

Murdoch University Library User Survey

Report on findings, May 2016

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Executive Summary

In April 2016, Murdoch University Library hosted a survey for Library users as part of their consultation process for the Library Masterplan. While Library services are provided from a small VLS Library on the South Street campus and a library in Mandurah, this report pertains only to the main Library building on the South Street campus.. The survey set out to gather information about how staff and students currently use the Library, what services they might be looking for in the Library of the future, and to understand the aspirations that the Murdoch community has for the physical spaces in the Library.

The survey was available online only, for a period of three weeks. The survey received a total of 456 response attempts. Of these, the survey yielded 365 complete responses. A number of key findings can be drawn from the survey data:

- The Library is a key part of campus life, with 67% of respondents visiting once or more per week.
- Library users come to the space for a range of reasons. The most common reason is to access study facilities (47%), followed by access to the collection (44%). Access to Library staff assistance (n=79, 9%) is another important driver.
- One in five sought assistance from Library staff.
- Both undergrads (57%) and staff (47%) indicated that study facilities were good to very good while study spaces with a larger variety to seating were sought after more by undergrads (57%) than staff (28%) . Postgrads were primarily interested in dedicated study spaces.
- A third of respondents (33%) said that they were detracted from visiting the Library because it is too noisy and crowded.
- There is demand to see the entire Library become available to users 24/7 with 37% indicating that they would visit more than once per week.

This paper details the responses to key questions posed by the survey. Survey responses form part of a wider consultation strategy, which included one to one interviews with key senior stakeholders, small group meetings with relevant teams and a workshop attended by key University staff to develop aspirations for the 'future library'. The data and feedback obtained through this consultation, along with benchmarking and exemplars of university libraries across Australia, will be used to shape the first draft of the Library Masterplan. Further consultation will be undertaken once the first draft is received.

All survey responses

Who responded to the survey?

A total of 365 complete responses were received. The largest group of respondents was staff, with 169 complete responses (46%). Undergraduate students followed, with 136 complete responses (37%). Postgraduate students contributed 60 complete responses (16%).

Table 1. Demographic data		
	n	%
Professional staff	103	28%
Academic staff	66	18%
Postgraduate domestic	47	13%
Postgraduate international	13	4%
Undergraduate domestic	127	35%
Undergraduate international	9	2%

How do respondents use the Library?

The majority of respondents were frequent visitors to the Library, with 244 respondents visiting the Library one or more times per week (67%). Of these respondents, only 64 visited the 24/7 Learning Common out of normal hours at least once per week (17%). Interestingly, 135 respondents said they would visit the Library outside of normal hours at least once per week if the entire building was open (37%).

Table 2. Attendance behaviour		
How often do you visit the Library?	n	%
Rarely	26	7%
A few times per semester	95	26%
1-2 days per week	110	30%
3-5 days per week	82	22%
5 - 7 days per week	52	14%
How often do you access the 24/7 Learning Common outside of normal library hours?	n	%
Rarely	237	65%
A few times per semester	64	18%
1-2 days per week	24	7%
3-5 days per week	31	8%
5 - 7 days per week	9	2%
If the entire library were to be open 24/7, how often would you visit outside of normal library hours?	n	%
Rarely	143	39%
A few times per semester	87	24%
1-2 days per week	41	11%
3-5 days per week	73	20%
5 - 7 days per week	21	6%

Why do respondents use the Library?

Respondents were able to select multiple answers in response to the question “*What are your main reasons for visiting the library?*”. Accessing print materials (50%) and studying alone (47%) were the most popular reasons to visit the library. Table 3 outlines the response data, while Figure 1 highlights the relative importance of each reason for visiting.

What are your main reasons for coming to the Library?	n	% *
To access print materials.	183	50%
To study alone	170	47%
To study with peers and friends.	115	32%
To access the reserve collection.	103	28%
To meet or collaborate with colleagues.	100	27%
To seek assistance from the Library staff.	79	22%
To access digital materials.	75	21%

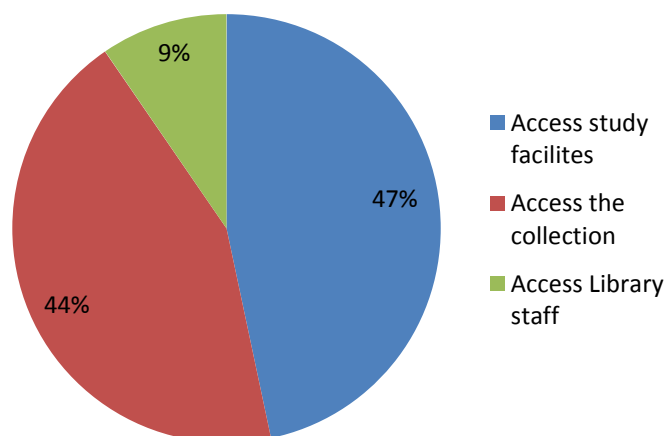
* This figure represents the percentage of respondents (n=365) that selected an answer.

The above answers can be further broken down into three main categories:

- *Access study facilities*: study alone (n=170), study with peers (n=115), meet or collaborate with colleagues (n=100)
- *Access collection*: print (n=183), reserve (n=103), digital (n=75)
- *Access Library staff assistance* (n=79)

The relative importance of each of these categories is demonstrated in the figure below. Noting once more that respondents were able to select more than one answer, percentage figures in this instance refer to percentage of total answers (n=825). While access to study facilities is the most frequently selected reason for visiting the Library (n=385, 47%), it should be noted that access to the collection (n=361, 44%) remains a key driver for Library visits. Access to Library staff assistance (n=79, 9%), is another important driver.

Figure 1. Relative importance of reasons for visiting



Respondents were also invited to enter free text to nominate other reasons for library visits. A word cloud showing key words occurring most frequently in these free text responses is presented below.

Figure 2. Other reasons for visiting



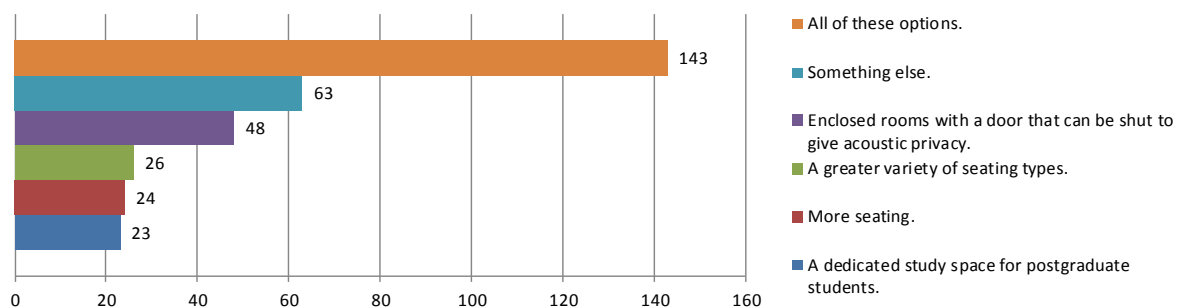
How would respondents improve the study spaces?

Respondents who indicated that they came to the Library at least a few times per semester (excluding those who answered 'rarely'), were asked to nominate a key factor in improving the study space at the library. The most popular response was 'All of these options' (44%). Table 4 outlines response data, while Figure 3 highlights the relative importance of each key factor.

Table 4. Key factors in improving the study space

What would be the key factor in improving the study space at the library?	n	%
All of these options.	143	44%
Something else.	63	19%
Enclosed rooms with a door that can be shut to give acoustic privacy.	48	15%
A greater variety of seating types.	26	8%
More seating.	24	7%
A dedicated study space for postgraduate students.	23	7%

Figure 3. Relative importance of key factors for improving study space



Respondents who selected the answer "Something else" were invited to enter some free text describing their key factor in improving study space at the library. A word cloud showing key words occurring most frequently in these free text responses is presented below.

Figure 4. Other key factors for improving study space

Provision of food & coffee	32	10%
Opening for longer hours	30	9%
Provision of more computers	27	8%
Provision of more power points	20	6%
Hosting activities and events	12	4%
Better access to librarians	7	2%
More bookable rooms	6	2%
More private spaces	6	2%
Refurbishment of bathrooms	5	2%
Provision of paces to nap	5	2%
Provision of postgraduate space	4	1%

Staff responses

A total of 169 staff responded to the survey, 61% of whom were professional staff, and 39% of whom were academic staff.

Table 7. Staff - Demographic		
Which statement describes you best?	n	%
Professional staff	103	61%
Academic staff	66	39%

Out of these respondents, 147 answered the questions “*What do you think of the study facilities provided for students?*”, and “*What do you think of the work/study facilities provided for staff members?*”. Student study facilities were perceived to be of slightly higher quality, with 47% of staff respondents rating them as *good* or *very good*. Staff facilities were rated as *good* or *very good* by 35% of staff respondents.

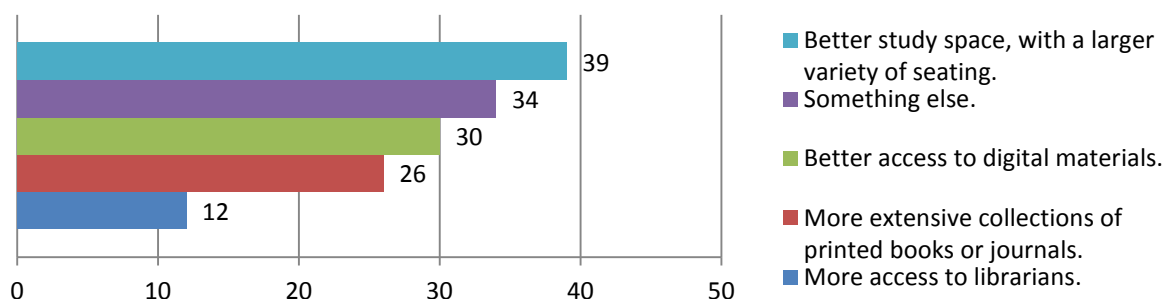
Table 8. Staff - Quality of work and study facilities		
What do you think of the study facilities provided for students?	n	%
Poor	10	7%
Acceptable	48	33%
Good	46	31%
Very good	23	16%
Not applicable	20	14%
What do you think of the work/ study facilities provided for staff members?	n	%
Poor	23	16%
Acceptable	45	31%
Good	33	22%
Very good	18	12%
Not applicable	28	19%

When asked what the one key factor would be to improve the library, staff mainly selected *better study space* (28%). Free text responses provided by staff who had selected *something else* were largely consistent in trend with those presented in *Figure 5. Key factors for improving study space*.

Table 9. Staff - Key factors in improving the library		
If there was one thing you could improve about the library, what would it be?	n	%
Better study space, with a larger variety of seating.	39	28%

Something else.	34	24%
Better access to digital materials.	30	21%
More extensive collections of printed books or journals.	26	18%
More access to librarians.	12	9%

Figure 5. Staff - Relative importance of key factors for improving the library



Undergraduate responses

Responses were received from 136 undergraduate students. Respondents were quite evenly spread in terms of how many years of study they had completed for their undergraduate degree.

Table 10. Undergraduate - Demographics

Are you an international or a domestic student?	n	%
Undergraduate domestic	127	93%
Undergraduate international	9	7%
Where do you live during the semester?	n	%
On campus	7	5%
Off campus	129	95%
Which year of your degree are you in?	n	%
First year	31	23%
Second year	34	25%
Third year	38	28%
Fourth year	33	24%

In line with the staff responses, undergraduates have a generally favourable view of the study space at the Library, with 57% rating the study facilities as *good* or *very good*.

Table 11. Undergraduates - Quality of work and study facilities

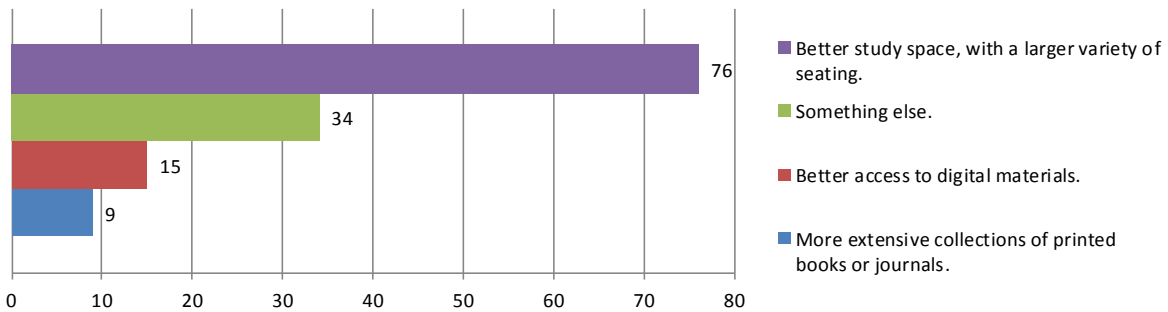
What do you think of the study facilities at the library?	n	%
Poor	11	8%
Acceptable	45	33%
Good	58	43%

Very good	19	14%
Not applicable	3	2%

When asked what the one key factor would be to improve the library, a clear majority of undergraduates selected *better study space* (57%). Free text responses provided by undergraduates who had selected *something else* were largely consistent in trend with those presented in *Figure 5*.

If there was one thing you could improve about the library, what would it be?	n	%
Better study space, with a larger variety of seating.	76	57%
Something else.	34	25%
Better access to digital materials.	15	11%
More extensive collections of printed books or journals.	9	7%

Figure 6. Undergraduates - Relative importance of key factors for improving the library



Postgraduate responses

Responses were received from 60 postgraduate students. Respondents were quite evenly spread in terms of how many years of study they had completed for their postgraduate degree.

Are you an international or a domestic student?	n	%
Postgraduate domestic	47	78%
Postgraduate international	13	22%
Where do you live during the semester?	n	%
On campus	3	5%
Off campus	57	95%

Which year of your degree are you in?	n	%
1st year	20	33%
2nd year	18	30%
2 + years	22	37%

Postgraduate students were asked some specific questions about the way they use the Library study spaces. Most postgraduate students (69%) indicated that they would use postgraduate dedicated study space several times per week or more should that kind of space be provided. A clear majority of postgraduate students said that dedicated postgraduate would be a greater attractor at the Library than better quality general study space (78%).

The survey results showed very low awareness, and very low utilisation of study spaces for the Postgraduate Suites located in the ECL Building, with only 15% of students using them at all. It should be noted that these spaces are most commonly booked as formal training and teaching venues and associated breakout space, often making them unsuitable as informal study space for postgraduate students.

Table 14. Postgraduate – Library usage		
If the Library has better quality study space dedicated to postgraduate students, how often would you be likely to use the space?		
	n	%
Rarely	6	10%
A few times per semester	6	10%
Once per week	6	10%
Several times per week	26	45%
Every day	14	24%
What type of study space would most attract you to the Library?		
	n	%
Better quality study space, available to all students	13	22%
Dedicated study space for postgraduate students	45	78%
How often do you use the study space in the Postgraduate Suites in ECL?		
	n	%
Rarely	16	28%
A few times per semester	2	3%
Once per week	5	9%
Several times per week	2	3%
Not aware that they are available	33	57%

When asked to select one key factor that would be important for improving study space in the Library, the majority of postgraduate students selected the answer “All of these options” (38%). Free text responses to the *something else* answer largely mirrored those presented in Figure 5. Key factors for improving study space.

Table 15. Postgraduates - Key factors in improving study space		
If there was one thing you could improve about the library, what would it be?		
	n	%
All of these options	22	38%
Something else	14	24%
Enclosed rooms with a door that can be shut to give acoustic privacy.	9	16%
A dedicated study space for postgraduate students.	8	14%
A greater variety of seating types	3	5%
More seating	2	3%

Key findings

- The Library is a key part of campus life, with 67% of respondents visiting the Library building once per week or more.
- There is a small group of regular users of the 24/7 Learning Common, with 18% of respondents using this space once per week or more.
- Use of the 24/7 facilities would grow, with 37% of respondents saying they would utilise this service, if the entire Library became available 24/7.
- Library users come to the space for a range of reasons. The most common reason is to access study facilities (47%), followed by access to the collection (44%). Access to Library staff assistance (n=79, 9%) is another important driver.
- Both undergrads (57%) and staff (47%) indicated that study facilities were good to very good while study spaces with a larger variety to seating were sought after more by undergrads (57%) than staff (28%) . Postgrads were primarily interested in dedicated study spaces.
- One in five sought assistance from Library staff.
- A third of respondents (33%) said that they were detracted from visiting the Library because it is too noisy and crowded. It important to note that while 26% of respondents use the Library for collaborative work and study, 20% use it for private work and study.
- A clear majority of postgraduate respondents (78%) would be attracted to use the Library by the provision of dedicated postgraduate student spaces.

Next steps

Survey responses form part of a wider consultation strategy, which included one to one interviews with key stakeholders, small group meetings with relevant teams and a workshop attended by key University staff to develop aspirations for the 'future library'. The data and feedback obtained through this consultation, along with benchmarking and exemplars of university libraries across Australia, will be used to shape the first draft of the Library Masterplan. Further consultation will be undertaken once the first draft is received and Library users will continue to be key stakeholders in the development of any interventions that aim to increase amenity and functionality within the Library building.