Bibliotheca: A Paradigm for Translating Student Preferences into the Design of a Library

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ABSTRACT

The university library continues to evolve in response to student behaviors, perceived desires, and technological advancements. The interior qualities of the library can contribute to academic success and provide students with an unparalleled study environment that supports peer collaboration and scholastic achievement (Gardner and Eng, 2005). How can a student's perception of an ideal study environment be integrated into the design of a library to foster an environment of learning? Using results from a case study to develop a model project, this research examines the design of a student group study space within a library.

Image board and graffiti wall methods were used to engage users of an existing group study space to identify the spatial design features that exemplify their ideal collaborative environment. A poster of collected pictures and illustrations were used to visually communicate design intent to a targeted user group (Hanington and Martin, 2012). To prevent bias in describing the visual images in this study, a user-centered card sort study was developed to understand the meaning of the images through the lens of undergraduate students (Kaufman, 2006). Graffiti walls "provide an open canvas on which participants can freely offer their written or visual comments about an environment of system, directly in the context of use" (Hanington and Martin, 2012). A content analysis of the written phrases and images drawn from the graffiti wall was used to quantify data collection. The informal approach of these methods was fundamental in creating an open and unbiased platform for students to respond and provide feedback on the design of a group study space.
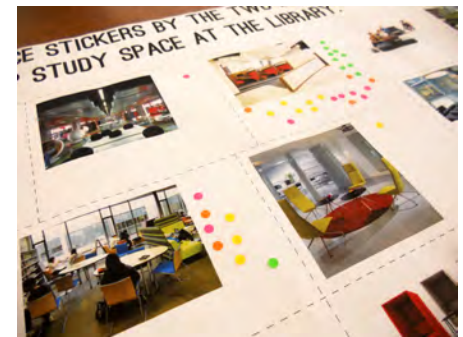
The most noteworthy design feature from the study results were that students had a preference for a group study space with an alcove design feature, whether actual or perceived, to allow

private space for groups. The majority of students preferred intimate spaces that allow them to have privacy within the group study environment. Spatial definition is an important aspect of these spaces that can be used to control visual and acoustical privacy (Miller and Schlitt, 1985). These spaces should be supported with a variety of other seating options that were selected by the students as favorable in their ideal study environment, including tables and padded chairs as well as informal lounge spaces that allow students to relax in a "beanbag" type space. With today's technology students expect power sources to be integrated into the design of study spaces.
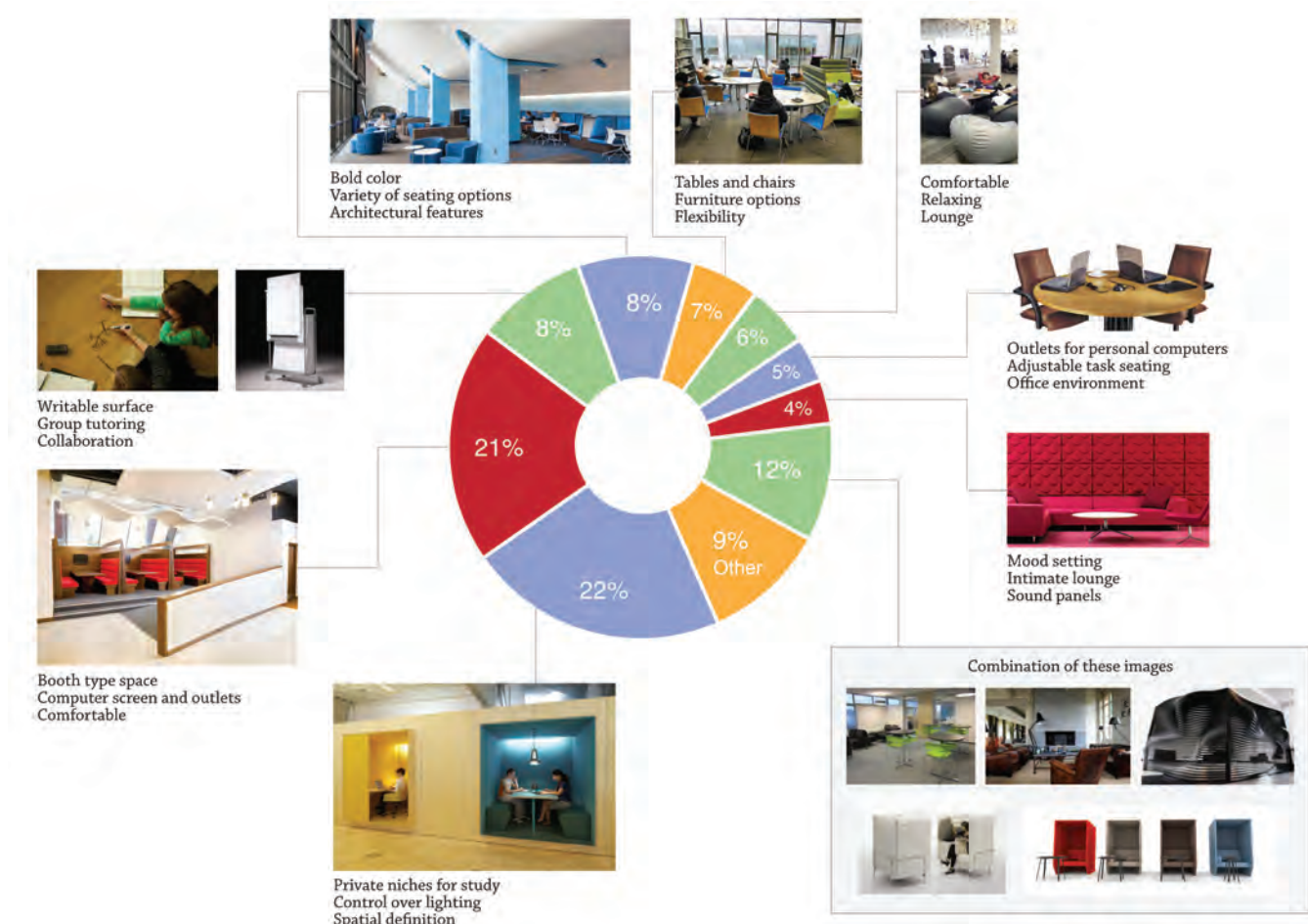
Bibliotheca, a visual design solution, implements the research outcomes into usable design recommendations for the design of the university library. The project is used to illustrate the spatial arrangements, control features, group communication methods, and other significant design features from the research study. Key findings from the study are annotated throughout the project, through a multi-media graphic communication approach that combines research conclusions with a personal sketching vocabulary. Bibliotheca explores the historical setting of the university library through the use of antiqued materials with rich patina, which link the tactile quality of books to the contemporary library.

REFERENCES (APA)

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Miller, S. & Schlitt, J. K. (1985*). Interior Space: Design Concepts for Personal Needs*. New York, NY: Praeger Publishers.

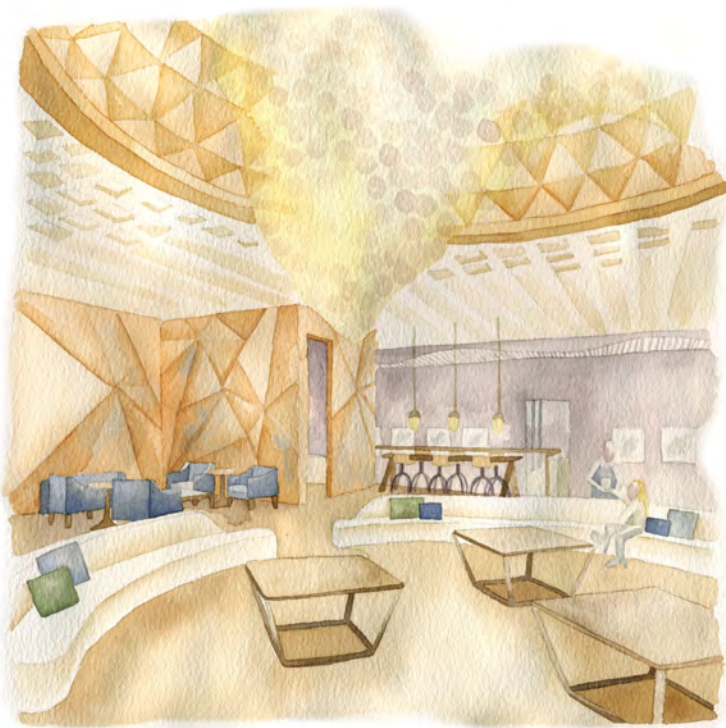Photographs of image board during the research portion of the study

Analysis of images selected by the students during the image board research – captions are design features identified during the card sort

Graffiti wall of student's ideal group study space at the library

BIBLIOTHECA

Examples of spatial definition students prefer in a group study environment

View of group study area that expands upon trends in library design of open areas near a café. The ceiling plane and furniture arrangements are used to define space.

View of library from entrance.
The design integrates technology without dominating the design. Emphasis is placed on the spatial definition of the group collaborative areas.