
Hours themes from 2011 Space study

General themes

- “More Library Hours” was a universal theme which resonated across the different data streams that were incorporated into this study
- From the data collected, the community desires:
 - Extended library hours to accommodate earlier hours on the weekends
 - Extended library hours to accommodate later hours in the evenings
 - More access to 24/7 spaces that can accommodate group *and* individual quiet study
- The survey comments and flip chart responses contained many positive comments about the libraries. A preliminary review of the comments suggests that the MIT Libraries’ physical spaces continue to serve a necessary and valued role within MIT’s education and research enterprise

Study context

- Seven days of observational data, three days of task inventory surveys, free text comments, and a variety of transactional data from Aleph, Request Tracker and elsewhere presents us with a starting point from which to broadly consider user needs for access to library spaces and improvements to library hours.
- Quantitative, qualitative and spatial data were captured in order to answer questions about library spaces and hours from multiple angles. The data streams include information from members of the community who visited one or more MIT Libraries’ space one or more times during the study period, members of the community who did not enter a library space during the study period are not represented.
- The information gathered through this study should be considered as the visible tip of a large, subsurface iceberg.

Future steps to better align library hours with MIT community needs

- Increase capacity for 24/7 space to support individual and group work.
- Extend weekend hours to open earlier at Barker, Dewey, Hayden and Rotch.
- Extend Monday-Thursday evening hours at Barker and/or Hayden.
- Continue FY11 hours at Lewis Music Library through FY12 without changes.

1. Task Inventory Survey

responses-Quantitative:

- Users were asked about their activities in the library, use of library space and equipment, and which library hours would help them in their work at MIT
- Approximately ~880 users responded.
- See “A-Task Survey Question #5”

Findings:

- Responses to “which additional library hours would be most useful to you” varied slightly by location
 - Dewey, Hayden and Rotch all had the highest preference for Before 1pm on Saturday & Sunday; For Barker, it was the second highest preference.
 - Barker’s highest preference was for After 11pm, Monday-Thursday; this was the second highest preference for Hayden and Rotch users.
 - Dewey users’ second highest preference was After 6pm on Fridays.
- The survey captured extensive data about users’ activities in library spaces, such as working on an individual or group assignment, academic research, use of library resources via the web, or use of library materials or equipment. This complementary information can inform planning for improvements to 24/7 or staffed library spaces.

2. Task Inventory Survey

responses--Qualitative:

- Free text comments were captured, then coded in Evernote software and visualized as a “word cloud.”
- **See “B-Task Survey Comments Wordle”**

Findings:

- Not surprisingly, given the question, library hours were a frequent topic of free text comments in the Task Inventory Survey and the open ended Flip Chart questions.
- The desire for 24/7 study space was a related theme.
 - *“...If it’s closed, make it accessible with MIT student ID cards. Students can access books, comps, printers, study spaces without need for library staff during off-hours.”—MIT Grad Student @ Hayden*
 - *“...I feel that in an institute as MIT, more study rooms should be open 24/7 and libraries should be open from 9am to 11pm on weekends and holidays as well.”—MIT Grad Student @ Rotch*
 - *“Hours are really are limiting factors for library use. MIT students are in class/lab for most of them, I feel, some extra late night/weekend hours on top of normal weekday hrs would be nice.”—MIT Undergraduate (year 3) @ Hayden*

3. Observational data- Quantitative:

- Users were observed in our spaces at 11am, 4pm, and 7pm over 7 observation days
- Users with and without laptops were counted on each library floor
- **See “C-Observation Data”**

Findings:

- A grand total of 3,700 users were counted and mapped across Barker, Dewey, Hayden, Lewis and Rotch libraries during the seven observation days.
- The first floor of Hayden was the busiest single floor, with 793 users observed over the course of all 7 days. Barker’s main floor followed next with 587 users observed.
- Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday were the busiest days of the week for the library system.
- 4PM represented the busiest of the three daily observation times.
- Laptop usage varied across library locations, individual floors, and observation times. Laptop usage in Dewey was highest and averaged 69% but was as high as 80% during some of the observation times.
- As a point of comparison, 58% of the Task Inventory Survey respondents reported using their own laptop when asked about the equipment they used during their visit to the library.

4. Observational data- Spatial:

- Users were observed in our spaces at 11am, 4pm, and 7pm over 7 observation days
- Locations were marked on maps, which were entered into GIS software
- **See “D-3D Images”** for details

Findings:

- While the spatial data does not directly inform decision making about library hours, the data illustrates areas of high saturation and low use within individual library spaces over multiple days.
 - The Hayden 24/7 room is utilized when the library is open and closed. The room is often at or near capacity.
 - The Barker reading room is another area of high saturation, but only accessible when the library is open.
 - Videos have been prepared of the main floor of each space to illustrate where users are situated over the three daily observation times, and the usage of laptop computers within the spaces.
 - **To view the videos**, see: <https://wikis.mit.edu/confluence/x/8RiCB>

5. Flip Chart open ended questions (Qualitative)

Findings:

- Collection of flip chart comments is not yet complete.

6. Ask Us! Trends:

- Gathered transaction data from Request Tracker to compare the times when Ask Us! Requests are submitted against observational data
- **See “E-Hourly Ask Us Data”**

Findings:

- Ask Us! requests can be initiated by users at any time, and they do.
 - Ask Us! trends showed some similarities to Task Inventory responses and comments, as well as Circulation Trends.
 - Activity is high during the daytime, continues through 11pm and 2am.
 - These Ask Us! time trends are consistent across multiple semesters and fiscal years.
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7. Circulation Trends:

- Circulation data was gathered to compare to observational data
- **See “F-Hourly Circulation Data”**

Findings:

- Circulation trends mirrored Task Inventory Survey responses and free text comments about early morning and late night access. Circulation data shows peaks in transactions at the same times.
- The observations of users in our spaces indicated fewer users in our spaces at 7pm than at 4pm or 11am. This circulation data showed a similar trend, with an ebb in circulation activity after 5pm, and upward trends in circulation activity after 9pm prior to closing.
- Self-service renewals peaked during daytime hours, ebbed after 5, and then trended upward through 11pm. There is an additional spike in Your Account activity at 2am, which mirrors some of the Ask Us! trends.
- Reserves use at Hayden indicates that users have adapted their patterns around current library hours. Use of Hayden reserves peaks early in the day, ebbs, and later increases again closer to closing time.

8. Gate Counts

- Gate counter data was collected daily during the study period.
- Users waiting for entry at opening, and users asked to leave 15 minutes before closing were also counted.

Findings:

- The estimated aggregate gate count across the library system during the study period was 14,993. In contrast, 3,700 users were observed across the study period.
- Across multiple days and locations, the number of users observed by staff represents an average 25% of the gate counts for the same period of time.
- An average of 6 users were counted waiting for entry across the library system over the seven observation days and five locations. An average of 12 users were counted in a library space within 15 minutes of closing.
- On Fridays, 122 users were in a library space or 24/7 study room within 15 minutes of closing.
- On Sundays, 60 users were waiting for entry or in a 24/7 study room at opening.
- Hayden had the highest opening and closing counts, in addition to having the highest gate counts across the system.

9. Hours benchmarking

- Consulted websites of ~30 libraries from local and national peer institutions
- **See “G- Benchmark Hours at Peer Institutions”**

Findings:

- MIT Libraries Average Weekly Hours (Monday-Friday) at Barker, Dewey, Hayden and Rotch *combined* is 79 hours per week.
 - Many peers, such as Michigan, Duke, Boston College, Brown and others, offer 100+ hours per week.
 - The overall average of Monday-Friday hours across the ~30 benchmark libraries was 121 hours/week.
 - Most of the benchmarked libraries with hours similar to MIT’s were individual or discipline-specific libraries that were part of a larger campus system, such as Cornell’s Law Library or Stanford’s Engineering Library.
 - Harvard’s Widener Library has a weekly average of 78 hours per week, making it MIT’s closest peer. Widener Library is part of the larger Harvard system, which includes 24/5 staffed hours at Lamont Library and additional hours at other campus library facilities.
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