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Student Learning Behaviours in Informal Learning Spaces in the Taylor Family Digital Library

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STUDENT LEARNING BEHAVIOURS IN INFORMAL LEARNING SPACES IN THE TAYLOR FAMILY DIGITAL LIBRARY



BACKGROUND

The Taylor Family Digital Library (TFDL) is a six-story building which opened in 2011. It has become a popular student centre on campus where students relax, work in groups or alone, complete assignments, study and learn. A previous unobtrusive study of student learning activities in the TFDL highlighted the diversity of student learning, concluding that students intentionally choose to conduct their learning in specific spaces in the library.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Which elements of the informal learning spaces influence students' choices of spaces in which to work?

STUDY DESIGN

To investigate student perceptions of the TFDL learning spaces, a study was conducted in winter 2016. The study involved: semi-structured interviews with 21 participants, roughly 45 minutes each, and included questions on:

- students' learning styles,
- learning activities in the library
- locations in which they performed these activities and why
- their ideal learning space
- preferences based on 15 photos of TFDL spaces

The interview transcriptions were analyzed via open and axial coding, using NVivo software. Results are preliminary. Our poster highlights some student views on spaces in TFDL as they relate to their learning behaviours.

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LEARNING SPACES IN THE TAYLOR FAMILY DIGITAL LIBRARY

A number of factors influencing students' choice of learning space were identified using a series of photos of representational learning spaces. Spaces were chosen to illustrate design elements like lighting, furniture, proximity to traffic areas, proximity to people, view, openness.

WHAT STUDENTS SAID

Figure 1. Indirect lighting, high traffic, social, collaborative



"The only time I find myself using these is if I need to do some last minute printing."

"When you have a few people, it's a bit relaxing... but when you have a lot, it's not."

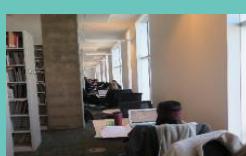
Figure 2. Natural light, view, low traffic, near people, defined space



"You see everyone around you...you feel a sense of community"

"You might have people right in front of you... that's a little bit distracting"

Figure 3. Isolated, natural light, near people, low traffic, single seating



"there is a certain type of privacy, but... you don't feel quite alone...we're together"

"I'd be too busy trying to figure out what the people ahead of me are doing"

WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT THE LEARNING SPACES

- Space design does make a difference to the learner.
- Affordances are perceived as relating positively to learning by the learner.
- There appears to be a relationship between environmental preferences and the ability to successfully achieve learning goals.
- Environmental self-regulation is more than just making things comfortable: it is about creating a frame of mind.

INTENTIONAL LEARNING CHOICES: MOOD AND MOTIVATION IN A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- Students carry out a variety of learning activities in their best learning space
- Their choice of space is based on what works for them
- They know how they learn best and they choose to organize their surroundings in order to achieve their learning goals.
- Their purpose in selecting a certain space is to achieve a level of comfort and motivation that enables the achievement of their learning goals.

NEXT STEPS

This results of the study is still in the process of analysis. The next steps will be to focus on determining the relationships that might exist between intentional learning and intentional self-regulation of the learning environment in the TFDL.

FURTHER READING

- Bennett, S. (2015). Putting learning into library planning. *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 15 (2), 215-231. Boys, J. (2011). Towards creative learning spaces: Re-thinking the architecture of post-compulsory education. Abingdon, England: Routledge.
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