

WHAT DO PATRONS *REALLY*
DO IN MUSIC LIBRARIES?
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

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Ethnography

What's
it all
about?

- Holistic research methodology originating in the field of anthropology and emphasizing participant observation
- Mixed methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis
- Allows results to *emerge* from the data itself rather than aiming to prove a preconceived assumption
- In the U.S., most often used to study sub-cultures—such as library patrons

Ethnography

How's
it
done?

- Observation – involves balancing participation in the activities of the population being studied with the detachment necessary to make meaningful observations
- Interviews – used to collect quantitative data to support the findings that present themselves during participant observation

Ethnography and Libraries

Why
do it ?

- People often say one thing, yet do another. Ethnography allows the actions of library patrons to do the talking.
- Can result in more accurate assessments than those provided by traditional survey methods, which can then lead to more appropriate responses to library service and facility issues.

Ethnography and Libraries

How
we
did it

- Flip Books
- Sweeps
- Cards

Sweeping the Library

Definition

seating sweeps – observation method that employs unobtrusive scheduled visual “sweeps” of predetermined zones within a complex for the purpose of recording the personal characteristics, behaviors, and activities of individuals at a specific point in time

Sweeping the Library

Origin

- First applied in the fields of urban planning and architecture

Brown, David, Pieter Sijpkes, and Michael MacLean. "The Community Role of Public Indoor Space." *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 3, (1986): 161-172.

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Use in Libraries

- First applied in a library in 1999

Leckie, Gloria J., and Jeffrey Hopkins. "The Public Place of Central Libraries: Findings from Toronto and Vancouver." *Library Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (July 2002): 326-372. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40039762>.

Given, Lisa M., Gloria J. Leckie. "Sweeping the Library: Mapping the Social Activity Space of the Public Library." *Library and Information Science Research* 25, no. 4 (2003): 365-85. doi: 10.1016/S0740-8188(03)00049-5.

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Use in Libraries

- Replicated in public libraries in 2006 and 2008

May, Francine, and Fiona Black. "The Life of the Space: Evidence from Nova Scotia Public Libraries." *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice* 5, no. 2 (2010): 5-34. Accessed Oct. 16, 2011. <http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/EBLIP/article/view/6497>.

Most, Linda R. "The Rural Public Library as Place in North Florida: A Case Study." PhD diss., Florida State University, 2009. ProQuest (3400213).

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Use in Academic Libraries

- First used in an academic library in 2002

Young, Virginia E. "Can We Encourage Learning by Shaping Environment? Patterns of Seating Behavior in Undergraduates." In *Learning to Make a Difference*, edited by Hugh A. Thompson, 161-69. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2003.

Hoivik, Tord. "Count the Traffic." In proceedings of *World Library and Information Congress: 74th IFLA General Conference and Council*. <http://archive.ifla.org/IV/ifla74/papers/107-Hoivik-en.pdf>.

Sweeping the Library

Use in Academic Music Libraries

- This is the first time a music library has been swept in order to learn what *really* goes on in these specialized public spaces!
- Perhaps other music librarians will be interested in replicating, or just doing some sweeping in order to learn about some aspect of how their patrons use their library.

Phase I - Flip Books

Definition

flip books – observation method that employs multiple close-succession, unobtrusive scheduled visual sweeps of predetermined zones within a complex for the purpose of recording the personal characteristics, behaviors, and activities of individuals over the course of a predetermined period of time

Phase I: Flip Books Tool

ECU Music Library Observation Study – Fall 2010

Name of observer	
Date	

Time Period 1

Starting time: _____ am/ pm

Technology Lab

Number of library patrons: _____

Please specify what you saw patrons doing in the technology lab:

Stacks:

Number of library patrons: _____

Please specify what you saw patrons doing in the Stacks:

Reference Area and Study Carrels

Number of library patrons visible in Reference Area at starting time: _____

Number of library patrons in Study Carrels at starting time: _____

Please list the users you are going to follow and specify what they are doing at starting time:

In reference:

In carrels:

Time Period 2

Technology Lab

Number of library patrons: _____

Please specify what you saw patrons doing in the technology lab:

Stacks:

Phase I: Flip Books Tool (cont.)

ECU Music Library Observation Study – Fall 2010

Name of observer	David Hursh
Date	11/08/10

Time Period 1

Starting time: ___10:35___ am

Technology Lab

Number of library patrons: ___5___

Please specify what you saw patrons doing in the technology lab:

1 Wf – typing a paper on a PC

2 wf – listening to music via the Naxos music library website, a service subscribed to by the music library

3 bf – on PC couldn't see website

Stacks:

Number of library patrons: ___0___

Please specify what you saw patrons doing in the Stacks:

Reference Area and Study Carrels

Number of library patrons visible in Reference Area at starting time: ___5___

Number of library patrons in Study Carrels at starting time: ___5___

Please list the users you are going to follow and specify what they are doing at starting time:

In reference:

4 bm – seated by himself listening to something w/ ear plugs and following along with a score in front of him

5 hispanic f – seated by herself reading and writing

6 bf – seated with 2 others and writing and occasionally talking with the others seated with her

In carrels:

7 wm – writing with books open around him and occasionally talking to 8

8 wf – writing with books open around her and occasionally talking to 7

Phase I: Flip Books Tool (cont.)

Time Period 2

Technology Lab

Number of library patrons: ____9____

Please specify what you saw patrons doing in the technology lab:

1 wf – typing a paper on a PC

2 wf – listening to music via the Naxos music library website, a service subscribed to by the music library

3 bf – on PC couldn't see website

Stacks:

Number of library patrons: ____0____

Please specify what you saw patrons doing in the Stacks:

Reference Area and Study Carrels

Number of library patrons visible in Reference Area at starting time: ____5____

Number of library patrons in Study Carrels at starting time: ____5____

Number of new patrons: ____0____

Number of patrons that left: ____0____

Please list the users you are going to follow and specify what they are doing at starting time:

In reference:

4 bm – seated by himself listening to something w/ ear plugs and following along with a score in front of him

5 hispanic f – seated by herself reading and writing

6 bf – seated with 2 others and writing and occasionally talking with the others seated with her

In carrels:

7 wm – putting his coat on and preparing to leave

8 wf – writing with books open around her and occasionally talking to 7

Phase I

How we collected the data

- Observations made from 11/01/10 through 12/04/10—a period of average patron activity
- Observation sessions distributed evenly across all hours during which the library was open
- A total of 40 observation sessions completed
- Observations done by music library staff members and selected student assistants

Results of Phase I

Five
areas
worthy
of
further
study

1. Amount of time spent in the library
2. Social chatting vs. study discussion
3. Ensemble study vs. solo study
4. Technology and its correlation to multi-tasking
5. Volume of activity in the various areas of the library and the types of activities taking place in those areas

Results of Phase I

Amount of time spent in the library

- Of the 309 patrons observed during the five-week period, 107 (35%) spent more than 20 minutes engaged in a single activity.
- The hours between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. were the most active with 65% of the observed patrons being present during these hours.

Results of Phase I

Social
chatting
vs.
study
discussion

- Nearly a quarter (23%) of observed patrons talked with at least one other person.
- Of these, observers described 3% as talking while working together, and 20% as engaged in casual chat.

Results of Phase I

Ensemble
study
vs.
solo
study

- Observers indicated that more than three-quarters of the observed patrons (77%) were working alone, and only 3% of them were working in groups.

Results of Phase I

Technology and its correlation to multi-tasking

- ❑ Observers indicated that 75% of observed patrons were using some form of technology.
- ❑ Observers described patrons as being engaged in multiple activities 44% of the time.

Results of Phase I

Volume
and type
of activity
by area

- The distribution of observed patrons in the various areas of the library was as follows:
 - ▣ Technology Lab: 47%
 - ▣ Study carrels: 24%
 - ▣ Reference area: 18%
 - ▣ Stacks: 10%

Phase II

Part 1:

Sweeps

Tool

Patron Activity Follow-Up Study Observation Tool

Name of observer														
Date														
Time	830	930	1030	1130	1230	130	230	330	430	530	630	730	830	930

Reference Area	Female	Male
Total number of patrons		
Number of patrons:		
working alone		
working in a group (group 1):		
working in a group (group 2):		
working in a group (group 3):		
working in a group (group 4):		
chatting casually with at least one other person		
using print materials only		
using a computer only		
using a portable device only		
using print AND using a computer		
using print AND using a portable device		
using a computer AND using a portable device		
using print AND using a computer AND using a portable device		

Carrels	Female	Male
Total number of patrons		
Number of patrons:		
working alone		
working in a group (group 1):		
working in a group (group 2):		
working in a group (group 3):		
working in a group (group 4):		
chatting casually with at least one other person		
using print materials only		
using a computer only		
using a portable device only		
using print AND using a computer		
using print AND using a portable device		
using a computer AND using a portable device		
using print AND using a computer AND using a portable device		

Phase II

Part 1:

Sweeps

Tool (cont.)

Technology Lab	Female	Male
Total number of patrons		
Number of patrons:		
working alone		
working in a group (group 1):		
working in a group (group 2):		
working in a group (group 3):		
working in a group (group 4):		
chatting casually with at least one other person		
using print materials only		
using a computer only		
using a portable device only		
using print AND using a computer		
using print AND using a portable device		
using a computer AND using a portable device		
using print AND using a computer AND using a portable device		

Stacks	Female	Male
Total number of patrons		
Number of patrons:		
working alone		
working in a group (group 1):		
working in a group (group 2):		
working in a group (group 3):		
working in a group (group 4):		
chatting casually with at least one other person		
using print materials only		
using a computer only		
using a portable device only		
using print AND using a computer		
using print AND using a portable device		
using a computer AND using a portable device		
using print AND using a computer AND using a portable device		

Phase II

Part 1:

Sweeps

Tool (cont.)

Definitions:

Working in a group: two or more patrons displaying body language that indicates they are cooperating on a project. Working in groups may include talking, but doesn't need to. Talking as part of group work does NOT need to be recorded separately.

Chatting casually: not the same as group work. Body language will most likely involve at least one person in a standing position (i.e., a temporary position), but could involve two seated individuals if they appear to have broken away from their individual tasks for social interaction. Though unusual in the music library due to a ban on cell phone use, chatting casually also includes talking on a phone.

Using print materials: any study activity involving a printed book, journal, score, notebook, etc.

Using a computer: using any computing device (desktop, laptop, netbook) with or without headphones.

Using a portable device: using any portable technology that is not a computer as defined above (e.g., iPod, iPad, MP3 player, phone, E-book reader, tablet) with or without headphones.

Phase II Part 1

How we collected the data

- Sweeps made from 03/28/11 through 04/03/11—parallel to the time period in the fall semester during which the flipbook observations were done
- Sweeps conducted on the half-hour every hour the library was open
- A total of 79 sweeps were completed
- Sweeps done by music library staff members and selected student assistants

Phase II

Part 2:

Cards

Tool

Date: April ___ 2011

Entered at: _____ am / pm

Left at: _____ am / pm

Please check all that describe you and your visit:

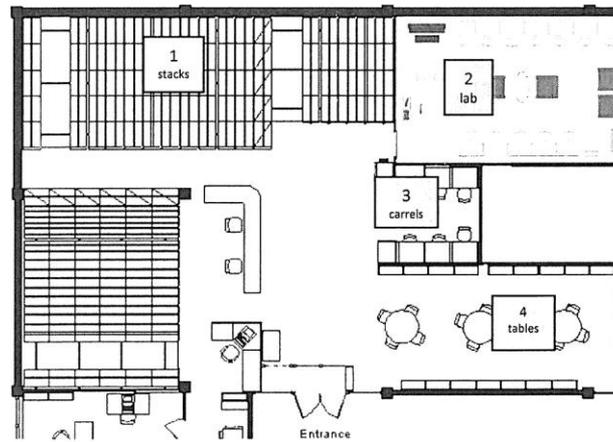
I am: female male

I used: desktop computer laptop portable device (MP3 player/iPod/phone)

I worked: alone with someone

I came in to: do school work/research do personal/leisure things

I spent time in (circle all numbers that apply):



Music Library

Thanks for helping us understand how you use the music library so we can better serve you!

Phase II Part 2

How we collected the data

- Cards distributed and collected from 04/04/11 through 04/10/11—on the heels of the sweeps
- Distributed to every patron that entered the library during that week
- A total of 881 cards were collected
- Distribution and collection of cards done by student assistants at the circulation desk

Preliminary Results of Phase II

Amount of time spent in the library

- The majority of patrons (58%) spent 20 minutes or less in the library
- Of the remaining 42%, the majority (12%) spent between 31 and 45 minutes
- 13% spent more than an hour, and 1% of those spent more than 3 hours

Preliminary Results of Phase II

Social
chatting
vs.
study
discussion

- Of the 503 patrons observed during the sweeps, 78 (16%) were identified as chatting casually **vs.** 20%
- 10% of patrons were identified as working in groups, the indicator of study discussion as defined in the sweep definitions **vs.** 3%
- 54% indicated their visit was for study, 27% for leisure, and 19% for both

Preliminary Results of Phase II

Ensemble
study
vs.
solo
study

- 85% of observed patrons were identified as working alone **vs.** 77%
- 10% were identified as working in groups **vs.** 3%
- 81% indicated working alone, 16% with others, and 3% indicated they did both during their visit

Preliminary Results of Phase II

Technology and its correlation to multi-tasking

- 76% were identified as using some form of technology **vs.** 75%
- 33% were identified as being engaged in multitasking **vs.** 44%
- 78% indicated using one type of technology, 5% two types, and 2% three types

Preliminary Results of Phase II

Volume
and type
of activity
by area

- Observed:
 - ▣ Technology lab: 75% **vs.** 47%
 - ▣ Study carrels: 8% **vs.** 24%
 - ▣ Reference area: 13% **vs.** 18%
 - ▣ Stacks: 4% **vs.** 10%
- Self-identified*:
 - ▣ Technology lab: 78%
 - ▣ Study carrels: 8%
 - ▣ Reference area: 16%
 - ▣ Stacks: 18%

* Totals more than 100% because patrons could indicate multiple location visits.

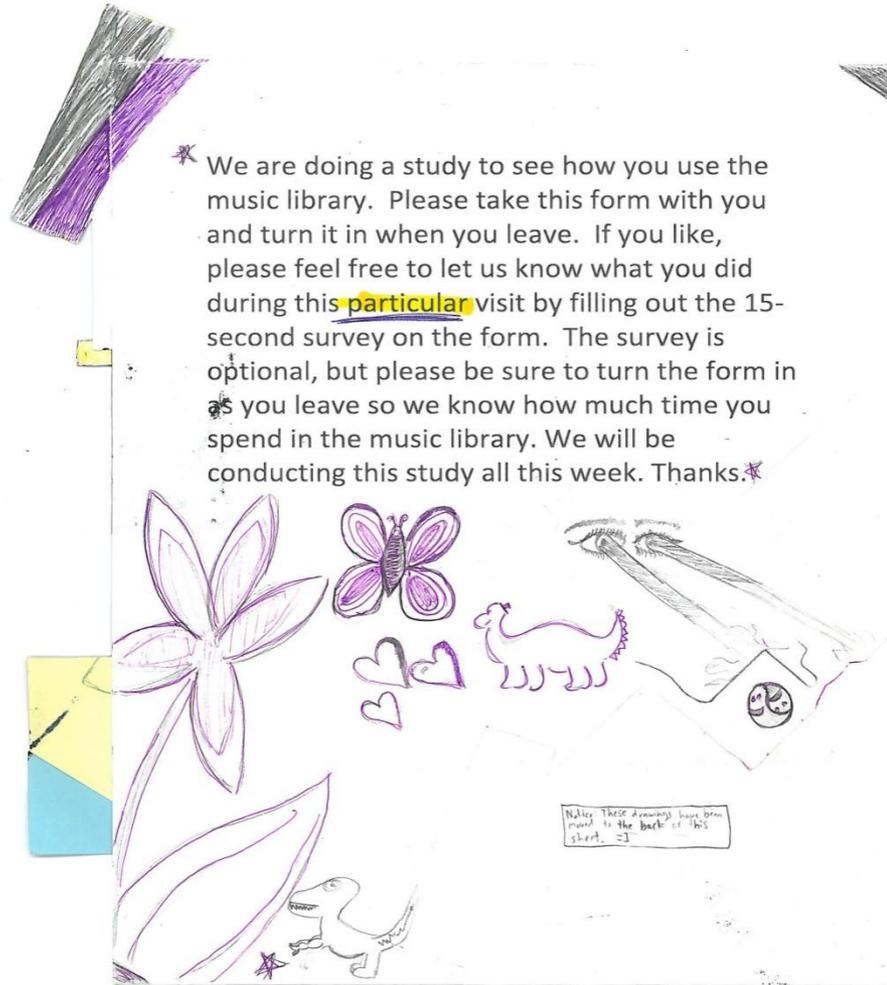
Preliminary Results of Phase II

Specific
locations
visited by
patrons

- 9% independently indicated with a circle one specific location (copier, catalog station, paper cutter, etc.) on the map on the time card
- 1% indicated a second specific location
- True to ethnographic traditions, we recorded these spontaneous additions

Unexpected benefit

* We are doing a study to see how you use the music library. Please take this form with you and turn it in when you leave. If you like, please feel free to let us know what you did during this particular visit by filling out the 15-second survey on the form. The survey is optional, but please be sure to turn the form in as you leave so we know how much time you spend in the music library. We will be conducting this study all this week. Thanks.*



Unexpected benefit (cont.)

