



# Navigating the Stacks: How Commuter Students Use the Library

Melissa Bauer | Kent State University at Stark



A special thank you to M.L.I.S. graduate students Rachel Tobias & Sarah McGill



## Introduction

The commuter student experience is underrepresented in the literature on library space assessment, which often focuses on residential campuses. The commuter students' unique perspectives are necessary to gain knowledge of current and emerging needs of this community.

A mixed-method research approach is used to understand commuter students' experiences, preferences and needs at a large regional library.



## Methods

### Photo-Elicitation Interviews

8 Participants took photographs to showcase personal preferences and experiences. 30 minute interview follow-ups.

### Hourly Floor Sweeps

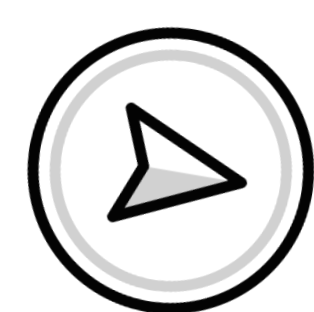
Data on seating arrangement, personal device use, library computer use, and study room use were collected. 2017-2018.

### Observations

Descriptions of the first and second floor settings, activity, individuals involved in activities, and significance were recorded. 8 observations. Fall 2018.

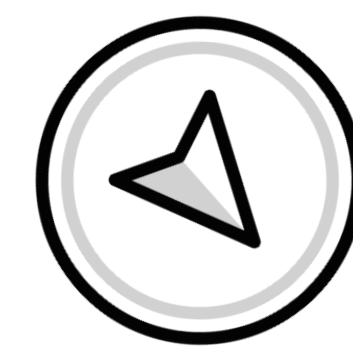
### Suggestion Box

Comment boxes with open-ended questions to elicit responses about the library space. Available throughout library.



## Conclusions & Recommendations

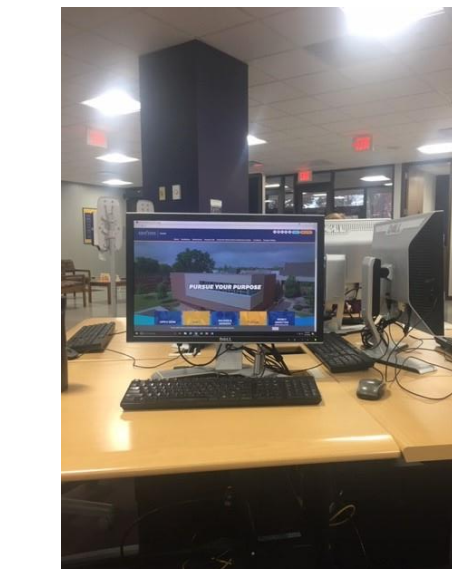
- Students prefer to study alone, in a quiet space with room to spread out
- Students settle in for serious study for 2-3 hour segments or more
- Students travel to campus for class or work, schedule study time at library around on-campus schedule
- Add additional large tables on second floor
- Add privacy screens around computers



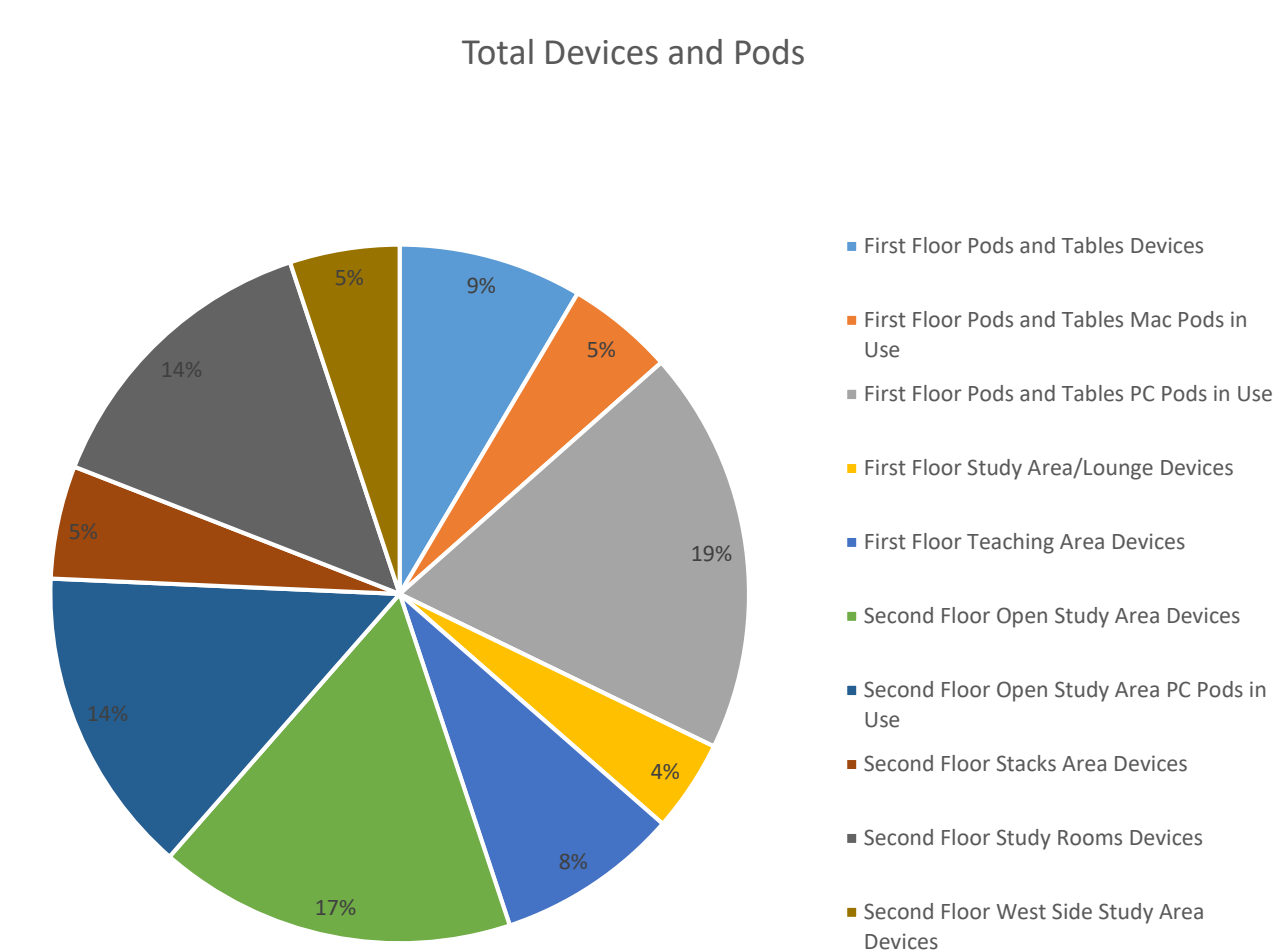
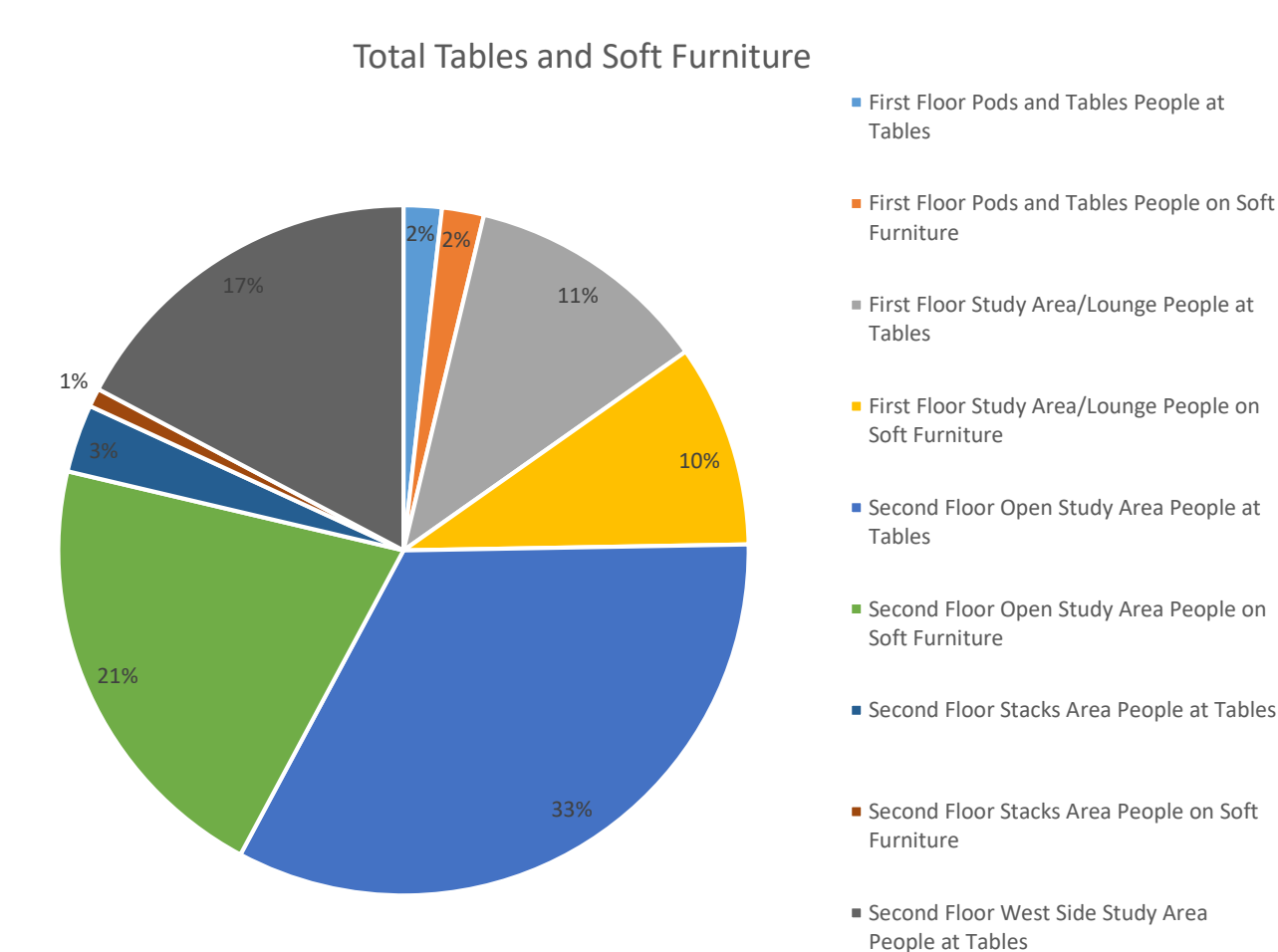
## Initial Results

### Photo-Elicitation Interviews

- Students schedule study time around class schedule, often working in 2-3 hour blocks of time
- Once off campus, students will not return to library/campus to study
- Serious study happens at tables or library computers
- Students plan their day and study schedule ahead of time
- Students interviewed completed almost all studying at library



### Hourly Floor Sweeps



### Overall

- 11a-1p busiest time of day
- Second floor used twice as much as first floor
- First Floor Use
  - 53% library computers
  - 47% personal devices
  - 54% tables
  - 46% soft furniture

### Observations

- Many individuals studying alone
- Few groups
- Table and computer work appears to be for serious study

### Suggestion Box

- The second floor, which is the quiet floor, was noted as the most popular place to study
- Vending machines were requested



STARK

