

To: Sheila Bonnard, Chair, Public Services Group
From: Jan Zauha, Chair, Commons Assessment Group
Date: December 21, 2012

Re: Library Commons Assessment Report

This report fulfills the charge given to the Commons Assessment Group, a temporary sub-committee of the Public Services Group (PSG), in April 2012. The membership of CAG consists of Jacqueline Frank, Mary Anne Hansen, Mike Hodges, Connie Strittmatter, and Jan Zauha (chair).

The focus of CAG has been to assess how the summer 2011 renovation of the first floor of Renne Library into a Library Commons has impacted users, library staff, and library services, and, when possible, to gather information about further needs and directions for the area. The Commons opened in late August 2011 and CAG's data gathering took place between April and December of 2012 but focused on use of the Library from August 2011 through August 2012.

Much of our exploration was guided by the goals of the original Library Commons Exploratory Group's (LCEG) final report of June 2010 (see Appendix A), out of which many features of the actual Commons emerged. To try to determine whether the Commons has realized the spirit of the initial report and how it has, in fact, been used in its first year of operation, CAG has gathered 3 basic categories of information: student/user feedback; resource/service use data; and library staff/faculty/admin feedback. Within each of these categories we've employed several ways to get a picture of the effects of the Commons on the work of our clients and on our own work, and where possible we've used benchmark data to try to measure impact.

The picture of the Commons that has emerged has some primary characteristics that are not surprising:

- The Commons is very popular and is seeing a great deal of use. Our data bears out the perception that the Library is busier since its implementation, and that some, if not most, of this rise in use is directly attributable to the renovation.
- New features implemented with the Commons, such as the study rooms, scanning technologies, color printing, and distributed printing, are getting high use and praise.
- The call for still more computers and more study space is heard from nearly every quarter.
- Noise levels are problematic, both in the broad Commons area and in the group rooms, from the perspective of both library staff and students.
- Services and resources appear to be better distributed and more readily available in the Commons.

The attached CAG report is structured to provide an overview of our findings, supplemented by longer analyses in the appendices. Where useful, or appropriate, raw data can be made available on the Intranet and in the Library's SurveyMonkey account.

CAG would be happy to answer any questions about our findings or methodologies. As chair, I would like to thank the members of CAG for their months of creativity and hard work on this assessment. Thanks also to PSG for empowering us to make this exploration. We hope the Library will find it useful.

Commons Assessment Summary

The bulk of this report provides a summary picture of the Commons Assessment Group's (CAG) findings after surveying or interviewing various stakeholders, tracking usage statistics, and observing use. Readers of the report are encouraged to review longer analyses of each section in the appropriate appendix, as noted. Background information is also included in these appendices, beginning with the original 2010 report of the Library Commons Exploratory Group (Appendix A: LCEG Report Final), and a brief bibliography of articles that CAG consulted as it began to plan out its assessment of the Commons (Appendix B: Articles Consulted).

Section 1: Student/User Feedback

Student Survey Results (Appendix C: Student Survey)

CAG designed a student-targeted survey on the use of the Library Commons and plotted out an effective distribution plan for it in spring 2012. 525 responses were collected during spring and summer semesters, 2012. Of the 525 students surveyed, 33% were freshman, 29% were sophomores, 17% were juniors, and 16% were seniors, with 3% graduate students, 1% faculty or staff and 1% other. Most responses were collected by surveying students enrolled in specific classes, but a few responses were also collected from volunteers who filled out the online survey. Courses surveyed included multiple sections of WRIT 101, BIOB 160, WRIT 205, BUS 201, HDCF 371, HSTA 409, UH 202, LIT 110, and LIT 494. These survey data provided valuable insight into how students are using the Library Commons.

The Library and Library Commons are **used heavily** by students. Nearly 72% of all students surveyed use the library at least once a week, with 31% of students using the Library multiple times per week. Additionally, 52% of student use the Library Commons at least once a week, while 22% use the Library Commons multiple times per week. Another 20% of students surveyed use the Library Commons at least once a month, totaling 72% of students surveyed who use the Library Commons at least once a month

Students not only use the Library Commons regularly, but they are **satisfied** with the Library Commons as well; 25% of students surveyed rate their level of satisfaction as 'excellent' and an additional 44% of students reported their level of satisfaction to be 'above average.' Therefore, the data show that students find the Library to be a valuable resource, and use the new space on a regular basis.

One of our goals in creating the Commons was to **facilitate group work**. This survey shows that the Commons does this and is used by students for group work. 43% of students surveyed use the Library Commons for group work at least once a month, while 38% use the Commons for group work at least once a semester totaling 81% who use the Library Commons for group work at least once each semester

To identify how students are using the Commons, students were asked to select all of the **resources** or services they use in the Library Commons. The resources most heavily used were library computers, library printers, the wireless network, and study tables with over 70% of students surveyed utilizing these resources. The study rooms in the Commons are also used a great deal by students; 39% of students surveyed utilize this resource. Over 20% of students use the Library Commons for research assistance, scanning and copying, and accessing course reserve items, and less commonly used

resources include technical assistance, the writing center, iRovers, the reference collection, the video and AV collection, and the new books area.

Lastly, students were asked "If you had one minute to speak to the MSU Library Dean, what **suggestions** would you offer to improve your experience when using the Library Commons? Are there additional resources or services you would like to see offered?" As expected, responses varied greatly but common themes still emerged. Complete student comments from this survey are compiled in Appendix R: Student Survey Comments. A few representative comments include:

- More computers!
- Bigger tables and more outlets.
- More study rooms. As a tutor they are nice to work in.
- More couches and comfortable study environments.
- I know there are a lot of computers, but it's often hard to find an open computer.
- Food.
- The "1st floor Library Commons" is profoundly improved over what we had before.

LibQUAL Data and Comments (Appendix D: LibQUAL Data; Appendix E: LibQUAL Comments)

Overall, the **mean perception of Library as place increased in all areas from 2008 to 2012**, with the most notable increase in the perception of the Library as a **place for group study**. This feedback suggests that the Library Commons played a role in increasing and improving group study space in the Library, a primary goal of the Commons, and helped increase the perception of the Library as a place in general.

LibQUAL also breaks out data by demographics, and analyzing these factions can uncover interesting trends. Undergraduates' perceived mean increased in all areas from 2008 to 2012, again most notably in the perception of the Library as a place for group study

However, when graduate student responses were analyzed, perceived means increased in all areas except in the area of individual use, which decreased. This could be due to the fact that graduate students are less likely to work in groups than undergraduates, and more likely to work individually when using the Library; thus when the Library Commons was implemented emphasizing group study space, it negatively impacted the perception of the Library as a place for individual use.

Overall, general perceptions of the Library as place increased in all areas, and when looking at the specific areas in which one demographic group reported a lower perceived mean, they actually proved to have a higher perception compared to their corresponding minimum and desired standards. Therefore, the data suggest that the Library Commons played a role in increasing and improving the perception of the library as a place in general, and especially in the perception of the Library as a group study space, which was a main goal of the Commons.

Careful sorting through the LibQUAL 2012 comments area revealed input related to the library facility, some of which clearly applied to the first floor area. In general, students, faculty and staff were favorable toward the changes in these comments. However, the general theme of the comments was, not unexpectedly, **MORE**: computers, outlets, tables, group study spaces, and better wireless. The dispersed layout of computers, a notable departure from our prior computer configuration on the 1st floor, elicited negative comments about increased difficulty in finding a free station.

Flip Chart Feedback (Appendix F: Flip Chart Comments)

Student responses to the question “How do you use the Library Commons” were also collected via flip chart, which were positioned in the Library Commons for a period of three weeks from April 16th until May 4th. The flip chart comments were then categorized for analysis. 79 total comments were collected, several of which touched on different themes which were counted separately resulting in a total of 114 total data points. While the student comments regarding library usage are not exact, they do reflect the data collected from the student surveys, as well as the positive comments gained from LibQUAL, and show that the majority of students who use the Library Commons use tables to study, and use library computers and printers.

SmartyCats Survey (Appendix G: CAG Survey of Smarty Cats)

Approximately two hundred SmartyCats Tutors employed by the Office for Student Success were emailed a link to a survey about their use of the MSU Library Commons in early August 2012. Twenty-five responded to the survey. All 25 respondents reported that they do some or the majority of their tutoring in various areas of the Library.

These commonalities emerged:

- Most tutor one student at a time, though some occasionally tutor small groups.
- Most of the respondents stated that use of a computer is either necessary or at least helpful to have available during their tutoring.
- Many report that they bring their own laptop and encourage their tutees to bring their own laptop as well, but some still prefer library pcs. One tutor who frequently teaches AutoCad to one or more students at one time stated that it would be helpful if the Library had this and perhaps other specialized software available in a group room setting. He is able to use the AutoCad lab in Hamilton Hall for tutoring Gallatin College students, but would also like the option of tutoring AutoCad in the library.
- Most respondents noted that white boards and markers are useful for tutoring a variety of subject areas, especially math and chemistry.
- Most respondents also stated that they prefer to tutor in the group rooms but often encounter difficulty in scheduling them because of heavy competition for the space.

Overall, the 25 respondents are very satisfied with library spaces and amenities but would welcome more computers, white boards, and in particular, group study spaces with these amenities in which they could do the bulk of their tutoring.

Section 2: Resource Usage

Gate Counts (Appendix H: Library Gate Counts)

Anecdotally, the Library has seemed busier since the Commons renovation. To assess whether the library was being used more after the opening of the Commons, CAG compared gate counts from

Academic year 2009/2010 through Academic year 2011/2012. In 2008, 802,420 people entered either Renne Library or the Creative Arts Library. The number of individuals entering the libraries dipped in 2009 to 788,523 and the Library saw a minor increase in 2010 to 794, 835. However, in academic year 2011/2012 the library gate counts increased 5.58% over the previous year to 839, 157. To avoid simply assuming that the renovation of the 1st floor alone led to increased gate counts, we also examined student enrollment trends during this period. What we saw suggests that a factor other than student population was impacting library gate counts and given that the Commons was completed for the start of Fall 2011, **we may be able to attribute the increased library gate counts to the 1st floor renovation.** It should also be noted that the Library purchased new gate count software in October 2011 which enabled us to keep more accurate statistics.

Observed Student Use of the Commons (Appendix I: Student Use of Library through Observation)

To complement the student survey conducted towards the end of spring semester, the Commons Assessment Group set up an observation schedule for the Commons. From April 16-May 4, 2012 (the last two weeks of the semester and finals week), library sweeps were conducted 5 times a day to identify which type of seating areas were most popular, whether students were working in groups or individually, whether the Library had enough computers on the 1st floor, how many students were using laptops, tablets and other mobile devices and how students were using the study rooms on the first floor.

Overall, the observation data indicates that public computer and group study percentage **capacities are higher than ideal** and that modifications may need to be made to the layout to accommodate these heavily used areas. Given that the comfortable seating has fairly low capacity rate, the reduction of some of the interlocked comfortable seating may help create additional space for group areas and computers. It appears from the observation data that the number of tables is currently appropriate for the space.

Ask Desk Interactions (Appendix J: Desk Statistics)

The area of the Commons that is now signed as “Ask” had no sign above it during the first year of the Commons. During that time it was still referred to most often as the “Reference Desk.” For purposes of this report, we are using its current name, signed as Ask, but most commonly called the Ask Desk when speaking with users.

Analysis of Ask Desk statistics during this first year of the Commons reveals several notable points:

- Duration of reference interactions increased slightly, especially during Spring semester.
- Printing and Direction/Supplies/Hours questions declined substantially.
- Reference questions increased slightly in Fall but were down in Spring.
- RAP sessions increased in Fall 2011 and Spring 2012 (slightly) over the prior year, though this increase probably can't be directly attributed to the new RAP stations.

Questions included in this statistical analysis included walk-up, telephone, email (handled at the desk), chat, and text/SMS.

Perhaps more revealing of how the Commons has impacted research assistance delivered from the Ask Desk are the comments from Reference Team members, excerpted in section 3 below and reproduced in full in Appendix P.

Study Room Checkouts (Appendix K: Study Room Checkouts)

Prior to the renovation of the Library Commons, the Library offered five study rooms on the 3rd floor for students to reserve for group work. Six additional study rooms were incorporated into the design of the Library Commons to facilitate more group work on the first floor. With the renovation of the Library Commons, the Library moved to an online reservation and scheduling system for the group rooms in November 2011 that allows students to make reservations themselves at any time.

In the year following the opening of the Library Commons, total study room checkouts increased from 4,978 checkouts to 9,379 checkouts for a total increase of 88%. Data collected in December 2011 and after also show that 1st floor room checkouts made up 50% of total checkouts, showing that both first floor rooms and third floor rooms are used heavily, and all group space is utilized within the Library. The **addition of more study room spaces has proven popular**, and the data show that the Library achieved its goal of increasing group work and collaboration on the first floor.

New Technologies (Appendix L: New Technologies in the Library)

As a result of the 1st floor renovation and the opening of the Library Commons, three major equipment purchases were made.

- **KIC**

The first is the KIC, which is a high-speed overhead scanner that is intuitive and easy to use.

Students and patrons love the KIC. We were not able to begin collecting data on the KIC usage until Feb. 2012 but from the statistics we have, over 120,000 pages were scanned. In addition, we have seen a significant decrease in photocopier use from FY 2010-2011 and FY 2011-2012. (74,448 v. 49,498 copies). The ease of scanning and printing may also contribute to the increased printing the Library experienced in AY11/12. It should be noted that documents scanned using the KIC can be saved to a flash drive or emailed directly and so patrons incur no costs when using this technology, unlike when using photocopiers.

- **iRovers**

With a computer, projector and whiteboard, the iRovers can serve as a portable classroom. Two iRovers were purchased for the Library Commons. One was located on the Northwest side of the 1st floor and the 2nd is located on the Southwest side of the 1st floor. They were purchased with the hopes that students would move them around and create impromptu classrooms or group study areas. The **idea has not worked as well as we had hoped**. Because the computers do not have a wireless connecton and need to be plugged into an active Ethernet connection, they are limited in their ability to move. Students also appear intimidated by them. Because of the lack of use, in FY2012-2013, we purchased partitions and made them group study areas that can be reserved through our study room booking software.

- **Information Monitors**

Two information monitors were purchased and placed in the atrium and near the display case. These monitors allow the Library to publicize events such as workshops or FOL events. In addition, information about library liaisons, artwork in the Library or library services can be promoted. We did not attempt to assess the effectiveness of these monitors.

Printing in the Library (Appendix M: Printing in the Library)

There are 8 black and white print stations and 2 color print stations located throughout the Library to serve the needs of patrons. Prior to the Commons, there were two black and white printers located on the 2nd floor and 3 black and white printers and one color printer located on the 1st floor. The introduction of the Library Commons allowed for the addition of 3 black and white printers and one color printer to be distributed around the Library to better serve the students and patrons. Library users in the public computing area on the first floor can easily locate a print station which allows them to print quickly. Express computer stations were added beside some of the printers to also expedite printing. During the first year of the Commons, some of the printers have been moved around to better sync with the printing habits of our patrons. Some of the lesser used print stations were moved into the northwest area of the Commons where printing was at its highest. By adjusting these locations we were better able to serve our patrons.

Data obtained from ITC indicates that approximately 75 - 80 percent of public printing is done in the Library. Other locations such as the SUB and student computing labs make up the rest.

- **Black and white printing:** In AY 2011, 2,087,993 pages were printed in Renne Library. In AY 2012, this figured increased by over 200,000 pages to 2,301,064 – an **increase of 10.2%**.
- **Color printing:** In AY 2011, students printed 7,132 color pages. During AY 2012, this number increased to 11,046, a **52% increase**.

The Writing Center at the Library (Appendix N: The Writing Center at the Library)

Appointments for writing tutorials in the Writing Center at the Library were **up 36%** at the end of AY 2011 compared to AY 2010. There are a number of reasons for this, some of which have to do with the relocation of the center to the Library Commons, but additional changes put in place at or near the time of its relocation include improved appointment procedures that made it much easier for students to make centralized appointments for either the WC at the Library or in Wilson.

Section 3: Staff/Faculty/Library Administration Feedback

Staff and Faculty Survey (Appendix O: Library Commons Staff Survey)

All library staff were surveyed in late summer 2012 regarding their reactions to the Commons, including its impact on their work, and their observations of its impact on the work of our users. We had 29 responses out of a possible 65 or 45%: 59% classified employees, 31% student employees; 10% faculty.

The majority of responders (62%) indicated that they spend little or no time in the public areas of the 1st floor during their work day.

Notable comments digested from this survey include:

- Several noting that the change resulted in an opportunity to help students with more appropriate questions.
- Changing traffic patterns have brought additional contact with other library employees and made it easier to engage with patrons.
- Increased ability to focus more on primary job functions.
- Increased access to technology, and reorganization of some materials noted positively.
- Words like first floor “vibe,” “vibrancy,” and “action” indicate a perceived increase in energy levels.
- Noise was noted as problematic by many respondents.
- Observation of student work indicates more group study is taking place.
- It “seems to be a good meeting place” that is “more inviting” now.

Respondents had many ideas for further changes or improvements in the area and their extensive responses to these questions provide significant input for future Commons reconfiguration or tweaking. Suggestions in this area run from quick fixes to more extensive projects, including:

- More computers.
- Better accessibility.
- Increased tutoring options/spaces.
- Fiction browsing area.
- Increase availability of different software on public computers.
- Add windows and a bathroom to the 1st floor.

Reference Team Reflection Questionnaire (Appendix P: Reference Team Reflections)

Many of the responses on the Staff/Faculty survey came from those who do not work in the public areas of the Commons, and therefore did not give a very robust picture of what working in the new environment is like. In addition questions on that survey did not focus on the Ask Desk environs, a central piece of the Commons. To address this gap, a follow-up questionnaire was sent out via email to the Reference Team, including adjunct and tenure-track faculty. Six responses were returned out of a possible of nine. Reference Team members all work extensively in the public areas of the 1st floor, either in their shifts on the Ask Desk, providing one-on-one research consultations at the RAP stations near the Ask Desk, or simply assisting patrons out and about on the floor with printing, technical, and research questions.

Common points that came up in Reference faculty responses include the following:

- Unanimously, reference team members who responded feel that improved handling of questions, including printing, technical, and supplies, in the new Commons means that

Reference faculty can devote more attention to working with research-level questions while at the Ask Desk.

- Multiple RAP tables near the desk have improved those interactions but noise and traffic issues need to be worked out still and several respondents felt this service needs to be located further away from the noise and bustle of the Ask Desk.
- Noise levels were noted as problematic not just for RAPs, especially emanating out of the study rooms near the Ask Desk.
- Distance of the Ask Desk from the print reference collection was noted by several as a negative.
- Name confusion was noted by several: “Ask Desk” is too close to “Ask Us Desk” and is too ambiguous.
- Size and imposing nature of the desk noted as a negative by several.
- Increased ADA-compliant stations needed near help noted by several.

Library Administration Interviews (Appendix Q: Library Administration Interviews)

Dean Tamara Miller and Associate Dean Brian Rossmann were each interviewed (separately) by CAG in an effort to capture the history of the Commons renovation and provide a sense of the process, challenges faced, and amount of time and energy they devoted to making it happen. Their comments are compiled in Appendix Q but were not used as part of this assessment.

Section 4: Future Directions

CAG respectfully suggests that the Library further analyze the data collected for this report to help guide the next iteration of the Commons. The students and library staff/faculty who gave input to CAG were not reluctant to express opinions about what they feel is not working or about resources they’d like to see increased, and CAG feels it has captured a good representation of these opinions. Since the Library as a whole, and especially the Commons, is in an era of continual change in order to meet constantly changing user needs and expectations, it is particularly important to revisit how we are doing in this most visible, highly used space in the Library. We suggest, therefore, that a plan be put in place for regular assessment of the Commons so that we continue to understand how it is being used and how it needs to evolve.

As charged, this report focuses on the 1st floor of the Library, but it is clear in walking around the other floors now that the creation of the Commons has impacted the use of other areas of the Library. Since a repeated refrain in the data collected is “MORE,” perhaps other areas of the Library need to be re-thought in the near future to help relieve some of the pressures on our very popular 1st floor spaces and resources.

Finally, it should be noted that the addition of ITC help at the Ask Desk was initiated in late August 2012, beyond the timeframe of this assessment. With this change, the Commons effectively moved into its next phase by combining robust technical and research help in the same location for the first time. Our analysis does not take this change into account and we encourage the Library to launch a separate assessment of how this combination of services is progressing, how it is being used, and to what effect on both students and service providers.

Section 5: Appendices

Please see these separate files for further data and commentary on each of the above sections:

- Appendix A: LCEG Report Final
- Appendix B: Articles Consulted
- Appendix C: Student Survey
- Appendix D: LibQUAL Data
- Appendix E: LibQUAL Comments
- Appendix F: Flip Chart Comments
- Appendix G: CAG Survey of Smarty Cats
- Appendix H: Library Gate Counts
- Appendix I: Student Use of Library through Observation
- Appendix J: Desk Statistics
- Appendix K: Study Room Checkouts
- Appendix L: New Technologies in the Library
- Appendix M: Printing in the Library
- Appendix N: The Writing Center at the Library
- Appendix O: Library Commons Staff Survey
- Appendix P: Reference Team Reflections
- Appendix Q: Library Administration Interviews
- Appendix R: Student Survey Comments