Killam Library Space Assessment: Question Slips & Touchstone Tours

HIGHLIGHTED FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS
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Background

The Killam Library Question Slips Study, conducted during the last 3 weeks of March 2019, came out of a recommendation of the 2018 Observation Study accepted by the Senior Leadership Team. Questions were designed for each study space in the library, aside from the First Floor group study rooms, room G70, and the doorless study rooms on the Fourth Floor. Question slips were reviewed and approved by Sarah Stevenson, Janice Slauenwhite and Michael Moosberger and were tested on a few student volunteers. Access Services staff members Kyoo Lee, Nancy Melvin, Irene Kuhirwa, and Nellie Clyke, along with Joan Chiasson and Gwen MacNairn assisted with the daily distribution of the question slips (on tables and desk tops) and the retrieval of completed slips from the drop boxes located near exits. Facilities Management staff, Arlene and Mary graciously collected completed slips as well. Two library summer interns, Nicole Marcoux and Nicole Slip, coded the responses and wrote draft summaries.

Nine touchstone tours (a student was the tour guide, and the observer – Lachlan MacLeod/Linda Bedwell - was the participant) were conducted with student volunteers who responded to the invitation embedded in the question slips. These tours were audio recorded, Carol Richardson transcribed them, and Killam intern and assessment reading course student, Katie Blythe, summarized this data.

This report synthesizes all the collected data and draws relationships between data from all the study spaces. The main focus is on the question slip data with references to the touchstone tours. Many of the findings mentioned in this report were also captured in the 2018 Observation Study, adding veracity to these findings. Thirteen recommendations arise from the data analysis and another twelve arise from respondents' direct feedback.

The entire collection of question slip and touchstone tour data and subreports is extensive. This report aims to draw the essential and actionable findings together in a succinct document; however, the reader is encouraged to view the Question Slips Study Space Results Summaries report and the Touchstone Tour Findings Summary found in the OneDrive report folder. Original question slips and touchstone tour outlines may be viewed here as well. Raw data is available upon request.

Demographics

The graphs on the next two pages show question slip respondents' user group and area of study for each study space. (Totals can fall below or exceed 100% as respondents could skip the question or provide multiple answers.)

The following areas of study are represented in the respondent group: Architecture & Planning, Arts & Social Sciences, Computer Science, Engineering, Health, King's Journalism, Law, Management, Medicine, and Science. Oddly, there were no Music students among the Music Collection respondents.
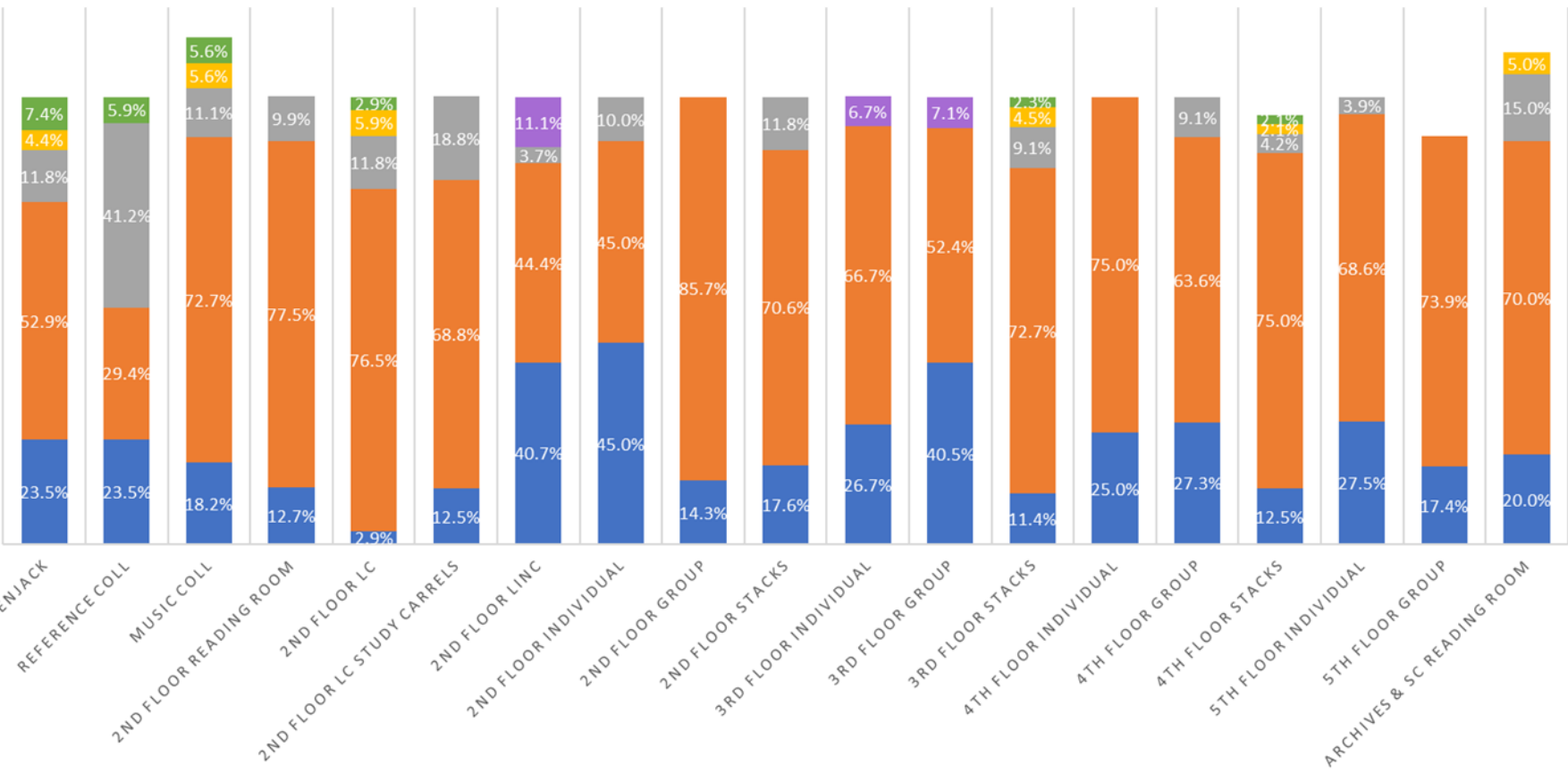
First year undergraduates, later year undergraduates, graduates, faculty, staff, and high school students are all represented in the respondent group. Interestingly, high school respondents were only present in the LINC and in the Third Floor atrium hallways – areas where there were no faculty respondents. Faculty respondents were only present in the Downie Wenjack Learning Commons (DWLC), the Music Collection, the stacks, and the Archives & Special Collections (A&SC) Reading Room.

Individual/Collaborative/Communal Work

Communal work (working together but focusing on their separate work) was very common overall. See the graph on page 5. One thing to note is the "bleed" of collaborative work into quiet areas designated for individual work. (This was also noted in the Observation Study.) Several of these respondents reported they had no choice as there was no group seating available elsewhere.

RESPONDENT USER GROUPS

Legend: ■ First-year UG ■ Later-year UG ■ Grad ■ Faculty ■ High school ■ Other

Location	First-year UG	Later-year UG	Grad	Faculty	High school	Other
DOWNIE WENJACK	23.5%	52.9%	11.8%	4.4%		7.4%
REFERENCE COLL	23.5%	29.4%	41.2%			5.9%
MUSIC COLL	18.2%	72.7%	11.1%	5.6%		5.6%
2ND FLOOR READING ROOM	12.7%	77.5%	9.9%			
2ND FLOOR LC	2.9%	76.5%	11.8%	5.9%		2.9%
2ND FLOOR LC STUDY CARRELS	12.5%	68.8%	18.8%			
2ND FLOOR LINC	40.7%	44.4%	3.7%		11.1%	
2ND FLOOR INDIVIDUAL	45.0%	45.0%	10.0%			
2ND FLOOR GROUP	14.3%	85.7%				
2ND FLOOR STACKS	17.6%	70.6%	11.8%			
3RD FLOOR INDIVIDUAL	26.7%	66.7%			6.7%	
3RD FLOOR GROUP	40.5%	52.4%			7.1%	
3RD FLOOR STACKS	11.4%	72.7%	9.1%	4.5%		2.3%
4TH FLOOR INDIVIDUAL	25.0%	75.0%				
4TH FLOOR GROUP	27.3%	63.6%	9.1%			
4TH FLOOR STACKS	12.5%	75.0%	4.2%	2.1%		2.1%
5TH FLOOR INDIVIDUAL	27.5%	68.6%	3.9%			
5TH FLOOR GROUP	17.4%	73.9%				
ARCHIVES & SC READING ROOM	20.0%	70.0%	15.0%	5.0%		

RESPONDENT AREAS OF STUDY

Legend: Arch & Plan, Arts & SS, Comp Sci, Engineering, Health, King's Journalism, Law, Mgmt, Medicine, Science
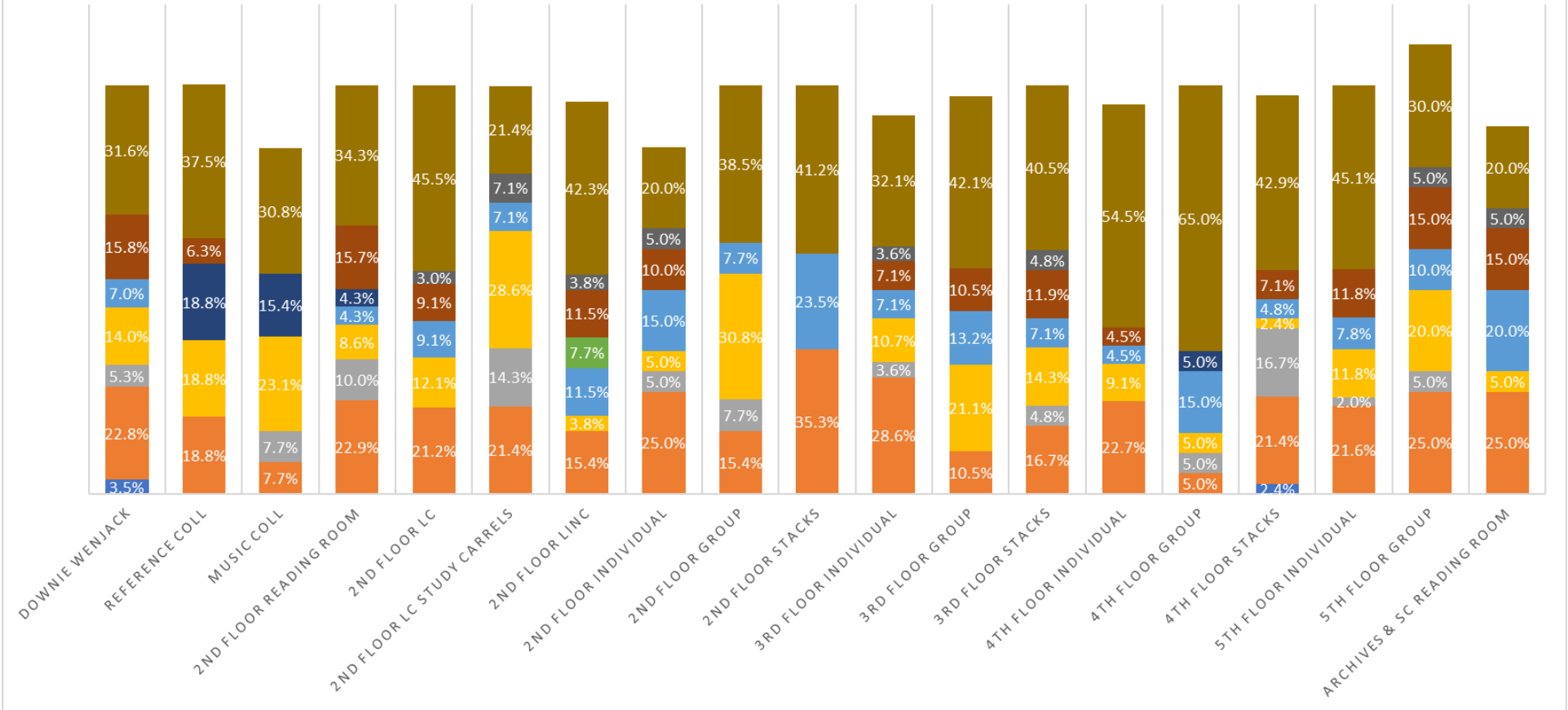
INDIVIDUAL/COLLABORATIVE/COMMUNAL WORK

■ Individual ■ Collaborative ■ Communal
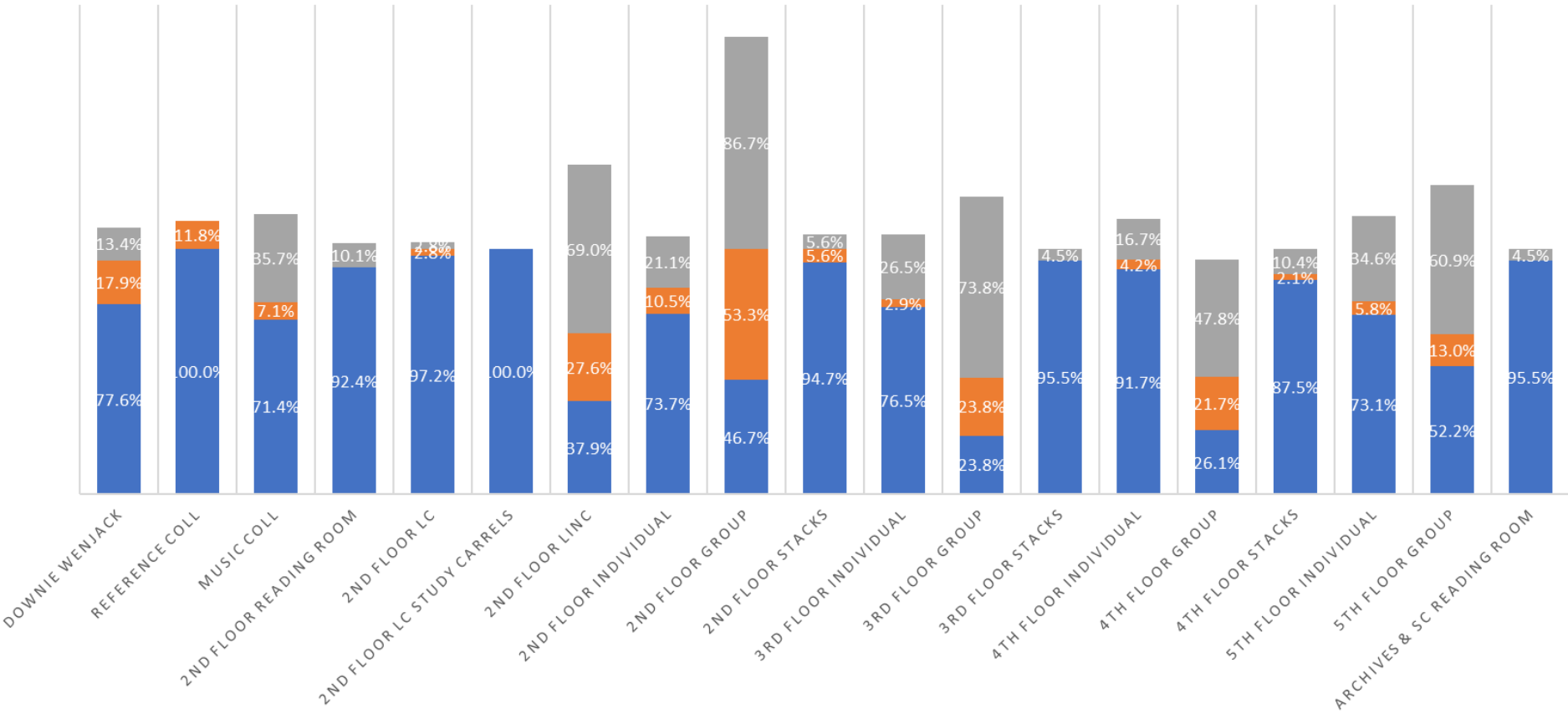
While the Second Floor Reading Room, LC and study carrels reported nearly 100% individual work, the First Floor DWLC and Music Collection show higher percentages of collaborative and communal work (although the Reference Collection reported 100% individual work with these respondents indicating that they worked collaboratively at times).

In terms of collaborative work in the atrium hallways, the Second Floor respondents reported the highest saturation of collaborative work. On the Fifth Floor, there was less collaborative work and more communal work reported instead.

In terms of what is happening specifically at group tables in the atrium hallways, all floors reported more communal work than any other kind, with the Second Floor reporting the highest rate at 86.7%. Communal work at the group tables, rather than collaborative work, was also a common comment among the touchstone tour student-guides. There is also a lot of individual work at the group tables, the highest rates reported on the Second and Fifth Floors – 46.7% and 52.2%, compared to only about 1/4 of respondents on the Third and Fourth. In terms of actual group work at group tables, the Second Floor reported the highest rate (53.3%), the least was the Fifth Floor (13.0%), while close to 1/4 of the respondents were doing groupwork on the Third and Fourth. Recommendations related to these findings are listed under the "Redesignating Spaces" section of this report.

Purpose of Visit

A variety of reasons were given for their visit but the most common were "studying" or "assignment", "studying" being the top reason for all locations except both LCs and Second Floor group tables. Computer work correlates with "assignment" being the top reason for the LCs, and the collaborative/communal work of the Second Floor group tables also appears to correlate with assignment work being the most common form of work there.

Those who were relaxing/reading were mostly found in the stacks and atrium hallway individual seating. Printing is happening from all over the building. Access to outlets was also a very common reason for visits. (The reader is encouraged to consult the Question Slips Study Space Results Summaries report for details of responses for each space.)

Length of Stay

Duration of use varied across the library spaces and the reader is encouraged to view the findings for each space in the space summaries report. Worthy of highlighting here is that shorter stays were reported in the DWLC. This was also noted in the Observation Study.

Why did you choose this space?

Respondents provided reasons specific to each area, but one common theme ran throughout all spaces, aside from the DWLC: noise level. Touchstone tour guides also mentioned noise level as the primary factor in choosing their study spaces, whether it be based on the requirements of their task or on their general personal preferences.

Aside from noise level, features cited that were specific to each area included computers in the LCs; privacy/isolation/no distractions in the stacks; collaborative/communal workspaces at the group tables; the amount of work space at the group tables, in the Reference Collection, Music Collection and Second Floor Reading Room; and the natural light in the Second Floor LC & Reading Room and at individual tables in the atrium hallways.

This project inadvertently gathered some evidence that those working individually appreciate natural light, while those working in groups didn't mention it when asked what they liked about the spaces they were working in (which had natural light). Also, nearly 60% of Second Floor Reading Room users did not mention the stacks (very little natural light) when asked what other areas provided a similar study environment, while natural light was their second most frequent reason for choosing to work in that space.

➢ **Recommendation 1:** If an opportunity arises to free up the space currently occupied by stacks, then consider designating this as collaborative space, given the need for group space and the lack of natural light.

(The reader is encouraged to consult the space summaries document for details of responses for each space.)

Quiet Policy Awareness

Respondents were asked if they were aware of the specific quiet policy in the area they were seated and to provide their definition of "silent" or "quiet" (whichever applied).

In the 8 "silent" areas studied, there was excellent awareness that a silent policy was in place - 94% to 100% of respondents in these areas said they were aware - except for the cubicles in the Second Floor LC for which 81% of respondents stated they were aware. When providing their definitions of "silent", 71% of the respondents in the Reference Collection went above and beyond the Libraries' definition. Fairly small percentages of respondents in the remaining areas (13%-22%) offered up definitions that were louder, although 31% of the Fourth Floor Stacks respondents gave a louder definition as did 50% of Second Floor LC cubicle users.

When it came to the quiet policies in the remaining 10 areas, the users of the Fifth Floor stand out as being the most unclear - only 65% of both the group table and individual table respondents were aware of the combined quiet policy specific to that floor [collaborative study until 5pm (i.e., audible discussion permitted) and quiet study after 5pm]. Several touchstone tour student-guides also did not know the policy had changed on the Fifth Floor despite being regular users and several mentioned their belief that the floors got quieter as you went up. Aside from the Fifth Floor, 86%-100% of respondents were aware of their quiet policy.

The Fifth Floor respondents were asked their opinion of the combined policy. Of the individual table users, there was a 50/50 split of positive and negative comments. 10.2% said the policy should be on a different floor and another 10.2% said that the policy wasn't being followed so it didn't matter. At the group tables, 45.5% were positive about the policy, 40.9% were negative, 13.6% said it didn't matter because it wasn't being followed, and 9.1% wanted more collaborative time. A recommendation related to these findings is listed under the "Redesignating Space" section.

As for their definitions of quiet, many in all areas gave a definition quieter than the policy. More than one touchstone tour student-guide mentioned "if the next table can hear you, you are being so

(sic) loud". The worst area would be the Music Collection with 46% of respondents confessing that they were not clear on what the quiet policy meant.

In the Second Floor Reading Room, a touchstone tour student-guide recounted their experience the morning of their tour:

> "Actually, this morning there was someone who came into that room 2902 and she caused a very large scene getting in there and I don't think she had any regard to the fact that it was a quiet room. She came in and said I don't know where I need to be, you need to show me. I was like nobody needs to show you anything man, you need to be quiet."

A recommendation was included in the Observation Study Report to remind staff of the quiet policy in this room but we need to be more cognizant of the confusion guests may encounter in accessing this room which may then cause them to be disruptive.

> ➢ **Recommendation 2:** Add silent study space signage to the cubicles in the Second Floor Learning Commons. Awareness of the policy was very low compared to other silent areas.

> ➢ **Recommendation 3:** Accompany new visitors to meeting room 2902 to avoid disrupting the quiet in the Second Floor Reading Room.

Workstation + Laptop Use

Prompted by observations in the 2018 study, a question was included to determine the rate of combined workstation and laptop use. 24.2% of workstation users in the two LCs were also using a laptop at the same time. While other folks left comments venting their frustrations at this behaviour, these workstation + laptop users gave reasons including ergonomics, desk space, multi-tasking, requiring software on the workstations and having access to the screens and keyboards. In answer to the question "what is an ideal setting for laptop use?", responses included: large work surface, outlet access, a phone charging station, and appropriate lighting.

> ➢ **Recommendation 4:** Pilot laptop stations – ergonomic workspaces with large work surface, multiple outlets and screens to plug into – in various locations in the library. Monitor use and increase with demand. This was tentatively suggested in the Observation Study Report and is now a firm recommendation.

Ergonomics

The area that reported the most satisfaction with ergonomics was the Second Floor LINC with 92.8% of respondents saying the space was ergonomic. 63.6% were specifically positive about the chairs and there were some comments on the overall adaptability of the space. The worst area was the Second Floor LC with only 44.1% feeling the space was ergonomic. There were mixed reviews of the tables and chairs. Mixed reviews were also given during the touchstone tours. One student-guide appreciated the adjustable and wheeled chairs, another mentioned that the Reading Room desks were too low, and being tall, they couldn't adjust the chair too far down or their knees would be too high, contributing to back pain. "Then if the chair is too high, the desk is too low, then I'm hunched as heck over like this guy here on this computer." This student-guide felt that the desks in the

computer area seem better and confessed to using them for that reason and not using the computer. Another student-guide pointed out that the chairs in the Reading Room were better than the chairs in the atrium hallways. The DWLC also received poor ergonomic reviews (only 58.8% were satisfied). There were several comments about the chairs not being adjustable and some problems with keyboards missing legs.

Other problem areas were the A&SC Reading Room and the Third Floor Stacks with only 47.6% feeling each space was ergonomic. Both tables and chairs received negative reviews and the point was raised in the Third Floor Stacks that the floor isn't level and since there are wheels on the chairs, they roll when the sitter doesn't intend for the chair to move. This was also mentioned by Fourth Floor respondents and was also reported in the Observation Study. The A&SC Reading Room has received new furniture since this question slip study.

> **Recommendation 5:** Pilot larger individual tables in individual use areas. Monitor use and increase with demand.

> **Recommendation 6:** Pilot adjustable standing desks in individual use areas. Monitor use and increase with demand.

> **Recommendation 7:** Pilot adjustable desks and chairs (both desk and chair adjustable) in various locations in the library. Monitor use, gather feedback, and increase if demand and feedback support.

Laptop Loaning Interest

There was some, but not an overwhelming interest in a laptop lending program. Of all respondents in all areas, 11.4% said they were interested, 63.8% responded no, and 24.8% said maybe/unsure. It was suggested at the time to be cautious with the number of laptops purchased for the loan program.

Leaving Belongings/"Camping"

Nearly one-third of group table respondents had definite plans of leaving their belongings for a period of time – 69.7% for the purpose of eating. Several confessed that it was to save the spot because the group tables are "like gold in Dawson City during the gold rush" (a problem also mentioned by touchstone tour student-guides). Several mentioned that friends would keep an eye on their belongings. This question wasn't asked in other areas but a touchstone tour student-guide revealed that they feel safe leaving their belongings in the Second Floor Reading Room "because there is constantly people in the room and I feel there is always at least two people that I know. I can see two people that I know already in here … okay three."

Awareness of Other Spaces

The 2018 Observation Study indicated that some areas appeared underused, prompting a question about user awareness of other study areas similar to the area they were currently using. Based on responses, awareness of alternative study spaces seems to be limited overall. Respondents in the

DWLC and Reference Collection did not mention the Second Floor LC when asked about similar spaces. The A&SC Reading Room was not mentioned by the Second Floor Reading Room respondents, or the Second, Third and Fourth Floor individual table respondents, and by very few in the stacks. Study rooms and the LINC were not mentioned by groups using individual spaces. A touchstone tour student-guide stated that the LINC was the only spot they could think of for group work. Several of the student-guides mentioned their habits of using the same space and seemed to lack awareness of similar options.

➢ **Recommendation 8:** To help users find the right spaces to work in and alternatives, design a "directory" that allows users to select the level of quiet they need, and the type of work they want to do (collaborative/communal or individual) with results indicating which areas support their needs. This can be on our website and as a feature of the Directory in the lobby. (This recommendation also appeared in the Observation Study Report.) This directory should be introduced to first-year students at the beginning of the academic year, before space-use habits are formed. Student feedback on space names should be gathered beforehand. For example, touchstone tour student-guides didn't seem to use or recognize the term, "stacks".

Redesignating Spaces

It is clear that more group space is needed. Groups are not finding spaces to work in and are having to work instead in "quiet" spaces, among individual users. Providing adequate space and furniture for groups will hopefully make "quiet" spaces quiet. Refreshing quiet policies will also help.

➢ **Recommendation 9:** DWLC - No form of "quiet" can be expected on the First Floor. This is the building entrance, foot traffic is abundant in all areas, there are book trucks and garbage carts, library and food services, and along with all this, a "social" feel. Users of the DWLC report "convenient", shorter visits, and non-adherence to current "quiet conversation" rules. Collaborative and communal work should be welcomed in this space with a refreshed quiet policy (e.g., "working quiet") (or no policy) and additional group tables to support it. Removing the quiet designation of the DWLC and promoting the Second Floor LC as the silent LC (see below) was tentatively suggested in the Observation Study Report and is now strongly recommended based on this study's data.

➢ **Recommendation 10:** Second Floor LC (and the Reading Room) - Promote as the silent place to work. Rename to make the purpose of the space clear. Drop "Reading Room" as very little reading is done here (15% of respondents) and simply name the entire area as one space: Silent Learning Commons (add "McNab" if we are beholden). (Touchstone tour guides didn't know the name of the space and two different guides called it the "sectionized room".) "Silent" signage should include a reference to the Shh text service.

➢ **Recommendation 11:** Second Floor Atrium Hallway - Re-designate this area as "working quiet", or similar, to support collaborative/communal work. Add group tables to the Second Floor Atrium Hallway, where possible, and/or place individual tables together to make it clear that collaborative/communal work is encouraged in this space.

➢ **Recommendation 12:** Third, Fourth, and Fifth Floor Atrium Hallways – Allow these to naturally be quieter as you go up. Limit group-sized tables on the Fourth and Fifth floors. Current "quiet conversation" policies should remain in place with signage referencing the

Shh text service. The Fifth Floor should revert back to a single "quiet conversation" policy for all hours.

➢ **Recommendation 13:** A&SC Reading Room - Promote as a quiet study space. Place welcoming signage near the entry making it clear that all quiet users are welcome. (This recommendation also appeared in the Observation Study.) Monitor this room for the best capacity to maintain the quiet and retain this number of seats. Consider renaming to reflect the activity in the room.

Direct Feedback

The following are recommendations for each area based on direct feedback (DF) provided:

➢ **DF Recommendation 1:** Downie Wenjack Learning Commons – Improve seating. Commenters requested better, more comfortable chairs, with a few mentioning the preference for wheels and a few noting the presence of older, stained chairs.

➢ **DF Recommendation 2:** Music Collection – Improve access to outlets.

➢ **DF Recommendation 3:** Second Floor Reading Room – Improve access to outlets. Table dividers/privacy screens can help discourage collaborative work and keep the space quiet. Investigate the possibility of providing a water fountain/hot & cold water in the space. This recommendation was echoed by touchstone tour student-guides: one commented that the foot traffic in the room was distracting and was their reason for not using the room; another commented that external noise was an issue due to the in and out traffic: "I think what would be interesting is having more facilities inside the room so there is less need to be in and out a lot because it's really distracting."

➢ **DF Recommendation 4:** Second Floor Learning Commons – Monitor the need for more computers. Better enforcement of quiet policy. Check Macs for need of repair/replacement.

➢ **DF Recommendation 5:** Stacks – The original suggestion was to increase the heat but now that HVAC changes have been carried out, the recommendation is to casually monitor the heat levels in these areas and to be open to feedback from users.

➢ **DF Recommendation 6:** A&SC Reading Room – Improve access to outlets. Touchstone tour student-guides commented that this room was too strict regarding bringing a drink in and therefore limiting their use of it. Solutions to this issue should be brainstormed.

Other:

➢ **DF Recommendation 7:** Investigate solutions for the heaviness of doors in the building. This was mentioned by both question slip respondents and touchstone tour student-guides.

- ➢ **DF Recommendation 8:** Increase the number of accessible washrooms (mentioned by question slip respondents) and renovate the old washrooms (mentioned by touchstone tour student-guides). Include these in the building renewal plans.

- ➢ **DF Recommendation 9:** Loan additional items such as headphones and laptop locks.

- ➢ **DF Recommendation 10:** Generally improve accessibility of outlets throughout the building. Provide charging stations. (Touchstone tour student-guides provided some insight by mentioning that they often have more than one thing to plug in at a time, and that outlets in the atrium hallways are not "reliable".)

- ➢ **DF Recommendation 11:** Respondents also requested we clean the atrium glass.

- ➢ **DF Recommendation 12:** Lighting improvement requests were very common as well but hopefully this has been resolved by the recent lighting upgrade.