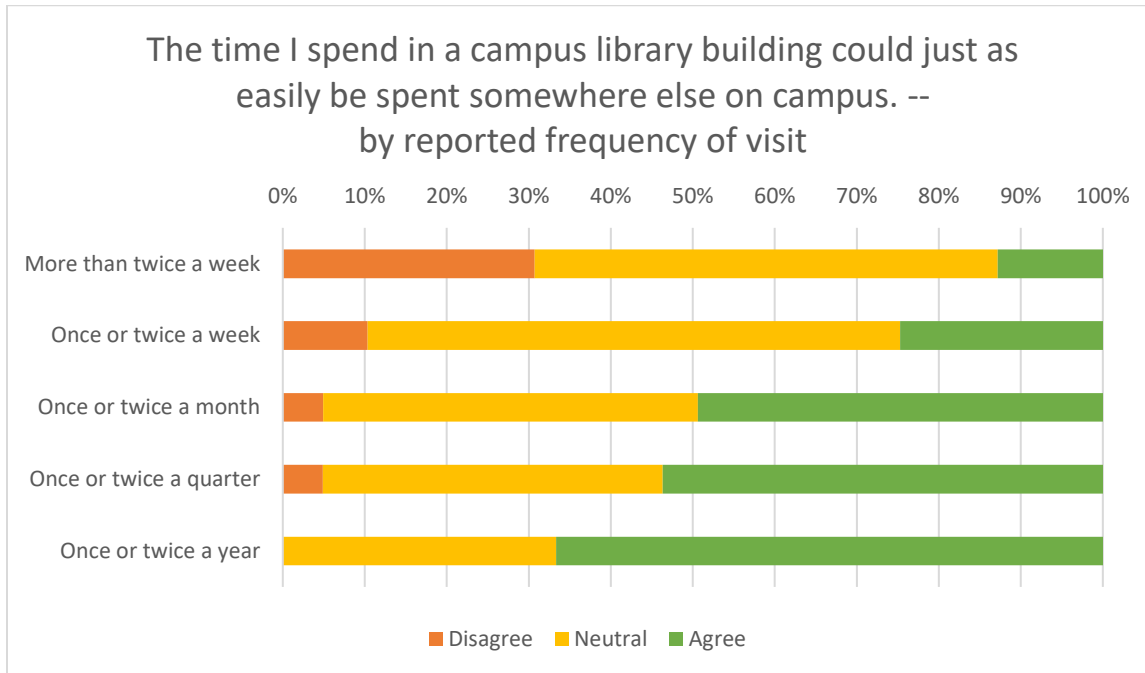
n=1070

With the majority of responses falling in the range between “somewhat disagree” and “somewhat agree”, it is difficult to know how to accurately interpret responses to this question. While it is encouraging that 6% of respondents strongly disagree with this statement, similar numbers (5%) strongly agree. Similarly, while 17% disagree, 15% agree, and while 21% somewhat disagree, 27% somewhat agree. This pattern of neutral/midrange responses is consistent across nearly all Collegiate Divisions, housing affiliations, or preferred libraries, though respondents who prefer D’Angelo were most likely to agree (56%) that their time could be spent elsewhere.

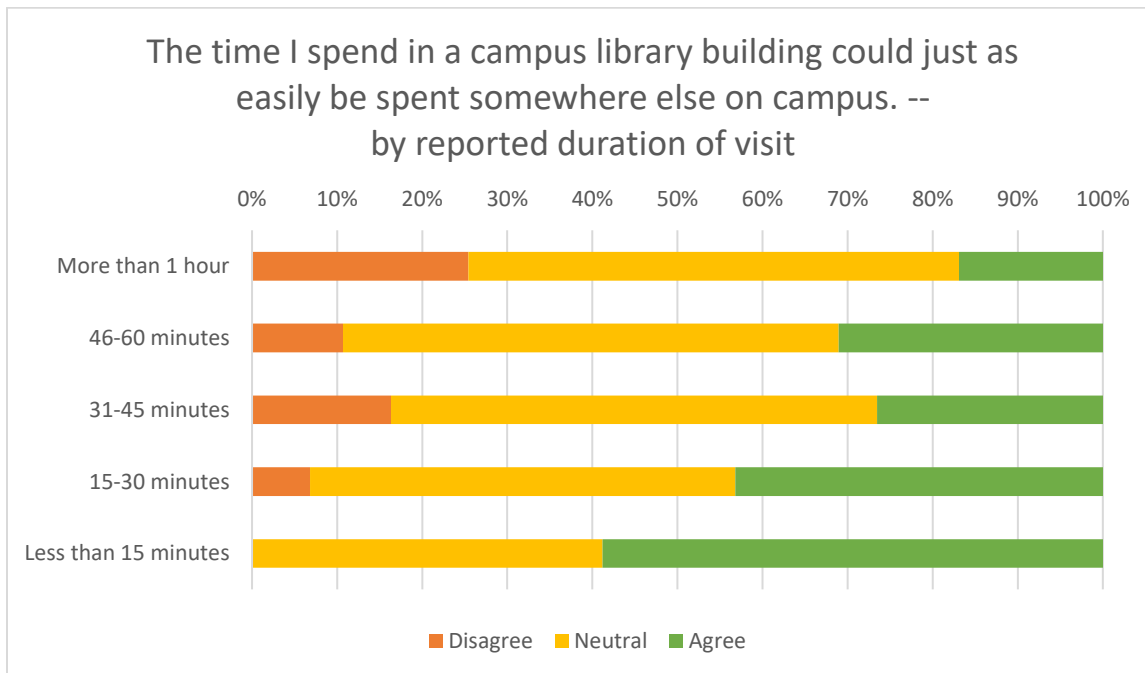
¹³ <http://news.lib.uchicago.edu/blog/2014/09/30/new-printing-service-at-libraries-and-residence-halls/>

¹⁴ <http://news.lib.uchicago.edu/blog/2013/07/26/copying-and-printing-prices-increasing-aug-1-scanning-and-faxing-prices-not-changing/>

However, these patterns of response change, however, when taken into the context of Library use. More frequent visits to the Library and longer visits to the Library are both correlated with stronger disagreement.



Disagree: Strongly Disagree, Disagree. **Neutral:** Somewhat Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Somewhat Agree. **Agree:** Agree, Strongly Agree.



Additionally, it is interesting to note that by Collegiate Division, respondents from Physical Sciences (30%) and Biological Sciences (28%) were most likely to disagree that their time could be spent elsewhere, as were respondents who prefer Crerar (27%). While these represent minority opinions

within these populations, they are noteworthy given the perceptions of Library use by these disciplines, and may be indicative of respondents' concerns about the changes to Crerar underway during the survey's response period.

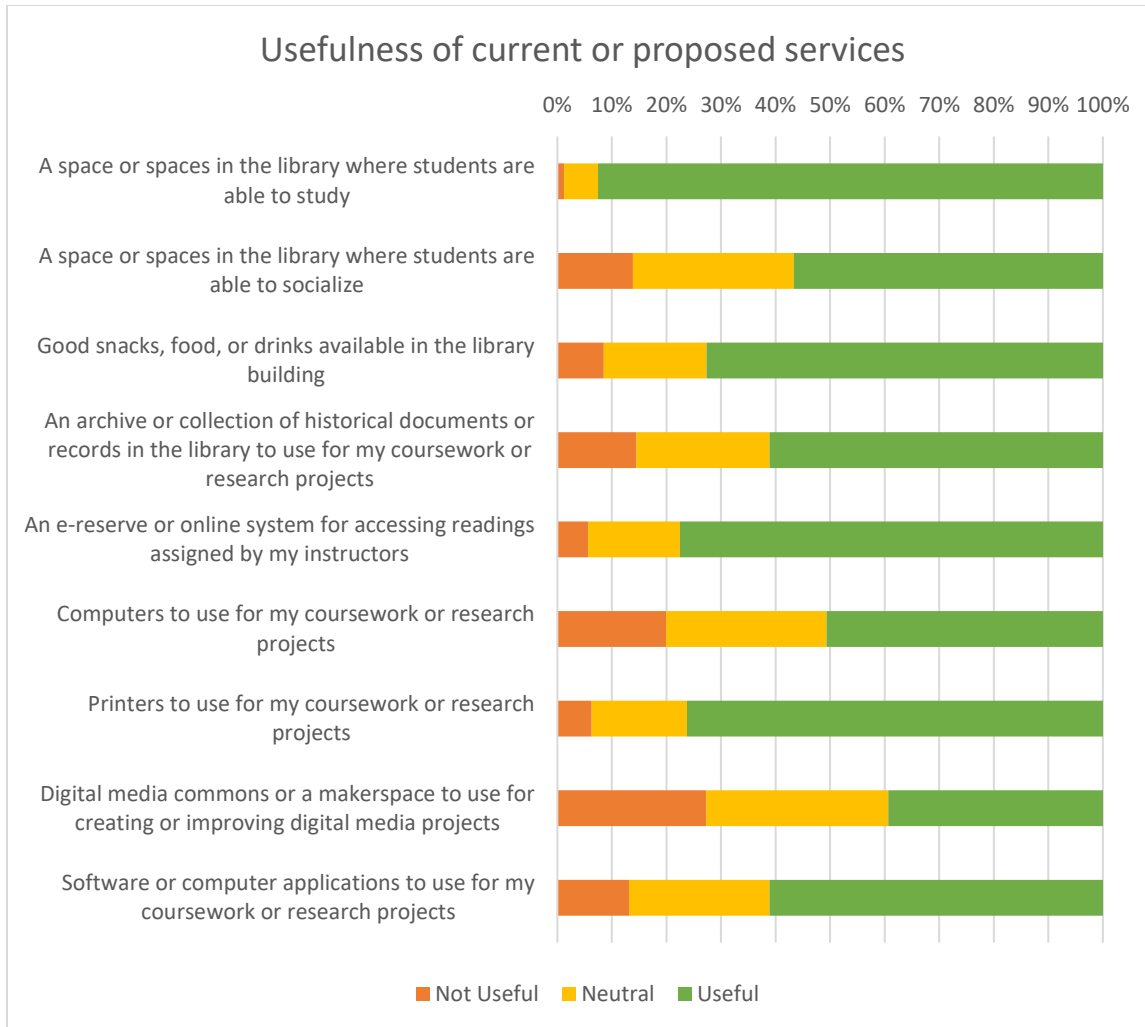
If respondents primarily value the Library as a space, it is possible that these responses indicate that for them, the Library's space is interchangeable with other spaces on campus – for example, the Arley D. Cathey Learning Center in the former Harper Memorial Library¹⁵ or the community spaces in the new Campus North Residential Commons. But despite the generally neutral responses, those who make the most use of the Library acknowledge its singular value. Library entrance data confirms the importance of the Library to undergraduates, but it may be worth conducting further studies to identify which aspects of the Library significantly differentiate this space from others on campus in order to continue to encourage and support students' use of our spaces.

Usefulness of current or proposed services

Given the seeming ambivalence expressed in the previous question, it is heartening that the majority of respondents find most of the listed services and spaces to be very useful. Most useful are the Library's study spaces (93%) and e-reserves system (78%).

The only exception is the (prospective) provision of a digital media commons; this is also the only service listed that is not currently offered by the Library. However, while only 39% of respondents believe they would find this very or extremely useful, an additional 33% respondents would find it somewhat useful. Similarly, while only slightly more than half of respondents value the Library making computers available (51%), 80% find this service at least somewhat useful, and two respondents mentioned relying on computers from the Library or the TECHB@R for the majority of their work.

¹⁵ Some respondents discussed Harper as if it is a Library, despite the fact that no respondents were enrolled at the University when Harper was a functioning library, and few (if any) were enrolled when the Cathey Learning Center existed under the Harper Memorial Library Commons moniker.

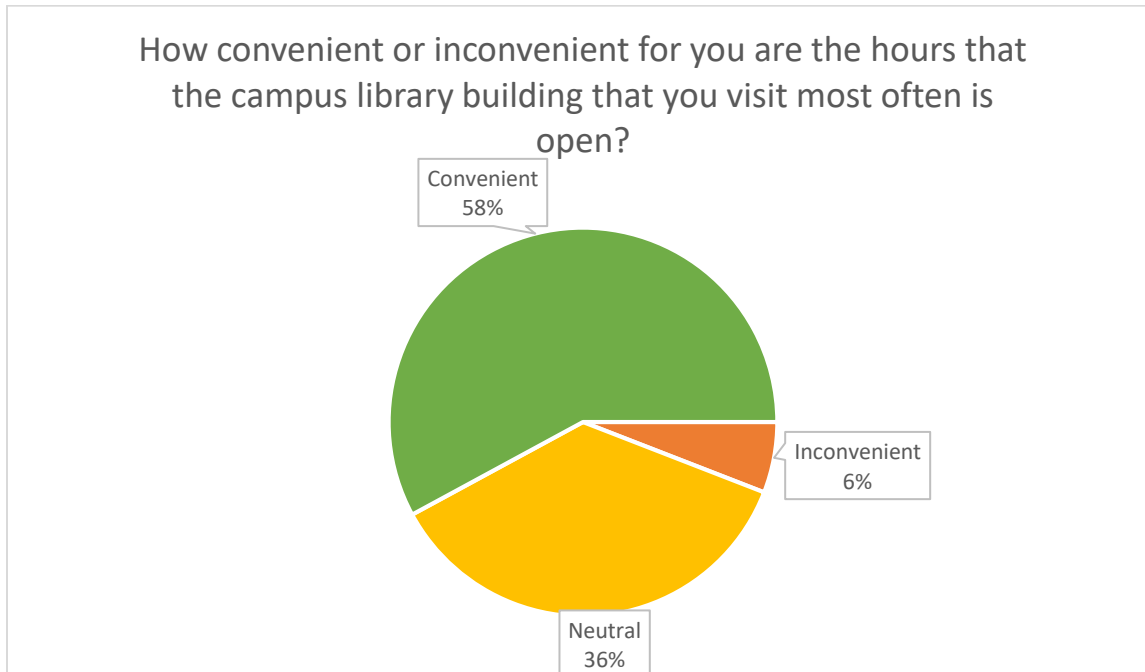


n ranges from 1059-1071. **Not Useful:** Not Useful at all, Not too Useful. **Somewhat Useful.** **Useful:** Very Useful, Extremely Useful.

In short, respondents are strongly interested in all of the services – current or proposed – described in this instrument. The lower degree of interest in a digital media commons is not surprising given that respondents are infrequently assigned digital projects. However, respondents elsewhere expressed interest in acquiring skills in managing, analyzing, and preserving data, media, and images,¹⁶ so the less enthusiastic response in this area may still indicate an area where the Library can expand its services or partner with other campus units to do so.

¹⁶ UR4 How important or unimportant is it to you to acquire each of the following research skills as a result of your experience at the university?

Convenience of preferred Library's hours and location



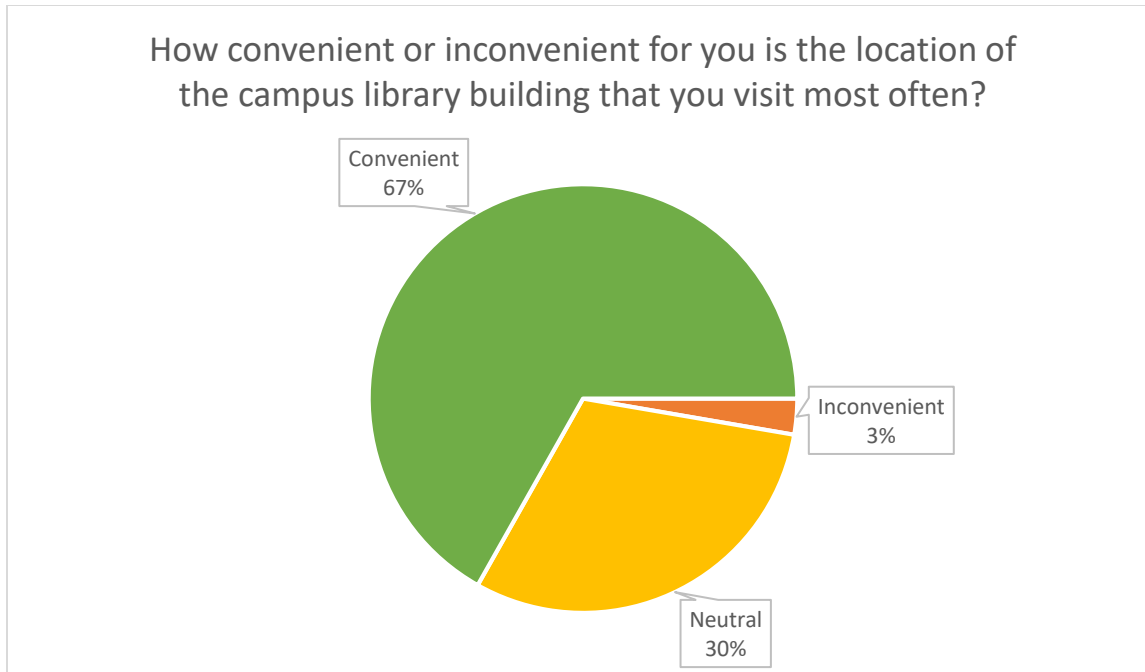
*n=1069. **Inconvenient:** Extremely Inconvenient, Inconvenient. **Neutral:** Somewhat Inconvenient, Neither Convenient nor Inconvenient, Somewhat Convenient. **Convenient:** Convenient, Extremely Convenient.*

The majority of respondents (58%) find the hours of their preferred Library to be convenient, with relatively few indicating that the hours are inconvenient (6%). However, all 45 of the open-ended responses that mentioned Library hours were negative in tone. And while the responses to this survey cannot be directly compared to previous surveys due to the use of different scales, clustering the broadly positive, negative, and neutral responses gives some indication of undergraduates' decreased satisfaction over time – from 80% in 2011 to 76% in 2017.

The open-ended responses reflect common complaints regarding the Library's hours. 23 responses specifically asked that the hours be returned to the Library's previous 1am closing time, a change made at the beginning of the 2017 academic year.¹⁷ These responses primarily focused on Regenstein, although a few mentioned Crerar and Mansueto. Nine open-ended responses requested 24/7 access to the Library, particularly to the upper floors or bookstacks, and twelve specifically mentioned problems caused by the reduction of hours in quiet study spaces. While the Library does make the All-Night Study space available on Regenstein's first floor, this space is characterized as inadequate due to limited capacity and noise.

While changing the Library's hours back might improve undergraduates' overall satisfaction, the general level of satisfaction with the Library's hours is already quite good, particularly among on-campus students (77% rated at least somewhat convenient).

¹⁷ <http://news.lib.uchicago.edu/blog/2016/09/23/changes-in-library-hours/>

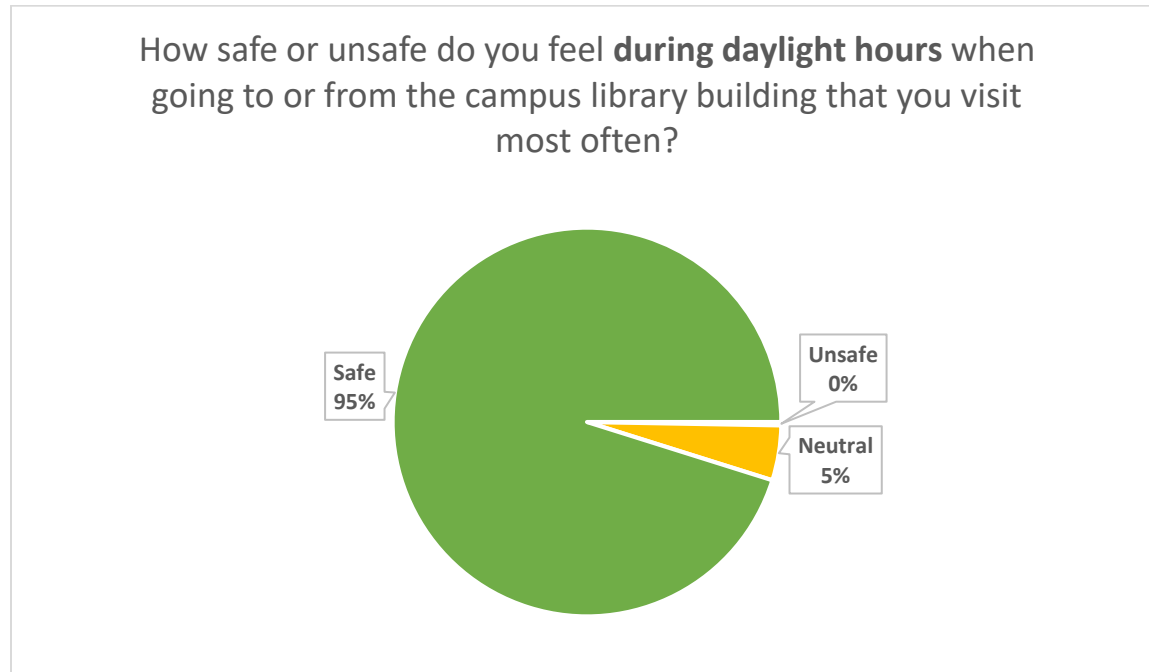


*n=1073. **Inconvenient:** Extremely Inconvenient, Inconvenient. **Neutral:** Somewhat Inconvenient, Neither Convenient nor Inconvenient, Somewhat Convenient. **Convenient:** Convenient, Extremely Convenient.*

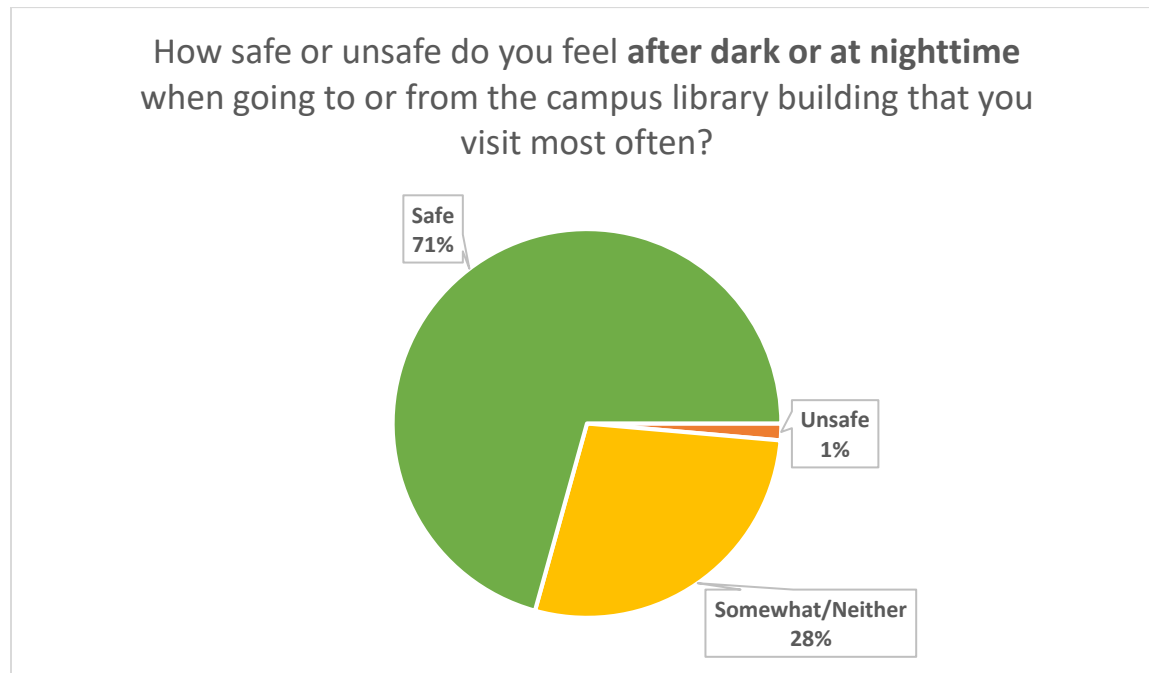
Respondents strongly rated the convenience of their preferred Library location, with 82% indicating that locations are at least somewhat convenient, and 34% affirming that the location is extremely convenient. Only 11% found the location of their preferred Library to be somewhat inconvenient or worse, and only 4 respondents indicated that their preferred Library location is extremely inconvenient.

It is not surprising that respondents tended to value the convenience of the Library closest to them. For example, respondents from Snell-Hitchcock and Max Palevsky expressed their preference for Regenstein and found those Libraries extremely convenient. The Library's locations are not just convenient for on campus respondents; 71% of off-campus respondents find their preferred Library to be conveniently located, and less than 2% find the location inconvenient.

Perceived safety traveling to and from the Library



n=1073. **Unsafe:** Extremely Unsafe, Unsafe. **Neutral:** Somewhat Unsafe, Neither Unsafe nor Safe, Somewhat Safe. **Safe:** Safe, Extremely Safe.



n=1078. **Unsafe:** Extremely Unsafe, Unsafe. **Neutral:** Somewhat Unsafe, Neither Unsafe nor Safe, Somewhat Safe. **Safe:** Safe, Extremely Safe.

Most respondents reported feeling safe when visiting the Library. During the day, only 5 (less than 1%) respondents reported feeling unsafe to any degree when traveling to or from their preferred Library, while 98% said they felt at least somewhat safe (and 70% reported feeling extremely safe.) Perceptions

of safety remained high during the nighttime, though the number of respondents feeling unsafe to any degree rose to 86 or 8%. Still, 87% of respondents reported feeling at least somewhat safe, and 32% reported feeling extremely safe. Those feeling unsafe to some degree were more likely to be female than male (with 10% of females and 5% of males feeling at least somewhat unsafe at night.) Moreover, while 43% of men professed to feel “extremely safe” at night, only 25% of women claimed to feel that way.

Most of the 49 comments received about safety discussed general concerns about the neighborhood and the perceived potential for muggings or robbery. Some mentioned reports of such activities and a couple mentioned having been personally involved in threatening situations. Some mentioned that off-campus areas felt unsafe, but others mentioned areas within the campus. Eight indicated that the number of guards near the Library and on their walk home was insufficient for them to feel safe. Several mentioned that they felt uncomfortable due to the presence of panhandlers around the Library and throughout the neighborhood, but few mentioned safety concerns within the Library.

The Library has committed to maintaining a safe and respectful environment for all users.¹⁸ So while the general feelings of safety are cause for celebration, the Library should continue to work with the University to ensure that patrons feel safe at the Library and on the campus.

Conclusion

Responses to this module confirm general impressions of undergraduate use of the Library. Specifically, this population uses the Library as a working and – to a lesser extent – social space. They value spaces dedicated to study, and use these spaces to work and study independently or in groups. Despite the persistent perception that undergraduates are the source of the Library’s noise problem, respondents to this survey expressed appreciation for the Library’s quiet study spaces and bemoaned the lack of such spaces once Regenstein’s upper floors and Mansueto. Respondents highly value the range of services outlined in this module, though the services are but a small portion of what the Library offers to its patrons. Given these expressed values, it is worth considering whether the needs and priorities of undergraduates are all that different than graduate students.

Worth celebrating are the strong indications that undergraduates are happy with the general safety, location, and hours of the Libraries. Nearly all respondents indicated that they feel at least somewhat safe when traveling to or from their preferred Library, though some express concerns about visiting after dark. The majority of respondents find their preferred Library’s location and hours to be at least somewhat convenient, though these responses are challenged by a vocal minority who expressed frustration with the Library’s hours, with many of these responses highlighting the scarcity of quiet study spaces after midnight.

Areas for potential Library intervention include the provision of additional workspace, particularly quiet study spaces with later hours, improvements to the existing power outlets, and continued collaboration with the campus to ensure the safety of patrons as they travel to and from the Library. Areas for further study include identifying the unique aspects of the Library’s space in the context of the campus, as well as the whether the provision of a digital media commons or makerspace would align with the needs of the campus.

¹⁸ <https://www.lib.uchicago.edu/about/thelibrary/policies/rights/>