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“But Is It a Library?”
The Contested Meanings and Changing Culture of the Academic Library

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ABSTRACT

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What does it mean, when academic libraries are noisy? After centuries of silence, bound up in architecture, building use policies, and scholarly habits, the American academic library is experiencing abrupt changes in its soundscape as shifts in technology and pedagogy prompt its re-situation in the academic community. Librarians, facing a future in which the role and relevancy of the library is uncertain, argue for its continued validity by linking changes in the library to its educational mission and to the needs and preferences of students born in the Digital Age. Lifelong library users, though acquiescing to these changes, question their appropriateness to the library’s essential role. Conflicts over the meaning of the academic library bespeak broader challenges in American higher education over balancing support for the life of the mind with the demands of a consumer-driven academic culture.

Focused on American academic libraries in general and Emory University’s Woodruff Library in particular, this phenomenological and ethnographic case study explores the meaning of the library to members of the academic community as a way of assessing the legitimacy of new library spaces. Using theories of discourse and sociological theories of legitimacy, methods of cultural and linguistic anthropology, and a historical and experiential focus on the soundscape of the library, this interdisciplinary research gauges the divergence between users’ beliefs about and use of the library and the types of spaces and activities promoted by librarians. In discourse about and observations within libraries, differing expectations of the role of the library emerge, along with a process of legitimating new library spaces by connecting them to broader cultural frameworks and extant beliefs

regarding the role of the library. Beyond evidencing the library's expanding technological and pedagogical roles, the soundscape of the academic library signals a deeper shift in the nature of academic life – from the culture of isolated reflection that has long typified the life of the mind, to a new academic culture of productivity, in which a focus on efficiency, outcomes, and consumer demands drive the experience of higher education.

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Appreciation also goes to Charles Forrest and Martin Halbert, who, by engaging me to write a chapter for their book on the Information Commons, put me in touch with a wider circle of people, organizations, and ideas in this area. Our conversations about the chapter, the book, and the future of libraries in general planted the seeds for many thoughts about library spaces, some of which have germinated in this dissertation. Parts of chapter 2 of this dissertation originally appeared in their edited volume, *A Field Guide to the Information Commons* (2009), published by Scarecrow Press and reprinted here with permission.

Thanks go to my committee members – Walter Reed (chair), Cathryn Johnson, and Debra Spitulnik – whose suggestions for my proposed research and comments on the dissertation helped to advance my thinking about my topic without thwarting my progress. Walter Reed's patient and wise guidance throughout this process was inestimable. Knowing when to push and when to praise, he helped to make the challenges of this process enjoyable. Excelsior!

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CHAPTER 1

THE SOUND OF CHANGE IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

When we went to the library as part of freshmen orientation, they [the librarians] told us that they wanted the library to be welcoming, to be a place where everyone was accommodated. And that sounded good then. But once you're working there, you start to realize that they really mean everybody, and so it's not such a good place to work if you need to concentrate and not be distracted. If you need quiet.

Interview with Bridget, Emory University undergraduate student

Academic libraries across America are building spaces that add instruction, service, convenience, and sociability – and more sound. Recent librarian interest in the “library as place” and changes to library structures over the past two decades have expressly sought to increase creative and collaborative scholarship, egalitarianism, conversation, social learning, and a sense of community (Bennett, 2005, Freeman, 2005, Frischer, 2005). Coffee shops and Internet cafés, collaborative work and Commons areas, and 24-hour study rooms not only make using the library more convenient and comfortable, they also promote ways of using the library that do not necessarily coincide with quiet study. Whereas the iconic library has traditionally been understood as a quiet space for reading and research, these constructions and renovations in academic libraries have visibly expanded the role of the library in teaching and learning. Many of these changes to the physical library have created spaces that resemble lounges and living rooms and encourage computer use, study groups, and casual conversation – spaces that counter established notions of what libraries look and sound like and how they should be used.

The marginalization of quiet, as more libraries deliberately create social and collaborative spaces and subsequently increase sound levels, raises the question of what significance quiet has in scholarly work and university life and what it means when these places are supplanted in the library. Long an assumed and unquestioned aspect of libraries, and for many younger librarians a chafing reminder of libraries' stodgy image, quiet is often both unremarkable (and therefore under-analyzed as an essential quality of the library as place)¹ and disregarded as an aspect that users, both young and old, may value. Indeed, if there were no ruptures in this quiet, its presence and importance would likely go unnoticed.

Libraries *are* becoming noisy places, in large part a result of recent expansion and adaptation of academic library spaces to support an array of technologies, users, and teaching and learning activities, along with a relaxation of policies. Given historical and cultural valuations of quiet and quiet places, particularly within academia, efforts to promote the library as a community workspace (and, in some instances, to downplay or dismiss its longstanding image as a quiet space) are particularly noteworthy. Acceptance of new, noisy communal spaces in American academic libraries marks a transformation in both library culture and academic culture and raises questions about the persisting roles of libraries and quiet in scholarly life and the changing nature of academia. In the Digital Age, when the sound of machines and cell phone conversations are often inescapable, when computing and communication technologies make it virtually possible to be always working and always

¹ Through standardized surveys such as LibQUAL+ and through local assessment efforts, academic librarians have attempted to measure what is valued and needed in library spaces, and thus begin to understand the importance of a library's ambience. Through such measures some libraries have discovered library users' desire for quiet areas. Yet, as will be discussed later in this dissertation, such assessment tools, while indicating a desire, cannot parse the role quiet plays in scholarly life: its importance to scholars and the life of the mind; its unique, historical associations with libraries; and what it means to have places of quiet in an increasingly crowded and connected world. Further, such findings must also compete with cultural assumptions that noise and activity indicate productivity and value, and that the sound of a space is a result of group consensus.

accessible, and within an American culture defined by consumer and market demands, what does it mean when the academic library is no longer quiet?

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND PROJECT SUMMARY

Focused on American academic libraries in general and Emory University's Woodruff Library in particular, this phenomenological² and ethnographic case study explores the meaning of the library to members of the academic community as a way of assessing the legitimacy³ of new library spaces. Using theories of discourse and sociological theories of legitimacy, methods of cultural and linguistic anthropology, and a historical and experiential focus on the soundscape of the library, this interdisciplinary research gauged beliefs about the meaning and sound of the academic library, and the extent to which these beliefs diverge from the types of libraries promoted as the norm. Further, this research asks what role quiet⁴

² The phenomenological approach used here follows the method developed by Schutz (1962), who in turn derived his ideas from Husserl (1964, 1999). In conducting a phenomenological study, the goal is to accurately describe individual perceptions of reality, in an effort to better understand a social reality. For this study a phenomenological approach helps to uncover the essential meaning of working in a quiet or noisy library to members of an academic community, which may also provide insight into different uses of the academic library, particularly how that use may be based in thoughts or feelings about silence, sound, the library space, the nature of scholarly work, and also in one's identity as a scholar or a librarian.

³ Weber (1978) provides a widely referenced definition of legitimacy: the quality of someone or something which gives it the unquestioned right to exercise power or influence, be it an act, a person, or a position in a group or an organization. Suchman's (1995) more recent formulation attempts to encompass the social, cognitive, and evaluative dimensions of legitimacy by describing it as "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (p. 574). Here, I build on Suchman's expanded definition by defining the legitimacy of library spaces as a generalized perception or assumption that such areas are appropriate for a university library and desirable and beneficial to library users. A key test of these spaces' legitimacy is their acceptance by individuals for whom such spaces are neither desirable nor beneficial and who likewise believe their opinions are in the minority.

⁴ I use "quiet" and "silence" interchangeably to refer to subdued aural environments. Interviewees for this study, however, often characterized silence as more extreme than quiet, in some instances imbuing it with negative connotations. In general, "quiet" referred to an atmosphere of few distractions where one is able to concentrate; while not completely devoid of sound, a "quiet" environment generally means there is no one talking. "Silence," on the other hand, often referred to a

plays in scholarly work and life and in the meaning of the library to the academic community, and considers what shifts in the shape, sound, and use of academic libraries portend: for users' understanding of the library and of what practices and spaces are legitimate, for the role of the library in the intellectual life of the university, and, ultimately, for the nature of higher education.

Libraries, as iconic symbols of a university's intellectual heritage and historically places of quiet and solitary study, face potential challenges when they attempt to recast themselves as social hubs. By examining the actual practices and beliefs of different constituencies of the campus population, this research considers the motivations behind such changes and whether these alterations – in sound, appearance, and purpose – meet the expectations of users and carve out (or sustain) a unique and vital place for the library in the life of the academic community. Promoted by librarians as supporting the library's pedagogical mission and especially of meeting the needs and preferences of the Millennial generation of college students, new academic library spaces frequently challenge extant beliefs about the sound and role of the library, and in some cases counter scholars' needs and desires for distraction-free space for reflection and study. Beyond evidencing the library's expanding technological and pedagogical roles, the soundscape of the academic library signals a deeper shift in the nature of academic life – from the culture of isolated reflection that has long typified the life of the mind, to a new academic culture of productivity, in which a focus on efficiency, outcomes, and consumer demands drive the experience of higher education.

more extreme version of quiet, where the lack of ambient sound could itself be distracting. These emic distinctions aside, there was not a persistent difference in the use of these terms (either among interviewees or in the periodical literature) to warrant maintaining such a distinction throughout this dissertation.

The discussion of methods below (and in the appendices) details how this phenomenological and ethnographic case study was conducted and the ways in which the sources and methods chosen helped to answer the following key research questions.

- What practices, spaces, and sounds are considered legitimate in libraries, and who considers them legitimate?
- What factors reinforce or challenge the meaning of the library to the academic community? And how are those meanings negotiated?
- What is the significance of quiet and noisy places in the library – in scholars' work, in the scholarly life of the university, and in the academic community's understanding of the library?

Through interviews with librarians and library users, observations within an academic library, and analysis of discourse on libraries and their soundscapes in professional librarian literature and published and unpublished institutional documents, this research examined institutional change and legitimation at macro- and micro-levels and uncovered experiential and environmental factors that contribute to or challenge understanding of the library. Critical discourse analysis of thirty years of articles in the national professional librarian publication *American Libraries* examined talk about libraries and their soundscapes for ways in which the sound of the library was connected to its role and for beliefs about the appropriate sound and use of academic libraries. Talk about libraries, in published and unpublished institutional documents and by stakeholders in one academic library community, was analyzed for beliefs about libraries and library use, especially as these beliefs relate to the sound of the library, and appropriate sound levels. These beliefs were compared to actual sound levels in and use of the library, as evidenced by participant observation. Together, these methods helped to

triangulate findings about the legitimacy of new library spaces and sounds and to piece together an understanding of libraries built from diverse time periods and places, and distinct histories and perspectives.⁵

Taking an ethnographic case study approach allowed for greater attention to the local milieu and how it impacts an academic community's beliefs, values, and actions. The library chosen for this study, Emory University's Robert W. Woodruff Library, provided an ideal subject. As the main library on campus, serving undergraduates, graduates, and faculty in business, humanities, and social sciences and supporting a range of resources, services, and activities, Woodruff Library attracts a variety of campus users engaged in different academic (and non-academic) pursuits. Further, Woodruff Library was among the handful of academic libraries (American and worldwide) that implemented Commons environments in the 1990s, and among the even smaller number of institutions that have also subsequently incorporated or reinstated dedicated quiet areas.

The focus on meaning at the heart of this study encompasses multiple facets of the library's history, mission, and use. As an institution long associated with quiet and identified as the heart of intellectual life, the academic library – more so, perhaps, than any other building or location on a college campus – possesses deep significance for its scholarly community.

Asking what the academic library means to both scholars and librarians exposes the multiple challenges that an institution faces in its efforts to adapt to change, and the ramifications for that change; focusing more pointedly on how silence and sound shape this meaning reveals the role that the aural atmosphere plays in reinforcing and reshaping cultural beliefs and values. Further, by examining evolving beliefs about libraries and noise levels in the broader

⁵ Following execution and write-up of this dissertation, I became aware of Richardson's (1994, 2000, & St. Pierre, 2005) work on crystallization, which would have application to this project. I discuss this briefly in the concluding chapter.

cultural environment, this study gauges the extent to which new library soundscapes have gained legitimacy, and how and among whom that legitimacy has been acquired.

THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

American academic librarians find themselves between epochs, having developed their professional standards and bureaucracies at the end of the Industrial Age and now having to re-assess their role and their organizational structure in the Digital Age. Libraries and professional librarians of the late 19th century deliberately espoused middle-class cultural values: quiet libraries and open architecture, accompanied by predominantly female librarians, communicated the virtues of reading and decorum, especially to lower-class patrons in urban public libraries (Levine, 1988; Van Slyck, 1996). Though less inclined towards acculturation of library users, academic libraries of this time exercised authority in other ways, including closed stacks, hierarchical circulation policies, and architecture and building use policies that curtailed conversation in favor of quiet study (Atkins, 1991).

The increasingly noisy library of the late 20th and early 21st centuries emerged amidst changes in pedagogical practice, widespread adoption of new personal computing and communication technologies, librarian efforts to reverse declines in library use, an increasing tendency in American academia to view higher education as a commodity and students as consumers, and broader cultural interest in building (and a commercial interest in marketing) communities. Today's American academic community brings to the library a panoply of expectations rooted in their current research and communication habits, the culture of higher education, and past library experiences. If there was ever an accepted notion of what

environment libraries should provide and how they should be used, that sentiment is no longer commonly shared.

Rather than simply repeating the refrain, “The Internet changed everything,” the historical overview offered below and in Chapter 2 considers the interrelated factors that have influenced academic and library work and the role an academic library plays in its campus community. As an exploration of how new institutional practices become culturally accepted (or legitimated), this interdisciplinary study uses sociological theories of legitimation, which seek to explain processes that change or maintain the *status quo* (see especially Dornbush & Scott, 1975; Douglas, 1986; French & Raven, 1959; Walker, Thomas, & Zelditch, 1986; and Zelditch & Walker, 1984). In this study I explore whether changes in libraries’ soundscapes are accepted and how quiet in libraries is understood and valued in this new context.

Theories of discourse⁶ (Fairclough, 2001; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Foucault, 1972) assist in this study of legitimacy by guiding analysis of talk about libraries in professional librarian literature, institutional documents, and comments by academic librarians and library users. Discourse theories prove particularly useful in determining what the library means to different users, and how that meaning is negotiated as libraries change their role, appearance, and sound. Finally, historical and cultural studies of sound guide an examination of the implications of new library spaces on academic life and the ways of being a scholar.

A culture of quiet

The written word’s stillness and silence is embodied in the architecture of libraries, which occupy a place in Western popular imagination as hushed, hallowed halls.⁷ Many early

⁶ I define discourse as instances of actual speech and the ideological beliefs underlying them.

⁷ In this discussion of libraries I have endeavored to distinguish between “space” and “place.” Space implies openness, lack of definition, while place implies definition. A place is a defined point within

academic libraries were actually located over the chapel or above a space designated for religious services.⁸ The reverence for the written word has been suggested by libraries' construction in the style of Greek temples and Gothic churches. Libraries (public, academic, or private) are often referred to as refuges or sanctuaries, their silence sacred, their interiors inspiring, the time spent in them transcendent. This association between books and spirituality may also be attributed to the medieval monastic schools from which the modern university arose, and to the monastic discipline of *lectio divina*, or divine reading. The practice of reading a passage of scripture in a place free of distraction was considered a spiritual act, through which one conversed with God by hearing His voice in the text and responding with prayer. Several Catholic orders, including the Benedictines and Augustines, place reading at the center of monastic life and set out detailed rules governing this practice. Emphasis on low sound levels, codes of user conduct, and the role of the librarian in controlling access to information have long served to reinforce the authority of the academic library as an institution as well as the authority of academic institutions' systems for establishing truth and conferring status. Physically and ideologically, the library has formed the hub of scholarly activity, as the place where valued texts are held and preserved, where new and vetted scholarship and literature are introduced, and where scholars congregate to study what is known in order to formulate new ideas. Consonant with its role as the keeper of and gateway to human knowledge and achievement, the library carefully maintains and preserves its wealth of resources; this is achieved in part by lending and building use policies, which tend to favor the needs and demands of faculty. Aural and visual aspects of library

space. Place implies distinctiveness. Space suggests flexibility. The space of the reading room, for instance, helps distinguish it as a place. By extension, the library itself is often distinctive because of its expanse of space – the lack of clutter, the open room, the possibility for any variety of thought, as a result of the visual and aural surroundings being kept open and empty.

⁸ Duke Humfrey's Library over the Oxford Divinity School is one, particularly noteworthy example.

spaces have also conveyed the place of the university in time – the institution’s distinguished past, or what it imagines that past to be – and contributed to the academic library’s iconic image as a cathedral of learning, a temple of knowledge, and the historical, spatial, and spiritual center of the university (Campbell, 2006).

Today, within academic librarianship and librarianship in general, questions about the significance of the library building to its users have led to attempts to formally measure users’ expectations of library space. LibQUAL+, a standardized electronic survey instrument for measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of academic library service worldwide,⁹ devotes five of its 22 core questions to the issue of the “Library as Place,” asking users to rank their desire for, and how effectively their academic library provides, the following:

- Library space that inspires study and learning,
- Quiet space for individual activities,
- A comfortable and inviting location,
- A getaway for study, learning, or research, and
- Community space for group learning and group study.¹⁰

As the selected criteria indicate, librarians are interested in the value of libraries as places for both quiet study and collaboration. There is an expectation that the library building should

⁹ LibQUAL+ was developed from a pre-existing private-sector survey, SERVQUAL, used by businesses since the mid-1980s to determine the efficacy of service and customer satisfaction (Cook, Heath, Thompson, & Thompson, 2001).

¹⁰ These current “library as place” criteria differ slightly from those originally developed to assess library environments. While initial criteria sought to measure the physical library’s success in providing a suitable place for work, contemplation, or quiet and solitary study, later criteria expanded possibilities for evaluating the sociability of such spaces (and the desire for such interactions), by inviting assessment of how well a library provides “community space for group learning and group study” (Cook, Heath, Thompson, & Thompson, 2001 January). More information on the American Research Libraries’ (ARL) LibQual+, including a history of its use and a bibliography of articles documenting the protocol’s development, is available at <http://www.libqual.org>.

be simultaneously magnificent, inspiring, and comfortable, inviting users to work with others or work alone or even transcend their immediate surroundings to imagine themselves part of something greater. In the words of architects who construct and renovate new academic library spaces, “People want to study, work, socialize and attend events in a place that is majestic, innovative, ‘cool’ or memorable” (Wedge & Blackburn, 2009). In an era when information resources, services, and tools are available remotely and the library building appears increasingly less crucial to the dissemination and use of information, and when library and university administrators must decide how best to construct or renovate library buildings for 21st-century users, there is great interest in what users desire and need in the physical library space. While a modular design may assist librarians in accommodating immediate and future space needs, such spaces do not always project the sense of heritage and status that more traditional library buildings tended to reinforce and that alumni, administration, and the campus community in general may expect from the building that has historically been the intellectual center and image of academic life.

Using LibQUAL+ some libraries have found that undergraduates rank them poorly as places, citing building-use policies as especially dissatisfying. For example, the University of Pittsburgh found that it was failing in its attempts to be a friendly and welcoming environment for users because librarians were obliged to admonish students who brought in food and drink (Knapp, 2004). The solution here, as in many other academic libraries, has been to loosen restrictions on library use. Where before food and drink were forbidden, given the danger they posed to introducing book-destroying insects to the library building, now food and drink are allowed, though often in designated areas in the library and in certain approved containers. Many academic libraries have also added coffee shops and

cafés, thus making the library a food-and-drink destination, not merely a place where that activity is tolerated.

Yet in attempting to cater to the needs of certain populations of users, libraries run the risk of alienating others. Encouraging users to think of the library as a living room or café, where one may hang out with friends and socialize, may undermine simultaneous efforts to use the library for contemplation and study. The “third place” some librarians hope to create – where all levels of a community may freely associate and where conversation and play help foment the free interplay of ideas – cannot, by definition, exude the authority and reverence or enable the quiet solitude that many users have come to expect from this traditional institution.¹¹

Justifying the noisy library

Though the LibQUAL+ survey questions suggest that the library may be a place for *both* quiet contemplation and collaborative communion, and though libraries can and often do attempt to offer both, opinions understandably differ on what the library of the future *should* sound like and how it should serve the university. Preferences for a particular level and style of speaking in the library are often linked to a particular vision of the meaning and role of the library within the academic community.

Librarians and architects widely endorse libraries’ more social aspects, with good reason: with widespread availability of online information in the mid- to late 1990s and a concurrent drop in library gate counts, the library building needed to expand its role and update its

¹¹ The “third place” is Ray Oldenberg’s (1999) appellation for spaces that level social hierarchies and encourage play and conversation, that are located between work and home, and that form the hub of communities. Although his initial publications on these types of spaces omitted discussion of libraries (likely because traditional library environments are not conducive to casual conversation and play), his most recent work includes examples of public libraries that embody qualities of the third place.

image in order to appeal to many campus users. During the 1990s a small number of innovative academic libraries constructed Commons areas to promote collaborative and instructional use of computing technology within the library building, and to encourage more faculty and students to avail themselves of the library's services and resources. A hallmark of Commons constructions has been collaboration, not just in promoting and facilitating interactions among users but also in staffing and supplying resources and services for the Commons itself: most of these constructions were also built through partnerships with other institutional divisions, primarily computing departments, but also academic writing centers and, more recently, cafés and bookstores.

Rises in building usage since the late 1990s suggest that academic library users have embraced this shift in design and use, though it is not entirely clear whether users simply gravitated towards an appealing new space.¹² Even less clear is what this increased patronage reflects about actual *use* of the library and the function of quiet and conversational areas in academic work. In supporting the addition of collaborative work areas and cafés, librarians implicitly endorse and invite the types of conversations and interactions that can lead to higher noise levels in the library. At the same time, by creating areas in which individuals can exercise greater freedom in the type of activities they undertake and with whom they interact, librarians also encourage users to play a more active role in constructing knowledge and to think of the library as a place for making social connections and working with others, rather than just as a repository for established knowledge and codified practices. In the view of some librarians, this shift in attitude towards the sound and use of space is the inevitable result of technological changes in information delivery and generational changes in users.

¹² One study found that 80% of new library constructions or renovations experienced an increase in traffic (Carlson, 2005).

There has been a culture shift in the way college students work, according to James Rettig, university librarian at the University of Richmond in Virginia: “The silent individual toiling in a carrel is no more.” The best way to accommodate them is with group study options. “Students create ad hoc group study around computers,” Rettig says, reflecting the Valparaiso [University] experience. They also develop an evolving culture in which they “self regulate,” designating quiet study areas by consensus. Self-regulation produces the best results, according to Rettig. “Putting up signs or having policies for quiet study is like speed limit signs on the highway. People read them as suggestions, not requirements!” (DiMattia, 2005, p. 49)

Despite increasing interest in creating library spaces in which users exercise greater control over their own learning environment (Bennett, 2003), librarians still authorize and regulate appropriate sound levels through signage, use policies, and occasionally direct intervention, often in response to user complaints about noise and request for quieter spaces. Indiana University, Bloomington, recently constructed a second Commons area that was specifically designated a quiet space (“Indiana U’s IC2,” 2005). At Emory University’s Woodruff Library, graduate students gave the library low rankings on its provision of “quiet space for individual activities,” prompting the library to designate large portions of its Commons area for quiet study and to post notices on all computer carrels regarding appropriate noise levels. Though many librarians today may herald the end of their roles as silencers and embrace the remaking of libraries as community centers (DiMattia, 2005), differing opinions about what form the library of the future should take, and especially what that library should sound like, obliges them to continue demarcating quiet and noisy areas in an effort to appease users.

Disagreement about appropriate sound levels in libraries may be read as a question of legitimacy: do individual library users believe that collaborative and conversational areas in the library and the noise they generate are appropriate for a university library, even when such spaces are neither desirable nor beneficial to them? As cultural and educational institutions, academic libraries offer a particularly interesting institutional case for studying legitimacy. Alongside records of humanity’s achievements, libraries preserve the historical

record of the university, perpetuate the university's identity and traditions, and support pedagogical and research practices valued by the faculty. In this sense the academic library may be regarded as the conservative base of the university: the culture that obtains within the library reflects and perpetuates the prevailing and legitimate order, from the way information is vetted and valued to the authority and rank granted to its members.

Rooted in a deeply hierarchical system, the academic research library has long served the needs of the faculty first, then graduate students, and finally undergraduates. Though American academic libraries now allow undergraduates to check out books and all users to browse the book stacks, privileges still obtain for higher ranked individuals in the system (e.g., longer book loan periods for graduate students and faculty; a limit on materials that undergraduates and graduates can check out or use; designation of some library spaces as faculty- or graduate student-use only; and so forth). This system of rank and reward, embedded within a larger and expansive system in which scholarly achievement and seniority establish one's place in the hierarchy, typically meets little resistance from those users it adversely affects. At the same time the academic library building has long been the *de facto* preserve for undergraduates who lack privileges for checking out books or resources for acquiring their own copies. For such users quiet library space would be a rare commodity, essential for protecting and supporting their use of the library for reading, study, and research. Yet these younger users are very often the ones whom libraries are attempting to attract and accommodate by introducing more social (and consequently, noisier) spaces. Whose interests, then, are at stake in efforts to revamp library spaces? And what are the implications of these changes for libraries and scholarly life?

In their arguments for creating such high-service and high-tech collaborative spaces like Commons areas, librarians often point to the need to satisfy Millennials' unique information

needs and technological ability.¹³ Descriptions as well as speculations about this Internet Generation, who began appearing on college campuses in the early 2000s, label them as both techno-savvy and highly social – anxious and able to be in constant contact with others through a variety of high-tech gadgets, from cell phones and pagers to instant messages and email (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Tapscott, 1998). This penchant for persistent contact shapes their approach to daily life; enabled by new technology to mix socializing and work, Millennials often do. An OCLC report on contemporary issues impacting libraries and other cultural heritage institutions (DeRosa, Dempsey, & Wilson, 2004) cites such boundary blurring as characteristic of the new generation of college students, who operate in a world mediated by technology, where work and play take place anywhere, anytime.

In addition to being born in the Digital Age, these students were raised under a new pedagogical paradigm that privileged group work and peer-to-peer discussion as critical to cognitive development. They not only grew up with more ways to communicate with each other, they were also encouraged in their academics to talk and work together. Combined with a tendency among this group to multi-task, the undergraduates now populating academic libraries are presumably more inclined to study in groups while eating and listening to a TV or headphones. One could argue (and, as will be discussed later in this dissertation, many do argue) that such students would not view the quiet of the library building as essential for their scholarly work, or at least would not privilege quiet over conversation.

¹³ Millennials are the generation of Americans born between the late 1970s and the late 1990s and the first generation to grow up entirely in a digital world. Also called Generation Y, the Internet Generation (or iGen), the Nintendo Generation, and NetGen, this large demographic is already exerting considerable influence on the workplace. Neil Howe and William Strauss wrote one of the seminal works on this group, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (2000), and later produced guides to understanding and successfully appealing to Millennials as they move into colleges (2003) and impact American popular culture (2006).

For older academics who grew up within an educational system that overwhelmingly rewarded individual effort, that provided little opportunity for collaborative work, and in which the teacher was the unquestioned and authoritative voice of knowledge in the classroom (as opposed to the newer active-learning view of the teacher's role as "guide on the side"), the quiet space of a library, particular of a grand reading room, may synthesize these critical elements of academic culture: a space for solitary, focused, and quiet work, in which the voice of an author speaks directly to the silently reading scholar. The codes of the quiet library, formalized at the end of the 19th century with the professionalization of librarians, have long reinforced a particular relationship between knowledge and authority, in which truth is found in a literary canon, vetted journal articles, and texts carefully selected and provided by others.¹⁴ The space itself, through amplification of the slightest sound and through a typical layout in which all readers are viewable to others and thus subject to the surveillance and correction by others, further encourages the individual to study quietly, connecting with others through the activity of reading and the written word rather than through conversation.

Valuing quiet

Talk about quiet and noisy libraries in librarian's professional publications, academic library users' own comments about the role and meaning of the library in their work, and observations of actual use of the academic library and instances of talk and quiet – all these forms of discourse help to inform our understanding of a new culture emerging in academic

¹⁴ Melvil Dewey, a pivotal and influential figure in the creation of the American Library Association in 1876, advocated that the (public) library's role should be to disseminate the culture of middle- and upper-class whites (Wiegand, 1996). Having staked out this role, he believed women "would become loyal soldiers in his army of new professionals who were unlikely to question decisions of literary and scholarly experts" (p. 10).

libraries, one which embraces a view of academic work as playful and collaborative and thus benefiting from easy and frequent access to conversation and diversion. In this cultural view the library's role expands from intellectual center (storing, preserving, and providing access to information, and supporting patrons' use of it) to social center; or, to put it another way, from just helping people connect with ideas to also helping people connect.

While on the one hand new communication and computing technology (e.g., instant messaging, cell phones, email, and collaborative software) blur the boundaries between individual and group study and between work and play, users still require space for focused, solitary work. In the face of increasingly noisy libraries some users indict librarians for failing to preserve this institution's sacred silence (for example, Tisdale, 1997, and Stein, 2003). The fact that many librarians welcome the changing soundscape, and especially the opportunity to shed their antiquated image as "shushers" (DiMattia, 2005), points to a potential disconnect between user and librarian attitudes about legitimate practices, spaces, and sounds of libraries.

The cultural significance of quiet remains a topic minimally explored within anthropology. While quiet may emerge as a feature of a particular cultural community (e.g., Basso's [1990] study of the Western Apaches and their use of quiet in tribal ceremonies and interpersonal communication), rarely does it occupy a prominent or even identifying role in the culture. In the case of libraries, which in American popular culture and literature are often synonymous with repression not just of the aural sense but other senses and sensualities as well,¹⁵ a

¹⁵ Paradoxically, the library and librarian frequently represent both repression and inhibition, as sites of passion and dispassion, order and chaos. As one of many examples from literature and popular culture, in the musical *The Music Man* the emotionally distant Marian, a librarian by vocation, is also the center of rumors regarding her supposed sexual relations with a wealthy benefactor of the library. Spurred by suggestions that she would be an easy fling, a traveling salesman sings a ballad of seduction to her in the library, in alternating loud and hushed tones. As another example, Jorge Luis

culture of quiet defines the quality and the character of the space and those who occupy it. To study the discourse of libraries is to study the discourse of gestures and looks, speakers and non-speakers, and the meaning imbued in quiet for those who choose to occupy it.

Theories of discourse provide a way for locating cultural meaning, for instance, in the words people use, the way they talk in certain environments, and how they talk to different people and what they talk about. Embedded in a particular context of social actors, setting, established patterns of exchange, and specific utterances and silences are the values and beliefs of members of a group, closely tied to social structures that influence genres of discourse and modes of expression (Fairclough, 2001). One can read in such exchanges the role of power and identity in shaping how individuals act (or don't act). Through its practices an institution both supports and constrains what can be discussed: by setting certain conditions on discourse, such as separating out some topics or types of speech from others and then rejecting or ignoring them, institutions shape and limit what can be talked about and, in turn, what is believed and valued (Foucault, 1972). Even such commonplace institutional practices as classifying and labeling reflect ideological assumptions about what is valued, and the labels in turn reinforce particular ideological views in those who employ them (Bowker and Star, 1999). Instances of discourse at various levels (e.g., everyday discursive interactions within a specific academic library, an academic library's public documents explaining usage and sound policies, or articles in librarians' professional literature) help define the broader social orders and cultural belief systems that govern who speaks, when, how, and about what. Close analysis of this discourse may also provide a

Borges' short story "The Library of Babel" paints an image of a library that, by the very fact that it contains and orders all knowledge in the universe, contributes to its users' despair and dementia. By virtue of its expanse of knowledge and the rules it establishes to order that knowledge, the library inhabits the alterities of possibility and impossibility, of denial and desire.

critical tool for linking the ways a practice becomes accepted, or legitimated, at the local level with the ways a practice is accepted more broadly (e.g., how the culture of the noisy library becomes accepted across different types of libraries, or across higher education institutions).

Some cultural historians have taken up the question of how sounds functioned in specific historical contexts, as markers of cultural identity and community boundaries, for instance, or indications of societal change and social discord (see Kelman, 2001; Picker, 2003, Smith, 2001, and several authors in Smith, 2004, including Corbin, Johnson, Rath, Smilor, and Smith). Mark Smith (2001) describes how quiet and sound marked racial and regional differences in the antebellum South. Ari Kelman (2001), as mentioned earlier, treats the cultural meaning of quiet by considering how physical structures impose social order and meaning by amplifying breaks in silence. Murray Schafer's (1994) elaboration of the elements of the soundscape (the aural equivalent of the landscape, containing keynotes, signals, and soundmarks that together form a place's unique, historical identity) presents the would-be sound ethnographer with tools for defining these auditory features. Ethnographies of sound, such as Michael Bull's (2000, 2007) exploration of personal stereo use in public urban areas, helps model profitable ways of viewing individuals' relationship to sound and how that sound mediates or mitigates relations with others in the community.

Despite these recent efforts to explore the role of the aural environments in shaping cultural identity and social interactions, little work has been done in uncovering the historical significance of sound or, more pointedly, in theorizing the role that sound and its absence continue to play in contemporary Western life. British activists of the 19th century and American activists of the early 20th century roundly accused urban noise of blighting civilization and sought means of containing the spread of sound (Picker, 2003; Smilor, 2004), but what is the prevailing attitude towards noise levels at the beginning of the 21st,

particularly in those places long accustomed to quiet? More importantly, and especially in light of the social conflict underlying past activism against noise, whose interests are being promoted when traditionally quiet spaces of study are reconfigured to accommodate more social and noisy interactions? And on what basis are such changes justified, or challenged?

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY AND PREVIEW OF CHAPTERS

The defining quality of libraries has long been their *lack* of sound. By taking the unusual step of foregrounding the aural aspects of academic library culture, this study undertakes a rare ethnography of sound in order to describe and understand an institution experiencing rapid cultural change. Further, this study's attention to the role and the cultural value of quiet spaces in contemporary scholarly life provides insight into what it means to live, work, and communicate in academia in the highly connected and mediated world of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Like the proverbial canary in the coalmine, the academic library is the bellwether of American academia, and challenges facing libraries preface or parallel those of higher education in general, as expanded access to information resources and alternatives to place-based education (such as Capella University) destabilize higher-education hierarchies and call into question the functional role of the campus in American educational life.

Its theoretical significance, particularly as an interdisciplinary study, lies in its application of theories of discourse and sociological theories of legitimacy to consider how changes within an institution are effected, maintained, and justified. In pursuing two different disciplinary approaches to questions about the meaning and legitimacy of library soundscapes, this research illustrates ways in which complementary sociological and anthropological approaches highlight different features of the same phenomenon. Fairclough's (2001) critical

discourse analysis approach and his theorization of the linkages between social orders and social orders of discourse shares with sociological theories of legitimacy a view of social actions and beliefs as structurally related. Through its attention to ideological commonsense underlying everyday talk, critical discourse analysis suggests the beliefs underlying moments of linguistic interaction and within textual utterances, helping to draw out subtle mechanisms in the adoption, dissemination, and maintenance of new social objects or institutions as legitimate. This study also demonstrates its interdisciplinary approach as an ethnography of sound in which cultural change is measured through fading silence.

This research has immediate applicability in the library field as an examination of the efficacy of recent architectural practices and building-use policies. Often assessments of a library building's use rely heavily on statistical figures: gate counts, annual survey's measuring different populations' type and frequency of library use, and so forth. While useful in detecting satisfaction or dissatisfaction with existing library spaces and services, such assessments cannot easily gauge what deep-seated beliefs make some uses of a space desirable, others prohibitive.¹⁶ Most of the recent and widespread interest in the "library as place" has pushed for conceiving and constructing libraries as social, collaborative, and community centers. Questions of how or whether to maintain traditional library and librarian roles have been raised, as the soundscapes created by these new buildings and policies have forced the issue. But these questions are often dismissed by a reassertion that librarians need not concern themselves with aural environments. Insisting that students self-regulate and

¹⁶ This is not to breezily dismiss use of the LibQUAL+ survey to assess users' experiences of the library. The 22 criteria used in the current survey instrument were developed and refined through open-ended interviews with library users (faculty, undergraduate students, and graduate students) and so do represent at a general level users' expectations and desires for the space of the library. As a standardized quantitative assessment tool, however, LibQUAL+'s value lies primarily in its ability to provide libraries with a means for comparatively gauging the library's progress in providing general types of library services, resources, and experiences.

will thus create and protect the work environment they need, many librarians do not attempt to control sound by designating and policing quiet areas. Studies such as this serve a practical function of peering into the lives and thoughts of academic library users, to better understand how different library environments support their work and how changes to the building impact perceptions of the library and its use.

At a deeper and ultimately more significant level, recasting libraries in the image of bookstores, coffeeshops, and “one-stop shopping” centers, referring to users of the library as “customers,” and relying on metrics to quantify the library’s value suggest more profound changes in the role of the library and its position in the academic community. Recognizing that libraries do not exist in a fiscal vacuum, university administrators have encouraged library directors (and directors, in turn, have encouraged librarians) to better account for the ways in which they serve the needs of the academy and the success of these efforts. Yet even as the complexity of new creative expressions have challenged legal definitions of copyright and ownership, so the often internal, ineffable, and minute movements that lead to great scholarship – from the unexpected discovery of an unknown idea, author, book, journal, or colleague while wandering through the library, to the insight emerging from idle reflection – are not easily tracked, if, indeed, the origins of such insights are even realized.

As a phenomenological study of the experiences of different members of one academic community, this study also complicates popular generalizations of the preferences and proclivities of library users in general and Millennials in particular. While this dissertation research did not examine cultures of study, and while such research would enhance the current findings, the insights offered here into individuals’ experiences of and beliefs about the library suggest the ways in which different library spaces function both practically and symbolically for younger members of the academic community.

Chapter 2 – Theoretical and Historical Review

Guided by historical and cultural studies of how sound and soundscapes reflect and even reinforce social differences, this study investigates the soundscape of an American academic library as a way of understanding recent convergences of technology, different generations of users, and economic drivers, and how individuals negotiate and accept these challenges. To lay the foundation for this aural investigation of the changing academic library, I look at the historical and cultural origins of the academic library – its place in the university and its support for scholarly activity – following through to the cultural values that have influenced the development of *American Libraries* generally. Part of its most recent history is the incorporation of new technologies, which have increased the speed and convenience of academic research and, along with shifts in pedagogy, have blurred boundaries between the places, times, and even nature of work and play. In this chapter I introduce sociological theories of legitimacy alongside theories of discourse and social power, to highlight the ways in which new forms are promoted and accepted as the norm, even when such changes do not advantage those whom they affect. In short, the academic library, its centuries-long history rooted in books, cultural authority, and silent study, stands today in an increasingly competitive, commodified, and technological landscape, and changes in the library suggest deeper changes in academic life.

Chapter 3 – Defining and Defending the Sound of the Library

In my interviews with librarians, teaching faculty, and graduate and undergraduate students at Emory University ($n=23$) I probed their understanding of libraries, based in their current academic work and history of library use, and their attitudes towards noise and quiet in the library. No one rejected higher noise levels in Woodruff Library as inappropriate, and many

commended the library's variety of spaces for different activities and learning styles. But in their beliefs about the meaning of the library, in their descriptions of their own use of the library, and in the types of sounds and activities they grouped together, they implicitly questioned the appropriateness of the noisy library. Individuals who specifically noted their own need for a separate or quiet space to concentrate on their work also demonstrated a reluctance to defend or assert this preference. Though some of the undergraduate Millennials I spoke with evidenced the stereotypes (e.g., preference for computers over books, or crowded areas over seclusion), they also confessed to finding some aspects of the noisy and social Commons distracting and undesirable. Their own preferences notwithstanding, librarians advocated the noisy library, as a place valued by users and supportive of the educational needs of the new generation of students.

The meaning of the library in these narratives, while reflective of a diversity of experiences and preferences, nevertheless coalesced into something exceptional or sublime – descriptions of people and experiences of lasting and often intangible value. Significant to individuals' acceptance of the suboptimal form of the noisy library as well as their reluctance to actively defend their own soundscape preferences, users' understanding of the library oscillated between their personal experiences of study and a sense of libraries as inherently public and shared. Both librarians and library users pointed to an understanding of the public nature of the library space and the implications for its sound. Yet while librarians' valued sound with positive action, others associated sound with diversion and distraction and contrasted it with work and quiet.

This ethnographic case study examines the soundscape, activities, and history of Robert W. Woodruff Library, the main and undergraduate library at Emory University. Excerpts from institutional documents and campus publications, alongside field notes from observations in the library and diagrams and photographs of the building, trace librarians' efforts to both anticipate and respond to user preferences, as well as to attract and track library users, through the use of new technology and services, a relaxing of building use policies, and diverse spaces. Efforts and attitudes of librarians and users, juxtaposed with vignettes of scenes in the library, demonstrate how users accept or accommodate this space. The keynotes, soundmarks, and signals in the Woodruff Library's soundscape, in addition to painting an aural portrait of the space, echo the library's efforts to track and accommodate user demands and market itself to wider audiences. Observations within the library uncover uses that blur boundaries between public and private space and call attention to the ways in which institutional authority is often absent and indirect.

Chapter 5 – Straddling Conceptual Worlds

The following analysis of talk about libraries and their soundscapes uses as its base thirty years of *American Libraries* articles. Attitudes about sound and silence in libraries are investigated through close attention to word choice, metaphorical language, and other lexical, grammatical, and syntactical features of discourse. Fairclough's (2001) approach to how personal beliefs and ideologies emerge through language guide the analysis of these articles. The talk about libraries published in *American Libraries* and discussed below, though primarily reflecting the viewpoints of individual librarians and library administrators, also includes the comments of architects, library users, celebrities and public figures, and humorists. Different sections of the magazine also project a particular stance on the material

they feature. I analyzed discourse in each article in terms of the speaker, the topic of the article and type of article, and other contextual or intertextual elements that would contribute to its interpretation (e.g., other articles that letters to the editor may be referencing).

The view of libraries and library soundscapes conveyed in these articles, while reflecting division and doubt regarding changes to the library and in library policies in recent years, suggest a valuation of sound in libraries as connected to serving the needs of users (especially younger users) and supporting education, and as reflective of the vitality of the library as an institution. In this discourse I identify themes that emerged in my analysis of this data and that resonate with findings in the interview and fieldwork data: conceptual understandings and valuations of noise and quiet; librarians' reluctance to directly manage the sound of libraries; and their response to and use of the discourse and discursive practices of business.

Chapter 6 – Conclusions

To date, librarians have succeeded in legitimating new library spaces, in part by linking them to the library's educational mission. While many users implicitly accept changes to the library's soundscape and the broad range of activities, behaviors, resources, and services this reflects, they place themselves and their differing needs and preferences for study space outside of the perceived norm. Of particular interest is the way in which new library spaces are oriented to the needs of "customers," as well as the complicated relations between notions of public and private space and beliefs about and the use of the library.

Issues for further study include a more extensive examination of the implications of American academic libraries' (and universities') adoption of commercial discourse and

discursive practices, as well as the economic factors contributing to that shift. Related to this conflation of the social orders and orders of discourse of commerce and education is the commodification of community, as bookstores, libraries, and campuses promote themselves as social gathering places. Other directions for research that would enhance the findings of this study include closer examination of the culture of study among college students, including not just the place and sound of academic work but also preoccupations with efficiency and productivity. Finally, this study introduced curious contradictions in notions of public and private, including the public-ness intended in the Commons movement and the corporatization of information inherent in the resources it provides.

REFLECTIONS ON INSIDER ETHNOGRAPHY

The span of my ethnographic data collection for this study (four months) is relatively short, compared to the two years considered requisite for most anthropological fieldwork.

However, as someone who has been living in this culture and visiting this library for almost six years and working alongside Woodruff Library staff for over four years, my observations and experience exceed the standard requirement. Through the course of my graduate work, well before my own dissertation research was conducted, I studied, wrote, and read (and ate and sometimes slept) in a locked library study, in the reading room, in study carrels in the stacks, in a chair along the skywalk, at tables and computers in the Commons, and in Jazzman's. I used the library to watch films for class or to show films to my own classes, check out or put books on reserve, photocopy journal articles, and attend workshops and lectures. From teaching undergraduate courses at the university, I became more familiar with

online and in-person resources for undergraduate research, and visited ECIT¹⁷ often for assistance with Blackboard (my course-management software) and guiding my students in developing presentations. Especially through my employment in Woodruff Library's Digital Programs and Systems division, I enjoyed unusual access to the thoughts and attitudes of librarians, the library's inter-organizational dynamics, how the library understands itself in relation to its library users and other academic departments, and how librarians conduct their daily work (working in a cubicle in the Cube Farm, attending internal meetings, and reading and posting documents on the staff wiki). Having become familiar with me and my research project, librarians and other members of Woodruff Library's academic community voluntarily related to me their own library experiences or their opinions about rising noise levels in libraries and the importance of quiet. Though earlier in my research in the library, when I sought the assistance of librarians, I found it necessary to foreground my previous life as a librarian in order to establish a rapport, by the time of my actual research such information was inconsequential. I was now, in many ways, an insider.

I relate this brief history of my place in this fieldsite for two reasons: first, to demonstrate that the participant-observation data for this study, gathered as it was over a single academic semester, represents the very focused observations of a cultural insider and thus sufficiently reflects the daily life of Woodruff Library; and second, to contextualize my own position as a researcher in this context. As the following description illustrates, the norms governing behavior within a library vary from place to place, over time, within the library itself, and according to one's position within that library. Working one's way into the field of research is as much a function of moving through social space as through chronological and physical

¹⁷ Emory's Center for Interactive Teaching, part of the University Technology Services division, is housed in the library.

space, and even then the borders of acceptance continually shift with interactions and utterances. As comfortable as I am with the degree of experience and insight I possess for multiple years in my field site (and, as a librarian, in my field), I have come to realize that there is no fixed cultural center to which one eventually gains access. There are only a multitude of social interactions and individual perspectives, through which one may glimpse another piece of the larger whole.

Library positions

As a librarian I have been asked to shush noisy students, and I have been shushed myself. I have encountered students who seem oblivious to the “unspoken” codes of the library, talking un-self-consciously with others or on cell phones when others are studying nearby, and I have met with students who whispered so quietly I had to ask them to speak up. Among the different libraries in my experience, policies towards maintaining quiet also differed. At Gorgas Library, the University of Alabama’s main library where I worked as a student, noise levels never seemed to be an issue: study areas were always quiet, while service areas (like Circulation and Reference) were always noisier, though never surprisingly so.¹⁸ At Gordon College, a small and rural two-year college in the University System of Georgia where I worked as a Reference librarian, the noise policy was regularly enforced: all areas of the library were to be kept quiet for the students. Typically librarians’ justification for maintaining quiet in the library is to provide an optimum environment for study and to protect that environment for the patrons themselves. At all the libraries where I have worked, many of my librarian colleagues resisted this stereotypical role-playing, but accepted

¹⁸ Since I graduated from The University of Alabama in 2001, the library has added a coffeeshop to its bottom floor, where the Reference and Circulation areas are located. Though I have not yet visited this renovation, anecdotal evidence from people who have suggests this space is now not just noisier than other areas but *noisy*.

that it was necessary for serving the needs of patrons. Some further attempted to keep their own conversations and noise levels to a minimum; others did not.

As a student, before becoming (or even entertaining the idea of becoming) a librarian, I never questioned quiet in libraries. I assumed to some extent that librarians controlled the quiet atmosphere, even as I regulated my own behavior according to what I believed I should or should not do and say in a library. Having been a librarian, I am more aware that this atmosphere is not so much maintained by explicit control (like shushing) as it is by implicit control, exercised through room layout, general noise levels, and quiet consensus.¹⁹

As a former librarian now studying libraries and library culture, I have become increasingly aware that the rules for using the library, including when and where and how loudly to speak, differ from library to library and from time and place within a single library. I have also had the opportunity to hear and see others' experiences of the same library, and from that vantage point also perceive how individuals' own orientation to the library could differ over time, place, and their position in the library.

With my data collection and analysis finished, I face the new question of whether the conclusions I draw from this study will endanger my existing relationships with people in this (very specific) field. Librarians whom I have interviewed or spoken with about my research frequently ask that I share with my findings with them. The reality of this insider audience has haunted my writing, as I questioned what my obligations were to them, in the ways I wrote about them and what I chose to write about. I recognized my desire to represent them fairly and considerately stemmed not just from my sense of ethics but also from a desire to maintain ties within this community and to sympathetically represent the

¹⁹ From my focused observations in this research, I realize now that the specter of surveillance (in the form of the librarian or other patrons) and institutionally and culturally acquired knowledge of respectable library behavior likely worked together to discipline my behavior and that of my peers'.

people I know as both colleagues and friends. But I also wondered whether, as a result of my position within this community, I might understand and write about academic library culture, and this particular library, differently than I would have as an outsider.

Constructing insider status

Through my examinations of this question of positionality – in preparation for this research during my coursework, in the midst of data collection in the field, and in the course of writing the ethnography – I came to understand that positioning and re-positioning are fundamental to social interactions, part of the ongoing negotiation among interlocutors of their sameness and otherness and part of a recognition of the overlapping contexts of interactions. In ethnographic encounters, inclusion in another's social world is always negotiated and technically never amounts to insideness but only to "between-ness" (Maher, 1997, p. 213) or to "gradations of endogeny" and "degrees of acceptance" (Nelson, 1996, p. 184). I was grateful for my levels of connectedness with the people I observed and interviewed, not least of all for the deeper sensitivity it gave me to their perspective. Yet I also recognized that my identity as an inside ethnographer was not fixed, either in the field or in the ethnography itself, and that even the concept of "insideness" was constructed (and, in some ways, flawed). Rather, at any given moment, my position(s) in the field merely gave me perspective – alternative lenses which I regularly and rapidly clicked through to view and assess each situation – and, depending on the discursive event, options for what I might do or say to learn more. To be "inside" in one circumstance or conversation is to be outside another. Ultimately, my goal in developing rapport was not to find my way into that elusive and elite center but to walk through as many doors as possible, in order to understand what it meant to be on the other side.

Just as defining ‘natives’ helps an anthropologist construct his own unique position *outside* a culture, a ‘native’ or ‘inside ethnographer’ works with similar rhetorical tools at her disposal. I recognize that, whatever my own “legitimate” claims to insider status may be, I play up those connections in the way I represent myself, the field, and the informants in this account of my experience. In the ethnography the author’s position in relation to informants, readers, and even other authors emerges through writing choices: using pseudonyms or real names; writing alone or collaborating with informants; representing the contexts of informants’ speech; and preserving long dialogue or monologue as it was related, or synthesizing it into analytic units. Representations of one’s positionality may be used to argue for the choice of fieldsite or methodological approach; for theoretical interpretations or claims of ethnographic authority; to explain representational and writing choices; and to call attention to ethical obligations.

In all those respects, this ethnographic account is no different. I make this observation for rhetorical reasons, of course: to point out that there is no distinct advantage to being either an insider or an outsider to the culture one studies, in terms of the quality or depth of the ethnographic insight; and to highlight my own sensitivity to the ways in which, through my writing, I define (and protect) the people of my research. Emerson et al. (1995) note that “prior experience, training, and commitments” (p. 42) shape how ethnographers orient themselves towards the people they study (for instance, whether they identify or sympathize with their interlocutors) and toward potential audiences. Many of the informants of this study are also my potential audiences, as well as my colleagues and friends. As I write this dissertation, I remain in contact with them, and though I use pseudonyms to refer to them in this written account, I do so not so that I can hide them from themselves and thus write about them more “objectively” (and as a result, perhaps more harshly [Scheper-Hughes,

2000]). I do so because it is quite likely that they and people who know them will read this account, and my informants deserve the privacy that I promised them when they consented to participate in this study.

In a phenomenological ethnographic case study, no less than in one situated within one's own cultural milieu and among one's colleagues and friends, sensitivity to the realness of individuals and relationships is essential to presenting an authentic account. Unlike some anthropologists who lose sense of the realness of their informants once they are no longer in the field (Scheper-Hughes, 2000), I continue to remain in my field and hope to do so (in terms of library work) for some time to come. Can one write a critical cultural account while still embedded in the field site and within social relations with informants? Narayan and Sood's (1997) collaborative work affirms this, and Narayan herself argues that the voices and the contextual realities of one's informants must be represented in the text, not simply out of ethical responsibility but out of intellectual integrity: (p. xii)

All too often, I fear, the people we have sought to represent have ended up as a faceless mass of informants spouting materials for the researcher's professional gain. Acknowledging the impact – both personal and intellectual – of remarkable people met “in the field” more accurately conveys the source of scholarly insights than such distanced depiction. Ironically, moving beyond generalizations to a careful account of the individuals and conditions from which insights emerge can be dismissed as being too precisely empirical, even positivistic; alternately, it can be dismissed as overly partial and personal. Yet I believe that this is a necessary move in today's interconnected, inegalitarian world to grant the people who are the sources of our written works respect as mentors, interlocutors, collaborators, and even friends.

In my efforts to convey the complicated reality of libraries and librarianship today, I have sought to depict the people of this study – library users and librarians alike – as individuals with complex and deep relationships with the library and their work. In doing so, I hope to create for the reader an understanding of libraries that does not merely illustrate my point but communicates the challenges librarians and library users face.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL REVIEW

In its history, the university – with its classical, monastic, or natured settings – has also served as a quintessential space for thought. Expressly, it has been an ivory tower where a student might look up and look down, alone, and take his or her bearing on the universe. But this function is slighted more and more in an age that demands material results: the utilitarian, the legislated, the countable, the visible, the noisiest in the bustle and stir.

Amanda Cain, 2003, "Slipping Sanctuaries," p. 11

After centuries of silence, bound up in print practices and quiet study, the academic library has seen a fairly abrupt change in sound as shifts in technology and pedagogy have prompted librarians to reshape its role to the academic community. Librarians have argued for the validity of these changes, but users – even those supposedly most desirous of these new libraries – claim a need for quiet space. These conflicts over the appropriate role of the academic library bespeak broader challenges in American higher education over balancing support for the life of the mind with the demands of an increasingly consumer-driven academic culture.

Guided by historical and cultural studies of how sound and soundscapes reflect and even reinforce social structures, this study investigates the soundscape of an American academic library as a way of understanding recent convergences of technology, different generations of users, and economic drivers, and how individuals negotiate and accept these challenges. This chapter lays a foundation for this research, first, by exploring the historical and cultural origins of the academic library – its place in the university and its support for scholarly activity – following through to the cultural values that have influenced the development of

American Libraries generally. Part of this history is the incorporation of new communication and computing technology, which have increased the speed and convenience of scholarly work and, along with shifts in pedagogy, have blurred boundaries between the places, times, and even nature of work and play.

As these changes have made their way into the academic library, stakeholders have justified, or challenged, the new environment. These conflicts in how people understand and talk about libraries prompt a discussion in this chapter of theoretical approaches to understanding ideological struggles in discourse. Sociological theories of legitimacy, along with theories of discourse and social power, help to highlight the ways in which the shape, sound, and role of new library spaces are promoted and accepted as the norm, even when such changes do not advantage those whom they affect. In particular, the language with which new spaces and sounds are justified (as well as challenged) may suggest deeper ideological implications of the changing nature of libraries.

These recent shifts in the space and function of the academic library, accompanied as they are by changes in its aural identity, pose further questions about the value of shared silent space for reflection and study, in the university and in scholarly life. Cultural and historical studies of soundscapes and sound hear in the auditory environment social and economic struggles (Picker, 2003, and Smith, 2001), and suggest that, through their reaction to or management of sound, people establish their individuality or their relationship to others, their proximity or their distance (Bull, 2000, 2007). New technologies having made it easier to distance oneself from one's immediate surroundings (e.g., using headphones) or connect with people far away (e.g., using cell phones or email), the question arises as to what purpose *immediate* quiet space serves? As information, education, and even community move online, does the quality of one's physical environment become more important, or less? More

pointedly, what is its importance in the education of the individual? These questions become especially critical as universities, currently facing lower enrollment rates, stiffer competition for students, and a depressed global economy, must make prudent capital development decisions.²⁰

THE SANCTUARY AND THE SILENT READER

Libraries' central role in academic communities is a truism, described in such familiar (perhaps clichéd) phrases as “the heart of the university” and “sanctuary for learning.” Stereotypical images of silent libraries and shushing librarians frequent literature and popular culture and reinforce traditional notions of the nature of the library. Stereotypes being, as they are, magnifications or distortions of an observed reality, these popular notions of academic libraries arise from historical realities. Though libraries today may not faithfully reanimate the libraries of memory or fancy, such idealized and iconic images continue to color expectations among academic library users.

The word “library,” rooted in the Latin word for book and variously defined over time as storehouse and morgue, connotes the stillness that has long characterized the physical place. At the same time, the word evokes for each individual sensations and meanings built from personal experiences, popular imagery, and stories. As Bakhtin (1981) observes,

[T]here are no “neutral” words and forms – words and forms that can belong to “no one”; language has been completely taken over, shot through with intentions and accents. For any individual consciousness living in it, language is not an abstract system of normative forms but rather a concrete heteroglot conception of the world. All words have the “taste” of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a

²⁰ The economic exigencies of academic libraries and higher-education institutions in general, though not part of the original research focus of this dissertation, significantly impact trends in education and receive brief mention in this chapter. The final chapter of the dissertation further discusses economic drivers behind changes in the library and the library profession, along with directions for future research.

particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life (p. 293).

At the level of the word, antagonistic forces perpetually disaggregate and reintegrate the multiple meanings of library. Centrifugal forces – the heteroglossia of past and current articulations, meanings, and experiences – confuse and oppose centripetal attempts to assert an official definition, to restrict understandings of the library to a legitimated, authorized perspective.²¹ At the same time, fresh attempts to articulate the meaning of the library run against thick conceptual and sensory frameworks that divert understanding back to familiar paths.²² Small wonder, then, that some librarians choose to simply change the name of the building or the space rather than attempt to fit a new and unconventional library environment with such a heavily loaded word.

Bakhtin's (1981) and Voloshinov's (1994) understanding of the utterance²³ as inextricable from the social world and from the history of utterances that preceded it, informs this brief history of libraries, as does their insight into the centripetal forces that seek to maintain the status quo and those centrifugal forces that disrupt common understanding. Historical

²¹ In addition to Bakhtin's (1981) discussions of centripetal and centrifugal forces in "Discourse in the Novel," a useful explication of these terms may be found in Morson and Emerson's (1990) "Global Concepts: Prosaics, Unfinalizability, Dialogue."

²² In his discussion of centripetal and centrifugal forces, Bakhtin (1981) described language as constantly buffeted by these opposing and necessary forces: one (centripetal) anchors meaning and use, thus "guaranteeing a certain maximum of mutual understanding" (p. 279); the other (centrifugal) disrupts and tempers monologism. In their explication Morson and Emerson (1990) distinguish between the naturalness of chaos and heterogeneity, in contrast to order which is often maintained only through great and deliberate effort: "In the self, in culture, and in language, it is not (as Freud would have us believe) disorder or fragmentation that requires explanation: it is integrity" (p. 31). While their elaboration casts centripetal forces as intentional and difficult to maintain, it should be noted that both forces operate naturally as part of the social order. Despite the deliberateness with which an official language or meaning may be emphasized, centralization is itself a natural force, the result of cultural meaning accreted over time.

²³ The unfinalizable utterance introduced by Bakhtin and Voshinov is an instance of language defined by specific social and historical circumstances and by its relationship to previous and future utterances. Whether as minute as a single word or exclamation, or whether as expansive as a book, the utterance only exists in a specific context, as a concrete manifestation of a particular time, place, and social interaction and of a dual exchange between an addresser and addressee.

associations with religious institutions, authoritative texts, and quiet study and reading anchor Western notions of academic libraries and link them with representations of authority. In the following abbreviated lineage of libraries, I focus on key moments and aspects that align with conventional understandings of the academic library as a hallowed and hushed space for solitary study and that also highlight how the aura of library spaces and their use reinforced institutional authority: intense individual and sometimes devotional acts of reading authoritative texts in monastic schools and early universities; spatial, aural, and visual alignments of university libraries and reading rooms with the sacred space of the church; dissemination of dominant cultural values through the image of silent readers; and reflection and support of academic values and hierarchies. Later I explore more recent phenomena in the history of American academic libraries and pedagogy that have altered the design, acoustics, and role of libraries. The shift in the library's meaning arises from this dissonance between an understanding of libraries accumulated over centuries and one developed over the span of a few decades.

From communities of mumblers to silent communion

Late Medieval reading was largely a private and silent activity, conducted alone within architecturally bounded spaces. It was around the 12th century that silent reading began to be perceived as a way to better comprehend passages in a text (since one would not be distracted by the voice or by the physical effort involved in speaking) (Parkes, 1999).²⁴ This shift, from the former mumbling and murmuring of devotional reading to making no sound at all, marked the loss of a community of sound formed by monastic readers.

²⁴ Already by the 9th century silence was becoming the rule in scriptoria; hand gestures were used for communication among scribes (Manguel, 1996).

The monastic reader – chanter or mumblor – picks the words from the lines and creates a public social auditory ambience. All those who, with the reader, are immersed in this hearing milieu are equals before the sound. ... Fifty years after Hugh, typically, this was no longer true. The technical activity of deciphering no longer creates an auditory and, therefore, a social space.... Reading will become an individualistic activity, intercourse between a self and a page. (Illich, 1993, p. 82)

Silent reading was not a new phenomenon; evidence suggests it was practiced as early as the 5th century B.C. (Cavallo & Chartier, 1999). Yet the reasons for reading silently, while ambiguous for antiquity, became codified during the Middle Ages. The Rule of St. Benedict specifically advocates the practice of silent reading as a way to better reflect on and internalize the meaning of a text and as less disturbing to others (Neuhofer, 1999; Parkes, 1999).²⁵ This *lectio divina*, or divine reading, was fundamental to the Benedictines and to other monastic orders, and was also practiced as a way to engage in communion with God.

As a silent and interior activity, the monastic style of reading was accordingly more intense and personal than reading aloud.²⁶ It was also a sacred conversation. As early as the 7th century, Isidore of Seville had acclaimed silent reading for its ability to mediate time and space, and “convey to us *silently* the sayings of those who are absent” (qtd. in Manguel, 1996, p. 49). Devotional manuals often connected reading, silent prayer, and intention, in which “the book in essence becomes the interlocutor in a dialogue that takes place entirely in the mind” (Amtower, 2000, p. 42). Citing Richard de Bury’s remarks in his *Philobon*, “In books I find the dead as if they were alive” (p. 8, quoted in Amtower, 2000, p. 39), Amtower remarks on the Medieval understanding of reading as a way of crossing time and distance to converse with others: (p. 39)

²⁵ Though it should be noted that there were many other rules regarding reading. Manguel (1996) notes the practice of communal listening, as the scripture was read aloud to Benedictine priests following the evening meal. Neuhofer (1999) notes that brothers were required “to spend from three to five hours each day in *lectio divina*,” or reading of the scriptures (p. 8). As for whether this meant reading silently or being read to, Harnesse’s (1999) gloss of *lectio* suggests that this was silent study.

²⁶ And not always spiritually intense: Saenger (1999) notes that a side effect of the growing interiority of writing was that readers were more apt to secretly imbibe in pornographic literature.

This meeting of the minds is of course illusory; the reader's mind is active, whereas the writer's mind is fixed forever in the words on the page. Yet the mind of the reader brings the writer to life, positing both participants as if in a conversation on another plane of existence. The act of reading, transcending the body and uniting the reader with an entire tradition of history and legend, associates a reader with the highest rank of prestige. When we consider the venerated tradition of *auctoritates* within which the Medievals situated their beloved canonical writers, the imagined association between reader and author becomes that much the more revered. In reading, then, and in communicating personally, or so it seemed, with an *auctor* who himself spoke God's language, a reader joins the community of the 'best' individuals commemorated by his or her culture, sharing their prestige and status.²⁷

The functional aesthetics of reading rooms

We have given back to the campus the grand reading room, a center for quiet study and reflection that had been missing from Emory since the 1950s. The room gives a sense of grandeur to the intellectual life. As one faculty member said to me, 'When I go into that room, I know I am in a university.' There is no other space on campus like it, a space that gives an immediate sense of being a part of a continuum of learning and ideas.

Linda Matthews, director of Emory Libraries, on the restoration of the reading room in the Candler Library ("The William L. Matheson Reading Room," 2003, p. 9)

The architectural lineage of university reading rooms, traceable through the histories of the colonial colleges and to their European models, is a heritage in which space – expansive and sacred – is intimately tied to wealth and beneficence, spiritual and intellectual life, and cultural heritage. The conflation of the sanctuary's grandeur with the functional aspects of the library, and the combined symbolism of the church and the book as the foundation of the university, produced a space whose architecture and aesthetics serve to commemorate the persons, entities, and ideas upon which the university and the building are based.

One of the earliest university libraries, Duke Humfrey's Library, located above the Divinity School at Oxford University (UK), suggests in its placement a symbolic alignment of sanctuaries and reading rooms. Many early libraries were placed above chapels or sacred

²⁷ One cannot help but wonder whether Plato shared this understanding of reading as a way of connecting with the best of those past, having written his former teacher into life again, to be read and experienced by others wishing to share the company of "the best."

spaces; for example, Oxford's first University Library occupied the second floor of the Congregation House (Gillam, 1988, p. 1).²⁸ A more striking connection between library and sanctuary, however, is suggested by the cavernous expansiveness of the Divinity School space, with its open interior, high ceiling, and tall windows, typical of cathedral architecture, creating 'height and light.' In these later "grand reading rooms," the once sacred space is conflated with the reading space, merging their composite features: (1) high ceilings, typically arched; (2) tall, frequently clear-paned windows regularly placed along the length of the room, often aligned with the furniture; and (3) uniform seating and writing surfaces, located in close proximity to reading materials, which are (4) laid out in a consistent pattern along the floor of the cavernous room. These features, while perhaps aesthetically pleasing, functioned to support the activities of reading and study.

Other common features of reading rooms, however, such as statuary and artwork do not also support any obvious "reading" purpose. Such elements frequently serve as homages to benefactors of the building or collection, commemorations of significant individuals in the history of the school, or simply references to the school's heritage. For instance, both Duke Humfrey's Library and the Divinity School pay tribute to their benefactors, one through ornamentation and one through name: initials and shields inlaid in the ceiling of the Divinity School commemorate donors and other individuals and entities that supported its construction, and the original windows contained "pictures of some saints and fathers... [and] the arms of benefactors"; though several decades passed before Duke Humfrey's name was officially given to the library, gratitude for his generous donation was ultimately expressed through the naming of the place itself (Gillam, 1988, p. 42, quoting from Wood,

²⁸ The Congregation House was also "the first building to be owned by the University as a corporate body."

1792-1796, p. 919). The construction and subsequent maintenance and renovation of such structures as these would not have been possible without the consistent generosity of wealthy or well-connected benefactors; and the beauty and magnificence of these spaces reflect and commemorate the school's ability (or good fortune) to procure funding. The Divinity School's vaulted ceiling, for example, a feature abandoned during earlier stages of construction, was reincorporated into the design when the University received a substantial donation towards the completion of the building. Duke Humfrey's Library, razed during King Edward VI's reign, owes its ornamentation, and its very restoration as a reading room, to the benefaction of Thomas Bodley.

The reading rooms of colonial college libraries of America carried on the traditions of their European forebears, to the extent that their funding allowed. The structural alignment of church and scholarship, exhibited in some Oxford libraries' placement above chapels or other religious spaces, was not uncommon among the colonial colleges of America, where libraries often occupied the second floor of a religious building. Such buildings could be seen to represent the material linkages between religion, education, and the written word, as many of these colleges were founded by religious denominations and the establishment of a college was often predicated on or coincided with the donation of books for a library (Shores, 1966). Additionally, the early American college libraries were frequently located above or in close proximity to the chapel (Shores, 1966).

The early library history of Harvard University stands as illustrative of the types of spaces constructed for libraries, the issues of space faced by libraries, and the linkages between beliefs about the purposes of universities, their cultural and spiritual heritage, and the locations, structures, and appearances of university libraries and reading rooms. In the case of Harvard the donation of books was pivotal in the college's establishment: the Reverend

John Harvard's bequeathing of over three hundred volumes of books "rendered possible the immediate organization of the College on the footing of the ancient institutions of Europe" (Shores, 1966, p. 11, quoting from p. 6 of Samuel Eliot's 1848 *A Sketch of the History of Harvard College*).

In 1790 Harvard's library itself was located above the Chapel, and its "thirteen thousand books, [were] disposed in ten alcoves, in each of which is a window, and over the windows inscriptions to perpetuate the names of the benefactors" (Potter, 1934, p. 19) – thus resembling its predecessors by its location, structure, and appearance. As space became scarce for storing the ever-expanding collection of books (the move to Harvard Hall in 1815 only temporarily alleviating shortages), a new building, Gore Hall, was constructed in 1841, following the architectural style of King's College Chapel in Cambridge (Potter, 1934).

Describing Gore Hall, then President Quincy commented that

this building presents a very pure specimen of the Gothic style in its form and proportions.... The appearance of the whole [interior] is imposing; hardly surpassed, in effect by any room in this country. The books are to be placed in the alcoves, which are formed by the partitions running from the columns to the walls of the building, somewhat in the form of the chapels in the aisles of many of the Catholic churches. (Potter, 1934, p. 21)

By the end of the 1870s, the library had to be expanded to accommodate the growing collection. Yet even this expansion was insufficient, and two decades later, the radical gutting of Gore Hall and the construction of a three-story stack tower was necessary to make space for the collection. A new, larger reading room was created as well, but it lacked aesthetic appeal, being both "barren and strictly utilitarian in appearance" (Potter, 1934, p. 22.). It was not until Mrs. George Widener donated a new library building to the university, in order to memorialize her son and properly house the more than three thousand books he left to the

university, that the library again possessed a reading room, and a library, of sufficient space and elegance.

In her seminal work on early American college libraries, Louise Shores (1966) indicates the importance of libraries to the colleges they were meant to serve, an importance rooted squarely in books.²⁹ For example, in speaking of Harvard, an icon of American educational traditions, Shores calls attention to the pivotal role the donation of books played in the college's establishment: the Reverend John Harvard's bequeathing of over three hundred volumes of books "rendered possible the immediate organization of the College on the footing of the ancient institutions of Europe" (p. 11, quoting from Samuel Eliot's 1848 *A Sketch of the History of Harvard College*, p. 6). As books served to symbolically and intellectually ground the colonial colleges, access to these books could be quite restrictive. In contradistinction to the open stacks of today's undergraduate libraries, early American college libraries often did not allow students to check out or access books on their own.³⁰

Making space for quiet, books, and reading

Within the last one-and-a-half centuries, more careful consideration has gone into the construction of American academic library buildings, and much of the attention has been focused on making functional and efficient use of the available space. A recurring concern is the need to accommodate a growing collection of books, and the logistics of accessing those books. Following the establishment of the American Library Association and the emergence

²⁹ Of interest in Shores' (1966) early accounts of colleges and libraries, particularly in light of recent trends to construct library spaces devoid of books, is the conflation of both books and building in the use of the word "library," often with emphasis on the former.

³⁰ For example, from Yale College's regulations for the library, "None of the Undergraduates but the Senr Class shall have Liberty to borrow Books out of the Library & that at the Discretion of the Tutor or Tutors" (Shores, 1966, p. 205, quoted from Dexter's 1916 *Documentary History of Yale University*, p. 265).

of librarianship as a profession, librarians' exercised increasing influence on the design of their buildings. Of primary concern was maximizing the use of space for libraries' essential resources (books) and activities (reading), as well as accommodating the work of librarians in the service of these. Consider the precise attention to space, efficiency, and function in the following passage on "Shelves in Reading Room," from Charles Soule's 1912 guide, *How to Plan a Library Building for Library Work*: (p. 269)

"The placing of books around the walls wastes floor space otherwise available for readers." In this opinion I concur, for the double reason that it bars out just so many readers, and also it necessitates movement which interferes with serious reading. ... take a room 30 x 40 with a perimeter of 140 feet, less say 10 feet for doors, 130 feet net. If this is shelved all around, the shelving with the usual ledge, and the three feet space in front of it needed for access, inspection and passing, four feet in all, will take up 456 square feet, out of a total area of 1200, nearly two-fifths. Without the wall shelving, the room would hold tables for that many more readers – the use for which it is intended. As to the latter consideration, to get at the books every attendant fetching or returning or cleaning them, every reader consulting them, has to pass before or beside or close back of some other reader who is trying to abstract himself at a desk. If stored somewhere else in floor shelving or in a stack close by, the books would not take up more space, would be more accessible, and less in the way.

Soule goes on to describe the qualities desirable, if economically permissible, for a "Serious Reading Room" as "quiet, privacy, light, good air and space" (p. 307). Sufficient quiet may be achieved through the types of materials kept in the room (those that are not used often or that do not make much noise when used), the type of construction ("noiseless floors" and "echoless walls and ceilings," p. 307), and the location of the room outside of traffic areas. Aside from their use in achieving adequate lighting, however, this author states that high ceilings are neither functional nor practical: "With a lofty open dome above, it [the serious reading room] is an impressive feature, but wastes space which might be utilized otherwise, and it is said to be more or less drafty and hard to heat evenly" (p. 306).

Such practicality was in line with the views of his contemporary librarians, who were pushing for greater architectural control of their buildings. In 1911 James Bertram, Andrew

Carnegie's private secretary who oversaw construction of Carnegie libraries at the turn-of-the-century, published "Notes on Library Buildings [sic]" as a set of guidelines and standards for the construction of new library buildings, created through consultations with architects and librarians (Bobinski, 1969). The goal was to maximize the functional space of the library and minimize extravagance, and to hopefully avert the further construction of expensive and inefficient libraries. Carnegie typically provided for the building of *public* libraries, but he did provide for the construction of ninety-three college and university library buildings, including Emory University's original Candler Library, located at its Oxford campus (Bobinski, 1969). New York City architect Edward Tilton, whom Bertram frequently contacted for advice, would later design the second Candler Library at Emory University's Atlanta campus.

Throughout the 20th-century architectural styles fluctuated dramatically, but librarian concerns remained constant: to make the library space as efficient and functional as possible. After World War II when artificial lighting and air-conditioning rendered sky-lighted atria and wells inefficient, they were removed or omitted from future construction plans (Kaser, 1997). Florescent lighting, in particular, eliminated libraries' reliance on natural lighting from windows. In the 1960s when carpet became cheaper to produce, and thus a more affordable floor covering, it became the ubiquitous floor covering in university libraries – an acoustical assistant to librarians, "who had long chafed at their reputation for having to shush patrons" (Kaser, 1997, p. 122). In short, by the mid-20th-century there was no longer any functional need for high ceilings, large windows, or echoing walls and floors.

The modular style, when used in conjunction with modern lighting and air treatment, eliminated all functional need for library ceiling heights to exceed 9 ½ to 10 feet, thus for the first time uncoupling library design from its princely and priestly origins and allowing the development of utilitarian library structures appropriate to their present-day egalitarian societal role. (Kaser, 1997, p. 144)

Even so, libraries may still choose to deliberately construct, restore, or preserve such cathedral spaces, and for purposes that, while perhaps not practical, nonetheless have value for their academic communities. To create a reading room is not simply to create a space for reading, but to claim and project an identity. For the university in this study, to construct or restore a grand reading room is to claim and project an identity – a very deliberate articulation of what it means to be an academic at Emory. And a large part of this identity is its connection to a grand past.

SHIFTING EXPECTATIONS OF SCHOLARLY WORK AND THE LIBRARY

Libraries, if they are true to their original and intrinsic being, seek primarily to collect people and ideas rather than books and to facilitate conversation among people rather than merely to organize, store, and deliver information.

Joan Bechtel, 1986, "Conversation," p. 221, College & Research Libraries

Threatened with irrelevance the college library is being reinvented – and books are being de-emphasized. The goal: Entice today's technology-savvy students back into the library with buildings that blur the lines between library, computer lab, shopping mall and living room.

Christopher Conkey, 2006, "Libraries Beckon," Wall Street Journal

Today many libraries have been refashioned into places for new technology, collaborative work, unstructured learning opportunities, social interactions, and even play.³¹ These changes

³¹ Many public libraries are not simply tolerant of users playing of games while in the library but are providing these games for them. Scott Nicholson (2007), a professor at the University of Syracuse's School of Information Studies, surveyed 400 randomly selected public libraries and found that seven out of ten supported providing their users with games (broadly defined to encompass diversionary activities ranging from board games to Wii). Eighty-two percent of the libraries surveyed allowed users to play games on computers in the library. Though the majority's support for gaming in libraries might seem surprising, Nicholson posits this as entirely within libraries' existing role: "Libraries that support the recreational needs of patrons through fiction or movies are simply extending these services to the popular entertainment media for a growing sector of the population. The concept of supporting gaming is one that most libraries have supported for some time." He equates the effect of games with that of coffeeshops, in which the focus is not so much on the

in the architecture, soundscape, and role of academic libraries roughly parallel innovations in communication and computing technology that, among their numerous other effects on work spaces and social behavior, make it easier for students and faculty to access or search the library's resources without entering the building.³² Changes to academic library environments are also contemporary with pedagogical movements to increase students' involvement in the construction of knowledge, which have led to greater acceptance of the role of play in learning and the need to provide students with more informal opportunities to work with others and articulate their ideas. The last decades of the twentieth century have also witnessed considerable popular and scholarly interest in the notion of community and the types of spaces that support or promote social cohesion, and have seen bricks-and-mortar businesses marketing themselves as community centers.³³

At the same time, just as recent years have seen librarians relax policies on sound in order to accommodate more social activities in the academic library building, they have also seen continued dedication to the maintenance of quiet areas for study, occasionally in the form of newly constructed or renovated grand reading rooms – icons of the traditional library. Efforts to emphasize or re-activate such signs of established authority suggest that academic libraries – and perhaps even academic institutions themselves – may be struggling to articulate their identity and role in a changing information landscape, where new paths to

particular product being delivered but on the social atmosphere it helps create. Public libraries' role in serving diverse community needs, however, including serving as a social center, make them more likely proponents of gaming in libraries and presumably more supportive of gaming activities than an academic library would be. That said, academic libraries have already begun providing video gaming opportunities for their patrons, in some cases as a way to encourage undergraduates to visit the library (Womack, Sutton, & Critz, 2007).

³² Such technologies have also made it easier for students to bypass university campuses entirely and earn degrees through online distance education courses.

³³ See the works of Etzioni (1995), Oldenberg (1999), and Putnam (2000), who, respectively, address the role of place in community and community's role in identity, the role of third places in community, and late twentieth-century decline in community in America. See also Miller's (1999) discussion of bookstores' attempts to market themselves as community centers.

information challenge traditional routes, and where established institutions must often incorporate these new innovations in order to remain relevant, or even simply visible, to a digital, multi-tasking generation.³⁴ Yet such dramatic changes to a physical environment, particularly one that has long served as repository for an institution's history, traditions, and identity, are bound to meet with resistance. Academic libraries' historical function as repositories of past knowledge and the symbolic associations that result from this may conspire to confound efforts on librarians' parts to update the library's image, especially in eras of rapid change that compel people to cling even more tightly to mementos of a familiar and idealized past.

Leveling pedagogy and building the Commons

1978 marks a critical juncture for libraries and pedagogy.³⁵ In that year, F. W. Lancaster of the University of Illinois – Urbana-Champaign's library school faculty published two classic works: *Toward Paperless Information Systems*, which predicted the “library in a desk” that would become the scholar's primary information resource, and “Whither Libraries? Or Wither Libraries?”, which warned that libraries must adapt themselves to the demands of new information and computing technologies. That same year, a compilation of the works of Lev Vygotsky – a relatively unknown Soviet developmental psychologist, only recently

³⁴ Council for Networked Information (CNI) Director Joan Lippincott (2006) observes that most schools do not showcase their Commons areas online. The fact that more traditional spaces (like grand reading rooms) are often incorporated into campus virtual tours suggests that there is at least a perception among those in charge of recruitment and fund-raising that the image of the library (and perhaps of the school as well) is communicated best by such grand, historical, and bookish environments. The redesigned Emory University website, released in fall 2008, demonstrates this emphasis on traditional library spaces through its choice of image on the University Libraries home page and the ranking of Matheson Reading Room in its list of “assets.”

³⁵ Incidentally, 1978 is also the year some use to mark the beginning of the Millennial generation – children born between 1978 and 2000 whose multi-tasking, social, and collaborative approach to learning and whose facility with new technology have been the *cause célèbre* for many changes in library services, resources, and construction. Strauss and Howe (1991) locate the start of the Millennial generation slightly later, in 1982 (a year after *Time* named the personal computer “Man of the Year”).

rediscovered by Western scholars in the late 1960s – was republished as *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*.³⁶ This book emerged amidst and helped fuel a pedagogical paradigm shift in how learning takes place, by positing external speech, social interactions, and play as crucial to cognitive development.

In 1995, Robert Barr, a director of institutional research and planning at Palomar College, and his colleague John Tagg, a professor of English, called attention to the shift that had been occurring in higher education – a movement away from the goal of merely providing instruction to a passive, receptive audience and towards a new focus on fostering learning among active student participants.

The Learning Paradigm frames learning holistically, recognizing that the chief agent in the process is the learner. Thus, students must be active discoverers and constructors of their own knowledge...In the Learning Paradigm, learning environments and activities are learner-centered and learner-controlled. They may even be "teacherless." While teachers will have designed the learning experiences and environments students use – often through teamwork with each other and other staff – they need not be present for or participate in every structured learning activity. (Barr & Tagg, 1995, pp. 21-22)

This shift was already well documented in educational literature, where for the past two decades researchers had challenged the traditional structures and processes of pedagogical environments. Referencing the works of such early 20th-century educational theorists as John Dewey and Lev Vygotsky, these scholars argued that knowledge is not something that passes verbally or visually from teacher to student, but something that must be actively constructed through teacher-student and student-student interactions. They proposed that learning can occur anywhere, at any time, not simply in structured learning environments.³⁷

³⁶ On a related note, Soviet-era philologist Mikhail Bakhtin's works were "discovered" in the United States around this same time. Holquist's volume of essays *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981) introduced to American audiences four pivotal Bakhtin works on the social life of language.

³⁷ For example, Kenneth Bruffee, an English professor at City University of New York's Brooklyn College, emerged as an early proponent of collaborative learning *outside* the classroom, where

In essence, this shift in educational theory pushed for new conceptions of the roles and relations of teachers and students and of the conditions for learning. The authority for building and dispensing knowledge was shared, with students playing an active role in the classroom and their learning. Rather than being relegated to recess, play became central to learning: tools critical for conceptual development must be accessible to students outside of structured learning situations and students must be allowed to experiment with them. In addition, students' ability to talk about their ideas with peers emerged as essential for learning. Educators rediscovered Vygotsky's (1978) notion of social cognition, which views conceptual development as tightly connected to language. It is not enough for students to be able to repeat a professor's lecture on a topic, these educators argued; students must be able to put these ideas into their own words, to explain them to someone else. In this new paradigm, students take greater responsibility for their learning, the instructor moves from "sage on the stage" to "guide on the side," and the notion of the classroom expands. Further, the emphasis shifts from establishing a heuristic model that all students must fit, to creating pedagogical practices that are flexible enough to permit a variety of learning styles and levels.

Previous "Instruction Paradigm" measures of institutional success, which focused predominantly on the deliverer of the service rather than the receiver, also reflected an understanding of education and educational value as quantifiable (Barr & Tagg, 1995).

students could focus on discussing and solving problems without the pressures of competition, performance, and evaluation. Bruffee published a number of articles in *College English* throughout the 1970s and 1980s, arguing for a collaborative learning approach to instruction: "The Way Out: A Critical Survey of Innovations in College Teaching, with Special Reference to the December, 1971, Issue of *College English*" (vol. 33, issue no. 4, January 1972, pp. 457-470); "Collaborative Learning: Some Practical Models" (vol. 34, issue no. 5, February 1973, pp. 634-643); "Collaborative Learning" (vol. 43, issue no. 7, November 1981, pp. 745-747); and "Social Construction, Language, and the Authority of Knowledge: A Bibliographical Essay" (vol. 48, issue no. 8, December 1986, pp. 773-790).

Within libraries this paradigm translated into quality measured by volumes of books, and architectural and organizational planning in turn geared towards the storage of print materials. However, while a librarian might consider library users as part of deciding what books to collect or the number of tables and chairs to provide for reference or reading areas, Vygotskian notions of social learning never entered the equation. For much of the twentieth century, the library building served primarily as a storehouse for books. “People's needs, habits, and learning styles [were] rarely considered in library planning for example, as the ever-growing book stock [was] perceived as the library's contribution to instructional relevancy” (Tompkins, 1992).

Gradually, this resource-centered approach gave way to a more expansive and inclusive focus. As beliefs shifted about the classroom space and the role of the teacher, so did beliefs about library space and the role of the librarian, and some academic libraries began developing architectural plans and campus partnerships that situated the library as a critical site for teaching, learning, and computing. Providing computers and other tools and space for academic instruction and student learning became more deeply ingrained in libraries' missions. Speaking from the perspective of community-college libraries, Philip Tompkins (1996), then Director of Library Information Services at Estrella Mountain Community College, argued that libraries must find ways to successfully merge print-based and digital cultures and create spaces and services that support interactive learning. Further, libraries must become more integral parts of the teaching-learning experience, integrating instruction and communication into their traditional service of information storage and delivery (Tompkins, 1990, 1996). In 1992 he observed, “an era of reconceptualization and boundary spanning collaboration is occurring”:

This collaboration has implications for telecommunications, microcomputers, the redesign of the classroom and the need for new, sponsored learning environments (spaces) departing radically in design from the theater of the classroom or the traditional library or learning resource center. Above all, a new vision of the role of all campus personnel to accommodate student-centered learning cultures has emerged. It is richly supported by the massing of microcomputer technology and changes in pedagogy.... Collaborative and cooperative teaching, and independent, self-paced learning call for new spaces accommodating the massing of newer instructional and information technologies, remote from the theater style classroom. Multimedia accessibility can usher in changing roles for the instructors who learn to moderate the historic obsession with “telling” to incorporate skillful coaching and facilitating upon call (“from sage on the stage to guide on the side”).

Early on, new technologies were linked to new philosophies of teaching and learning, and both would need new spaces to accommodate them. Most librarians saw a shift in the use and structure of library space as an inevitable consequence of new technology; others saw it as an imperative, with the co-location of resources, tools, and services making the library “the public space for scholarship on campus” (Lewis, 1988, p. 293).³⁸ The ubiquity of personal computers alongside the remote delivery of formerly print-based resources (e.g., library catalogs, indexes, journals, and books) meant that areas once dedicated solely to shelving current periodicals and reference works or housing card catalogs would need to be given a new purpose or renovated in order to remain viable.

Community colleges, with their instruction-centered and student-focused missions, were among the first higher-education institutions to develop Commons environments, with several community colleges adopting the model developed by Philip Tompkins.³⁹ Despite predictions that top-tier research libraries would resist this expansion in role from resource center to instruction and service center (Van Horn, 1985), many major university libraries led the Commons movement, likely because they possessed the funds necessary to develop and

³⁸ Lewis quotes John Sack, who spoke during a panel discussion at the Seminar on Academic Computing Services held in Snowmass, Colorado, 1986.

³⁹ Tompkins also helped develop the Information Commons that opened with the new Levey Library at the University of Southern California in 1994.

maintain these additional tools and services. Indeed, the costs involved in revamping or overhauling infrastructures in order to create a Commons may explain the seemingly lower frequency of Commons development among Associate's or Baccalaureate/Associate's degree-granting institutions.⁴⁰

The University of Southern California's Leavey Library, which opened in 1994⁴¹ but had been in the planning stages for over a decade, arose from the belief that the library could serve as a link between instruction and technology and as an answer to the information needs of a digital generation of students (Helfer, 1997; Commings, 1994). When the new library was opened, the director of the Leavey Library stated that he expected the library to be "far more than just a site for information technology and books, far more than just a comfortable place to study and learn. It will be an intellectual center – a place where students and teachers will come to exchange ideas – and I very much want the Leavey to be a center for campus social life as well" (Commings, 1994, p. 19).

Two years earlier The University of Iowa had opened its Information Arcade, "a playground for the mind" housing a classroom of twenty-four computers and an open independent work area of fifty computers and a few clusters of multimedia workstations (Creth, 1994).

The space was intended to support a range of uses; the electronic classroom was designed to accommodate smaller workgroups as well as whole-class discussions. For their part, the faculty often had to restructure their curriculum and pedagogical approach to match the type

⁴⁰ See, for example, Brookdale Community College librarian David Murray's (2000) oft-cited directory of Information Commons sites, listed by Carnegie Classification: <http://www.brookdale.cc.nj.us/library/infocommons/icsites/sitetype.htm>.

⁴¹ The Maricopa County Community College District of Arizona offers one of the earliest-recorded examples of an Information Commons, with its opening in 1992 of the Estrella Mountain Community College Center, a combined library and technology center "planned as an environment where instructional and information technologies and efforts were to be integrated" (Tompkins, 2006). From the planning stages, the project sought to leverage new technology for instructional support.

of teaching and learning supported by the electronic classroom: “As a political science faculty member commented, teaching in the Arcade ‘changes the focus. Instead of learning by listening, students learn by doing. It puts me, the teacher, into the role of helping, giving advice. It’s a different sort of learning’” (p. 23).

A library by another name

Understanding what the Commons is and why it emerged is a window into the mindset of librarians at the *fin de siècle*, as they faced the future of academic libraries and information access in the Digital Age and attempted to rearticulate their role in teaching, learning, and scholarship. The phenomenon of the Commons is remarkable not simply for its novelty and its widespread adoption, but also for the cachet of the term itself. The appeal of this label, and the decision by so many institutions to adopt it for their collaborative workspaces, implies shared beliefs about the role of libraries and informational resources in building knowledge. References to “collaboration” and “community” in library articles in the early 1990s (and that continue to mark discussions in this area) suggest that decisions to renovate and restructure library buildings were predicated in part on egalitarian attitudes towards access to information, ownership of the learning process, and the library’s position on campus.

References to “information commons” in legal discussions of access to information, while focused less on physical spaces and more on media ownership, fair use, and other aspects of intellectual property rights, are not unrelated to its use in academic libraries to describe spaces where students, faculty, librarians, IT personnel, and others collaborate and cooperatively construct new knowledge. What began in the mid-twentieth century as a debate about the merits of common ownership of natural resources became by century’s end

a broader argument about the ownership of information and the importance of information access to democracy. In *The Future of Ideas*, legal scholar Lawrence Lessig (2001) draws analogies between the availability and use of electronic information at this turn of the century and the physical commons before industrialization: just as the pre-industrial commons provided shared access to resources that people needed to survive and thrive, the information commons or virtual commons provides shared access to the tools, ideas, and instruction needed to perform one's academic work and create new scholarship. While the Commons in libraries represents very literally a physical space, it operates from the same principles as the notion of information commons in legal circles: to encourage the free, collaborative exchange and creation of ideas and information, which in turn benefits and strengthens the community.

Though many institutions chose to call their new collaborative spaces Commons, some exceptions still exemplified essential qualities of the space. For instance, the University of Iowa's Information Arcade⁴² represents one of the earliest attempts to join new technology and new philosophies of learning within the space of the library. When it was first opened in 1992, the Information Arcade embodied many of the distinctive qualities that have come to be associated with the Commons in libraries:

- embedded and networked computing, information, and multimedia technology, that allows users to seamlessly search, access, and apply information in a single location and in a variety of ways;
- flexible or modular architecture that accommodates multiple and divergent activities;

⁴² Here the connotations of "arcade" suggest a space conducive to playing with technology.

- emphasis on service and instruction through coordinated efforts of a specialized or highly-skilled staff; and
- pedagogical philosophies that acknowledge the need for students to take ownership of their learning, rather than receive instruction through traditional means, and to construct knowledge by interacting with others.

The Commons, as both a label and a conceptual ideal, is exemplified by features of the space itself and the philosophy behind its construction more so than by the appellation. Indeed, some “Commons” may be so in name only – called Information Commons or Learning Commons and housing computers, and yet reflecting little of the larger trend towards collaborative work, community exchange, and technological innovation.⁴³ For that reason, the Commons may be understood as a type, marked to varying degrees by its conformity to certain principles of social interaction; organizational structure; embedded, ubiquitous, and/or collaborative technology; integration of informational resources and services with processes and tools for teaching and learning; and partnerships between librarians, IT personnel, faculty, and others in creating and supporting these spaces. Though they may differ in the details, Commons typically cohere around the notion that scholarly work is best supported through environments that encourage and are maintained through collaboration, that provide convenient access to the tools, information, and services for accomplishing that work, and that cultivate meaningful interactions among the academic community.

⁴³ Because Commons environments can vary so widely in appearance, there is a tendency to typify them by their objects rather than by their objectives, and by foreground features rather than background organization. As a cursory definition, Albanese (2004) identifies the key elements of an information commons as “lots of computers, collaborative space, comfortable furniture, and usually some kind of café, lounge, or other suitably social area nearby” (p. 31). Later he discusses a more substantive component: organizational realignments that preceded and supported the Commons’ development.

Contesting the meaning of the academic library

The pursuit of learning as we reflect upon it, seems to be often an erratic and unpredictable enterprise, a strangely private affair, quiet, personal, even lonely. In spite of our donnish intentions, learning does not take place always and only in the class room [sic], nor is it imparted always and only by the professor. It often just happens – that’s the word – and happens most memorably and excitingly when we suddenly drop the book into our lap and sense with wonder, even awe, the inner stir that marks the advent of an idea we had never before thought of. One almost gasps at this recurrent miracle, one of those enduring and genuine joys of university life. Students readily forget their professors. No student ever forgets his library.

George H. Healey, Cornell University Professor of English and Curator of Rare Books, 1969, at the dedication of Emory University’s Robert W. Woodruff Library (Lyle, 1981, pp. 200-201)

I’m picturing, like, a giant Starbucks, only with built-in computers. That’s what I’m picturing.

Bill, Emory University graduate student, on the type of library he thinks would be ideal for today’s undergraduates

Academic librarians wonder and worry publicly about the enduring role of their institution and their work to the larger scholarly population. Yet while media outlets and pundits may make dire predictions for libraries’ future, librarians often counter these arguments by pointing to circulation figures, database web logs, and other statistics indicating vigorous library use and patron satisfaction with resources and services. Librarians know that academics will always need to access primary materials and scholarship in their field, and, despite Google’s demonstrated ability to deliver relevant Web resources from simple searches, academic libraries offer the most reliable access to vetted and valued information. What really concerns academic librarians is the broader economic context in which they and academics function, and the costs of maintaining their position in this structure.

Budgetary expenditures for the library as a percentage of the total university expenditures have been falling steadily since the late 1970s (ARL, 2007).⁴⁴ Costs for electronic collections are outstripping those for print collections (ARL, 2004), and libraries frequently allow print subscriptions to lapse when patrons express a preference for the electronic versions.⁴⁵ In the sciences especially, a demand for the most recent scholarly research begs the question of whether libraries should keep journals past the most recent five years, given the limits and costs of storage space. Though books continue to be critical in promotion and tenure practices, and consequently critical in scholarly publishing cycles and in libraries, the costs of storing and maintaining access to them have pushed many libraries (including Emory University's Woodruff Library) toward offsite storage.⁴⁶ Books that remain in the library must demonstrate relevance to researchers (e.g., they must circulate frequently and/or have been checked out recently) in order to remain available for browsing on the shelves.⁴⁷

The role of the academic library building and the significance of shared quiet in the digital age speak to larger issues of the relevance of physical places and face-to-face interactions in an increasingly hyper-mediated world. Libraries are one of many institutions forced to re-

⁴⁴ The average percentage of university budgets devoted to the research library (based on data reported from seventeen ARL research libraries) has fallen from 3.8212% in 1980 (the second highest recorded percentage in forty years) to 2.2158% in 2004 – a drop of over 1.5% (ARL, 2007).

⁴⁵ The rising cost of journals, which has been attributed to the consolidation and inelasticity of the scholarly journal market, has also contributed to decreased expenditures for monograph publications (Edwards & Shulenberger, 2003 November). Emory Libraries (2005, August 23) has devoted a page of its website to an account of the rising costs of journal subscriptions, the efforts it has undertaken to bridge the gap between subscription costs and its own budget for serials, and suggestions of what libraries, universities, and scholars can do to help ensure that scholarship will be available and affordable in the future.

⁴⁶ Rising costs of journals have also meant that more of the budget is being consumed by subscriptions and less by monograph purchases.

⁴⁷ At Emory University's Woodruff Library those shelves are (either currently or imminently) compact, moveable shelving, in an effort to make the most efficient use of the available space. Valparaiso University is another of many universities freeing up space in their buildings by moving books offsite (Conkey, 2006). Commenting on the growing trend among libraries to relocate their collections in order to free up space in the building, architect Joseph Rizzo quips, "You know the saying, 'Build it and they will come?' Now it's "Clear it out and they will come'" (Conkey, 2006).

examine the value and role of physical spaces, in light of the convenience and popularity of electronic alternatives. In the face of online retailers, business owners have been forced to rethink the market for their bricks-and-mortar enterprises. In some cases these business now appear to be selling social interactions more than a product, such as the community experience marketed by bookstores (Miller, 1999). Such non-profit entities as museums also face uncertainty regarding their physical spaces as more patrons choose to visit online (Courson, 2005; Teachout, 2006; Wagner, 2006). Political and social scientists worry about civic health when citizens spend their leisure time watching television or surfing the Internet rather than meeting face-to-face in lodges or coffeehouses or at city council or PTA meetings and forming social connections based on physical communication (Putnam, 2000; Locke, 1998; Oldenberg, 1999).⁴⁸

Librarians have not waited for questions about the future relevancy of the physical to be resolved. Despite predictions that capital investments in library buildings would wane (Neal, 1996), library construction and renovation projects during the 1990s remained consistent (Bennett, 2003). Over the past decade librarian and academic organizations worldwide have undertaken studies of the role of the physical library and how best to plan, manage, and continue to develop physical spaces for current and future library functions.⁴⁹

In 1999 the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) began testing a standardized survey instrument for measuring the effectiveness of library resources and services. Based on a

⁴⁸ Even when people venture into public areas, technology (from cars to cell phones and stereo headsets) makes it easier for them to tune out their immediate physical environment and avoid social interactions, contributing to the phenomenon of “mobile privatization” first described by Williams (1974, 1997) in relation to television and to efforts to create personal boundaries and limit the intrusion of strangers (Bull, 2000).

⁴⁹ See, for example, studies and collected essays published by EDUCAUSE (Oblinger, 2006), the Council on Library and Information Resources (Bennett, 2003a, 2003b; CLIR, 2005, 2008), and by the United Kingdom’s Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC, 2006).

private sector assessment tool called SERVQUAL, the library tool, later called LibQUAL+, was refined over the next few years through testing with hundreds of institutions; by 2004 the standardized core criteria included assessments of Affect of Service, Information Control, and Library as Place (ARL, 2009). The original criteria were developed and refined based on comments from faculty, graduates students, and undergraduate students in open-ended interviews (Cook, Heath, & Thompson, 2000). Speaking of these interviews, the authors noted the significance to respondents of the space of the library as a “sanctuary” or “haven”:

[T]here was pervasive discussion of the matter of library as place, a concept transcending the definition of tangibles as found in the SERVQUAL studies. While triggered primarily in those instances of over-crowded or substandard facilities, many of those interviewed spoke passionately of libraries as sanctuaries or havens, as contemplative environments essential for their creativity. Based on the language of the respondents, a series of questions was developed and added to the SERVQUAL core in order to test the efficacy of these two factors.

Following these responses, the survey criteria were reshaped to more accurately measure library users’ desire for and extent to which the library satisfies this desire for library space that not only directly supports their academic work but that, through its aesthetics, provides an “emblematic affirmation of the centrality of the life of the mind in the university setting” (Cook, Heath, Thompson, & Thompson, 2001).

Not surprisingly, architects have argued for the continued importance of the library building, pointing to its symbolic role as the heart of the university, the center of the academic community, the hallmark of the institution’s past, and the identity of the school itself (Freeman, 2005), as well as to its role in supporting the academic work of the campus population (Wedge & Blackburn, 2009). Their optimistic views regarding the continued vitality of library spaces are not always shared by university administrators, some of whom view the library as a space for storing imminently obsolete books and remain skeptical of its

value as a long-term investment. In response, architects and librarians argue that new technology, which makes it easier to work in isolation, has *increased* the need for the physical library as a place for the academic community to connect. As architect Craig Hartman (1995), designer of the Library of Virginia, asserts, “The electronic revolution makes human encounters, which are the real basis of community, even more valuable and necessary, not less so” (p. 47).⁵⁰

Along with a professed interest in promoting libraries’ role as academic community centers, designing such spaces may also reflect a desire to increase gate count numbers and daily usage of the main or undergraduate library building. In a recent *Chronicle of Higher Education* article on new library architecture, reporter Scott Carlson (2005) points out that library attendance statistics are increasingly used to demonstrate success to administrators, “which means...that librarians are competing more and more with the conveniences and comforts of the dormitory suite and the buzz of the student center” (p. B3).⁵¹ He cites a number of new university libraries constructed specifically with the purpose of creating social and study areas for students, as well as reliable locations for resources and assistance with research.

⁵⁰ In a complementary assertion, Kenneth Dowlin, director of the San Francisco Public Library when it constructed its controversial new building in the 1990s, suggests that physical contact is “less viable in a networked instant access world” (quoted in Tisdale, 1997, p. 72). Also, in seeming support of the notion that people expect and desire the kind of community connections found in a shared library workspace, a 2008 OCLC report on the implications of digitizing special collections quoted a history professor who, though an enthusiastic supporter of digital access to archival collections, lamented the loss of social contact found in visiting the archives:

Both of the faculty speakers [History Professor David Watt of Temple University and English Professor Zachary Lesser of The University of Pennsylvania] said they miss the community of faculty and students in the analog world. The steps leading to the library provided a venue for gossip, and students and their professors could see each other working in the reading room. Watt observed that the disconnected digital library – “our new capacity for using the library without going to the library” – “makes it hard for us to realize the communal nature of our project.” (Proffitt & Schaffner, 2008, p.6)

⁵¹ The topic of one discussion thread on the InfoCommons listserv centered around how to assess the impact of a library Commons environment on the quality of students’ academic work. One member noted that currently measures of a Commons’ success focus almost entirely on such quantitative, non-academic indicators as number of people who visit the Commons and economic savings for the university.

Carlson also notes a trend among librarians to conceive of libraries as “third places,” Oldenberg’s (1999) term for the egalitarian social spaces between work and home that form the hub of communities.⁵²

How do users understand and value the library: as a community-connecting social space, or as a marker of the school’s heritage and an essential component of the campus experience, or as a spacious, quiet sanctuary for reading and study? “Librarians increasingly find that administrators, professors, and students see the library building as essential, a romanticized heart of the campus. At the same time, though, libraries have changed radically from the stodgy and stuffy repositories of years past” (Carlson, 2005, p. B2). Indeed, there is potentially a disjuncture between the traditional and imagined library of much of the academic community and the new library that many librarians and architects are building and promoting.

For example, in a *Chronicle of Higher Education* commentary on library innovations, Santa Clara University English professor Fred White (2005) lightly reproaches librarians who replace tactile, traditional research experiences with digital surrogates, and lauds the virtues of browsing bookshelves: (p. B8)

Books embody much more than the information they contain. They are artifacts to be held and admired for their aesthetic properties, not just mined for information. To stand with bookshelves towering over your head and reaching beyond your field of vision is to bear witness to the essence of civilization, the fruits of the human mind.

⁵² Oldenberg characterizes “third places” – places in one’s daily life that are neither work nor home – as typically 1) on neutral ground, preferably public, “where individuals may come and go as they please,” 2) leveling (equalizing, inclusive, allowing people to disregard the roles and relationships attached to other parts of their life), 3) conversation centers (in which conversing and interacting is the main activity), 4) accessible and accommodating, always available whenever one decides to go there, 5) frequented by regulars (the people one grows to expect whenever visiting the third place), 6) plain in structure and/or appearance (having a “low profile”), 7) playful, and 8) a home away from home (pp. 20-42).

Upon the construction of an Information Commons at Emory University's Woodruff Library, one "grizzled faculty member" is reported to have stood in the building's new computer-intensive atrium and repeatedly asked, "Can you tell me, where is the library? I'm trying to find the library. It used to be here" (Halbert, 1999, pp. 90-91). In the same issue of *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* in which this anecdote appeared, Philip Tramdack (1999), Associate Dean of West Library at The College of New Jersey, cautioned of potential conflict between the design of new library spaces and users' expectations: "Traditional library users may be sympathetic in acknowledging a complex function addressed by the idea of the IC [Information Commons]. However, when the design is seen as an alternative to the familiar book-centered and print-bound reference center, anxiety may be the result" (p. 93).

Hesitation to conflate the high-tech Commons with the bookish library still persists in some circles, along with efforts to reinstate or emphasize the place of the library building in projecting institutional identity, linking with intellectual heritage, and connecting members of the academic community. Following its creation of a multi-functional and computing intensive atrium for its main library (Woodruff Library), Emory University constructed a separate, quiet reading area in response to user demand. "We intended to make it slightly less hi-tech," said Charles Forrest, director of the Office of Library Facilities Planning. "We've got computers all over Woodruff Library and Cox Hall [where a computing center run by the University Technology Services department is housed], and many people were asking us to give them back a traditional reading room. They wanted a grand, contemplative space where they could just spread things out and think" (Rangus, 2003). The reading room was located in the original library building, still called Candler Library, while the new high-tech (and decidedly non-bookish) construction was named the Center for Library And Information Resources, or CLAIR, and commonly referred to as the InfoCommons. As this

example and the following suggest, librarians themselves may be the ones reluctant to label technology-saturated areas “libraries.” In a document describing the plan for constructing an Information Commons at Brookdale Community College (“Program Statement,” 1997), the authors recommended that this new space be called the “library,” rather than the “resource learning center,” which had been its designation for many years: “It may seem a contradiction to design a building that anticipates new technologies, then reach back into the past and call it a Library. But our clientele, students and faculty alike, have never become used to translating library into RLC. For many it will be a relief to give a direct answer to the question, ‘Where’s the Library?’”

The meaning of quiet

The silence I remember from my childhood library, and still find on occasion in a few big-city reading rooms, is the thick, busy silence one sometimes finds in an operating room. It is profoundly pleasing, profoundly full. There used to be such silences in many places, in open desert and in forests, in meadows and on riverbanks, and something of this kind of silence was common, a century or so ago, even in small towns, broken only by the unhurried sounds of unhurried people. There is no such silence in the world now; in every corner we live smothered by the shrill, growling, strident, piercing racket of crowded, hurried lives. The street is noisy, stores and banks and malls are noisy, classrooms are noisy, virtually every workplace is noisy. National parks and ocean shores and snowy mountains are noisy. And now the library is noisy, which is supposed to be a good thing. It is less “intimidating.”

Sallie Tisdale, 1997, “Silence, Please,” p. 72, Harper’s Magazine

In an homage to a traditional role of public libraries – a role threatened in the Digital Age, and often by librarians themselves – *Harper’s* columnist Sallie Tisdale (1997) remembers the silence of libraries as communal and priceless: “a refuge from the street and the marketplace” whose walls of separation “are being deliberately torn down in the name of access and popularity” (p. 72). Some librarians, however, see the quiet library of the past – a place of refuge from the everyday, and also a place of awe – as incompatible with the way

younger generations typically work. David Mowery, president of the American Library Association's Young Adult Library Services Association, scoffs at the notion of preserving the quiet library for today's users: "Quiet in the library? It doesn't exist. Libraries are no longer the old image of pin-drop quiet. Youths could never be that quiet because they do so much work in groups and don't want or expect quiet" (DiMattia, 2005). If the noise bothers them, he and other public and youth librarians suggest, today's youths will just don headphones and listen to music.

Preferences of younger users notwithstanding, there has been a backlash against rising noise levels, in libraries as well as in other public spheres. *American Libraries* editor-in-chief Leonard Kniffel (2004) reports that the Joliet (Illinois) Public Library enacted strict rules to protect quiet in the library, following a barrage of complaints about unruly and noisy children. In a posting to the Learning Commons discussion forum at North Carolina State University Libraries, a user complains bitterly about the lack of quiet study areas in the library (rgminor, 2007).⁵³ Academic libraries at places such as Emory University, the University of Indiana – Bloomington, and the University of Southern California have demarcated quiet Commons areas, in response to user demand.⁵⁴ Noise from cell phones has spurred action to curtail the use of these devices. In a tongue-in-cheek opinion piece published in *Inside Higher Ed*, regular columnist Scott McLemee (2006) advocates shooting offending cell-phone users.⁵⁵

⁵³ A response posting directs the frustrated user to try studying in the vending area, where "there are a bunch of tables, and it is very spacious. People who come in to buy things very rarely talk" (Jrgoldba, 2007a) and also chastises that the complainer ought to be more cognizant of others' needs: "you should consider the fact that sometimes people need to talk in order to understand concepts" (Jrgoldba, 2007b).

⁵⁴ In recent years several postings to the InfoCommons listserv have specifically queried noise issues in Commons areas and how different institutions have addressed them. Subscribers offered a range of solutions, from providing users with noise-canceling devices (i.e., earplugs), to using furniture or partitions to set off quiet areas, to designating whole floors or wings for quiet study.

⁵⁵ Online comments almost unanimously applaud this diatribe against cell-phone noise in libraries and complain about the erosion of public etiquette. One commentator, the Director of Libraries at

Frustration over cell-phone noise has even led Amtrak trains in the northeastern United States to install “quiet cars” for cell-phone-free travel. These strikes against invasive noise signal broader conflicts over public aural space, fueled by technological change and generational differences and by a valuation of quiet as something precious and worthy of protection.

A call for quiet can signal anxiety over rapid social upheaval or technological change. In the increasingly noisy metropolises of the Industrial Age, silence was a sign of order against the chaos (Smilor, 2004). Middle-class British intellectuals heard filth and primitiveness in the sound of street musicians, their choice of instrument and tune further reinforcing national and class prejudices (Picker, 2003). In American cities the alarmingly diverse readers in public libraries were controlled through architecture and atmospherics, as silent female readers communicated middle-class values to less savory patrons (Van Slyck, 1996). Silence in this context also possessed an authoritative, disciplinary character, serving as a marker of social difference and a tool of acculturation.

In their separate studies of European society at the onset of the modern era, Corbin (2004) and Smith (2004) describe different communities united through a shared sense of sound – not unlike Kelman’s (2001) argument in “The Sound of the Civic.” They describe the

the College of Wooster, specifically bemoans “the loss of the concept of shared public space” and notes that at his library, he interrupts these conversations to remind the cell-phone user “that they’re sharing a public space created for the purpose of quiet study, and that they should take their conversations outside, or into a small, soundproof room.”

However, it also bears mentioning that a cartoon published in *American Libraries*, in which a gun-toting librarian enforces cell-phone restrictions, was perceived by at least one reader as exhibiting poor taste (possibly in light of the Columbine High School shootings).

distinctive sounds marking the boundaries of communities, using classifications developed by Schafer (1994) to describe distinct acoustic environments, or soundscapes:⁵⁶

- *keynotes* (fundamental sounds, typically natural sounds, which set the tone for the acoustic environment and lend meaning/significance to other sounds, e.g., wind or water),
- *signals* (foregrounded sounds which convey a distinct message to the listener, e.g., bells and sirens), and
- *soundmarks* (the aural equivalent of landmarks; sounds unique to a particular community or place, lending it its distinct character and deserving of special protection).

For instance, within the 19th-century French village of Corbin's (2004) study, the church bell functions as a signal (for the time of day or for special events) and as a soundmark (registering a particular place and lending to those who hear it a sense of collective identity – a connection to a particular aural space).

The bell tower prescribed an auditory space that corresponded to a particular notion of territoriality, one obsessed with mutual acquaintance. The bell reinforced divisions between an inside and an outside.... This auditory space is not much affected by the acceleration that swept the nineteenth century along, and entails no tendency toward mobility and speed. Listening to a bell conjures up a space that is by its nature slow, prone to conserve what lies within it, and redolent of a world in

⁵⁶ Though Schafer, a musician and composer, brings to his proposed study a distinctly aesthetic (and subjective) agenda – to turn the noises of modern life into music – his suggestions and observations tie together a number of significant authors and observations about the acoustic environment of contemporary life and how sound affects our relations with others and the meanings we attribute to particular experiences. His references to the composer John Cage's highly idiosyncratic work *4' 33'* *Silence* (in which the musician “rests” for the given length of time, and the sounds from the audience and the environment create the “music” of the piece) reminds those familiar with the experience of this work that there are sounds around us constantly, which we have learned to tune out. Schafer goes even further, proposing that “the general acoustic environment of a society can be read as an indicator of social conditions which produce it and may tell us much about the tending and evolution of that society” (p. 6).

which walking was the chief mode of locomotion. Such a sound is attuned to the quiet tread of a peasant. (p. 184)

Smith (2004) applies Schafer's (1994) categories of sounds to the spaces of early modern England, detailing the distinctions between different 16th-century English communities: the city, the country, and the court. Smith emphasizes the reality of constant, diverse, and intense sound in the daily lives of 16th-century Londoners. Aural signals marked significant events in the life of the church, the city, and the nation (most notably through the ringing of cathedral bells, but also through musical performances and the shooting of cannons); commercial enterprises (e.g., factory noises and hawkers); the time of day (e.g., the ringing of bells, town criers, traffic noise, etc.); and the speech communities inhabiting a particular area. All of these sounds serve to enforce the boundaries and the unique soundmarks of the city. The country, on the other hand, follows a different aural rhythm. Here, "the absence of masking noises from internal combustion engines and electrical equipment would give intensity and presence to the keynote sounds: wind in the trees, birds, domestic animals, and running water in the several streams" (p. 97) – sounds whose decibel levels are so low they would not register in urban environments. "In an acoustic environment that, apart from barking dogs and the occasional gunshot, lacked any sounds above 60 decibels, all sounds would be present with an intensity quite beyond anything imaginable on the same site today. And in a close-knit social environment those sounds would never be anonymous" (p. 98). In the American South preceding the Civil War, the elite class of slaveholders dictated the pervasive silences and quietude of their estates, which slaves rebelled against through song (though their masters often interpreted these songs as signs of prevailing serenity and order; Smith, 2001).

Masters went to great lengths to discipline plantation soundscapes by insisting on quietude and trying to delimit slaves' sounds. The essence of plantation serenity was

not silence but carefully regulated quietude. Slave songs were part and parcel of that imagined quietude. Sung in and at the right time, songs were active confirmation of slaveholders' soniferous gardens and metronomes of slave productivity. Sung at the right time and in the wrong place, slave songs sounded like excesses of passion. Herein lay the dreadful irony. For the most part antebellum planters got what they wanted from slaves: songs sung and sounds made at appropriate times in appropriate places. Many things went unheard, and many pieces of vital information were conveyed by slave songs. Masters probably recognized much of this, but on the whole they interpreted the aesthetic beauty of slave songs to demonstrate their bondpeoples' supposed happiness and the superiority of their own social order. The irony lay, however, less in what masters heard and more in what they failed to hear: slave silences. In slaves' silence, masters had the most to fear. (p. 68)

While whites often assumed their noisy slaves were too undisciplined to be quiet, in reality the slaves' potential for silent escape led to the development of elaborate contraptions – bells fixed to iron bands around a slave's neck or suspended five feet above his head – that would aurally mark his movements. Perceptions of the soundscape were also colored by one's place in the social system. Elite whites' may have celebrated the peaceful stillness of their estates (especially in contrast to noisy, chaotic Northern cities), but “for bondpeople, plantations were rarely quiet places of shaped serenity. Rather, ‘everything was in a bustle – always there was slashing and whipping. . . . It was awful to hear the cracking of that whip. . . . so loud and sharp was the noise’” (p. 77). Though both slave and master often perceived loud sounds as disturbing, their management of and response to particular sounds closely reflected their place in this social system.

This and other historical studies of sound provide useful models of how one might undertake a study of quiet in academic libraries and its meaning to users, and suggest a fruitful area for anthropological study. How does sound or silence reinforce existing social systems? What values or beliefs underlie library users' preferences for a particular aural environment and their actions that perpetuate or disrupt the existing soundscape? Given the range of sounds that often go unheard in the modern world, drowned out as they are by incessant and higher decibel noises, the silent space of libraries – and especially the

heightened quietude of reading rooms – create aural environments in which the sound of a page turning may become the keynote of the space. That sound, amplified as it is by the space and the quiet activity of people within it, embodies and communicates the solidarity of readers.⁵⁷

What, then, do we make of this new trend in academic libraries to create social spaces and encourage conversation? Is it merely a reflection of pedagogical trends and the library's attempts to retain and expand its base of users? Does it signal movement away from careful disciplining of scholars and inculcating of shared values into a heterogeneous community, and towards relative and communal notions of authority? Or does it signal anxiety stemming from perceptions of silence? Indeed, the growing propensity of both public and academic libraries to encourage conversation may point to an adoption of a new cultural code, in which activity, visibility, sociability, and audibility evidence a scholar and an institution's productivity and value.⁵⁸ Such new valuations of the library's proper role and environment, however, run afoul of long-standing beliefs concerning the nature of scholarly work and the place of library in academic life. Investigating the significance of quiet – in libraries, in scholars' work, and in the scholarly life of the university – necessarily involves an examination of recent cultural, technological, economic, and structural changes in libraries that have prompted dramatic changes and consequently challenged established notions of what practices, spaces, and sounds are legitimate in libraries.

⁵⁷ Commenting on the distinctive character of libraries, Manguel (1996) contrasts the hushed silence of the British Library with the sound of slamming books and rattling carts at Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan. He also notes that, in recent years, the silent soundscape of the British Library has been "punctuated by the clicking and tapping of portable word-processors" (p. 44).

⁵⁸ A more pervasive and potentially insurmountable possibility is that the higher education institutions of late capitalistic societies do not countenance the time-consuming, isolated task of focused study that traditional library environments supported, a point Amanda Cain (2003) makes in her observations about the changing library (see quote at the beginning of this chapter).

DISCOURSE, AUTHORITY, AND CULTURAL CHANGE

It is important to consider why non-traditional library spaces might be appealing, particularly among younger scholars. Questions of popularity and preference may hinge on more than mere connection speed or collection size. A space that accommodates, and perhaps encourages, the accomplishment of multiple tasks (e.g., watching the day's news on a large-screen TV while answering email and eating lunch with friends) may have greater appeal to a rising generation of multi-taskers focused on productivity.⁵⁹ On the other hand, a space that restricts or prohibits food, beverages, and conversation, TVs, and other sounds – and thus limits the number of tasks that may be accomplished in one place or time – may be less appealing to this group, even if it offers a greater selection of resources.

And yet, in a world where cell phone rings and electrical hums crowd the soundscape of public spaces, quiet in academic libraries may be a scarce and essential resource of scholarly life – “the quiet and often comfortable environment [that] allows for the concentration necessary to ‘really valid study’” (A. Cain, 2003, p. 13). Uncovering beliefs and practices that reinforce or challenge the legitimacy of conversation and quiet in libraries would be a first step towards determining the value of traditional and innovative library environments to different user populations and ultimately the legitimacy of new library environments and increased noise levels in libraries among a campus community.

Legitimacy and innovation in organizational fields

To acquire legitimacy, every kind of institution needs a formula that founds its rightness in reason and in nature.... For a convention to turn into a legitimate social institution it needs a parallel cognitive convention to sustain it.

⁵⁹ See David Brooks' (2001) article “The Organization Kid” in which he describes the younger generation as multi-tasking and focused on productivity.

Mary Douglas, 1986, How Institutions Think, pp. 45-46

Legitimacy results from group consensus and indicates a shared perception of validity: the perception that an objective order guides the way things are, and that there is collective support for this order. Weber (1978) provides a widely referenced definition of legitimacy: the quality of someone or something which gives it the unquestioned right to exercise power or influence, be it an act, a person, or a position in a group or an organization. Suchman's (1995) more recent formulation attempts to encompass the social, cognitive, and evaluative dimensions of legitimacy by describing it as "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (p. 574). Particularly relevant to an understanding of legitimacy is the role that the broader cultural context plays in affirming an institution's or convention's seeming objectivity. As Douglas (1986, quoted above) notes, the legitimated institution becomes so because it "founds its rightness in reason and in nature," drawing on existing conceptions of social reality to bolster its claims. Embeddedness within a constellation of cultural beliefs contribute to the perception that an institution or convention is natural, a part of objective social reality. Or, as Johnson, Dowd, and Ridgeway (2006) summarize the fundamental characteristics of legitimacy at the micro- (social psychological) level and the macro- (institutional sociological) level, "legitimacy is a problem in the construction of social reality," in which perception that a social object is natural, and especially beliefs that others believe a social object is natural, lead to an acceptance of it, not just as "what is" but also as "what is right" (p. 57).

Beyond these essential linkages to other accepted beliefs and practices, change in established institutional practice can be efficiently sustained only if the change is perceived as legitimate by those it affects (Zelditch, 2001). As numerous theorists have expounded (Gramsci, 1992;

Foucault, 1995; Weber, 1978), coercive control is much less efficient and more difficult to sustain – spatially and temporally – than control internally maintained through beliefs and practices (see also French & Raven, 1959). Further, people are more likely to accept changes to their social environment if they believe these changes are authorized and endorsed, even if these changes disadvantage them (Walker, Thomas, & Zelditch, 1986; Zelditch & Walker, 1984); likewise, authorization and endorsement of an existing practice can undermine attempts to change that practice (Dornbush & Scott, 1975). In the case of academic libraries, interest in expanding the role of the library building (and subsequently changing its space and sound) may come into conflict with well-established attitudes about what the library should look and sound like and how it should be used. Thus, even if innovation in the library space (its sound, appearance, and use) is authorized by librarians, endorsement by users themselves is necessary to its widespread adoption.

Theories of status and legitimacy would suggest that academic libraries may not simply be making changes in response to the needs of users but may also be attempting to retain or increase the library's perceived value to the campus population. Many academic libraries reported a drop in building usage during the 1990s, as the availability of information online reduced patrons' reliance on print resources. Because statistics on building usage can be used by the administration to justify budget cuts, librarians' introduction of Commons areas⁶⁰ could be seen as an attempt to increase library attendance and re-establish the library building's value to the university. Valparaiso University's Christopher Center for Library and Information Resources, "a high-tech, socially aware building" which was "not meant to be a

⁶⁰ As noted previously, Commons areas (also called Information Commons, Learning Commons, or even Academic Commons) are spaces for working collaboratively with various media and resources, especially computers, and, increasingly, for supporting impromptu, egalitarian gatherings among diverse members of the university population.

quiet place,” attempts to address library users’ changing work habits, but Dean of Library Services Richard AmRhein also acknowledges that “the new building plays a big role in kicking librarians up a notch in the eyes of the campus and local community” (DiMattia, 2005, p. 49).

Status and legitimacy may function through sound in other ways. For example, Picker (2003) argued that a quiet, interior study was critical to male professional intellectuals in Victorian England, who desired it not simply as a function of their work but as a status marker, distinguishing them from the foreign working class and from the women who inhabited their same domestic space. Nineteenth-century America also saw the development of class distinctions along sound levels, as muted and organized instances of sound at museums, concerts, plays, and other public events and spaces came to define highbrow culture (Levine, 1988). Melvil Dewey, founding member of the American Library Association (established in 1876), identified controlling the aural environment of libraries as one of the roles of the emerging library professional (Wiegand, 1996). At that time, both academic and public libraries operated within a cultural system in which quiet public spaces underscored middle and upper class cultural values, and linking the sound of the library and the role of the librarian to those cultural preferences was one way to boost their status (and, indirectly, their legitimacy). In short, American librarians’ professional values and the public library movements were established in a climate of rapid social change and cultural conflict. The space of libraries mediated interactions between social classes by communicating middle- and upper-class cultural values to lower-class patrons, and through their mediating and inculcating role, librarians gained the legitimacy of their profession.

In a world in which librarianship continues to be perceived as a low-status, and gendered, profession (Williams, 1995), status and legitimacy still play a role in librarians’ decisions

about library space and their role to users. Efforts to attract and retain patrons may be driven as much by a need to improve the library's standing on campus, especially in the eyes of administrators, as they are by a desire to better serve the academic community. Overt and covert efforts to codify sound levels in the library (e.g., through signs requesting users to turn off cell phones and speak quietly, or by deliberately creating conversational spaces in areas where users tend to form ad hoc work groups) must be read as attempts to legitimate practices that benefit the institution (the library and professional librarianship) as much as they benefit users.

Despite their authority to control library environments, librarians cannot control how people actually use these spaces or whether users will accept changes to library spaces (or to the meaning of the library) as legitimate. Other users must accept and teach such beliefs and practices, and individuals must believe that others believe the library environments they encounter are appropriate. Widespread dissemination and adoption of new practices, spaces, and sounds may, in fact, be hindered by cultural and personal notions of libraries, established through past experiences and social interactions and the cultural meaning embedded in the word "library" itself.

The dispersion of authority

Libraries, along with the educational institutions in which they are embedded, have long served to discipline individuals into a hierarchical structure, in which knowledge is channeled through approved paths and vetted by those invested with the requisite authority. In the classroom, the teacher spoke and dispensed knowledge, students listened and repeated. Within disciplines, scholarly societies and editorial boards approved and published new scholarship. In the library, designated selectors built the collection, which was then made

available the academic community. From the professor to the undergraduate, productivity was directed through the library, and the authority of previous scholarship reproduced there as well: the ingestion of canonical works, used to reconstruct previous thought into new ideas, duly vetted by specialists and published in works collected and controlled by libraries. Through their practices libraries also reinforced the hierarchical structure of universities, in which professors might borrow books for years at a time and store them in their offices, graduate students might borrow books for shorter periods of time and stow them in their carrels, and the lowest ranked undergraduates might be allowed to borrow books for a few days or weeks, if they were allowed to take books out of the library at all. Until the late twentieth century, American university library book stacks often remained closed to most users, especially undergraduates. Books available to undergraduates frequently were housed in a separate library; these collections often contained works deemed either essential to the undergraduate curriculum or of such low value there would be no great loss should they become damaged or go missing. Regardless of the user, what reading material went into the library's collection was determined by librarians, on the advisement of faculty and scholarly reviews, and those works or their authors were often themselves subjected to scholarly scrutiny before being published.

New technologies and new sources of information, particularly those arising from the Internet, have challenged the traditional forms of vetting and hierarchy inherent in academic institutions. Systems of promotion and tenure for college professors demand that scholars publish articles in peer-reviewed journals. Yet the rise of online journals and the greater speed of communication challenge this system: publishing materials online where they can be located easily through search engines and potentially read and adopted by more people affords scholars an alternative to the slower print cycle of publication and a quicker route to

renown and status. Though academic libraries have long served the scholarly communication cycle by making expensive publications and hard-to-find information available to the academic community (and by being the chief supporters of the progenitors and consumers of the progeny of scholarly work), the advent of search engines (especially Google and more recently Google Scholar) has unseated libraries from their primacy as information sources. Particularly in the sciences where e-print archives and e-publishing were first adopted, the latest information in a field may be found more quickly through a simple Google search than through a database, where the most recent issues of journals are often embargoed (sometimes up to a year).

Among online information sources, Wikipedia is frequently decried by professors and librarians alike as unreliable if not simply erroneous, especially since it has become such a popular reference tool among undergraduates.⁶¹ A subversion of traditional reference sources, Wikipedia and wiki technology in general embody the collaborative approach to knowledge construction championed in pedagogical circles since the 1970s. Whereas traditional encyclopedias are formed through individually authored entries, solicited from experts in a field, and available only through libraries or at personal expense, Wikipedia entries are created and edited voluntarily and ad hoc, as users themselves or self-interested parties determine their need. Though the initial entry is often individually authored, authorship is not prominently claimed and others may freely amend or enhance each entry. Vetting of the information takes place *after* the information is published, not before, and reviewers are self selected and not necessarily authorized in the field through formal means (i.e., higher education degrees in the field of specialty). This approach to information access

⁶¹ An undergraduate in one of my classes introduced me to another alternative to traditional reference tools: when he wanted to know the definition for a term, he would type “define:” and the term in a Google search box. (In some cases, this would take him to a Wikipedia entry on the term.)

assumes that communities will monitor themselves and control their own knowledge, and that all are responsible for constructing, vetting, and amending knowledge, rather than a select few.⁶² Authority is not singularly controlled and select, but dispersed and democratic; veracity comes not from a single distinct voice speaking with authority but from multiple anonymous voices continually voicing and checking opinion.

Structured and structuring discourse

As with many areas of human life, libraries operate mostly through implicit suggestion rather than explicit coercion. While detailed policies exist, and may be communicated in part through signs, pamphlets, or in person, or in whole through downloadable files, much of the day-to-day activity of users is guided less by the institution's active management of their behavior than by users' own observation and mimicry of the actions of those they see around them. An understanding of libraries emerges over time, from experience and observation. The rules of libraries – how they look and sound, how they are used, what one does or how one behaves within them – are disseminated gradually, between individuals and in repeated interactions. How infractions of these rules are addressed may also be learned through cultural habituation rather than through formal instruction, with variations to the norm standing out more than conformity. For instance, one librarian I interviewed as part of a pilot study of academic library culture had to be prodded into explaining how he quieted noisy patrons (by putting his finger to his lips), but he volunteered an example of an unusual instance, when a student yelled, “Quiet!” above the noisy banter around the Reference desk, causing everyone in the area to fall suddenly, startlingly silent.

⁶² Though in practice it may be that a self-selected few do, in fact, monitor and construct a discrete area of information, amendment and censure of that information is readily available to anyone and, at the same time, changes to that information will be followed and approved or rejected by the group.

Inherent in his description is a logic of libraries, in which appropriate and customary actions for shushing others (a finger to the lips) are unremarkable, while shouting an order for quiet is surprising and memorable. This logic may be traced to childhood experiences in libraries and encounters with scholarly practices throughout one's academic life; through regular interactions with and observations of other people in these settings, one acquires a sense of how libraries operate and what behaviors are appropriate or inappropriate, and develops personal practices for negotiating this social world. Bourdieu's (1977) concept of the *habitus* plays out well in the landscape of academic libraries, where people tacitly understand the rules, knowing when to enforce them and when they have violated them, and creatively or normatively responding to social situations that arise. This *habitus* equips them with a set of competencies for operating in this world, a sense of what communicative tools are at their disposal for defending their own interests, and when (and whether) they can employ them. Individuals' ability to act in their own interest and obtain needed or desired resources (whether status, power, or symbolic capital) depends on the nature of the linguistic market in which they operate and the linguistic and communicative competencies they possess.

Foucault (1995, 1972), on the other hand, may offer a closer reading of these environments, particularly regarding architectural features that may encourage or discourage certain types of activity, and the types of institutional disciplinary practices that subtly regulate the movement and behavior of people in space. Discipline, he asserts, originates in cultural, external prompts then gradually becomes internalized as the individual accepts the norm of behavior and imposes it on himself. Such discipline may be developed through specific physical environments (such as the panopticon) or through institutional practices (systems of reward and punishment) that instill a particular valuation and perspective of the larger community and one's place within it.

Remarking on the hard surfaces and echoes in the restored Matheson Reading Room at Emory University, a renovation planning team member noted that “we wanted it to be a loud, boomy place, so that people would be quiet. It’s a reading room, not a conversation room” (Parvin, 2004). Much like the acoustics in the New York Public Library that Kelman (2001) describes as “panauralism” (p. 38) – a twist on Foucault’s (1995) panopticism – surveillance in this space is conducted by the ear rather than the eye, and the sound of one’s actions reverberating in an acoustically live room may prompt the self-disciplining of movement that preserves quiet. Silence’s own supporting role as a backdrop to low decibel sound, combined with the acoustical liveness of reading rooms that augment subtle movements, could also create an environment in which one hears the sounds of reading and, through that sound, communes with others (Kelman, 2001). Such silence still serves as evidence of a disciplinary machine, though, churning out productive, self-regulating individuals attending to the printed words of others.

Yet architectural and acoustic features that subtly suggest or reinforce certain types of behavior do not work effectively without cultural and internal reinforcement. As suggested earlier in the comments of University of Richmond library director James Rettig, today’s library users “self regulate” their noise levels by following the dictates of group consensus. Whatever messages about appropriate noise levels might be communicated overtly by signs or covertly by acoustics and architecture, users tend to manage their environment by general agreement and from cues picked up from other users. Such logic derives less from past experience and more from current community dictates of what is valued and rewarded.

Beyond observing this discipline in action (in the actions and reactions of people in a reading room, for instance, or in a group study area), unspoken beliefs or assumptions about the rules governing the library may also be found in discourse. In his explication of the rules

governing discourse Foucault (1972) points to the salience of division and rejection, in which certain topics or ways of speaking are separated out from others, and then rejected or ignored. One key to identifying these unspoken biases in discourse about libraries and their sound is locating the implicit rules governing that discourse. Speaking of the library in certain terms – as being a place for certain activities, not for others, or grouping appropriate activities together and inappropriate activities separately – may indicate unspoken assumptions regarding what types of library spaces and activities are legitimate.

Discourse, legitimacy, and cultural change

Ideology is most effective when its workings are least visible. ...And invisibility is achieved when ideologies are brought to discourse not as explicit elements of the text, but as the background assumptions which on the one hand lead the text producer to 'textualize' the world in a particular way, and on the other hand lead the interpreter to interpret the text in a particular way. Texts do not typically spout ideology. They so position the interpreter through their cues that she brings ideologies to the interpretation of texts – and reproduces them in the process!

Fairclough, 2001, Language and Power, p. 71

As Fairclough observes in his discussion of critical discourse analysis, everyday language is shot through with ideological beliefs, embedded within larger institutional discourse patterns, and tightly linked to social orders. Discovering how particular views are legitimated (or made natural) and authority claimed necessarily involves a close examination of lexical, syntactical, and contextual clues. Some distinct advantages of Fairclough's approach are the attention to texts as discourse (leaving room for analyzing institutionally produced documents as utterances themselves and contributors to conversations at the individual and institutional levels); the various ways discourse may be interpreted, depending on members' resources; and the way in which utterances are embedded in orders of discourse and social orders.

Returning, then, to the question of how users understand libraries and adopt new meanings, cultural values and beliefs may be communicated through discourse and through the adoption of discursive fields that help to legitimize new roles and changing spaces. For instance, simply describing a new library space as a “community center” is not nearly as effective as couching that phrase within a longer disposition detailing the social connectedness of different campus groups, promoting a distinctive and attractive campus identity, and arguing for the critical role such public spaces play in supporting an individual’s intellectual and emotional growth. A commercial enterprise such as a coffee shop in the library may make more ideological commonsense, for example, within an organizational climate in which greater emphasis is placed on meeting user preferences for convenience, where one is accustomed to hearing patrons referred to as “customers” and where “self-service” is a regular alternative to librarian-performed activities, and when the library itself is lauded as providing a “one-stop shopping” experience. Alternatively, legitimating the presence of a café within an institution where policy once forbade the presence of food and drink, might also be achieved by linking the higher goals achieved by such “third place” institutions as coffee shops with the professed goals of libraries: egalitarianism, intellectual exchange, civic mindedness.

Building new meanings for “library” and legitimating new library practices, spaces, and sounds are accomplished not just through social interactions that teach the norm, but also through repeated, coherent discourse that borrows the word choices, style, tone, genres, and other distinctive features of an existing realm of cultural experience. Such discursive formulations allow libraries to remake themselves by simply placing the loaded word within a more densely packed conceptual scene, which through its imagery and suggestion imbues “library” with new meanings.

Efforts to redefine the library, through changes in sound and changes in discourse, may also be considered within a broader contextual scene, in which academic libraries as well as the higher education institutions to which they are attached struggle to maintain and increase their share of the educational “market.” As the structure in which campus libraries operate relies on statistics to determine budgets and fundable initiatives, and as the promises of new technology erode popular perceptions of the value of the library, librarians may adopt the language of commerce in an effort to regain a position of power in the academic network. The fields and players, competencies and capital in this contest for continued relevance may be located and analyzed in specific discursive events, and those events located within orders of discourse connected to social orders (Fairclough, 2001; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999).

Fairclough (2001) also notes a tendency in late stage capitalism towards expansion, as

the capitalistic domain has been progressively enlarged to take in aspects of life which were previously seen as quite separate from production. The *commodity* has expanded from being a tangible ‘good’ to include all sorts of intangibles: educational courses, holidays, health insurance, and funerals are now bought and sold on the open market in ‘packages’, rather like soap powders. And an ever greater focus has been placed upon the consumption of commodities, a tendency summed up in the term *consumerism* (p. 29).

This attention to overlaps between traditionally commercial practices and discourses and the language of library work and education will be of particular importance to this study.

CONCLUSION

This history of libraries and their soundscapes locates their origins in cultural and religious authority and silent, often solitary, scholarly practices, and traces recent technological and pedagogical developments that have prompted libraries’ development and promotion as collaborative workspaces and sites for formal and informal social interactions. Consonant with these shifts in sound and character, the academic library and academia in general have

undergone a leveling of previous hierarchies – namely, the diversification of sites of authority in pedagogical interactions (expanding possibilities for where and how learning may take place and who may speak) and in scholarship (the rise of alternatives to vetted, published knowledge, in the form of peer-reviewed online journals, wikimedia, and other collaborative, open access works). In constructing this historical view of libraries and their soundscapes, I have sought to suggest how valuations of particular sounds and silences within particular contexts or socio-historical moments connect to authority, social relations, or social structures, and especially ways in which the changing sound of the library may be understood as indicative of trends in its larger cultural, educational, and economic context. This dissertation uses a focus on sound, and on talk about libraries and their sound among various stakeholders, at one American academic library and among library users and librarian professionals nationally, to investigate the legitimacy of new library spaces. Specifically, it explores sound as a signature element of a cultural reality and examines the ideological commonsense underlying descriptions of libraries and their sound, to determine who benefits from these changes, how these changes are promoted, and how conflicts with other beliefs about the meaning of the library are negotiated. Beyond differing expectations of the library and the library's expanding technological and pedagogical roles, the soundscape of the academic library signals a deeper shift in the nature of academic life – away from a privileging of the life of the mind and towards a consumer-driven approach to the business of higher education.

The following chapters will continue to sound the shifting nature of libraries, first, through interviews with users of one academic library, second, through an ethnographic study of the soundscape of that library, and finally, through a discourse analysis of articles from the professional librarian literature. Sociological legitimation processes introduced in this

chapter, especially theories of the ways in which new forms become legitimated, may be observed in the comments and beliefs of librarians and library users, in the scene vignettes of the ethnographic case study, and in talk about libraries and their sound in *American Libraries* articles. Theories that locate institutional power and ideological commonsense in discourse, applied to the ways in which libraries and their sound are talked about by library users and librarians, in institutional documents, and in professional librarian literature, reveal the ways in which new ways of speaking about the academic library connect with these same shifts in authority, social relations, and social structures. In particular, I seek to highlight the ways in which changes in the library's soundscape signal deeper shifts in the nature of academia. Concurrent with challenges to the primacy of the professor, the classroom, and print scholarship, and propelled by new computing and communication technologies and the proclivities of a generation raised in the Digital Age, the academic library – indeed, academia itself – is casting its lot with the masses, seeking to level and popularize its own resources and services in an effort to remain visible and valuable in an era of increasing commodification of educational life.

CHAPTER 3

DEFINING AND DEFENDING THE SOUND OF THE LIBRARY

Harvey | The Public Space of Libraries

I've been sitting in Harvey's office, talking to him about his use of the library, which for him mostly involves going in, getting books, and coming back to his office. We're almost done, and I'm about to thank Harvey and click off the audio recorder. I glance over my protocol one more time, and since we have a few more minutes, I ask him what other types of libraries he's been to. He talks about the public library near his house that he visits, and then hesitates. "I don't know, what other kinds of libraries are there? There are research libraries and public libraries. I don't know, are there other kinds of libraries?"

"Well, there are private and corporate and, um, personal libraries –"

"Oh." He makes a face. "Like, it's funny, I don't think of this as my 'personal library'. I think of this as just my, my books. Like, I always find it funny when people talk about their 'personal libraries'. It seems very pretentious."

"Yeah? What is it that they're assuming?"

"I think they're assuming their own self-importance. I think it's like, 'Oh! My books are so important that they have to be cataloged and looked at and thought about!'" Harvey grimaces, then gestures to his shelves full of books. "Who gives a shit about this stuff except me?"

"In other words," I push, "to say 'library' is to suggest that others will have access to this?"

“Absolutely. And that it’s important. And that importance is developed in a non-selfish way.”

“Ah! Ah. And to put ‘personal’ to library – it really brings us full circle. Like you said earlier on, that you don’t assume Woodruff Library is your personal library. Like, in an ideal world, wouldn’t that be wonderful? But that wouldn’t be – ”

“It wouldn’t actually be wonderful,” Harvey finishes. “It would be gross.”

“So your perception about libraries,” I suggest, “is that it is something that is shared?”

“It’s shared. That it knows more than you do. It even knows stuff that you need to know that you don’t know even know that you need to know.” He smiles. “Right? That’s why a library is cool.” He gestures to the books lining his office walls. “These books are exactly the opposite. These are things you already think you know. You can’t discover anything new in someone’s personal library. That’s why it isn’t really a library. It’s just books on a shelf. In an actual library you discover something new every time you go in there. That’s what I’m saying, that’s what I love. I go in there and I’m looking for this book and I find that other book. You didn’t know those other books were there. But there they are. Here, it’s just...” He looks around at his shelves. “My stupid books. It’s just me. It’s me talking to me. Isn’t that gross?”

The users of Emory University’s Woodruff Library whom I interviewed for this study arrived at their current understanding of libraries over time, from experiences at public, school, and academic libraries both inside and outside the United States, from attitudes about books and learning inculcated by parents and peers, and especially from the circumstances and responsibilities that define their current academic life. In my interviews with librarians, teaching faculty, and graduate and undergraduate students ($n=23$) I probed

their understanding of libraries, based in their current academic work and history of library use, and their attitudes towards noise and quiet in the library. (See Appendix 1 for more description of this interview sample, recruitment methods, and a copy of the interviewing protocol.) The meaning of the library in these narratives, while reflective of a diversity of experiences and preferences, often coalesced into something exceptional or sublime – descriptions of people and experiences of lasting and often intangible value, and of relationships to others. The users and librarians I spoke with demonstrated considerably generosity to the needs of others in the library while also articulating the demands of their own academic work. What I found most indicative of interviewees’ understanding of the library, at least in how it translated into their perceptions of the library’s role and the extent to which they asserted (or often, didn’t assert) their personal needs, was an essential understanding of libraries as shared public space.

In understanding how each person understood and explained libraries in general and Woodruff Library in particular, it is preferable – indeed, essential – to take into account the very particular experiences and beliefs that the individual brings to this understanding. I would be overextending this data if I were to claim to know the preferences and proclivities of Woodruff Library’s entire user population from this handful of interviews, and I hesitate to make claims for the consensus of their views, since I risk distilling such complex histories and experiences into a few common threads. At the same time, for the purposes of illuminating how different members of the campus population use, experience, and define the library (especially when such phenomena run counter to assumptions) and for tracing legitimation processes and the acceptance (or at least tolerance) of new library spaces, I must necessarily omit some details in favor of others. Further, when disparate members of an

academic community arrive at similar conclusions regarding the nature, role, and space of libraries, it is necessary to highlight these as, potentially, widely held beliefs.

As a presentation and examination of the most individualistic data in my study, this chapter explores answers to the three key research questions while attending to the unique qualities of each interviewee's history and current experience. In this way, it attempts to balance the somewhat antagonistic goals of phenomenology and social anthropology: to explore and honor subjective experiences of libraries, while also recognizing the ways in which these distinct beliefs and practices cohere. In the interest of detailing these unique histories without burdening the narrative thrust of the chapter, I present details from a few of these interviews as separate vignettes, in which I highlight a dominant theme in their experience of libraries and aspects of their own histories and academic lives as well.

DEFINING LIBRARIES

What is a "library"? I began every interview with the same question: *If I say to you "library," what do you think of?* From there, answers varied, from the stereotypical to the immediate and physical to the conceptual and even spiritual. Perhaps not surprisingly, librarians' answers were particularly nuanced and conceptual, attending to the many ways a library can "be": the physical location and resources, virtual holdings and tools, a community of users, and the librarians who assist them, as well as libraries of the past that continue to shape assumptions about what the library *can* or *should* be. Sometimes pushing against the respondents'

immediate answer, sometimes posing hypothetical situations, always probing, I pressed each individual to describe just what the library means to them – ideally, typically, minimally.⁶³

Aaron | The Scholar Alone in His Study

Be it grand or slender, burrowing, blasting, or refusing to sanctify; whether it laughs out loud or is a cry without an alphabet, the choice word, the chosen silence, unmolested language surges toward knowledge, not its destruction.

Toni Morrison, Nobel Lecture

I am surrounded by beige cinder blocks walls. No posters. Few books on the shelves, even. Just a clean desk with some manila file folders and blank sheets of paper, two chairs, and a wastebasket. Bright yellowish light from the small, rectangular window mixes with the fluorescence from above. The lights hum, a barely audible, low-pitched buzz. Somewhere outside and far below, I hear the distant sound of a bus motoring by.

Aaron⁶⁴ is the first person I'm interviewing, and I've agreed to talk with him in his library study. Grateful for the interview and anxious not to inconvenience him, I was only too happy to meet with him in this private, quiet space, which I wouldn't have to go through the hassle of reserving and where I could be confident of getting a good audio recording. Sitting here now, I congratulate myself on unwittingly getting a view into his scholarly life: the Spartan surroundings, devoid of any objects save those immediately relevant to that day's dissertation writing. I remark on this as we begin to talk.

⁶³ Only after I analyzed these interviews and composed this chapter did I come across Alberto Manguel's (2006) recent, roving narrative on libraries, *The Library at Night*. Had I read this before starting my own work, I would have questioned whether the qualities of libraries that emerged from interviewees' comments, from my research, and from my own experience, were not simply Manguel's ideas imposing their order on my psyche. As it is, his itemization of fifteen facets of libraries (myth, order, space, power, shadow, shape, chance, workshop, mind, island, survival, oblivion, imagination, identity, and home) prefigure the array of experiences that somehow compress themselves into the notion "library."

⁶⁴ A pseudonym. Out of respect for the privacy of study participants, all real names are substituted with pseudonyms and, to the extent feasible, identifying personal details are omitted or altered.

“I found I can’t write at the computer,” he explains, then launches into an amusing reference to the movie *Adaptation*, in which one of Nicholas Cage’s characters flounders in front of the computer screen as he tries to write a screenplay, pondering what kind of muffin he’d like to be eating. Faced with composing his own magnum opus, Aaron confesses that his writing tends to get stuck in minutiae. “I spent nine months on that first chapter of the dissertation, obsessing over slight variations in word meaning,” but working in the study, and working with just pen and paper and his notes, are how he works best. It’s here that he mulls through the histories recorded in his notes, the ideas stored and starting in his mind, and pulls them into words with his pen.

When I think of myself as working, I’m working here, largely because there’s no noise and there’s no distractions. I find noise made by people very distracting when I’m either trying to study or trying to write. Like, I couldn’t be one of these people who goes to a Starbucks and sits there and lets the whole world see them writing on their laptop or something. I would not be one of those kinds of people because I wouldn’t be able to think enough or clear enough where I felt I’m writing something very focused. I think the thing I like about this space...is that basically there’s not enough noise that would distract me from focusing completely on what I’m writing. That’s what I like about this space.

Going to this quiet library study, with its empty walls and uncluttered surfaces and fresh sheets of unlined paper, is, for Aaron, “goin’ to work.”

I believe him. In his button-down shirt, tan chinos, and loafers, sitting in a padded swivel chair (circa 1984) and leaning back as he talks, he already resembles a college professor in his office – minus, of course, a wall of books behind him and a desk piled with papers. Here in this library study, his academic life is peeled back to its bare essentials: the scholar, the page, and the play of ideas. (Sitting across from him, my laptop open as I take notes on what he says, I appear to be playing the role of student in his classroom, taking down his words as he extemporaneously expounds, gestures, and questions.)

Easily, happily, he travels from one question in the interview to the next, often venturing into tangential excursions and new thematic directions, gesturing broadly as he expounds on his answers. His experience of libraries stretches decades – from the public library where his mother would drop him off after school, to the undergraduate library where he would read whole volumes of political papers and collected works, to the archives he has visited for his doctoral research. Lasting almost three hours, his is the longest of my interviews and, in some ways, the most complete. From the future of university presses to the economy of time, his comments integrate into a cohesive vision of libraries, sound, and scholarly life, in which the printed word, collected and housed in an accessible library building, unleashes and leads to new ideas. Indeed, much like the professors I spoke with and whose ranks he aspires to join, he locates the heart of the library in its collections, and his own heart there as well.

“I cannot imagine the day when I do not have regular access to a college library. To me, that would be almost on the level of a kind of death. The idea that you wouldn’t have access to all of these books would just be terrible to me.” Having wandered among library shelves for most of his life – from story time at the public library when he was two, to hanging out in the library in high school and reading “everything I could possibly get my hands on,” to spending his undergraduate nights and weekends browsing stacks of the college library only forty steps from his dorm building – Aaron is emphatic that academic libraries must focus on collections. For the library to retract from this primary purpose by reducing its resources or making them less available, would be to diminish its own vitality and its relevance to the university. Though the library must serve many constituencies with its limited space and resources, Aaron insists it must also allow as many resources to be available for browsing as possible and must support the fundamental collegiate experience, which is the life of the mind.

Working alone here in his modest, quiet library study, Aaron personifies the life of the mind that he espouses. For him, it is a life richly rewarding and, although often a solitary pursuit, not isolating. “There’s a difference between being alone and being lonely. If anything, when I’m working, that’s when I feel I’m most invigorated by what I’m doing.” But the younger generation, he finds, do not possess such self-sufficiency to sustain them in solitary study. Quoting a passage from Toni Morrison’s Nobel Prize lecture, he laments that today’s undergraduates do not have “the intellectual courage” to be alone with their thoughts. “Quality time by yourself is not a concept that they necessarily have or that they value.”

Quiet place of books and study

Aaron’s views, colored and spun and stretched as they were by a life lived in libraries and by the exigencies of a doctoral program, resemble those of many others I spoke with. His conceptual understanding of libraries as book-centered places for serious study, and his expectations for that physical environment – a quiet, distraction-free space where he can read, write, and work with ideas – aligns with other graduate students’ and faculty’s descriptions of what the library, minimally, must be.

Among graduate students, libraries tend to be places for quiet study with books. For instance, Lisa expects to see some semblance of books, or a way to find books, when she comes into a library. Her own history of public and academic libraries was as a place for finding and using books, whether she would just check the books out or sit down where the books were so she could use them. Nowadays, she points out, you tend to see computers first when you come into a library. The entrance to Woodruff Library, for example, with its lack of books and copious computers, has always been a little confusing, since it doesn’t

really seem like a library.⁶⁵ Still, she assumes that in a library, there are books somewhere, so she will push on through to find them. For her, a library is books and quiet, and when she comes to Woodruff, she tends to seek out quiet areas for study, usually in the stacks.

For Eleanor, another graduate student, the notion of a “library” conjures up images of books, and also of open reading areas. When I ask her what she thinks of when I say “library,” she describes the public library in her hometown, with its comfortable seating area and huge windows, where she would go to study after school. And then she describes the immense collection of books she has accessed at Woodruff Library as a doctoral student. Her understanding of libraries constellates between memories of studying in a sunlit, open space and the current access she enjoys to so many books and journals. Now defending her dissertation and living off campus, Eleanor no longer visits Woodruff Library as much as she used to and, for convenience’s sake, would gladly just have books delivered to her rather than come to campus to pull them from the shelves. Yet she insists on the importance of there being books in the library. “I know, it sounds contradictory,” she says, “but to me, a library has books. Even if I’m not going to the shelves to get my books, they should be there.”

An older student returning to academia from years in the corporate world, Bill sees himself as atypical of most college students, including those in his graduate program but especially undergraduates. For him, the library has always been a place where you do your work – “a cave where you can go in and emerge with all your work done.” His understanding of the library as a quiet place reflects his own preferences for his work environment. To Bill, the library is, first,

⁶⁵ Apparently she isn’t the only one confused by the lack of books. A librarian I spoke with encountered a student who saw the new books shelf in the Business library and assumed that that was the extent of the school’s collection.

a place of quiet where I can get my work done without being distracted. If I'm at home, there's the TV, there's everything, there's "Oh, it's a sunny day," but if I'm in the library, my favorite little cubby hole, I'm heads down and I'm working. And two, it's a source of information. Libraries are critical for what I do because there's such a vast corpus of information. It's critical. (35:1)

He chooses to study in Pitts Theology Library, a place where he can "really crank out the work" but that he suspects other people find unnervingly quiet. Attributing his preferences to his age and the greater degree of discipline and focus that graduate study demands, he speculates that for undergraduates the library is a more active and social place: more multi-tasking, more talking, more traffic, and more sound.

I'm thinking, for this generation, for these kids, that Woodruff – the main reference floor here – is gonna be the norm.... They can work through distractions, I think, better than my generation can.... When I was growing up, we had three channels and a knob. That was our option. Now, with satellite, they have 700 channels, they have Internet, they have cell phones, they have IM... They're plugged in in so many different ways. If we walked past them, if I were to talk to you a little bit...they're not distracted like we are.... They're so used to all the buzz, so many things around them.... Their sensory intake is where they're used to being bombarded with things.... So here, I think, they want the lively, they want the multiple stimuli. So I think in the future this is probably the model.... I could see entire libraries, probably before I die, just entire libraries being nothing but computer screens and reference help.

Interestingly, I spoke with undergraduates whose use of the library did seem to oscillate between working with librarians and working with computers. But they also value the library as a quiet place where they can concentrate on their work. For instance, in answer to my question, "What is a library?" Henry replies, "Definitely just a place to study pretty much. Like, a quiet place to go where you can get away from kind of a noisy area wherever you live. Even if, like, you know, you live in, like, a quieter area, just, like, the library is a place you go 'cause you know you can just sit down and study and not get distracted." Another undergraduate, Bridget, defines libraries as places for group study, but then goes on to describe her own work routine as based in quiet and solitude and to express her preference for studying at a carrel in the stacks:

Once I got more comfortable with the library, though, that's where I do my work. In the stacks. I sit at a carrel, and the way the carrel has sides and a back, it feels like my own personal space. ...And it's very convenient. It's like I have all the conveniences of home when I'm working in the library: I have my own space where I work, where it's quiet and I can concentrate and not be disturbed, but I can also take a break if I want, go get a snack or a drink, stretch my legs, call my parents, get some fresh air.

None of the undergraduates mentioned books as part of their essential understanding or use of libraries, but most noted the quiet and all described a distraction-free space, where they could concentrate and study.

Like many of the graduate students, the teaching faculty are unequivocal in how they value the library: as a place of books. When I ask Sally what she thinks of when she hears the word "library," she immediately replies, "Books." A full professor in a humanities department, she knows libraries are many more things, but for her, it always comes back to the books.

Minimally, a library must have a good access and retrieval system, which includes having the ability to browse books. Harvey, another full professor in a humanities department, also lists books first among his requirements for a library. Though he personally doesn't go to the library to read, he thinks a library should have some place where one can sit and look at the books. In his experience, Woodruff Library surpasses the libraries at small liberal arts colleges where he has taught, because of the strength of its collections and because he can go to the stacks, see what's there, and take as many books as he wants back to his office.

Ultimately, Harvey's meaning of the library rests in his access to books: the library must have books, and the experience of the library must involve the freedom to discover and collect the books one needs (and take them back to his office). Moving books out of the library into off-site storage puts him into a "panic," and his colleagues as well. "I can't stand it. ...It's fucked up. It means I can't discover anything." Storing books offsite takes away the

experience that is, to him, essential to libraries: browsing shelves and discovering books that he didn't know were there.

An associate professor in a humanities department, Peter still vividly recalls sitting in his library's reading room as an undergraduate, studying Russian verbs. The quiet room was the place he could concentrate on his mentally demanding work, free from distraction. When he went to graduate school, he again found himself working in his university library's reading room. In our interview he noted the similar qualities of that space and the Matheson Reading Room at Emory, as the focus of our conversation turned to his ideal library space.

I am very fond of the new periodical room in—I guess it's not technically in Woodruff, but you know, in Candler Library...the Matheson Reading Room. For me, that fits with one of my idealized pictures of a reading space. It's actually very similar to a periodical reading room that I used when I was a graduate student and that I've used in other libraries as well. Lots of clear space for reading, free of distraction, but surrounded by periodicals. That's one kind of space. And then the other space is the stacks: a place where you can get lost in shelves and shelves of books and find yourself in a corner that would be hard to locate. Both of those are kind of idealized spaces for me.

These two areas – the Matheson Reading Room and the stacks – match “the kind of aural environment that I want.” For Peter, “a quiet library means, you know, a chance for extended reflection that can take place over a long period of time.” When his work places particularly strong demands on his ability to focus, he needs a place to go where he knows he won't be distracted.

Refuge from other distractions

Though they may not go to the library now as much as they did during their graduate school days, the teaching faculty echo the graduate students in their pronouncement that libraries are places of quiet and books, where one goes to study and to avoid distractions. When their own graduate or undergraduate library experience defines what they expect a library to be,

the image of libraries that emerges is not simply ideal but idyllic – a respite from other places and people, distracting sights and sounds, and competing responsibilities that encroach on their ability to think and reflect.

Walking into a library is, for Sally, “relief.” If she’s in the library, it means she’s escaped her office and her administrative duties for a while, and she’s doing something that’s related to research. Her faculty library study is now crowded with books, so she often does her writing in the Matheson Reading Room, a place that reminds her of the library reading room at her graduate school. Sitting in the reading room, with just her laptop and a few hours’ time, she knows she can get some good work done. As an undergraduate, though, she chose less open areas for work, searching instead for the furthest corner of the basement of the library, where it was quiet and still.

As faculty members, both Peter and Sally appreciate having a place they can go to escape from other obligations and into their research, where they can accomplish their intellectual work. Observing that the stack tower is “a place where you can get lost in shelves and shelves of books and find yourself in a corner that would be hard to locate,” Peter touches on a recurring image of libraries as refuges. Lisa, a graduate student, finds this architectural aspect typical of libraries: along with open areas, there are always “corners, nooks and crannies where you can sit and hide, places you can seek out.” For some, these are deliberately places to avoid others.

Chelsea, an undergraduate psychology major and graduating senior, does not like studying in groups or even near others if she can avoid it. She looks for niches, like a carrel in the stack tower, where there is little noise, people, or traffic. For Sue, another undergraduate I spoke with, Matheson Reading Room is a place she goes deliberately to escape the distractions of

socializing. When friends call Sue and invite her to come to the library to study, she indirectly avoids their distracting influence by saying, “That’s great! I’ll be in the reading room.” She goes to the reading room to study “because it’s not a hang out place. If you drop a pen, everybody hears it.”

Gwen | The Pleasure of Your Company

I shift awkwardly in my seat, discomfited by the routine task of interviewing and the long protocol that I must get through. Gwen’s answers are earnest, her gaze, unflinching, and her long, deep, lively and colorful life spent in libraries, academia, and churches defies the frame of my questions. I suddenly feel ill suited to gauging her experience, and doubtful of my methods. The tape recorder and the clock on my cell phone sit on the table in front of me, mute reminders that I must leave here with answers to my questions, and, in a moment of insecurity, I question my urge to keep following tangents. If we don’t get through all these questions, will her interview count? I fret. The white noise of my research anxiety ramps up. But I pull myself back into the moment, reminding myself that discovery is part of this process. I let myself relax into the conversation and enjoy hearing and following her lead.

“You’ve danced in the library?” I smile, making sure I haven’t misunderstood.

“Yeah, I’ve danced in a library,” Gwen repeats, laughing, “It was a quiet dance.”

Such is her ease in libraries, and her bodily experience of them. Peripheral view – looking for one thing but discovering something else – is a common thread in this experience. When she’s browsing in the stacks, “It’s like there’s a neighborhood on the shelf, ... [a] tactile, sensorial, broadening, expansive experience when you go to reach for one book to pull it off the shelf and yet all these other titles pull you in and you end up spending time going through the neighborhood.” Online you have a lot more control over your search, Gwen admits, but you lose the possibilities afforded by searching the shelves on your own. “You

develop a tunnel vision when you check things online, you'll only check things that you already know." The experience of searching for information is different, richer, she insists, "when you're in a real space ... in the real world."

Every person I've spoken with so far for this study has shared a rich personal history of library experiences. None, though, struck me so much as Gwen's. When I ask her to think of a "library," she recalls every library she has ever known in her life: the public library in the town where she grew up, the county library where she wrote a novel, the New York Public Library (especially the reading room, which she visits every time she's in the city), the libraries at the universities she's attended, her elementary school library (and her favorite book on the shelf, "I can still see it there – I even tried to go back and buy that book"), and church libraries (to name just a few). She thinks of these libraries as integral parts of her personal history, snapshots of different stages of her life but also extensions of herself. The library brings out her role as nurturer, as a place where she has taken her children and where she has performed as a storyteller. Here at Emory, she has taken her own students in hand to show them how to find and check out a book.

So when Gwen starts to describe a space as "what the library *should* be," I take particular notice. That space is the Matheson Reading Room. I press her to explain.

"A library should be where students gather around tables like that in that room... and bring their laptops and bring their books and sit there and study and, you know, and talk – whisper or whatever. Do their work, you know, and be accountable to doing our work." Lamenting the ways that people are often distracted or disconnected, especially the ways in which the computer carrels in Woodruff Library block out the view of others, she wishes that Matheson could be "a real community study hall, you know? Where people actually sit down like they do – *I think*, I've seen it in the movies, anyway – at Harvard and Yale and, you

know, some of the other places where people take seriously doing their work together... People need to sit around tables like this rather than in little cubes.”

A library, Gwen believes, should be a room like Matheson, but on a grander scale: more tables and chairs, and many more students. She would love it, in fact, if Matheson were crowded; then it would be a place where she would work. Woodruff Library itself, as a library, is like the sacred space of a chapel. It is the center of the universe, and the place where the highest human ideals are pursued.

She stresses again and again the importance of social connection—the human need to be in contact with other human beings—and sees something inherently unhealthy in the graduate student lifestyle, in which much work is done in isolation and (particularly at this university and at this library) where there don’t seem to be spaces for graduate students to do their work together. The Matheson Reading Room is one place where that kind of academic, work-focused identity and camaraderie could happen, but in her experience there are never enough people in the room, and so it’s still isolating. The furniture in the library (especially the computer carrels) and in the librarian offices (the cubes) de-humanize: they shut out the faces of one’s familiars, colleagues, and classmates, cutting them off from their community.

Gwen speculates that the reason social networking sites like Facebook have taken off is because people feel isolated and are seeking out human connection. When working on her own dissertation, alone in her home late at night, Facebook became the place where she could connect with her community of others. Just seeing that her friends were online, too, at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning, made her feel less isolated, more connected with other people.

I have a virtual community in my head.... I have more friends in my head that I’ve met and communicated with on Facebook—I’m not kidding—than I have in my real life. And it’s made a huge difference. And when I see people that I’ve communicated with ... when I see them in the real world, it’s like there’s a connection now. ... [I]t’s replacing the community that I think used to be, to exist in the—at least it did when I was in elementary

school, when we sat around in the library and read together. You know? We had library time.

Transcendence and communion

From years working at Woodruff Library and with online databases, Dana, a librarian, is accustomed to thinking of libraries as virtual places. But her ideal library resembles the Matheson Reading Room, a space much like the libraries she's used in the past and the type of space she imagines when she thinks of a library. "As an undergrad," she says, "I always gravitated to the grand reading room, with the stained glass windows and the vaulted ceilings." Faculty and graduate students mentioned other grand reading rooms as exemplars of scholarly spaces and as the kind of spaces that Matheson suggests. Speaking of the reading room at Duke University, one graduate student commented that Matheson Reading Room isn't as "grandiose" but it still seems to be almost a "ceremonial" space for study. Also, Matheson is a very "soothing" place, partly because of the quiet but also because it has natural light if you're there during day and it's aesthetically pleasing. A member of the library's technology department recalled the grand reading room at his alma mater as a place where, looking up at the high painted ceiling and the arched windows, he could rise above his Calculus problems and imagine himself part of something greater. The beauty and magnificence of such traditional library spaces conspire to both impress and inspire, transporting the individual into communion with a purpose and ideals and community that existed before and will exist beyond her.

Perhaps Gwen captured this insight best in her description of the New York Public Library. She visits the library whenever she's in the city and relishes the experience of sitting in its reading room with so many other people, all together and all working. "A library *should* be a place where students gather around tables like that and bring their books and sit and study."

That type of space – a big room where people come together to seek knowledge – captures her understanding of libraries, both what is ideal and what is essential. A library is the center of the universe, she says, the sacred space of the university, and it is also what unites that community. An academic library *should* connect people with their intellectual community, giving them a space where they can see each other and do their work together. For graduate students, this type of space is especially important, she feels, because their work is often so isolating.

How to parse the elements of such a unifying and transcendent experience? Gwen insists that the room alone is not enough; for her, sitting by herself in a big room is still isolating. There must be other people, a human connection. Others echo this view. Speaking of a library in his hometown – an expansive and historical place with an immense oil painting on one end of the cavernous room, bookshelves lining the walls, and heavy wooden tables filling the center – this graduate student fixates on the people studying there. For him, the sight of people working quietly together inspires a sense of their intellectual engagement, of a shared work ethic.

There's a people-oriented silence, you know... When I say "people are working quietly" it means, it usually indicates that they're very involved with what they're doing, and, so, their silence can be inspiring in the sense that, "Oo! They're working really hard, they're really into what they're doing. They're thinking a lot of good thoughts in there. I don't know what they are, 'cause they're quiet, but—" you know, that's kind of a sign that indicates something's going on intellectually for them. And, so I think it may be related to kind of a work ethic, that these people are just very into what they're doing.

Even now, when he works in the Matheson Reading Room, the quiet sounds and sights of others working creates a sense of connection. He imagines a connection with them, a sense of his own intellectual identity reflected in their focused study. Working at a table in her undergraduate library, Karen (a librarian) remembers being amazed at "all the brains

working.” Even now, what animates her experience of libraries is the energy of the people working in it, an energy that, at least in some areas of the library, has become more audible. Even when they described Woodruff Library as a noisy place, individuals qualified that sound as still relative to other places on campus, and some went on to describe the ways that people act differently in the library. An undergraduate noted that students always take their cell phone calls outside. Social norms keep people from being too loud in the library, he explains. It’s understood that the library is for work. A graduate student went further, describing library users’ behavior more in terms of reverence. As soon as students enter the library, she says, their posture and their movement shift. “It’s different, I’ve noticed that. Everything about their existence shifts to respecting the space.”

Such respect, she claims, is connected to the nature of the library, a place where academics pursue the highest ideals of the university. For some, the reverence connected to library spaces is tied up in the artifacts it houses and the silence that surrounds them. Having spent much time working in Woodruff Library’s stack tower – in study carrels, in a locked study, and in the special collections room – Thérèse, a humanities faculty member, recalls the eerie quiet as both a factor of being in such a secluded place and also part of the haunted aura of libraries. With its relics of past lives, from the books on the shelves to the papers in the archives, the library is “a whole combination of spookiness and eeriness and hauntedness and quiet and old.”

There’s such history and heaviness...or when you’re in the archives and you’re reading dead people’s papers.... There’s such body to it, it’s living, even though it’s a relic of the past.... It’s the relics of the past in the Special Collections, the kind of sacredness of the past. But I guess it’s the quiet. You know, to make any kind of noise, to do any kind of crazy action, you know, disrupts the sacred. It’s profane. It’s vulgar. It disrupts that holiness.

Whether visually present in the space of the reading room, or awaiting reanimation as books and artifacts in the stack tower, the people with whom we share our intellectual identity form an experience of libraries as spiritual, communal, and transcendent.

Fran | Where the People Are

It's a Friday afternoon in early April, and Fran and I have settled into some padded chairs in Jazzman's, a wall between us and the café area. This late in the day on the last day of the week, traffic and noise are light; occasional revs from the blender or whooshes of the cappuccino machine aside, the coffee shop is tranquil and for the most part empty. At the end of a long week myself, I find myself relaxing with a sip of my coffee and thankful we didn't decide to hole ourselves away in a conference room. I had some difficulty actually locating Fran's office amid the maze of librarian cubicles known as the Cube Farm and ended up asking someone for directions. After that expanse of gray sameness and artificial lighting, I bask in Jazzman's bold colors, natural light, and open space. Fran and I chitchat for a little while about the latest library news, then I start the tape recorder and ask her what she thinks of when I say "library."

As a librarian, Fran experiences libraries both personally and professionally, and her answers oscillate between these perspectives. Her first thought is of a place to do research. But she doesn't connect this activity to a specific place. Rather, she points out the fact that, because so much information is online, research today is detached from the physical, and then goes on to acknowledge the challenge this poses to librarians. Often users are doing their research in places or at times that are far removed from the Woodruff Library reference desk.

Fran goes on to describe a refined conception of librarians' work, which seems to exist separate from any particular location and which posits librarians as both research assistants and instructors. When I point out that even this description of her work seems detached

from a physical library, she shifts her argument, countering that there are many aspects of academic work that benefit from one-on-one interaction. In other words, though the physical may *seem* irrelevant to the research process, interpersonal contact is critical to reference assistance and instruction, in the view of many librarians. “It’s a lot more effective” when you’re able to sit next to someone and point to a computer screen, showing and telling them how to pursue their research. Even though you may not even leave the reference desk and everything is on the computer. For her, it’s very important to be able to point to the computer screen and call attention to important elements (e.g., call number) and to talk to the individual. The more Fran talks, the more she distills the essential elements of libraries into two things: the *computer* (where the information is) and the *librarian* (the human who helps you find it).

Listening to Fran assert her place in the library and implicitly defend the nature of her work to an absent administrator, I feel a twinge of the stress and frustration shared by many of my colleagues. Only a few days ago, I’d picked up on the latest gripe during a passing conversation in one of the Cube Farm hallways. Reference librarians had been told to limit their time at the main information desk, since the sight of librarians just sitting, apparently idly, sent the wrong message to users about the work of librarians. The person speaking paused, letting that information sink in, then challenged, “So what kind of message does it send when there are *no* librarians on the desk at all?” Beneath Fran’s insistence on the place of librarians in the library, I hear not just my own conviction of their critical role but also urgency that their presence be recognized and valued.

We move on to a discussion of what’s typical in library spaces today. After some hesitation and false starts, Fran directs my attention to the view in front of us: beyond the glass walls of Jazzman’s we see the study area of the first floor, with its large wooden tables and students studying in groups. This place is intended to be a “collaborative area” where, she points out,

students are “interacting with one another.” There’s a lot more social networking and multi-tasking among today’s students, Fran explains, and libraries have responded to that in the design of their spaces. When she was in library school, there were no group study areas and the library was expected to be a quiet place. But pedagogy changed. She noticed her daughter doing group work in elementary school, and a tendency among her teachers to have students work together rather than work alone. Libraries caught on to this new way of working, she says, and library spaces were redesigned to support this activity.

Computers, librarians, and people

Librarians and undergraduates seemed to read from the same page when it came to defining libraries. Librarians were, not surprisingly, nuanced in their description of libraries, capturing the many ways libraries appeal to different stakeholders and the challenges of meeting those varied ideals and demands. Yet their descriptions placed certain elements of libraries in greater prominence: the computers, through which the “virtual library” and its vast resources are accessed; the librarians, who ensure that these resources are not simply available and accessible but also understandable; and the library user, for whom the library serves.

When I asked Karen (a librarian) to tell what she thinks of when I say “library,” her immediate image was of a bright space, with people and motion. As we talked about it and fleshed out the details, she saw in that initial image much of what she sees and experiences at the library’s Reference desk: the traffic of people and their “energy,” and the computers everywhere. Described by Fran as “Grand Central Station,” the Reference desk area (and the library) described by Karen is likewise busy and crowded, as people get to where they need to go.

Undergraduates spoke of the library as a place to work, where they and other students come to study and to do research. Though some described their workspace as barren – just a book, or some practice problems – and others gestured towards the multiple objects on their crowded desks or dual computer monitors, they all saw that space as shared with other people, for good or bad. Additionally, some explicitly named the librarians as key components of that space, as individuals who were pivotal in their own academic education. Jake, for instance, an undergraduate senior, wouldn't miss the books if they weren't there, but he often misses the librarians when he's working overnight at the library and needs some assistance. Lisa, a graduate student, would find it odd for there not to be librarians, or, as she puts it, some "authority" in the library.

Though some undergraduates, like Chelsea and Bridget, described their ideal work environment as some place barren and secluded, in a carrel or in the stacks, others I spoke with described their workspace and their use of the library in terms of the computers. Jake praised the double monitors, which provide more space for seeing online documents. Felice, a sophomore, also spoke of the computer as a place for spreading stuff out, to "own" her space. It's hard to get a computer, she said, so when you get one, you make sure it's clear you're there. If she goes to dinner for an hour, she'll leave everything there to hold her space. Even though she knows that she'd be annoyed if she needed a computer and someone had done that, she thinks she has to do it to save her workspace. After all, she's been there for five hours, she needs to protect her space. If someone needs a computer, she may tell them they can use it while she's gone, but she'll leave her stuff there and reclaim it when she gets back.

Jake is waiting for me in the lounge area of Jazzman's, a sandwich and salad on the table in front of him, a bottle of water on the floor near his feet. "I hope you don't mind if I eat lunch while we talk?" he says.

A senior now and a long-time Woodruff Library user, Jake was initially reluctant to use the library as his place to study: the library at Emory is a social place, he says, and he assumed he wouldn't be able to get work done there, since friends stopping by to chat is very distracting to him. But ever since his library orientation for a Psychology class, when the librarian instructor pointed the way to resources he's been using ever since, he's been a regular library user.

I'm impressed at his knowledge of the library, in fact, particularly his attention to its schedules. He rattles off a list of when different parts of the library close (stacks close at 1 AM, Circulation desk closes at midnight, Jazzman's closes at 2 AM during finals). These times figure into use of space and management of work: calling ahead to the campus escort service, checking the current wait time for an escort; timing when to get dinner and get back to library; collecting books and getting them to Circulation desk before they close.

Talking about the inconvenience of Jazzman's limited hours, he diverges into a discussion of the night life of undergraduates and the influences on how they manage their time: when eateries close, the absence of shuttle service in front of the library and the reliance on escort services late at night, his own occasional all-nighters in the library when he's working under a deadline. The lull in activity between 1:00 and 7:00 a.m. is when he gets his best work done.

Speaking of his own preferred work environment, he says noise doesn't really bother him, and that he works better with a little foot traffic. Part of his work process is to get up every now and then, walking from one end of the building to the other (from his computer to the

bathroom). “I need breaks when I work.” What helps him get his work done in the morning is more the deadline, not the environment.

For his own research he tries to get everything online, rather than rely on print sources. He doesn't just describe this in terms of convenience, however, but also in terms of Emory's own status as an institution that is cutting-edge when it comes to technology, that this is a point of pride.

What does Woodruff library need to do to meet the needs of library users? Jake says it needs to serve the 24/7 needs of the younger population of users. It doesn't need to be quiet or noisy, just recognize the various needs of users and meet those, which, he adds, it does. “It has something for everybody.” Minimally, though, he says the library needs workspace and it needs reference librarians.

Jake has no problem with the prospect of a library without books. The only books he uses regularly are textbooks, but even then, some of his instructors don't use texts: all the readings are online. Also, his workspace is digital: when he's working, he wants to be able to put all his documents in the same space (and ideally, on the double-screen monitors, which give him more room to layout and keep in his visual field all the projects he's working on).

Presented with the notion of Cox computing center as a library (“What would it take to make this computing lab a library, since it already embodies most of the functions of the library for you?”), he suggests having a reference librarian and longer hours. Cox closes at 7:00 PM. In other words, the value of Cox is in its accessibility... “Unless you don't know what you're doing. Then you need a reference librarian.” He muses on how great it would be to have access to reference librarians at night (overnight, when he's working towards a deadline), something along the lines of Interlibrary Loan but with librarians who are still

working, say, on the West Coast. But he also notes that the librarian-produced reference guides designed for specific courses are great resources in the absence of librarians.

SOUNDS AND SPACES

I asked interviewees to imagine themselves walking into a noisy library and a quiet library and to describe what they saw, how they felt, what they were doing or not doing; in short, to describe what the noisy library and the quiet library mean to them. For almost all of the individuals I spoke with, the quiet library was understood in a positive and traditional way. Almost all interviewees connected quiet positively to their ability to work, concentrate, and be productive, as well as to a feeling of transcendence (e.g., relief, serenity, escape). Despite popular views to the contrary, all the undergraduates I interviewed expressed a desire to work in areas that were relatively quiet. Though they were much more likely to work in groups than graduate students or teaching faculty, undergraduates' academic work typically involved writing, studying, or researching on their own.

Very few of the individuals I spoke with regularly use the library for working with others, but they readily accept the library's role in supporting group work and the noise that this inevitably creates. The concept of a noisy library prompted thoughts of community (especially public libraries), activity and socializing, people (especially children), and play. To the extent that a sound might be tied to an accepted role of the library (e.g., education, or even recruitment), that sound in the library was accepted as legitimate, even if it was disturbing. When a sound could not be directly connected to a legitimate role, it was perceived as inappropriate – depending, of course, on *where* it occurred.

It's just after twelve o'clock on a late March day and I'm sitting at a table in Jazzman's with Henry, an undergraduate at Emory who's in his junior year. A mathematics and biology double major, he often uses the library as a place to study for exams and work through practice problems. As we talk about life in the fraternity house where he lives and how he organizes his day, the lunch crowd picks up. A line forms in front of the humming cooler of milk and juice drinks, sandwiches, salads, and yogurt, and people chat with each other as they wait their turn at the register. Cashiers call out orders and count out change, while behind the counter the cappuccino machine and the blender squeal and grind with each drink request. Somewhere underneath the chatter and buzz, a horn player and percussionist play a duet on the café's sound system.

Henry tells me about how noisy it is where he lives. People are always stopping by to talk, so it's hard to study in his room. Plus, there's always noise somewhere in the frat house. One night he couldn't fall asleep because there was music coming from somewhere. He finally got up to find it and shut it off, and discovered it was coming from the recreation room in the basement: the house stereo was turned on at full volume, and no one was in the room. Accustomed to dealing with disruptions and distractions at home, Henry comes to the library to get his work done. Needless to say, he prefers the library to be quiet.

"I like it when I walk in and it's quiet. When I walk in and there are tons of people here and it's loud" – he rolls his eyes – "it's like, 'Agh! Why did I come?'" The noise level in Jazzman's is rising, and I'm starting to have a little trouble hearing. Leaning forward and raising my voice a little, I ask Henry how it feels when he walks into a quiet library. "It's a relief," he says. "It's like, I can actually come here and study.... If it's loud, I would never sit on the first or second floor. If it's quiet, I just sit wherever I find a desk."

Feeling self-conscious about the noise in Jazzman's and Henry's expressed preference for quiet, I ask him if he'd rather relocate to a quieter spot. He smiles and, laughing, assures me

this is fine, he can hear just fine. Still, I lean over the table a bit. We are in a corner, shielded on two sides by the wall, which helps limit the noise, but the traffic flows into the queue in front of us and the blended drink orders persist. In a few minutes, though, the rush is over and the general sound level drops back down. I can hear the cooler humming again. On the other side of the room, the fan in the Coke machine quietly kicks on.

Machine City

Woodruff Library hums. On slow days, early in the morning, or between semesters, the library may be quiet but it is never silent. Fitted with such vital organs as artificial lighting, air conditioning, and plumbing, sound pulses through it. Besides the standard machinery that keeps a building functioning, elevators ding their arrival at a floor and thrum to their destination, security gates beep-beep-beep warnings when someone is exiting with sensitized materials, turnstiles clank mechanically as another person enters, and photocopiers repetitiously whir and throb, whir and throb, whir and throb. In the Commons, printers wind up, their pitch rising and falling as each sheet of paper rolls out; even after the last page has settled onto the stack, the pitch hangs, expectant, waiting several seconds before releasing, sighing, back into the printer's low drone. Electric pencil sharpeners and staplers buzz and clunk. Quietly but distinctly, keyboards register finger strokes – short bursts of staccato clicks.

These are the keynotes in the Commons soundscape, the predictable aural texture that has come to signify this space in the campus library. Such sounds blend into the background, barely registering to the inattentive mind and frequently indistinguishable underneath the conversations that rise above them. Excepting, of course, the more persistent sounds of the building's infrastructure, these sounds serve as a subtle reminder of the presence of other library users. Changes in their pattern may disrupt one's concentration (for example, a

printer's hour-long silence suddenly interrupted by the high-pitched start of a print job, or, conversely, an excessively long print job signaled when the expected end-of-printing pitch drop never arrives). Sometimes one looks away momentarily from a computer screen or a book, to see who is standing by the printer. For the most part, though, these mechanical, aural remnants of human activity slip into the background, serving as subconscious reminders of other people going about their work in the library. For most people, these sounds are predictable, to the point of being inaudible. And as sounds of people *working*, they are acceptable. Such sounds, typically, are not "noise."

Woodruff Library is not unlike other campus libraries in this respect. Scanners, security gates, computer keyboards, photocopying machines and printers, elevators – these are all common features of a university library, and they all add to the overall sound. But they are elements of the soundscape that many users tune out. Alone, they don't necessarily make a building "noisy." But according to the library users I spoke with, and according to its own annual surveys as well, Woodruff Library is a noisy place.

Many were quick to point out that there are both quiet and noisy areas in the library, and that this variety is part of what makes Woodruff such a good library, maybe even an ideal one. One can expect the stacks and the Matheson Reading Room to be quiet, for example, and one can feel comfortable talking on the first floor. Sound varies over time, too, and depending on where one is during the day, the week, or the semester, the relative noise or quiet of certain areas can vary considerably. Nevertheless, there is a perception of Woodruff Library as a noisy place, noisier than other academic libraries and noisier than other libraries in both librarians' and library users' experience. What makes Woodruff noisy, though, is not so much the volume of sound, but a certain type of sound: the sound of *people*, arriving and

leaving, clustered around and moving among computers, going about their work, passing through the hallway, and talking all the while.

Placing the Jazzman's café on the first floor was, for the library, a convenient decision. Not only did it make the coffee shop more easily accessible from the main entrance, but it also located this potentially noisy establishment in an already noisy location. Students had been congregating on the first floor, working in groups and socializing. The quiet reading area by the first-floor windows never quite lived up to its designation. By adding this café with its bistro tables and lounge, the library both authorized and encouraged a use of the first floor that was already occurring – in essence, legitimating an existing practice. Librarians and library users alike now point to Jazzman's and the first floor as the place where it is completely appropriate to talk, and where, in fact, talk in the library *should* take place.

Their acceptance of talking in the coffee shop and on the first floor of the library building may also be cultural: an organizational tendency to locate common and humble objects, activities, or persons in the lower regions of a building, while placing those of greatest value at the top.⁶⁶ This was true in the past library experiences of at least two of the people I spoke with, for whom the basement of their college library was the one place where they could go to talk. A librarian remembered her undergraduate library as a place where the quiet was policed. The only place you could talk was in the basement, where there were couches and

⁶⁶ This is almost too commonplace in American culture to warrant comment, but it is worth remarking upon when considering why the first floor became a noisy area, despite the library's earlier efforts to mark it as quiet. In apartment buildings, for instance, the most expensive residences are located in penthouses, while the laundry room is often located in the basement. Among academic buildings, administrative offices are located in the upper floors. In Woodruff Library, the special collections library is located on the top floor of the stack tower. Of course, there are exceptions to this seeming metaphorical rule of locating objects, activities, and persons of highest value in the top of a building. As but one example, the top floor of the U. S. Supreme Court building contains a gym, which includes a basketball court. (Then again, perhaps this suggests a rather high valuation of play and competition in American legal culture?)

snack machines. At Yale University's underground Cross Campus Library, one faculty member recalled, the basement vending area, popularly (and even officially) referred to as "Machine City," was an unpretentious oasis where one could take a break from studying, relax and talk. Though a professed lover of quiet, out-of-the-way study spaces, this person saw Machine City as a much-needed respite from the focused, isolating aspects of working in the library, a place virtuous in its mundanity. "Every library should have a place like that."⁶⁷

While Woodruff Library's Level 1 bears no resemblance to the "dimly lit" and "greasy" Machine City (Carp, 1997; Branch, 2008), it tends toward the same function: an informal space for group study, meeting, and open socializing. In Jazzman's, students take a break from studying to relax and refuel, and faculty and librarians meet others for coffee or lunch. Here is the sanctioned space for eating and casual conversation. Especially at night, the floor is crowded, the talking, constant, and the noise level, high. As some undergraduates put it, "If you go to the first floor to study, you know what you're getting into," "On the first floor, it's like a market at night," and "Down here [first floor], you can do whatever you want."

Everyone names the first floor as the noisy area of the library – a label it retains despite the fact that, at many other times during the day, people work here alone and quietly. Harvey, a humanities professor, points out this anomaly to me, as he explains the library's rules about noise and his own atypical relationship to quiet. "When I'm in the library, I'm actually talking to people. I'm behaving badly, and I understand that I'm behaving badly." Talking in the library is bad, he says, except in the Jazzman's cafe. Even in those places where the computers are, "People give you a look if you're talking to somebody. Or I think they are. Maybe I'm paranoid," he laughs. Harvey has an expectation that he shouldn't be talking in

⁶⁷ A postscript to the Machine City story: in 2006 a Yale alumnus donated \$1 million to the library, which was used to construct a reading room bearing his name in the space formerly occupied by Machine City.

the library, except in Jazzman's. "This is where you should talk." And yet, every time he goes to Jazzman's, he sees somebody there alone, working on a laptop. He finds it odd that people work in Jazzman's by themselves, and they don't have coffee, either. "Maybe the quiet drives them crazy, too."

Disturbing Quiet

If the first floor is widely pronounced "noisy," the Matheson Reading Room is equally understood as "quiet." With its chandeliers and cathedral windows, wooden tables and bookcases, and marble floor, it represents the iconic library in appearance as well as sound. The aural atmosphere in this room is tangible – "almost oppressive" (faculty member) but capable of being broken (graduate student) – and affective – "soothing" (graduate student) and protective (undergraduate students). Designed to be a "boomy place" (Parvin, 2004), it reverberates when someone enters or leaves, scoots a chair, sneezes or coughs.

Everyone's hypersensitive to the noise in Matheson, says Thérèse, a visiting assistant professor, and you feel so self-conscious about any noise you make. Aaron, a graduate student, who worked there while in coursework, said that if his shoes were squeaking, he would take as large a stride as he possibly could. "Any kind of noise becomes magnified," he said, and you get these very angry looks from people. You feel like "you're breaking the silence of that space." Henry, an undergraduate, told me about a time he walked out of the room when he had to cough. Admitting that probably no one would have said anything if he coughed in the room, he did it because he felt so self-conscious about the quiet.

Henry went on to explain how the room and ruptures in its quiet have a disciplining effect, apart from and more effective than any official attempts to dictate how people should behave.

There's more personal accountability when you can hear your own voice going through the whole, you know, the whole room. And then it's just, like, you know that's you. Whereas if you're talking loudly out here [in the Commons], it's like, you know, you just blend in with everything else. You kind of stick out and everything when you do that [in Matheson], and I think that's probably one of the reasons it stays so quiet: it's because, you know, it has that echo and, like, you know, everyone knows it's you.... I don't think the signs play a role. I mean, like, [laughs] I don't think anybody cares.... I think the reading room is kind of – people aren't loud because they *can't* be loud or else they really stick out. And then you're the asshole that's really being loud. But yeah, I don't think people really pay attention to the signs.

The reverberations in Matheson, it seems, are panauralism at work, promoting self-discipline by reminding people of their presence, simultaneously emphasizing one's self and the proximity of many other selves. The open space of the reading room amplifies this effect, making the audible distraction visible as well.

These are effects lost in the stacks, an area of the library also widely regarded as quiet study space. Here, where three-sided study carrels along the wall all face the same direction and the windows in locked-study doors are often covered, you could be working with many others without seeing or hearing them. Though the aural environment never ventures into absolute silence (elevators ding, on some floors the movable shelving motors whirr, and the lights always hum slightly), the quiet in the stacks is more static. Where the reading room echoes with the sound of people actively studying, the stack floors are muffled and still, the population of silent books vastly outnumbering and cloaking the few people who walk or work there.

One librarian told me that when she takes undergraduates on a tour of the library, the students regularly refer to the study areas in the stack tower as “Creepy! Creepy!” Younger students prefer to be down in the Commons, she explained, “in these wide, these open – I think they think of them as inviting – spaces where there are a lot of people and a lot of activity and a lot of computers.... They don't like to be off in a secluded, quiet space like

that.” Even so, I spoke with undergraduates as well as graduates for whom the stack tower is the place where they prefer to work, a place where they intentionally go for its cloistered quiet. Undergraduate Chelsea says she seeks out quiet and closed off study areas, with little foot traffic, and finds the perfect study environment in the stacks. She even seems somewhat apologetic for her preference, as though there is something wrong in wanting to work alone.

In my personal perfect library, it’s quiet. There are individuals. It’s kind of like the stacks because it’s all isolating and not very positive in that regard. So there’s not really laughing and talking and this and that but it’s a quiet, kind of sterile environment. Doesn’t sound very good, but, I mean, to do work, it’s conducive to that, it’s helpful.

Lisa, a graduate student, regularly studied in the stacks because she knew she could count on quiet there, a place with minimal noise and visual distractions so that she could concentrate. She mentions this as one of the few places in the library where you know it will be quiet, in contrast to other places (like Level 3 in the Commons area, where, she says, it is often noisy despite signs designating it a quiet area). Even so, Lisa says she sometimes uses earplugs in the stacks, just to make it extra quiet. She’s not alone in this habit; aside from my own observation of earplugs at a student’s desk while passing along an aisle of stack carrels, I talked to Bridget, an undergraduate, who admitted to using earplugs in the stacks as well.

In the separate, secluded, and sequestered space of the stacks, one can expect quiet and escape recognition. Though some might describe it as creepy, and though it does have a haunted feeling (the many voices in the books on the shelves, the people who wrote them, and the unseen and unheard people who are up there with you, working in their studies or carrels), the stack tower is, for some, a reliably quiet place for focusing on their work.

Uncomfortable with the openness of the reading room and wanting to avoid social interactions, they tuck themselves away among the bookshelves, far from distraction. Seeing

no one, and not being seen, are key to this area's appeal, but that same invisibility, especially in locked studies, can contribute to a false sense of privacy.

Graduate and undergraduate students alike described study carrels in their ideal work environments. One undergraduate sits at a carrel to work through his math problems; another writes papers; another spreads out her things to create her own personal space. All speak appreciatively of the way the carrel shuts out visible movement, creating a private space in which they can work. Marking off the carrel space with his hands, a theology grad student talks about how, in his regular spot in Pitts Theology Library, "I'm heads down and I'm working." Another graduate student muses that she'd like a carrel where the open end faces the wall, so that she can feel even more secluded. Bridget, an undergraduate, said she feels at home working in the stacks, where the study carrel contributes to a sense of privacy.

I sit at a carrel, and the way the carrel has sides and a back, it feels like my own personal space. I can spread my stuff out. If I'm taking a break from studying, I just leave all my stuff there [computer, iPod, credit cards]. I feel very safe, I'm not worried. And it's very convenient. It's like I have all the conveniences of home when I'm working in the library: I have my own space where I work, where it's quiet and I can concentrate and not be disturbed, but I can also take a break if I want, go get a snack or a drink, stretch my legs, call my parents, get some fresh air.

Open Walls

The beauty of the library carrel is how it allows one to be visually alone while still aurally connected to others. Hearing I was studying sound in libraries, one Emory professor readily shared with me his own bygone days of working in the library, as an undergraduate at a male college that shared a library with an all-female college. "All the guys would be sitting at these library carrels, working, when a group of women would come in. You could hear them come in by the click-click-click of their heels on the hard floor. Almost immediately, the guys would all pop their heads over the edge of the carrel to look." Yet another Emory professor volunteered a story of his own bygone days at the all-male Yale College, which shared

Sterling Library with co-educational Yale University. “Although I’m somewhat embarrassed to admit it,” he confessed, the ability to hear women coming in was a valued quality of the library’s reading room. “There were a few women graduate students who were regulars there who became unwitting celebrities among my classmates.”

The easily permeated barrier of the carrel, though, is beastly as well. The sense of separation from others is an optical illusion, and one that some believe contributes to a diminished awareness of other users and their need for quiet. Describing the open tables in her undergraduate library, Sally wondered aloud if computing carrels weren’t partly to blame for noise in the Commons area of the library.

Group study rooms, located along the perimeter of each floor of the Commons, provide an alternative sense of separation. With tall glass windows along one wall, the rooms maintain visual contact with the rest of the floor while sealing out sound. There are only a handful of these rooms in the Commons, and later in the semester, they tend to be in higher demand. Sign-up sheets outside the door set limits on the room’s use: a minimum of three or more occupants, for no more than three hours at a time. These proscriptions aside, the rooms often serve as soundproof havens for solo studiers, as I often observed. One undergraduate student even suggested we go to a group study room for our interview, and recommended one on Commons Level 4, which, she supposed, wasn’t likely to be occupied since the whole floor is usually pretty quiet.

Graduate students fortunate enough to be assigned one of the few locked study rooms enjoy an even greater sense of privacy, as the walls and door separate them from others, physically and visibly (though not always audibly). Some may furnish the room to resemble a home

away from home (down to a rug and teapot, for one graduate student), others may keep the space stark, like Aaron, further minimizing distractions. The effect is still one of seclusion.

Behind a wooden door, surrounded by cinder-block walls, people who work in library studies may unconsciously assume such spaces are soundproof. On most occasions, these spaces *are* quiet, especially when compared with other supposedly quiet places, in the library and elsewhere. But sound travels through the walls and anyone sitting nearby or in the next study can easily hear a conversation carried on in normal voice. During our interview in his library study, Aaron ranted about the many public places that used to be quiet but now are noisy – movie theaters, for example, where people carry on conversations or talk on their cell phones, or museums, where people shout comments to each other over their audio-tour headsets. “It’s very frustrating,” he said, that he can no longer expect quiet in these places. “But I can expect it here.” Such was the completeness of the library study illusion that we comfortably carried on our own conversation in his library study, in normal speaking voices, with no sense of irony.

ORDER OF THE LIBRARY

Posters, pamphlets, orientation tours, and one-on-one interactions with librarians are just a few of the ways the library communicates its policies to users. At the entrance to the Matheson Reading Room, for example, and inside it as well, signs clearly state the prohibitions against cell phone use and food consumption in this quiet space. Posters on the doors to Jazzman’s remind that food and drink should stay in the café. At the main entrance, guards at the security desk will stop someone coming in with food or with drink in unapproved containers.

At least, that's the official way these rules are communicated and enforced. Unofficially, open containers of yogurt, half-eaten apples, bags of chips, and other snacks at computing stations send a different, and in some respects more convincing, message of what is acceptable or unacceptable in Woodruff Library. Librarians and patrons alike actively negotiate their expectations for library spaces, shuffling through their past library experiences, the regulations and policies for this specific library, and the daily examples of which behaviors are condoned, which are sanctioned. What rules, explicit or unwritten, guide behavior in Woodruff Library or in any library? I pushed interviewees to articulate exactly what sounds and behaviors were appropriate, and what their expectations were of themselves, other library users, and library spaces. Their answers revealed not just their own perspective on how people *should* and do behave in Woodruff Library and what sounds and activities are acceptable, but also assumptions about *who* this library is actually serving.

A Lively Library

Almost invariably, acceptable sound in a library is connected to doing work. Talking when it occurs within a study group or with a project partner, for instance, falls within the domain of permissible behavior. Everyone, in fact, made accommodations for talking in the library, to varying degrees, always acknowledging people's differing needs for noise in doing their work.

As Dana, a librarian, explains, noise in a library is appropriate because people make noise as they do their work. Librarians were unanimous in their assertions that some noise in the library was appropriate, especially in contrast to the quiet of no one using the library.

Librarians also insisted that the library should accommodate both quiet and noise, but in some of their comments the balance tipped slightly in favor of noise. For some areas of the Commons (namely, the Business library, the reference desk, and the first floor), librarians

characterized the sound of people talking as stimulating and positive. Said Karen, “I like to see the energy” of a busy library, and she went on to describe the flow of people through the reference area. She even likes to hear the sound of “kids” getting off and on the elevator, heading to and from classes in the stack tower. Asked whether the library should be quieter than other places on campus, Karen wavers between an initial reaction that the library should be a quiet place and her own understanding of the vital connections between sound, learning, and libraries.

That’s kind of a hard question to answer. I’m not sure. Part of me says, “Yeah it should be just a little bit quieter here, even in the noisy places.... Then when I think about it, I think, “Why?” There’s no reason. If you want people working and active, why would it make any difference? It shouldn’t. I think that’s just something left over from my being older, and remembering when there were few places you were allowed to be noisy in libraries.

For Karen as well as for other librarians at Woodruff, the desire to have “people working and active” in the library coincides with a distinct valuation of noise as by-product of people’s productivity and thus a sign of a healthy library. Asked about the meaning of a quiet library, Ruth qualified that she would prefer a quiet library to be a place like Matheson, where there are people working quietly, rather than a quiet that comes from no one being there. When I asked her what it would mean to her if she walked into a quiet library, Fran responded, “I think my immediate reaction would be, ‘Gosh, this place doesn’t get used very much,’” then proceeded to link sound in libraries with younger users and learning.

When I worked at [another academic library], that library was not used nearly to the extent that this one is. To me, the fact that we’ve got all these kids in here—See, I use the word “kids” because that’s the way I think of them—is a sign that, for whatever reason, they find this space useful and they’re using it. So maybe that’s another reason leading into why I’d be reluctant to shut them down: because they obviously find the place comfortable or valuable or whatever and I don’t want to discourage them from using it.... I have to make a distinction between my personal needs, you know, when I’m trying to study or something, and how I react when I walk into—Like, when I hear the phrase “noisy library,” I immediately go to “public library,” even though that’s not necessarily true. But, when I walk into my public library and there’s little kids running around, little kids talking and carrying on, it’s

normal to me, it's like "Oh, yeah, they're using this space. They're interacting with it, and they're learning maybe." It doesn't turn me off. I think of that as a good thing, I guess. So there's this sort of dichotomy in me between, well, sometimes I really need peace and quiet but I don't necessarily expect a whole library to be—I don't think it's necessarily a positive thing if I walk in and the place is like a tomb.

Thinking about the difference between walking into a noisy library versus a quiet one, faculty drew similar inferences. Said Reese, an assistant humanities professor, "There's something good about entering a library that they're talking, running up and down and getting books...versus entering a mausoleum." He went on to mention museums as places that are quiet and ominous, and that he doesn't think a library should be like that. If he walked into a very quiet library, "I'd think that people here take themselves really seriously." Sally also understands the sound of a library as a reflection of its character, and while self-deprecating of her own desire for quiet in a library, she stresses that quiet communicates something essential about the role of the library. "A library doesn't have to be completely quiet but both should be accessible and valued when you walk in. A drum-tight library wouldn't be the kind of teaching-learning center you want it to be these days, but on the other side of the spectrum, you don't want it to appear un-serious."

Depending on where one is in the library, different sounds may be acceptable. Talking at a normal level is acceptable in the Commons, but not acceptable in the Matheson Reading Room. Whispering, on the other hand, is expected if one is talking in the reading room, but not necessary in Jazzman's. Some sounds, though, are questionable regardless of where they occur. Snoring is clearly inappropriate, and, according to Lisa, something one hears a lot in the stacks and the reading room. She woke someone up one time because it was "really loud," it was making her laugh and she was having a hard time reading. Laughing and casual conversations, on the other hand, fall into a gray area, as sounds that aren't appropriate necessarily, but aren't clearly deserving of censure, either. For instance, Lisa listed laughing

among noises inappropriate in the library. But she also talked about her regular conversations with the security guards at the entrance. Sometimes they'll laugh, she said, and usually they'll all talk at a normal level, without lowering their voices.

Even when sound is appropriate in the library, such as the sound of people talking as they do their group work, it can build into distracting noise. Sue, a sophomore, would prefer students to do their group studying in the group study rooms. She understands that they need to speak up to do their work, but in the open space of the Commons they're competing with other people making noise talking about their own projects. Whether elevated sound levels are attributable simply to talk about work is debatable, since (as undergraduates and librarians both point out) work talk slips easily into socializing. On occasion, the security personnel use the intercom to ask library users to talk more quietly. Among the people I interviewed, responses to this ranged from amusement to confusion. Describing someone getting on the loudspeaker and telling people to be quiet, Henry rolls his eyes. "I mean, come on."

Basically, it's kind of, like, unspoken, but like, you know, exactly, the guy comes on the loudspeaker, it gets quiet for five minutes and then it gets loud again.... It's just they don't really notice it. It's not like they're trying to be mean or disrespectful, it's just, you know, the group – group way of working. They don't notice it. They get loud. And that's what happens.

You just can't control the crowd, he says.

Aaron | Gaming the Library

I'm talking with Aaron, a doctoral student, about the many libraries he's visited in his life, and the dozens he's visited just as part of his dissertation research. "Now here's something you'd be interested in," he says. "I walk into Hill Library at North Carolina State University, and just inside the entrance, there are video games."

He certainly knows his audience. I gasp. “You’re kidding!”

“I kid you not. There were students playing Nintendo Wii in the library. Now, is Wii appropriate for an academic library? I don’t think so.”

His example serves as the illustrative capstone for our extended conversation about the growing noisiness of libraries (and society in general, in his view) and libraries’ readiness to do whatever it takes to get people in the door. “Come for the social life, stay for the books,” Aaron quips. Readily admitting libraries’ desire (in some cases, need) to appeal to younger users, he is nevertheless critical of libraries openly supporting such recreational activities, to the endangerment of their core mission and of what makes them a library. “That’s the line. When you just give yourself over so blatantly to the social aspect of campus life, then, yeah, that’s where, I think, that’s the line.” University libraries have become social areas by default, but it’s a question of students gathering there and talking on their own versus *trying* to get students to come to the library to do these other, less academic things. There are all sorts of other places for students to go to be social, he observes. Why does the library have to do that?

Something for Everyone

Curious what concessions people were willing to make for less academic activities, I pushed later interviewees’ on the appropriate role and sound of the library, offering Aaron’s anecdote as a provocative example. “Suppose you walk into the library and there are video games?” or “Suppose someone sitting next to you in the library is playing a video game?” Their answers pushed play and the sound of play to the edge of legitimacy and over, or at least into the basement.

Bill, an older graduate student who hedges that his views may be atypical, says games in the entrance of Woodruff Library would cross the line. If they *were* in the library, though, he'd put those sorts of things on the first floor. He also conjectures that younger students might be okay with play going on around them while they're trying to work.

At least one undergraduate vigorously rejected the appropriateness of video games in the library, at least at first. "That's really blurring the line between the main purpose of the library. I think – even at a place like Emory's library – I think the main purpose is to do work and to get stuff done. It can have that secondary purpose as a social place for some... but I think that that does cross the line." Even so, this undergraduate said he wouldn't be opposed to have a gaming area in the library ("It would certainly boost foot traffic"), but only if it were set to a volume that wouldn't interfere with anybody.

Felice, another undergraduate, said she would be okay with video gaming in the library, even if someone were playing right next to her; but she qualified her acceptance. "If people are being quiet, they can play games if they want. If they don't have a computer in their room, they can come to the library and play video games. But if they're going to talk to their friends about Tetris, they need to go downstairs." Imagining what would make a library *not* a "library," yet another undergraduate ventured, "I guess if I walked in and saw a 42" flat screen and there were chairs around it and, like, a pool table, I would think, 'Hm. That's strange.'" I asked her what a space like that would say to her. "Probably wouldn't feel much like a library then, I guess, because it would make the noise louder.... If they put it in the downstairs, though, I guess that would work."

Often the talking that accompanies diversion is indicted more than the play itself; still, such questionable behavior is relegated to the first floor. Henry, for instance, an undergraduate

who expressed a distinct preference for quiet areas in the library and frustration with excessive noise, qualifies the appropriateness of conversations: “What’s an inappropriate conversation? Depends on where you are. Non-academic conversations are to be expected downstairs.” Less legitimate sounds and activities are being figuratively slipped in the back door – or, literally, slipped into the basement. The individuals I spoke with may have questioned, even rejected outright, the library’s role in supporting social or recreational activities, but they found space for accepting them in the lower regions of the library.

The first floor of Woodruff Library sits on the edge of appropriateness, teetering towards a place of mere diversion. It is a careful balance that librarians strenuously maintain, in an effort to bring students in the door, even while they worry that they potentially contradict the purpose of the academic library. Concerned that the first floor might become “just a lounge” and pushing back against my probing of the library’s social role, one librarian urged, “We need to stick to our mission.... We’re the library, we’re not the student center.” And yet, early in our interview, she wondered why there were no meeting rooms for campus groups in the library, like there are in Emory’s student union building, and suggested, “This might be one direction the library could go to improve.” Some ideological teetering must be expected when trying to balance such disparate roles.

Bill | Not One of the Kids

For Bill, an older graduate student, the quiet, cave-like environment of Pitts Theology Library is a highly productive workspace. “At Pitts, that’s when I really crank out the work.” Working in a more visually and aurally stimulating place, like a coffee shop, on the other hand, would slow him down. “I would say something that takes me one hour to do at Pitts, would probably take me two hours to do at Starbucks, maybe three.... You know, if I, like, had to write the same paper with the same materials in front of me, same laptop.”

“Is it fair to say that the difference is the distraction?” I ask.

“Mm-hm... I can only take so many things at once, where nineteen year-olds can take a lot more.”

This distinction between his preferences and those of younger students came up frequently during our almost two-hour interview. Now approaching his 40th birthday, and returning to school after several years' hiatus, Bill understandably sees himself as different from the younger students on campus. Saddled with oversized bags and perpetually in motion, the undergraduates remind him of his elementary-age niece – facts that, combined with his own relative seniority, seem to prompt his regularly referring to them as “kids.” These kids are the users of Woodruff Library, he says, the ones for whom distractions are not a problem.

Quiet places like Pitts, on the other hand, which are ideal work environments for someone like him, wouldn't necessarily appeal to this generation.

Some people get unnerved by the quiet at Pitts. The type of quiet that's at Pitts, which is really, really quiet, where you hear some people on a keyboard maybe or a chair, you know, scooching out occasionally. Some people are very unnerved by that. They don't like it. And think about it, with all this stimuli we have, they're not used to it.

For the next generation, he imagines their ideal library as a bright, colorful place, like Jazzman's, with comfortable seating, wireless Internet access, and cell phones definitely allowed and encouraged. Much like a Starbucks, with its bold art on the walls and cool music on the sound system, but with librarians in place of baristas, he sees this library of the future as a place full of stimuli – colors, sound, smells, movement – and almost the polar opposite of the type of library he uses and wants for his academic work. The younger generation doesn't need that kind of closed off space, he asserts, an opinion that's been bolstered by his own observations in Woodruff Library's first floor, where students lounge around in comfortable chairs and talk.

Someone Else's Library

I have this stereotype that younger people are used to more noise, and I assume, maybe wrongly, that they're okay if there's noise around, and because they're the majority here [at Woodruff Library] I assume they must like the way the library is.

Interview with Lisa, an Emory University graduate student

Notwithstanding the anecdotal undergraduates who never set foot in the library until their senior year, most Emory undergraduates visit the library fairly regularly. Emory Libraries' 2007 user survey results show that undergraduates far exceed all other groups in their frequency of library use: of the 665 Emory College and Oxford College undergraduates who responded to the survey, 53% reported using resources from a library building more than once a week; only 36% of responding graduate students and 18% of responding faculty reported using the library building that frequently. Faculty, in fact, exhibited the least patronage of the library: of those who responded to the survey, 40% used the library building's resources less than once a month and 12% never used the library.⁶⁸

The graduate students, faculty, and librarians I interviewed made comments that either directly or indirectly named undergraduates as the main users of Woodruff Library, the ones who benefit from and desire the noisier environment, and thus the ones who determine the environment of the library. Sally, for instance, a humanities full professor who prefers working in a quiet library, speculates that the noisy library reflects its younger users.

I think it [the noisy library] probably depends a lot on age. I mean, I really think age is a big thing in this, don't you? ... I think it's generational, because I do think that there is just, you know, with cell phones and iPods – students, undergraduates right now are very plugged in, they're used to constantly having all this input all the time. [She waves her hands around her head, simulating constant motion] So yes, I think it is, I think it's generational.

⁶⁸ Results of this survey provided by Woodruff Library Assessment Coordinator Susan Bailey (2007).

One librarian, Ruth, noting the noise in Woodruff Library that comes from group work, dismissed it as a problem for undergraduate users. “The younger generation, they can multi-task, and noise doesn’t bother them,” she explained. “And number two, they’re sitting here with earphones. So, you know, the noise, it’s not even an issue for them.” For herself, though, “Ideally, I need a quiet place to work, but I think it just needs to be separate. ... And I think I’m in the minority.”

Especially among librarians, but among other library users as well, an understanding of libraries as shared public spaces is key to their attitude about sound in the library. Though personally they might prefer quiet in their work environment, they accept that other library users may not, and so they do not insist upon or expect quiet when they enter Woodruff Library. Ruth asserted the need for students to work in groups, to talk as they work, and for the library to support that.

This emphasis on a space for everyone, however, sometimes means that what’s good for the group isn’t good for the individual. As an undergraduate at Emory’s Oxford College, Bridget was told that the library was meant “to be welcoming, to be a place where everyone was accommodated.” But she soon realized that “they really mean everybody, and so it’s not such a good place to work if you need to concentrate and not be distracted. If you need quiet. There would be someone having a conversation right next to me, and it wouldn’t be about work. So that would be distracting, and it was also a small library, so you couldn’t really escape the noise.”

I spoke with seven undergraduates, ranging from sophomore to senior and representing social science, science, and humanities majors. Though a few had done group work in the library before and some were amenable to a little movement and sound around them as they

worked, all expressed their preference for working alone and quietly. No one felt it was appropriate to try to make the whole library a quiet place, since a proclaimed virtue of Woodruff Library is its accommodation of a variety of uses and styles of working; yet many felt that Woodruff tended too much toward a place for socializing.

Despite quiet's conduciveness to their work, library users seem resigned to the fact that noise in the library cannot be controlled, either by themselves (individually confronting talkers) or by the library (through security guards telling people to keep their voices down, signs indicating appropriate sound levels, or librarians shushing). The noisy library seems to exist beyond any particular individual, policy, or action, but cumulatively arises from the individually insignificant actions of many. Individuals further implicate themselves in this problem, calling out their own tendencies to chat with others. At the same time, they acknowledge others' needs for a quiet workspace and to the types of gestures or movements that communicate that need (e.g., pointed glances, heads rising up from a carrel to look in the direction of the talker). When the environment or the individuals in that environment allow talkers to be identified and singled out, then the space can be quiet.

The legitimacy of a library environment, including the sounds and behaviors deemed appropriate, does not pivot on a single point. A sound, like laughter, may distract or call attention, but its mere presence does not usually invite condemnation from library users. Unlike the scriptorium in Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, judgment is not visited on those who lose themselves for a moment in audible amusement. But the aura of a space is colored by people, activities, and sounds, and in the academic library the persistence (or mere presence) of certain elements elicit reproach. Even so, users still find places where their assumptions about library environments can go unchallenged, or even be reinforced. In the

face of contradictions, many find answers (or rationalizations) by identifying themselves as atypical library users, their own unique needs somehow deviant from the norm.

All the individuals I interviewed for this study considered themselves library users and reported using Woodruff Library regularly. Even among those who acknowledged some overlap in their work and social life while in the library, none considered socializing and hanging out appropriate uses of the library. The predominant view was that the library was a place to get work done, though how that work got done (e.g., in an isolated and quiet place, or with music playing in the background, or at a table with others) might vary. Even those who appreciated a little sound and distraction in their work environment did not consider this appropriate for the library environment as a whole.

As a shared public space, the library requires respect for the interests and needs of others. Many of the users I spoke with believe in the shared nature of libraries and deference to the needs of others, even to the extent that they were unwilling or embarrassed to defend their own interests. For example, in describing an incident in which she was distracted by other library users, this graduate student seems apologetic for her frustration and her reluctance to tell disruptive people to be quiet.

[Have been there many occasions when you intervened and said something about the noise?]

Only one or two. Maybe once on the third floor.

[What was going on?]

Like a bunch of people sitting around a table talking about something that seemed non-academic. [laughs] Is that stupid? Sounds really snobby! [laughs]

[What were they talking about?]

They probably had their phones out and were giggling and, I don't know, talking about rush or sorority or something like that, it seems that's my memory of that. And I don't know if I said anything but I think I probably gave them nasty looks for

a long time...which they kind of responded to. And then another time on the third floor in that annex place, I think I asked some guys to be quiet and they totally ignored me. Yeah, because I was trying to write something and I didn't have any other computer access at the time and I was frantically trying to finish something and, you know, they were being real noisy.

[What happened with the people you were giving looks?]

They got quieter, actually. I mean, I wasn't like [gives piercing glare], I was kind of like [furtive glance]. You know, maybe I was like [sighs heavily] and looked at them.... It sounds really petty, but you know, sometimes you end up doing that because you're so frustrated you can't do the thing you need to do, you know?

[What stopped you from getting up and saying something?]

Uh, I don't know. I guess because I'm too much of a wuss. [laughs] I don't like confrontation, probably.... Maybe I'm not very assertive. I'm not very assertive.... I guess maybe I also thought that self-policing should be the norm, that people should know that it's a quiet space. That you should be self-policing.

Some individuals exhibited considerable patience and silence in the face of inappropriate and disruptive sound. For instance, one graduate student, writing a dissertation chapter at a study carrel in the stacks, was surprised to suddenly hear a Charlie Mingus jazz drum solo. Half an hour later, the offending music aficionado (another grad student in a locked study nearby), apologized as he walked by the carrel.. In another instance, a dissertation-writing grad student, sitting in her locked study, was regularly distracted by her neighbor's long, laughing cell-phone conversations. Initially, she was surprised to find that someone talking in the next study was so clearly audible, but then was even more surprised that he talked so loudly, knowing that she was working just next door. "I complained about it to people all the time, but would I ever say anything to him? No, I would *never* do that! Why?" She pauses, as though astonished herself at her own hesitation, then shakes her head, "I don't know." Stark examples of inappropriate sound in the library, to be sure, but in neither case did the unwilling over-hearer take action.

In contrast, consider the following anecdote related by someone who was on the receiving end of a “shush.” The mother of a toddler, and lacking flexible and affordable child care, this graduate student sometimes brought her son with her when she needed to check out books from the library. On one such visit, while she searched the book stacks with her jabbering child in tow, another library user approached her to ask if she could get her son to be quiet. Though she could completely understand the disruptiveness of her child’s talking, she found the request absurd: “No, I can’t get him to be quiet. He’s two.”

From my perspective, having already talked to someone who tolerated her study neighbor talking regularly and loudly on his cell phone and to someone else who listened to the frenetic drumming of Charlie Mingus for half an hour without saying anything, the circumstances of this intervention were intriguing. Who was this person who decided to shush? Where was she working: in a locked study or in a carrel, or just walking through the stacks? How long had this noise gone on before she decided to say something: as long as the jazz record, or the phone conversation, or longer? Perhaps the toddler’s talking lacked the artfulness of a jazz piece. Perhaps it lacked the muffling of cinder blocks. There is also the possibility that a child in an academic library is a less acceptable distraction than other sounds. Consider the response of this undergraduate when I asked how he would react if he heard a child in a Woodruff: “I’d be pretty pissed. . . . I’d be like, ‘Why do you have a kid in the library? What does a kid need to come to the library for?’”

Interviewees were insistent that an academic library is a place that meets the needs of many people, a fact that helps account for the degree of tolerance and acceptance many of these library users exhibited towards disturbing noise or distracting user behavior. In some cases, when describing a particular incident in or a general aspect of the campus library that they found displeasing, interviewees faulted themselves – their age, their unique circumstances,

their personality – rather than indict other users’ behavior or even the library’s policies.

Perhaps most surprisingly, many interviewees minimized their own preferences for quieter workspaces and working alone rather than with others, singling themselves out as atypical of most library users despite their own history of library use and professed regular use of Woodruff Library.

At the end of our interview, Chelsea asked whether anyone participating in my study was actually someone who uses the library for socializing, since she (like Jake) assumed that my recruitment of “library users” negated anyone who comes to the library just to hang out. When I told her that most of the people I’ve interviewed so far would prefer the library to be a quiet or quieter place, she wondered aloud who is determining what the library is like.

CONCLUSION

Blurred boundaries define much of academic life and experiences of the library: porous walls separating public space from private, work that morphs into diversion, and sound that seeps into other places, and, at a more abstract and structural level, increasingly invisible or absent authority over the actions of users. Newer constructions and renovations in the library – the creation of the Commons, the restoration of the reading room, and the installation of a coffee shop (discussed in more detail in the next chapter) – convey distinct valuations of library spaces and a role of the library. Users’ and librarians’ articulations of the meaning of the library to them often hinge on an understanding of library space as shared. Their definitions of libraries oscillate between a sense of what they personally need in a library, and their understanding of libraries as inherently *not* ‘personal’. As shared public spaces, they are always, at an essential level, someone else’s library.

Sound plays a role in communicating to users the legitimate use of a library space. While signs may indicate policy, echoes in the reading room and bustle at the Commons Reference desk communicate to users expectations of behavior and establish the norm. The public aural space of the library, though varying according to time of day or the specific area of the library, was understood by most of these users to be noisy, or at least noisier than other libraries they had visited. While no one rejected higher noise levels in Woodruff Library as inappropriate, and many commended the library's variety of spaces for different activities and learning styles, many users (as well as librarians) raised doubts about the appropriateness of the noisy library when they qualified their own need or preference for less distracting spaces. In their beliefs about the meaning of the library, in their descriptions of their own use of the library, and in the types of sounds and activities they grouped together, many drew distinctions between the sound and space that they find typifies Woodruff Library and how they need or prefer to work. Individuals who specifically noted their own need for a separate or quiet space to concentrate on their work also demonstrated a reluctance to defend or assert this preference. Though some of the undergraduate Millennials I spoke with evidenced the stereotypes (e.g., preference for computers over books, or crowded areas over seclusion), they also confessed to finding some aspects of the noisy and social Commons distracting and undesirable.

Librarians' view of the role of the library and the needs and preferences of library users influences how and whether they respond to complaints about sound. Among librarians the library was advocated as supportive of the educational needs of the new generation of students and therefore more likely to be noisy. As indicated in the history of libraries in the previous chapter, and as will be further illustrated in the following chapters, Commons environments in libraries reflect a range of institutional assumptions and expectations about

public access to information, shared responsibility for constructing knowledge and managing work environments, and the nature of academic work. Whatever their own personal beliefs about or use of libraries, librarians publicly advocate an understanding of the library as primarily geared towards learning, and of conversation as an essential component of the learning process. Beliefs that the library should be a place for social interaction are supported in part by their perceptions of the needs and desires of Millennials. At the same time, librarians eschew their former roles as disciplinarians, arguing that this sets up boundaries between them and the users they hope to assist. In short, they explain the changing soundscape of the library as reflecting the changing teaching and learning practices of the university, a new generation's preferences for work environments, and their own interests in being more accessible to the academic community. To put it another way, the library reflects what users want.

For many of the professed library users interviewed for this study, the soundscape of Woodruff Library conflicts with their established beliefs about how libraries sound and how they are used. The variety of spaces available at this library makes it easier for users to accept less optimum study environments. If one area is too noisy, they can always go someplace else. This generous view towards the sound of the library is bolstered in part by understandings of the library as inherently communal, and so one's personal preferences should not dictate the norm. Though they might find the sound of the library is not conducive to their own manner of studying, they do not actively assert their own interests, in part because they assume they are in the minority. To put it another way, the library reflects what other users want.

Close attention to discourse used to describe libraries, academic work, and valuations of quiet and noise in libraries and in scholarly life, however, expose latent beliefs about noise

and quiet that conflict with overt acceptance of the noisy library. In conceptually grouping quiet with serious work and noise with play, and in suggesting that less acceptable activities and sounds in a library be located on the first floor (the sanctioned noisy area of Woodruff), users evidence a deep understanding of the relationship between the sound of the library and the level of intellectual engagement it indicates. Librarians tend to associate the sound of the library with its use, and especially to describe noise in the library as indicative of energy, activity, and even learning. While these divergences in librarians' and library users' valuations and conceptions of the sound of the library do not alter the legitimacy of new and noisier areas in Woodruff Library, they raise questions about the strength of this acceptance and the objective reality the noisier library presumably reflects.

CHAPTER 4

SOUNDING THE LIBRARY

The main library on Emory University's campus, one of the early innovators in Commons developments among academic libraries (and still regularly visited by library design teams seeking to create Commons environments), and an active participant in library organizations nationally and internationally,⁶⁹ Robert W. Woodruff Library plays a prominent role both in Emory's academic life and in an understanding of academic libraries nationwide. The keynotes, soundmarks, and signals in Woodruff Library's soundscape, in addition to painting an aural portrait of the space, highlight how new technology and philosophies of student learning have become part of the backdrop of daily life in the library, contributing to a culture of self-regulation in which authority is often absent, subdued, or shared. Comments from librarians and excerpts from institutional documents (introduced here and discussed further in the following chapter) augment this picture, demonstrating how the library deliberately positions itself as pivotal in teaching, learning, and the social and intellectual life of the university and how it often orients spaces according to perceived preferences of users. Recent decisions about how to construct and use new spaces in the library reflect a strong interest in measuring and meeting the needs and preferences of its academic community, referred to as "clients," "customers," and "markets."

The following ethnographic case study of Woodruff Library traces librarians' efforts to both anticipate and respond to user preferences, as well as to attract and track library users,

⁶⁹ In addition to its membership in the American and Canadian 123-member Association of Research Libraries (ARL, <http://www.arl.org>), Emory Libraries is among the 37 institutions worldwide that belong to the Digital Library Federation (DLF, <http://www.diglib.org>).

through the use of new technology and services, a relaxing of building use policies, and diverse spaces. Scene vignettes⁷⁰ re-constructed from field notes and juxtaposed with diagrams and photographs of the building and with excerpts from interviews, institutional documents, and campus publications, demonstrate librarian intentions behind different spaces and how those spaces are actually used. (See Appendix 1 for a description of interviewing methods and Appendix 2 for a description of participant observation methods.) Through these descriptions, this chapter demonstrates how the sound of Woodruff Library is established, altered, and legitimated, and how this soundscape, along with talk about the library and valuations of its sound by librarians and in institutional documents, reflects the library's expanding pedagogical and technological role in the university. Additionally, this ethnographic case study shows a growing business orientation in the library, in which users are viewed as customers (figuratively and, in the case of Jazzman's, literally) and the libraries' services and resources are deliberately marketed.

Description of the library is organized chronologically, from a brief overview of the university's and its libraries' histories through three recent architectural renovations to the library: the creation of the Commons, the restoration of the reading room, and the addition of a coffeeshop. As of this writing, the most recent architectural changes to Woodruff Library are retrofitting of the stack tower floors to accommodate movable shelving and to add more lounge areas and meeting space. Renovations to the stack tower were underway when this dissertation research began, although plans to conduct observations in the stacks were not part of the research protocol. Besides allowing more books to stay in the library (rather than being moved to off-site storage), more space in the stacks is being freed for

⁷⁰ To help place the reader in the sights, sounds, and activities of these library spaces, I include edited versions of my field notes, presented as first- or third-person vignettes of scenes in the library and set off from the surrounding text with indentation and a different font.

casual seating and meeting space. I discuss these current changes and some implications in the concluding chapter.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WOODRUFF LIBRARY

In 1836 “Emory College was launched on the crest of a wave of interest in education which influenced Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians alike” (Bullock, 1936, p. 50). Established by Methodist Episcopalians and named in honor of Bishop John Emory, the school opened in the town of Oxford, Georgia, itself named for “the seat of learning” where the founders of Methodism, John and Charles Wesley, were educated (p. 57). Following its closure during the Civil War, the school struggled to regain its footing in the post-bellum South. Physical and financial losses had left the school destitute, but it nevertheless opened its doors again to students in 1866. Over the next few decades the school gained greater financial security and expanded its curriculum, and in 1915, the school opened a university in Atlanta.

A library was constructed in 1926 through a donation by Coca-Cola Company founder Asa Griggs Candler, for whom the building was named. The new library, designed by New York architect Edward L. Tilton, was “an impressive marble-clad structure” with “a lofty reading room, extending the length of the second floor” that could easily accommodate many more students than the university currently had enrolled, and with space for the collection to grow (English, 1966, p. 187). Within a few decades, though, storage space was gone and the reading room was rapidly becoming crowded with additional shelves and books. In 1955 the

library was completely renovated and the reading room gutted, its lofty space replaced by two floors of book storage.⁷¹

Yet even this proved inadequate to house the university's expanding collection, and so a new multi-story structure was planned. Named for Robert W. Woodruff, former Coca-Cola Company president and long-time Emory University benefactor, the new building was a multi-story tower, given almost entirely to housing the university's growing print collection. The Robert W. Woodruff Library for Advanced Studies opened in 1969, dedicated in a Board of Trustees' resolution as a library "designed as the academic heart of Emory University" (Lyle, 1981, p. 199).

During the 1990s Woodruff Library underwent a renovation to update its facilities and to link its tower structure to the original Candler Library (Halbert, 1999). The new construction, formally named the Center for Library and Information Resources, was informally referred to as the Information Commons. In constructing the Commons, the library sought to create an area where students and faculty could more easily access and use information tools and resources in their work and which supported instruction and group work using multiple media. Key features of this space are plentiful computing stations – an exponential increase in the number of public workstations previously available – and areas for experimenting with new technology and incorporating it into one's research and teaching (Halbert, 1999). The incorporation of technological elements even extends into the office

⁷¹ This action was not without its detractors. In his memoir Lyle (1981) recalls that when his plans for razing the reading room "reached the architect who originally designed the building, and the critics on the campus who were against all change, ...they swarmed over to the President's office to suggest that this meddler was about to ruin the aesthetics of the Asa Griggs Candler Library and ought to quit" (p. 175). Ultimately, Lyle's proposal won out, because the space recovered through this renovation would make possible the creation of a Science Library, open space for the general collection to grow, and increase student use of the library building by improving lighting and adding air conditioning.

space, where librarians share an open, cubicle-filled room with employees of the university's academic computing division.

Development of this highly technological and collaborative Commons included plans to renovate Candler Library, now connected to the main library building by an enclosed pedestrian bridge. As an elegant reading space housing the latest issues of the library's print periodical collection, the Matheson Reading Room in Candler Library is intentionally less high-tech than the rest of the library; though this room does contain some desktop computers and a printer, the open room is dominated by large wooden tables in the center of the room and bookshelves lining the walls.

In 2005, after much internal debate about where to house it (and whether to have it at all), a Jazzman's café was installed in the bottom floor of the Commons. True to its name, the café regularly plays jazz music over the sound system. Enclosed in glass and with an adjoining lounge of soft seating with built-in desks and coffee tables, Jazzman's is the sanctioned space for eating and drinking in the library. Signs at the main entrance to the library and around Jazzman's remind users of that fact, though this policy is not enforced.

The Commons, Matheson Reading Room, and Jazzman's represent divergent views of the academic library: quiet, traditional space for individual work; wired space for collaborating with multiple media; and a space for taking a break from one's work and socializing. As recent constructions, they are also part of a deliberate attempt by the library both to establish a new identity as a community crossroads and high-tech collaborative workspace and to reference an iconic identity connected to customary uses, architectures, and sounds. They thus provide convenient contexts for exploring different library users' and librarians' activities in and understandings of the library.

THE COMMONS

Like the commons of old it is both a resource in itself, and a meeting ground for the community. The Information Commons will support the needs of the Emory community by providing a ubiquitous set of information research tools which will support collaboration among groups, be flexible in nature, and developed over time.

Statement of the vision for an Information Commons at Emory University, from the 1996 Draft Proposal Report of the Library Public Computing Working Group (qtd. in Information Commons Next Generation Design Team, 2006)

Emory University's Woodruff Library distinguished itself as one of a handful of early innovators in the Commons movement that began in the early 1990s.⁷² In constructing the Commons, the library sought to create an area where students and faculty could more easily access and use information tools and resources in their work and which supported instruction and group work using multiple media (Halbert, 1999).⁷³ Development of the Commons was itself a collaborative effort, born of the efforts of then University Libraries Director Joan Gotwals and Information Technology Division Director Jim Johnson to address growing technological issues affecting teaching and research (University Senate, 1994). Key features of the resulting space were plentiful computing stations – an exponential

⁷² The University of Iowa and Estrella Mountain Community College (Arizona) opened the first Commons environments in libraries in 1992, closely followed by The University of California, Santa Barbara (1993), The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (1994), and the University of Southern California (1994). A second early wave of Commons environments opened in 1997 with Emory, Lehigh University (Pennsylvania), Brookdale Community College (New York), followed by Oregon State University (1998) and Bucknell University (Pennsylvania, 1999). By the next decade, the phenomenon had become more widespread, with several libraries opening Commons environments every year.

⁷³ Recently librarians and members of the university's academic computing division have begun to revisit and revise their conceptions of the Commons, from the initial "Information Commons" focus of the mid-1990s to a new "Learning Commons" approach to this space. Members of the Information Commons Next Generation Design Team (2006) propose the new vision of the Commons as "a destination – virtual and physical – where members of the Emory community combine content, technology, and services in an inquiry-driven, ethically aware, and creative environment to enrich their teaching, learning, and research." This shift in conception began being actively promoted in 2008, as the appellation "Learning Commons" was incorporated into computer screensavers in the building and employees began referring to the space as "Learning Commons."

increase in the number of public workstations previously available – and areas for experimenting with new technology and incorporating it into one’s research and teaching (Halbert, 1999). The incorporation of technological elements extended into the office space, where librarians share an open, cubicle-filled room with employees of the university’s academic computing division.

The Commons abuts the original stack tower of the library, then stretches toward and opens onto the campus quadrangle.⁷⁴ The bulk of the library’s print collection is housed in the stack tower and, increasingly now, in offsite storage. Among the resources and services incorporated into this four-story addition are the Business School library, a music and media library and language center, reference books and an adjoining information desk staffed by librarians, and the Emory Center for Interactive Teaching, or ECIT, where members of the university’s academic computing department assist students and faculty in using new electronic resources and tools in their academic work.

Welcome to the library

Having just come into the library from the cold January morning outside, I fumble for a few moments with my I.D. card before my numb fingers manage to slide the magnetic strip through the turnstile card reader.

Beep! It didn’t work. I wait a few seconds, then slide my card again. Beep!

I look to the guard behind the counter, expectantly and preemptively grateful. He knows me, of course – I’ve been walking through this gate at least once a week for the last four years. With an expression that is neither friendly nor unkind, he gets up from his chair, walks over to the counter, and reaches underneath it to flip an invisible switch that unlocks the turnstile. Click.

⁷⁴ This extension of the existing library building allowed the new entrance of Woodruff Library to open onto a corner of the Quadrangle where several buildings in the College of Arts and Sciences are located, including the original Candler Library building. Formally called the Center for Library And Information Resources (CLAIR), this new wing was part of a larger building movement on Emory’s campus in the mid-1990s, as then-president William Chace sought to construct a “walking campus” (Frost, 2004).

I push through, thanking him with a smile and wishing “Good morning” as I walk past.

“Have a good one,” he drawls, as he saunters back to his seat.



Figure 1: Entrance to Woodruff Library showing Security desk, turnstiles, and exit gates. Copyright 2008 by Emory Libraries. Reprinted with permission.

The entrance to Woodruff Library is glass and marble, two-stories tall, and noise echoes. Sound from the vaulted entrance carries easily to the 3rd floor through an opening in the 2nd floor ceiling. In this space the metal clunk of the turnstiles reverberates, along with the greetings, conversations, and laughter of the security personnel. The few benches and computer kiosks attract some visitors, and people entering and leaving often linger here, finishing conversations before moving on to their next destination. Signs posted on and around the Security Desk and the turnstiles remind visitors of library hours, regulations about food and cell phones, openings and closing of stack floors going through renovations,

and upcoming events. In 2009 the library hung a plasma TV screen inside the entrance, an alternative medium for promoting some of these same announcements; it hangs in easy view of the turnstiles, where students and personnel swipe their Emory identification cards to enter the library.

All library users pass through one of two turnstiles to enter the library, and through a security gate to exit. If a patron does not have a valid Emory identification card that can be swiped (or if their card does not swipe properly for some reason), Security personnel can allow them in, though protocol for non-Emory-affiliated visitors requires signing in (name, time of visit, and institutional affiliation). At the exit the security gate detects whether anyone is leaving with materials that have not been desensitized (i.e., have not been checked out). At one time, guards regularly searched patrons' bags before they left the library, but the practice ended in the face of complaints (Library Policy Committee, 2000). When the security gate senses magnetized materials, it emits five high-pitched beeps, and the guard at the desk asks whoever has just walked through to step back inside. The guards' nonchalance and the regularity of this sound suggest that many of these alerts are false alarms or honest mistakes.

Level 2: The Business Library

The energy and excitement of the burgeoning Goizueta Business Library are palpable these days. The library is usually packed to the gills, especially in the afternoons and evenings, with busy business students studying and completing group projects. ... The crowds that gather in the library aren't just the result of class assignments – the business library actively surveys its users and markets its services, says Executive Director Susan Klopper. ... “We survey our customers regularly; they are happy with the level and quality of services we provide, but we must always continue to evaluate, reassess and improve on an ongoing basis.”

Description of the Business Library, in the 2007-2008 Emory Libraries “Report to the Community” (2008, pp. 54-55)

Just beyond the Security desk, a staircase leads down to the 1st floor, and an elevator and stairwell lead to the upper floors of the Commons. Carpeting starts shortly inside the entrance and continues throughout the Commons.⁷⁵ The Business library flanks the main hallway, just past the stairwell and elevators, and consists almost entirely of computing stations and worktables. Otherwise, there are a few librarian offices and a shelf of new books on one side, and business reference books (the “Career Resources” area), cushioned chairs, and glass-enclosed group study rooms on the other.



Figure 2: Computers in the Goizueta Business Library, with new business books in the foreground. Copyright 2008 by Emory Libraries. Reprinted with permission.

Because of its location the Business library is often what one sees and hears upon entering the library. The slow morning hours notwithstanding, this part of the library is frequently

⁷⁵ The exceptions are the enclosed stairwell and the Schatten gallery at the base of the stack tower; these are technically part of the older building, not the new Commons addition.

crowded and noisy with undergraduate students, especially at night. In an interview with a business librarian, I asked what she would think if she entered a quiet library. “That it’s not being used.” As a business librarian, she understands noise as a positive indicator of the use of the space. “Certainly here, I think we’re known that the Business Library is a place for group work. That it’s a noisy place – perhaps *the* noisiest place in the library (so I’ve been told). But we think that’s very positive. Our students work in groups, and that’s why they come here, to do their group work.” Acknowledging her own need for a quiet place to do her work, she immediately dismissed it, saying, “I think I’m in the minority. It seems the younger generation, they can multi-task, the noise doesn’t bother them, and number two, they’re sitting there with earphones.”

Social hour

7:30 AM on a Monday morning in the Business library, and it’s quiet. Sounds are short, infrequent, and irregular – the mechanical clunk of the turnstiles, greetings and short conversations at the Security desk, the periodic scuffing and clapping of shoes on carpet as patrons and employees walk through the main hallway. A handful of people work here quietly, alone, sitting scattered around the space, staring into computers or leaning over tables.

How different than it is at night. Just a couple of weeks ago, also on a Monday, I sat in this same area – the *only* person sitting by myself – and watched and listened as the steady stream of traffic and activity flowed around me. The sound coming from the entrance was constant: the beep of swiped cards not read correctly, the blurry echo of conversations, doors whining open and closed and turnstiles clunking. In the Business library the printer churned, its motor running for about 30 seconds after each job before it wound down. The chunk of the electric stapler alone spiked the soundscape.

Collaborative conversations, however, were often brief. Though there were some students sitting around a table to actively discuss an assignment, most students appeared to engage in parallel work: sitting side-by-side, working on their own tasks, and pausing occasionally to say something to the other. At one table, a student wearing high-end headsets stared into his Apple laptop, eyes glancing back and forth between the screen and his fingers pecking at the keyboard. His study companion, eyeglasses pushed up onto the top of his head, read from a textbook, a frozen coffee drink on the table

in front of him. Occasionally, one would direct a comment to or ask a question of the other; they'd talk for a few minutes then turn back to their work.

Much of the talking I witnessed was a hybrid of socializing and consultation. A young man stopped by a table of students in front of me, snap-shook hands with a couple of them, looked around, laughed, joked, then moved on after a few moments. Someone else waved over a young woman wearing sherpa boots with blue jogging shorts. She settled her belongings at their table then walked off with another student, who left his laptop still sitting open at the crowded table. The woman in sherpa boots returned, a Jazzman's drink in hand, and accompanied by someone else. They both stopped to talk with two guys at a computer carrel – about clean sheets, calories in a cheeseburger, and typing up their reports. "Maybe we should write down arguments?" she said. "And I think we should get a table for this discussion." The four of them moved off to a table in the back of the Business library, along with two other girls who'd been working at computers close by.

A crackle, then a man's voice came over the PA system.

"Attention... There is *too much noise* in the library."

He pronounced the words "too much noise" slowly and clearly, as though emphasizing this point, making sure we all understood.

"People have complained that there is *too much noise*... This is a reminder that Level 2 and Level 3 are quiet study areas. If you need to do group study, go to Level 1 or use a group study room."

I watched the faces of the students around me: everyone was smiling, some, quietly laughing...in disbelief? I smiled myself, partly out of sheer delight that this announcement came on when I was here observing, and partly because he just kept talking. The PA announcement was now becoming disruptive; though it only lasted about thirty seconds, it seemed longer. The people around me stopped talking. When the announcement ended, the area around me was noticeably quieter. Within a few minutes, however, noise in the Business library had picked back up.

In the early morning, the Business library is a different place. Fewer people, fewer conversations, less printers and staplers being used, less sound coming from the entrance. Even so, the entrance is still where the most sound comes from. The turnstile announces another visitor, the clunk itself a soundmark of the library. Conversations among people at the Security desk modulate in volume, from a low echo-y murmur, to spikes of laughter flashing through the space, the glass and hard floor in the two-story foyer lending a vibrancy and volume to the sound.

The business librarian I interviewed mentioned in passing that some MBAs had complained about the noise in the library – at least, that’s what she *heard*, no one has ever complained to her directly. She quickly followed that, in her experience, students working in the Business library either don’t mind the sound or know that there are other places in the library they can go to work. I probed her further about the MBAs: why were they disturbed by the noise when the BBAs apparently weren’t? For instance, did the older students tend to work alone rather than in groups? No, they need to do group work, too. Qualifying again that no one had complained to her directly, she conjectured that, while younger students were often on campus and in the library all day, the older students had less flexible schedules and so perhaps felt inconvenienced when the library environment wasn’t as they needed it to be.

I had actually heard this story of complaining MBAs⁷⁶ before, a few years earlier, from another librarian. Where the business librarian’s story had emphasized its hearsay nature and suggested that the MBAs’ frustration stemmed mostly from their tight schedules, the other librarian’s story accentuated deference to the needs of others and the library’s service to the public. Opening with a vague allusion to the “politics” that put the Business library in the Commons, she described how

the MBA students came in, en masse, to meet with the Library Director and the Director of the Business School to complain because, after all, those BBAs,⁷⁷ those Undergraduates, were in their—in that space having meetings all the time. And quite rightly, it was the, it was the Director of the Libraries who pointed out, “Yeah, well, you know, they don’t have any other place. You guys have the Goizueta Business School, which has meeting rooms, conference rooms, and that’s where you go and do your conversations and discussions and group work. They—the BBAs don’t have a space like that. For them, the Business Library is their conference room...”

The point seemed to quiet their objections. “I think it finally dawned on them,” the librarian told me, “That they were saying that we want the library to be what we want it to be for us,

⁷⁶ MBAs refers to graduate students in the Masters of Business Administration program.

⁷⁷ BBAs refers to undergraduate students in the Bachelors of Business Administration program.

and not be aware that there are other people. So that's maybe one of the things we have to do, is to help people understand that we're there for them, but we're also there for everybody else."



Figure 3: View from behind the Level 2 Reference desk, looking down the main hallway towards the entrance. Copyright 2008 by Emory Libraries. Reprinted with permission.

Level 2: Reference

Yeah, I view the campus, a campus, as the person's home or house. So the dorm, the residence hall is one room, the classroom is another room, the library is another room. It's almost like a den, because you can do, you should be able to do multiple things in this one room, and comfort's one of them. A living room is too formal. A den, where you can sit down in your chair or you can sit down by your window, or there are times you can say, you know, "I've really had enough of this hubbub – shut up!"

Richard, a Woodruff Library librarian, on the role of the academic library

The main walkway on the ground floor runs from the entrance, past the Business library, through stacks of Reference books, and straight to the Reference Information desk. Some

librarians refer to the Reference Desk area as “Grand Central Station.” The wide walkway bends past the desk and between the computing stations, the primary route to this lobby-level floor’s restrooms and the stack-tower elevators. Employees tend to beat a path between the double-doors leading to their offices (behind the glass-enclosed stairwell) and the restroom/elevator lobby, thus not contributing as much traffic as they might to the rest of the Reference computing area. Yet the number of places connected by this juncture – restrooms, elevators, offices, ECIT,⁷⁸ the mailroom and loading dock, two sets of stairwells, and the main entrance – means that traffic is fairly constant, and sometimes quiet heavy, especially between classes when crowds of students leaving classes in the stack tower stream out of the elevators.

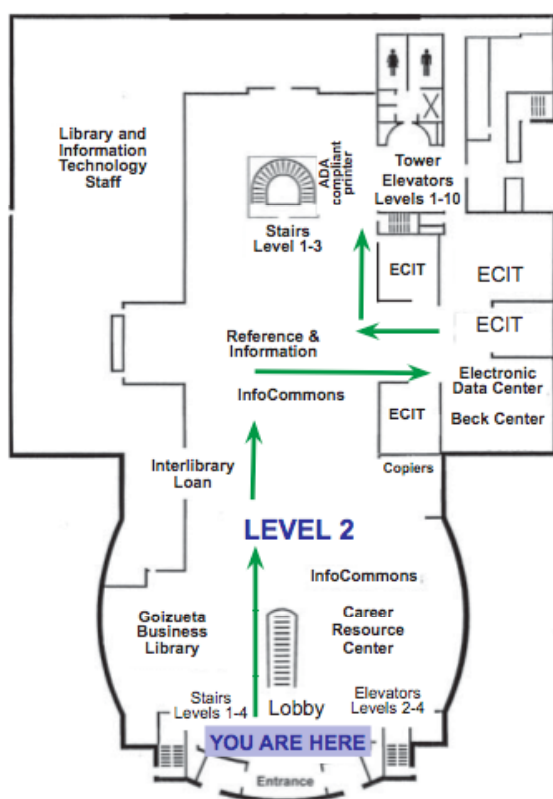


Figure 4: Map of Commons, Level 2, from “Robert W. Woodruff Library: A Walking Tour and Resource Locator.” Copyright 2006 by Emory Libraries. Reprinted with permission.

⁷⁸ Emory’s Center for Interactive Teaching, a center run by the University Technology Services division but housed in the library. In addition to open computing stations and help staff, ECIT includes meeting rooms and classroom space.

During my pilot study a librarian shared with me his own misgivings about the computer workstations being located along this main walkway and next to the Reference area. Librarians need to talk as part of helping patrons, he said, but sometimes this can be disturbing to students working nearby. Pushed further, he confessed that he wished the Reference desk were located away from the computers and in the middle of the Reference collection instead. “I like to be in the middle of the collection, too,” he said, “Because I use it a lot, and I’m not sure a lot of people use the collection anymore. They’re all trying to get things out of the computer.”



Figure 5: Emory Libraries director Rick Luce, posing with the Reference computers for a publicity photo. Copyright 2008 by Emory Libraries. Reprinted with permission.

Computer watching

At 8:30 AM, at the beginning of the semester, there’s not much going on. Sitting at one of the Reference computing stations along the main hallway, one can easily hear the ding of elevators at the main entrance and conversations at the Security desk. The two guards talk briefly as they change shifts, then the now off-duty guard calls, “Cheers!” as she walks out, her parting word hanging for a moment in the resonant entryway.

The occasional clunk of turnstiles signals people entering the library, their muffled conversations and footfalls growing in volume and clarity as they move down the hallway.

"I love working with these computers," remarks a girl to her friend as they walk through the Reference area. "I could sit here all day..."

Does she mean "these computers" along the hallway? Or "these computers" with double monitors? Or maybe she's referring to the Apple computers that are being installed in this area – brand-new widescreen iMac G3s. A few carrels away a member of the library's Desktop Support team is installing the last of them. When the library director and his daughter happen to walk through, they stop to talk about the new computers. "So, do you think this is an improvement?" the computer tech asks, gesturing to the new iMacs. The three of them talk for several minutes.

A student working at a computer nearby doesn't appear distracted by this conversation. He doesn't seem to notice it at all, just stares into his computer screen and types.

Aside from the sounds of turnstiles and the Security Desk telephone at the main entrance, early to mid-morning in the Reference Desk area is relatively quiet. As in other places in the Commons at this time of day, the few people there work alone. Sound increases as traffic increases—elevator bells and motors, the shuffle of feet and clothes as people pass through, greetings or short conversations—but these sounds tend to be brief, usually lasting only seconds. Traffic picks up the ten minutes around class changes then trickles off.

In the evening, however, when computer usage is heavy, sometimes two to four students group around a single computer, talking about their work, chitchatting, or both. Other students call out questions or comments to one another, around or over computing carrel walls and between workstations. Occasionally, a cell phone goes off. Conversations at the Reference Desk add to the noisy atmosphere: librarians answer questions from students, talk to someone on the telephone, and talk to each other.

Asked about shushing people who are noisy, one librarian, Richard, points out the inherent conflict between being a policeman and being an assistant. How can you tell people to shush

at one moment then expect them to come to you for assistance the next? Monitoring the sound is a job for Security. Even so, Richard talks about the different criteria he may use to decide whether or not to ask someone to be quiet. He also mentions a recent moment when he was having a personal conversation near the Reference desk and, after about five minutes, one of the students sitting at a nearby computer “shot me a look that would wilt lettuce.” He smiles, and says, “I got the message.”

Sound barriers

Two young women walk through the Reference area, on their way to the tower elevators. One asks the other, “How do you keep from falling asleep in the stacks?”

“I listen to music. It helps keep me focused.”

I circle several of the computing stations, looking for a “free” computer. The empty carrel I thought I saw turns out to be occupied: someone is still logged on to the computer, personal effects strewn about the desk. I see a small, clear plastic globe of foam earplugs, and two or three of the bright-orange plugs lying on the desk and floor.

Intrigued, I approach the Reference Desk to say that I’ve seen these earplugs at a computing station and wonder whether the library provided them. The librarian at the desk seems confused. No, the library doesn’t provide earplugs. Someone must have brought those for personal use. A lot of people want it to be quieter, she says. They’re used to the more “traditional library, many years ago” before we started having “collaboration.” Now it’s noisier, she says, so people probably need earplugs to keep it quiet.

“So, do people tell you that they wish it were quieter?” I ask.

“Oh yes, but we tell them there’s nothing we can do about it. We try to send them to other places where it’ll be quieter – the 3rd floor, the stacks.”

“When did it start being like this?” I wonder aloud.

She hesitates, seems to be trying to decide. “Oh, maybe the late 1970s, early 1980s.”

As we finish talking, I notice that the Reference area is rather quiet. At the moment, no one is collaborating. Everyone works alone at their computer.

Three librarians emerge from the elevator lobby, talking. As they walk by, a young man sitting at a computer carrel across looks up and over at them. Does he scowl? His head rises just above the panels of the computer carrel. Our eyes meet. He turns his head and looks directly at the talking

librarians, who are now splitting up: one heads to the stairwell, another to the front of the building. Still finishing their conversation as they walk away, their voices rise. The young man had looked down, but now he looks up again, staring at them. They finish talking and move away, and he looks back down again.

Though sound levels in this area are often elevated, and idle chat may go on for longer than a few minutes, librarians rarely ask anyone to be quiet. In over five years of using the library I have never personally observed a librarian say anything to a patron or the crowd in general, and the librarians I interviewed considered shushing anyone in this area an exceptional act. They attributed this to their reluctance to “shut down” conversing that is a part of the students’ learning process, to the futility of trying to quiet a high-traffic area where there is inevitably going to be noise, and to users’ own acceptance of this excess sound. One librarian I spoke with during my pilot study admitted to being uncomfortable with noise in this area when people are working quietly, until she realized that if students choose to sit in this area, they must not mind the sound.

There are classes that are held up in the stacks (some of those spaces are actually owned by the Registrar’s Office), and so students come at the change of class time and they come down the elevators, and, you know, they’re coming out of class, “La-la-la-la-la-la!” You know, all that conversation. They’re talking on their cell phones and everything. And I’m there at the Desk and I hear, you know, a wave of noise come along.... Well, the people that are sitting in there and studying at the Info Commons machines, interestingly enough, very rarely do they give their fellow students a dirty look. And it finally dawned on me, you know, they’re—They know what they’re getting into [laughing] by sitting in the chairs like that.

Subliminal soundscape

Two graduate students carry on a steady conversation at the back of the Reference area – a moderate volume, but punctuated by the woman’s occasional laughter. At one point a young man sitting at a computing station several feet away looks over at them, then goes back to the paper he’s editing.

Sound undulates in this area. As people walk through, their conversations arc, rising and falling and fading away as they move out of hearing. A

young woman pushing a bookcart (and wearing ear buds) ambles through. The elevators ding. There's no consistent pattern to these particular sounds, not immediately at first, but after a time they do become part of the soundscape. They are sounds that, if not predictable, are familiar. Keynotes.

The elevator dings once, at the same pitch and volume, and for the same length of time, as it has every other time. Though I don't know *when* this will happen again, subconsciously I know *how* it will happen. It is also a sound that occurs with such frequency, I'm no longer distracted by it.

Fingers tap on computer keyboards at different rates. The nature of the sound is familiar – same volume, same pitch. And so I tune it out.

A woman just walked by with a young boy, presumably her son. Why did I look up to see them? I'd been fairly engrossed in my computer screen, but glanced up when they walked by. Perhaps because the boy stopped to sit briefly in one of the chairs – knees in the chair, facing towards the back, swiveling the chair slightly – then popped up again, walking away. And he made a sound as he got up, so quick and light I hardly know what he said, whether it was even a word.

Here, certainly, is someone whose movements and sounds are unfamiliar to me. He wasn't loud, he wasn't running; he wasn't really calling attention to himself. But the sound and the movement were different. Not part of the soundscape.

Level 3: The Quiet Study Area

Who are the people who use your product(s) or service(s)? Who is the (end user) customer? Describe your end user customers qualitatively (e.g., research librarians or faculty (by discipline) and quantitatively. (See Appendix A, Customer Segmentation Matrix and include your answers in that format).

Entry prompt from the Emory Libraries Service Division's draft workbook for business planning (2008)

The lofty third floor of the Commons houses many of the library's more public services, including the Jones Room, a large, wired conference room that serves as the primary and high-profile lecture space for the library and other campus departments, as well as for library committee meetings and library-sponsored events. The Schatten Gallery, formerly the main entrance to the library, is a staging area for receptions and exhibitions, especially for items from the Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Book Library (MARBL); the Schatten Corridor

(the hallway connecting this older part of the building to the Commons) is also regularly used for exhibitions. The third floor also includes classrooms for bibliographic instruction, plus a new books area – a small, circular, domed, and highly resonant space between the Schatten Corridor and the main room of the Commons third floor.



Figure 6: Atrium and hallway along the Level 3 Quiet Study Area, across from the Circulation Desk. Copyright 2008 by Emory Libraries. Reprinted with permission.

The Circulation department sits across from a computing and study space, which the library recently designated a “Quiet Study Area.” Tall windows line the exterior wall of this space, offering a view onto the patio outside and the wooded gulley beyond. A wide corridor running the length of the building separates this area from the Circulation Desk. In the center of this corridor, an atrium opens to the 2nd floor below. Through the atrium one can hear conversations in the entrance and the clunking sound of the turnstiles as people walk through, or beeps when someone’s card doesn’t register. Within the study area, however,

when conversations and activity are low, when printers and photocopiers are not churning out paper, and when fingers are not tapping on keyboards, the ever-present sound is mechanical: the mid-range hum of the building's heating and cooling system and the faint, high-pitched, buzzing tone of the fluorescent lighting.

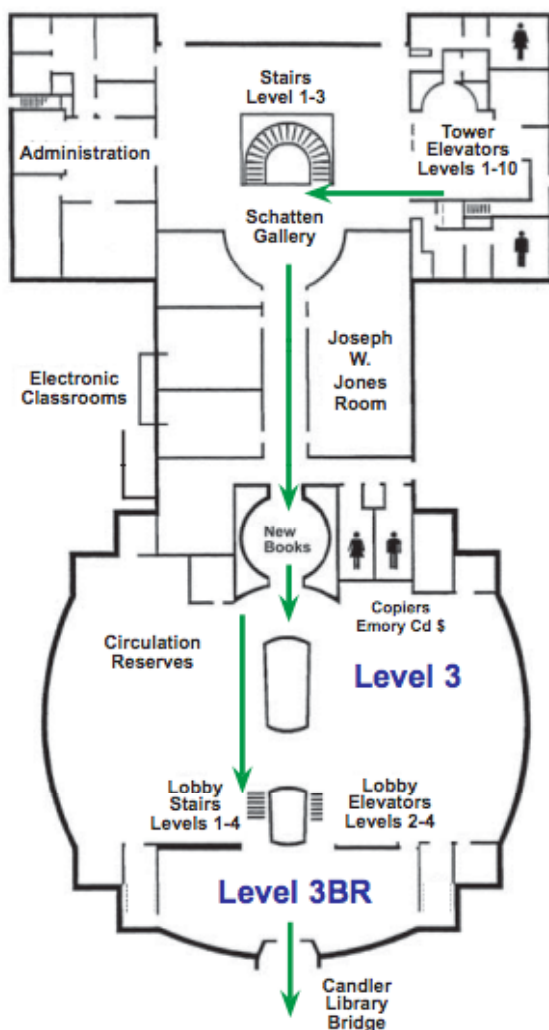


Figure 7: Map of Commons, Level 3, from “Robert W. Woodruff Library: A Walking Tour and Resource Locator,” by Emory Libraries, 2006. Reprinted with permission.

The “Quiet Study Area” itself is composed of four computing cluster stations (four to six computing stations per cluster, with each station composed of a computer, keyboard, mouse, and two flat-screen monitors), photocopying machines and printers, a Technical Information

Desk, and an array of tables and chairs. Along the opposite walls are two glass-enclosed Group Study Rooms. Signs posted on the computing stations (but not on the tables) indicate to users the nature of the space and behavior expected of users in order to maintain it:

Level 3 InfoCommons is a **Quiet Study Area**. Thank you for keeping noise to a minimum by

- Silencing your cell phones
- Working quietly

Group study and collaborative workstations are available for use on Levels 1 and 2 of the InfoCommons. If you have any questions or concerns in regards to this policy, please contact **Library Security, (404) 727-2960**.



Figure 8: View of the atrium, looking down from Level 3 to Level 2. Copyright 2008 by Emory Libraries. Reprinted with permission.

Keeping quiet, building consensus

The sound of tapping keyboards is constant, at computing stations and on laptops.

A young man typing into a laptop at one of the large tables wears a set of headphones – flat, circular discs. If he’s listening to music or if he’s listening to nothing at all, it’s impossible to tell; no sound escapes. The few people here, this Monday morning in early April, sit as far apart as possible. Several people sit at tables by themselves.

Though working separately, two younger women sitting at one computing cluster appear to be together. One rolls her chair away from the carrel slightly, leaning towards the other and speaking quietly. Their conversation is brief. As the leaning student talks, her companion turns back to her computer screen several times, and never fully faces the speaker. Gradually, the talker backs up a bit, begins to orient her body toward her computer screen; as she does so, her companion smiles and turns to face her a little longer – as though gently, friendly, subtly cuing her that she would like to end the conversation and get back to work. They return to facing their computer screens.

When a few minutes later, one whispers a question to the other, they both remain in their computer-facing postures, only inclining their heads slightly to talk and to hear. The conversation lasts only a few seconds, and they’re back to work.

A young man walks in. After walking around the computing stations, he heads into one of the group study rooms and shuts the door. Inside, another student sits by herself at a computer screen. He leans over to look at the screen. They talk, but nothing can be heard through the heavy door and thick window glass.

On the other side of the room, a young man working in the other group study room opens the door and walks out. The room is empty.

No groups are working here right now, and hardly anyone talks, even the people who are here together. Conversations that do occur are quiet and short.

How different from a few nights ago, when I sat in this same location and watched and heard nearly constant interactions.

There was an event in the library that night, a celebration of the opening of the Schatten Gallery exhibit on the Danowski Poetry Collection. Conversations rumbled up from the lobby and stairwell, as Friends of the Library, faculty, library personnel, and other guests, in bowties and silk scarves, vests and hats, made their way to the Jones Room in staggered groups. No one was particularly noisy, but most of them were having small, two-person conversations as they walked, and their voices along with their movement accumulated into something greater.

A man sitting at a computer workstation near the corridor wore neon orange earplugs in his ears. During a brief break in his work, as he talked and laughed animatedly with someone else, the earplugs were out. Two or three minutes later, his friend had left; the earplugs were back in and he was working at his computer.

[Echoes of the Danowski event waft into the Quiet Study Areas, as more of the guests congregate in the Jones Room. The sound of conversation is constant but amorphous, a gray cloudiness of voices, cut through at moments by a flash of woman's laughter or a particularly sharp and high-pitched phrase uttered with a lilting Southern accent.]

The man wearing earplugs walked over to the printer, plugs removed. He printed something, then headed back to the computer station, picked up his backpack, and left.

Two undergraduate women sitting at a table next to the windows, who were initially working quietly together, over time became a social hub. At first conversations were sporadic and focused on their work. One person would leave, someone else would show up, but there were never more than one or two people sitting at the table.

[Clapping from the Jones Room. A pause, the muffled voice of someone speaking, then another short round of applause.]

Then there were three people sitting at the table, one eating a salad, and the socializing began in earnest. Books still lay open on the table, but one student rolled through items on her Blackberry screen and chatted while another ate. Soon they were joined by two more people.

[Laughter. The Danowski people are exiting the building in small groups.]

With five people at the table, the conversation became constant, and merged with a conversation at the next table, where a young woman with long hair and black velvet-y lounge pants had just sat down with a guy doing math problems and working with a calculator.

The dedicated Group Study Rooms, located at the margins of the Commons, have become the *de facto* reserve of individual students seeking quiet space to do their work. Though policy dictates that these rooms be used by three or more students, and though some students occasionally do use them for group work, I regularly observed students studying there alone. Rarely was the room's glass front a window into an animated interaction between several (or even two) people. Even when there was more than one student, interaction was minimal or

nonexistent: from my vantage point, I watched the tops of heads bent over books and papers, or placid faces staring into a computer screen.

Having walked around the floors of the Commons and spent some time working in these rooms, the reason for this subversion was obvious to me: the entire Commons is a group study area. If you need a quiet place to concentrate (and especially a quiet place where you can also work on a computer), grab a group study room. The relative scarcity of the rooms (only eight in the entire Commons, with time limits on use)⁷⁹ makes them particularly valuable to undergraduates, and the closest approximation to having a locked study.⁸⁰ The quiet in these rooms is profound; add to that the minimal visual distractions, the whiteboard, and the computer, plus the ability to maintain visual contact with others, and the rooms become fairly priceless in their ability to deliver concentration, connection, and convenience. Times when the rooms tended to be empty (in the morning hours or on weekends) coincided with times when the library as a whole tended to be quieter and less busy. The implication seems to be, when the library is quiet already, there's less demand for a quiet and closed study.

Following low marks on Emory Libraries' provision of quiet space in the 2005 LIBQUAL+ assessment (Bailey, 2006), a quiet study area was designated on Level 3 of the Commons, in the computing and study area across from the Circulation Desk. Announcements were circulated to librarian liaisons, who forwarded them on to their departments' listservs. In

⁷⁹ That said, I never observed anyone being asked to leave a room because they had stayed past their allotted time, or because there were too few people using the room.

⁸⁰ How the group study rooms are actually used and valued may be overlooked in user surveys, even when user's comments are solicited. For example, in a summary report on the 2007 Emory Libraries Survey (Bailey, n.d.), one user's statement that "it'd also be nice for there to be more group study rooms," while communicating a preference for these rooms, cannot be assumed to be a preference for more *group study* areas. In fact, set alongside complaints about the noise levels in the Commons and in light of frequent use of these rooms by individuals working alone, this could arguably be read as a request for more places for *quiet study*.

addition to information about whom to contact and how to reach them with any “questions or concerns regarding this policy,” the March 2006 email message stated, “In response to student requests for a quiet work area in the library, we are pleased to announce the opening of a Quiet Study Area in the Level 3 InfoCommons at Woodruff Library. Located across from the Circulation Desk, the Quiet Study Area will offer students to opportunity [sic] to work in a placid environment with online access.”

Signs posted on computing stations in the Level 3 study area indicate that the area is a “quiet study area.” Yet this designation is either not sufficiently evident to users or respected by them. A graduate student I interviewed “used to be infuriated” because, even though the third floor area is designated quiet, “people would talk, loudly, in that section.” She wondered why it’s even designated quiet, because so much is going on there. An undergraduate rolled her eyes when I asked her about the signs on the 3rd floor designating it as a quiet area: “I think the signs are also useful in the sense that you can see them there, and if people are, you know, aggressive enough, they can motion to it. It’s kind of like your back up, where you can say, ‘Look! This tells you to be quiet so you have to be quiet.’ So it’s kind of – yeah, it’s useful in that regard but it’s not going to make it quiet enough.” She acknowledged that the library is trying to make this area a quiet space, and it is quieter than the first and second floors, but it’s not quiet enough for her to do her work. People will still work in groups there, and they’ll still have conversations.

Privatizing the Commons

Two laptops sit open at a table nearby, a pile of personal belongings to keep them company: books, notebooks, an open insulated bag and the top of a water bottle poking out, a pencil bag that reads *tout se balance*, a lanyard with a thumb drive attached, and a coat hanging off the back of the chair. The orphaned laptops are plugged into power outlets. When the owners eventually return, they carry Jazzman’s coffee cups.

Food debris litters the computer carrels of two younger women: water and Coke bottles, coffee cups, half-eaten apples, and an open yogurt container. One of the women takes a last bite of her apple then pushes the core into the yogurt container. After wiping her hands on her lap several times, she places her fingers back on the keyboard and starts typing.

When a third woman stepped away from her computer for nearly twenty minutes, she left her workspace intact – book, pile of papers, accordion file with elastic close, bottle of water, pen, and open Word document on the computer screen.

While she was gone a young man walked into the area and looked around. He stopped in front of her abandoned computing station, leaning in to read the screen, then straightened up and looked around. Students often walk through this area, scanning the room and circling the computing stations, like cars looking for a parking space. When this student eventually located an open computer, he logged in then got up to sit down with someone else at another computer a few feet away.

Another student walks in, carrying a large canvas bag, which she drops into a chair in front of a vacant computer station, then leaves. (Later, hearing a conversation at a table behind me, I will turn around and see her high-fiving a guy sitting at the next table, her bag still holding the seat in front of the unused computer.)

Across the room two computer stations are occupied, but without users: open files displayed on the computer screens, and books, papers, and other items lying about on the desk, but no people. Next to one of the computers sits an open laptop.

The student who'd been sitting at the computer next to me has disappeared, leaving her sweater, papers, and book bag. She's still logged on to the computer, but I noticed she logged out of LearnLink.

Someone else logs off a computer and leaves. An older man who was reading in a soft chair in the center of the room walks over to the computer and sits down.

A young woman with blonde hair tied in a bun sits by herself at one of the large tables, reading from a book with highlighted text and typing into her laptop. A large coffee mug from Einstein's sits on the other side of the laptop, next to a PDA and a bottle of medicine.

Soon she's joined by a young man, who earlier had been working by himself in one of the group study rooms. After depositing a pile of books beside her on the table, he strides to the nearest computing station, drops into the swivel chair, and logs in. After a few moments, the woman with the blonde bun gets up and walks over to him. He grabs her around the waist and pulls her into his lap. They kiss several times. They are not discreet, but they are also not noisy.

After awhile the man gets up and heads back to his group study room, and she continues to work at his computer, her laptop sitting closed on the table nearby, surrounded by her stuff and his.

Computer usage tends to be high, especially so during the evenings and exam time. To help users locate an available workstation from the 161 computers distributed across the four levels of the Commons, the library created a web page that tracks current computer usage (<http://web.library.emory.edu/learningcommons/usage.php>). A table at the top of this web page shows total numbers of busy and idle computers on each level alongside numerical and visual representations of percentage use for each level; the rest of the screen lists all computers by level and whether or not they are “busy” or “free.” Computers register as “busy” when someone is logged on, whether or not anyone is actually sitting at the computer working. As I have observed and several interviewees pointed out, people may take a break, get a snack, even head out of the library for an hour or more, leaving their computer logged on and their stuff sitting out, to “hold” their place.

Level 3: Mezzanine and Bridge

One of the things we noticed when we first opened up the Center for Library and Information Resources is that—We had planned to renovate Candler down the road, didn’t know what Candler was gonna be when we renovated it, but—So there was that, basically that mezzanine floor attached to a bridge which was closed at the time. And it became very—it was really interesting, ‘cause I would walk around the library every day, sort of just seeing how people work or what people are doing. And the two things that were very popular very quickly were these little group study rooms, which ended up being places that people would go and close the door and just study by themselves or sometimes would have conversations, and the Mezzanine, which became clearly a sacred, quiet space. We didn’t have any computers up there because we didn’t have enough money to put the computers there. And people didn’t want computers there.

Interview with Woodruff Library reference librarian

A short stairway leads up from the main 3rd floor area to a small study area, just outside a skywalk leading to the Matheson Reading Room. This mezzanine and the adjoining bridge differ from the rest of the 3rd floor Commons study area, in part by their lack of computers. Furnishings here are a mixture of large tables and chairs, study carrels, and cushioned chairs

with combination footstools and coffee tables. Soft chairs and low tables along the sides of the skywalk are accompanied by floor lamps with reading lights. Windows along the edge of the mezzanine and the length of the skywalk offer a view of Bowden Hall, the Quadrangle, Callaway Hall, and the creek on one side, Emory Hospital on the other.

Before Matheson opened, the mezzanine was “the end of the road, a cul-de-sac,” as one librarian described it to me, and it was the quietest study space in the Commons. Observing that it’s still a quiet place, he explained, “It’s identified and self-regulated with a purpose.” By this, he meant that students recognize it as a quiet place and they maintain it for themselves.

Somewhere else

Early in the evening on this Thursday in late March, the sun is setting but it is still bright outside. From the skywalk connecting the Commons and Candler Library I can see the Quadrangle, where people walk between Callaway and Bowden Halls and lounge on the grass. I find myself staring out the window, watching a woman who just walked out of Callaway reunite with her Golden Retriever waiting outside. She unties his leash from the railing, then bends over and scratches his head and face while he wags his tail and wiggles. With effort, I turn away from their delight in each other to focus on my work.

I look around to see who else is sitting in the skywalk tonight. In the next set of chairs on this side of the skywalk, the occupant has just taken a phone call. He talks quietly, slowly, and I think I hear him say, “Let me call you in about ten minutes.” The call lasts less than a minute. I kept watching him as he was talking, trying to hear what he was saying, and he started glancing back. When he leaves in ten minutes, he will glance at me more than once as he heads out of the skywalk and into the library.

Another person faces me on the opposite end of the hall, a paperback book open in his lap. When I look over at him, I find he is staring back at me. I look down. When I look up again, he’s staring out the window.

A young woman sitting on my side of the skywalk, a few seats down, has just answered her cell phone: a logistical call, lasting just a minute. “It’s probably going to be, like, eight.... Dude! I have work to do, and I have to shower... I would come sooner if I could, but I can’t. ...Okay, awesome... Okay, awesome. I’ll see you then.... Bye.” She sighs, turning her attention back to her laptop and a stack of stapled papers.

After a few minutes, a young man in a plaid shirt walks up and starts talking to her. Several minutes later, as their conversation ends, she packs up to leave and he takes over her seat.

The man who was staring out the window is now asleep.

The student in the plaid shirt has just answered his phone; I didn't hear it ring: "What's up, man? What's up?... Yeah... Yes... No... No... Yeah... All right... Guess I'm gonna go up to the house then... All right, will see ya."

Across the aisle from me, an undergraduate female in a Dooley Week shirt is talking on the phone. I assume she answered a call, since I didn't see her dial, but I didn't hear her phone ring, either. She talks in a low voice, for just over a minute.

"Hey... Not much, I'm in the library. How 'bout you?... I can shove my stuff in there... No, it's cool I have my backpack with me.... No, I don't.... Okay.... Do you want me to meet you? I can meet you outside... I'm pretty sure he's coming yeah... Yeah, we're fine. (laughs)... Okay, bye.... Bye."

She gathers up her things and leaves.



Figure 9: Seating and windows along the skywalk between the Commons Level 3 Mezzanine and the Matheson Reading Room. Copyright 2009 by Elizabeth Milewicz.

MATHESON READING ROOM

When we opened up Matheson the thought was, well, there's the sort of vision of the grand reading room that every great library has to have, and so we have to have that status image. But it's been fascinating to see because it has become a very protected space that the students have made their own and protect themselves. And there are clearly floors and areas on floors where people go to be seen and to socialize, and Matheson is a quiet study space.

Interview with Woodruff Library reference librarian

The Matheson Reading Room is approximately two stories tall, with arched windows on one side letting in natural light. Bookshelves, floor lamps, and cushioned leather couches and chairs fill the alcoves on either end. A few desktop computers and a printer are positioned in carrels in the center of the room, on either side of the Service Desk, and a photocopier is positioned just beyond each of the alcoves. These are the extent of the room's electronic resources, and, from my observations, they are infrequently used. The electrical outlets at the base of the table lamps, where people can plug in their laptops, see much more activity. A Newspapers Reading Room, with current paper editions of major national and international newspapers, opens into the hallway that runs along the outside of the reading room. A guard sits at the Security Desk at the other end of the hallway, at the top of a stairwell that connects the floors of Candler Library, and monitors the turnstiles where people swipe their university ID cards or sign in to enter the library.

Inside the reading room a small sign at the unoccupied main desk states the rules for the room in (mostly) serif font; the typeface varies from rule to rule, changing color as well. "A Quiet Level should be maintained at all times," the sign tells the reader, and that if individuals want to study as a group, the place to do it is in one of the group study rooms. It also tells them that ringing cell phones and cell phone conversations are not permitted, and

that drinks are permissible in approved containers but food is not, “due to preservation and housekeeping reasons.”

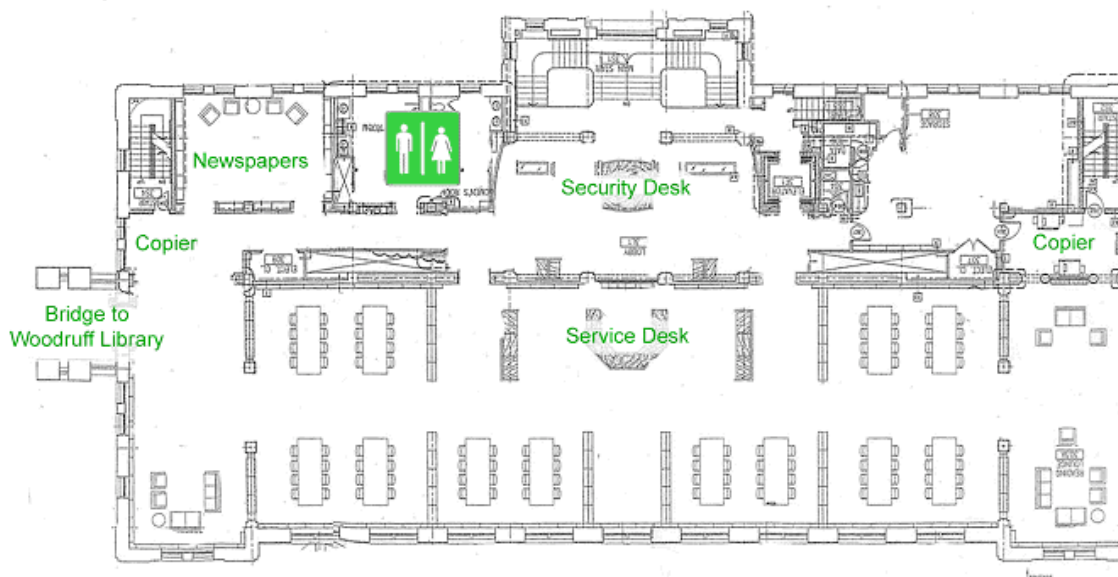


Figure 10: Map showing layout of Matheson Reading Room, on the third floor of Candler Hall. Copyright 2005 by Emory Libraries. Reprinted with permission.

The acoustical aliveness of the open space and hard surfaces (wooden tables and chairs, marble floor) was designed to forestall superfluous sound. According to Nancy Bayly, facilities planning coordinator for Emory College and a member of the Candler Library renovation project team, “We wanted it to be a loud, boomy place, so that people would be quiet. It’s a reading room, not a conversation room” (Parvin, 2004).

Intense quiet

A Thursday afternoon in early February. Sunlight bathes the reading room, but the chandeliers overhead are turned on, as are most of the table lamps. Along the walls small lights at the top of each periodical shelf cast a bluish glow on the stacks of magazines below.

A student worker, wearing jeans and earbuds, rolls a bookcart into the room, the thrumming of the smooth-rolling wheels echoing insistently but

gently. She smiles and stops to talk with a student sitting at another table (flat-soled shoes kicked off under the table, jeans with tears at the knees). Their conversation is quiet – inaudible only a few feet away – and brief: maybe a minute passes before the student worker wheels her cart away, carrying new issues of journals to be shelved. The thrumming sound rolls away with her.

A young man at the next table reads from a stapled sheaf of papers, his feet propped up in the chair next to him. He adjusts his legs, and the chair scrapes against the floor– a sharp squeal, barely half a second. The room resumes its quiet hum.

As in so many other spaces in the library, there is always a sound – constant and low and mechanical. Here, it takes on the character of a rushing whisper, a blowing sound, low-pitched. Other sounds sporadically punctuate the room’s stillness. The clicking of laptop keyboards. A cough. Hard-heeled shoes pounding against on the floor. Papers rustling.



Figure 11: Woman wearing headsets and working at a laptop in the Matheson Reading Room. Copyright 2008 by Emory Libraries. Reprinted with permission.

People sit as far from each other as possible, on diagonally opposite sides of the long rectangular tables. We all work alone, and almost all of us have laptops. Even the young man reading the stapled papers has a laptop, closed on the table beside him. Another young man in a polo shirt

through a hardcover book, scanning the text with his finger, then moves his hands to his laptop, his fingers tap-tap-tapping swiftly, his eyes darting between the open book and the glowing screen. At a table across the aisle, a young woman with curly auburn hair works from a laptop only – no papers, books, or magazines open in front of her.

A clear plastic cup sits on the table next to her, mostly full, of what appears to be an iced latte, and next to that, an open bag of potato chips. She pauses in her typing to take a sip from her drink. Ice cubes clunk against the side of the cup as she lifts it up, then sets it back. Her fingers return to the keyboard of the red-and-silver laptop, and she stares intently into the screen. Click-click, she types. Click-click click-click-click.

A young man wearing a yellow baseball cap sleeps at the next table, his head on his arm, which is stretched across his open book and closed laptop. He is still. He does not snore.



Figure 12: Interior photograph of the original Candler Library reading room, prior to the 1950s renovation. Reprinted with permission.

Emory University archivist Ginger Cain attributes the reading room's original design to a conscious goal of "creating a classical, elegant, temple to learning in Candler Library.... something that was intellectually appealing" (Adams, 1999). The high flat ceiling, the hard floors, and the columns lining the walls of the reading room were certainly suggestive of Ancient Greece, a connection reinforced by the plaster frieze in the Delivery Hall, "encircling the four walls of the room half-way between the floor and the skylight," that depicted "the triumphal entry of Alexander the Great into Babylon" (G. Cain, 2003, p. 2). For a university newly established and possessing close to 100,000 books (a far cry from the million volumes this new building and its future extensions were intended to hold), the image of Alexander and the implied reference to the power and knowledge of his reign suggest that this space was intended to project a grander sense of self than the university currently possessed. Certainly, the "triumph" of this frieze did not reflect Emory University's status in the academic world at that time. As Cain (2003) speculates, "It just might have been that the frieze, with its classical theme, was selected to reflect and reinforce – and indeed to make real – the lofty and scholarly aspirations of the new university and its state-of-the-art library" (p. 3). The aesthetics of the reading room and the library portended greatness, as surely as Alexander's march into Babylon foreshadowed greater power and knowledge. At the same time, the distinctive style of the interior design connected the university to a distinct, Western intellectual heritage.

The parlor and the den

It is a Friday morning in mid-April, and I am nestled into a soft, black-leather chair in one of the reading room alcoves, my back to the window and the shelves and my face towards the hallway foyer that connects the reading room to the skywalk. Behind me, natural light slips between the cracks in the window blinds, casting sharp lines of shadow and sunlight on the floor and furniture around me. I take my jacket off and lay it over the

arm of the matching sofa to my right, which is also well padded. An ottoman in front of me and a power strip on the floor nearby, I have all I need to do my work today: electricity for my laptop, a comfortable seat, and a place to put my feet up. I lean over and pull the power strip towards my chair, then plug my laptop in.

A young man steps into the room – an undergraduate, I assume, by the looks of him: a buzzed haircut; white button-down shirt with a rather bold red-and-orange striped tie, black dress pants, and sneakers, and carrying a well-worn backpack. He walks towards this seating area a bit uncertainly, looking at me then at the couch directly next to my chair, but not making eye contact. I'm surprised to see him set his bag down at the couch; usually people pick a seat as far as possible from others already sitting in the area. My jacket is lying on the arm of the sofa, so (I think) technically that sofa is part of my space, too. Why doesn't he take the loveseat across from me?



Figure 13: View of the restored Matheson Reading Room from an alcove. Copyright 2008 by Emory University Libraries. Reprinted with permission.

Ah. I see. Because he's going to take a nap. He lies down, settling his head against the soft arm on the opposite end of the sofa from me and wriggling his shoulders into the seat cushions. Though he could probably stretch his frame the full length of the sofa, he curls his legs up slightly, his half-closed eyes looking down the couch to where his sneakers almost touch my jacket. I watch for a few seconds as the tips of his shoes barely graze the

jacket, then reach over and move my jacket from the sofa arm to the ottoman in front of me. He stretches once more, turning toward the back of the sofa as he does so, then is still.

There are always parents and prospective students visiting the campus, it seems, and today is no exception. An older woman with long blonde hair, large tote bags on both her shoulders, enters the foyer to the reading room slightly behind two fair-haired teenagers. The boy and girl talk quietly to one another and walk slowly into the Reading Room, and the older woman trails after them, stopping occasionally to look at magazines in the shelves along the wall. After a few minutes, they all saunter back out and towards the Newspapers Reading Room. A few minutes later, when they reappear, heading more deliberately now to the pedestrian bridge, I notice the boy and girl both hold large portfolio-sized pamphlets: on the cover, the word “Emory” stands out against a scene of blue sky and bright green grass.

The young man asleep on the couch just snored. I think the sound woke him up: he wriggled a little then stopped. Now the snoring is starting up again, nasal and high-pitched but not very loud. How long will this go on before I or someone else says something? It’s 11:29...11:30...11:31, and now the snoring has subsided slightly.

A young woman in a blue sundress, her hair long and reddish brown, walks into the reading room from the skywalk, accompanied by an elderly couple and a middle-aged woman (her mother and grandparents, I suppose). Looking around at the room, she beams and says to them, quietly but excitedly, “This is *nice!*” She exudes a sense of hesitant happiness: her smile is relaxed but slight, and though she walks easily she keeps turning to the others, matching their movements, watching their expressions. They all seem pleased as they look around, the elderly couple more so than the middle-aged woman, who frowns slightly when she turns her attention to the open tri-folded brochure in her hands.

As they pass by the young man asleep on the sofa, I hear someone chuckle softly and catch the word “sleeping.” They walk into the reading room and stroll around the shelves.

The young man rolls over onto his stomach. The snoring stops.

In the 1950s, thirty years after the original reading room’s construction, it was renovated.

The library’s collection had inevitably expanded, and tall bookshelves added to the reading room “made both window and chandelier lighting inadequate” while still failing to resolve the problem of space (G. Cain, 2003, p. 3). Though plans were already drawn up for extending the library, there was not money enough to execute them. The less costly, but aesthetically less appealing, option was to bisect the reading room, creating an extra floor.

According to the memoirs of then-library director Guy Lyle (1981), the deconstruction of the grand reading room in 1952, though successfully defended as serving the practical and institutional goals of the university, initially met with stolid opposition from “the critics on campus who were against all change” and who believed he “was about to ruin the aesthetics of the Asa Griggs Candler Library and ought to quit” (p. 174). Lyle succeeded in his project by pointing out that, by dividing the room into two separate floors, the library would gain valuable collection space, reduce the costs of cooling and lighting, and consequently increase usage of the building – all of which are still primary concerns for university library directors.



Figure 14: Candler Library, following the 1950s renovation that leveled the reading room. Reprinted with permission.

Photographs of the early “magnificent” reading room of the 1930s and the reading room as it appeared after the 1950s renovation, illustrate the shifting priorities of the university

regarding this space. Visually, the two rooms are vastly different. In the original reading room (see Figure 12 above) chandeliers hang from the high ceiling, and natural light shines in from tall arched windows on one side and smaller windows in the alcove. Bookshelves line the edges of the room, leaving the floor primarily occupied by tables and chairs. A wide and empty aisle divides the room and the lines of evenly spaced tables. The renovated room (Figure 14, above), while still filled with study tables, is one-story tall. The once empty aisle is now filled with rectangular support beams running the length of the room. Glowing fluorescent lights line the ceiling and reflect on the tables below. They are the sole source of light in the room.

Image conscious

Bwweez! Bwweez! A high-pitched, shrill buzzing somewhere to my right. As I look around, I see that there's some maintenance work being done in the reading room today. Two men have a ladder stationed next to one of the windows, hand-held electric drills lying on the table beside them, and they're holding thin plastic discs covered with bright-blue protective film. As best I can tell from here, they're screwing the discs into the tops of the bookshelves, just in front of the tall windows, equidistant from the edges of the window frame. What are those discs for?

Someone's cell phone is ringing. It belongs to a maintenance man, who answers it, cupping the phone to his ear and leaning against the ladder as he talks. I can't hear the conversation from where I'm sitting, almost 40 yards away. The call doesn't last long, less than a minute.

The young man napping on the sofa (who I'm now mentally referring to as Joe Casual) rolls over and, still lying down, reaches his right arm into his backpack sitting on the floor next to the couch and pulls out a laptop. Lying now on his back, completely stretched out, he has his left arm bent behind his head and his right arm held (it seems to me) uncomfortably close to his chest, his right hand working the mousepad and keyboard.

I look up as one of the maintenance men walks over. He sets down two orange power drills, very gently, on a low bookshelf. I smile at him as he does this, and he smiles back – tightly, it seems to me. (Does he smile tightly because he is tense, or did my own smile seem forced?) He walks away, coming back a few moments later to set some bubble wrap on the shelf, and when our eyes meet again, I smile (more warmly, I hope) and ask him what they're installing. "We're putting lenses over the lights. They just

came in. We installed lights in the base of the windows over spring break, and the lenses just came in.” He says this a couple of times – that they installed the lights over spring break, *but* the lenses just came in so they’re installing them now – and it occurs to me that there may be some apology and defense behind this statement (i.e., we wouldn’t be doing this now and disturbing you, normally we’d do this when no one’s here, but the lenses didn’t come in until now).

I’m surprised to hear that there are lights at the base of the windows, which would basically shine upward and not actually illuminate any bookshelves or workspace. He says that these lights are for parties and special events that are held in the Reading Room, and that if you see the windows at night when the lights are turned on, especially from outside, they’re really pretty.

The maintenance man walks away. Meanwhile, still stretched out on the sofa and staring into his laptop screen, Joe Casual has just picked his nose and now is rubbing boogers off his finger over the floor. I can’t believe what I’m seeing. My face turned towards my laptop screen, I keep glancing up in disbelief. Ten minutes go by, with him picking his nose and rubbing his fingers, and me surreptitiously watching in astonishment. Finally, he closes the laptop and slips it back into his bag, then rolls back over onto his side, his face turned to the inside of the sofa, his arms clutching his sides.

As I sit here marveling at how uninhibited he is about relaxing in this room, I look down at my own bare feet, which I’ve slipped out of my shoes so I can sit cross-legged in the chair. I’m acting rather at ease myself.

The 1950s renovation of the Candler Library reading room highlights some abiding and often conflicting concerns of the university (and of universities in general): the demand for adequate functional space for the maintenance and advancement of academic goals, and the desire to maintain the aesthetic appeal of the campus and its buildings, frequently demonstrated through the preservation of open space. Though the gutting of the reading room favored the functional uses of space far more than aesthetics, the original creation of the room in the 1930s promoted the aesthetic functions of space as well: a place that could communicate the classical elegance, the power, and the intellectual wealth of Alexandria.

The \$17 million restoration of the reading room in 2003 (made possible in large part through the beneficence of Marjorie Andersen Matheson, in the name of her husband, William) was explicitly an attempt to “reclaim the grandeur” of the original space. Three-quarters of a

century after Candler Library was built, Emory University was no longer a small university struggling to fill its shelves. It was, instead, a nationally ranked research university, whose most recent previous library projects were the construction of a technology-intensive Commons and a pedestrian bridge, linking this modern space to the original library. The reading room restoration completed this link, connecting new to old both physically (through the bridge) and symbolically (through the re-creation of Emory's past). The room did not simply reference the grandeur of Alexander; now it referenced its own proud history, further reinforcing an intellectual heritage of lofty aspirations and triumphs.

JAZZMAN'S

We want to make the Emory Libraries the intellectual commons of the campus. To feed the mind and spirit, we must offer as many easily accessible printed and digital resources as possible. In the 21st century library, we ensure that we feed their bodies as well.

Charles Forrest, Emory Libraries Director of Facilities Management and Planning (Emory Libraries, 2008, p. 46)

Adding a coffee shop put Woodruff Library in the company of many other campus libraries seeking new ways of enticing students into the building. Alison Barclay, marketing director of Emory's food services division, cited this as a key reason for locating Jazzman's in the library: "In order to get students to use the facility, libraries need to provide additional services. In this case, it's coffee" (Rangus, 2005). Despite the perceived benefits of increased traffic, however, librarians were not in agreement on where, or even whether, to place a coffee shop in the library. Concerns about noise and food led arguments against this

addition, and eventually pushed the decision to place Jazzman's on the first floor, where the sound at least might be more easily contained.⁸¹

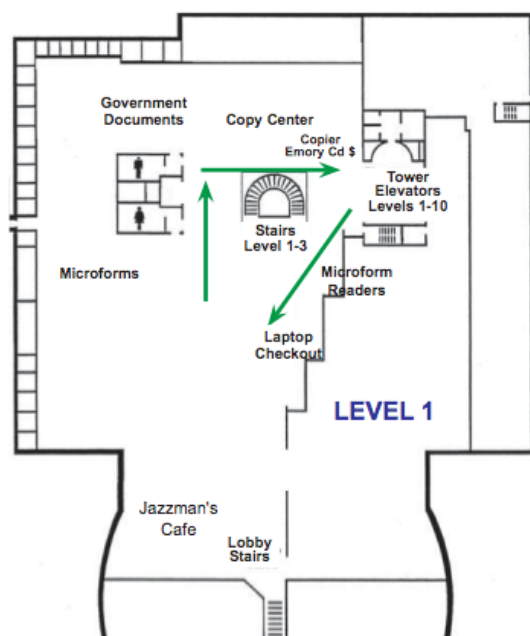


Figure 15: Map of Commons, Level 1, from “Robert W. Woodruff Library: A Walking Tour and Resource Locator.” Copyright 2006 by Emory Libraries. Reprinted with permission.

Located at the foot of the stairway descending from the main entrance of Woodruff Library, Jazzman's is reasonably accessible from the main floor of the library and the exterior quadrangle. The café is enclosed in glass, making it visible to users in other areas of the 1st floor but muffling the sound from within, and includes a bistro area and a lounge with soft seating. Other areas of the 1st floor within sight of Jazzman's are computing stations, the microforms readers and collection, long tables and study carrels, and a help desk, where students can check out laptop computers for use in the library.

⁸¹ In interviews librarians noted not just this internal debate over whether or not add a coffee shop but also some external questioning as well, when Emory's Chief Financial Officer questioned the proposed renovations to Level 1, since it wasn't clear whether these were appropriate to a library.

Much of the public area of Woodruff Library's first floor is populated by shelving and cabinets for government documents and microforms. This fact is easily obscured, however, by the copious desks, tables, chairs, and computing stations and by Jazzman's itself, sitting along the main traffic area and lending the floor a feeling of openness. The microform shelves are slightly higher than waist level, so the back wall and its group study rooms can be seen from the main thoroughfare. The towering Government Documents shelves, positioned in a corner of the floor and behind the bathrooms, easily go unnoticed.



Figure 16: Jazzman's Cafe in Woodruff Library. Copyright 2008 by Emory Libraries. Reprinted with permission.

Jazzman's is partially enclosed by large glass windows, giving people inside a view of the hallway leading off from the entrance stairwell and the microforms computing area, and allowing people outside Jazzman's an easy view of who's there or how crowded it is.

Jazzman's is divided into two main areas: the café and the lounge. In the café, bistro tables

and chairs fill half of the room, and a bench seat hugs two sides of the glass wall. Drink and snack coolers along the wall hum and whirr, and overhead the sound system keeps up a steady rhythm of jazz music. This soundscape is punctuated by the high-pitched buzz and hiss of the blender and cappuccino machine (located behind the cashier's counter) – sounds amplified by the hard surfaces of the glass walls and linoleum floor.



Figure 17: Lounge area adjacent to Jazzman's in Woodruff Library. Copyright 2008 by Emory Libraries. Reprinted with permission.

Sound is slightly muffled in the carpeted lounge, where clusters of cloth-padded seats with built-in swivel desks encircle chunky cylindrical coffee tables, serving double-duty as footstools. The furniture seems both muted and loud, its earth-tone fabrics of muddy oranges and reds, olive greens and navy patterned with large geometric shapes. Additional bistro tables, chairs, and a padded bench line the back wall. Windows in the adjacent wall look out onto a wooded hill, where sunlight seeps in, filtered through thickets of arching

bushes and overhanging tree limbs. The jazz music on the sound system is less discernible here, as one moves further towards the back of the room and away from the café. Directly across from the café, in the front of the lounge area, vending machines pulsate constantly, drowning out the jazz for anyone sitting near them.

Slow start

Morning in Jazzman's, and the traffic is light. Jazz music plays faintly on the sound system, loudly enough to make out the notes if one is attending to it, but otherwise easily ignored. Much louder is the sound of the compressor for the beverage coolers: two large ones at the main entrance – one branded for Coca-Cola, the other for Odwalla – maintain a constant, low-pitched, pulsing whirr. Occasionally, the food cooler next to the cashier counter kicks on, its drone slightly higher pitched but less pulsating.

The sharp, distorted buzz of a blender cuts through and momentarily drowns out the regular hum of the room as a Jazzman's barista prepares a frozen beverage. The customer addressed her by name when he came in, and spent a minute or two deliberating what type of beverage he would order today.

It's early in the spring semester, and midway through this Friday morning, around 9:00 AM. Jazzman's has been open an hour. Most of the people here, sitting far apart, work alone. None appear fazed by the constant sound of the jazz playing on the speakers or the vending machines and coolers humming.

In the lounge area the solitary readers have each claimed a cluster of chairs for themselves, their belongings strewn over the coffee tables and adjacent chairs. In one cluster, a woman with stringy blonde hair spoons out something whitish and thick from a round plastic container with "Take Me" written on it in black marker. Sipping occasionally from the water bottle and the Jazzman's coffee cup sitting on the coffee table, she writes on the papers stacked on the armchair desk swiveled in front of her. Two other young women sit in the lounge, at separate clusters of seats, sipping coffee and reading from paperback books, their bulky bags resting in the chairs beside them.

A phone rings behind the counter. The cashier can just barely be heard talking over the sound of the coolers.

In the café area, an older man in a button-down pinstripe shirt and navy sweater sits at a bistro table along the café wall, his back to the window, his face towards the cashier's counter. His trim mustache is graying faster than his short brown hair, and he wears eyeglasses. Frowning into the laptop on the table in front of him, he lifts a coffee cup to his mouth and takes a sip.

Along the other glass wall and also facing in, a young woman reads from a book in her lap, the remnants of her breakfast still spread on the table in front of her: a paper Jazzman's coffee cup with lid, the waxed paper used to wrap a bagel or a pastry, a couple of wadded napkins. She glances up regularly at a couple sitting and talking at a bistro table in the middle of the café. She doesn't smile or frown, just looks up at them from time to time, then back to the book in her lap.

The only people talking in here – the only people here sitting together – are a pair of undergraduates at a bistro table in the middle of the café. The woman, her dark hair pulled back into a loose ponytail, talks animatedly to the light-haired man across the table from her. After chatting about the classes in their major and minor, and about a specific class for which they have books open and spread out on the table, they clear away their work, unpack the sandwiches they've just bought, and start to seriously gossip: about how he sounds so Southern, the in-common friends that he has classes with, and the details of a recent conflict with her roommate and her roommate's boyfriend.

The mustachioed man staring into his laptop looks up from time to time, frowning in the direction of the chatting couple and shaking his head. Soon, he packs up his things and leaves.

After Jazzman's opening in fall 2005, the *Academic Exchange*, a campus publication reporting news and opinions of Emory faculty on a range of intellectual and academic issues, discussed the new coffee shop as its lead story on the changing library. Titled "Library Past, Library Present: The Age and Angst of Digitization" (Franklin, 2005-2006), the article depicted Jazzman's as a harbinger of the new digital library, positioning it in opposition to a dusty past of card catalogs and weighty tomes and alongside a present and future of immediate access to mutable content.

On September 6, Emory's Woodruff library celebrated one of its newest and potentially most influential acquisitions. Not the monumental Danowski collection that arrived in more than 1,800 boxes, or the 1,600-volume Ingall Sanskrit collection. No, the muted hullabaloo accompanied the grand opening of Jazzman's, a coffee bar on the first floor....

Across the hall in a locked room, a relic silently bears witness to the brash newcomer: the old card catalogue, gathering time in solid wood cabinets that stretch along an entire wall, their rows of diminutive drawers sketching an even, geometric rhythm. From their hand-typed contents—unaltered since March 31, 1997—

emanate the musty smell sure to spark academic memories for anyone schooled when a mouse was still just a rodent and windows didn't crash, they simply broke.

Here then, separated by a few feet, is a forgotten icon of library past, and a mocha-scented emblem of library present and future—a place where students and faculty can jack into networks awash in information tumbling in from far flung origins and never touch a book; a place where food and conversation—eating and talking in the library!—are the norm, and where content, like food and drink, is a marketable commodity to be consumed, replaced, and even altered unpredictably.

The author, Emory University Health Sciences Library director Sandra Franklin, uses Jazzman's as a catalyst for examining how the changing landscape of libraries – more to the point, the digitization of information – impacts scholars and their work. Humanists' concerns constellate around the future of the book and of the library's print collections, which are essential to their work, and social scientists also point to the value of the stacks as well, a place where they regularly discover authors and ideas they hadn't expected in the course of retrieving books. For those in the sciences, however (which includes Franklin's constituency), digitized information is a godsend, printed texts, a waste of time, and the physical library, virtually obsolete. The sciences, particularly the health sciences, account for the greatest portion of Emory's prestige and wealth, and thus carry considerable weight in budget decisions, including how to balance or prioritize the considerable costs of database and journal subscriptions, acquisitions of books and monographs, development of special collections, and storage and access to print materials. As a college and university that, following the \$105 million gift by the Woodruff brothers in 1979,⁸² has moved rapidly up the rankings of national Research 1 and Ivy League schools, Emory has experienced considerable growth in its library, and now faces the inevitable challenge of where and how

⁸² This gift of Coca-Cola Company stock from George W. Woodruff and Robert W. Woodruff (long-time president of The Coca-Cola Company and the individual for whom university's main library is named) was, at the time, "the largest single donation bestowed on an educational institution in the nation's history" (according the *New Georgia Encyclopedia*) and helped Emory to catapult itself into the ranks of the nation's top research and liberal arts institutions.

to store its growing collection. Add to that the desire to build unique and extensive holdings of rare books and manuscripts, and to continue to provide all its students and faculty with the critical resources they need in their field, and the library faces a crisis – not simply in budgeting funds, but in prioritizing values.

Most of the faculty and librarians interviewed for this article, and the article's author as well, served on the 2005-2006 Faculty Senate's Library Policy Committee. Among the twelve issues listed in their annual report to the administration, the two given the most description and emphasis were the related concerns of dwindling storage space for print collections and ongoing and rising costs for both digital and print resources (Library Policy Committee, 2006). The committee framed these issues as critical to Emory's aspirations, especially the need for strategic planning to support the development of print and digital collections, by referencing "the vital role that libraries play in the research and teaching missions of the University and in any hope for its attaining the University's long-term goals." "Building an adequate library takes much time," the committee reminded, "and Emory is necessarily at a disadvantage nationally, since it essentially only became a major research institution in the last quarter-century." With costs of digital resources rising and with print materials continuing to be of critical value, funds are needed not simply to maintain and grow the library's collections but to modify and create facilities to store them as well.

Fits and starts

A two-year-old boy bounces on the bench next to a bistro table, where three women sit with laptops and coffees, discussing fellowship applications. The boy's mother asks if he'd like some water or juice, then heads to the counter, while the other two women talk to the young boy.

"Would you like some granola bar?"

"Yes!" he trumpets, enthusiastically, reaching over and breaking off a piece. Chewing thoughtfully, he picks up a small toy airplane sitting next to him

on the bench and waves it around in the air in wide, elliptical arcs. When the boy's mother returns, he offers her some granola bar, then takes a sip from the bottle of juice that she hands him. Drinks and snacks distributed, the women return to their discussion. "I have some suggestions for your application letter..."

In padded chairs in the lounge area, just on the other side of the cashier's counter, two women sit across from each other, talking. Behind them, the cappuccino machine and the blender are running now, momentarily drowning out the sound of the jazz music, the cooler and Coke machine drones, and conversations in the other seats nearby. The older woman leans forward, her brow creasing slightly, her eyes watching closely as the soft-voiced young woman speaks. Abruptly, the older woman interrupts, apologizing, "It's really loud here. Do you mind if we move?" A few moments later they've resettled at a bistro table along the back wall of the lounge, as far from the bustle as one can get without actually leaving Jazzman's. The sounds of the coffee shop are still there, but fainter, and they resume their conversation.

"Nooo!" Wailing, the young boy clings to his mother, his head buried in her chest while she holds and gently rocks him. Across the table her two friends watch helplessly, wearing expressions of sympathy, as the boy cries and his mother soothes him, "It's okay, it's okay."

A dark-haired, bearded man at the next table, getting up to leave and hoisting his backpack onto his shoulder, says, "Wish I could do that, too, sometimes. It's okay, guy, you cry it out." The boy's mother looks up at him and smiles.

Within half an hour, the lunch rush has ended. In their corner of the lounge, the two women had been laughing and talking loudly. Slowly, their voices start to drop in volume. At one point, the older woman says to the other, "Wow, it sure got quiet in here." Looking around and seeing only two other people in the lounge area, both sitting by themselves and reading, she says to her friend, "Do you want to head out?" They gather their things and walk to the exit.

Now entering its fourth year, Jazzman's has become a fixture of library and campus life.

Professors go there to talk with students or colleagues. Admissions committees buy drinks and snacks for prospective students and talk about their interests. Students meet for lunch or coffee, to catch up after a semester break or simply take a break from their studying. This was the life imagined for a coffee shop in the library, now realized.

Among those I interviewed who frequent Jazzman's coffee shop in the library, most criticized its hours: it closes too early or isn't open when they stop by. No one raved about the service or the food, either. It simply provides some caffeine or snack for study breaks, or something to sip on or nosh over meetings. In my own observations in the library, I frequently saw cups and paper bags with the Jazzman's logo, or watched someone vacate a computing station for several minutes then return with a purchase from the coffee shop.

It became clear that what makes Jazzman's valuable to users is its *convenience*. Why go to the Emory Village when you can just pop into Jazzman's? Just a staircase away from the main library entrance, it's close by, the service is usually quick, and there are plenty of places to sit. For people already working in the library, it's a place to get a caffeine boost and some food without having to leave the building. In short, it saves time.

The pulse

9:00 on a Tuesday night and Jazzman's is busy. People move in and out of the café, along the hall outside, and among the tables and carrels in the first floor study area. The traffic flows wax and wane, sound levels often moving in tandem.

Only half an hour ago, Jazzman's was quiet. The only regular sounds were compressors on the coolers and the Coke machine, and the occasional conversation of idle baristas. When the buzzing hum of the cooler stopped, the quiet was almost palpable.

Now the cappuccino machine is blasting, the cooler compressor is humming, and a crowd has gathered – selecting snacks and drinks from the coolers, waiting in line, placing orders, working at tables, and talking over all the other noises.

A young woman sits a bistro table along the wall inside the café, reading from PowerPoint handouts and handwritten notes, marking the text with a purple highlighter. Two other young women stop by her table and talk briefly. One of the women orders a beverage, and after a few minutes they both leave and the woman with the purple highlighter goes back to work.

The cappuccino machine is running again, and everyone is talking louder. When it stops, conversations pause, and voices drop. After a few seconds, the conversations pick back up again.

9:30 PM, and another student is visiting the woman with the purple highlighter. He flips through a three-ring binder of notepaper covered in Kanji characters. When two other young women come in, he leaves to join them and another male student stops by to chat with the woman with the purple highlighter. After a few moments, he joins the others, and she turns back to her book.

The blender buzzes – someone must have ordered a frozen drink. A line is forming at the cashier's counter, some people waiting for coffee carafes to be refilled, others waiting to place orders. A girl stands at the end of the counter with the half-and-half pitcher, trying to get one of the baristas' attention. "I'm sorry," she says, "but there's no milk left in there," handing the empty pitcher to the man behind the counter.

The woman with the purple highlighter has another visitor. They sit next to each other, looking at an article on Delta airlines from last Sunday's *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and talking about something that's underlined in pink.

In the hallway outside, students sit in groups of two and three at round tables. At one table a young woman points to a piece of paper, talking and directing her gaze in turns to another woman sitting beside her, who listens, occasionally speaking in turn.

11:00 PM and another long line is forming at the counter. The phone rings, the compressor cooler kicks on, and a new conversation starts up. The woman with the purple highlighter leans over her papers, still hard at work.

CONCLUSION

Defining the soundscape depends on where, and when, you are in Woodruff Library. As librarians and library users I have spoken with attested, there are many spaces in Woodruff Library, designed to meet a variety of needs and preferences. At the aural extremes are Jazzman's, the sanctioned space for talking, and the Matheson Reading Room, the sacred quiet space. Spatially, though, the library sets the tone and establishes the norm for its soundscape by positioning the noisiest areas at its entrance: the resonant atrium, the Business library, and the Reference desk, or "Grand Central Station," all on its main floor, with Jazzman's lying at the foot of the stairs just beyond the entrance and sound from the atrium rising up to the third floor. The iconic quiet of books lies in the margins – up the

stack tower at one end of the Commons, or across the skywalk at the other end, into another building (and back in time) to the grand Matheson Reading Room. Although the attested noisier areas of the library can often be rather quiet, depending on the time of day, such keynotes as the churning of printers and photocopiers, beeps and clunks from the turnstiles signal the active presence of other users as well as the manner in which use of the library is continually tracked.

While changes to the sound and shape of Woodruff Library reflect attempts by librarians to track and respond to users, they also reflect deliberate articulations of the role and meaning of the library in its academic community. The Commons was developed explicitly to promote interactions with information and others, crossing previous divisions of media, of place in the hierarchical structure of the university, and of departmental affiliation. A librarian's observation of how students made the Mezzanine "sacred" quiet space before plans for Matheson were finalized suggests the library responded to perceived user demand. At the same time, the acoustical design of the reading room space was intended to help reinforce a climate of quiet study. Here, as in other areas of the library (the use of signs, reliance on security personnel, non-management of sound levels in the Reference area), librarians demonstrate a tendency both to attend to user needs without direct involvement.

Privatization of the Commons is commonplace as users leave computers logged on and laptops open and leave the area, thus saving their seat. The ease with which users personalize and own public space, as well as their comfort in exposing their personal information and belongings to theft, raise questions about how users understand what is personal and what is shared, especially in new information environments where ownership of information is unclear. At more practical level, and pertaining immediately to notions of the public and private nature of libraries, these practices raise questions about users' sense of obligation to

the needs of others. These points are addressed briefly in the conclusion. In the next chapter I explore more closely the evolving beliefs of librarians regarding libraries and their sound, as evidenced in thirty years of *American Libraries*.

CHAPTER 5

STRADDLING CONCEPTUAL WORLDS

Richard | Library is a library is a library

Richard is the consummate reference librarian. When I ask him what comes to his mind when I say ‘library’, he returns, “Are you talking about me as a consumer of libraries, or me as a service provider?”

Patient, attentive, reflective, and thorough, he considers many sides of my questions, answering from his personal perspective, then from the perspective of a librarian, then suggesting other angles from which the question might raise different considerations. As he pauses, considering his answer, or another answer to my question, or a new question that these thoughts raise, he puts his pencil to the blank sheet of paper in front of him, jotting down notes – a word, an idea – and using them as prompts for his next direction of thought.

Speaking of the needs of the “digital natives,” Richard observes that “the library has to be able to cater, or to replicate in an educational setting, the m.o. of its customer.”

He pauses. “You know, some people do have issues with customer, and patron.” A librarian with a keen ear for semantic nuances, Richard ticks off a number of terms for the people who come into a library and why they don’t quite fit. Customer suggests a business relationship, but one “that has more to do with fiscal responsibility” than an exchange relationship, he points out. “Because if the customer only wanted one thing, I would hope that the library wouldn’t only deliver that one thing. It’s like, the student is a customer of the faculty member. It’s not the same as going into Macy’s or Wal-Mart and being a customer. It’s a variation on that.”

Patron is “more formal, and maybe it goes back to the era when there were more rules and a much greater class structure than there is today.” Although it appropriately indicates the important role a user plays in what the library does and the financial support they provide, he says, it’s too extreme: patrons of the library do not dictate what the library does, in the way that patrons of the arts used to determine what would be produced. Acknowledging that user, patron, and customer are common labels for the library’s stakeholders, each reflecting a particular conception of the library, he grasps for a better term to describe the library’s external stakeholder. “It’s almost affiliate, I mean, to me it’s—they’re our partner. A partnership—that word is loaded, too. Whether you’re providing the financial support, the leadership, where you are in the hierarchy, you have a different view of what the library means.”

When I ask him to describe what’s typical in libraries, he confounds this attempt to distill their meaning by pointing out all the variation in just a public library system: the variety of collections, services, and spaces that meet different user needs. “In Dekalb now, they have different types of branches... The Briarcliff branch is for non-fiction, others that are more full-service, others that are regional.” Chuckling, he adds, “Trying to make your bucks stretch.”

By the time I ask Richard to describe an ideal library, I am ready for his multi-faceted and ranging reply, which begins again with his own preferences. “As a consumer,” he would prefer electronic access to full-text information (though he “would still prefer print. I don’t enjoy reading a lot on the monitor”), and the ability to quickly reach someone for help if he got stuck. Turning to an academic librarian’s perspective, he begins, “If I look at ... what is the purpose of higher education, now not as a consumer, I think of...”

He pauses, smiles, and laughing lightly, says, “I’m going to sound like an advertisement,” then continues. “I think a perfect library is one in which college and university students and

faculty realize that the facility and the collections and the services are built around them, the user, not “This is what I as a library want to do and if it meets your needs, you come in, and if it doesn’t, who cares?!”

The concept of user-centered libraries is not well established in academia, he observes, having only recently diverged from its “sage on the stage” formality. Today, there is more interaction between faculty and students, and the library has followed that. It’s taken its cue from the organization of which it’s a part. The library’s operation must be congruent with the other parts of the higher education organization, including its attitude. Academic work is different now than it used to be, Richard observes: where work used to be sequential and structured, now it all takes place at the same time, in the same place. This has an effect on the space of the library as well. Describing today’s students as “digital natives,” he says they are used to multi-tasking and doing everything from the same place.

The library is especially important here at Emory University, where there are both graduate and undergraduate populations using the library. “Just as there are different kinds of library, there are different categories of library users and they are competing for resources.” And this is further complicated by the fact that the people serving these libraries, funding these libraries, and using these libraries bring with them notions of the library—and of higher education and learning—that were formed in their own history. On a campus, the library is usually not on the perimeter; it’s at a number of crossroads. “Location, location, location,” he intones. Libraries are a business, just like higher education. “It boils down to dollars.”

In their talk about libraries and sound, the librarians I spoke with frequently referenced the needs and preferences of the younger generation of learners as part of the justification for the new library: talking and working in groups as part of their learning process, their

tendency to multi-task, and their ability to work through distracting sound and movement. Some of their opinions of Millennials I had heard before. Some, especially regarding active learning, I believed myself. At the same time, while they confidently asserted the differences of the rising generation of college students and the library's need to adapt to their needs, they did not unequivocally endorse an approach to users that viewed them as customers. After finding undergraduates disturbed by the noise and openly skeptical of whether learning was taking place among groups in the library, I looked more closely at the language about libraries and sound in the professional librarian literature, to see what resonance there might be in beliefs about libraries and the preferences of users found at the local level and those occupying the national and organizational conversation.

The following analysis of talk about libraries and their soundscapes used as its base thirty years of *American Libraries* articles. Attitudes about sound and silence in libraries were investigated through close attention to word choice, metaphorical language, and other lexical, grammatical, and syntactical features of discourse. Fairclough's (2001) approach to how personal beliefs and ideologies emerge through language guide the analysis of these articles. (For more description of document collection and analysis methods, see Appendix 3.) The talk about libraries published in *American Libraries*, though primarily reflecting the viewpoints of individual librarians and library administrators, also included the comments of architects, library users, celebrities and public figures, and humorists. Different sections of the magazine also projected a particular stance on the material they feature. I analyzed discourse in each article in terms of the speaker, the topic of the article and type of article, and other contextual or intertextual elements that would contribute to its interpretation (e.g., other articles that letters to the editor may be referencing), in order to better understand the stance of the author and the factors impinging on the views expressed.

The view of libraries and library soundscapes conveyed in these articles and highlighted through exemplar articles discussed below, while reflecting division and doubt regarding changes to the library and in library policies in recent years, suggest a valuation of sound in libraries as connected to serving the needs of users (especially younger users) and supporting education, and as reflective of the vitality of the library as an institution. In this discourse I identify themes that emerged in my analysis of this data and that resonate with findings in the interview and fieldwork data: conceptual understandings and valuations of noise and quiet; librarians' reluctance to directly manage the sound of libraries; and their response to and use of the discourse and discursive practices of business.

DISTINGUISHING SOUND

A 2005 *American Libraries* cover story on silence and libraries presented a range of understandings of the quiet library, used to argue for and against its perpetuation:

- “a noiseless sanctuary,”
- “the old image of pin-drop quiet,”
- “the refuge from worldly chaos,”
- “the quiet tradition,” and
- “the tradition of church-like quiet in the library” (DiMattia, 2005, pp. 48-51).

The appearance of this article – titled “Silence Is Olden” – was itself an indication of changing beliefs regarding libraries' soundscapes. By the mid-2000s the World Wide Web and Internet technologies were pivotal elements of American culture and already revolutionizing business models, legal understandings of copyright and ownership, and

modes of scholarly communication. Commons developments in libraries were well into their second decade, active learning was commonplace in pedagogical practice, and the Millennial generation had started college. All of these factors have impacted and continue to impact librarianship and library culture, as librarians and others with an interest in the sound and role of the library make claims for the library's meaning through its sound.

In recent years, much of the talk in *American Libraries* about quiet libraries has been in response to noise: people conversing, cell phones ringing, and the general increase in sound levels brought by new technology and changes in policy. This talk has been divided primarily between those pointing to noise in libraries as an indication of the vitality of the institution and its relevance to its community of users, and those pointing to quiet as an essential and endangered quality of libraries. Amid claims about libraries' missions, each side understands the sound of the library – whether loud or quiet – as an indicator of its value to users.

Noisy life

The causes of our noise problems are all on the plus side. More people using the library, more human interaction among the library's users, more users involved with noisy technological means of gaining access to knowledge; in short, more – and more complex – demand. We do have a problem to solve on the noise issue, but it's a good problem to have.

Craig Buthod, director of the Louisville (Ky.) Free Public Library (DiMattia, 2005, p. 51)

While libraries may not have always been unequivocally quiet places, the relative absence of *American Libraries* articles during the 1970s and 1980s that either advocate for noisier activities in the library or question the primacy of quiet indicates a professional acceptance of quiet as the norm. That said, the following excerpt from a 1980 “Who We Are” piece (featuring school media librarian Jeri Hall, who instituted new programs and influenced the way some libraries were perceived and used) suggests ambivalence regarding appropriate

library environments and an early indication of changing attitudes towards library soundscapes: (Cherry, 1980, p. 260)

Hall feels school media specialists are returning to the old notion that a quiet library environment is desirable.

“If kids want to study somewhere, there has to be some semblance of order. Students and librarians have to arrive at a consensus on what is a reasonable noise level,” she says.

Personally, Hall plans to make more noise than ever to start new library programs and maintain old ones.

While labeling “a quiet library environment” as an “old notion” might seem to connote it as unfavorable, the fact that Hall (whose professional work is being lauded) is also described as maintaining “old” programs undercuts the potential negativity. Also, Hall’s comments suggest an analogous relationship between quiet and order and a preference for that quiet through her assertion that there must be “some semblance of order.” That said, her comments that some noise can be “reasonable” and that only “some semblance of order” is needed to support studying imply that the “old notion” of a quiet library needs to be revised. She also advocates seeking consensus regarding “what is a reasonable noise level,” suggesting that librarians share responsibility and authority with students for the maintenance of library environments. Tellingly, this article and its accompanying photographs (including one of Hall in a leotard performing a tap-dance routine) emphasize the librarian’s energy, which, through such statements as “Hall plans to make more noise than ever to start new library programs and maintain old ones,” further link noise to positive action. Quiet may still be the defining characteristic of the library at this time, but it is not to be desired in the librarian.

Considered alongside discourse about noise in the library published over two decades later, Hall's middle-ground position regarding sound in the library seems contemporary, along with the positive associations the article's author makes between noise and activity. Leaning more towards endorsing noise than quiet, the public library director quoted above simultaneously acknowledges and rejects noise problems at his library. His repetitious use of "more," following a reference to "the plus side" of the noise problems, points to a valuation of noise as positive and appropriate – "a good problem to have." Further, the technology, which is "noisy," is also the "means of *gaining* access to knowledge," another plus. Labeling the "interaction among the library's users" as "human interaction" (rather than "social interaction" or just "interaction") distinguishes it from mere functional exchanges and also conveys a sense of these activities as embodying the higher qualities of humanity. The reverse implication of such assertions is that quiet in libraries is negative – an indicator that the library is not being used.

American Libraries articles that present the phenomenon of elevated sound as undesirable typically associate that sound with people talking. One such disruption is the sound that youths make when they are "unruly" (Stein, 2003 [letter to the editor]; Kniffel, 2004 [editorial]; Arterburn, 1996 [cover story]). The public library in Joliet, Illinois, instituted its strict noise policies in response to numerous complaints about the "fighting, shouting," and general "free-for-all" from unsupervised children (Kniffel, 2004 [editorial]).⁸³ At the Indiana University in Bloomington library, the staff has come to rely on emergency phones and representatives from the campus police department to deal with noise.

⁸³ In another article (DiMattia, 2005 January [cover story]) this library's director clarified that the new policy was directed not at noise but at controlling the behavior and numbers of unsupervised preteens.

While [head of access services Harold] Shaffer remains optimistic about the decorum of “kids today,” he admits that his staff confronts a certain amount of guff from unruly students. “I don’t think users are any more abusive towards staff. We have always had that to some degree due to the role [librarians] have taken by traditionally standing there and taking as much as they can take. The phenomenon we are experiencing involves a constant noise problem.” (Arterburn, 1996 [cover story])

Adults talking out loud are also fingered as contributors to noise problems, whether reading aloud to themselves (LaBaugh, 2004 [cover story]) or to others (Stein, 2003 [letter to the editor]). In some cases librarians are the offenders, when their conversations (work-related or otherwise) disturb patrons trying to read or study (DiMattia, 2005 [cover story]; Kniffel, 2004 January [editorial]). University librarian James Rettig offers an example from his institution, the University of Virginia library, where students working in a quiet study area complained about noise from adjacent library offices.

For those less sanguine about noise in libraries, rising sound levels are indicative of a broader societal shift, in which people embrace technology, activity, and sound with little thought to its value. Former ALA president Michael Gorman, meditating on the values of library work, subtly questions the wisdom of appealing to the masses: “Noise blares everywhere today. Loud, unwatched TVs and music that must be popular with some invade all our public spaces. We can provide library places in which people can hear themselves think... but do contemporary users want them? Let us hope so, and hope that there will always be a demand for silence and thought” (1997 [cover story]). Changing social norms, he suggests, not new technology, are to blame when libraries are no longer places for “contemplative quiet.”

A 2004 *American Libraries* cover story explicitly argues for the continuing relevance of public libraries, through description that links “din,” dinginess, and diversity to productivity and that valorizes the mundane experience as both authentic and vital. Read apart from its surrounding text, the following paragraph from this article would appear to condemn the

noisy library, whose poor aesthetics exacerbates the cacophony arising from technology and children: (LaBaugh, 2004, p. 58)

The pink fluorescence from the ceiling and the tinted sunlight from the front windows (the only windows) made the room and everything in it look dingy. Noise bounced off the boxy hard glossy beige walls and ricocheted round and round. Chairs scraped, computers beeped, keyboards clicked, children whined, phones rang, and photocopiers hummed. A man sat at one of those 1940s battleship-gray steel desks, the kind you'd want to hide under when the big one comes, reading the newspaper aloud, to himself. A group of young mothers sat on an old, lime-shaped-and-colored shag rug, corralling 2-year-olds while a 20-something woman tried vainly to read *Curious George and the Pizza* to them all. This was din.

Through description of other aspects of this public library (for example, the poor lighting that makes it “look dingy” and the “1940s desks” to the 1960s-reminiscent “old, lime-shaped-and-colored shag rug”) as well as the noise itself, the author communicates a distinctly negative impression of the noisy space. Patrons and staff alike struggle, mothers “corralling 2-year-olds” that a woman “tried vainly” to read to as “children whined.” The room itself seems to resemble a pinball machine in sound and motion, as beeps, rings, clicks, and scrapes bounce around its walls. As if there were not enough tension and disorder in this description, the author invokes World War and the atomic bomb in his reference to “those 1940s battleship-gray desks, the kind you'd want to hide under when the big one comes.” The last sentence clearly and succinctly drives home the author's point home about this unpleasant atmosphere.

Yet the author, an academic librarian who specializes in library instruction, uses this unsavory scene to make a larger point about the persistent value of libraries and the benefits of shared, noisy, and even humble space. Subtly offering himself to the reader as a model of the actions and beliefs he hopes to instill, he proceeds and follows this description with a personal narrative of idealized libraries of the past, present-day work demands, and libraries' essential value as places of inclusiveness (and even of productivity). The library of his 1950s

suburban childhood was “a deep, deep quiet place” “where you would never eat a bologna sandwich...or talk real loud. I mean, jeez, it was a library” (p. 56). At the same time, it was a place where his young “Pig-Pen-like” self felt welcome and independent: “In those days and in that place, I could safely pedal a couple of miles into town, park my dumpy bike by the stairs, and walk right in. ...The staff didn’t care that I was sweaty and smelly” (p. 56).

Seeming to borrow from the genre of the morality tale, this article on libraries’ enduring significance (subtitled “The public library may not be the refuge it once was, but that’s not a bad thing”) uses the Everyman protagonist’s lesson in the essential virtues of public libraries to suggest to readers that they, too, may find much that is desirable and valuable in the new library (p. 56). Though it may not look or sound like the libraries of memory or popular imagination, the noisy and visually less inspiring library can still be a place between work and home where one sees, hears, and interacts with the community, and may even be “very productive” (p. 58).

Gilded silence

“Shattering the silence” was the title for a 1993 installment of “*AL Aside-Image*,” a regular column on librarians’ and libraries’ image in popular culture. The article documents one librarian’s response to a car advertisement that connected the new Ford Crown Victoria’s low interior noise level with the quiet found in libraries: (p. 114)

“If it were any quieter, you’d need a library card,” boasted Ford’s advertisement for the 1993 Crown Victoria. Appearing in magazines such as *Modern Maturity* and *National Geographic Traveler*, the ad was selling the notion that silence is golden for well-heeled, comfort-seeking car buyers.

College of William and Mary Librarian Nancy Marshall shattered that silence with a wonderful letter to Ford exec Christian Vinyard, who happens to be a William and Mary alum. She wrote, “Since you are such a strong supporter of Swem Library and other libraries and librarians, I hope you will agree with me that Ford and its

advertising agency need to get their collective 19th-century stereotypical image of libraries and librarians updated to the 20th century, and certainly before we leave it!”

“Ford needs to be aware of the fact that librarians have disposable income which can benefit their coffers, but ads like this really turn us off.”

The verb *to shatter* is used in the title and within the copy to indicate action against ‘silence’.

Two collocates are suggested by this verb: ‘glass’, the physical material that ‘shatters’ (breaks apart) when it comes into contact with a strong force; and ‘image’, a view that idiomatically ‘shatters’ (ceases to hold together or comes apart) when confronted with a forceful and contrary perspective. Though the use of ‘shatter’ might suggest an ontological metaphor (i.e., silence, which can be broken and has physical, glass-like properties), in this context the idiomatic meaning is foregrounded: the destruction or undoing of a popular, stereotypical image of libraries and librarians as silent *and* of an adage that metaphorically attributes high value to silence.

Proverbially, the phrase “silence is golden” means that the absence of sound, and often the specific absence of speech, is highly desirable. In the article “Shattering the Silence” the text suggests that, although she is technically attacking the ad’s undesirable portrayal of libraries and librarians, it is the conventional valuation of silence that the librarian strikes down.

Indeed, by speaking her mind rather than remaining quiet, this librarian rejected the notion that “silence is golden” and demonstrated that, as a librarian, she does not fit this stereotype.

This phrase occurs in another “*AL* Aside–Image” entry, “Choosing coffee over silence” (1993, p. 983), as part of a quote from a newspaper article about the rising popularity of bookstores. The article is quoted here in full:

A front-page story in the Oct. 25 *Chicago Tribune* hailed “the new generation of super bookstores” at the expense of libraries. The megastores were acclaimed as “a combination of bookstore, coffeehouse, and performing arts center” that lure families, singles, and even dating couples.

The article credits the stores with changing the image of books, which “were to be culled through by someone, usually alone, amid the dusty stacks of the public library, where silence is golden and coffee is prohibited.”

“The library still reminds me of high school and studying and being serious,” one customer told the *Tribune*. “There’s something still psychologically tacked to it: I walk in with a small stomachache. Whereas here, it’s relaxed and laid back.”

The story did acknowledge that libraries “still are doing big business” and that their mission is entirely different from that of a commercial operation. Even so, the article definitely questioned the coolness credentials of anybody who would choose the library over the newly trendy bookstore.

Again, the value of the quiet library is questioned, this time from outside the professional library community. It is also worth noting the *American Libraries* editors’ choice to call their readers’ attention to this major metropolitan newspaper story, in which a multi-purpose bookstore – “a combination of bookstore, coffeeshouse, and performing arts center” – is presented as a more desirable destination than the dated and deserted library.

In a play on the cliché “silence is golden,” a recent *American Libraries* cover story (DiMattia, 2005) titled “Silence Is Olden” directly confronts the tradition and stereotypical assumptions of quiet libraries and shushing librarians. Though the article itself rather even-handedly presents different views on the proper role and sound of today’s libraries, its title encapsulates much of what is negatively understood about silence among those who champion the noisy library. Celebrity librarian Nancy Pearl, a regular guest on National Public Radio’s *All Things Considered* program and model for the infamous shushing librarian action figure, encountered these views in librarians’ reactions to the doll.

Young librarians Pearl has met generally believe that silence shouldn’t be associated with libraries, while older librarians like the action figure because they simply believe the tradition of church-like quiet in the library has gone too far. . . . Pearl, a bookwoman of the highest degree, points to the new generation of librarians as representing part of the shift away from the quiet tradition. Those that come out of the “information” schools rather than the “library” schools aren’t concentrated on a book culture, so they may not think of quiet as a necessary concern in libraries, she says. (DiMattia, 2005 January [cover story])

This sea change in attitudes towards the sound of libraries marks a break with an authority previously assumed by professional librarianship and bound up in books and stack towers, strict building use policies and hierarchical relations with users, and a shift to the current egalitarianism and flexibility evidenced by lax policies, modular environments, guides on the side, and information at your fingertips. Within the new “information” mindset, libraries are places for everyone, especially young people, sites for active engagement with computers and people, and the notion of the quiet library where people go to read seems antiquated and irrelevant.

Preserving quiet

Those who champion the quiet of the library do so with varying degrees of surprise and pique towards the noise in library spaces and those who invite it. Rosanne Welch, a professional screenwriter, wonders, “Have we also forgotten that libraries provide much more than books?” (1996 [editorial]).⁸⁴ “Community libraries are nondenominational places to congregate on a quiet evening,” she says. “They are places to learn that silence can be useful.” In a letter to the editor, university cataloging librarian Shirley Richardson (2004) writes disparagingly of libraries that appear to have abandoned their role as educational institutions, evidenced in part by their noise. Citing a letter in the previous issue of *American Libraries*, in which the author lamented libraries’ trend away from the life of the mind and toward idle entertainment (McDonald, 2004),⁸⁵ Richardson (2004) concurs, “This is a trend

⁸⁴ This editorial was originally published in the *Los Angeles Times*.

⁸⁵ Some of Joseph McDonald’s criticisms bear repeating here, in light of the extent to which they indict the library profession for shirking its responsibilities to educating citizens and, rather than taking on challenges, merely glossing over these issues in the magazine. “Libraries,” he remarks, “apparently, have little to do with education, learning, the give and take of ideas, and the life of the mind anymore.... Ours is not an intellectually inquisitive era, one in which sustained reflection and thought mark the life of the citizenry. I like to think libraries could contribute much to changing that. Hugging ourselves in print is not likely to be the catalyst we need” (pp. 34-35).

that appalls many of us who grew up with the concept of a library as a quiet place, where one could go to study, to read, and to inquire in an atmosphere of peace and serenity” (p. 29). If music, games, poetry readings, and other social events are happening in the library, she asks, “To which distant cubbyhole are the people who value peace and quiet supposed to be shuttled in order to be able to concentrate on their reading and study?” (p. 29).

Sometimes requests for quiet in libraries are preemptively defended, as patrons and librarians alike attempt to show that their demands are reasonable. For instance, in complaining that “the general noise level [in his library] was significantly higher than anything I had ever experienced before,” a patron clarified that he was not expecting “total silence here – just general respectful quiet” (Stein, 2003, p. 43). Joliet (Ill.) Public Library director James Johnson, whose institution implemented one of the country’s strictest policies on use of the library, insists, “We don’t demand quiet. We demand an atmosphere where no one’s ability to use the library is infringed” (Kniffel, 2004 [editorial], p. 46).

Some recent support of ‘quiet’ places or times qualifies them as being without distractions to one’s concentration. As part of an *American Libraries* cover story on library values, Michael Gorman (1997 [cover story]) promoted quiet libraries as “places in which people can hear themselves think” (p. 44). Walt Crawford (2003), a regular *American Libraries* technology columnist, told of a recent conference where, following a thought-provoking lecture, he “retired to a quiet spot to think,” which in this case turned out to be “a hotel room [which] has fewer distractions than [a] house or apartment” (p. 84). Addressing the human need for time to contemplate, he advised turning off or getting away from distracting technology: “unwanted music destroys concentration. And a ringing phone or beeping pager breaks any contemplative mood” (p. 84).

Will Manley (1996), a librarian humorist and *American Libraries* opinion columnist, blasts new technology for the ways in which it undermines productivity, thoughtful reflection, and meaningful engagement with others.

What does it say when you take a spouse, a son, a parent, or even a co-worker to lunch and you enter the restaurant armed with your cell phone and laptop computer? It says you are unwilling to give them your full, focused attention. And what does it say when you take your beeper into church on Sunday? It says that you have little regard for your fellow parishioners. Some of us, after all, like to sleep during Father Fitzhugh's sermon. While some people lobby for gun-control laws, I prefer to advocate cell-phone control laws (p. 128).

Manley's tongue-in-cheek humor notwithstanding, his articles often give the lie to commonsensical assumptions about the merits of new technology and practices that librarians have been quick to embrace. He bemoans the loss of the libraries of his youth, "institution[s] devoted to reading, research, and study in an atmosphere of peace and quiet": (Manley, 2006, p. 96)

Librarians were known as strict disciplinarians who were expected by their clientele to enforce a very structured code of etiquette. Patrons were required to be well behaved, respectful, and most of all silent. In those days libraries looked like... libraries. With their neoclassical columns, vaulted ceilings, and book-lined walls, they were cathedrals of scholarship and learning.

Now, he claims, librarians have flattened their buildings and their hierarchies, creating spaces that project neither awe nor authority. Out of fears of seeming too "elitist," librarians stopped requiring patrons to be quiet, "and as a result children and teenagers became increasingly disruptive. OPACs⁸⁶ began to replace venerable old oaken card catalogs, and before long reading rooms and stack areas were filled with row after row of computers" (Manley, 2006 [editorial], p. 96).

⁸⁶ Acronym for "online public access catalog," often simply referred to as the online catalog.

SECURING QUIET IN PUBLIC SPACE

Complaining about the noise at his local library, one library user writes in a 2003 *American Libraries* opinion piece,

First one staff member – and then another – informed me that the teens were allowed to make noise. I was told that this is the “new library policy,” because “the library is now for everyone.” I was told that if I was disturbed I could isolate myself in a closed room, with no computer terminal. If this did not satisfy me I could leave. “But it’s a library!” I said. ... Libraries have always been “for everyone”; it’s this new policy that has altered it (Stein, p. 43).

His conflict with the librarians at his public library arises not simply over the new policy but over how the public and their needs are defined. As a member of the public the library is intended to serve, the author feels figuratively isolated by a policy that forces him to remove himself from the company of other users in order to work without distraction. The policy of non-intervention suggested in this article is itself intended to make the library environment more welcoming, a place “for everyone.” The author’s personal opinions aside, the situation he describes typifies librarians’ challenges and solutions as they seek to expand the types of aural spaces available to users and make the library and themselves more welcoming. These include what users may be expected to do in order to manage their workspace, what librarians may be required to do in order to ensure quiet is available, and how challenges to users’ desired library conditions are understood and addressed. Often conflicts pivot on contested understandings of the public nature of the library space and of the librarian’s role in managing it.

Enclosures and environments

In an *American Libraries* feature story published in 1992, architect Joe Rizzo highlighted ten ways to look at (and to promote) the purpose of library buildings. Heading the list was a

view of the library as study hall, a description which contained the article's only reference to the library's sound: "A library is a controlled environment, a refuge that should be free from distracting stimuli – one of the last sanctuaries in our aggressive, noise-saturated world. Traditionally, libraries have provided quiet places to study, but many years of analyzing study habits have expanded our view of what an appropriate study space is." (p. 322). Having begun with a traditional, iconic understanding of the nature and purpose of library spaces, he ends by indicating that this view is too limited to encompass the variety of "appropriate" places to read and research.

Yes, users still need the solitude of the secluded carrel, but increasingly, given today's teaching techniques, they also need areas for group study. And some still prefer the openness of the traditionally grand reading room.

Providing a variety of study space is a necessity for today's libraries. Variety is not simply a function of layout, but of all the aspects that create an environment: the size, shape, and height of the space; its degree of enclosure; its lighting, acoustics, and furnishings; the color and texture of its finishes; and the views it provides. When different settings are available, users naturally move to what suits them. When study space lacks variety, all users compete for the best space, reducing the quality – and quantity – for all (Rizzo, 1992, p. 322).

His argument for variation and change in library spaces is grounded in new pedagogical practices that encourage group study and also in the preferences of users, who will "naturally move to what suits them." The space of the library he promotes is one in which the quiet refuge is reconfigured as just one element of a more diverse environment, in which the inhabitants move freely, choosing for themselves the type of space they need.

In the past decade references to quiet in libraries in *American Libraries* articles have tended to ascribe that quiet to specific activities and specific locations, rather than to the library as a whole.

- "a quiet reading room" ("So Goes the Community," 2005 [cover story])

- “an area ‘For Quiet Reading Only’” (LaBaugh, 2004 [cover story])
- “quiet study areas,” “quiet zones,” “designated quiet space,” “a quiet ‘fireplace lounge,’” “traditional study and quiet areas” (DiMattia, 2005 [cover story])
- “designating a quiet space” (Knecht, 2003 [cover story])
- “a place for quiet study” (Meyers, 1999 [cover story])

Several librarian administrators quoted in an *American Libraries* cover story on silence in libraries, “Silence Is Olden” (DiMattia, 2005), describe their libraries as places where talking is appropriate, even desired by their users. They also expect users to take responsibility for protecting their own work environment. Says James Rettig, the University of Richmond in Virginia’s university librarian, “Putting up signs or having policies for quiet study is like speed limit signs on the highway. People read them as suggestions, not requirements!” (p. 49). He advocates “self-regulation,” in which people designate quiet areas by consensus, as the best approach for maintaining quiet areas. Richard AmRhein, dean of library services at Valparaiso University in Indiana, says of the library’s Christopher Center for Library and Information Resources, “It’s not meant to be a quiet place, but we have quiet places” (p. 49). Among those quiet places are fireplace lounges and two floors that, according to the article, “are understood by users to be traditional study and quiet areas, although no signs announce that designation” (p. 49). Speaking of library noise levels at the at the Governor’s School of Arts and Humanities (Greenville, S.C.), the director of library services Pat Scales says, “There are no policies and no signs.... The students sense that they are trusted, and they act accordingly” (p. 50). Students wear headsets in the noisy computer lab, where the staff monitors noise levels only if circumstances warrant it. Once the defining characteristic of

libraries, in these new library “environments” “where talking is appropriate, even desired,” quiet is a diminished aspect.

The library directors quoted above speak of the library as a space where quiet is no longer assumed, often not desired, and certainly not enforced. Pointing to students’ use of headsets as evidence that they can manage noisy environments for themselves, librarians insist that the best way to handle noise in libraries is *not* to handle it: let the users self-regulate, deciding by consensus what the sound level should be at a particular place or time. Citing users who “sense” how they are supposed to act and who passively understand the expectations of a library space while also making their own decisions about how they want to use the library, these administrators invoke self-directed users who can manage their workspaces for themselves, consequently releasing librarians from the responsibility of monitoring sound.

Youths are typically cast as the patrons of the noisy library, either as contributors to the noise, unaffected by it, or preferring it to the quiet library of the past. In their defense of the sound in their libraries, some librarians and library directors suggest not simply that a quiet library is not possible but that it is not desirable, either. Describing an initiative to make libraries more appealing to younger users, one article quoted teenagers who disliked quiet in libraries, which they often negatively associate with authority: (Meyers, 1999 [cover story], p.

42)

Teens are distracted by libraries that are “too quiet.” “The first thing I think of when I think about libraries, is ‘SHHH!’ ... Libraries are so-o-o-o quiet—they are creepy.” The sense that you “can’t talk” in libraries was coupled with other comments about severe strictness, “too strict in the rules,” “always scolding us to be quiet,” and “too restrictive on talking and eating.”

David Mowery, a youth-services librarian at Brooklyn (N.Y.) Public Library and past president of the American Library Association’s (ALA) Young Adult Library Services

Association (YALSA), laughs at the notion of a quiet library today, adding that “Youths could never be that quiet because they do so much work in groups and don’t want or expect quiet” (DiMattia, 2005 [cover story], p. 49). Others, like Carla Stoffle, Dean of Libraries at the University of Arizona at Tucson, dismisses complaints about noise at the library as “generational” and points to the role her library’s Information Commons plays in supporting collaborative work (DiMattia, 2005 [cover story]). Group study is the norm among today’s students, and, according to Rettig, “The silent individual toiling in a carrel is no more” (DiMattia, 2005 [cover story], p. 49).

On the other hand, articles that presented quiet as more nebulous, locating it in the ambience rather than in a specific area, also seemed to value quiet as a quality necessary to the library and desired by users. An article on cell phones in the library explores “what can be done to preserve a quality library atmosphere and ensure that students can enjoy a quiet space in spite of widespread cell-phone usage” (Knecht, 2003 [cover story]). This article also describes cell-phone use in libraries as “a challenge for librarians wishing to provide a quiet environment for their patrons.” In a letter to the editor a librarian describes her understanding of the library as “a quiet place, where one could go to study, to read, and to inquire in an atmosphere of peace and serenity” (Richardson, 2004).⁸⁷ Speaking of his own library’s building use policies, another librarian qualifies, “We don’t demand quiet. We demand an atmosphere where no one’s ability to use the library is infringed” (DiMattia, 2005 [cover story], p. 51). In other instances, the entire library is referred to as a place of quiet, as when librarian (and previous ALA president) Michael Gorman (1997 [cover story]) describes

⁸⁷ The one reference to a noisy library “atmosphere” occurs in this same letter: having just described a trend among libraries to pipe in music and host poetry readings, the librarian author comments, “I recognize the fact that younger people may not find this atmosphere too intrusive and noisy, but what of older patrons?” (Richardson, 2004 May). Again, ‘atmosphere’ appears to be used to indicate a pervasive climate of the library rather than the quality of a particular area or activity.

libraries as having “a long and noble role as a universal haven for those who seek a quiet place to read, think, and write” (p. 44).

In a 2003 article published in the “Policy” section of *American Libraries*, the author suggests that library administrators concerned about cell-phone noise should “Cordon off the quiet” (Knecht, pp. 68-69).⁸⁸ The conflation of ‘quiet’ with a specific area is not so unusual; however, the *type* of space indicated here is. As cordoned-off areas are typically surrounded or marked off by enforcers of legal authority and are protected from trespassers by legal authority, the type of space suggested by this choice of word is very specific. Occurring alongside other words and phrases connoting ‘law-enforcement’, the association is deliberate: (p. 69; emphasis added)

According to Interim Associate University Librarian Jay Lambrecht, the UIC [University of Illinois at Chicago] library has quiet study areas where cell phones and other ‘devices that ring or generate audible noises’ are *prohibited*. Although some *violations* do occur, Lambrecht states that peer pressure keeps the *infractions* to a minimum; students wanting to study are adamant about their quiet space. Without this peer pressure, most academic libraries may find it difficult to *enforce* the policy of a ‘quiet’ study area. Few academic libraries can afford *security personnel* in the library, leaving the *enforcement* to library staff members, who are not always eager to get involved.

The need for such excessive force appears to be necessitated in part by the relative fragility of quiet. Writing about finding time for quiet contemplation, *American Libraries* columnist Walt Crawford (2003) notes, “[U]nwanted music destroys concentration. And a ringing phone or beeping pager breaks any contemplative mood” (p. 84). As a regular columnist for the “Technology” section of the library, Crawford’s critical comments regarding the ways technology interferes with one’s ability to think and reflect are particularly noteworthy. That said, this article, in which Crawford nominates the “off switch” as “the century’s most vital

⁸⁸ At the time of this article’s publication the author, Michael Knecht, was assistant dean for library services at Henderson Community College in Kentucky.

technological device,” places the responsibility for quiet with the individual who desires it (p. 84).

Avoiding confrontations

Librarian talk about sound often involves their concerns about whether this will result in negative interactions with users and how best to avoid this. Even when noise turns out to not be a problem, as in the following excerpt, it continues to be portrayed in a negative light.

In this paragraph from an *American Libraries* article on a reading-tutor program (Dombey, 1988), a positive attitude toward sound is couched in negation: “Some of the things we worried about turned out to be no problem: one was the noise level. To date, we have not had one complaint. Any comments made by passers-by in the library have been favorable and have often led to the questioners themselves volunteering their services as tutors.” The author expresses the presumption that noise in the library would be a “problem”: it was something “we worried about.” Despite this expectation, the noise level was “no problem” and there was “not one complaint.” Although noise, with its potential for causing a “problem” or “complaint,” is clearly not preferred in this library environment, in this instance the noise turns out to be not just *not* a problem but in fact a positive element, since it leads to people inquiring about the library’s reading program and volunteering to assist.

“Cell Phones in the Stacks” (Knecht, 2003), an article on developing policies around cell phone use in the library, describes a number of situations and strategies for handling cell-phone disturbances. With the disclaimer that “cell-phone use in libraries is a challenge” and “most academic libraries may find it difficult to enforce the policy of a ‘quiet’ study area,” Knecht offers some examples and suggestions for handling these potential disturbances. He mentions that “a new cell-phone technology known as ‘Quiet Calls’ is under development to

help cell-phone users in quiet environments.” Though he thinks Quiet Calls “may become a viable option for libraries to consider,” he acknowledges that “most patrons will not be familiar with this new technology and may not understand library signs that say, ‘Only Quiet Call cell phone technology is permitted in the library’, necessitating handouts and brochures to explain the concept.” Another technological solution he suggests is “the installation of a ‘Faraday cage’ into the walls and ceilings of quiet study areas,” since this device is “a legal way of rendering radio signals ineffective.” Banning cell phones altogether would be unpopular with patrons, he cautions, “but it might be tempting to consider it”: “Although most libraries have refrained from this harsh step, some (such as the Iowa City Public Library) have pursued variations of this policy by hanging signs that ask patrons to turn off their cell-phone ringers.” Restricting cell-phone use, however, may be difficult without patron support: “Without this peer pressure, most academic libraries may find it difficult to enforce the policy of a ‘quiet’ study area. Few academic libraries can afford security personnel in the library, leaving the enforcement to library staff members, who are not always eager to get involved.”

In these examples signs, policies, technology, and security personnel handle the problem of cell-phone noise. Cell-phone users and other library patrons are enlisted as well in controlling cell-phone disturbances. Cell-phone restrictions are communicated via signs, brochures and pamphlets, and even (through Quiet Calls technology) pre-recorded messages on patron’s cell phones. At no point in these examples, however, does a librarian actively and directly confront cell-phone users. Passive sentence constructions and nominalizations remove librarians from actively enforcing or even communicating policy, directing their energy instead towards the policy’s construction. This slant is explained, in part, by the article itself, intended to guide policy development around cell phone use in the library. Yet

the portrayal of librarians' actions throughout this article puts them at a distance from conflicting events, even from external action, as illustrated in the following passage (emphasis added).

Cell-phone use in libraries is a challenge for *librarians wishing* to provide a quiet environment for their patrons. *Decision-makers should carefully consider* all the options. Each has its strengths and weaknesses, and combinations of two or more options may prove to be optimal. Indeed, the situation will likely vary from one institution to the next, so it will be difficult to develop a library policy that is fair, easy to enforce, and widely recognized. However, it is *an issue that must be tackled* to prevent users from learning more than they want to know about other peoples' grocery lists, shoestrings, and crayons.

When an active verb is connected to a librarian, the action is internal: "librarians wishing" and "decision-makers should carefully consider." The most active verb in this passage, "tackled," acts not upon the runaway sound itself or the unlawful cell phone user but on the nebulous and ephemeral "issue," all in the interest of circumventing situations where users are subjected to unwanted conversations and, presumably, where someone might have to intervene. In contrast, "cell-phone conversations" "disturb" and "interrupt," and objects, like pre-recorded messages on cell phones or signs and information brochures, "say" what limits there are to cell-phone use.

When "noise" acts on others, that interaction is often negative and, in the case of cell-phone conversations, lacking in human agency. "Excessively loud cell-phone conversations" (pointedly *not* the individual who actually conducts that conversation in the library) "disturb other library users and interrupt reference interviews, bibliographic instruction, or circulation services" (Knecht, 2003, p. 68). Regular commentator Will Manley (1999) complains, "The chirps, beeps, and buzzes of telecommunications equipment have invaded every peaceful sanctuary – including my library and church" (p. 104). Such noise is often countered by other anthropomorphized objects. Signs, for instance, might "ask patrons to turn off their

cell-phone ringers” (Knecht, 2003, p. 68) or “request that library patrons turn off the ringers of their cellular phones upon entering the library” (“Quick takes,” 2002, p. 26).

THE BUSINESS OF LIBRARIES

I hate late-phase, unregulated capitalism.... And these same people have now invaded the library with a vengeance, with their ...unstated contempt for anything that isn't a column with a total at the bottom. They've got a hook in us now, and from now on, in varying degrees, and in one form or another, we will be driven by their demands.... They sold us on speed, self-directedness and “efficiency” – that above all – and yet absolutely nothing in education is served by any of these values. In fact they are antithetical to education. And in the end, they are antithetical to reading. And it is in the singularly personal act of reading that any rebirth in an educational system as wiggled out as ours must begin.

William Wisner (2000), Whither the Postmodern Library?, pp. 92-93

Academic librarians' awareness of, and sometimes adoption of, the discourse of commerce must be understood to reflect in part the economic realities of their increasingly smaller portion of the overall university budget and the rising costs of maintaining print and electronic collections. Forced to justify their value to administrators focused on the bottom line, many librarians have adopted the language and practices of business, in order to measure and communicate their worth. For many, though, this mindset clashes with their own understanding of libraries as public institutions, serving a higher mission than mere return on an investment.

The influence of business practices on the practice of librarianship is starkly noted and often passionately opposed in the pages of *American Libraries*. Much of this vehemence arises from attempts to equate or compare the work of libraries with that of for-profit institutions (namely, bookstores) and to reduce their immeasurable influence on people's lives to numbers. Even so, in proclaiming the virtues and successes of various library initiatives,

librarians utilize⁸⁹ the tools and terminology of commerce, pointing to rising gate counts, percentage increases in user/customer satisfaction, and visibility of resources and services as indicators of their effectiveness, only occasionally self-aware of the irony. In fact, shifting their own practices and speech reflects librarians' awareness of the changing context of their workplace and their work, where a focus on the needs of the consumer and the production of valued goods and services can be translated into greater power in the social structure. The adoption of this new rhetoric, however, has not been without protest; in changing their discourse and discursive practices, some librarians fear they are also sacrificing their values, and the meaning of the library.

Selling an experience

I am sitting on a padded bench, just on the edge of the Level 3 Mezzanine and the skywalk leading to the Matheson Reading Room. A librarian colleague walking by sees me and stops to chat.

I mention an article I read recently on the use of smells in marketing and commerce – how certain smells are associated with certain perceptions (of cleanliness, affluence, comfort and warmth) and how businesses use these to lure customers. “I can’t image a smell in the library, though,” I say, wondering what his response will be. He launches into a gentle tirade against consumer culture – “that’s the Marxist in me” getting worked up – and wonders aloud if everything will be for sale, if there aren’t some things that can be real for their own sake and not part of an attempt to get someone to buy something.

Measuring productivity and value

As Commons environments were first appearing in academic libraries, an article in *American Libraries* entitled “Ten Ways to Look at a Library” (Rizzo, 1992) addressed the different perspectives to consider when altering or constructing library spaces. Written by an architect to architects (and indirectly addressed to the librarian audience in whose member magazine it

⁸⁹ Social scientist-speak for the more humanist term “use.”

appears), the article described several different conceptions of the use and purpose of the library, including “part of a community” and “a store,” that are intended to help architects promote a new library space to stakeholders. “A well-designed library is more than an attractive building that works well for librarians,” the author advised. “It is a building that should help attract and keep a wide clientele.” This declaration assumes a prevailing viewpoint that the building should accommodate librarians’ needs first, rather than the needs of users, here recast as customers. He went on to indicate specific others whose interests must be considered when planning architectural changes: “You will have to convince a number of other people – the design team, a library committee or trustees, and certainly the people paying for the facility – that there are many different ways to look at a library.” The intent and the genre of this article are thus established: it is an educational treatise on how to talk about the nature and purpose of library spaces, specifically with the people whom one hopes to engage as clients and partners. Its discourse continues this vein, emphasizing throughout such business concerns as marketing, operational costs, efficiency, and productivity. The value of the library lies in its ability to attract and retain its market. Noting that, “Like a store, every library needs customers” (p. 324), the author goes on to describe the ways a building’s interior design can help promote its use.

Interior design is as important to a library as it is to a store – in both settings it eases the way for customers and provides a stimulating environment that whets the appetite. The right layout can move people in ways that open new options. For example, people can be routed past educational videos on their way to books-on-tape. Retailers call this cross-sell. Taking a cue from successful bookstores, many libraries are highlighting new and special-interest books, making it easy for users to find what they want quickly and stimulating people’s natural desire to browse. Librarians concerned with marketing soon learn what retailers have long known: Good planning and design moves merchandise.

Equating books and other resources with goods for purchase, the author presents the space of the library as a mechanism for directing the actions of its visitors: the “layout can move

people,” “the interior design...eases the way for customers,” and the “environment...whets the appetite.” Librarians are the novices in this scenario, apprentices to businesspeople who already possess this insight into how to run an enterprise that produces successful results.

They are also noticeably absent in the description: as the space itself conducts customers into desired avenues of consumption, librarians appear to act at a distance (if they act at all).

Describing the library’s community-centering aspects, the author lauds the library’s educational mission, specifically noting public libraries’ unique position as “one of the few nonretail anchors in a community” (p. 324). Stating that the public library is a reflection of community identity and educational values, and that these in turn can affect real estate prices, he connects these to the benefits of the academic library building: “The [college and university] library remains the physical symbol of an institution’s dedication to learning. A good library can serve as a recruiting tool for both students and faculty. It is an important part of campus tours, and is often featured prominently in brochures” (Rizzo, 1992, p. 324). While the library is here explicitly described as a non-commercial institution and the building a symbol of its community’s dedication to non-pecuniary values, its advocacy as a tool for attracting students and faculty, to be featured in recruitment and publicity brochures, locates it in the discursive practices of marking and within the social order of commerce.

Serving customers

“We’re a consumer society now,” noted John McGinty of Marist College, and “students see themselves as consumers of education.” Administrators are more likely to increase budgets if libraries take a businesslike approach, he observed, advising libraries to take advantage of new opportunities to provide revenue.

Comments from the panel “When Education Becomes a Business, What Happens to Traditional Library Values?” at the 1998 ALA Annual Conference (Eberhart et al, 1998, p. 92)

Librarians have long viewed their profession as one of public service, and of libraries as distinctly separate from commercial enterprises, oriented to the needs of a community, not to the bottom line. Referring to library “users” as “customers” or “consumers” skews the meaning of the institution of libraries and librarianship, aligning it within a social order of commerce, in which the library, by marketing its services and goods to consumers, aligns itself with a commercial institution – an association that some librarians have vehemently opposed.

One such flashpoint occurred when *American Libraries* published the cover story “What If You Ran Your Library Like a Bookstore?” (Coffman, 1998) which unfavorably compared libraries’ typical service models with those of bookstores. The author, who runs a fee-based research service through the Los Angeles (Ca.) County library system, listed several benefits to the bookstore model, not least of which was its basis in customer demand. Early on, he acknowledged potential resistance to the comparison he was drawing, saying, “Of course, we know that libraries are not exactly bookstores and library patrons are not exactly customers. There are differences in what we do. But the evidence suggests that we also have much in common, and that librarians might learn a thing or two about how to operate more efficiently and at less expense from bookstore management” (Coffman, 1998, p. 41). His use of “we know” to declare the not exactly assertive assertion that “libraries are *not exactly* bookstores and library patrons are *not exactly* customers” (italics added) simultaneously acknowledges readers’ presumed objections (that the comparison is faulty) and his implicit suggestions, made explicit in the article, that there is a comparison to be made and “that librarians might learn a thing or two about how to operate more efficiently and at less expense from bookstore management.”

Use of the words “clients,” “customers,” and “constituencies” to refer to library users (following the author’s suggestion “Let’s pretend for a minute that we ran our libraries like bookstores”) also underscored the article’s message of the relational value of users to the libraries and librarians, and vice versa.⁹⁰ The use of the inclusive first-person plural throughout the article (“we,” “us,” and “our”) suggests that the writer speaks for others, namely, librarians, and the occasional use of second person pronouns, particularly with questions, strikes a familiar, conversational tone even as the author disparages library services and practices and the professional worth of librarians:

Your staff might not sit behind a reference desk, but you would still have all the people you need to help your customers find the books they wanted, and to answer basic questions about authors, titles, series, etc. But please note: Bookstores call these people booksellers and pay them \$7.50 per hour, while libraries call them librarians and pay them a lot more. (Coffman, 1998, p. 42)

No cataloging for your collection. No Dewey numbers, no OPAC, no AACR2, no LC Classification, no standard elements of bibliographic control. ...Of course, customers in superstores seem to find what they look for easily enough. (p. 44)

Although we like to flaunt our reference services (no matter how inadequate they may sometimes be), many of our patrons would never know the difference if we stopped offering them tomorrow. (p. 46)

According to the *American Libraries* editors (“Bookstore Backlash,” 1998), response to the article was voluminous and heated. The essential objection raised was the faulty comparison of libraries and bookstores, with arguments centering on the higher quality of library’s services at no individual cost to users, the bottom-line mentality of chain bookstores and the implications for quality of service, and libraries’ public-service mission which is driven by community need rather than potential cost or profit. As this response succinctly summarizes these arguments, “Libraries are not in competition with bookstores. Our mission and the

⁹⁰ In his published response to readers’ angry letters, the author refers to users of the library only as “patrons” (not as “customers,” “clients,” or “constituents”).

services we provide cannot be quantified with sales receipts. Measured against other public services, public libraries are a bargain for taxpayers” (p. 78). Among the many comments published, two referenced religious organizations or practices in their arguments (quoted below, italics added).

For us to *prostrate ourselves at the altar of retail* is shortsighted and foolhardy. In a series of six focus-group discussions last year, our "constituents" talked at length about how to improve the library. Nobody asked for a coffee shop. Nobody asked for decreased reference service--just the opposite. (p. 78)

If reference is an important service to a significant percentage of library visitors, then *they need to be proselytized to support these services*, which means user education.... Every reference transaction is *a potential "sale" (in the same way that churches consider every new member a potential pledge)*. It's a very simple economic model that is used to sell everything from toothpaste to submarines: First *we market the need* (you need answers to questions), then *we market our service* (we can answer questions), and then *we deliver the goods* (here are your answers). (p. 77)

The first respondent quoted above uses the juxtaposition of images of religion and retail to suggest the absurdity of the author's claims, and in the next sentence describes focus-group activities already undertaken to assess the desires of users. The second respondent suggests symmetry in the actions of religious organizations and libraries, then deftly extends the comparison to draw analogies between business transactions and reference transactions. Their descriptions connect the service-oriented, non-profit realms of religious institutions with those of libraries, but in the process they evidence their own facility in the language of commerce. The easy transition many of the respondents made, from condemning the comparison between libraries and bookstores on the grounds that they operate in different social realms and are driven by intrinsically different goals, to explaining the value and work of libraries in economic terms, belies what this volume of letters responded to: not the definition of the library in economic terms, but the devaluation of the professional work of librarians.

CONCLUSION

Librarians have long chafed at their quiet image, before Commons environments became commonplace in libraries. As libraries experienced drops in gate counts in the 1990s concurrent with the rise of the World Wide Web, *American Libraries'* articles argued against librarians' and libraries' silent and stodgy image. In the pages of the magazine librarians saw their institution competing with the convenience, comfort, and service of bookstores; the discourse of commerce placed a higher premium what users (now termed "consumers" and "customers") want, while devaluing traditional librarian services and resources that also demonstrated (and justified) their higher pay.

Changes in the economic structure of universities (their increasing focus on the bottom line, marketing, and other commercial concerns) altered the linguistic marketplace of academia, impelling librarians to adopt the discourse and practices of commerce in order to communicate their value. At the same time, as technology altered the place and manner of scholarship, and as changes in pedagogical beliefs prompted new conceptions of where and how learning takes place, academic librarians facing a steady decline in their share of the university budget reoriented themselves to this new reality. By locating new valued objects (namely, new computing technologies) in the library and reshaping the library to better accommodate emerging pedagogical practices, they positioned themselves as more vital to the institution. By adopting the discourse and discursive practices of commerce to communicate their value, they sought to increase their symbolic capital (and, literally, their capital) in the university.

Librarians are largely to be credited for the legitimation of new library spaces. Part of their success lay in an articulation of these new library spaces that linked them to previous and

already legitimate practices (namely, the library's role in supporting the educational mission of the university). Widespread acceptance of Commons environments may be understood as activating existing beliefs regarding the role of the library. Their acceptance among many librarians may also be understood to reflect in some part a tendency to associate noise with positive activity and with an unwillingness to perpetuate unsavory stereotypes. Part of this acceptance may also be connected to ways in which relaxed policies toward noise were endorsed, through reference to naturally self-regulating users, especially younger users understood to be accustomed to working through distraction and able to manage their aural environments for themselves.

While librarians today have adopted the language of business in describing and conducting their work, and while the practices and mindset of business (such as, marketing and market analysis, strategic planning, and a focus on the bottom line), there is still resistance to conflating the work of libraries, oriented towards the public good, with the work of businesses, focused on profit. In their talk about libraries, the work of librarians, and the needs of users, librarians switch between different orders of discourse, arguing for the separation of commerce and education, even as they subsume generic "users" under such conceptually loaded terms as "consumers," "customers," and "clientele."

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

This interdisciplinary study, using linguistic and cultural anthropological methods and guided by discourse theories and sociological theories of legitimacy, sought to discover what the library means to librarians and users, in order to assess the legitimacy of new, noisy library spaces. Straddling multiple disciplines and theories and pulling from diverse data sources, this research kept its focus on instances of discourse and on the phenomena of human experience, to connect the disparate theories informing the study and to provide insight into how the library is accepted and understood. Sound in this study functioned as a tool for exploring culture and a lens for examining beliefs about the library. In addition, the focus on sound revealed the ways in which librarians and library users orient themselves to their work and to others, how sound communicates expectations for legitimate practice, and the persistent importance of the physical place in scholarly life.

The place of libraries in the academic community – both physical and figurative – is being deliberately redefined in order to maintain libraries' and librarians' relevance. Through examination of talk about libraries and their sound, expressed at the national level (through articles in the professional librarian magazine *American Libraries*) and the local level (through interviews with librarians and library users at a private academic research university), this study found that noise in the library is becoming legitimated, primarily through the deliberate efforts of librarians to reshape the library to support new approaches to learning and to appeal to the preferences of younger users. As technological changes in the publication and dissemination of information have made the physical library less essential to research and

gate counts dropped, and as the practices and discourse of commerce (particularly for determining value) have pervaded academic culture, librarians have responded by making themselves and their spaces more accessible, adjusting their role to encompass more aspects of academic life, and by measuring and responding to user demands.

SOUNDING THE LEGITIMACY OF THE NOISY LIBRARY

Now into its fourth decade, the pedagogy of active learning has become well established at all levels of education, including at colleges and universities. As part of this pedagogical paradigm shift from “sage on the stage” to “guide on the side,” the high-tech Commons invited a new attitude towards intellectual authority by relaxing policies that had previously inhibited users’ access to and use of information, whether in the form of books, computers, or other people. Commons environment have become more commonplace in academic libraries as sites for instruction and collaborative learning, and coffee shops and café areas, if not as ubiquitous, are at least not surprising. In a seeming reversal of previous systems of pedagogical thought, in which the quiet library reflected and reproduced the practices of solitary and silent engagement with texts, the noisy library, with users crowded around computers and working in groups, now serves as the more popular marker and maker of academic life.

The legitimacy of these new library spaces and the practices and policies that gird them is suggested by their prevalence and confirmed by attitudes expressed in the professional librarian literature and by comments and practices of actual library users. Some librarians question the appropriateness of library activities and services that invite more social uses and higher sound levels, while others (particularly those serving younger constituencies) embrace

these changes as progressive. Though more social areas in libraries and less active monitoring of sound levels often produce louder and more crowded soundscapes, many of the Woodruff Library users I interviewed tolerated the excess, partly because they accept that part of the library's role is to serve others' needs, not individual preferences. As perhaps the greatest indicator of the legitimacy of these areas and increased sound in the library, users accept them even when such spaces and soundscapes are neither desirable nor beneficial to them personally them (Walker, Thomas, & Zelditch, 1986; and Walker, Rogers, & Zelditch, 1988).

And yet, for library users in general and users of Woodruff Library in particular, the meaning of the library is challenged by these new, noisier spaces. At least among these users, the library *should be*, minimally, a quiet place for individual study. Letters to the editor of *American Libraries*, written by both librarians and patrons, questioned the propriety of some librarians' relaxation of noise policies and incorporation of more social events in the library building, which in practice impinged upon not only the needs of some users but the library's core educational mission as well. Beliefs about libraries, rooted not just in past experiences and popular culture but also in current use, conflict with the meaning of the library conveyed by these new spaces, uses, and sounds.

As librarians promote and project a new image of libraries and librarianship based in social interactions and computing, users struggle to place themselves within this new context and to align their understandings of what a library should be with the place in which they find themselves. For many of the users I spoke with, the answer to this conflict is their own exceptionality: rather than faulting the library or other users – the non-optimal system in which they find themselves – they label themselves and their preferences as atypical. Most

people, they assume, want and need the library for talking and working with others. They and the handful of other people who want quiet must be in the minority.

As Zelditch and Walker (1984) observed in their research into legitimacy and the stability of authority, the *perception of validity* is key to legitimacy: though others may question internally the legitimacy of a practice or action, they will not challenge it if they perceive that others (those in authority and ones' peers) accept it. Seeing and especially hearing actions of others on a regular basis, in which noise is permitted and in some places encouraged, and working quietly and typically alone in the library, most of the individuals I spoke with developed an understanding of talking in the library as a valid practice. Likewise, they came to understand themselves and their own needs for quiet study space as exceptional to the norm.

Despite their acceptance of higher noise levels in Woodruff Library – some even expressing their sense of the propriety of these noisier environments by lauding the library's accommodation of a range of activities and user preferences for work environments – many interviewees exhibited beliefs about quiet and noise, a use of the library, and work habits and preferences that underscored an understanding of libraries as quiet, transcendent, and sacred spaces for concentrated and productive work. Conceptual groupings of quiet with seriousness and focused work, and especially with productivity, expressed an implicit connection between quiet and accomplishing one's academic work. Noise, on the other hand, was grouped with play, socializing, and, for many users, distraction. For those for whom the library is a place to accomplish one's academic work, noise often distracts and undermines productivity. For librarians, however, noise often means activity, users, and vitality, and by extension, the continued relevance of the library.

New communication technologies, combined with productivity demands, have contributed to an experience of academic life in which boundaries blur between work and play, isolation and socialization. The academic library continues to exist as a place for focused work, with the added convenience of being able to more easily access diversions (such as food or socializing) without leaving the library building (or, in some cases, one's workspace).

Working at Commons computers, library users are only moments away from a cup of coffee and a snack, a chance meeting, an email message or IM. Yet such seamless distractions, seemingly in the service of greater efficiency by allowing one to integrate work and leisure, can ultimately undercut productivity. Among the library users and librarians I spoke with at Emory University, for whom time constraints and productivity were paramount concerns, there is still a need for places set apart from the day-to-day, where they can escape other responsibilities and distractions of campus life and steep themselves in their work.

Ordering discourse about (and in) the library

Once an unassuming aspect of libraries, then an unsettling indicator of the changing information landscape, quiet has become contested territory for librarians. In discourse about noise and quiet in libraries in over thirty years of *American Libraries* articles, noise moves from being unwelcome to being not just unavoidable but also, for some librarians and users, acceptable. Saying "our noise problems are all on the plus side," librarians attempt to outweigh the negative aspects of noise with the advantages these signal to them: namely, greater use of the library space by patrons and consequently the continued relevance of the physical library. Associated with community, activity, and vitality (and contrasted with the "tomb" or "morgue" connotations of silence), noise is an element that librarians are not

always willing to stifle. When noise is also understood as a natural by-product of active learning and engaged patrons, there is even less incentive to control or limit it.

All the Woodruff Library users I spoke with understood the library as a place for work and, expressly, *not* a place for socializing (although they acknowledged that such informal conversations often do occur in the library and that the Jazzman's café on Level 1 is the sanctioned place for socializing). Several students indicated that socializing in the library hampers their productivity, be it someone else's conversation that disturbs their concentration or their own tendency to interrupt their work in order to talk with other people. Some asserted that students who work in the library in groups (i.e., not necessarily working on a group project, but simply choosing to sit with other people while doing their work) spend more time in the library but get less done; hence, the need to pull an all-nighter. Among those I interviewed, the opinion was that much of the talking that contributes to higher noise levels in the library comes not from academic conversations but non-academic socializing. Interviewees were unanimous in their identification of the first floor as a noisy area, and many pointedly remarked that people who choose to study "down there" "know what they're getting into."

To the extent that a sound might be tied to an accepted role of the library (e.g., education or recruitment), that sound in the library was accepted as legitimate, even if it was disturbing. When a sound could not be directly connected to a legitimate role, it was perceived as inappropriate. As I pushed interviewees to identify which noises were appropriate in the library, which were not, they defined the edges of their understanding of the library and what spaces, sounds, and activities this concept could *not* encompass. Accepting as many individuals were of others' (and their own) need for diversion, they often drew the line at

where recreation undermined the academic library's emphasis on serious study. Perhaps not so surprisingly, they often relegated less acceptable behavior to Woodruff Library's Level 1.

Quiet and noise in libraries tend to occupy separate spheres of thought. On the one hand, the noisy library is understood as a place of human interaction and community building, where people may freely access and use and share information. Here, play mingles with work, conversation with comprehension, and an experience of separation is easily attained through earplugs or headphones and easily breached by a cell phone, an email or IM, or an acquaintance walking by. (As a consequence, however, experiences of transcendence and escape are less easily achieved). Though very few of the individuals I spoke with regularly use the library for working with others, they readily accepted the library's role in supporting group work and the noise that this inevitably creates. The concept of a noisy library prompted thoughts of community, activity and socializing, people (especially children), and play. Depending on the type of work they were doing and the level of concentration required, most of the interviewees I spoke with could work with people and noise around them. Some even found constant sound stimulating and reassuring – a positive indication of the presence of other people or a persistent background of sound that masked occasional disturbances and allowed them to focus.

The quiet library, on the other hand, is understood as a place of transcendence, separateness, and mental focus, where one is attuned to an inner world of thoughts and feelings. It is a place commonly found in past experience and popular image, both as a nostalgic reminder of a less demanding, simpler, freer existence, and also as a symbol of obsolescence, authoritarianism, and antiquated attitudes. It is solitary and deserted, peaceful and spooky. It is a place of interiority and separation, which can be experienced as either restorative or unsettling. Almost all interviewees connected quiet positively to their ability to work, to

concentrate, and to be productive, as well as to a feeling of transcendence (e.g., relief, serenity, escape).

When an academic library is a community crossroads and an extended classroom, it *is* the daily life of the campus, not an escape from it. Without quiet places set away from main traffic routes, the library may fail to provide the sanctuary and seclusion necessary for concentration and deep reflection and for nurturing academia's celebrated "life of the mind."

Balancing quiet, noise, and the needs of others

Champions (or apologists) for both noise and quiet in libraries stake their claims for legitimacy in the library's educational mission. In preserving places of quiet and in providing areas for more interaction, libraries accommodate a range of learning styles, needs, and preferences. Libraries with copious resources and space at their disposal may more easily meet a range of needs. The reality of libraries, however, even those with sizable budgets and buildings, is diminishing space and increasing competition for funds.

Library renovations and construction projects take considerable time and research to develop the types of spaces users require; at their conclusion they are often already obsolete, as new technology changes yet again how people work in the library. A recent strategy is to develop modular environments, capable of being easily reconfigured for a variety of purposes. These modular spaces work well with the philosophy of self-regulation, in which libraries do not designate quiet areas or enforce noise policies but instead rely on users to "self-regulate" their work environments (i.e., determine how a space will be used at a particular time, and protect that use for themselves). In the periodical literature and in interviews, librarians point to self-regulation as the preferred way to handle sound in the library.

In the interest of supporting collaborative ways of learning, libraries have created spaces and policies that permit users to work together. In the interest of being approachable and of not playing into the stereotype of the shushing librarian, librarians do not police user behavior. As a result, both librarians and library users tolerate less than desirable noise levels in the library, typically from an expectation that occasional disturbances will be short-lived and that some level of noise is inevitable. Further, librarians' hands-off attitude contributes to the perception that such noise is authorized and appropriate.

The Woodruff Library users I spoke with typically do not seek out the library for group study; instead, they prefer to work in quiet environments. They likewise believe that self-regulation is preferable to shushing, and view Woodruff Library security guards' overt attempts to control sound as ineffective and, in some circumstances, illogical and inappropriate. Yet they were reluctant to assert their desire for quiet in the face of inappropriate noise. Some cited their passive personalities, others the amount of effort and disruption such policing requires, and still others, an understanding of themselves and their needs as atypical and in the minority.

Library users and librarians alike who were interviewed for this study exhibited considerable tolerance towards and acceptance of the needs of other library users. A library for them is, by definition, a shared public space, and so they were reluctant to assert their own needs for a workspace over those of others. Almost every Woodruff Library user I interviewed spoke of the library as a place serving a broad range of needs and users, and praised the variety of workspaces it provided. Yet many of these same individuals – including those who used Woodruff Library on a weekly basis, those who were lifelong library users, and even undergraduates – counted themselves out of this library's core constituency. Desiring a place where they can study alone and in quiet, and perceiving Woodruff Library as either a noisy

library or noisier than other libraries in their experience, they set themselves apart from the talking and multi-tasking students crowded around computers in the entrance and along the main traffic areas. Their preferences, they assume, are not those of the majority of users, whom they see in abundance throughout the Commons.

Given these library users' reluctance to actively protect their work environment, and a growing acceptance of socializing as part of the learning process, there is little reason to expect that any self-policing will occur when noise levels get out of hand. In short, the maxim that users will self-regulate does not protect or support quiet areas. By default, spaces tend to get noisier, especially when there are more people, and individual library users tend not to defend their own need for a distraction-free space.

Conventional librarian wisdom (fueled in large part by *American Libraries* articles as well as recent literature on the Millennials) holds that today's undergraduate works in groups, multi-tasks, and is not disturbed by movement, sounds, and other stimuli in the library that other (older) library users find distracting. Many academic libraries are attempting to accommodate a broader range of learners and learning styles, specifically to meet the needs of rising generations of college students. Certainly, I include myself among the librarians who believe that the library can *and should* be more than a reading room, and that much of the future of libraries and librarianship rests on our successfully refining the nature and role of the library. As members of a profession that defines itself by its service to the needs of others, librarians do not lightly institute changes that may undermine that role.

However, in our eagerness to serve and appeal to a rising and already highly influential constituency, in our anxiety over the future of the physical library, and in our desire to distance ourselves from an embarrassing and unsavory stereotype, we too easily believe in

the difference of the younger generation, carrying our assumptions about their preferences and abilities too far. There is much convenience in this belief. Believing that younger users are not easily distracted and do not need or want quiet areas, and that they “self-regulate,” means we do not need to institute policies on sound that we will then have to enforce, and we do not need to inefficiently waste space for designated quiet areas. However reasonably we may argue that silencing users interferes with our preferred roles as research assistants, we cannot blithely assume that if the library is noisy, it is because the library’s users prefer it that way. Given the frustrations expressed by the undergraduates in this study, we also cannot assume that the “kids” prefer it that way, either.

Comments from the undergraduates I spoke with unravel blanket statements about multi-tasking Millennials’ preferences for more social, stimulating environments. Requirements for quiet places to study pertain regardless of one’s age or academic rank, and undergraduates required conditions for doing this type of work just like everyone else. Certainly, I observed a lot of younger students working with headsets on, or writing at a table with lots of other students talking around them. I also observed young students turning their heads towards conversations and grimacing, staring pointedly at their talking peers, wearing earplugs, and closing themselves off, alone, in group-study rooms. Asked specifically about how students get their work done when sitting with talkative peers, the undergraduates I spoke with expressed skepticism about how much work was actually getting done.

New technology and new work habits (especially blurred boundaries between times and places of work and play) challenge scholars’ ability to concentrate on mentally challenging work. This experience is compounded by new environments in libraries, where users are expected to police their own quiet areas but are often reluctant to do so, and by the demands of a culture in which users are increasingly challenged to be productive in a timely manner.

Quiet, disciplining environments in academic libraries are still needed, to provide users a place they can go where distractions are minimized and where they can rely on a predictable and supportive work environment.

THE CULTURE(S) OF PRODUCTIVITY

In interviews with librarians and library users, a specter of productivity flitted behind comments about the library. Ticking off timetables of library openings and closings, describing the environments where they can really “crank out the work” or leave with a “product,” and noting how difficult it often is to discipline one’s self to get work done amidst so many (often technological) distractions, they all echoed a preoccupation with meeting deadlines and accomplishing goals. In a similar vein institutional discourse deliberately referenced productivity in its emphasis on metrics to calculate the efficacy of services and resources. In librarians’ own talk about the library, in interviews and articles, sound signified the life of the library and, indirectly, the library and librarians’ continued relevance.

The concept of intellectual life that began to emerge for me in the course of this study was one in which productivity, rather than reflection, anchors its meaning. Within this new academic culture, evidenced in the philosophy and practice of the library Commons, intellectual effort is measured through collaboration, visibility and audibility, and spontaneous interplay to create new knowledge. In this dissertation I have sought to highlight a few areas of this emergent academic culture of productivity, by focusing on the ways in which a leveling (and sometimes absence) of authority contributes to a perception of egalitarianism and shared ownership, blurred boundaries (between work and play, and

between public and private) place even greater demands on self-discipline and self-policing of one's own needs, and the conflation of the language and values of business with those of public service and education. In future research and elaborations of this dissertation research I plan to expand on this understanding of the culture of productivity in academic libraries and in academia.

Privatizing Public

As I sat day after day in Woodruff Library, I began to wonder about the notions of public and private, and how these concepts are challenged in the increasingly technological (and highly valued) space of the library. Undergraduates and graduate students would camp out at computing stations, leaving their workstations logged in or their laptops out, while they would go to buy coffees or head outside. I asked one student in an interview whether that was appropriate, to which she explained that that was just what you had to do sometimes. Other students would close themselves off alone in group study rooms, in disregard for rules regarding their use. I also recalled the story of the Classics reading room, a rarefied space for the graduate students in Classical Studies that was dismantled with the stack tower renovations and replaced by group study space. Thinking of this specialized access, including graduate students and faculty private studies, I began to question what other aspects of private and public space were being blurred or reconfigured in the library.

The Commons is built in theory in a notion of common ownership, in the spirit of the public grazing grounds of the pre-Industrial age. Though today's Commons' focus is primarily on shared computing and print resources, it builds off this same notion of the shifting real estate, of spaces that are used temporarily, not reserved, easily modified or exchanged from moment to moment. Much the way that public access to and use of

knowledge on the Internet has challenged notions of ownership of creative works, the physical space of the Commons and changes in the study habits of students, as well as the economic realities of increasing demand for limited resources, both shape and reflect the changing culture of academic libraries. At another level, the openness of information in the library translates to greater potential access by the library and the university in tracking the habits and preferences of students. Card readers indicate who is coming into the library (though not at the individual level), who is logging on to computers, and, if a user agrees to being tracked, where users are going on the library's website.

At a more phenomenological and personal level, complicated relationships exist between the personal private nature of study and research and the public shared experience of working in a library. Experiences of working publicly and silently in a library were connected with scholarly identity and a sense of connection to one's community of scholars. At the same time, the ability to remove distractions while still remaining in contact with others, through carrels or group study rooms, pointed to the continued need and desire for quiet, distraction free space for concentrated study.

Talking Shop: Business approaches to public goods

If I have taken the license of mourning the inevitable in these pages it is because I grew up loving and using the traditional library, loving its silences, stacks, dust and chambers for reading, and because almost no librarian I've talked to misses this library today. In library school, over a decade ago, the wonders of the new information technologies were already being pressed upon all of us. My professors' view, which embarrassed me a little, coincided with their concept of librarians as captains of a brave new information revolution. I felt even then that knowledge and scholarship -- the only true goals I could imagine for any educational enterprise -- were being undermined. And so they have been. History, which has always ignored us, will end now by condemning us. We cannot hide from our most insightful patrons the denigration of values which has invaded our walls and made us the marionettes of big business.

William Wisner (2000), Whither the Postmodern Library?, p. 88

When I began researching this topic, I knew that libraries operated within a broad organizational field that included bookstores. I knew that, like much of higher education, libraries have become focused on the patron as “customer” and “consumer,” and come to think of their websites and library buildings as “one-stop shopping” places. I was surprised to discover how extensive this focus on the bottom line has become. Where once the metric of quality and status was the number of books and periodical subscriptions, today’s academic libraries measure their worth through a growing assortment of quantitative assessment tools. One of the most lauded and accepted is the LibQUAL+ survey of user’s assessment of the library experience (services, resources, and place), which was derived from SERVQUAL, a private sector assessment tool. More assessment tools have been built on this model, with the promise of building services, resources, library buildings, even organizational structures, that not only respond directly to need but that can quantify and justify that need.

While on the one hand the design of academic library spaces and policies regarding their use will reflect on some level a desire to appeal to the largest contingent of users as well as a commitment to best supporting students’ and faculty members’ academic needs, on the other hand these decisions also reflect the exigencies of the library’s bottom line. More to the point, the library must measure and thus make visible the often invisible elements of its daily existence, in order to justify its budgetary demands to administrators (and even faculty) who do not see the myriad ways the library continues to support the university’s daily work.

That business models and practices, and the language of business, have become part of the daily existence of academic libraries is understandable, given such factors as their decreasing percentage of the total university budget (ARL, 2007) and the rising costs of journal subscriptions (Edwards & Shulenberger, 2003). Arguing for and gaining the acceptance of new library spaces, especially among administrators, may be seen as due in part to librarians’

adoption of the new linguistic currency, in which metrics and marketing help to evidence customer satisfaction and thus the value of the library.

Yet the semantics of calling the users of the library “customers” invokes a set of relations and practices in which attainment of customer satisfaction (“the customer is always right”) may supersede other legitimate factors in determining the worth of resources and services.

At a more literal level the users of the academic library become its customers when commercial enterprises (like coffeeshops) are granted space in the building. A potential synergy in this arrangement, in which library users purchase beverages because of their convenient location in the library or people stopping by for coffee stay for a library event, nevertheless poses the question of what part such environments play in supporting teaching and learning? As librarians attempt to straddle conceptual worlds and social orders, linking their new spaces to old missions and new study habits and attempting to justify both in the language of quantitative measures, their success depends on their ability to ‘talk shop’ without losing their conceptual focus on their educational mission. Theories of discourse and ideology, however, in which thought and culture, discourse and practice are tightly linked, suggest that this is an untenable proposition.

Outsourcing relevance

Concerns about the quality of the profession also arouse anxiety among librarians. Within the library profession, trends toward outsourcing tasks traditionally performed by the library and hiring paraprofessionals to perform librarian work continue to erode the relevancy of the profession and the value of the professional degree. The problem of professionalization is further compounded by the growing demand for computing expertise and knowledge of electronic information systems in managing collections and delivering services. Though

Library and Information Science schools have expanded their curricula to address the technological issues of information management, the question remains as to whether the new information economy is willing to pay for the professional librarian's expertise, and whether students looking for the more lucrative career path will not see more potential rewards and job opportunities in the field of computer science. More recently, as academic libraries' content has become increasingly electronic, managing this information has required either partnering with computing departments or hiring personnel with computer science degrees or programming experience. When libraries are managed by business professionals and staffed by computer programmers and paraprofessionals, what is the organizational place (and worth) of the credentialed librarian?

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As would be expected in any research endeavor, no less the graduate student exercise of researching and writing a dissertation, there were many points along the way when I would have preferred more time, more resources, and more foresight to counter and avoid some of the challenges. In the interest of avoiding these same problems in the future and pointing towards more fruitful directions, I catalog the lessons learned from this dissertation project.

Recruiting library users

The semantics of *how* I identified potential participants was not something I gave much consideration when I proposed this study. Towards the end of one interview with an undergraduate, in which we'd discussed his preference for quieter places to study over conversational areas, I remarked that I had yet to interview any undergraduate who regularly does group work in the library. "I think it's because you're asking for library users," he said.

People who come to the library to meet others or to study in groups probably don't consider themselves "library users." His observation caught me off guard, but I was immediately struck by the very real possibility that (as the working title of my dissertation predicted) people who use the library building may not conflate it or their activities in it with the "library" of popular culture or of their own past experience.

That said, there are groups of users who would have been likely to consider themselves users of the library – students in the business school, for instance – who were not part of this study. Without an approved recruitment notice, I was limited to recommendations from others and, as it turned out, those recommendations didn't include many people working in social science and science disciplines and didn't include any faculty or students from the business school. Even so, while a recruitment flyer might have given my project wider publicity, there is no reason to expect that more people would have responded to an anonymous flyer than responded to my direct email solicitation.

While my convenience and snowball sampling minimally enabled me to conduct my research as approved by the Institutional Review Board at the university, they potentially biased my findings. Librarians serving as liaisons for humanities departments, when asked to recommend others for my study, were more likely to name individuals in those departments. Additionally, by not soliciting participants during the course of observations, I was unable to query behavior I had observed for underlying beliefs. While the humanities and social sciences were well represented in my sample, the sciences and the Business school were not. Given these disciplines' emphasis on online resources and collaborative work practices, and especially those schools' influence and power within the university structure, their perspective on the library was especially desirable. Faculty and students in the health or physical sciences would be less likely to frequent Woodruff Library, since they have their

own libraries. Because the Business school has its library in Woodruff and because its users are encouraged (and expected) to collaborate, I would have preferred more interviews with MBAs and BBAs as well as faculty, to understand how their use of the library may reflect their academic work, beliefs about libraries, or personal preferences. Only one individual I spoke with was affiliated with the Business school, a gap in my demographic that I could easily have rectified had I been able to recruit interviewees directly in the field. Additionally, the higher number of interviewees working in humanities disciplines and the typically individualistic and text-driven nature of humanistic research may also have skewed the data. That said, the habits and beliefs of the undergraduate participants in my study, including students majoring in sciences, who desired quiet places but felt their needs were in the minority, even as other user populations suggested undergraduates would prefer the noisy library, suggest that their views have relevance, minimally as indications of the ways in which legitimization of the noisy library is operation at the microlevel. Less typical (maybe even idiosyncratic) preferences of some humanists (for example, a History professor who finds Woodruff Library in general too quiet and thus too distracting a place to work) suggest that the higher percentage of humanities scholars represented in this sample does not necessarily equate to a preference for quieter library environments. For this focus on meaning and on legitimacy, a key finding was the conceptualizations of noise and quiet, private and public, and their links to the meaning of the library, as well as the reflection (and naturalization) of some of these views in the professional librarian literature.

Recording sound

When measuring sound levels in the library as part of participant observation, I was often confused what appeared to me to be erroneous readings. In some cases, the readings seemed

inconsistent with the location (for instance, a level of 51 dBA in the Matheson Reading Room versus a level of 45 dBA in Jazzman's). In some cases this might have been attributable to the time of day, the particular moment I took a reading, or persistent ambient sound in my immediate proximity (such as air blowing from a heating or cooling vent nearby). However, occasional wide variations in decibel levels in the same area, absent of any audible change in sound, suggest that there were errors or inconsistencies in my methods or that the reader was inappropriate to the task of gauging ambient sound levels. Ultimately, the sound level meter was most useful in confirming how much of an aural impact extraneous noises could make and in raising questions about what makes an area seem noisy or quiet. Perceptions of quiet and noisy, in my own experience, appeared to be mostly a reflection of the social activity in the area – the *type* of sound – and not just the decibel levels.

The omission of sound recordings in my research was purely accidental: I had intended to include this provision in my IRB proposal, but did not realize I had left it out until the study was about to begin. Though I believe I was able to sufficiently record and describe the sound of the library “the old-fashioned way” – through field notes – I also believe that representation of the aural experience of Woodruff Library would have been enhanced by the inclusion of audio excerpts. Despite the delightful creative challenges of describing aural phenomena verbally, the possibilities afforded by new media technologies, and the increasing willingness of conservative academic institutions to accommodate them, argue in favor of more expansive inclusion of these technologies in one's research, in ethnographic writing as well as research. My own interest and work in digital scholarship convinces me that, while practices for preserving theses and dissertations still (and will always) lag behind practices for researching and presenting scholarship, the technology continues to advance, and new tools and processes will accommodate the multimedia research that doctoral students are already

engaged in. For my own part, I will push myself to expand my own practices for recording and mapping soundscapes, in order to better understand and communicate how these sounds color one's experiences and actions.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Siting new studies

I would have liked to observe the users, use, and sound of other spaces in Woodruff Library and on campus. Based on my own experiences and on the comments of interviewees, the following locations would be worth studying in greater detail, to determine how they are being used and how changes to the soundscape may affect that use.

Woodruff Library Stack Tower

Renovations of Levels 4-6 are complete and renovation of Level 7 is currently underway. Changes to Level 6 have already negatively impacted some users, according to interviewees. The red-orange carpet, though perhaps visually appropriate for the floor where art books are shelved, seems a “noisy color” to some. The loss of the Classics reading room proved frustrating to students who used it as their study space and who valued its out-of-the-way location and the old-world feel created by the wooden bookshelves along the wall. Perhaps most significantly, though, the replacement of locked study carrels with open group studies and photocopying machines marks a shift in how the tower floor is used and how space in that area of the library is to be perceived – from a place for quiet, solitary study, where individuals feel they own their space, to a place for noisier group work in shared locations and fewer places for individuals to claim space for their own.

The Computing Center in Cox Hall

Design and development of the Computing Center in Cox Hall sought to make optimum use of limited space with modular and varied furniture, and to create a more relaxed workspace. With its coffee vending machine, bold colors, soft seating, copious computers, and large screen television and sound system playing classic or alternative rock, this space pushes the envelope for study and work space. Its companion center in the library, Emory's Center for Interactive Teaching (ECIT), sets a similar tone for computing and collaboration, minus the television, coffee, and music, and raises its own questions about what sort of spaces the library will develop next to appeal to and support use of library and computing resources.

My own limited observations here and anecdotal evidence from others indicates that the Computing Center has thus far succeeded in managing the difficult balance of encouraging collaborative and noisy work while also supporting focused, individual, and quiet work. This is due in very large part to the room's design: with deliberate nooks and crannies, open areas and hidden (and yet in a small enough and well-trafficked room to avoid security risks), and shields that help block visual and audible distractions, this space permits a range of activities and sounds to happen in close proximity without disrupting each other.

Already elements of this center (extra chairs, for instance, and the color and style of decorations) have been brought into the library – most strikingly in that last bastion of quiet and seclusion, the stack tower. The library's willingness to incorporate elements of this *avant garde* space indicate a need to better understand who currently uses the stack tower space and how, what new spaces are being incorporated and for whom, and what librarians and library users gain through this redesign of space.

Crystallization versus triangulation

I undertook this study with an assumption that the multiple qualitative methods I used would help to triangulate my findings. For example, interviewees' assertions about the appropriate sound and purpose of the library would be either reinforced or refuted by observations in the library, official statements about library policy, and descriptions of or beliefs about libraries portrayed in media publications. Triangulation is also an approach commonly recommended as a way of validating multi-method research, both in methodological literature and in workshops on qualitative methods that I attended. My research project, though primarily intending to canvass the phenomenological experiences of an array of library users, also sought to address specific questions regarding the legitimacy of library spaces, and in this way, triangulating results was central to my purpose of locating discrepancies between what people assumed about others' use of the library and how the library was actually used.

However, in a study such as this, where the data collected represents such diverse perspectives and arises from many contexts, triangulation is limited in its ability to describe either the benefits of these methods or the validity of the multi-faceted conclusions one can draw from an ethnographic and phenomenological study. The image of the triangle suggests tight, two-dimensional correspondence between points of data, and ultimately a faulty assumption about the fixed, bounded, and simple nature of cultural reality.

Sociologist Laurel Richardson (1994, 2000, and St. Pierre, 2005) first called attention to the limits of triangulation for validating qualitative research when she proposed the crystal as a more appropriate image of the structure and possibilities of "postmodernist, mixed-genre texts" (2000, p. 934). In describing crystallization as an alternative process for understanding

complex subjects, Richardson observes, “Crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. Ingeniously, we know there is always more to know” (p. 934).⁹¹

As I begin re-conceiving this dissertation for other publications and developing new research agendas to build on this work, I will approach these new projects more deliberately from the perspective of crystallization, in an attempt to better represent the complex perspectives and social realities that informed this research and its presentation.

Library ‘utterances’ and finalization

The constellation of meanings users submitted to the simple question of “what is a library?” suggested to me a natural affinity between a study of the new, polyphonous library through the lens of Mikhail Bakhtin, especially his arguments for centripetal and centrifugal forces that shift the meanings and valuations of language over time. His notion of centripetal forces in particular, arising as it did from his own scholarly life lived in the shadow of a totalitarian government, always suggested centripetalism as enforced through an institution, deliberately against the marginal centrifugal forces which were understood to be the living language, the words and genres of everyday speech. In my conversations with library users, though, I found myself struck by the power of meanings accreted over time – not through deliberate manipulation by an institution but through the overlapping of meanings and experiences from multiple, disconnected areas of life. In the experiences they shared, and in their understanding of and reaction to new library spaces, these individuals treated the library’s deliberate creation and promotion of these new spaces as the marginal meanings.

⁹¹ For a recent overview of Richardson’s crystallization approach, especially as an alternative to triangulation, see Ellingson (2009).

In conclusion, I had hoped to dwell more deliberately on a Bakhtinian reading of the 'library'. The rich histories and meanings that many individuals brought to their understanding of libraries, and the unfinalizability of its meaning, along with the ways in which people personalized their books as speaking to them, silently uttering, promised to reward closer examination through the lenses of Bakhtin and Voloshinov. In individual imaginings of the library, whether those images are purely fanciful and diverting or pivotal to the endorsement of a building project or a line of funding, its meaning flows and wafts between the spaces of one's past experience, images in popular culture and literature, and the meanings suggested in evolving experiences of the present. Not monolithic or static, the dynamic word of the 'library' reverberates through a thick history of meaning.

The emblem of silence and order, the library nevertheless slips and blurs: space that is silent isn't, full of internal utterances and the voices of distant others (especially now, as new technologies have expanded the conversational space of the library ever further within and beyond its walls; its regularity is defied by missing books and malfunctioning equipment, by rising noise levels and a Charlie Mingus drum solo. The image it projects in a particular place, a particular day, or even a particular time of day, does not persist, and this intangibility confounds its definition.

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEWING

Interviews were conducted at a location agreed upon by the interviewee and myself. Using a semi-structured interview format, I posed questions from my protocol, then followed up or moved to other questions as the answers warranted. I audiotaped interviews using an Olympus DS-20 digital voice recorder, then uploaded the audio files into Atlas.ti for coding and analysis. (See discussion of discourse analysis below). Data from these interviews, combined with data from participant observation and discourse analysis of institutional documents, were used to determine what sound levels and practices are legitimated within Woodruff Library, for whom, and how conflicts over legitimacy are negotiated. Additionally, this data provided insight into what the library means to different members of the academic community and how the library's soundscape is connected to that meaning.

By investigating the meaning users attach to the library building, particularly to its atmospherics, I sought a more holistic insight into what motivates use of the library and what changes to that physical space might entail. In interviews with librarians and users of Woodruff Library, I explored beliefs about what the library should look and sound like and how it should be used, and questioned how these individuals use and value quiet and sound in the academic library and in their work, and the motivations and experiences underlying these practices and beliefs. I also asked these individuals to describe and explain their own use of the library and preferences for particular workplaces. By examining the actual practices and beliefs of different campus populations at this university, I sought to discover whether changes to the academic library—in sound, appearance, and purpose—meet the expectations of users and carve out or sustain a unique and vital place for the library in the

life of the academic community. I also directly queried the significance of silent places (especially silent library spaces) in scholars' work and in the scholarly life of the university.

INTERVIEWEES AND RECRUITMENT

Participants in this study were recruited through a combination of convenience and snowball sampling. I initially recruited librarians and graduate students whom I had met through my pilot study or had expressed interest in my research; following an interview, I would ask for recommendations of others (librarians, faculty, or students) that an interviewee thought would also be interested in participating.⁹² Following each interview I emailed participants questions about their age, academic rank, disciplinary affiliations, and other demographic data in order to determine the diversity of my sample (see below for a complete list of these demographic questions and participants' response). Given the phenomenological nature of my study, I did not need to be exhaustive in my representation of the range of potential library users, but I did seek to interview at least five individuals from each of the following academic groups: undergraduate students; graduate students; teaching faculty; and librarians. These were groups likely to use the library on a regular basis as part of their academic work and/or to have an opinion on the appropriate use and quality of the physical space. Other demographic information, such as one's disciplinary affiliation or current academic status, were considered alongside their attitudes and beliefs about libraries, as a way of understanding how attitudes about and use of the library might be shaped by more immediate academic concerns. To the extent possible I also hoped to canvas the views of different generational groups within each academic classification, in order to explore

⁹² Though I had intended to recruit additional participants by posting and circulating a flyer describing my study, my university's Institutional Review Board did not approve the flyer for use until after the fieldwork phase had ended.

whether and how uses of and attitudes towards the library may be more closely related to one's socio-historical experience of libraries rather than to one's current academic needs.⁹³

Taken as a whole, the twenty-three participants in this study tend to be young, humanist scholars who visit Woodruff Library at least weekly, if not daily, and who live off campus (a complete description of interviewee statistics is included at the end of this appendix). More specifically, the individuals in my sample fairly evenly represent the academic groups I sought to interview: undergraduate students ($n=5$), graduate students ($n=7$), teaching faculty ($n=6$), and librarians($n=5$). Most reported working in humanistic disciplines, with some working in the social sciences (Business and Psychology) or the sciences (Biology and Mathematics). Slightly more Generation Xers were represented in this sample ($n = 10$), with only slightly fewer Millennials ($n = 7$) and fewer Baby Boomers ($n = 5$).⁹⁴ Almost all participants reported using the library frequently (daily, $n = 11$; weekly, $n = 10$). Of the two individuals who reported using the library only once a month, one reported that in an earlier phase of her doctoral work she visited Woodruff Library weekly, and the other indicated in her interview that, because she often does not have child care, she necessarily limits her trips to campus. In the interviews all participants self-identified themselves as "library users."

ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS

Digital audio files of interviews were uploaded into Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis program. This program allowed me to listen to and code the audio files themselves, rather

⁹³ These generational groups were divided roughly as follows, according their birth years: Millennials (late 1970s to mid 1990s); Generation X (mid 1960s to late 1970s); Baby Boomers (mid 1940s to mid 1960s); and the Silent Generation (mid 1920 to mid 1940s). I was primarily interested in what Millennials thought about the library (and the assumptions other generational groups would make about this group).

⁹⁴ One study participant did not self-report an age range.

than having to first transcribe them. Before coding, I listened to the interview straight through, taking notes as I did so in a .txt file; at this stage, I was less interested in tagging themes than in understanding the perspective of the interviewee – who she was, what her experience in libraries has been, what her current academic life and use of the library involves, and beliefs about silence, sound, and library spaces. I then began coding the interview, marking off a roughly forty-five to sixty-second segment, listening to it once and coding as I listened, and then moving on to the next segment. Initial codes were based in answer to the three key research questions, and so sought to broadly identify excerpts as they pertained to meaning of the library, quiet or noise in the library or in other spaces, and so forth. I expanded this list of codes as I realized the need to capture themes that were emerging or to narrow codes that were too expansive; as I added new codes, I returned to previous interviews to re-code. Constant comparative analysis was used to identify recurring themes. After generating reports to identify those sections of interviews containing talk on key themes (e.g., beliefs about quiet in libraries), I re-listened to each segment, transcribing the relevant text into the comment field and indicating the stakeholder status of the speaker (librarian, teaching faculty, graduate student, or undergraduate student). Relevant excerpts were then read against the content of the original interview notes, to determine the extent to which the view expressed represented an individual's experience of libraries. By using Atlas.ti to code other materials (including field notes and periodical articles) I was also better able to analyze comments made in the interviews against other findings.

EXPLICATION OF INTERVIEWS

Illustrative vignettes, interview excerpts, summary description, and characterization are used to convey the unique experiences and perspectives of the study participants while also

highlighting themes and patterns in their understanding and use of the library. Included among the library user and librarian interview data collected in spring 2008 are comments from two librarians and one graduate student who were interviewed during the pilot study for this research, conducted in spring 2004. Although the interview protocol in the pilot study differed enough to rule out any seamless inclusion of the early interview data in this study, I found that some of the earlier interviewees' responses to similarly worded questions or discussion threads warranted inclusion because they reflected or illustrated trends in the more recent interview data.

In an effort to respect and protect their privacy, I use pseudonyms to refer to the individuals who participated in this study. Beyond using typical male and female names to indicate the sex of participants, pseudonyms bear no particular relationship to the demographic characteristics of participants. To the best of my ability, I have omitted details in descriptions of the participants in my study that could be used to identify them. However, I recognize that when the site of my study is not itself anonymized, it is possible that someone will puzzle out the real individual behind the fictitious name. This likelihood has heightened my sense of gratitude and ethical responsibility to these participants. With apologies in advance to anyone who may come across too readily in this dissertation, I hope that, along with any telling details, my respect for these individuals comes through as well.

INTERVIEWEE DEMOGRAPHICS

Interviewees self-reported demographic information by answering the following questions, sent by email following each interview:

- 1. What is your age? Please indicate using the following ranges:**
A) 18-25, B) 26-46, C) 47-64, or D) 65-82, or E) 83 or older.

2. **To which of the following academic groups do you belong?**
Please indicate only the one that is most applicable.
A) TEACHING FACULTY, B) LIBRARIANS, C) GRADUATE STUDENTS, or D) UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS
3. **What is your major field of study or academic department affiliation?**
(e.g., History, African American Studies, Theology) If more than one applies, please list all.
4. **What is your current status within your career or program?**
For UNDERGRADUATES:
A) Freshman, B) Sophomore, C) Junior, or D) Senior
For GRADUATE STUDENTS:
A) in coursework, B) preparing for qualifying exams, C) preparing for dissertation research, D) researching for dissertation, or E) writing & defending dissertation.
For TEACHING FACULTY:
A) Assistant Professor, B) Associate Professor (non-tenured), C) Associate Professor (tenured), or D) Full Professor
For LIBRARIANS:
A) Assistant Professor, B) Associate Professor (non-tenured), C) Associate Professor (tenured), or D) Full Professor⁹⁵
5. **What activities are typical of your current academic work?**
(e.g., teaching classes, presenting at conferences, writing papers for courses, studying) Please list those that are consistent with where you are currently in your academic career or program.
6. **Do you live on or off campus?**
7. **How frequently do you use Woodruff Library?**
A) Daily, B) Weekly, C) Once a month, or D) Once a semester.

All but one of the interviewees returned answers to these questions, and for the absent response (and for specific questions that others did not answer) I was sometimes able to impute the answers (e.g., academic group). The following table summarizes the characteristics of the study sample, based on these self-reported and imputed responses.

Table 1: Total Interviewees Corresponding to Queried Demographic Characteristics

Demographic Characteristics		Number
Academic Group	Undergraduate students	7

⁹⁵ In their responses, librarians noted that they used a different ranking system (e.g., Librarian I, Librarian II) and substituted this rank for the choices I'd offered. Roughly, Librarian I substitute for "Assistant Professor," Librarian II for "Associate Professor (non-tenured), and so forth.

Demographic Characteristics		Number
	Graduate students	5
	Teaching faculty	6
	Librarians	5
Age Range (Generational group)	18-25 (Millenials)	7
	26-46 (Generation X)	10
	47-64 (Baby Boomers)	5
	65-82 (Silent Generation)	0
	82-older	0
Field of study⁹⁶	American Studies	3
	Anthropology	3
	Art History	1
	Biology	1
	Business	1
	Chemistry	1
	Comparative Literature	1
	English	1
	Graduate Institute of the Liberal Arts	2
	History	2
	Jewish or Judaic Studies	2
	Latin American Literature or Latin American Studies	2
	Mathematics	1
	Psychology	4
	Theology	1
Women's Studies	1	
Academic Status		
Undergraduate students	Freshman	0
	Sophomore	1
	Junior	2

⁹⁶ Some interviewees reported more than one field of study.

Demographic Characteristics		Number
	Senior	4
Graduate students	In coursework	1
	Preparing for qualifying exams	0
	Preparing for dissertation research	0
	Researching for dissertation	0
	Writing & defending dissertation	4
Teaching faculty	Assistant Professor	2
	Associate Professor (non-tenured)	0
	Associate Professor (tenured)	1
	Full Professor	3
Librarians	Librarian I	0
	Librarian II	0
	Librarian III	3
	Librarian IV	2
Live on or off campus?	On campus	7
	Off campus	16
Frequency of library use⁹⁷	Daily	11
	Weekly	10
	Once a month	2
	Once a semester	0

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The following questions and structure guided my conversations with study participants.

Attitudes and Activities Associated with Libraries (20 minutes)

When I say “library,” what do you think of?

⁹⁷ One interviewee reported two frequencies of use, current (once a month) and past (weekly), both of which are included here.

What does this library *look* like, *sound* like?

How does it make you *feel*?

What are you *doing* (or not doing) in this library?

Are there libraries you've used in the past (academic or otherwise) that are good *examples* of the library you're describing?

What matters most in your understanding of libraries: sensory experience, the layout/physical environment, activities, resources, people, or something else?

What *words* do you associate with the word "library"? (What words do you think other people associate with "library"?)

What words do you associate with the word "librarian"? (What words do you think other people associate with "librarian"?)

Is the library you've just described your *ideal* library – a place you'd like to visit – or the type of place that you think is typical of libraries?

What *should* a library be like?

What should it *look* like?

How should it *sound*? (Should it be quiet or noisy? Or does it depend?)

What are people *doing* in this library?

How should a library make you *feel*?

Can you offer an *example* of this library?

Does it matter whether a library is an academic or public library?

Attitudes and Activities Associated with Quiet & Noise (20 minutes)

Tell me some places you go to that are usually quiet.

Are these places you go very *often*?

Why do you go to these places?

What do you do there?

How do you feel?

Are there other people there? (If so, what do they do?)

Are there certain *types* of places you think of as quiet? (Such as?)

Are these places you *like* to visit?

Do you distinguish between *good* quiet and *bad* quiet? (Examples?)

Are there places you think of as quiet (in a good way) that you don't visit that often? (Why don't you go there?)

Do you distinguish between *quiet* and *silence*? If so, explain the difference.

Tell me some places you go that are usually noisy.

Are these places you go very *often*?

Why do you go to these places?

What do you do there?

How do you feel?

Are there other people there? (If so, what do they do?)

Are there certain *types* of places you think of as noisy? (Such as?)

Are these places you *like* to visit?

Do you distinguish between *good* noise and *bad* noise? (Examples?)

Are there places you think of as noisy (in a good way) that you don't visit that often? (Why don't you go there?)

How is your perception or use of a library affected by its sound?

How do you *feel* when you enter a quiet library?

Think of yourself in a *quiet library*:

What does it look like?

What are you doing?

Are there other people around?

What are they doing?

What does a quiet library *mean* to you?

What makes a library *too quiet*? (Can you give an example?)

How do you *feel* when you enter a noisy library?

Think of yourself in a *noisy library*:

What does it look like?

What are you doing?

Are there other people around?

What are they doing?

What does a noisy library *mean* to you?

What makes a library *too noisy*? (Can you give an example?)

Think about the unpleasantly quiet and the pleasantly noisy places you've just described.

What – other than the sound levels and your comfort level – makes them different?

Attitudes and Activities Associated with Woodruff Library (20 minutes)

Imagine that you're in Woodruff Library... *Where* do you picture yourself? *What* are you doing? Describe the images that pop into your head.

Are these images typical of what you do and where you go in Woodruff Library?

To what extent do you consider Woodruff Library to be a *typical* library?

To what extent does it embody your *ideal* library?

How does Woodruff Library differ from other libraries in your experience?

How often do you visit this library?

Do you enjoy visiting Woodruff Library? (Why or why not?)

If you were to recommend this library to your friends or colleagues, what would be on your list of attributes? (activities, environment, people, resources, etc.)

Do you think of Woodruff Library as a quiet place or a noisy place?

Why do you think the library is quiet or noisy? (What factors are involved?)

Would you prefer Woodruff Library to be noisier or quieter?

Do you want this library to be relatively quiet (compared to other areas of the campus)? Why or why not?

Are there *times* when you wish the library were quieter or noisier?

Do you want certain areas of the library to be quieter than other areas of the library?

What areas have you come to expect to be noisy or quiet?

Which areas would you prefer to be noisier or quieter?

What do you think makes these places noisier or quieter than other places in the library?

Do you think *other people* want Woodruff Library to be a quiet place? (On what do you base your opinion?)

Do you think noisiness is appropriate in Woodruff Library?

Do you think this library *should* be quieter or noisier? What makes you think that?

Do you think *certain areas* of the library should be quieter or noisier? Why or why not?

What kind of noise is appropriate? What kind of noise is inappropriate?

Have there been situations in which you felt the library or certain people in the library were too noisy?

Have you ever asked people to be quiet? If so, describe the scenario:

Who was being noisy?

What were they doing that was noisy?

How did you *feel* about asking them to be quiet?

If you felt that the library itself or certain individuals were too noisy, but you didn't do anything about it, describe the scenario:

Who was being noisy?

What were they doing that was noisy?

How did you *feel* about asking them to be quiet?

What could you have done? Why didn't you do anything?

While in Woodruff Library, have there been situations in which someone asked *you* to be quiet? If so, describe the scenario:

Who asked you to be quiet?

What were you doing that was noisy?

How did you feel about this?

History of Library Use (10 minutes)

1. What role have libraries played in your education (both formal education and lifelong learning)?

- What libraries have you used in the past? (public, school, corporate, other?)
- Do you consider yourself a library user? (What does being a library user mean to you?)

2. How has your enrollment or employment at Emory University affected your library use?

- Visit the library more or less than previously in educational experience?
- Use the library for same activities or different?

3. In other libraries in the past (not Woodruff Library), have you found yourself in a situation in which certain users or the library itself was too noisy?

- What did you do? (If you did nothing, why didn't you do anything?)

Attitudes and Activities Associated with Academic Work (10 minutes)

4. Describe your ideal academic work environment.

- Describe your habits/routines for the following learning-related activities (if applicable): where you go, what you do, whether you work with others or alone, how you focus.
 - Studying for exams
 - Preparing for class discussion
 - Researching a topic
 - Writing a paper
 - Preparing a presentation or lecture
- *Where* do you most often do your academic work? Why?
- Have there been times when the place you usually work has been less than ideal? If so, what was wrong?
- Do you think your habits and preferences for work environments are typical of academics? (Do you consider yourself a typical academic?)

Describe your typical day on campus.

What places (buildings) do you visit on a regular basis?

Who do you see or What types of people do you interact with on a regular basis?

What activities (if any) do you associate with particular buildings?

Where do you go to relax?

Where do you go to study by yourself?

Where do you go to study or work with others?

Where do you go to meet with your peers?

Other activities & buildings?

For faculty only:

Do you regularly converse with students outside of the classroom? Describe these interactions (the kinds of places, environments in which they take place, i.e., physical or virtual; the nature of the interaction—study group, informal gathering, conversation with close friend, lunch dates, etc.)

For graduates & undergraduates only:

Do you regularly converse with other students outside of the classroom? Describe these interactions (the kinds of places, environments in which they take place, i.e., physical or virtual; the nature of the interaction—study group, informal gathering, conversation with close friend, lunch dates, etc.)

Do you regularly converse with instructors outside of the classroom? What role do you see the instructor playing in your education?

➤ Do you live on campus?

- What impact (if any) does this have on the places you go on campus?
- What impact (if any) does this have on what you do on campus?

Current Library Use [10 minutes OR email follow-up]

Describe a typical library experience: when you go, how long you stay, what you do.

How frequently do you come into the library?

What brings you into the library? (typical reasons for coming in, including most typical)

Where do you go in the library?

What activities do you do while in the library?

Where do these activities take you in the library? (Which areas do you go to?)

Do these activities involve reading? Do these activities involve the use of machines or other technology? Do these activities involve collaboration and/or conversation with other people?

How long do you spend in the library? (average)

What library-based services (Reference, ILL, circulation, bibliographic instruction, etc.) have you used? How frequently do you use library services? What prompts you to use these services? What is your experience of these services?

To what extent is your use of the physical library directly attributable to your academic work?

How do you use the library to complete your academic work?

For graduates & undergraduates only:

Is use of the library required by your instructor or your degree program? If so, in what way?

APPENDIX 2: PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Emory University's Woodruff Library provided an ideal location for a phenomenological and ethnographic case study. As the main library on campus, serving undergraduates, graduates, and faculty in business, humanities, and the social sciences and supporting a range of resources, services, and activities, Woodruff Library attracts a range of users engaged in different academic pursuits. This library was also among the handful of academic libraries worldwide that first implemented Commons environments in the 1990s, and among the even smaller number of those institutions that have subsequently incorporated dedicated quiet areas. This pattern of architectural and policy decisions – altering the library space to accommodate new technology and a broader service mission, and then re-emphasizing a more conventional character and use – intimate that the institution is still struggling to legitimate its new role and image.

FIELD SITE AND OBSERVATION LOCATIONS

My field site was the Robert W. Woodruff Library on the campus of Emory University. Of particular interest to this study were the library's fairly recent architectural improvements: the construction of a Learning Commons⁹⁸ (completed in 1997), the renovation/restoration of the Candler Library reading room (completed in 2003), and the installation of a Jazzman'sTM coffee shop and café and adjoining lounge (completed in 2005). These three areas of Woodruff Library represent divergent views of the academic library – quiet, traditional space

⁹⁸ Formally called the Center for Learning and Information Resources, or CLAIR), this dominant area of Woodruff Library has for many years been referred to as the Information Commons, or InfoCommons. In 2007 the library began referring to this area as the Learning Commons, in order to emphasize its educational role. For simplicity's sake, I refer to CLAIR here as the Commons.

for individual work; wired space for collaborating with multiple media; and a space for taking a break from one's work and socializing – and, as recent constructions, are also part of a deliberate attempt by the library both to establish a new identity as a community crossroads and high-tech collaborative workspace and to reference an iconic identity connected to customary uses, architectures, and sounds. They thus provide convenient contexts for exploring different library users' and librarians' activities in and understandings of the library.

For this study I regularly observed in six distinct locations (described below), on different days of the week, times of day, and times during the semester, in order to establish the ambience and character of these areas of Woodruff Library and how they are used.

- Jazzman's café and lounge (located in the Commons, 1st floor)
- Commons: Main Entrance and Business Library
- Commons: Reference Area
- Commons: 3rd Floor (Circulation and "quiet study" area)
- Mezzanine and Bridge (adjoining Commons 3rd Floor)
- Matheson Reading Room (located in Candler Library)

I chose these locations as places embodying the divergent images and of the library and serving different roles, evidenced through conversations with other users and librarians, the university's own advertisement, and my own experience as a student and a library employee. All these locations are within Woodruff Library proper, except for the Matheson Reading Room, which is technically located in the adjacent Candler Library building but connected to Woodruff Library's 3rd floor by an enclosed bridge.

OBSERVATION PROCEDURES

Observations within Woodruff Library, at different days and times within different locations (both quiet and noisy), provided some general understanding of how people act and interact in these spaces and the degree to which sound levels and use of library spaces are legitimated or challenged through practice. I observed in each location for three hours at a time, with at least one observation during the day and one observation at night. Through non-reactive participant observation I captured naturally occurring practices and discourse of librarians and library users.

Measuring sound levels

Noisiness and quiet, as abstract labels, were rooted more objectively through the use of a decibel-level gauge. To briefly explain, sound intensity is measured through decibels (dB). For instance, almost total silence is 0 dB; sounds 10 times more intense are measured at 10 dB, sounds 100 times more intense are measured at 20 dB, and so forth. To understand how different decibel intensities translate into actual sounds, consider the following general relations between sounds and their decibel values in Table 2 (below).

Table 2: Average Decibel Levels for Types of Sounds (“Decibel (dB),” 1999)

Type of sound	Average Measure in Decibels (dB)
[threshold of hearing]	0 dB
Rustling leaves	20 dB
Quiet whisper (3 feet away)	30 dB
Quiet home	40 dB
Quiet street	50 dB
Normal conversation	60 dB
Loud singing (3 feet away)	75 dB

Type of sound	Average Measure in Decibels (dB)
Automobile (25 feet away)	80 dB
Motorcycle (30 feet away)	88 dB
Food blender (3 feet away)	90 dB
Power mower (3 feet away)	107 dB

A sound level meter detects the intensity of sound waves, and translates it into decibel readings. Different scale weightings (A, B, or C) are used to filter how sound is received by the gauge and measured (Wolfe, 1998). They differ in their sensitivity to very high sound levels, with A-weighting being least sensitive and C-weighting being most sensitive. Of these scales, A is the most suited to detecting lower frequency sounds, though it is still unable to detect extremely low-frequency sounds (lower than 30 decibels, or the sound of someone whispering three feet away). My options for gauge were limited, as most decibel meters measure high-frequency levels and fluctuations, rather than the low end of the sound spectrum. The gauge I used was a Mastech JTS 1357 digital sound level meter, which could measure 30-130 dB (A weighting) with an accuracy of +/- 1.5 dB.

I began and ended each observation with a decibel reading, and took new readings at thirty-minute intervals during the observation, to obtain an average sound level for that area. These measures were intended to help me establish a standard and objective indicator of what interviewees *meant* when they described certain areas of the library as noisy or quiet. During observations, however, I began to doubt the accuracy of these readings. For instance, directing the meter's microphone slightly upwards or downwards could shift a reading by several decibel points. Also, while the meter responded sharply to abrupt changes in sound (e.g., a phone ringing approximately twenty feet away from me in the Jazzman's bistro area would send the level up seven points), other loud noises barely registered (e.g., when the

compressor in one of the Jazzman's drink coolers shut off, approximately fifteen feet away, there was no change in the decibel level reading).

While the readings ended up being useful in confirming spikes in sound levels corresponding to specific activities, I did not find readings to be compelling enough to regularly include in the descriptions of locations. Ultimately, the precise decibel level reading at any given moment in time mattered less than the average over a few hours, and the difference in these averages across locations. I supplemented these readings with field notes, in which I recorded observations about the sounds that predominated in an area and at particular times (in order to identify the "keynotes," "signals," and "soundmarks" [Schafer, 1994]), activities and user populations, and connections between them.

Recording the scene

My goal in the participant observation phase was, primarily, to attend to the aural elements of the cultural environment as a way of understanding the whole. Or, to rephrase Marcus (1995), my goal was to follow the sound. Schafer's (1994) notions of the soundscape – its keynotes, signals, and soundmarks – helped structure my observations. In settling into the scene, I listened to the space around me, asking not simply, What do I hear? but also What do I hear that is constant, repetitive, and part of the keynotes of the space? What do I hear that is meaningful, unusual, perhaps even alarming, signaling some other event or activity that people here might attend to? What do I hear that isn't typical of other places? And are there patterns to how and when these sounds and silences emerge, and who produces and reacts to these sounds?

Because my fieldwork site was a place where people regularly work at computers, I was able to take copious and detailed notes on my laptop during my observations. I alternated

between attending to description of the setting and the participants (e.g., the lighting, what people are wearing, the color and style of the furniture) and of the activity (e.g., how and how often people enter and leave the area, what they do and say while they are there, who they interact with). Sound figured largely in all these descriptions. Having chosen not to use an audio recorder during observations, I was particularly attentive to describing sounds in my notes and how others did (or did not) react to them. From my readings of cultural and historical studies of sound, I was also attentive to the ways in which sound (or its absence) might mark social differences, power relations, or structural shifts that serve as catalysts to cultural change (see, for example, Picker, 2003; Smith, 2001; Bailey, 2004).

In presenting descriptions of the people, places, activities, and sounds of Woodruff Library, I endeavored to convey images that were vivid, engaging, and concise – to help place the reader in the scene while also calling attention to certain aspects. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) served as a useful guide both in recording the scene during fieldwork and in turning these fieldnotes into a written ethnography that faithfully and evocatively recreates the experience of being in Woodruff Library. I employ predominantly an excerpt strategy for presenting my recorded observations, in order to distinguish between this evidence and my analysis of it, and “to allow the scenes to speak for themselves” (p. 181). While some elements of these excerpts are pulled directly from my notes (i.e., they are not edited), most are revised in some way to condense a scene or an event, in order to better focus the reader on those aspects that I determine are most relevant to this study. I highlight these edited versions of the original fieldnotes using a different font, single-spacing, and indentation.

Role switching in the scene

As noted above, the nature of the fieldsite for my research (an academic library where people regularly sit at tables or carrels, typing on keyboards and staring into computer screens) meant that my fieldnote-taking was neatly camouflaged and my presence, for the most part, unremarkable. While I was fortunate that I could write at length about a scene without disrupting it, I did find that my looking up from the computer screen and looking around the room occasionally attracted attention, with some library users in the vicinity looking up or glancing in my direction if I was staring in theirs. This in itself became a notable finding, in terms of the panoptic qualities of library spaces to discipline users and the types of actions that call attention to themselves (as out of the ordinary) and distract other users.

Staring into a computer screen, as many of the people I observed were doing, and focused intently on what I was working on, I found myself often losing track of the space and people and sounds around me. While taking notes, I would remember an email that I needed to send, or an article I wanted to look up in a database, or a website someone had suggested I visit. Several minutes later, I would remember with a start my primary purpose and look around me in surprise. Having become for that span of time a full-fledged “participant,” I can attest to the ease with which someone like myself, ordinarily attentive to sound and movement, can tune those distractions out. Simultaneously, my distractedness, enabled by new technologies (e.g., the ease with which I digressed from taking field notes in order to send email or do online research), was an experience I shared with many interviewees for this study, who confessed to the difficulty of disciplining themselves to do their work.

APPENDIX 3: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

An understanding of libraries emerges over time, through personal experiences, through stories and literature, and also through messages carried by media publications. Especially during times of great or sudden transformation in an established institution (as was the case for libraries in the mid-1990s), more articles are likely to appear that call attention to these changes, in order to challenge or laud them. Librarians' and academics' attitudes about what the library is and should (or should not) be and the changes in discourse surrounding libraries and library buildings may be located through close analysis of articles in professional librarian publications and higher education journals. Discourse analysis of librarian and higher-education news publications provides further insight into the widespread legitimacy of new practices, spaces, and sounds and stakeholders' positions regarding these changes. To the extent that new library spaces, particularly noisy ones, are highlighted as distinctive or unusual (regardless of whether that difference is perceived as negative or positive), such spaces may be understood as lacking widespread legitimacy.

Discourse analysis of periodical articles provided insight into how the meaning of the library is projected and negotiated at a national level, particularly from the perspective of librarians. As a potential counterpoint to these views and to assess how the library is understood at the local level, I interviewed students, librarians, and faculty at Emory University's Woodruff Library. Through close attention to how these individuals understand the library and the experiences that have shaped their beliefs, I sought to discover what factors reinforce or challenge the meaning of the academic library.

DOCUMENT COLLECTION

Documents collected for discourse analysis were published articles from *American Libraries* and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, spanning the past thirty years (1978-2007). Articles in these journals provided a view into national and professional discourse on library spaces and their use, both from the perspective of librarians in general and from academicians, and during a time period when new technologies and pedagogies emerged that shifted the role, use, and sound of the academic library.

As the membership magazine of the *American Libraries* Association, *American Libraries* both presents and informs the views of most American library employees regarding libraries and the library profession. While individual libraries' missions and policies might differ according to the public they serve (for example, the ways academic and public libraries might differ in their policies regarding young children), the magazine encompasses them all into a larger community of like-minded professionals. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, while directed toward a higher education audience of administrators, students, faculty and staff, is not affiliated with any specific academic or professional organization. In addition to providing a weekly print publication, *The Chronicle* hosts a daily updated website that lists job opportunities in academia and provides career advice. According to the *Chronicle* website, the printed newsletter reaches approximately 350,000 readers ("About the Chronicle," 2008).

I began my search for periodical articles in the EBSCOHost Academic Search Complete database, which indexes *American Libraries* for all years in my study (1978-2007) and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* for a portion of that time (1999-2007). Additional *Chronicle* articles were located using the ProQuest Research Library database (1986-2007). Because earlier issues of *The Chronicle* were not indexed in either print indexes or databases, I located

the remaining articles by manually scanning article titles under “Libraries” in the subject index for each volume. Following are the specific searches and number of articles retrieved for each periodical.

American Libraries

Source: EBSCOHost Academic Search Complete
 Search:
 SU librar* AND
 TX (silence OR silent OR quiet OR noise OR noisy) AND
 SO (“*American Libraries*”)
 Years: 1978-2007
 Results: 480 articles

Chronicle of Higher Education

Source: EBSCOHost Academic Search Complete
 Search:
 SU librar* AND
 TX (silence OR silent OR quiet OR noise OR noisy) AND
 SO (“*Chronicle of Higher Education*”)
 Years: 1999-2007
 Results: 32 articles

Source: ProQuest Research Library
 Search:
 SU librar* AND
 TX (silence OR silent OR quiet OR noise OR noisy) AND
 PUB (“*Chronicle of Higher Education*”)
 Years: 1986-2007
 Results: 28 articles (only 8 unique articles from the ProQuest search)

Source: Bound print copies of Chronicle
 Search: [manual scanning of subject indexes]
 Years: 1978-1982
 Results: 1 article

Source: Microfilm copies of Chronicle
 Search: [manual scanning of subject indexes]
 Years: 1982-1988
 Results: 2 articles

In total, I collected 480 *American Libraries* articles and 44 *Chronicle of Higher Education* articles; see figure below for total number of articles per year. The greater number of *American*

Libraries articles is partially explained by my search for articles about libraries; given *American Libraries*' subject matter, it was much more likely to have published articles on libraries than the *Chronicle*. However, during the 1980s neither magazine published many articles that referenced both libraries and silence or noise (see figure below).

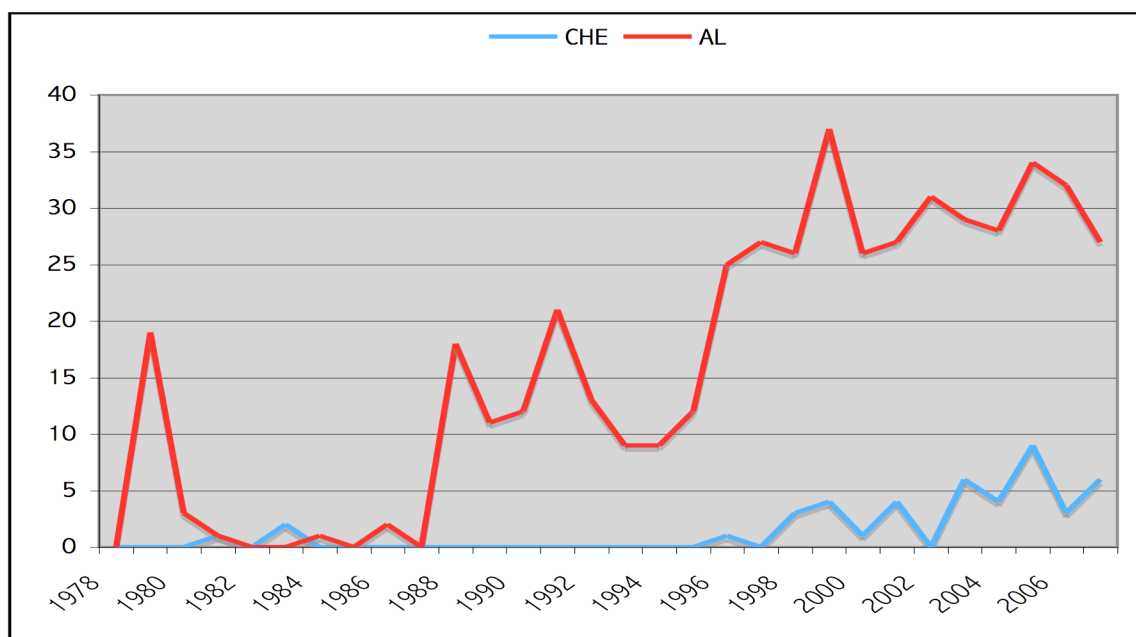


Figure 18: Total *American Libraries* (AL) and *Chronicle of Higher Education* (CHE) articles on libraries and sound, 1978-2007

The rise in number of relevant articles starting in the late 1990s could be explained by better indexing tools: when journal articles began appearing in databases at this point, it became easier to conduct keyword searches of full-text articles. On the surface, however, there does not appear to be anything ideologically significant in the greater number of *American Libraries* articles or the higher number of relevant articles from both magazines in recent years. The relative dearth of *Chronicle of Higher Education* articles, compared to *American Libraries* articles, also persuaded me that nothing useful would be gained from trying to quantitatively measure and compare changes in attitudes or word choice in *American Libraries* and *Chronicle of Higher Education* articles over time, or in attempting a more in-depth comparison of discourse in

both of these journals. Instead, I focused my discourse analysis solely on how the sound of libraries is described and explained in *American Libraries* articles.

For the close discourse analysis of *American Libraries*, I trimmed the dataset to a more focused and analyzable subset by looking only at opinion pieces, letters to the editor, or cover stories. These types of articles, I determined, would help me assess the types of views *American Libraries* readers are regularly confronted with and feel passionately about and also the issues that the magazine itself deems newsworthy for its librarian readership. Doing this required running a new and altered search, for two reasons: 1) the “Document Type” preference in the Academic Search Complete database only retrieves articles from 1996 forward (the year that the “Document Type” metadata descriptor was added); and 2) adding an “All Text” keyword search for “opinion or letter or editorial or ‘cover story’” to the original search yielded no results. Consequently, I used the following broad search parameters in an attempt to retrieve as many articles as possible containing the type of articles and discourse I was looking for.

Source: EBSCOHost Academic Search Complete

Search:

TX (silen* OR quiet OR noise OR noisy) AND

TX (opinion OR letter OR editorial OR “cover story” or “al aside-image” or “thus said” or “world sees us”) AND

SO (“*American Libraries*”)

Years: 1978-2007

Results: 328 articles

In order to closely analyze only language use around sound and silence in libraries, I manually read through and weeded this *American Libraries* dataset of any articles in which references to sound or silence were not directly related to library environments. Specifically, articles were omitted in which references to “noise,” “noisy,” “quiet,” “silence,” or “silent” were not used to describe the aural environment of the library, individuals’ activities in or

experience of the library, or attitudes or preferences regarding the space of libraries or the types of environments deemed appropriate for the types of activities expected to take place there. I also weeded out articles that were merely news stories or otherwise didn't fall into the article types I was looking for.⁹⁹ Less these irrelevant articles, the library-focused, opinion and cover-story dataset of *American Libraries* articles now contained 66 articles that referenced noise or sound in relation to libraries.

In a previous study of metaphorical language in *American Libraries* articles, I had observed strong associations between beliefs about libraries and their atmospherics and attitudes towards cell phones. The fact that many interviewees for this current study of Woodruff Library referenced cell phone noise as bothersome (in libraries and in society in general)¹⁰⁰ signaled to me that I might fruitfully explore discourse about cell phones in my analysis of the discourse around libraries, sound, and silence. I decided to build a subset of *American Libraries* articles that referenced cell phones. In constructing this dataset, I considered the possibility that discourse about cell phones and/or libraries in these articles would likely demonstrate positive valuations of quiet and negative valuations of sound. However, I decided investigating language around cell phones would be useful for gauging the ways cell phones were understood among librarian audiences; if there was positive valuation of cell phones, that would in itself be an indication of changes in attitudes about sound in libraries or about the libraries role to users. As with the previous dataset, I decided to focus on article

⁹⁹ Specifically, I included cover stories and opinion pieces (letters to the editor, pieces specifically labeled "editorial" or "opinion," and regular opinion columns). Based on my familiarity with the regular *American Libraries* features, I included articles by two regular columnists, Walt Crawford (author of "The Crawford Files") and Will Manley (author of "Will's World"), since these two individuals not only express opinionated views on topics but also are invited speakers at library conferences. Cover stories were identified either by the phrase "(cover story)" in the title or in the section description or abstract of the article full-text.

¹⁰⁰ Of the 23 individuals interviewed for this research, ten mentioned cell phone conversations as irritating to them personally, a disturbing element in libraries, or the type of activities that should not occur in or should be curtailed in libraries.

types that would best represent the views of readers and the magazine. Using the previous search, I added an All Text keyword search for “cell* or phone*” and retrieved 58 articles.

Source: EBSCOHost Academic Search Complete

Search:

TX (opinion OR letter OR editorial OR “cover story” OR “al aside-image” OR “thus said” OR “world sees us”) AND

TX cell* AND

SO (“*American Libraries*”)

Years: 1978-2007

Results: 51 articles

Removing articles that did not fit the article types I was looking for reduced this dataset to 24 articles.

Coding and Analysis

Periodical articles were converted into image files or formatted as rich-text documents in order to be uploaded into Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis software program. Using the same codes developed for interview data, I tagged sections of the texts for conceptual categories and language use connected to academic libraries and their soundscapes, and for evidence of shifting or conflicting beliefs surrounding the sound and use of the academic library. I also ran automatic searches to highlight each paragraph of text containing the keywords from the database search (“quiet,” “silent,” “silence,” “noise,” or “noisy”).

Constant comparative analysis was used to identify recurring themes. I generated reports to identify those sections of text containing talk about libraries and sound then coded these excerpts for attitudes about noise or quietness, stakeholder(s) whose perspective is represented by the text, and other issues raised by the text besides the sound of the library space. After analyzing discourse in each excerpt (using methods suggested by Fairclough, 2001), I retrieved each article in full in order to further analyze the discourse in terms of the speaker, the topic of the article and type of article, and any other contextual or intertextual

elements (e.g., other articles that letters to the editor may be referencing). In all, I analyzed articles from three different datasets, for the following purposes:

- All *Chronicle of Higher Education* articles ($n=44$) and a random sample of *American Libraries* articles ($n=44$) that mention libraries and noisiness or quietness
Purpose: To assess attitudes about sound and silence, as connected to word choice
- Opinion pieces and cover stories in *American Libraries* ($n=66$) in which references to noisiness or quietness are specifically connected to library spaces
Purpose: To closely analyze discourse around the sound of library spaces
- Opinion pieces and cover stories in *American Libraries* ($n=24$) that mention cell phones
Purpose: To closely analyze discourse around cell phones

Discourse analysis in this study considered connections between the language used and associated beliefs, practices, and social systems: What ideological views underpin discourse about libraries and their atmospherics? How does the discourse reflect individuals' or institutions' attitudes and beliefs, their experiences, and their position within a social structure, and how does it help to explain their actions? Does the discourse change over time, and in what way does the changing discourse reflect broader changes, particularly in policies regarding the space and use of academic library buildings? Analysis of texts and talk attempted to determine

- position of the individual or institution in relation to other stakeholders in academic library use;

- individual's or institution's beliefs about legitimate use and sound of the academic library, and beliefs about what other stakeholders believe;
- practices and behavior associated with academic library spaces, both actual and what an individual considers appropriate; and
- attitudes and beliefs about academic libraries and silence and sound, as they relate to scholarly life.

I began the discourse analysis by examining how noise and quietness were valued in *American Libraries* and *Chronicle of Higher Education* articles published between January 1978 and December 2007. To do this, I used the Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis software program to search across rich-text files of *Chronicle* articles ($n=44$) and a comparably sized subset of the *American Libraries* articles ($n=44$), looking for the keywords “quiet,” “silent,” “silence,” “noise,” or “noisy.”¹⁰¹ Excerpts of paragraphs containing these words were copied into a separate file, then manually read and coded for

- attitudes towards quietness and noise expressed in the excerpts (positive, negative, or neutral),
- whether or not quietness or noise were directly connected to libraries, and if so, what aspect of libraries, and
- specific words used to indicate quietness.

In my analysis of language use in periodical articles, I attended to lexical and grammatical choices of the author: specifically, vocabulary used and the experiential, relational, and

¹⁰¹ To create a random subset of the 480 *American Libraries* articles from my original search, I organized the article citations chronologically, then counted off groups of ten and included each tenth article in the subset.

expressional values of those word choices; grammatical features, such as syntactic modes and active or passive verb constructions; and the social and discourse orders that signal the broader sociocultural and historical environment in which the discourse occurs (Fairclough, 2001). I referred to Cameron (2003), Fairclough (2001), and Lakoff and Johnson (1980) for guidance in coding for metaphorical language and analyzing the results. Cameron informs the essential first step in metaphorical discourse analysis with her guidelines for determining just what constitutes metaphorical language. Lakoff and Johnson also help define types of metaphors. Fairclough suggests ways of linking discourse to ideology, by considering how other lexical and grammatical elements may corroborate metaphorical meaning.

Everyday discourse and ideological commonsense

Fairclough (2001) outlines specific critical discourse analysis methods that may be used to uncover the deeper workings of discourse, breaking them into three phases: (1) *description* of the text, (2) *interpretation* of the relationship between text and interaction, and (3) *explanation* of the relationship between interaction and social context. During the description phase, one attends to lexical and syntactical features of the text itself, such as the choice of words and sentence structure. Regarding metaphorical expressions, Fairclough proposed that ideological assumptions are revealed by the choice of some metaphors over others. In analyzing discourse, then, one asks not only ‘What metaphors are used?’ but also ‘What metaphors *could have been used*, and how would they have altered the meaning?’ Contrastive relations (between the metaphorical language used and alternative metaphorical constructions) help indicate what ideological ‘commonsense’ the discourse assumes.

There are other linguistic, syntactic, and discursive levels, however, at which ideology functions. Pronouns may indicate how relationships between or among persons, groups,

objects, places, and so forth are ‘logically’ understood. Sentence structures help determine who or what is considered passive or active, agentive or agentless. These two factors, along with word choice, may indicate a particular experience of the world, a subjective relationship to the world, or how relations between certain individuals or social types are perceived. Combined, these elements further reinforce the power of a metaphorical expression and flesh out the dimensions of ‘obvious reality’. For example, consider this hypothetical sentence: *As librarians, we preserve information for our future users.* Pronoun usage, sentence structure, and word choice combined reinforce the understanding of a collective and agentive group which ‘preserve[s]’ (contains, protects, and to some degree controls) information for the benefit of an owned (and thus, perhaps also controlled to some degree) collective that has yet to be fully realized. It likewise establishes this librarian collective’s service to others (by acting or doing ‘for’ someone or something else) and longevity (its ongoing purpose, since its present work is perpetually motivated and/or fueled by a ‘future’ reality). Consider how the ideology, particularly the relational and experiential value of librarians’ role, shifts if the word ‘preserve’ is replaced in the sentence with the word ‘rescue’ or ‘hoard’ or even ‘generate’. It not only changes the understanding of librarians, their role, and their relationship to users, it also calls attention to the ideological ‘commonsense’ that the original sentence supported.

The previous hypothetical example, though deliberately constructed to illustrate a point about ideological assumptions, nevertheless failed to illustrate its metaphorical language in any obvious way. Beyond the ontological metaphor suggested by the verb and its object – ‘information’ has physical properties or dimensions that allow it to be ‘preserve[d]’ – the deeper, underlying metaphorical associations are unclear. Do librarians ‘preserve’ in the way that a park ranger contains, protects, and controls flora and fauna and ecologies? Or do they

‘preserve information’ in the same way that a biologist ‘preserves’ specimens: putting them in a container, protecting them from decay, and controlling the conditions in which they are stored and used? One might even detect a hint of maternal benevolence in this action, akin to putting up peaches for future family guests. The surrounding discourse, as well as the larger cultural context, must be taken into account before any metaphorical understanding can be reasonably constructed from this sentence. Such methods of analyzing the discourse and context are covered in the next section.

Article types

Some article types recurred frequently enough in this study to warrant further description. Others seemed to warrant explanation, given the content that was pulled from them. Some of the columns featured regularly in *American Libraries* resemble article types found in other journals, professional or popular. Readers have several places to voice their opinions and pose questions: the question-and-answer section, “Action Exchange,” for library specific content; the letters-to-the-editor section, “Reader Forum,” for commentary on previous issues’ content; and the “On My Mind” section, a space for longer opinion pieces on topics deemed by the editors to be of general interest to the readership. Regular sections and subsections address news and issues of concern to libraries and librarians, such as “The Crawford Files,” written by regular columnist Walt Crawford and featured in the “Technology” section of the magazine. Within the “News Front” section, which predictably provides news on libraries nationwide, the section “*AL* Aside–Image” (also called “Thus Said” and “How the World Sees Us”) provides updates on a somewhat atypical news item – how librarians’ and libraries’ are currently portrayed in popular culture. This article type, along with other opinion-piece types, is discussed below.

AL Aside-Image

As a subsection in the “News Front” portion of the magazine, this regular column on libraries’ and librarians’ public image provides the library professionals who read *American Libraries* with a sense of how they are currently perceived, through representations in other mass media outlets (television, newspapers, major national magazines, and the Internet, just to name a few that were discussed in these pieces). In some of these cases, librarians’ commentary was included within the copy, so that negative or positive evaluations were immediately countered or bolstered. In most of these stereotypical images of librarians (as timid or passive, unattractive or plain, and authoritarian) and libraries (as quiet, dark, old, and rule-bound) are trotted out and tested.

On my mind

The column title “On My Mind” suggests that the contents will be opinionated and personal, and the single-word subject classification in the upper right corner of the page – “OPINION” – leaves little doubt that this is section of the magazine, indeed, reflects a subjective viewpoint. This column highlights the more lengthy opinion pieces of the magazines readership, and thus may be written by almost anyone, provided the letter’s contents fall within the interests of the magazine and its readership (as determined by the editors).

Will’s World

The column “Will’s World” (written by librarian and humorist Will Manley) is a regular feature usually found on the back page of the magazine (which is often the choice location for thought-provoking tidbits or ‘last word’ pieces). Manley is described by the magazine as someone who has “furnished provocative commentary on the library profession for over 25

years” (May 2004, p. 80); his columns also carry the caveat that his opinions “do not necessarily reflect the policies of the ALA” (November 1999, p. 104). This initially posed a problem: could analysis of this presumably irreverent discourse data be generalized to account for library professionals’ views in general? How, indeed, does one seriously analyze humor? My first instinct was to exclude this article type, but I eventually decided that the “Will’s World” column’s regular inclusion in the magazine gave the opinions expressed there considerable weight as a determiner or reflector of librarian opinions, much more than they would have had as mere opinion pieces occasionally published at the discretion of the editors. The fact that selections of Manley’s writings have been republished in the magazine and that Manley is a frequent guest speaker at professional librarian events, suggests that his opinions resonate with readers.

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