

### Libraries Reopening Assessment 2021-22

#### Purpose

The UW Libraries reopened to students, faculty, and public visitors in September 2021, though campus guidance and policies evolved over the course of the academic year. The Libraries Assessment team partnered with other units to take a flexible, holistic, mixed-methods approach to understanding student needs in the reopened Libraries spaces. Continuous small scale assessment activities enabled us to remain responsive during a time of experimentation and uncertainty and better understand how student needs and behavior evolved since the pandemic – and continued to evolve as health and safety and campus circumstances changed.

#### Key Resources

- [Spring Services 2021 Project Summary](#)
- [Fall 2021 Libraries Study Spaces Research](#)

#### Methods

- Assessment staff collected building counts 2-3 times a week in Odegaard and Allen Libraries in Fall 2021 to build a quantitative understanding of space use and building occupancy. Building counts in the hour before closing were also collected in Suzzallo Allen Library throughout Fall quarter to provide a better sense of activity for decisions about closing hours.
- Qualitative data was also collected in Fall 2021 through hour-long observations in Odegaard, Suzzallo Allen, and the Husky Union Building (HUB). Observations were designed to complement quantitative data and provide in-depth insights into student use and behavior in Libraries and other campus spaces.
- Assessment staff conducted 338 weekly intercept interviews in Libraries buildings: beginning in Odegaard in Fall 2021, expanding to Odegaard and Foster Business in Winter 2022, and then Foster and Engineering in Spring 2022. Brief two-minute interviews asked students about their activities in the

building, including group study work and attendance at online classes and meetings, and any suggestions for improvement.

- Students were required to book group study rooms in advance online through Springshare LibSeats. A short follow-up survey was automatically distributed to visitors in Suzzallo Allen, Odegaard, Foster, Engineering, Built Environments, and the Research Commons after their reservation ended. This survey received 600 responses by June 10, 2022 (the end of Spring quarter) and helped distinguish general student priorities from more specific priorities of users of the study rooms. The post-reservation survey remained active throughout the 2021-22 academic year for student visitors to submit comments and suggestions, and users could respond to the survey multiple times (whenever they had a room booking).
- In Fall 2021, the Libraries User Experience and Assessment team students partnered on an [online student survey and wayfinding interviews](#) about finding study spaces on campus, designed to improve communication of Libraries policies.
- Review of chat reference transcripts was conducted throughout the academic year to identify emerging questions about using and accessing Libraries spaces and policies.
- An ethnographic Diary Study was conducted in Winter 2022 with six undergraduate students. Asynchronous reflective prompts were distributed weekly and students and Assessment staff met virtually every other week to review responses and discuss feedback.

## Results

Some specific results were able to guide immediate improvement, including:

- The number of online classes and dominance of hybrid schedules on campus affected demand for private, individual study spaces, as well as outlets (a pain point for student pre-pandemic as well).
- Students were not always able to plan for the study spaces they might need in advance as their own comfort working in person and the expectations for their classes, peers, and assignments evolved throughout the year.
- While we saw changes in many high-level summary statistics after reopening, we were able to validate prior assessment results on student behavior and needs (e.g., previous space assessment projects and In Library Use Survey results).

Across all of these methods, we were also able to synthesize more complex, high-level themes that the organization continues to work to address, including the Libraries role in student community building and adapting to mixed modality as an ongoing student expectation moving forward.

## **Actions & Improvements**

- Libraries Facilities and Research Services departments received funding to pilot outlet towers and mobile power units throughout Suzzallo Allen and Odegaard Libraries in the 2022-23 academic year. Facilities conducted outlet review in Suzzallo Allen and submitted work orders for carrels without power.
- To address the need for individual study spaces, Odegaard opened two individual study rooms for same-day reservations.
- Libraries Instructional Design department received funding for 4 individual study pod enclosures to provide for continued need for class and appointment attendance via Zoom from on campus.
- Physical signage was updated to better communicate available supplies and amenities and online room reservation information was updated for clarity.
- The data continues to guide planning for Fall 2023 and the upcoming academic year and select results were shared with campus partners.