UNSW Library/Project Support Unit

Library Spaces Utilisation and Needs report
February 2018

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1. Executive summary

1.1 What was this project about?

This project gathered data and attempted to glean insights into:

- how UNSW students use the Main and Law Library physical spaces
- students’ needs from the Main and Law Library physical spaces
- why UNSW students don’t make use of the Main and Law Library physical spaces
- how UNSW Library compares to other Group of Eight (GO8) Australian university libraries

1.2 How was the data gathered?

Four data collection methods were employed for this project and ethics approval was sought and granted for each method. These included:

- an online survey (HC 17755)
- post-it note graffiti boards set up in various locations at the Main and Law Libraries (HC 17815)
- exit interviews conducted as clients left the Main and Law Libraries (HC 17815)
- observations conducted at various locations in the Main and Law Libraries (HC 17815)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total amount of feedback received 4149</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2997 Completed surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>911 Graffiti boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137 Exit interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104 Observations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.3 What did we find?

The results of this study revealed that:

- students would like to see an increase in the Main and Law Library physical spaces and facilities. They would like to see (in order of importance) more:
  - floor space, desks and chairs
  - quiet areas
  - increased opening hours
  - ergonomic chairs
  - single desk seating/private study spaces
  - sleep pods and relaxation furniture
- group study rooms
- power points, charging spaces and UBS ports
- cold/hot water taps, microwaves and kitchens

- the Main Library is heavily utilised for quiet study and group work (in line with the finding of the 2015 KPMG Learning Spaces Market Research survey report.)
- the Law Library and the Postgraduate study space are also heavily utilised locations and space is an issue, particularly, in these locations
- the Library is a place where students go to do quiet study

In 2016 the UNSW Library was tracking 4 out of 8 of the Go8 in turnstile counts; 6 out of 8 for library floor space (per square meter) per 100 students and 7 out of 8 for seats per 100 students. Figure 1.3 illustrates how UNSW compared to the other Go8.

**Figure 1.3 Go8 comparisons**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turnstile counts</th>
<th>Library seats per 100 students</th>
<th>For floor space (per 50 m) per 100 students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 out of 8 – Go8</td>
<td>6 out of 8 - Go8</td>
<td>7 out of 8 - Go8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. How UNSW students use Main and Law Library physical spaces

Across the data collection methods, it was found that students use the Library for a range of facilities and activities including:

- quiet single person study - which is undertaken at single desks, double desks, larger group desks, booths, soft furniture, stools/benches and group study rooms
- group discussion - which is undertaken at group study rooms, group desks, booths, soft furniture, stools and benches
- power points are used to power equipment including students’ laptops and phones
- Students bring their own devices (BYOD) including laptops, phones and tablets and use Library computers while in the library
- printing, scanning and copying on the library printers
- accessing the library collections
- relaxing in the sleep pod or relaxation furniture including bean bags
2.1 What students said about how and why they use their libraries, from the survey and exit interview data points:

“The environment is more study-focused, productivity is higher than if I study at home”
“I was able to achieve everything today, it’s comfortable, no distractions”
“The computers are great, I love the keyboard sensitivity, easy and big monitor they are slick”
“My favourite space is the Level 3 computer labs as they are bright and can also interact with other people. I can get a lot of work done there plus the library location is close to lectures”
“I did group work today, nice place to meet and finish the project”
“I borrowed books from the library, used computers and printed”
“I slept for two hours between work and class”

2.2 Students’ length of stay in the Main or Law Libraries

In the exit interviews, 137 students provided a response to the question relating to how long they had been in the Library on that day. There was a mix of results which indicates that students use the Main and Law Libraries for various lengths of time. The responses did, however, fall into two distinct groups:

- 49% of users were in the Library for under 1 hour
- 51% of users were in the Library for over an hour

**Graph 2.1** illustrates the length of time users were in the Main or Law Libraries.

**Graph 2.1 Length of library stay**
The exit interviews also indicated that the length of stay largely depended on the type of activities that the students were undertaking; if the library spaces suited their study needs and if there was space available for them at that time.

2.3 How students rated their library facilities

Graph 2.3 illustrates how library facilities were rated by students. The darker colour represents excellent or good from a rating scale of - excellent/good/average/poor/very poor.

**Graph 2.3 How student rated their library facilities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>Excellent/Good</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Poor/Very Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wifi</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighting</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temperature</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Power Outlets</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Computers</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft furniture</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desks and chairs with backs</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benches with stools*</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to whiteboards**</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Benches with stools (no backs) - 43% rated as either excellent or good, 33% rated as average and 14% rated as poor or very poor.

**Whiteboard - 37% rated as either excellent or good, 39% rated as average and 24% rated as poor or very poor.

Overall, the facilities rated very well and were seen to be of a high standard. Possible areas for improvement would be benches and stools and access to whiteboards which received
the lowest rating. Increasing this rating could be achieved by purchasing additional desks and chairs with backs and increasing the number of whiteboards for student usage. Both suggestions could be considered for future library infrastructure planning to improve the student experience.

2.4. Students’ favourite library spaces

The library spaces cater for a range of activities and support many varied student requirements. This is illustrated by the amount of “favourite” spaces the students highlighted in their exit interviews. The preferred areas largely depended on the activity being undertaken by the student, however the following were all popular - the group study rooms, Levels 2, 3, 7, 8, Postgraduate study space, individual spaces and computer lounge/labs. **Graph 2.4** details how the spaces rated.

**Graph 2.4 Favourite Library Spaces**

![Graph 2.4 Favourite Library Spaces]

It is worth noting that the Level 1 of the Law Library was mentioned in the feedback but not the Ground Level. This could be attributed to students having access to both booths and
single desk seating on Level 1 (which was the most popular form of seating during the observations) which are not available on the Ground Level of the Law Library.

Below are some comments students had said about their favourite spaces in the Main and Law Libraries in their exit interviews:

**Law Library**

Level 1 – “the new line of single desks as there is storage for your bags, dividers and power points. You can do single work but if you have a friend next to you can still talk to each other if required.”

Level 1 – “the booths upstairs they are comfortable and have power point access”

**Main Library**

“Level 2 next to the window in the corner. It is close to printer and computers. The computers are convenient to use for assignments and not need to take the stairs or elevators.”

“Level 3: Convenient, has quiet areas and I don’t want to walk to higher levels”

“4th floor as there are really big meeting rooms, that you can book out for society”

“Level 8 because it tends to be quiet and there are individual desks to study at”

“9th floor, nice views near the window”

“An empty one, because it’s empty”

“The post grad space is a big room with big windows and the air is also fresh at Main. The post grad space at Law is not good and the air quality is also not good and there are no big windows which can make you feel stressed as there are lots of people.”

“PG study space as the desks are more spacious”

**2.5 Additional feedback from students on library spaces**

The Main and Law Libraries support a variety of student needs and the survey responses, the exit interviews and the staff observations all support this.

When students were asked to share their feedback on library spaces on the graffiti boards, one student wrote: “Being a Masters student [I] spent a lot of time here, a lot of memories. Will miss the sleeping pod a lot as well, Much love”, another wrote “everything is perfect” and a third student wrote “Awesome!” (see image 2.5).
Image 2.5 Post-it note feedback

Similar themes were reflected by students in the survey including:

"I reckon the library doesn’t need any more things, it’s pretty good"

“Nothing it’s perfect”

“all good”

The data provided a lot of positive feedback which illustrates that the Main and Law Libraries do successfully support a range of activities and student requirements. Most of this research however focussed on what students wanted from the spaces and how library spaces could be improved. The next part of this report will focus on areas for improvement that were discovered.

3. What students want from the Main and Law Libraries

3.1 What our students told us from the four data collection methods

They would like to see more:

- library spaces, desks and chairs
- quiet zones and better signage to support this zoning
- opening hours (longer)
- ergonomic chairs and a reduction in the amount of stool seating
- single desk seating and/or private spaces for quiet study
- sleep pods and relaxation zones including comfortable furniture
- closed group study rooms and enclosure of current group study rooms that are open
- power points, charging spaces and USB ports
- access to cold and/or hot water, microwaves and the provision of kitchens

Further information regarding these trending issues can be found in the following sections of
this report.

3.2 What our students would like to see in their library spaces – survey data

The graph 3.2 represents 2,323 free format survey responses that were manually categorised in Survey Monkey. The students were answering the question “If there was one thing you would like to see in our physical spaces at the Library, what would it be?”

The top five categories were:

- more space, desk and chairs
- increase ergonomic seating
- quiet space feedback
- increase single desk seating
- create single study rooms or private study spaces

Regarding this feedback, it is also important to note that there was a very large amount of unique responses. These were placed in the “unable to group, other or suggestions” category. Examples of this type of feedback can be found in section 2.5 - Additional feedback from students on library spaces and section 3.4.1 - Other trending themes from our data collection methods.

**Graph 3.2 What students would like to see in their library spaces from the survey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More space, more desks and chairs</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase ergonomic seating or reduce stools</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiet space feedback</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase single desk seating</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create single study rooms or private study spaces</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More group study rooms</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More power outlets, charging stations or USB ports</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase bean bags and relaxation area/furniture</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase sleep pods or sleep areas</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA or blank</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create better signage and zoning</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold/hot water, microwave and kitchen</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light, lights and window feedback</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 21% from the above graph was categorised as either “unable to group, other or suggestions”. 
3.2 What our students would like to see from their library spaces - graffiti data

The graph 3.2 represents 911 handwritten, free format post-it note responses that were manually categorised (see appendix for further details). The students were responding to the prompt “Share their Constructive Feedback about Library Spaces.”

These were the top five categorised groups:
- increased opening hours
- increase space, desks and chairs
- quiet space or too noisy feedback
- sleep pods
- hot/cold water

Graph 3.2 represents categorised post-it notes student feedback

Note: 16% from the above chart was either "unable to group, suggestions or other".

3.4 Top nine areas for improvement in library spaces

The next section of this report will provide more insight into each of the top nine trending areas.
3.4.1. More library space, desks and chairs

This was the highest trending issue for our students across the data collection methods regarding the Main and Law Library spaces. The following information illustrates this feedback based on the data collected.

Observations

- 100% to 80% capacity was reached (for all spaces observed) during peak period times.
- From 104 observations, an average of 9.4 of personal items were left on desks per area. The postgraduate study space has the highest number of items left on desks with an average of 22 items from 20 observations.

Exit interviews

- 70% of students did achieve what they wanted from their library visit and of that group 25% cited the fact that the space suited their needs and contributed to achieving what they wanted from their visit.
- 50% of the students stated that their library experience would be improved if there was an increase of spaces, desk and chairs.
- 30% of students did not achieve what they wanted from their library visit. 33% of this group cited lack of space/or seating as issues for not achieving what they wanted.

Survey

- 78% of students told us finding a closed room for group work was either somewhat difficult/very difficult or extremely difficult (ranking scale: Extremely easy/ very easy/somewhat easy/somewhat difficult/very difficult/extremely difficult)
- 76% of students told us finding a quiet space for self-study was either somewhat difficult/very difficult or extremely difficult (rating scale as above)
- 70% of students told us finding an open space for group work was either somewhat difficult/very difficult or extremely difficult (rating scale as above)
- 54% of students don’t use their library because there is no space, no seating and it is too crowded.
- 30% of students would like to see more space and more desks/chairs (this was the highest ranked category for this free format question).
Graffiti boards

▪ 12% of students wrote they would like to see **more space, desk and chairs** (3rd highest ranked category).

Other

▪ 87% of Law students surveyed in the Law Library Improvement Survey Report would like to see **more study desks**.

The following are comments made by students in the data collection methods on library spaces, desks and chairs:

  “More space please”
  “Do not expect much it’s at maximum capacity best to extend or create a new library so more space is available”
  “I had enough space for computer and my belongings today. Seats were comfortable”
  “No place to sit and I spent 20 minutes looking for a space”
  “Don’t have a favourite spot, in this library, I just take whatever seat I can get”
  “The space provided for the post graduate students is not enough”

Increasing the amount of library space, desks and chairs would be a great improvement for the student experience in the Library.

3.4.2. Increase the number of quiet zones and better signage to support this zoning

Increasing the number of quiet spaces and creating better signage to support zoning was important to our students, which was illustrated by the data collected.

Observations

From the 104 observations, quiet activity was the most popular form of work being undertaken by students. From these observations the following was discovered:

▪ 83% of students were mainly participating in **quiet work**
▪ 13% of students were mainly involved in **50% quiet/50% discussion work**
▪ 4% of students were mainly involved in **discussion activities** in the space.

*Graph 3.4.2* illustrates the type of activities undertaken in the Main and Law libraries.
Survey

- 63% of students indicated that a quiet place to study free from distraction was the most important aspect of the library to them.
- 14% students, who don’t use the Library, stated it was because it was too noisy or not quiet enough.
- 12% of students would like to improve the quiet spaces. This was the 4th highest ranking category.

Exit interviews

- 11% of the students from the exit interviews cited that their library experience would be improved if there were more quiet spaces or zones.

Graffiti boards

- 8% of student comments on the graffiti boards cited increasing quiet space or reducing noise as an important issue to them.

Other

- The 2015 KMPG Learning Spaces Market Research survey reported “Students undertaking general assignment work or study alone consistently identified the need for more quiet spaces”.
Below are some comments from our students on quiet spaces and better zoning:

“Too noisy (maybe have dedicated quiet zones)”
“More quiet zones (not completely silent, but noise is at a whisper)”
“More places available to sit and study quietly.”
“Distinct spaces between quiet and social areas”

*Image 3.4.2* is an example of Post-it note feedback from a student on quiet spaces and zoning.

*Image 3.4.2 Example of post-it note feedback*

```
Designated floors.
- Designated quiet floor for individual study
- Floor for group work and meeting rooms
- Floor for computers and general purposes
- Floor for napping and quiet study
- Floor for food; microwaves; refrigerators; hot water etc. R. Matthews
```

3.4.3 Increase opening hours

The data collected told us that increasing opening hours was important to our students.

*Graffiti boards*

An *increase in opening hours* was the highest trending area for student comments on the graffiti board with 25% of students wanting this change. This feedback fell into 2 distinct groups on the graffiti boards; the largest group called for the Library to open 24/7, the next group asked for an increase in opening hours (in general) and a subset of this group wanted to specifically increase opening hours on weekends.
Exit interviews and survey

12% of the students from the exit interviews cited that their library experience would be improved if there was an increase in opening hours and the current opening hours was noted in the survey as a reason for why our students do not use the Main and/or Law Libraries for quiet study.

Below are comments from students on increasing opening hours in the surveys:

“24 hours opening. Opening up more of the library instead of just the study lounge. Longer hours especially on the weekend”

“Not enough study spaces in the libraries in main hours. They should be open 24 hours like at USYD, 6pm on weekends is particularly poor. In the late hours it is less busy, so it will be easier to get a spot and get lots of work done.”

3.4.4 Increase ergonomic chairs and reduce the amount of stool seating

We learnt from the data collected that increasing the number of ergonomic chairs and reducing the amount of stool seating was important to our students.

Observations

- From the 104 observations undertaken, the stools were viewed as a less popular form of seating on Levels 3 and 6 of the Main Library and Level 1 of the Law Library.

Survey

- 52% of students rated the bench seating (stool seating) as either average/poor or very poor. This was the second lowest rated facility for our Main and Law Libraries.
- 13% of students would like to see an increase in ergonomic seating and a reduction in stool seating.

Exit interviews

- 7% of students cited that their library experience would be improved if there was an increase in ergonomic chairs and/or a reduction in the amount of stool seating.
Below are comments from students on increasing ergonomic chairs and reducing the amount of stool seating:

“Better seats - I don’t like the stools because they are uncomfortable, but most of the seats available are stools.”
“I like the benches near to windows because of the power socket and it’s near the window, the light feels good and there are nice views. I find the stools okay for shorter periods of time”

3.4.5. Increase the single desk and chairs (with backs) or create private spaces for quiet study

Increasing the single desk seating and chairs (with backs) or creating private spaces for quiet study was important to students in the data collection methods. The following data illustrated this.

Observations

- Single desk/chairs (with backs) was the most popular form of seating (when available) compared to any other forms of seating during the observations. This applied to the Postgraduate study space, Level 3, Level 6 of Main and Level 1 of the Law library. In 47 of the observations undertaken, the observers noted that single desk seating was the most preferred type of seating. **Graph 3.4.5** illustrates the most preferred seating from these observations.

**Graph 3.4.5 percentage of preferred seating**
The single seating on the east side of the Main Library building on Levels 3 and 6 were the most popular form of all seating. This seating has single desks and chairs (with backs), power points, natural lighting, desk partitions, is a quiet space and has the feeling of a private space as the bookshelves enclose the seating area.

The group study rooms at low capacity periods where often occupied by only one student, this could be viewed as a way of creating a private, enclosed, single spaces for them.

Survey

- 19% of students would like to see an increase in single desk/chair seating or quiet/single study spaces.
- 12% of students don’t use the Library because they have their own space in which to study.

Other

- The UNSW Law Student Representative Report told us that 60% of students surveyed would like to see more quiet study rooms.

Below are comments from students on increasing single desks and chairs with backs and/or private spaces for quiet study:

“I like the rows of individual seating with power points, don't have to awkwardly ask people if you can share a table”
“More individual desks to do quiet study in (more seats and tables in general)”
“More enclosed single space study areas/rooms”
“We need to add in more study space like quiet individual study desks.”
“I really like the single desks, I like working on my own space”
“Maybe a partition for every single seat.”
“More individual tables during exam preparation periods”
“My favourite spot in the library is the individual study desks on the East side of the building next to the window and books on level 6, 7 and 8.”

3.4.6. Increase in sleep pods and relaxation zones including comfortable lounges

Increasing sleep pods and relaxation zones, including comfortable lounges and bean bags was a popular theme with our students from the data collected.
Survey and graffiti boards

- 11% of students in the surveys would like to see an increase in sleep pods or relaxation furniture (beanbags or lounges).
- 6% of students who wrote on the post-it note graffiti boards would like to see an increase in sleep pods or relaxation furniture

Below are comments from students on sleep pods and relaxation zones:

“More of those cool scifi sleep pods”
“More rest or chill areas like bean bags and couches ;)”
“More beanbags, places to just lay back, chill and study”
“More "lounging" places to read books”
“A sleep/reading pod. For me to read peacefully or to take a quick nap in between work”
“Any place that students can take a rest after long studying hours.”
“Some comfortable areas exclusively for napping (although I understand how this is a pretty outlandish request)"

3.4.7. Increase the amount of group study rooms

The Library had a total of 128,544 group study room bookings in 2017 which was up by 15,390 (12%) from 2016. Part of this figure (7,504) can be directly attributed to the introduction of the four-bookable postgraduate group study rooms which were launched in March 2017. Taking out this figure, there was still in an increase of 7,886 room bookings between 2016 and 2017. **Graph 3.4.7** illustrates the upward trend in group study room bookings.
Graph 3.4.7 total amount of bookings for group study rooms

Observations

During the observations, the group study rooms in the Law Library (Ground Level and Level 1) and Level 3 of the Main Library, demonstrated their popularity regardless of the capacity of the space, for example the rooms were still in use even if the floor capacity was low. It was also recorded in the observations that the group study rooms were utilized for group discussion along with other activities including one or more students working quietly.

Survey and exit interviews

8% of students said in the survey that they would like to see an increase in the number of group study rooms and at the exit interviews 6% of students cited that their library experience would be improved if there was an increase in group study rooms.

Below are comments from students on group study rooms:

“More closed group spaces”
“A separated floor or half of a floor that is dedicated to just meeting rooms [?]”
“Way more group study spaces (open and closed)”
“More book-able areas for group work”
3.4.8. Increase access to power points, charging spaces and USB ports

Increasing access to power points, charging spaces and USB ports is important to our students and was observed consistently throughout the observations. Below is data on this trending area.

Observations

The observers noted that students using power points was a popular theme and these were comments from some of the observers:

“99% using laptops, remaining 1% using phones. 70% using power points.”
“Many students using the power points”
“At the Law Library, students will sit anywhere, as long as they have access to a power point.”
“Students mostly using laptops & phones and they are using them whilst they are recharging them.”
“Lots of students prefer to use laptops, they need access to power points”
“most students are on either laptops or phones, lots of students are using the power points and available facilities.”

Survey

7% of students would like to have increased access to power outlets, charging stations and USB ports.

Below are comments from students on power points and charging ports:

“Maybe some USB ports to charge our phones and what nots, but otherwise this is one of the best libraries I have the pleasure to study in”
“Every individual desk space having access to a power point.”
“Charging station”
“More power outlets installed on tables, near tables - More tables”

3.4.9. Increase access to cold water and provide hot water, microwaves and kitchens

Increase access to cold water and providing hot water, microwaves and kitchens was a theme in the data collected. It was a smaller trending theme than the other eight however it was still consistently mentioned by the students.
Graffiti boards

7% of the comments from the graffiti boards said students would like to have access to cold water and have hot water, microwaves and kitchens provided.

Below are comments from students in the survey and exit interviews on cold/hot water, microwaves and kitchens:

“A bigger space where you can eat food in the library. The Library Lounge is great but it's always busy around lunch time.”
“Maybe a place to refill water bottles?”
“A hot water dispenser, for making instant coffee”
“microwave in PG lounge”
“Kitchen area”
“Perhaps a closed off study space only for UNSW students with more amenities (i.e. hot water, microwaves) that is open 24/7.”

3.4.10. Other trending themes from our data collection methods:

In addition to the top nine trending areas the following themes were also raised in the feedback received:

- improving lighting was mentioned by students and this was either through increasing natural light, brighter lighting or increasing the number of single desk lamps
- HSC students were mentioned within the context of these students not behaving well, not being allowing into the UNSW Libraries (at all) or taking up library space
- Law Library booths and Main Library media booths were often cited as popular forms of seating with students
- increasing computer access time for public computers and installing subject relevant software on public library computers was also mentioned
- printing feedback – including increasing the number of photocopiers in the Law Library, free printing and reducing the cost of printing
- temperature of the Library - generally too cold
- increasing the amount of cleaning of tables, bathrooms and keyboards
- students complained about unattended items left on desks by other students
- Law library should be only for Law students
- online access was mentioned as a positive feature. Following is what one student had to about online resources:
“... the university and the Library online services are great so I go to the library when needed (when i need to read an actual book when researching for assignments etc.)”

It is also worth noting that security was rarely mentioned as an issue.

Below are some other lower trending themes and some of the more unusual requests from students in the survey:

“Cafe area”
“Lockers. So when you need to move for some reason, your belongings can be securely left somewhere”
“Making spaces”
“More lifts”
“Borrowable laptops”
“more whiteboards”
“More bins”
“Stand up desks”
“Some indoor plants would be nice.”
“Inspiring objects, eg small models of the solar system, models of megastructures, etc”
“Something brightening! e.g. some more artworks”
“Pets activity”
“Hand sanitising station”
“Convenience store in the library on lower campus”

4. Why UNSW students don’t use the Main or Law Library spaces

So far, this report has investigated how and why students use the Main and Law Libraries. This section explores the reasons why students don’t use the Main or Law library spaces. In the survey, 1,094 students identified themselves as “not mainly using the Main or Law Libraries for their quiet study”. From this group the top trending issue was space and seating issues, or that the library spaces were too crowded. This was the highest rating issue with 54% of these students citing this, as a factor.
The second trending issue for this group was **location and convenience** at 27%. For example, the location of the Main and Law Libraries was not convenient for a student who attended classes on middle campus.

The third highest rated issue for this group, at **14%**, was either that the libraries were **not quiet enough** or were **too noisy**.

**Graph 4** illustrates the breakdown of the group of students who don't normally use the Main or Law Library for quiet study.

**Graph 4 displays the percentage of reasons why students don’t normally use the Main or Law library for their quiet study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No space, no seating and too crowded</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location and convenience</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other and suggestions</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too noisy not quiet enough</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have my own space</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study at own faculty/school</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software and Computer</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like ergonomic chairs and not the stools</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I study at another campus or online</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The library needs to be open longer hours</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: 20% of answers from the above graph were categorised as either “other” or “suggestions”.*

It is also worth noting that some of this group cited that they did use the Main or Law Libraries, however, it was not their “normal” or “main” place of quiet study.

Following are comments from students on why they don’t mainly use the Main or Law Libraries for quiet study:
No space, no seating and too crowded
   “There is not enough room in the Law library – not enough computers and not enough desks”

Location and convenience
   “It’s usually easier when on campus to go study somewhere near my classes which are often mid campus”

Not quiet enough or too noisy
   “The library is very noisy with a lot of students talking loudly so it is hard to concentrate.”

I have my own space
   “I have my own space allotted from the school”

Software and computers
   “Mech Labs have all the software like Solidworks, Ansys etc that I need”
   “I do not like having to look around for a computer, and although I understand the need for a timer, I do not like the hour limit on the computers”

Preference for ergonomic chairs
   “…. those high stools are extremely uncomfortable compared to normal chairs”

I study at another campus or online
   “Because my faculty is Art and Design”

The Library needs to be open longer hours
   “I do also use the Law and Main Library, however as I tend to prefer studying in the evening till late at night, I often go to the business school to study as the rooms are open 24/7 allowing me to stay however long as I wish.”

This concludes the section of the report as to why UNSW students do not mainly use the Main or Law library. The next stage of the report will investigate UNSW student figures and how UNSW library compares to other Group of 8 Universities.
5. UNSW student figures and comparison to Group of 8 (Go8)

5.1 UNSW student figures and library entries

UNSW is experiencing student growth as can be seen in graph 5.1a.

**Graph 5.1a UNSW student growth**

![UNSW student growth graph](image)

**Graph 5.1b** displays that UNSW Library entries at Main and Law (to a lesser degree) are also showing an increase. This could be attributed to the increase in UNSW student numbers.

**Graph 5.1b UNSW library entries**

![UNSW library entries graph](image)
The following section of the report compares UNSW Library to other G08 members.

5.2 Turnstile counts

UNSW is ranked 4th highest out of the Group of 8 (Go8) members in turnstile counts (number of people entering the library buildings). Graph 5.2 illustrates the total number of library entries for each of the universities in 2016.

**Graph 5.2 comparison Go8 turnstile counts**

* floor space figures provided by CAUL 2016 data and direct contact with UWA and Monash University. Monash University provided 2015 turnstile rates due to refurbishment in 2016.

5.3 Floor space per student

UNSW is ranked 7 out of 8 in 2016 in the Go8 members with floor space per square meter, per 100 students, as can be seen in the following graph 5.3.
Graph 5.3 comparison Go8 - floor space* per 100 students

*floor space figures provided by CAUL 2016 data and direct contact with UWA and Monash

5.4 Seats per 100 students

UNSW is ranked 6 out of 8 in 2016 in the G08 for seats per 100 students which can be seen in graph 5.4.

Graph 5.4 Comparison to Go8 seats per 100 students*

*Seats per 100 students figures provided by CAUL 2016 data
6. Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to explore the following:

- how UNSW students use the Main and Law Library physical spaces
- what students need from the Main and Law Library spaces
- why UNSW students don't use the Main or Law Library spaces
- how UNSW Library compares to other Go8 Australian university libraries?

The report found that students actively and successfully engaged in the data collection methods which resulted in a large amount of qualitative and quantitative feedback that was able to be analysed for this report. The methodologies utilised also provided rich data sets which enabled cross referencing for the trending areas. There was attitudinal and behavioural research used for the data collection, including the user experience methods (observations, graffiti boards and exit interviews) as well as the more traditional methods of surveying. All proved useful tools for gaining better insights into students' attitudes and use of the Main and Law Library spaces.

6.1 Opportunities for improvement in library spaces

Based on the data collected during the project, the following may be considered as worthwhile areas for improvement:

Space opportunities

- Increase the amount of space available for student usage in the Main and Law Libraries, especially in quiet and group study spaces.
- Increase the Law Library and the Main Postgraduate study spaces as they are at maximum capacity (100% to 80%) during peak times.
- Introduce a space occupancy monitoring system so students can view where space is available, for example: https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/students/study-space/space-occupancy-monitoring-pilot. Further details on this can be found in the appendix.
- Create an app like Spacefinder for areas within the library or for the whole university, for example, https://spacefinder.lib.cam.ac.uk/. This app could answer questions like “I would like a single study space on a quiet floor. Where can I go?” and could give
students a greater understanding of what spaces are available to them, for their various study needs.

Facilities opportunities

Furniture

- Increase the number of single desks (similar size to postgraduate desk) with seating (chairs with backs) in the Main and Law Libraries, especially in quiet zones.
- Reduce stool seating and increase the number of ergonomic chairs.
- Increase the number of sleep pods and increase relaxation spaces/zones with comfortable lounges and seating.

Infrastructure

- Increase the number of power points, charge bars and USB chargers, especially at single desks, to assist students who need to charge their own devices.
- Introduce cold and hot water; provide a kitchen in both the Main Library and the postgraduate study space to assist students who have their own items, for example, food, coffee and tea.
- Increase the number of printers at the Law Library preferably near the front of the library.
- Create single, bookable rooms or study spaces to increase privacy and reduce disturbing other students.
- Enclose the group study rooms that currently have curtains or open ceilings, so noise does not escape and disturb students in other group study rooms or students working independently nearby.
- Improve lighting, air quality and provide desk lamps for an improved user experience.

Cleaning

- Increase regularity of cleaning of desks, bathrooms and keyboards at the Main and Law Libraries

Access opportunities

- Increase opening hours in the Main and Law Libraries – 24/7 or longer hours on weekdays and weekend for additional access and space for students.
Zoning and signage opportunities

- Create improved signage to explain and reinforce zoning “Thank you for being quiet on this level”. This will advise students of the different types of library zoning for that space.
- Match furniture to zone type, for example, single desks in quiet zones/group desks in group discussion zones; this will assist with enforcing zoning of spaces.
- Use of colours to support zoning, for example, cool colours for quiet spaces and warmer colours for discussion areas, which would visually assist with the zoning in that area.
- Create signage tools that advise students of the number and type of seating that is available on each level. This will assist students in understanding what types of spaces and facilities are available to them on each level.
- Potentially create Level 1 of the Law library as a quiet floor to assist with increasing quiet space and availability at the Law Library.

Ambiance

- Introduction of plants or artworks in the Library to increase the ambiance of the spaces and could potentially showcase student work. Plants could also be used to create divisions between zones.

6.2 Continuation of current work

This body of work analysed how and why students use the UNSW Library spaces and why they don’t use them. This work could, however, be continued and the following could be considered:

- Implementation of the “Opportunities for Improvement for Library Spaces”
- Dissemination of the results of this report to be fed back to the students (see appendix)
- Gather additional data and perform more user experience techniques for example, love/break up letters
- Repetition of data collection in the future to see if there has been a change in how students use the space or changes in attitudes towards the library spaces
- Inclusion of the UNSW Paddington Library in user experience techniques to see how that space is being utilised by the students
- Deeper analysis of the data gathered for greater detail, for example, the graffiti boards only had data entry for the “other and suggestions”. These other categories could also be data entered.
- Expansion of this study beyond library space to include other library services, for example customer service or online presence etc.
7. Appendices:

Appendix A – Methodologies and demographics

How did we achieve these findings?

Four data collection methods were employed for this project and ethics approval was sought and granted for each method. They included:

- An online survey
- Post-it note graffiti boards
- Exit interviews conducted as clients left the Main and Law Libraries
- Observations conducted at various locations in the Main and Law Libraries

Data collection methods

Surveys

*Image 7.1 example of graphics for the survey*

The UNSW Library Spaces Survey was sent to 48,796 UNSW undergraduate and postgraduate students. The survey was released on 9/10/2017 and was in the field for 12 days, then closed 20/10/2017. There were 2,997 responses received. The response rate for this survey was 6.14% and for this sample size, the survey has a confidence level of 90%, with a margin of error at +/-1.5%.
The questions focussed on library spaces and suggestions for improvement and no more than 15 questions were required to be answered by any one student. **Graph 7.2** Highlights student demographic survey data.

**Graph 7.2 student demographic survey data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgrad</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live off campus</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live on campus</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st year</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd year</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd year</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th year</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Graffiti boards**

The Post-it note graffiti boards were set up in several locations around the Main and Law Libraries, inviting clients to “Share Your Constructive Feedback about Library Spaces.” The boards were open for feedback from 16/10/2017 to 20/10/2017 and were monitored by exit interview staff, Client Services Unit and security staff.

Once the task was completed, the Post-it notes were grouped and recorded with a total of 911 separate pieces of feedback received about library spaces. Where Post-it notes contained multiple ideas, these were re-written onto a new Post-it note for each unique idea and grouped accordingly.

This was a very popular activity among the student population and generated a large amount of feedback. The **images 7.3** illustrates the interest shown by the students, **images 7.4** are
some samples of students’ comments and image 7.5 illustrates the grouped data in the Main Library foyer.

**Images 7.3 illustrates students engaging with the graffiti boards**

**Images 7.4 are some samples of students’ comments**
Exit interviews

Exit interviews were conducted as clients left either the Main or Law Libraries from 16/10/2017 to 20/10/2017. Students were asked questions relating to their library experience on that day and what they would like to see in their library spaces. The interviews conducted were between 5 and 40 minutes in length (depending on the clients) and three current UNSW students and one Library staff member conducted these interviews. The discussions were documented by the interviewer during the interview and a total of 137 interviews conducted. Image 7.6 contains various exit interview photos including the lolly bag giveaways that were given to students after they completed the interview, an exit interview between an interviewer and a student and the lanyards worn by the interviewer from the exit interviews.
7.6 Photographic images from the exit interviews

Graph 7.7 illustrates the percentages of interviews for each of the library locations.

**Graph 7.7 percentages that took place at each library location**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph 7.8 illustrates the student demographic data of participants in the exit interviews.

**Graph 7.8 student demographic details who participated in the exit interviews.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st year</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd year</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th year</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd year</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th year</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pgrad</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live off campus</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Observations

The observations were conducted at several locations in the Main Library (Level 3, Postgraduate study space and Level 6) and Law Library (Ground Level and Level 1). These observations were conducted over the teaching recess, the second half of second semester, study period and exam periods (dates ranging from 2/10/2017 to 3/11/2017). Maps were manually marked with colour coding and a total of 104 observations were conducted. Images 7.9 are examples of completed observation forms. The marked blue colour represents quiet activity (per student), the orange colour represents discussion activity (per student) and the purple colour represents left property by students. Once the space was observed the feedback was then entered into an online form by the observer.

Observations were conducted by Library staff who observed the following:

- how the space was being used
- what percentage of space was being utilised by students
- how much space was being used for quiet activities as opposed to discussion activities
- the amount of left property
Opportunities with data collection methods

Each of these four data collection methods contain a large amount of data and further analysis could be performed on each for greater detail.

Appendix B

University of Edinburgh solution for space pressure:

Pressure on library spaces is not unique to UNSW. The University of Edinburgh increased the number of study spaces in their Main library in 2016 to over 2,300 places (an increase of 358 seats). Even after this increase there was still pressure for space, so they then employed OccupEye technology in which sensors were placed on desks.
Students can now view live data showing the number of study desks currently available for use in the Main Library, Lower Ground Floor through the [Study Desk Availability](#) webpage.

**Image 7.10** is an example of the desk availability information students can see when using OccupEye technology.

*Image 7.10 an example of live student desk availability at The University of Edinburgh*

Both UNSW and the University of Edinburgh have a similar student to seat ratio; the University of Edinburgh has 29,211 full-time students and 2,300 seats (7.9 per 100 students). In comparison UNSW has 40,157* full time students and 3,649 seats (9.09 per 100 students). This technology could be considered for UNSW Library.

* 2016 CAUL student data

**Appendix C**

**Informing respondents of data collection outcomes**

As a condition of the ethics approval, UNSW students were able to receive information about to the outcomes of the research undertaken. The Deakin University returned feedback to their students after conducting a survey through an infographic (refer to their website for further details). The top section of the infographic design highlights what Deakin Library was doing well, and the lower section of the design fell into two sections “what students want” and “how the library has resolved their needs”. This type of infographic could be used by UNSW library to feed the information found in this report back to UNSW students.