

# The Impact of University Library as Space and Place: Best Practices in Tampere University Library

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## Introduction

Today, university libraries face a difficult situation as they are expected to add their performance in the circumstances of limited budgets and uncertainty. The rapid growth of electronic materials and decrease of printed materials may be used by decision makers as an argument to limit resource allocation for physical library premises. Therefore, academic librarians face a challenging task to demonstrate the evidence of the impact their premises have as space and place on the quality of the output of the community they serve. Accordingly, it is of great interest whether academic library as place has relevance and how should space be best used.

Library buildings have always been the center of the campus and the most important public learning space at the university. Today while researchers use library resources more and more via the network in their own offices, university libraries act as students' workroom and enable the place where to stay and study. This emphasizes the importance of modern and well-equipped library premises on campus. Further, the university libraries act as a gateway to e-learning, which means the need of functional computers and local access to the networked environment.

In this paper we describe the use and importance of library premises by a case of Tampere University Library, which is a big, multidisciplinary Finnish academic library. In Tampere University Library, we use multiple methods to gain information on our customers' ways of using library premises. We have regularly followed the users' satisfaction and expectations with service quality surveys including questions related to library premises. We have also carried out special surveys and monitoring to be able to get evidence on the use and importance of library as space and place. This paper reports on some results we have achieved. We will consider how important our library premises are to our customer, how satisfied our customers are with our library premises, and what is actually going on in the library, what our library users actually do in the library.

## University library as space and place

The planning of new library buildings is very challenging at the beginning of the 21st century. Historically, library buildings have been built primarily to housing library collections and accommodate study and research. Libraries are faced with the paradigm shift in their understanding about the form and function of library facilities (Cantor & Schomberg 2003; Boone 2003). Moving away from the traditional repository conception of where libraries are storage centers of material, the new facilities are more complex, enhanced interactive and research environments with the multitude of functions.

University library as a place is learning environment and learning resource centre serving as students' workroom. The changes in higher education, such as e-learning and the library's involvement in these, affect the use of library space. The pedagogical shift in higher education means that learning is seen more as a collaborative process among faculty and students. The library building is now often conceived as a facility supporting an increased role in instruction and learning with classrooms, meeting rooms and computer labs (Leighton & Weber 1999). Technology has changed the functions of libraries and the services libraries provide. Changes in supply of electronic resources and new digital services affect the planning of the library, because the demand for space is decreasing in many libraries.

Students need computers, wireless networks, teaching labs, and other facilities in the library (see e.g. Boone 2003; Oyston 2003; Rizzo 2002). Survey on the construction or the renovation of over 177 academic libraries in 1995-2002 in the United States, find out that there was the large amount of new "nonlibrary" facilities in the libraries (Shill & Tonner 2003). One major change was the addition of collaborative study spaces. According to the survey there was an increase of all these facilities:

- conference rooms (41,1 %)
- computer labs (34,1 %)
- seminar rooms (31,8 %)
- multimedia production centers (26,6 %)
- cafes (24,9 %)
- educational technology centers (15,6 %)
- art galleries (15,1 %)
- classrooms (15 %)
- auditoria (10,4 %)
- research institutes (4,1 %)
- bookstores (2,8 %)
- writing labs (0,4 %)

Further, university library as a place is public place enhancing social capital. Finnish academic libraries are open to the public and since they create social capital. Also as a place the library is more than a place, collections, and people. It is a place for gathering and sharing of ideas and messages, enhancing social capital. (See e.g. Crawford 1999.)

It is interesting to think that also libraries have different library generations: First libraries have been collection centered (Todd names it library 1.0). That was followed by customer oriented library (library 2.0), then experience related library (library 3.0) and finally learning centered library (library 4.0). This library 4.0 offers different spaces, spaces for the extroverts who need open performance spaces, spaces for the voyeurs who would prefer visually connected spaces and spaces also for the introverts who might prefer secluded spaces. Also informal spaces are needed in the library. (Todd 2008.)

In addition, university library as a place is campus meeting centre, which offers the space for both social and individual use. It is important that people feel themselves welcome and comfortable in the library. (See e.g. Gust & Haka 2006; Rizzo 2006.) Very often the library has been introduced as a third place, where members of the certain community go daily, stay and meet each other, discuss various issues and interact with others in a pleasant atmosphere. (See e.g. Glosiene 2005.)

There are several challenges that libraries are facing and libraries should challenge some historic assumptions and ask fundamental strategic questions. It is important to libraries to rethink the physical spaces of the library and create a “desirable draw” (Brindley 2006). There are many desirable facilities for new or renovated library, among others are: procuring and implementing integrated technology infrastructure, paying attention to ergonomic factors in computers and enjoyment furnishings design and selection and establishing both noisy and quiet places as well as places that are food and beverages friendly (Boone 2003).

In planning new library buildings or renovating old ones the critical factor is to know what is really happening in the library, how the ways to use library premises are changing, and what are users’ expectations towards the library place as their own space. However, we can assume that the use of library premises will change, even radically in the future. Therefore, new library buildings should not only support the current use but also be flexible and easily modified.

## **The premises of Tampere University Library**

Tampere University Library consists of the main library, the department of health sciences, and the department of humanities and education, which operates both in main campus in Tampere and in Hämeenlinna serving there the special needs of teacher education. The main library operates likewise in the main campus both in Linna-building and in the university’s main building, where newspaper collection and reading room are located. Department of health sciences is located on Kauppi campus close to the university hospital and the faculty of medicine.

In the University of Tampere, we have recently moved to several new library buildings. The department of humanities and education moved to the new building in the main campus in 2003. The department of health sciences moved to the new building in 2004 but the location was not the best possible one because the library had the distance of 500 meters from the teaching building. Now the library will move again in the summer of 2009 into a new building, which is located closer to the faculty’s teaching premises, thus the access will become easier for the students. The main library got new premises in the summer of 2006. Earlier it was located at a former shoe factory, rebuilt to the library. The new building was designed to open up the modern library premises. New library premises have offered us a good opportunity to analyze the use of library space and to design new solutions for the better use. Information about our current library premises is presented in table 1.

**Table 1.** The premises of Tampere University Library

Location	rooms for group work	teaching labs	reading and working places	area
Main library	4	2	497	6 251 m <sup>2</sup>
Department of health sciences	3	1	135	1 619 m <sup>2</sup>
Department of humanities and education in Tampere	5	2	190	2 211 m <sup>2</sup>
Department of humanities and education in Hämeenlinna	1	0	105	627 m <sup>2</sup>
Total	14	5	901	10 708 m <sup>2</sup>

### Service quality in relation to library premises

In the millennium of 2000, we have regularly followed up with extensive inquiries the quality of our services and satisfaction of our customers. In the years of 2002 and 2005 we carried out the service quality inquiries alone, in the year 2008 the same survey was carried out together with other university libraries. Some questions in our questionnaires were related to the importance of library premises to our customers, and their satisfaction to the premises. First inquiry was carried out when both the main library and department libraries still operated in their old buildings. The second one was carried out, when the department libraries had moved to new buildings but the main library still operated in the old shoe factory. The last inquiry was carried out after the main library moved to the new building. In table 2 we are able to see how our customers' satisfaction to our library premises has changed in recent years.

**Table 2.** The customers' assessment of library premises

	2002 (n = 1017)			2005 (n = 849)			2008 (n = 905)		
Library premises	I	S	G	I	S	G	I	S	G
Premises in general	*	*		*	*		4,0	4,1	- 0,1
The cosy premises	4,41	3,65	<b>0,76</b>	4,41	3,71	<b>0,7</b>	*	*	
The quietness of premises	4,89	3,58	<b>1,31</b>	4,88	3,91	<b>0,97</b>	4,3	3,9	<b>0,4</b>
The number of reading places	4,76	3,36	<b>1,4</b>	4,68	3,76	<b>0,92</b>	*	*	
The number of computers	4,65	3,16	<b>1,49</b>	4,66	3,54	<b>1,15</b>	4,1	3,8	<b>0,3</b>
The rooms for group work	*	*		4,33	3,76	<b>0,59</b>	3,4	3,9	- <b>0,5</b>

I = Importance

S = Success

G = Gap = Importance – Success

n = the number of responses

the scale is from 1 to 5

\* The question was not asked.

Comparing the results of inquiries indicates some interesting changes. In the year 2002 when all library units still operated in the old buildings, there was quite a big gap between the perception of the importance of library premises and the customers' satisfaction with them. After moving to new buildings, the gap has clearly become smaller. The investment in new library premises has been profitable for the library users.

In the year of 2008, the customers evaluated the premises in general and the rooms for group work more successful than their importance to them. There was still a minor gap in the quietness of premises and in the number of workstations. Although the customer satisfaction with these factors has grown from the year 2002 to the year 2008, at the same time their importance has slightly decreased. There might be different reasons for that. One of the reasons may be that the users' habits to use or visit the physical library have changed. It may be also possible that when users have better library premises and facilities available, they take them as self-evident and no more emphasize the importance of premises so much.

### **The student inquiry demonstrates the use of the learning centre and reading room**

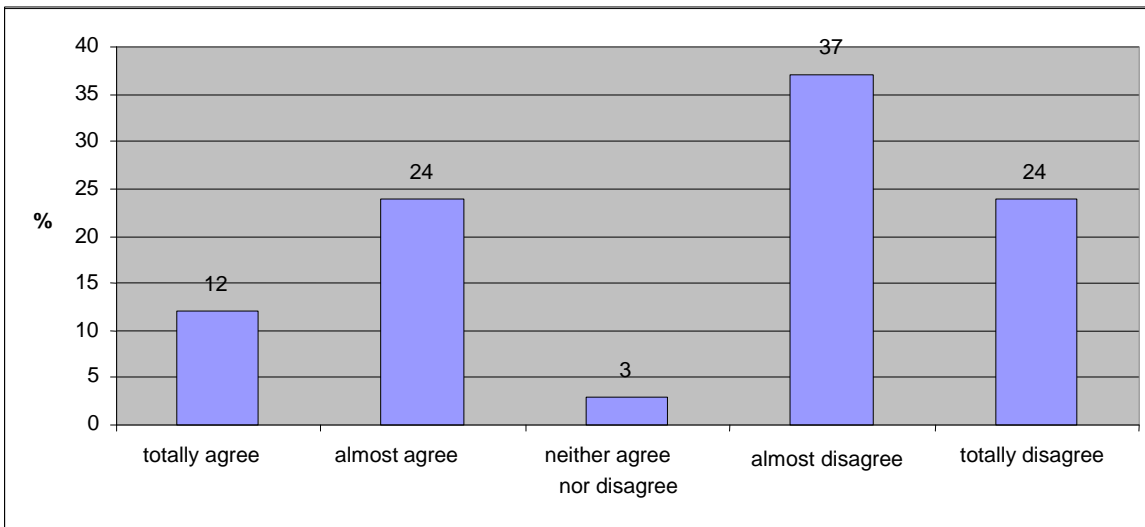
The premises of University Library in Tampere have been developed as learning centres and therefore there was a need to find out how successful this development has been. There was a need to clarify in the study that which students are using the reading room and the learning centre with computers and what kind of is the use density of these premises. The idea was to clarify what opinions the students have from the learning centre and from the reading room and what proposals they have to improve these services. One of the methods used was the student inquiry.

### **Method**

The inquiry was arranged in January-February 2007. As the target group there were students who had used the services in question. 145 answers were obtained. The majority of the respondents were students of the medicine (74 %). 14 % of the respondents were the students of the nursing science and 9 % were students of public health science. There would have been more potential respondents, because only 12 % of the students of the Medical School answered (Matikainen 2007).

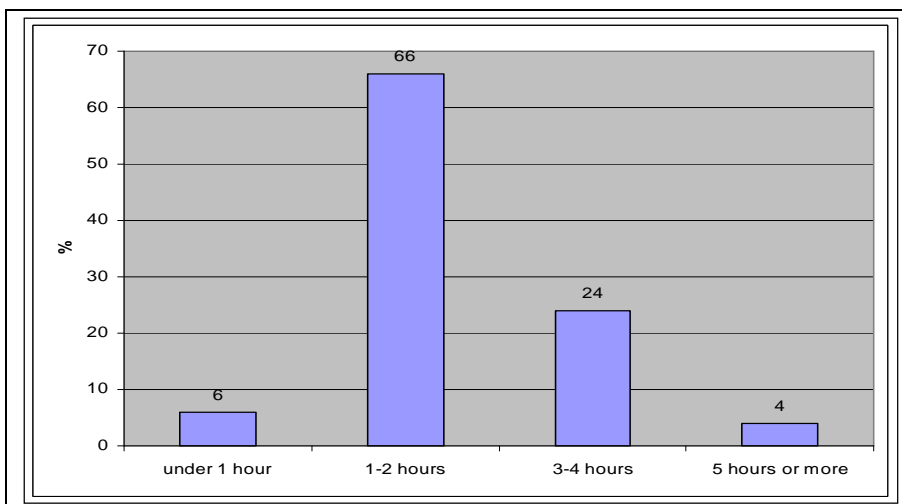
### **The results of the student inquiry**

In the questionnaire, there were also claims about satisfaction with the location of the library. As background information it is worth mentioning that the premises of the library have been changed a further away from the teaching building in 2004. According to the answers (Figure 1), more than half (61 %) of the students were dissatisfied with the new location of the learning centre. 36 % of the students was by and large or totally satisfied with the location. The results showed that the location of the library is important to the students. The migration of the library from the teaching building three years earlier affected the results of the inquiry.

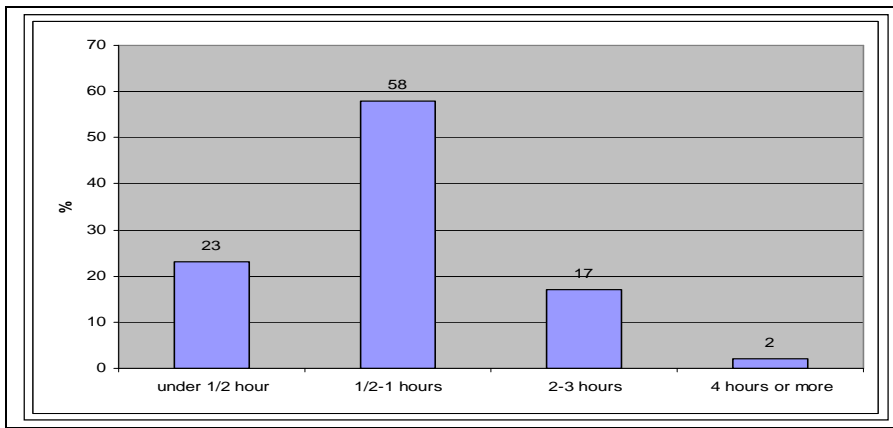


**Figure 1.** Satisfaction of the location of library premises

According to the answers (Figure 2), the reading room was used 1-3 times in a month (27 %) and 43 % of the respondents used the reading room less than 1-3 times in a month. The learning centre (Figure 3) was used 1-3 times in a month (38 %) and less often than 1-3 times in a month (37 %). On the basis of the questions concerning the average length of the visit, the learning centre was used for shorter times than the reading room. More than half of the students (58 %) use the learning centre on average from half an hour to one hour. 23 % of the students used the learning centre for under half an hour. 2-3 hours were using 17 % of the students. Only a few students use four hours or more. The users utilized the reading room the most generally (66 %) for one to two hours in one go. 24 % of the students used it for 3-4 hours.



**Figure 2.** Average use of the reading room at a time



**Figure 3.** Average use of the learning centre at a time

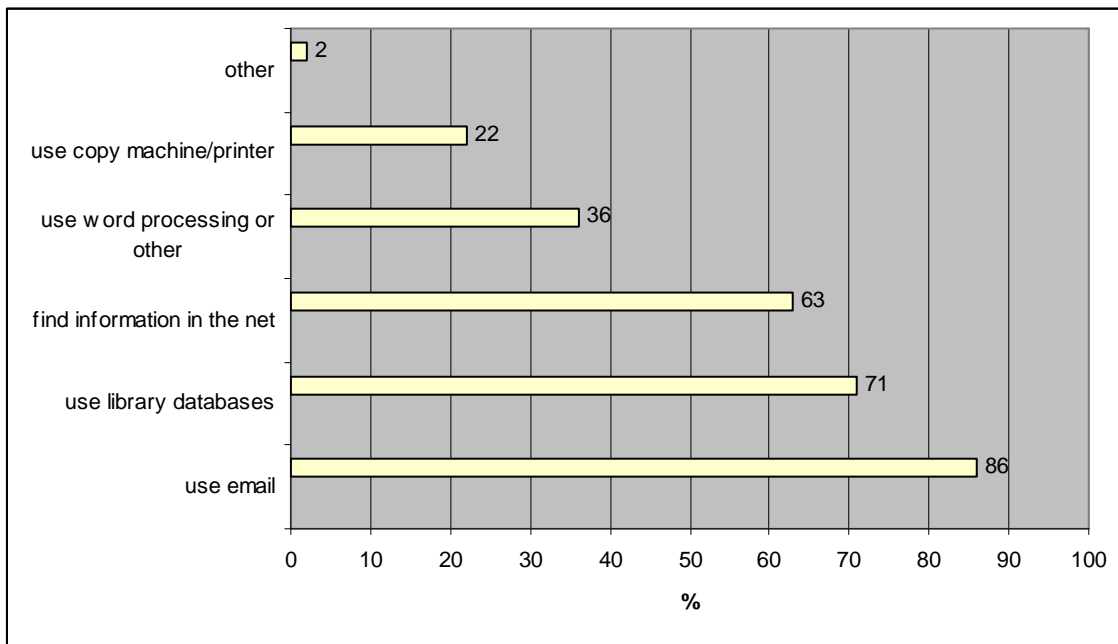
### Use of the 24/7 availability

The majority of the students used facilities (learning centre and reading room) during the office hours of the library: the learning centre 90 % and reading room 82 % despite around the clock availability (24/7). The rest of the students corresponded that they use these premises after the closing of the library. Reason for this is either that the location renders the use or perhaps the students are not used to use the learning centre around the clock. The learning centre with computers was used more often than the reading room according to the results. On the other hand, the premises of the learning centre were used shorter time at a time because more than half (58 %) used the learning centre from half an hour for an hour at a time. More than half (66 %) of the students used the reading room for 1-2 hours in one go.

### The use patterns of the learning centre

The students were also asked what they usually do in the learning centre (see Figure 4). Most of them were using email (86 %), or using library databases (71 %) and finding information elsewhere in the net (63 %).

The use patterns showed that students used the learning centre mostly for communication (using email 86 %) and finding information (using databases 71 % or finding information in the net 63 %). The use patterns seem to be exactly what the space was actually planned for, the use of library databases and searching information. However, it was interesting to find out that students used the learning centre mostly for email connections. Earlier we mentioned that the university library is a place for enhancing social capital, e.g. sharing ideas and messages. This is true also in the networked environment.



**Figure 4.** Use patterns of the learning centre

### The effect of the results

The results of the student inquiry about the use will also affect the planning of the premises. The location of the library will change, the library will move closer to other faculty buildings and at the same time the opening hours will be enlarged. Also, in the new building, we could have fewer computers if the using time of the computers is rather short as the inquiry tells. Instead the number of the quiet reading desks has to be evaluated again because the reading desks were reserved for a longer period of time and valued high by students.

### Monitoring gives evidence on the daily use of the library premises

In addition to conducting the customer inquiries and regularly counting the number of visits to the library, we found it interesting to monitor and investigate what our library users actually do in the library, e.g. do they interact with others, and do they interact with texts or computers.

### Method

Monitoring customers' activities in the library through observation walks is a rather simple way to get systematic data on what is actually going on in the library. The method is based on regular observation tours through the public areas of the library. There are several advantages in the method, for example the tours can be conducted by the library staff. The observers register on a standardized form the activity that each customer is doing. Another advantage of the method is that customers' privacy is protected, because no personal data is collected. (Høivik 2008.)

Monitoring as a method was adopted with modifications from seating sweeps methods that have been used for example in Norwegian and Canadian public libraries (see e.g. Høivik 2008; Givenn & Leckie 2003). Tampere University Main Library was built in 2006 and has thus modern premises, but how are these really functioning in the daily use is a question that we sought to answer by this experiment. Further, we were interested in the amount of social vs. individual use of the library premises.

We divided the activities of the customers into a set of categories which are presented in table 4. The categories were chosen on the basis of the results of previous research (e.g. Høivik 2008) with regard to the essential functions of the monitored university library premises. Further, the activities were monitored with respect to whether they were conducted individually or in a group.

The monitoring was carried out between 30 March and 3 April from Monday to Friday four times a day, at 9 a.m., at 12 noon, at 3 p.m. and at 6 p.m. in the Main Library of Tampere University in 4 different locations (1<sup>st</sup> floor, text book reading room, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and 3<sup>rd</sup> floor). 23 members of the library staff volunteered in doing monitoring tours according to given instructions, forms and floor maps.

The monitored public spaces in the library have different functions (see Table 3). When the new main library was planned the idea was that the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor would be the place where the library users would study in the learning centre and therefore stay for a longer period than on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor.

**Table 3.** Description of the functions of the monitored public spaces in the Main Library

Location	Functions
1 <sup>st</sup> Floor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• circulation desk</li> <li>• interlibrary loan services</li> <li>• self check-out/check-in automates</li> <li>• text book collections in open shelves which customers are able to browse</li> <li>• a couple of library computers for customer use</li> <li>• all customers go to upper floors (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>) through the 1<sup>st</sup> floor</li> </ul>
2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the majority of the library's open collections</li> <li>• reading places</li> </ul>
Text Book Reading Room (located also on the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor with a separate entrance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• quiet reading room based on the student feedback</li> <li>• open 24/7</li> </ul>
3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learning centre</li> <li>• 4 rooms for group work</li> <li>• about 50 computers with relevant software</li> <li>• 2 teaching labs</li> <li>• reference collection</li> <li>• printed journals</li> <li>• microfilm/microfiche readers</li> <li>• information services enquiry desk</li> </ul>

All premises mentioned in table 3 are equipped with photocopiers and the wireless network covers all floors of this study. The library opening hours during the observation period were 8-19 with exception of the text book reading room which was open 24 hours. The service hours on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor circulation desk and 3<sup>rd</sup> floor learning centre information services were 10-19.

## Monitoring results

**Table 4.** The 17 observed categories of customers' activities ordered by frequency

Categories of activities	n	%
Sits alone reading or writing (without computers)	1158	50 %
Sits or stands alone with library computer	447	19 %
Sits alone with own laptop	274	12 %
Walks or stands alone (don't use library materials or browse, and without relating to library staff)	142	6 %
Sits or stands in a group with library computers	94	4 %
Browses alone	45	2 %
Contact with staff	33	1 %
Talks on mobile phone or sends SMS	30	1 %
Sits in a group reading or writing (without computers)	23	1 %
Queuing	20	1 %
Uses self check-out/check-in automates	17	1 %
Takes photocopies or print outs	16	1 %
Sits in a group with own laptop(s)	11	0 %
Walks or stands in company (don't use library materials or browse, and without relating to library staff)	11	0 %
Sits alone without books or computers	10	0 %
Uses microfiche or microfilm readers	1	0 %
Other observations; please, specify: sleeping	1	0 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>2333</b>	<b>100 %</b>

The results of the monitoring experiment indicate that the library premises are actively used, with an average of 117 observations in one go. Thus the library actually is a campus meeting centre, which offers the space for both social and individual use. The observed activities per one time ranged between 49 (Monday 9 a.m. and Friday 6 p.m.) and 220 (Tuesday 3 p.m.) activities.

As indicated in table 4, the results of the monitoring interestingly show that the most common activity was *reading and writing alone*, with 50 % of all observations. The second common activity was *using library computer alone*, with 19%, and the third common activity was *sitting alone with own laptop*, with 12 % of all observed customers' activities.

The use of computers in the library was significant, 35 % of all observations included either the use of library computers or own laptops. This demonstrates the shift in library functions from static book collections towards a modern learning environment which combines the electronic and printed resources of the library.

Contact with staff (1%) and browsing (2%) represented only a fractional part of observed activities. Most of the service desks in the library were closed at 9 a.m. when the first

monitoring walking tours were conducted, so the contact with staff at the desks was not possible at that time. Further the evening tours at 6 p.m. were carried out by the librarian who was also on duty at the information services desk on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor learning resources centre and thus was not available for the customers at that time. However some librarians reported that they have been consulted by the customers while they were walking on their monitoring tour.

The results are somewhat similar to results from previous research. The results from two Canadian central public libraries, Toronto Reference Library and Vancouver Public Library reported by Given and Leckie (2003) indicated that reading was the most prominent activity at all times of the day in both libraries. More recent results from Norway, Drammen library which is a public library well equipped for digital use, showed that the most common activity was sitting alone with library computer with 18% of observations. Sitting alone reading or writing was the third (13%). The percentage of the category contact with staff was 3 % and browsing 4 % of more than 4000 observations during an observed week in 2007. ( Høivik 2008.) However, when comparing the results of our experiment with public libraries results, attention must be paid on the functional differences between academic and public libraries, (e.g. study purposes vs. recreation). In our study the use of library premises seems to be related to studying, i.e. reading, writing and working with computers, while the use of public libraries was more related to recreation.

**Table 5.** *The customers' activities alone vs. in a group*

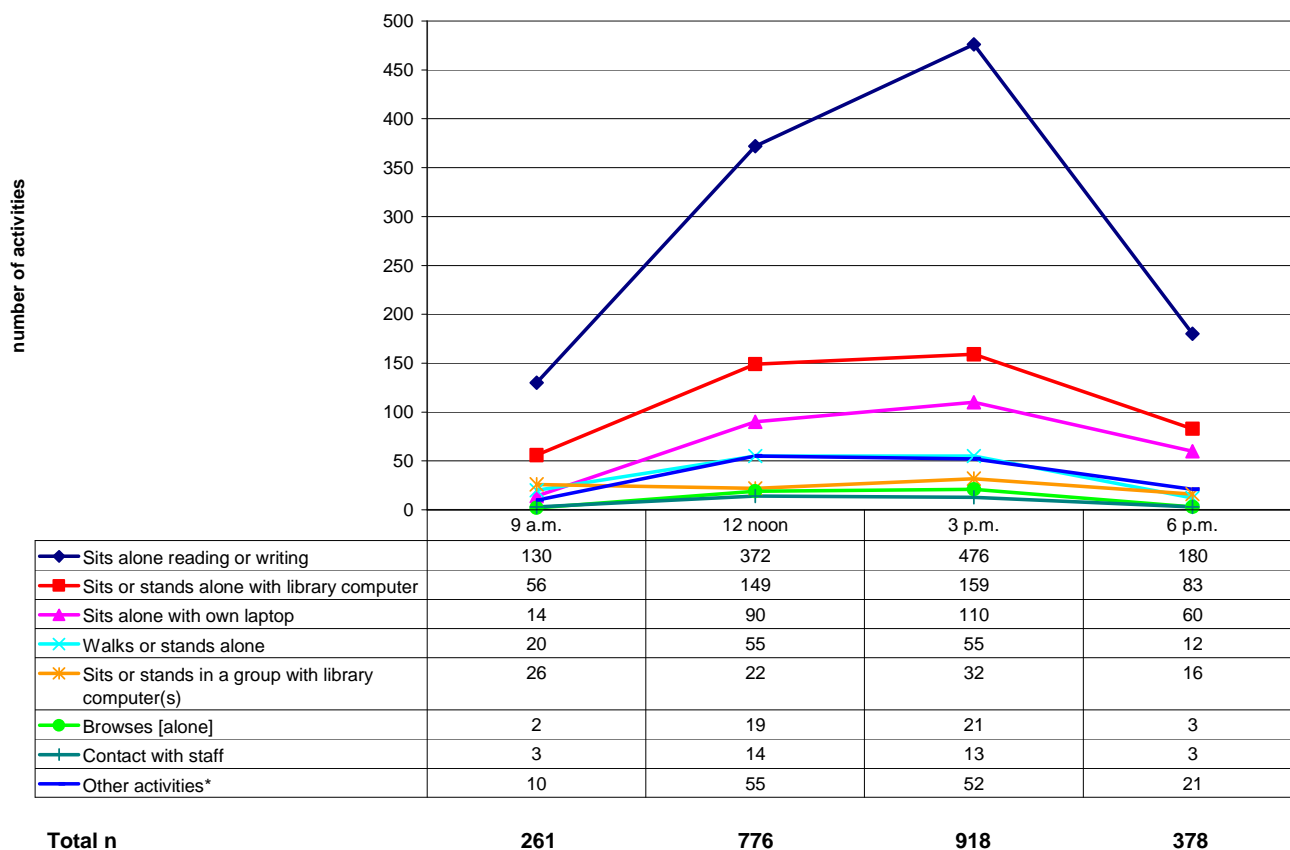
<b>Categories of activities</b>	<b>Alone</b>	<b>In a group</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Sits reading or writing	98%	2 %	100%	<b>1181</b>	<b>51 %</b>
Sits or stands with library computer(s)	83%	17 %	100%	<b>541</b>	<b>23 %</b>
Sits with own laptop(s)	96%	4 %	100%	<b>285</b>	<b>12 %</b>
Walks or stands	93%	7 %	100%	<b>153</b>	<b>7 %</b>
Browses	100%	0 %	100%	<b>45</b>	<b>3 %</b>
Contact with staff	100%	0 %	100%	<b>33</b>	<b>2 %</b>
Talks on mobile phone or sends SMS	100%	0 %	100%	<b>30</b>	<b>1 %</b>
Other activities*	97%	3 %	100%	<b>65</b>	<b>1 %</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2333</b>	<b>100 %</b>
<b>n</b>	<b>2192</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>2333</b>		

\* Queuing, the use of self check automates, photocopiers or microfiche readers, sitting without books or computers etc.

In table 5 the activities have been considered on both individual and group level. Table 5 shows that the most common activity without respect to individual or social use, was sitting reading and writing, with 51 % of all observations. As shown in table 5, only 6 % of the observed activities were done in a group. This result was somewhat lower than we expected.

In table 5, we have highlighted the computer use included in the customers' activities in all locations alone vs. in a group. The use of computers was registered in 826 observations, i.e. about 35 % of all observed activities. The use of library computers, 23 %, was almost twice as common as the use of own laptops, 12 %. This indicates that library has succeeded in providing the customers with relevant computers, thus the returns on investments are proved.

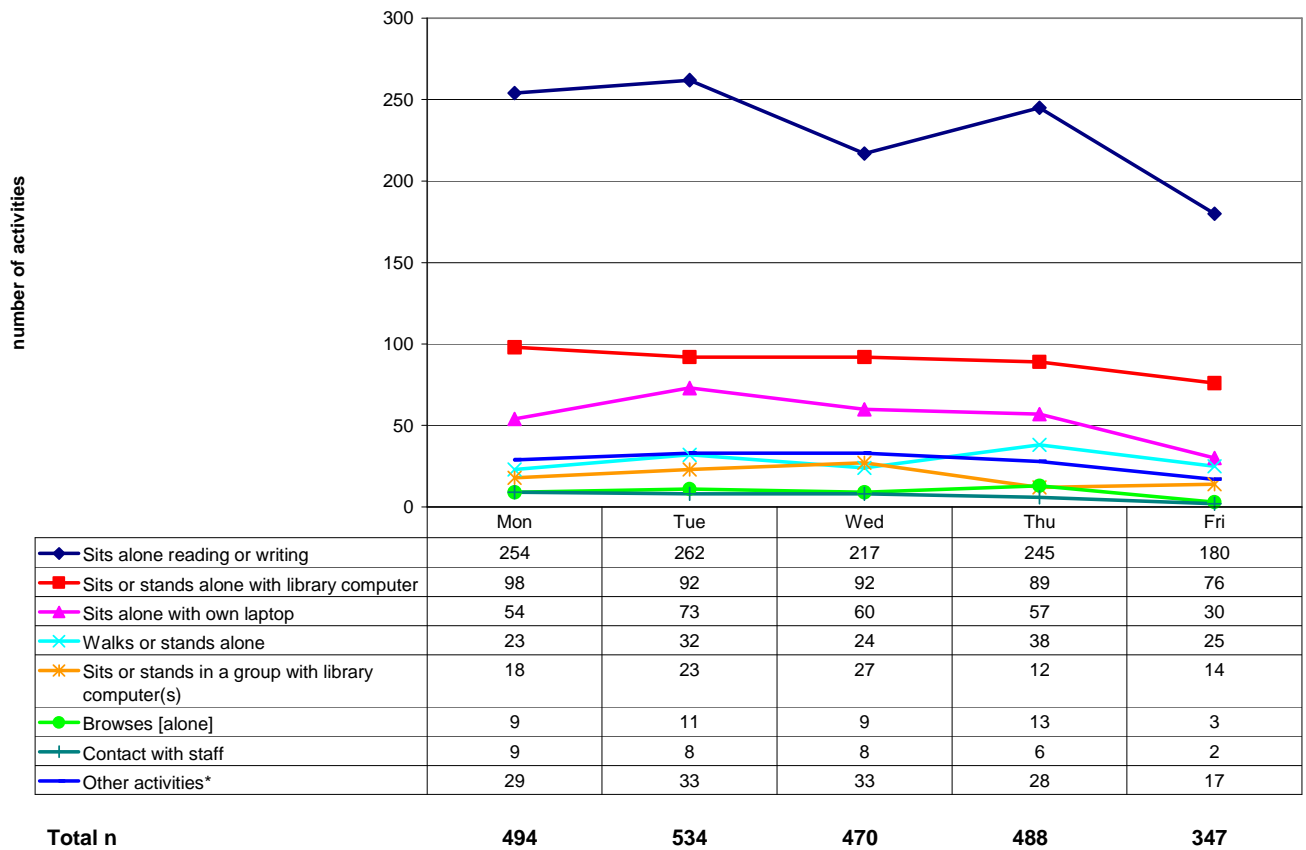
The results of the monitoring showed that the library is used mostly for individual reading or writing. The use of library premises in a group was lower than expected in the observation period. The students are however in the library to complete their tasks given by the faculty. If the tasks are mostly individually based, there is no need to do group work.



\* Queuing, the use of mobile phones, self check automates, photocopiers or microfilm readers, walking or standing in company, sitting in a group reading or writing or with own laptop(s) or sitting alone without books or computers etc.

**Figure 5.** The customers' activities by time in all locations

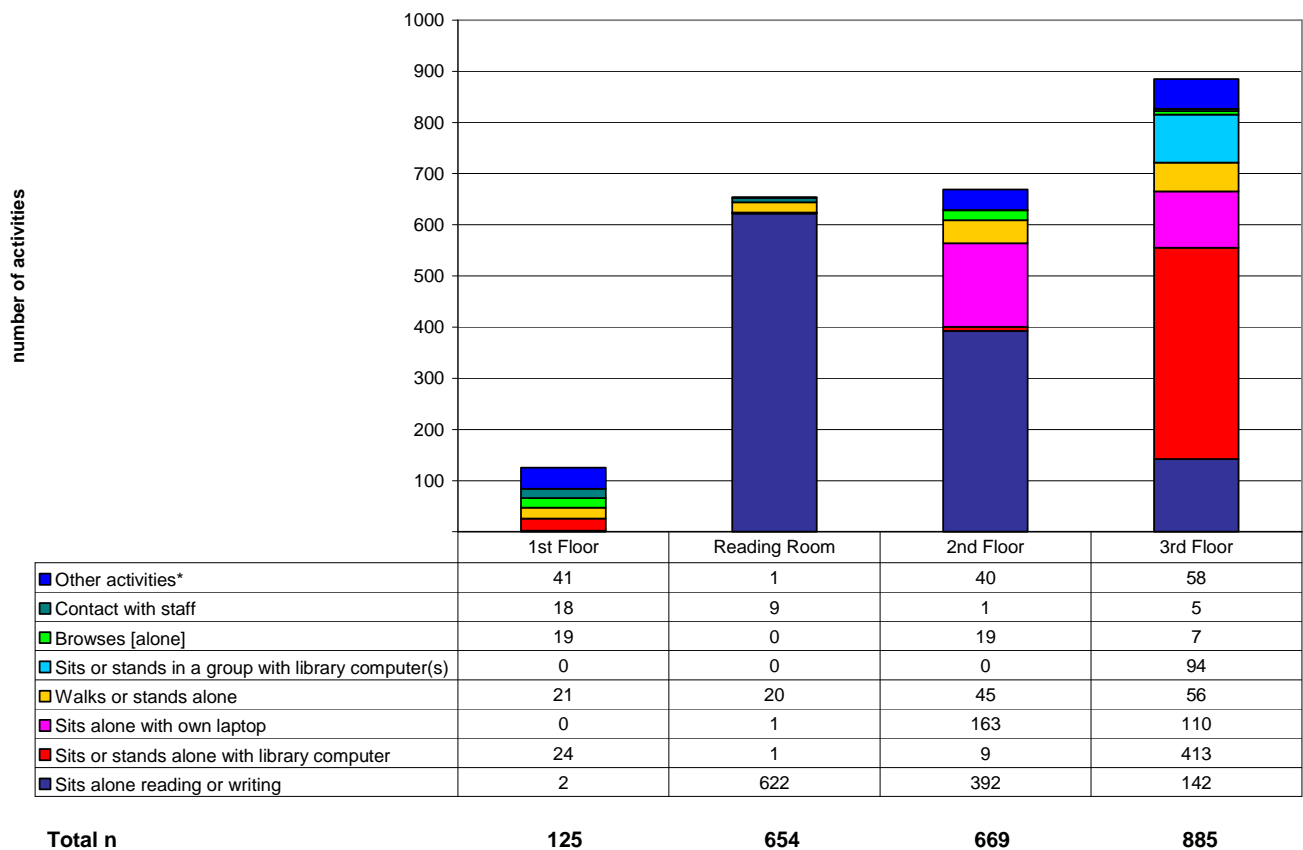
Figure 5 illustrates the differences between observed activities at different times of the day. As it was assumed, the busiest time of the day was afternoon. The figure 5 also demonstrates that the category *sitting alone reading or writing* was the most common activity at all times. Clearly, the library gets useful information from results of this kind for the planning of services and service hours. However we need to consider both the risks of generalizing these results of one week too widely and the probable development and change in the use patterns of the customers.



\* Queuing, the use of mobile phones, self check automates, photocopiers or microfilm readers, walking or standing in company, sitting in a group reading or writing or with own laptop(s) or sitting alone without books or computers etc.

**Figure 6.** The customers' activities by weekday in all locations

As shown in figure 6, there were no outstanding differences between other weekdays except Friday, which was clearly the quietest day of the observed week. Of the observed weekdays Tuesday was the busiest day of the week. Also Monday, Wednesday and Thursday had remarkably more activities than Friday.



\* Queuing, the use of mobile phones, self check automates, photocopiers or microfilm readers, walking or standing in company, sitting in a group reading or writing or with own laptop(s) or sitting alone without books or computers etc.

**Figure 7.** The customers' activities by location.

Different locations of the main library have different functions. The differences in the numbers of observations varied between different locations (Figure 7). For example, the number of activities on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor where circulation functions are located was lower compared with other observed spaces. It is worth knowing that the 1<sup>st</sup> floor is a place where to visit quickly just for taking care of businesses such as borrowing, returns, charges, interlibrary loans. Customers usually do not stay there for a long time. Instead reading room, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and 3<sup>rd</sup> floor are space for study purposes and offer a place for a longer stay than the 1<sup>st</sup> floor.

The results might be somewhat different if the observation time period had been in the autumn when new students come to the library. Therefore it would be interesting to repeat the monitoring in the autumn when all the new students come to the library to get their library cards from the 1<sup>st</sup> floor and most of the information literacy classes are arranged inside the library in the teaching labs on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor.

## Conclusions

As academic librarians face a challenging task to demonstrate the evidence of the impact their premises have as space and place on the quality of the output of the community they serve,

we suggest that in order to be able to provide an overview of the impact of the library premises as space and place, multiple methods are needed for collecting rich data. In the paper we reported on both longitudinal and recent results we have achieved. The results show that the library is actively used, and thus the investments to new library premises have been profitable for the library users.

We noticed that customers are still physically present in the library although many services provided by the library are nowadays available via the network connection and library users can use them anytime anywhere. Users still come to the library to study. In spite of the virtual library, the customers still come to the physical library and they come there even to get an access to the networked environment. When we studied the use of the learning centre of the department library of health sciences, we noticed that the students used the space for email connections, use of library databases and searching information. When we were monitored the use of the main library premises, we found out that about 35 % of all observed activities was related to the use of computers.

The surveys and monitoring have been carried out by the library staff in collaboration with members of staff from different library departments. The experiments were also learning processes for the staff. Thus the experiments have enhanced collaborative knowledge building and sharing in the library. As part of academic community the library attempts to be research based in all the activities and planning processes. This theme has also arisen in the renewal process of the library strategy which has been done together with stakeholders, members of the faculty and students.

The users' satisfaction is the final goal of all the development that is done by the Tampere University Library. We think that we have managed to get evidence about the daily use of library premises and we can benefit this in the future. We have also witnessed the growth of the customers' satisfaction with our library as space and place, which we were pleased to report.

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