Add It Up: Using Data to Make Informed Spatial Decisions

Lynné Colbert
*Marian University - Indianapolis*, lcolbert@marian.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://mushare.marian.edu/ls_pubs

Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

**Recommended Citation**

https://mushare.marian.edu/ls_pubs/12
Add It Up: Using Data to Make Informed Spatial Decisions

Lynné Colbert, Access Services Librarian
Mother Theresa Hackelmeier Memorial Library, Marian University

INTRODUCTION
In 2016, Marian University’s library began collecting data on how patrons utilized our building. We conducted student surveys, held focus groups, and collected spatial data using Suma, an open-source assessment toolkit.

In 2019, in response to the student surveys, the library began upgrades to our building including new furniture and additional technology. We utilized results from Suma studies to make evidence-based decisions about where to focus our improvements.

ABOUT SUMA
• Suma is an open-source mobile web-based assessment toolkit for collecting and analyzing observational data about the usage of physical spaces.
• Suma was created by NC State to assist in collecting data in areas traditionally difficult to access such as use of physical space.
• Suma provides data analysis and visualization capabilities to aid in space design and day-to-day planning.

OVERVIEW
For one week in the spring, student workers used Suma to conduct an hour-by-hour assessment of how individuals used the library during a representative week. We repeated the process in Fall 2019 after upgrades were made to determine if there were changes in usage.

DATA COLLECTED
• Areas most utilized
• Student carrel usage
• Overall computer usage
• Computer usage by area

DATA USAGE
The information we gathered from these assessments have been used to make informed decisions about the following:
• Hours
• Furniture improvements and placement
• Technology arrangements
• Location of noise cancelling devices

CONSIDERATIONS
• When picking a typical week, pick one away from midterms, finals, and holidays.
• Changing physical locations of items means comparisons may not be consistent from year to year.
• Clearly define areas to assess, choose logical names, and create a map to help those collecting data know boundaries.
• Data results in Suma do not easily connect activity with space use. Further data manipulation may be required.

RESULTS
Results from our Suma assessment indicated study tables and collaboration spaces were a priority because of their high usage. We updated tables and chairs in these areas. After the improvements, we saw a nearly 7% increase in usage of those areas. The collaboration space on the second floor, already a popular area, saw an 8.75% increase in usage.

Through our computer usage assessment, we determined we could reduce the number of machines and repurpose some of that space on the first floor. We were able to install a virtual reality unit in that area, expanding the type of technology available in the library.

CONCLUSION
Initial Suma assessment shows the improvements we made lead to increased usage of the building. Fall data results are encouraging, but to get a better assessment of the impact, we will track usage again in the spring to make a more accurate comparison.