



UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY

Learning in Informal Library Spaces

The value for students

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Performance Measurement in Libraries,
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Space Design Features

COLLABORATIVE Floors 1-3

- Café
- Social areas with tables
- 27 Workrooms
- Workstations, some dual monitors
- Public access computers
- Comfortable lounge areas
- Varied seating choices
- Distributed wiring
- Wireless access

QUIET SPACES Floors 4-6

- Classrooms with pc's
- Study carrels
- Study tables
- Individual study tables
- Some lounge seating
- Some pc's
- Varied seating choices
- Distributed wiring
- Wireless access
- Print collection

Why do students choose informal spaces?

- Interview Questions focused on
 - Students' learning preferences
 - Learning activities in the library
 - Preferred location for study
 - Features that support learning
 - Response to informal learning spaces in the TFDL – review 15 photos of representational spaces in the TFDL
- Analysis open and axial coding using NVivo software

- Interviewed 21 students (M=10, F=11)
- 20 Undergraduates: 11 – 2nd year or below; 9 – 3rd year or up including 3 with previous degree
- 11 in STEM, 10 in Arts and Humanities
- N=18 report coming to the library 3-5 times per week
- N=14 stay 1-3 hours per visit, N=7 stay more than 3 hours per visit

Quiet seating area 6th floor



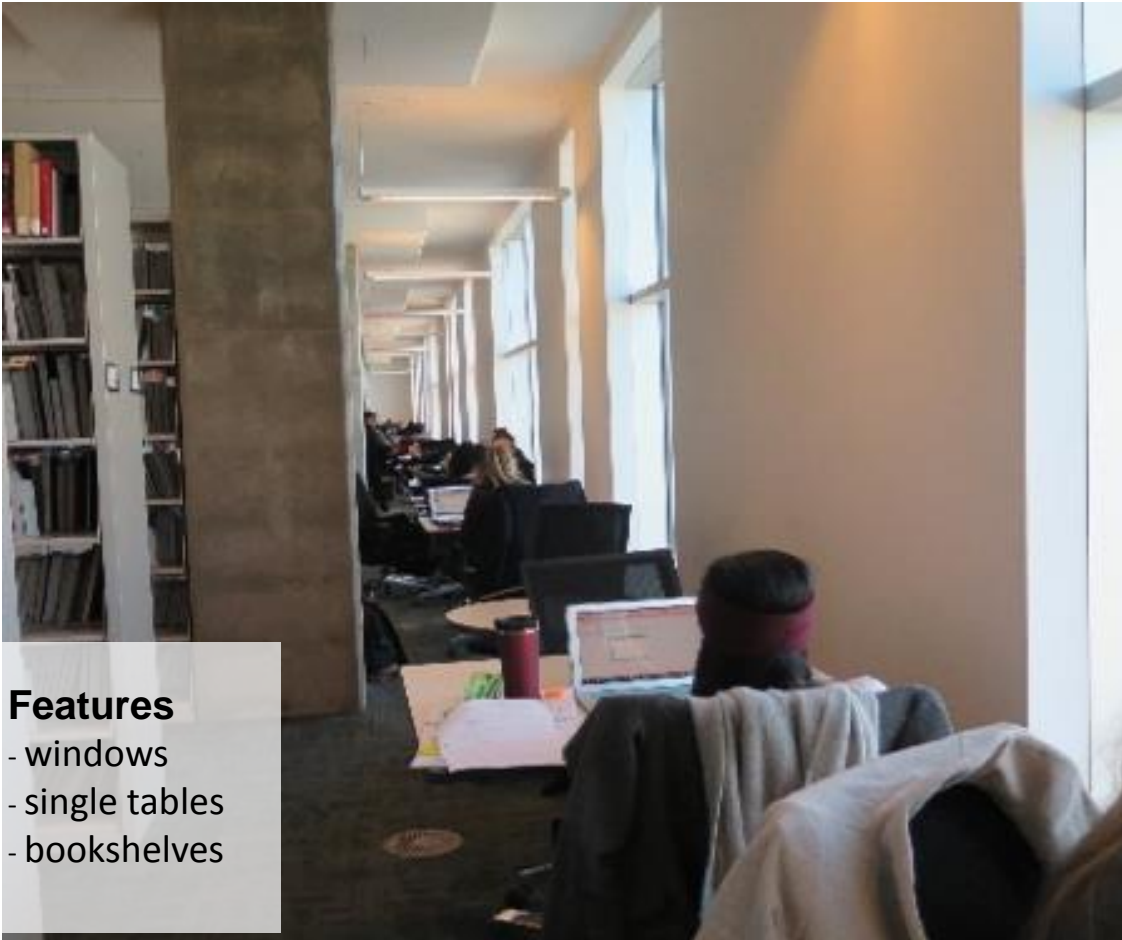
Features

- windows (view, natural light)
- quiet, open
- divided table

“You see everyone around you engrossed in what they’re doing. You feel the sense of learning community.”

“I find the dividers are nice, you have the mild sense of privacy.”

“You might have people right in front of you ...That’s a little bit distracting.”



Features

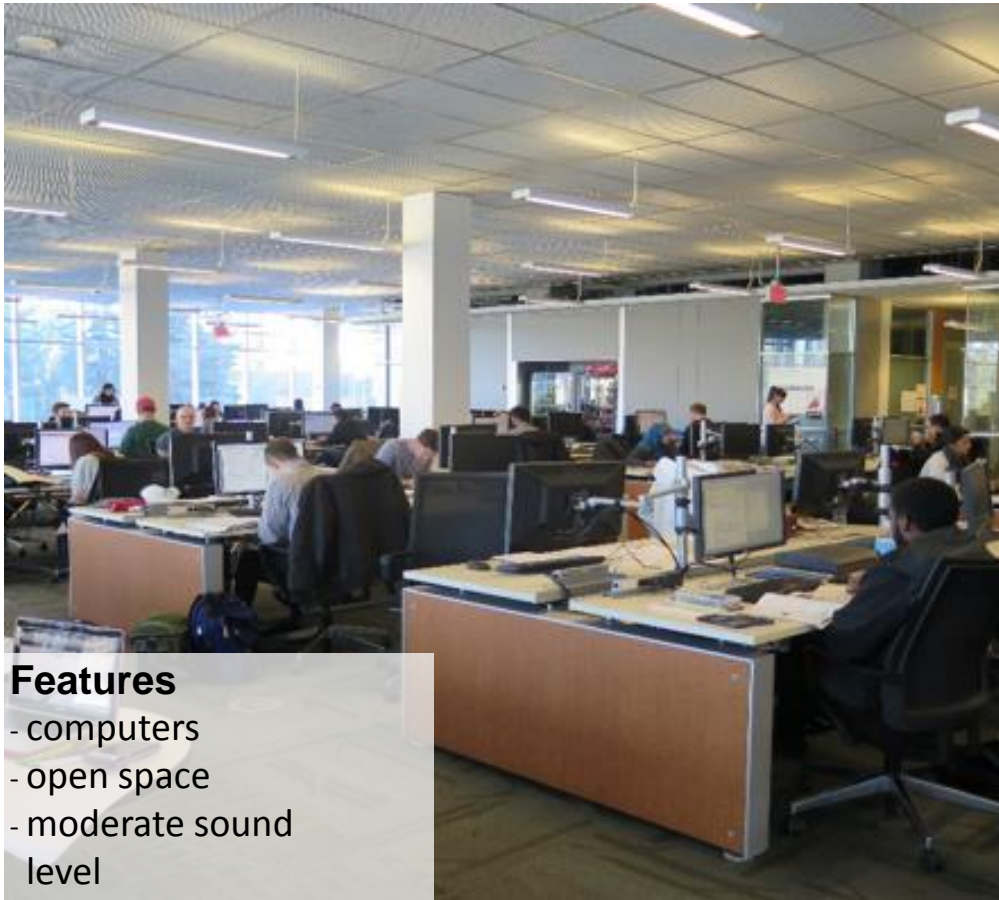
- windows
- single tables
- bookshelves

"It gives you a view of both the library and downtown. It's also close to the wall so it's less open"

".. we're all there, doing our own thing, but we're together."

"I've tried actually sitting there but I found it distracting"

Open Workstations 2nd floor



Features

- computers
- open space
- moderate sound level

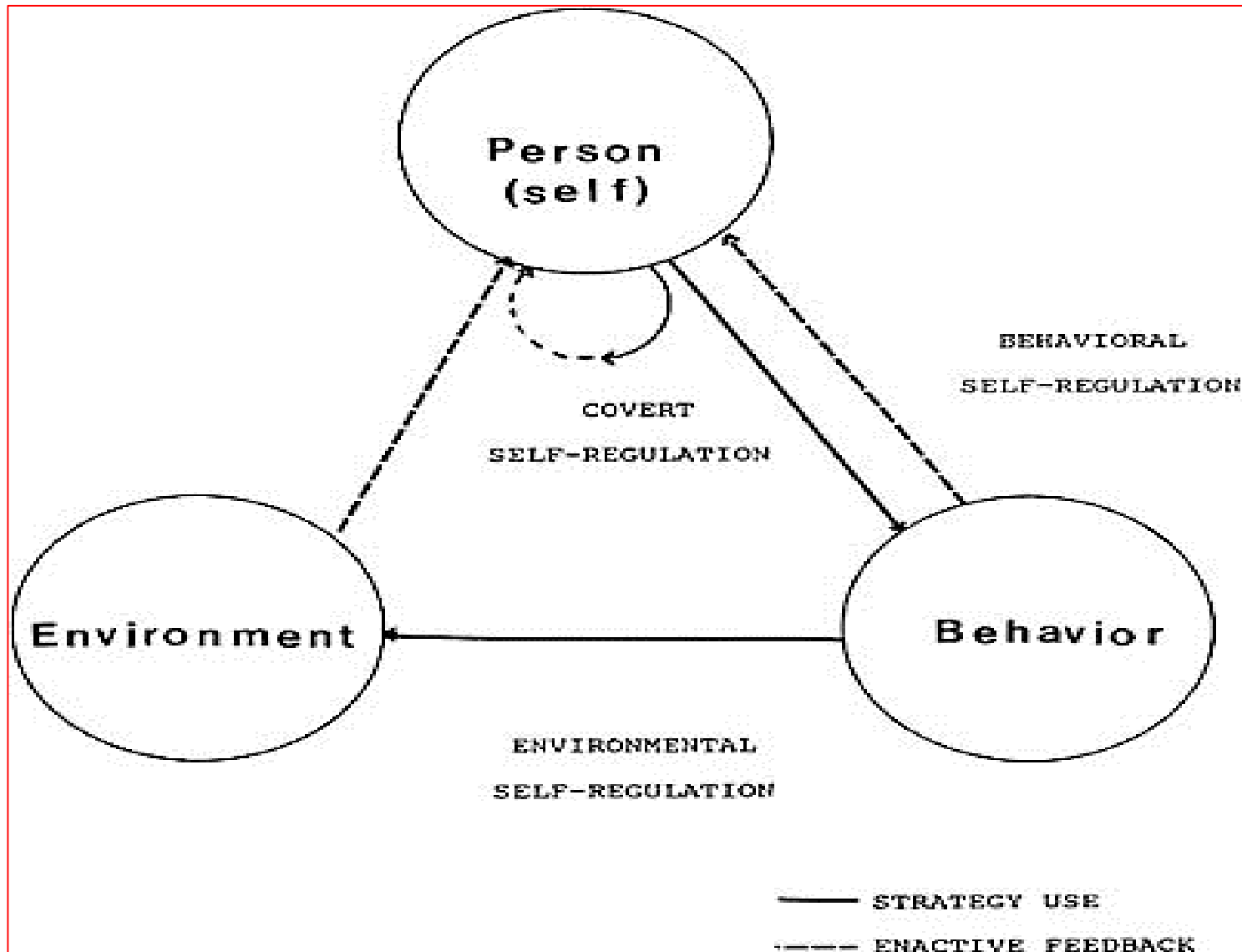
“ you just run up the stairs, print it, and head out, you know, if you’re in a hurry. ”

“So distracting, because everyone keeps walking around. And [...] I’m like, “Oh, do I know this person?”

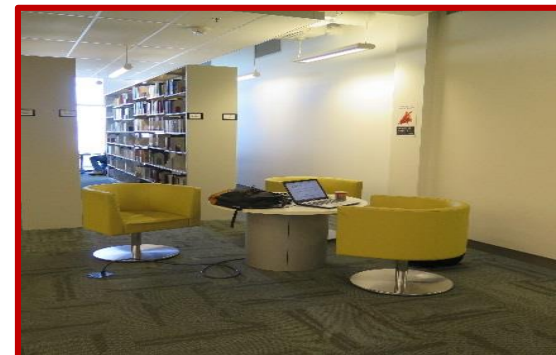
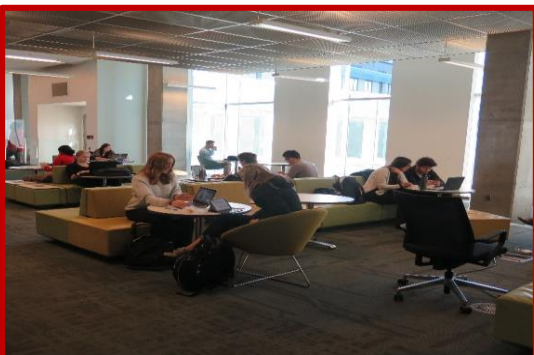
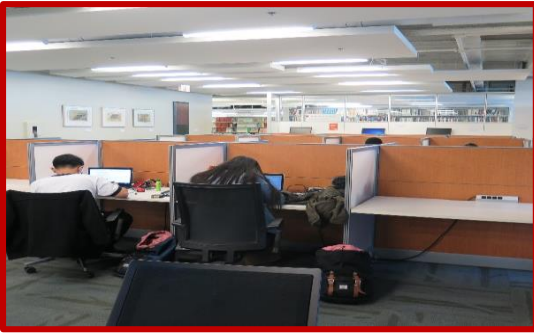
“It just feels too busy to really sit down and focus on anything.”

- **Sound and lighting:** sound most frequently mentioned, but could be either too loud or too quiet. Prefer natural lighting.
- **Distraction:** either need it or avoid it
- **Openness:** high ceilings with natural light, not isolated or confined, but not too open
- **Electrical Outlets:** needed but not critical
- **Alone or with others:** what works for them
- **Work space:** no real preference, but need “enough desk space”
- **Space definition:** Preference for spaces where “their space” was physically defined

Zimmerman: Self-regulated learning



The Value of Library Space to Students



Why do students come to the library to learn?

- Multi-Functionality: set and meet all goals
- Opportunity for space ownership and regulation
- Learning Atmosphere: mood and motivation
- Library as academic symbol: student is part of the academy

The Real Value of Library Space: AH HA moment



- The best space for students is the one that looks like it offers the opportunity for them to be successful
- Purpose and features should be obvious
- Desk space should be big enough for all their stuff, don't jam in workspaces
- Allow for privacy or space to be with others, and don't confuse the two
- Use transitional spaces to create barriers and announce change in environment

- While students' learning preference vary according to their learning style, the values that they hold about the library are universal.
- The learner will make the space their own, DESIGN SPACES THAT LET THEM DO IT.
- Seek feedback and be prepared to change

- Small study, exploratory
- Not meant to be representational
- Study of one set of students in one academic library
- Further study needed on the relationship between learning preferences/styles/behaviours and space

- Students know how and where they learn best and they choose to organize their surroundings in order to be successful.
- Because each learner seeks his or her best space for learning, our informal learning space design choices for libraries should be intentional, based on an understanding of how students learn and regulate their learning environment
- The library is an important learning space for students. We need to continue to investigate this relationship between learning and libraries and space in order to make that relationship more clear



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