



Midwinter Online Conference 2023

Session 7: It's 10pm, do you know what's happening in the library? An Exploration of Hourly Library Usage Data, by Hilary Thompson and James Spring (University of Maryland Libraries)

Q1: Do you train your student worker to record circ data?

Circulation data is recorded automatically, but we do train student employees to manually record questions asked at our two service points in RefAnalytics.

Q2: Is your library open all the time?

During most of the Fall and Spring semester, McKeldin Library is open 24 hours, from 11am on Sunday to 8pm on Friday. We are also open 10am-9pm on Saturdays. Full hours available at: <https://umd.libcal.com/hours>

Q3: Do you see a lot of activity from 12:00 - 7:00 a.m. during the fall and spring semesters?

Though less busy than weekdays and evenings, we do see good space usage and service point activity from 11pm to 2am (the first three hours of Late Night Study). At 2am the numbers really start to drop, and 2am-8am is the least active time period of any Fall/Spring day+hour combination, both for space usage and service point activity.

Q4: Who is your gate count vendor?

Sensource - <https://sensourceinc.com/>

Q5: How did administration react to changing when the library was closed?

Our Associate Dean understood and was supportive of adding a few additional closed dates on days when classes are not being taught based on the very low space usage/service point activity and staffing difficulties. To our knowledge, there have been no concerns expressed by other administrators, nor complaints from library users. While the data definitely helped us make our case, it's also likely that the many challenges we experienced during the pandemic raised awareness regarding the importance of taking time to rest, reflect, and recharge in order to avoid or mitigate burnout.

Q6: what's your minimum staffing need?

At least 3 people (one of them a staff member) between the 2 service points, so they can each be staffed and someone can leave the desk to assist users, if needed. But we aim to staff with more, especially during weekdays and weekday evenings, to avoid long queues and ensure coverage in the event of call outs.

Q7: Do you have services or is the activity just space usage?

We gathered data both for usage of our spaces (traffic and occupancy) and activity at our service points (circulation transactions and questions of all types). If this question is about whether we offered services during Late Night Study (11pm-8am), please see response in Q14 below.

Q8: have you thought of combining the two services desks

Combining them is not currently feasible given the size of each desk, and the inability to secure the first floor desk (which would be needed to store laptops and other equipment there). We would need a significant renovation to accomplish this, along with a reassessment of service models and duties. (Note: we have already combined our circulation and information desks on the first floor to form a single Library Services Desk that handles both circulation of materials and basic reference).

Q9: Did you have admin support or did you have to convince admin that data was needed? Our admin has been reluctant - I think they are afraid of what the data might show.

Our Associate Dean has been supportive of us exploring the data so that we can optimize service point staffing and so that we are prepared if/when changes in hours need to be made in response to budget constraints.

Q10: Do staff have to take vacation on those [closed] dates?

When there are closed dates that are not university employee holidays, staff work with their supervisor to determine how to adapt their work schedule for that particular week. Options vary depending on an individual's job duties and unit needs, but may include: working on alternate day(s) when the library is open; working on site while the library is closed; teleworking; or using leave. For some folks, these days are a great time to take vacation; for others, they are great opportunities to do project work, address backlogs, or focus on professional development activities.

Q11: Any tips on how to get students at service desks to record stats?

Repetition and prompting are always a good idea, we all forget things from time to time. Inviting students to prompt you is also a good way to get them to pay attention to how you handle questions. If you can, make recording stats easy - multiple choice over short answers, fewer number of questions rather than greater. Let students know that filling out the stats isn't a test, that it's getting credit for their work. No one likes "busy work", so showing the students where these stats are going and explaining how they are being analyzed and used can do wonders for your rate of recording.

Q12: How would you change your service points based on the current data you've collected?

Too soon to tell! That being said, preliminary results indicate that we should re-examine our staffing models for service points, especially during non-peak hours and summer and winter terms, to make sure we are making the best use of our student employee budget.

Q13: For these panelists as well as any who are still present in audience: I love seeing the use of all the data we have available at our fingertips - do you have methods or plans to gather end-user data (qualitative)? If so, what are they?

We do not currently have plans to gather qualitative data from end users, but think it would be a great idea to do so prior to proposing any significant changes in Fall or Spring library hours in order to better understand the potential impact on students.

Q14: I meant to ask if you provide services after midnight? Would those services be fulfilled by student workers?

During Late Night Study, which runs from 11pm to 8am, both the 1st and 2nd floor service desks are open, staffed, and offering the same services that are available to users during the day, except for those involving consultation with a librarian or other staff with specialized expertise. Late Night Study is staffed by a manager, 2 non-exempt staff, and a few student employees. In addition to working at the service points, they also retrieve items to fill user requests and help set up for any special events scheduled for the following day.

Q15: Any thoughts on obtaining e-resources data - could use EzProxy data to see who is using the library remotely or even in house Any thoughts on obtaining e-resources data - could use EzProxy data to see who is using the library remotely or even in house

We have not yet considered or explored e-resources data, but this is a very interesting idea, especially with regard to who is using digital library collections onsite and when. It aligns with our desire to gather hourly usage data for public computers, printers, and wifi, all of which will help us to better understand when and how the library is being used.

Q16: Do you share the stats with Administration Units? If so, how do you do that? - e.g. presentation?

We plan to share this data with library administrators once we've established trends across at least two academic years following the full reopening of the main library. Rather than share all the data (it's a lot!), we would present specific data visualizations that illustrate why we are recommending a change in hours and/or to support a funding request. This could be done as a presentation and/or a brief report.

Q17: are full time staff present 24/5 or only student workers

Staff members are present 24/5 at the main library, along with student employees