

WHAT DO PATRONS *REALLY*
DO IN MUSIC LIBRARIES?
THE ETHNOGRAPHIC FINAL WORD

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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., it is 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 verify 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.

Sweeping the Library

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.

Sweeping the Library

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. Mode of activity (solo activity vs. ensemble activity)
2. Mode of conversation (social chatting vs. study discussion)
3. Electronic technology and its correlation to multi-tasking
4. Amount of time spent in the library
5. Volume and types of activities in the various zones of the library

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:

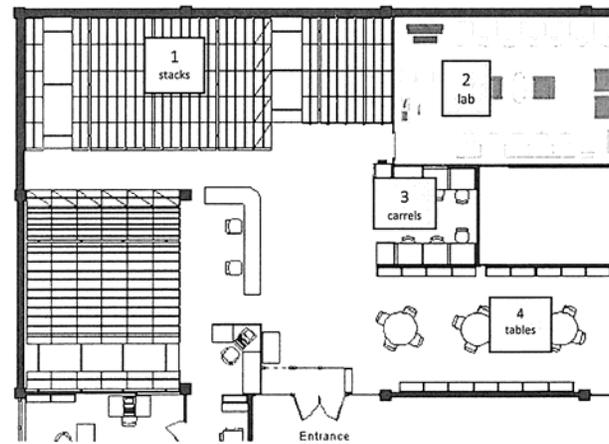
I am: female male

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

The Final Word

The study resulted in seven meaningful, and often inter-related, conclusions.

1. Solo activity is the preferred activity mode.
2. Patrons spend nearly the same amount of time engaged in leisure activities as in study regardless of activity mode.
3. Single-tasking is preferred over multitasking.
4. Multitasking increases when electronic technology is included in the multitasking mix.
5. The technology lab is favored for short-term visits involving less multi-tasking.
6. The carrels are favored for long-term visits involving considerable multitasking.
7. The reference area tables serve as overflow for carrel area solo activity.

The Final Word

Solo Activity is the preferred activity mode.

- **Flip Books**
 - ▣ 77% engaged in solo activity
 - ▣ 3% engaged in group activity
- **Sweeps**
 - ▣ 85% engaged in solo activity
 - ▣ 10% engaged in group activity
- **Time Cards**
 - ▣ 81% engaged in solo activity
 - ▣ 19% engaged in group activity

The Final Word

Patrons spend nearly the same amount of time engaged in leisure activities as in study regardless of activity mode.

- When engaged in solo activity:
 - 55% studied
 - 27% played
 - 19% studied and played
- When engaged in group activity:
 - 52% studied
 - 32% played
 - 16% studied and played

The Final Word

Single-tasking is preferred over multi-tasking.

- **Flip Books**
 - 56% engaged in single-tasking
 - 44% engaged in multi-tasking
- **Sweeps**
 - 67% engaged in single-tasking
 - 33% engaged in multi-tasking
- **Time Cards**
 - Could not be used to accurately gather single-tasking vs. multi-tasking data

The Final Word

Multi-tasking increases when electronic technology is included in the multi-tasking mix.

- While multi-tasking was practiced not only by those using electronic technology, users of two forms of electronic technology (private laptops and iPods) were more likely to multi-task than were those who included non-electronic technologies in their multi-tasking activities.
- Female patrons had the greatest effect on the skew because they were even more likely than male patrons to multi-task at their laptops—a cross-tabulation that was significant at the .03 level.

The Final Word

The technology lab is favored for short-term visits involving less multi-tasking.

- An overwhelming 68% of time card patrons visited the technology lab for 20 minutes or less.

- Only 37% of flip book technology lab patrons juggled multiple tasks.
- A virtually identical 36% of sweeps technology lab patrons juggled multiple tasks.

The Final Word

The carrels are favored for long-term visits involving considerable multi-tasking.

- Time card patrons who were in the library for 1 to 3 hours were more likely than expected to use the carrels—a cross-tabulation that was highly significant at the .00 level.

- The majority of flip book carrel patrons (62%) juggled multiple tasks.
- Likewise, the majority of sweeps carrel patrons (40%) juggled multiple tasks.

The Final Word

The reference area tables serve as overflow for carrel area solo activity.

- An impressive 55% of flip book reference area patrons multi-tasked.
 - Only 20% of sweeps reference area patrons multi-tasked.
-
- This considerable difference suggests a vacillation of patron preference.

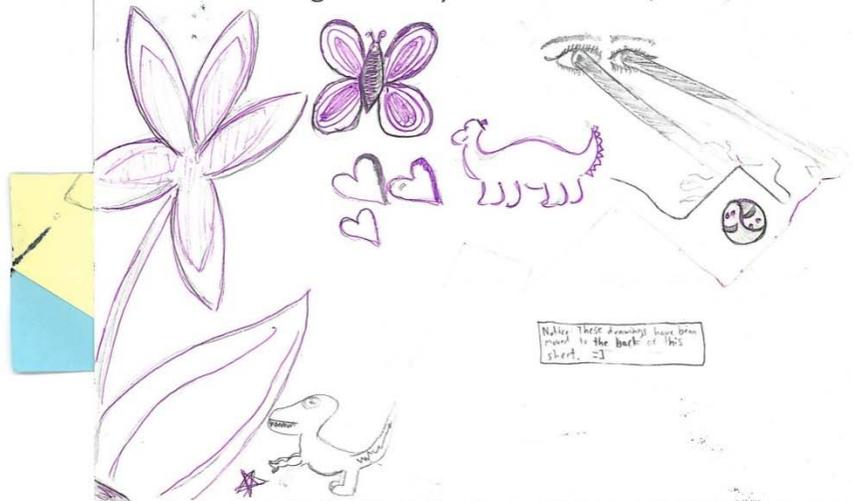
The Final Recommendations

The study resulted in four recommendations that have already informed plans for a future music library remodel.

1. Locate the technology lab near the entrance of the library to enable quick and easy access for patron pit-stops without disturbing long-term visitors.
2. Increase the number of carrels to allow for more solo engagement in an environment more conducive to that type of engagement.
3. Locate the carrels further into the library away from the technology lab and in the lowest activity area to provide an environment more conducive to long-term solo engagement.
4. Equip the carrels and reference area tables with electrical outlets to support electronic technology-centered multi-tasking.

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.)

