

Why Did You Choose This Seat?

Days of the study: Five days, November 19th-23rd 2019

Number of respondents: 368

Population: Open to any user of the library

Format: Paper survey, available at any seat

Type: Multiple choice and a free write section

Method: Surveys asking “why did you choose this seat” were distributed at all seating areas of the library. At different intervals of the day, a student worker or librarian would pick up any surveys that were completed and replace it with a blank survey. Completed surveys were put into an excel spreadsheet (via LibWizard).

Data:

Table 1.

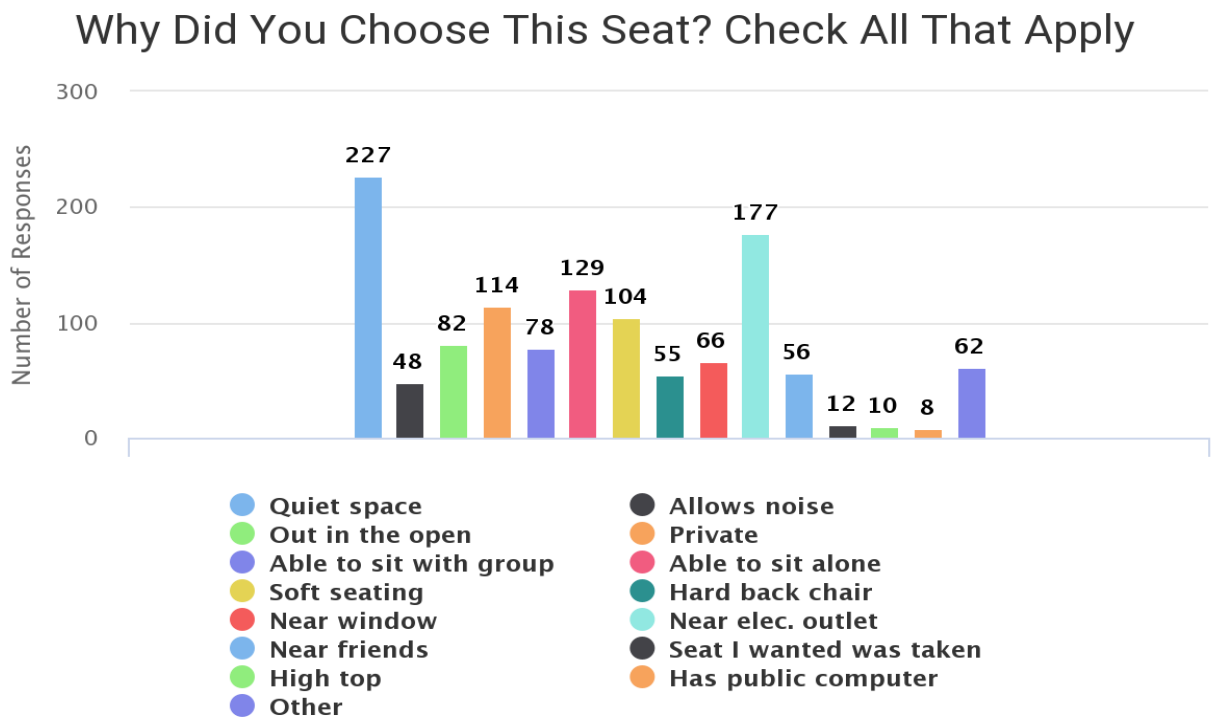


Chart legend should be read left to right

Table 2.

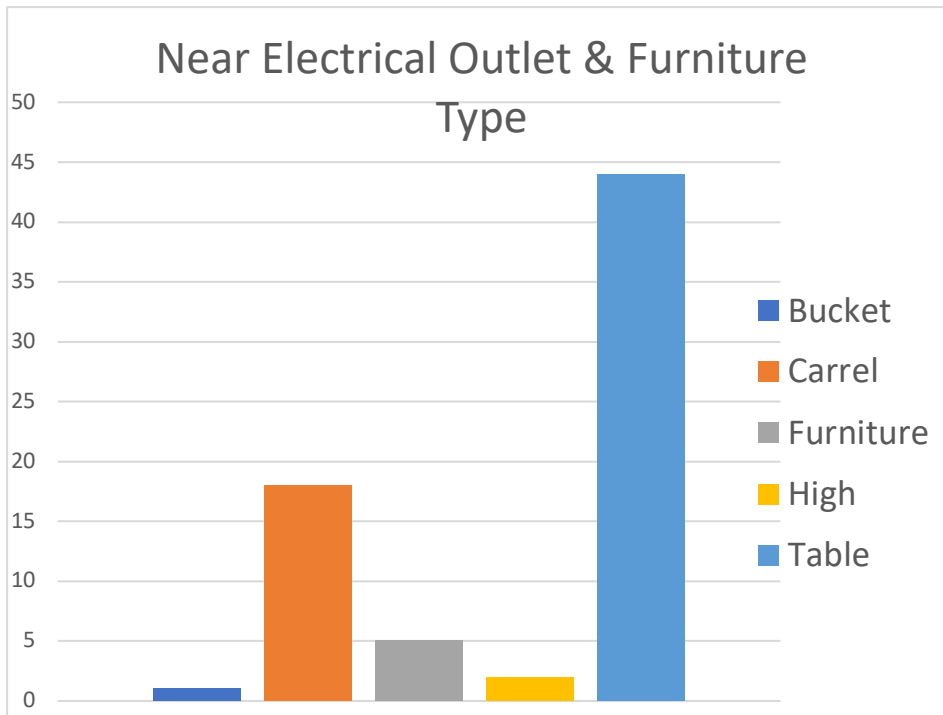


Table 3.

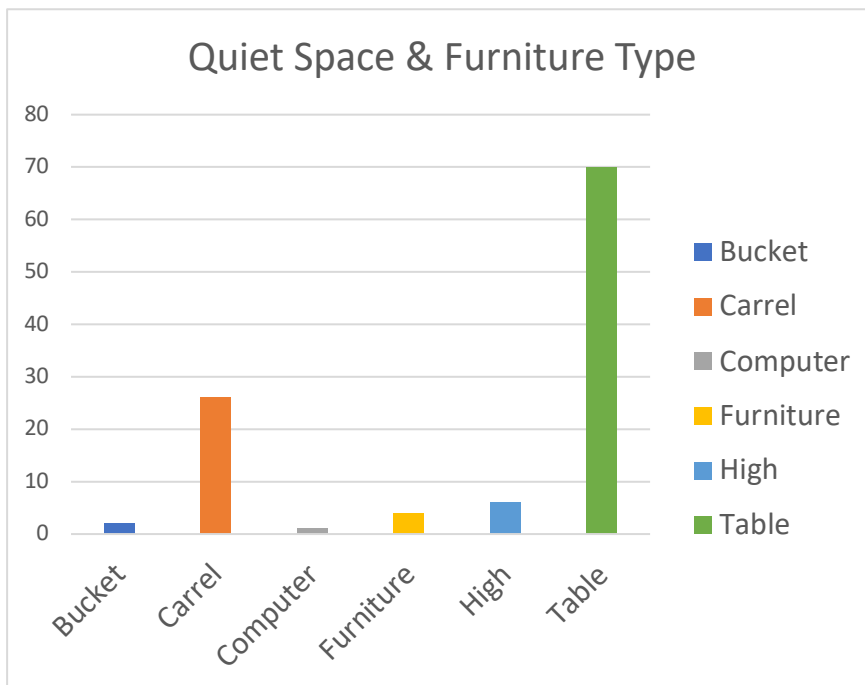


Table 4.

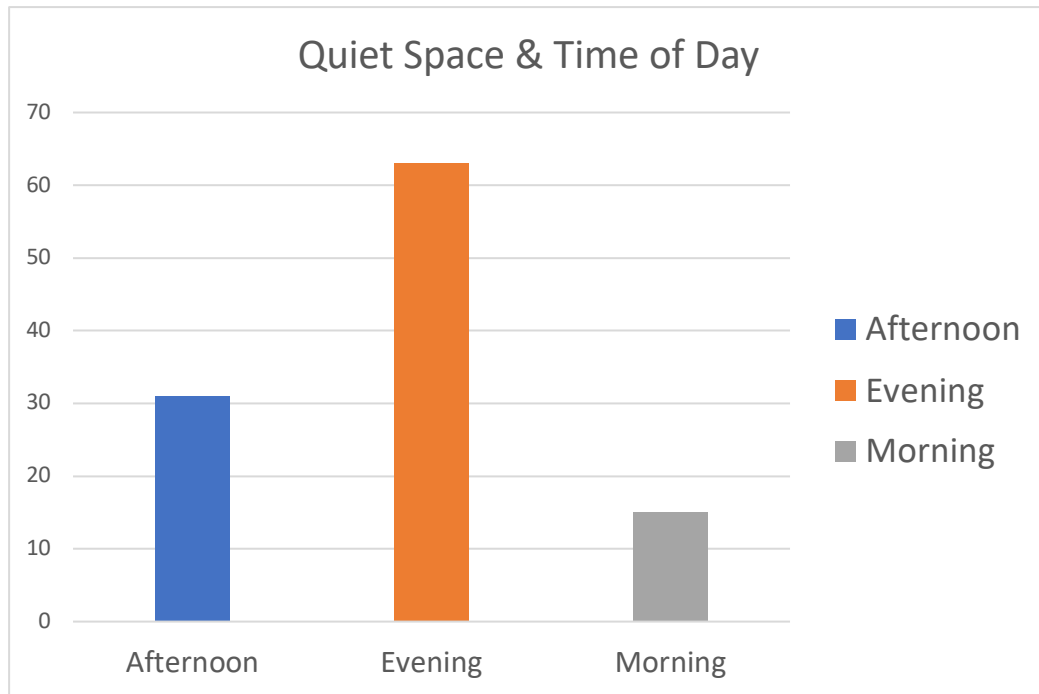


Table 5.
Student recommendations for ideal library space

Describe your ideal study space in the Library	% total
Quiet	49%
Near electrical outlet	32%
Comfortable seats	27%
Natural Light/Window	23%
Tables	21%
Private	14%
Group Seating	8%
White Boards	5%
Cubicles	5%
Allows noise	5%
Out in the open	4%

Table 6.

Areas of Improvement	% total
Food/Drink options (most want it to be free)	5%
More seating	5%
Temperature (most said building too hot)	4%
Computers or monitors	3%
Dunkin Donuts hours	2%
More printers	2%

256 responses

Discussion of the Data:

Quiet space is the top consideration for students choosing a seat followed closely by being near an electrical outlet. However, significant number of respondents want privacy, open space seating, ability to sit alone and with a group. At first this might seem contradictory, but students require a variety of seating options depending on the work that they're doing. Additionally, when looking into the write in comments we can see that students' notion of privacy is perhaps more nuanced than we suspect. For instance, one respondent said they chose their seat because it was "Out in open because I goof off in study rooms. I need other people nearby so I can focus and be productive." Another said that they like a "large table that I can either sit alone or with friends." One representative respondent said he/she "likes the cubicle set up so will not get distracted," demonstrating that furniture type influences perceptions of privacy. Additionally, respondents said they like to be able to "people watch." We can surmise that privacy does not mean isolation and can be accomplished by furniture type and/or position. We can see a higher demand for quiet space in the evenings.

Our data showed a majority of students selected a table. This might not seem significant since this is our most plentiful furniture type but respondent comments indicate a preference for seating where they can "spread out". As we can see in Table 2, even though they are prioritizing being near an electrical outlet, they are still choosing a table as their furniture choice.

Write in responses also indicate proximity to facilities, technology, and tools influence seat choice. Many respondents cited whiteboards as a factor in their choice, and other technology such as HDMI monitors. Respondents want to be near a source of food or drink. And, overwhelmingly want to be near an outlet. One representative respondent said "Outlets are a must." Respondents also chose their seat based on its proximity to other facilities in the building such as bathrooms and the math center.

One surprise in the data is the degree to which respondents value aesthetic considerations. They cited natural light, high ceilings, proximity to artwork, and "good atmosphere" as factors for seat choice.

Recommendations:

Easy fixes: [Interventions that can be implemented with little resource investment]

1. Vending machines on each floor
2. We can do more in terms of advertising our chargers for phones and computers.
3. Budget for more whiteboards

Long term planning: [Interventions that require monetary or staffing resources, or significant alterations to workflow]

1. Any future furniture configurations or purchases need to provide immediate access to power.
2. Any changes we make should follow already established student patterns and preferences.
3. Consider building quiet space for cell phone use.
4. Students need variable space for different kinds of work thus a variety of furniture should be purchased.

Crazy idea?: [What would we do with this data if money, time, and staff were limitless?]

1. Open a branch of Tully in the library.
2. Every piece of furniture is powered or accessible to an outlet.