Examining Undergraduates’ Library Priorities through Q Methodology

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Research Question
How do our undergraduates prioritize library services and spaces?

Instrument Development & Data Collection

What is Q Methodology?
- Primarily Sequential Mixed Methods Design
- QUAN + QUAL → QUAN → QUAL
- By-person factor analysis, whereas participants (not items) serve as the variables

1. The Q Set
- 60 items in final Q Set
- Items were developed from previous UM library surveys and focus groups. We also included non-UM services and spaces available at ARL Libraries nationwide.

2. The P Set
- Participant group was 40 undergraduate students
- Incentive was a $5 Starbucks gift card

3. The Q Sort
- Students sorted the cards on a prearranged grid from -6, -5, -4, -3, -2, -1, 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

Data Analysis

1. PQMethod Factor Rotation

Factor 1: The Environmentalist
- I want comfortable, natural surroundings
- Prioritizes: study space near natural lighting; non-traditional seating options; additional soft seating; and introducing more color in the building

Factor 2: The Space Advocate
- We need more study spaces
- Prioritizes: more group study spaces; more quiet study spaces; individual, small group and large group reservable study spaces

Factor 3: The Ideological Traditionalist
- It’s not a library without books
- Prioritizes: buying more academic books; enforcing quiet study spaces; print books over ebooks

Factor 4: The Weekender
- I’m here all weekend
- Prioritizes: longer hours on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday; better printing options, open to digital resources

Surprising Takeaways
- No factor showed particular interest in the library developing a technology check-out program
- Three of the four factors were not in favor of creating more study space by removing library bookshelves or computer stations
- In-person library workshops were considered a low priority by all four factors
- All factors wanted textbooks available for checkout

Data Results

3. Crib Sheets

Four Significant Factors

TIP
- Add images by dragging and dropping from your desktop, copy and paste, or by going to INSERT > PICTURES. Resize images proportionally by going to the DESIGN menu, click on COLORS, and choose the color theme of your choice. You can also create your own color theme.

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Save your work

Prioritize: longer hours on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday; better printing options, open to digital resources

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