

# Evaluating the digital university library

Evaluating the digital library: 4:

physical space evaluation

## Evaluating the digital library: 4: physical space evaluation

Study by Jo Bryant

Dr Graham Walton, Service Development Manager and  
Honorary Research Fellow, Loughborough University Library

Users and uses of digital library module

University of Parma 23/10/08

Dr Graham Walton,  
Service Development Manager and Honorary Research Fellow

Users and uses of digital library module:

University of Parma, 23/ 10/08






# About the Project

Co-supervised by Professor Graham Matthews  
in the Department of Information Science  
and Dr Graham Walton

Designed to follow-on from the 2006 space  
survey.



How does Open<sup>3</sup> measure up?  
What are our users doing in  
the library?









# Open<sup>3</sup>

Open<sup>3</sup> was developed in 2005. Last year's user survey touched upon how our users felt about it.

This study the first to actually look at what they are doing out there (instead of what they tell us they are doing!).

Open<sup>3</sup> has (text about number of spaces and pcs etc)



# Ethnomethodology

## Definition:

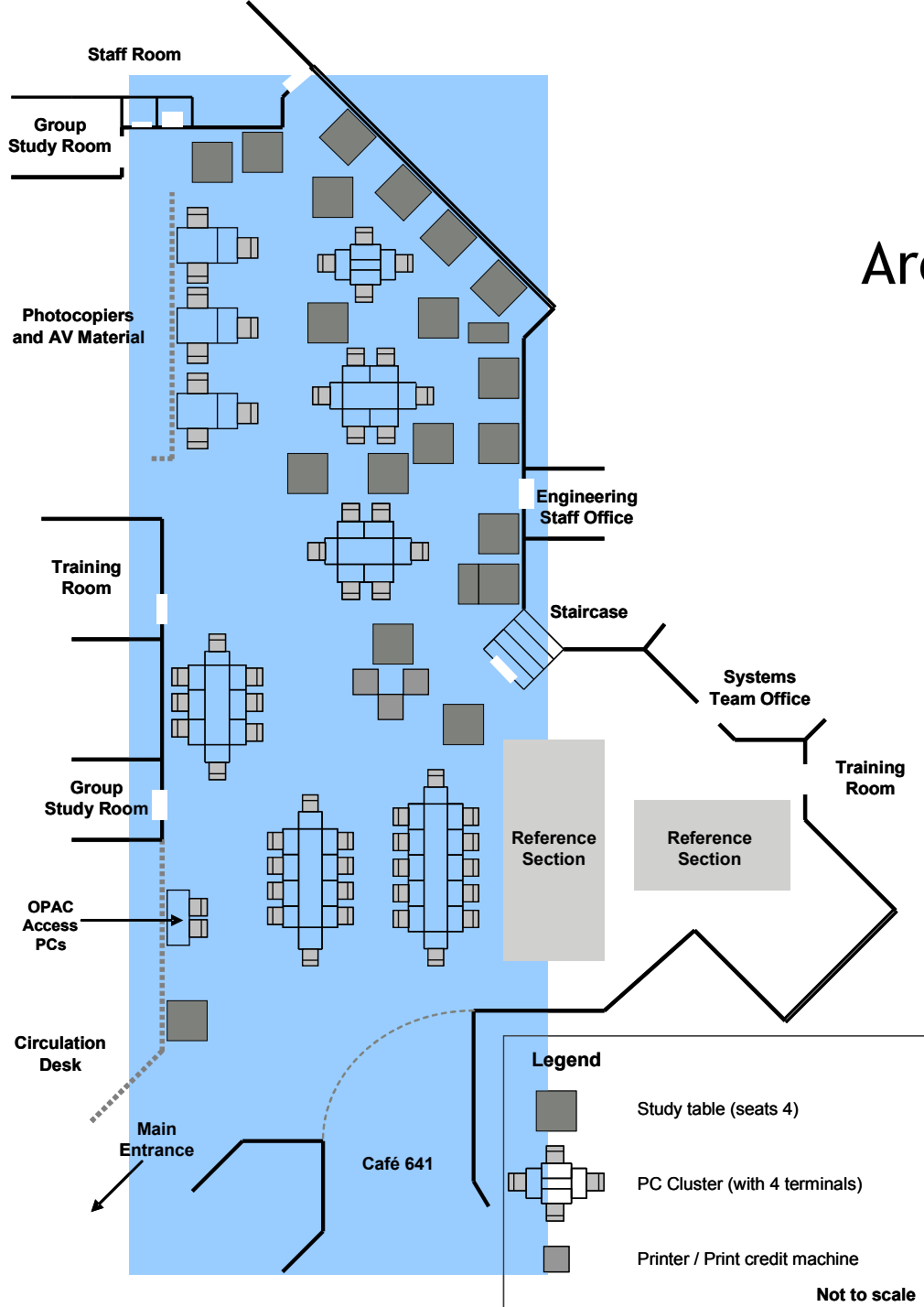
- The art and science of describing a group or culture... much like the one taken on by an investigative reporter... [yet] about the routine, daily lives of people. The more predictable patterns of human thought and behaviour are the focus of inquiry.
- Fetterman (1998, p. 1)

The background of the slide is a photograph of a library. On the left side, there are several tall wooden bookshelves filled with books of various colors. The rest of the background is a blurred, light-colored area, possibly representing the interior of a library or a bright, open space.

# Ethno methodology

- Data collection phase ran between May and July 2007
- Over 40 hours of unobtrusive observation undertaken.
- Following analysis, eight broad themes were identified: collaborative study; individual study; intrusions and interruptions; Open3 as a social space; Open3 as a public/private space; use of technology; diversity; and Library staff/Library materials.
- Aspects of the general, spatial organisation of Open3 were also identified.





Area covered by the study



# Findings



The background of the slide is a photograph of a library. On the left side, there are several tall wooden bookshelves filled with books of various colors. The rest of the background is a blurred image of more bookshelves and books, creating a sense of depth. The text is overlaid on this background.

# Collaborative Study

Students were seen working in groups on almost every occasion.

Group size generally ranged from 3 to 10 students. Larger groups tended to use the study rooms on the periphery.

Often noisy, but noise didn't necessarily mean they were slacking!

Whiteboards popular.

Laptops used for group study - not PCs.

The background of the slide is a photograph of a library. On the left side, there are several tall wooden bookshelves filled with books of various colors. The rest of the background is a blurred, out-of-focus view of more bookshelves and the interior of the library, creating a sense of depth and a quiet academic atmosphere.

# Individual Study

Very popular with students working solo.

People like to have the space to spread out.

Quite territorial about space individual space!

Many students make quick visits to print off work, or check e-mail/LEARN.

People seem to like the social nature of the space.

Food & drink





Some areas more popular than others.

People who want to stay a long time gravitate towards the back of the library

Threshold spaces near the café and the main entrance less popular - noisier.

The background of the slide is a photograph of a library. On the left side, there are several tall wooden bookshelves filled with books of various colors. The rest of the image is a blurred, out-of-focus view of more bookshelves and books, creating a sense of depth. The text is overlaid on this background.

# Intrusions & Interruptions

Self-governing space. Generally effective.

Users often move to threshold space to make noise.

Reluctance to ask others to quieten down.

Rare to witness someone being really disruptive.

Sunday and Monday nights strangely lively!



The background of the slide is a photograph of a library. On the left side, there are several tall wooden bookshelves filled with books of various colors. The rest of the image is a blurred, out-of-focus view of more bookshelves and books, creating a sense of depth. The overall lighting is soft and even.

# Diversity

Mostly male students working in the area. Far fewer female students.

Real mix of home and international students.

Difficult to accurately gauge the age of users, but most users seemed to be undergraduates under 25yrs.

# Other Observations

Library materials - electronic well used, but not many books in evidence.

‘Cable clutter’ - difficulties plugging in laptops. Students bringing their own extension cables.

Printing seems to confuse people!

Unattended PCs



# Conclusion

We're popular!

It is used as social space but does that matter as long as it is also being used for learning?

|