Africana Library User Survey, Fall 2013

CORNELL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY ASSESSMENT & COMMUNICATION
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Africana Space Survey Results

1 Key Findings

Introduction

Visitors and users of the Africana Library and Research Center were invited to answer a brief survey about their uses, activities and desired changes for the library. The survey ran for a two-week period between October and November 2013 and a total of 141 responses were received.

Key Findings

- The majority of respondents were undergraduate and graduate students (89%, n=125); 6% were faculty/post-docs and 6% were community members, which may include faculty and students from other institutions.
- Sophomores and Seniors account for 47% of responses and also reported using the library with more frequency than others.
- All campus colleges were represented in the responses, except the Law School and the Vet College.
- 59% of respondents (n=86) indicate they visit/use the Africana Library once a week or two to four times in a week. 17% (n=24) indicated they only visit the library on rare occasions. Seven respondents indicated that it was their first time in the Africana Library.
- Respondents reported using the library most often in the evening, between 8 and 11 pm (35%), and in the afternoons, between 2 and 5pm (29%). The Africana Library appears to have its smallest number of users between 9:00 am and 2:00 pm (13%). Faculty are more likely to visit the library during business hours and not at all at other times.
- Activities conducted in the library by respondents can be divided into four categories: intellectual pursuits, productivity activities, use of library services and relaxation activities. The majority of activities reported were in the area of intellectual pursuits (57%, n=402), such as doing research or engaged in group work.
- The top three cited reasons for choosing this library was for quiet (26%), its ambiance (16%) and its location (12%).
- Nearly 40% of the suggestions received “to change one thing in the library” hinged on extending library hours during weekdays and weekends (39%, n=53). The second highest suggestion at 11% (n=15) was to maintain the library and its operations as they are now because “it’s perfect; Secret Gem of Cornell.”
2 RESULTS

BACKGROUND

The Africana Library director was interested in finding out if users of the Africana Library had any concerns about services or ideas to improve services. A paper survey with a total of seven multiple choice and open-ended questions was made available throughout the Africana Library from Monday, October 28 through Monday, November 11, 2013. Visitors and users of the Africana Library were invited to fill out the voluntary survey and in exchange received a candy bar. A total of 141 responses were received during the two-week survey period, which may include repeat survey takers since the survey was anonymous. A copy of the paper survey is included at the end of this document.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The survey participants included undergraduates, faculty, graduate students, post-docs and members of the Ithaca community. Figure 1 shows the affiliation of Cornell students and faculty who chose to provide their major or field of research; 25 respondents did not provide this type of information. The largest group of respondents identified with the College of Arts and Sciences, five of which indicated Africana studies as their field of interest/major. 80% of the survey participants were undergraduates, 9% graduate students and the remainder faculty/post-docs and community members (Figure 2).

![Respondents by College](image-url)

Figure 1. Respondent affiliation by college.
Visits to the Library: Frequency and Time of Day (In the Course of This Semester)

Respondents indicated that they are frequent visitors to the Africana Library, using it as often as every day, but mostly from two to four times in a week (38% of respondents) or once a week (21%). 17% of respondents indicated they rarely use the library and at least seven individuals indicated it was their first time (Figure 3).

The Library appears to be busiest in the afternoon from 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm and even busier in the evening from 8:00 – 11:00pm. The use by students increases with the time of day and sophomores and seniors appear the heaviest users between 2:00 and 5:00 pm and again after 8:00 pm to closing (figure 4).

Comparing participant reported information to staff reported user ‘head counts’ both within and outside of the library proper (but within the premises of the Africana Research Center), corroborates peak use of the library between 8 and 9pm (figure 5). On average, the Africana Library staff counted over 1000 users per month between the hours of 5 and 11 pm, Sunday through Thursday in the fall of 2013.

Adding the number of items checked out of the Africana Library for fall 2013, also confirms higher number of transactions occurring between noon and 5pm (55%), compared to over 30% between 5 and 9pm. Not surprisingly, and supporting the feedback received in this survey, the highest number of transactions at all hours, but especially between 5 and 9 pm, is for students (graduate and undergraduate) (table 1). 1

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1 This information is provided here for comparative purposes and for context, but does not form part of the survey.
Figure 3. Frequency of visits to the Africana Library in a week.

Figure 4. Time of day that participants indicated visiting the Africana Library.
Table 1. Africana Library – items checked out, Fall 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patron Group</th>
<th>9:00am - Noon</th>
<th>Noon - 5:00PM</th>
<th>5:00 - 9:00PM</th>
<th>After 9:00pm</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>1063</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activities in the Africana Library (in the course of this semester)

Activities reported were divided into four categories: Intellectual pursuits, productivity activities, use of library services and relaxation activities. The breakdown for these categories from high to low for all survey respondents is as follows (and below in Figure 6):

- **Intellectual activities** (read, write, do research/homework, do group work, watch TV/Videos, use quiet space): 57% (n=402 counts)
- **Productivity activities** (use desktop computers, print, use copier/scanner, stapler, etc., charge laptop, charge cellphone): 29% (n= 205 counts).
- **Use of Library Services** (check out materials, return materials, meet with library staff, use items on reserve, borrow laptop): 8% (n= 58 counts).
- **Relaxation Activities** (hang out, eat, nap/rest): 6% (n= 39 counts).

![Figure 6](image.png)

**Figure 6.** Activities reported as being conducted by participants in the Africana Library (%).

**Intellectual Pursuits**

Intellectual pursuits include activities that revolve around the conduct of research, studying (reading, writing), completing assignments, collaborating with peers, watching a video or TV program (in support of academic tasks), and the use of quiet space that affords this kind of work. 74% of intellectual pursuits reported were identified as reading, writing and doing research/homework (Figure 7).
Productivity Activities

Productivity activities include the necessary tasks that surround completion of assignments, research and other projects such as printing, using a computer, scanning, copying, collating a project, or charging a laptop or a mobile device. 52% of productivity activities reported include the use of a computer and printing (Figure 7).

Library Services

As expected, Library services is a category that includes the staffed services that one would expect in a library -- the ability to check out or return items, borrow laptops (and peripherals) and consult with staff. Most of the activities reported (93%) were circulation transactions (Figure 8).

Relaxation Activities

Relaxation activities include all those necessary behaviors that support academic endeavors, such as napping, eating, resting and hanging out. 44% of the responses for this category are for resting or taking a nap (Figure 8).

Figure 7. Intellectual and productivity activities conducted in the Africana Library.
Figure 8. Library services used and relaxation activities in the Africana Library.
WHY CHOOSE THE AFRICANA LIBRARY

Given the opportunity to indicate why they chose this Library, students cited as the top reason the quiet (26%), the ambiance (16%) and the Library’s convenient location in proximity to home or other desired spot (12%). Additional reasons included the furniture, the light and the staff (Figure 9).

![Figure 9. Respondents’ reasons for choosing to visit the Africana Library from high to low.](chart)

ONE THING TO CHANGE ABOUT THE AFRICANA LIBRARY

When asked if they could change one thing about the Africana Library, 126 participants offered a variety of suggestions: from changing nothing to adding more seating to changing the time for the local bus! By far the most often mentioned change (39% of all comments) were about the hours of operation – from earlier or later opening/closing hours, to extending weekend hours to making the library a 24/7 access building.

The following is a breakdown of the comments by categories from high to low. All comments are provided unedited after this breakdown.

One thing to change about the library:

- Hours (n=53; 39%)
  - A little longer hours at night; longer hours; more hours on weekends.
- Nothing (n=15; 11%)
  - N/A I like the way it is.
- Great as is (n=14; 10%)
  - It’s perfect; it’s the quietest one I’ve been to; Secret gem of Cornell.
- Furniture (n=13; 9%)
  - More comfortable chairs; more desks; more workspaces; add more seating.
• Food (n=12; 9%)
  o Add a coffee machine; vending machines for food/drink; sell coffee.
• Space (n=8; 6%)
  o Bigger!; include more spaces to study; more space; bigger, more desks.
• Technology (n=6; 4%)
  o Macintosh computers; more computers; scanner.
• Location (n=6; 4%)
  o It should be closer to campus; location, but can’t be helped.
• Group study space (n=5; 4%)
  o Group study area; more tables for group work; private study rooms for group projects
• Other - (n=5; 4%)
  o Add lockers or carrels for graduate students; more parking; make the 81 run later at night.

COMMENTS ON “ONE THING TO CHANGE” ABOUT THE AFRICANA LIBRARY.
(duplicate statements removed from most sections)

Hours

• a little longer hours at night
• Closing hours
• Earlier hours on Sunday
• Expand Sunday hours (open at noon)
• Extend hours. Close later and on weekends open earlier.
• Hours of operation (make them longer!)
• If you could open 2 hours earlier on Saturdays that would be great. Thank you.
• It would be great if the library open longer hours on weekends
• Longer hours on Sunday (open earlier), Friday and Saturday (close later)
• Longer hours!!
• More comfortable chairs, longer hours in the summer, more computers
• More hours
• More hours! Open earlier & stay open later on weekends.
• Open 24 hours
• Open 7/24/7
• The hours of operation are so short, I would like to spend more time here.
• To extend library hours after 11pm and open earlier on the weekends - 11am!!!
• Weekend hours, especially Sundays
• Open later and/or sell coffee
• open later during the week or earlier on sundays
• Open later! Midnight!! Such a great location - I want to stay later than 11!
• Open until 12!
• Opened until later/opened earlier on weekends
- Time of open and closing. Needs to be longer!
- Make the 81 run later at night so it's more accessible and open earlier (7:30-8:00am)
- I would maybe change the library times.
- 24/7
- could be open until midnight

Change Nothing

- N/A I like it the way it is.
- None
- Nothing really, it's the quietest one I've been to. Easy to be productive!
- Nothing really. I actually enjoy coming here because it is clean and quiet!
- Nothing!
- Nothing. I love it here :)

Great as is

- Can't think of anything
- I love this library. Thank you!
- It's all good!
- It's perfect!
- perfect as is
- This Library is pretty damn good... the location's very out of the way !!
- I like this Library. Note: I've used this Library a lot in the past.
- I would let more people know about this space
- Occasionally the staff chat among themselves very loudly; it makes it difficult to concentrate at times. However, their laughter and shiny disposition is a great asset and greatly contributes to the good vibes this place has.
- Everything is great, possibly a café
- Nothing really, it's the quietest one I've been to. Easy to be productive!
- Nothing really. I actually enjoy coming here because it is clean and quiet!
- Nothing. I love it here :)

Furniture

- Increase the number of tables and chairs. At night it is always full!
- More comfortable chairs
- More desks for individual studying
- More desks/tables w/ chairs.
- more of the comfortable desk chairs/This Library is amazing thanks. More portraits of female leaders
• more workspaces (but that might mess up the quiet ambience if there are too many people)
• more study areas/desks & chairs-spaces are often full
• Add more seating
• Bigger, more desks
• More comfortable chairs, longer hours in the summer, more computers

Food
• Add a coffee machine and more tables.
• Coffee maker/hot water dispenser for coffee/tea
• Make coffee available
• That there's no where to get coffee.
• More parking. Vending machines for food/drink
• eat food while I work.
• Everything is great, possibly a café
• Casual use; sleeping/eating for students at night
• Have a vending machine close by & perhaps less talking (if possible)
• Open later and/or sell coffee

Space
• Add more spaces! Sometimes (especially Sunday night) it is full!
• Make it bigger
• Bigger!
• Bigger, more study spaces!
• Include more spaces to study!
• More space

Technology
• Have more computers available
• I hope there could be a scanner here
• Macintosh computers
• A few more desktop computers
• More comfortable chairs, longer hours in the summer, more computers

Location
• Location, but can't be helped,
• I wish it was closer to my residence hall so I could come more often!
• I would move it closer to North campus!
• Make it closer to campus/College Town!
Group Study

- A group study area
- I wish it had available group rooms to discuss projects with partners
- more tables for group work
- Private study rooms for group projects. More chairs.

Other

- I would add lockers or carrels for graduate students (like Olin). I work with lots of books/documents which are difficult to lug around. I would work at Africana more during the day if I had a place to store some of my books
- Make the entrance at the other side because it gets crowded whenever there's a conference going on.
- Ability to reserve rooms online
- More parking. Vending machines for food/drink
- Make the 81 [bus] run later at night so it's more accessible and open earlier (7:30-8:00am)
3 SURVEY FORM

1. Tell us about today: Date________________________
   Time of Day: 9am – 12  12- 3pm  3-6pm  6-9pm  9-11pm

2. Tell us about you! Your class, field of study and/or department affiliation. Check appropriate category.
   ○ First year  ○ Junior  ○ Grad student  ○ Postdoc  ○ Other  Field of Study /Major:
   ○ Sophomore  ○ Senior  ○ Faculty  ○ Staff  ○ Other  ________________

3. In the course of this semester, how often have you come to use the Africana Library?
   ○ Daily  ○ 2-4 times in a week  ○ Once a week  ○ Every 3 – 4 weeks  ○ Rarely

4. In the course of this semester, approximately what time of day have you most frequently used the Africana Library?
   ○ 9 am – 2 pm  ○ 2 - 5 pm  ○ 5 – 8 pm  ○ 8 – 11 pm

5. In the course of this semester, what activities have you come to do in the Africana Library? Check all that apply and/or add your own.
   ○ read  ○ write  ○ do research / homework  ○ use desktop computers
   ○ print  ○ use copier/scanner  ○ use stapler, etc.  ○ watch TV/ videos  ○ check out a book/item
   ○ return a book(s)  ○ meet with library staff  ○ use items on reserve  ○ do group work
   ○ use quiet space  ○ charge laptop  ○ charge cell phone  ○ borrow laptop
   ○ hang out  ○ eat  ○ nap / rest  ○ ________________
   ○ ________________
   ○ ________________
   ○ ________________

6. Why did you choose this library for these activities? Check all that apply and/or add your own.
   ○ class in Africana Center  ○ ambiance  ○ parking  ○ ________________
   ○ quiet  ○ light  ○ exterior bookdrop  ○ ________________
   ○ furniture (tables/chairs)  ○ staff  ○ ________________

7. If you could change one thing about this library, what would that be?
   ____________________________________________________________________________