Assessing Library Services, Resources & Space
Survey and Focus Groups with Graduating Students – Spring 2009

In March 2009 the UC Merced Library launched a survey, facilitated by Institutional Planning & Analysis, to undergrad and graduate students scheduled to graduate between May and December 2009. The intent of the survey was to determine how and to what extent students used the library and their level of satisfaction with the library (space, resources, and services). Those students who completed the survey (59 total) were asked if they would be willing to be contacted to participate in a follow-up focus group. From these volunteers and some additional recruits, we conducted four focus groups in April 2009 using a moderator from the campus's Center for Teaching and Research Excellence (CRTE). Two of the focus groups consisted of graduating students who already worked at the library (7 and 9 participants) and the two remaining focus groups consisted of graduating students who did not work at the library (6 and 8 participants). As a result of the survey and focus group findings, we have outlined the primary strengths and areas of concern brought to the library's attention and have outlined actions in response to these findings.

Key Findings:

Section A:
What Are We Doing Right?

1. We are providing a quality collection that students are using for their academic work.
Students recognized the valuable resources provided by the library and favorably referred to the availability and usefulness of the databases, journals, and articles available to them.

Quotes:
- "The databases provided me with valuable resources for several projects."
- "great amount of peer-reviewed journals"
- "The databases have been very helpful for my research projects. I felt confident in finding what I needed in order to write my papers."
- "The library resources are really excellent here."
- "I love the online databases…. That's probably my favorite service that they offer."

Context/Background: The Library does offer a robust collection of resources to the UC Merced community in support of the academic offerings and research needs. As a University of California library, the UC Merced Library is able to leverage its financial resources to gain access to the wide range of electronic information resources licensed by the California Digital Library on behalf of all the UC libraries and listed in the following table. In addition to electronic resources, the library has access through Interlibrary Loan to the 35 million volumes that comprise the UC print collection. On the local level, the library continues to build an online, print and DVD collection in support of instruction and research.

Information Resources Format	Number
Print Books	78,000
E-Books	540,000
Periodicals	24,200
Government Documents	92,000
Non-Print Media	1,250
Databases	300
Supplemental Course Resources	320
Digital Finding Aids	9,000
Digital Archival Resources	50,000
Digital Images	181,818
UC Library Shared Collection	36,000,000
UC Library Digitized Print Books	1,675,000

WASC Standard 3.6: Developing & Applying Resources & Organizational Structures to Maintain Sustainability

Action:

- To the extent allowed by the availability of funds, the library will continue to participate in CDL consortial licenses for electronic resources. The library will also continue to the best of its ability to purchase print books through its approval plan and to respond to faculty requests for books, online journals and DVDs. (Ongoing)

Note: Particularly in the focus groups, student expressed some frustration at the difficulty of using databases and noted that they like the ease of a search engine such as Google Scholar. At least one individual expressed difficulty identifying appropriate search tools.

Action:

- We have tagged recommended databases with a star icon in an effort to explicitly highlight some of the databases that may be of most interest to our library users. For example on the General Engineering page, the icon draws attention to seven of the databases from a list of 17. http://ucmercedlibrary.info/dblistmain.html?subject=e_general_databases (Completed)

- In our database listing, we have included links to subsets of databases based on assignment requirements. These subset options limit a search to a specific number of resources within a database and can direct students to a group of acceptable resources for a specific course or assignment. (Completed)
    - Selected Political Science Sources (from Academic Search Complete)

- Selected Science News Sources (from Academic Search Complete)
- Selected Magazine Sources (from Academic Search Complete)

2. We are providing a versatile and welcoming physical space that meets multiple needs.
Students like the physical space and its ability to meet various needs. Several noted that they use it for quiet and group study and view the facility as a welcoming, aesthetically appealing and relaxed environment which allows food and drink.

Quotes:

- "The library is the only place I can really sit down and focus and work on important things because it has few distractions and allows me to get what I need to get done."
- "The study areas provided a very welcoming environment for students to study. I loved how the library is so well lit and open with large tables."
- "I see the library is this kind of central important building in my academic experience."
- "the library does help me focus and get away from people"

Context/Background: The UC Merced Library provides spaces to support a variety of activities, not all compatible with each other but all valid uses of library space. The library's first floor provides a student-union atmosphere for eating and socializing, but the space is used for study as well. The upper floors provide collaborative workrooms for group study; these rooms are in high demand and are in use from opening until closing when classes are in session. Throughout the library, traditional library tables are used for individual study but are also used by groups working on projects or studying together. The soft-seating areas are used in ways similar to the table, with student re-arranging the soft seating to meet their needs. The library also provides spacious carrels for individual study.

Action:

- We will continue to provide a space that serves multiple purposes. We are aware that both study and social places are needed for students on campus. Our goal is to provide that balance to serve as many student needs as possible while ensuring that students' academic needs are met. (Ongoing)

Note: Though students made many positive comments concerning library space a number of other students found it too noisy to study and wished for more collaborative study space. *See Section B #1.

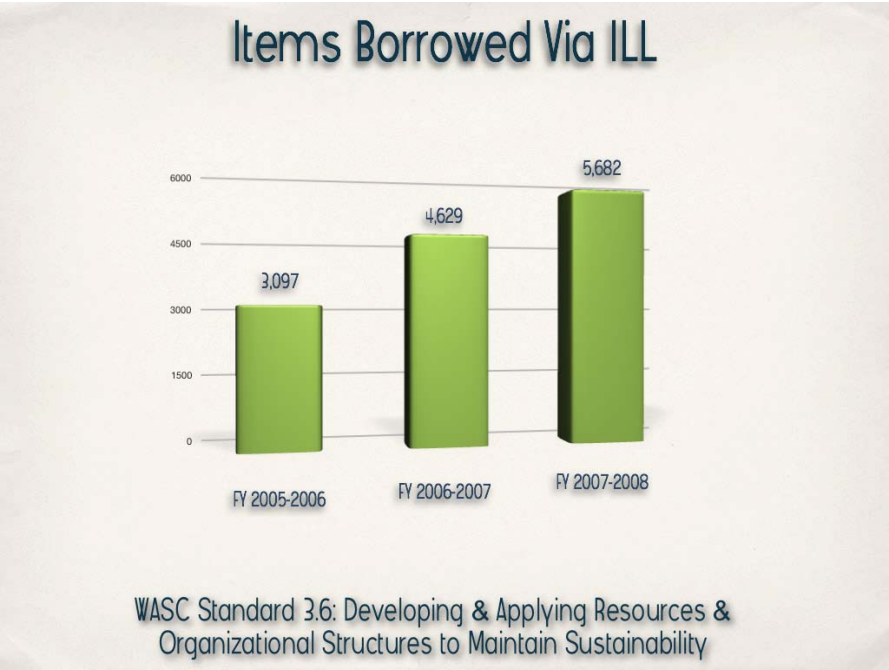
3. We are providing valuable services.
Students appreciate several services available in the library particularly the loaner laptops program, Interlibrary loan, and printing capability.

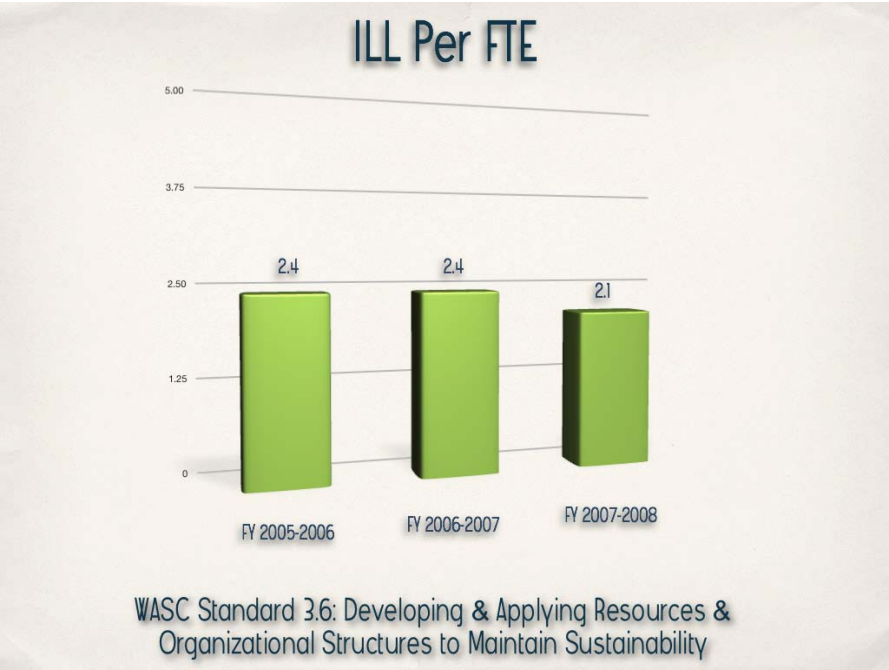
Quotes:

- “The ILL service was especially helpful since I was able to request whatever books/journal articles I could find.”
- “laptop rentals and ILL were the best resources used.”
- "I think that's [the laptop program's] genius."
- "I think that's [ILL's] really important because then it doesn't limit me to what I can … use in my research."
- “I value … printing access even from my own computer.”

Context/Background: The UC Merced Library opened in 2005 with 200 laptops available to users for a 4 hour loan period. The Library provided this service as a means for students to access the library resources though students have also used this for additional purposes due to the full productivity suite of software.

The Interlibrary Loan service has also been extremely popular for many users. Students, faculty, and staff can request items not available locally for no additional charge. Many items are borrowed from other UC campuses though items are also brought in from libraries around the world.

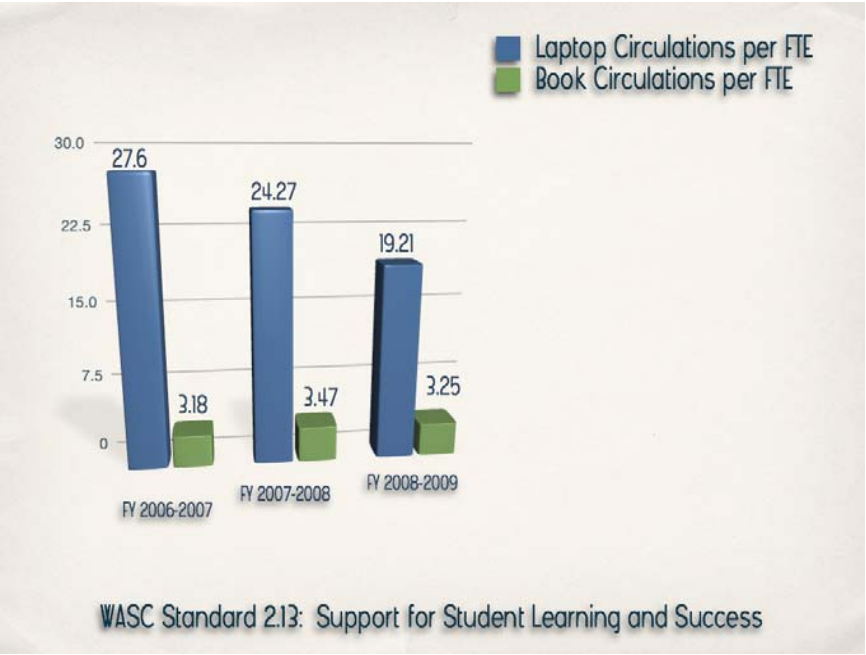




In addition, users have been able to print in the library by connecting through the campus' UCMGlobal Print Queue and sending print jobs to one of three printers available in the library or to another printer on campus.

Action:

- Laptops continue to be available for checkout. However, due to the growing student population coupled with a limited number of laptops available, we expect that some students will not always have a laptop available to them for checkout. Interestingly, our student assistant workers voiced the strongest support for the laptop service. At the same time, our circulation statistics show a decline in laptop circulation per student which could indicate less demand for this service, but it could also indicate that laptops are not as readily available to students who want them since the number of laptops in circulation has declined since 2005/2006 due to equipment attrition and need for more laptops for library instruction. We will continue to evaluate the needs of students and priorities for library services to determine the long-range plans for this program. (Ongoing)



Action:

- The Interlibrary Loan service continues to be a valuable service with the number of requests growing each year. The library will continue to provide this service and more staffing hours will be available for ILL in August 2009. (Ongoing & In Progress)

- Though many users noted that they used this service heavily, others were unaware that they could request resources. As a result, library staff will continue to make users aware of this service through instruction opportunities, orientation presentations, and communication tools e.g. digital signage. (Ongoing & In Progress)

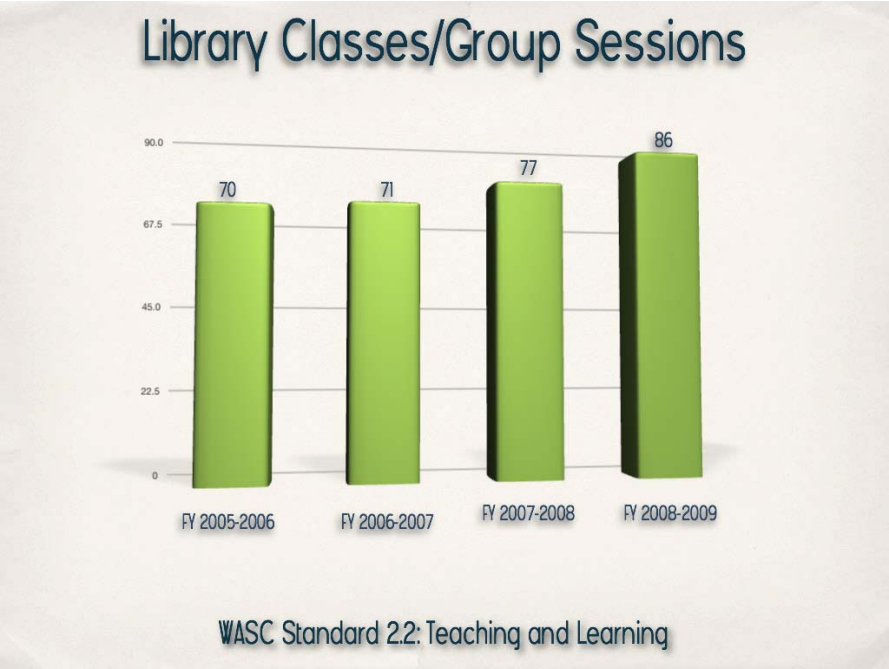
- Continue to improve printing capabilities. Though students expressed an appreciation for print services in the library, there were also numerous comments regarding its lack of reliability. *See Section B#2 below. (In Progress)

4. We are providing friendly, courteous assistance to our users.
Students made several comments positive comments regarding the willing and helpful assistance they received.

Quotes:

- "I also appreciated the willingness of the librarians in helping me learn how to use the online resources."
- "Very professional / Very helpful."

Context/Background: Everyday users of the library will interact most often with our student assistants and occasionally paraprofessional staff at the main service points (Helpdesk, 1st floor and Library Services Desk, 2nd floor). We rely heavily on our student assistants to provide strong customer service. Users are most likely to interact with the librarians during an instruction session, orientation program, research consultation appointment, virtual chat session, or involvement in a special research project.



On the survey portion, we scored more highly on providing friendly, courteous assistance than we did on providing knowledgeable assistance. However, we did receive extremely positive comments from individuals who had visited librarians for research help.

Action:

- We are revising portions of our student assistant training this summer 2009 to support their knowledge and skills to provide excellent customer service. (In Progress)

- The librarians will continue to be very involved in summer orientations. This is an opportunity to introduce incoming students to library staff and services. (Ongoing)

- Librarians are making the process of transferring research related questions to librarians easier and more explicit for our student assistants through training and technology (e.g. walkie talkies). (In Progress)

- In fall 2009, the librarians are training some student library assistants to offer roving reference assistance to Library users in an effort to increase both the level and visibility of research help available to the library users. (In Progress)

- To raise awareness of the librarians and the services they offer, we are going to profile our staff on the digital signage and on the website more prominently for fall 09. (In Progress)

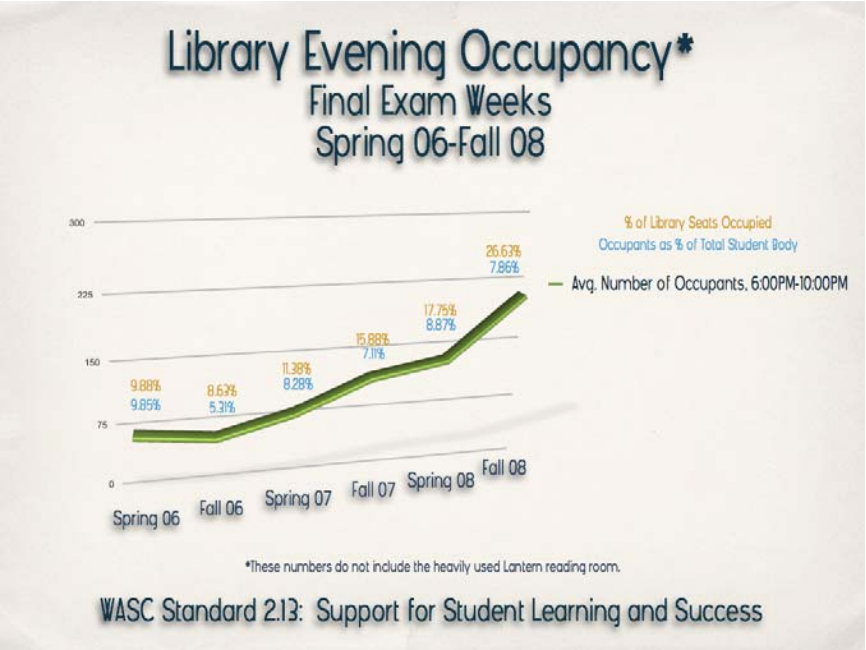
Section B:
What Needs Improvement?

1. Students expressed that there was not enough available quiet study space.
Even though many students indicated that they did use the library for quiet study space and found this valuable, many others found it too noisy for quiet study and wanted quiet to be enforced at least in designated areas. Some individuals thought the noise was merely cumulative while others thought individuals were sometimes just disrespectful of others' needs. Yet, we also heard that students liked having both social and study spaces available. Some of the noise was also attributed to the tours that take place in the library.

Quotes:

- "UC Merced doesn't have a floor where you can listen to music and talk with your friends, and another floor for people who do want quiet to study."
- "during the week like on a Monday or Tuesday, it's not someplace I would come to study"
- "It just gets frustrating when you're trying to crank out a paper or something and people just don't respect that."
- "Make people shut up in the library so that we can actually focus and study."
- "Controlling the amount of idle chatter and noise that occurs throughout the library. It is distracting and not conducive to the studying environment."
- "The library needs to be more quiet hands down. Considering the acoustics of the building...noise from the second floor travels all the way up to the fourth and it is sometimes very distracting."
- "keeping the noise down would be better, there are times when some students get loud and library staff can not be found to quite [sic] the noise"

Context/Background: The library opened its doors in September 2005 to approximately ~875 students. The small number of students made it easy for them to find a quiet or collaborative place to study in the library. Since that time, the student population has steadily grown while the number of seats and collaborative work rooms in the library has remained the same. In light of this growth, noise has increasingly become an issue even though students appreciate the relaxed atmosphere of the library and its versatility to accommodate both study and social space. The graph below shows increased density/occupancy during final exam week from spring 2006 through fall 2008.



Action:

- Due to the number and intensity of the noise complaints, the need to support academic endeavors, and the growing student population, the library is designating areas of the 4th floor for quiet or silent study. (In Progress)
    - KL 460 is being converted to a silent study room.
    - McFadden-Willis reading room is being designated as a silent study room.
    - Signage will be added in the elevators on the internal staircase, outside McFadden and on digital displays to make users aware of this change and expectation.

- Library staff has consulted with Student Affairs staff to more effectively manage tours of the library building to prevent noisy interruptions and to preserve the quiet study zone of the 4th floor. Implementation will be monitored. (In Progress)

- In fall 09, student assistants will sweep the library every hour in the evening. Part of their duties will be to monitor noise on the 4th floor. If students find that individuals are not treating the 4th floor as a quiet study area, they can ask for assistance at the 2nd floor Library Services Desk. (In Progress)

2. Students noted that they like the ability to print in the library but that the service is notoriously unreliable.

Quotes:

- “improve printing troubleshooting instead of juggling the problem between the help desk and IT”
- "printing. And their difficulties. Equals doom"
- "Any odd day of the week you might be lucky and the printers will be working."
- "Low on paper and low on ink all the time."
- “Make the UCM Global Print usable. Most times the laptops won't access the print network or do so with great difficulty. Also get better copier/printers...the Xerox is hard to use and breaks down too much.”
- “The printers in all the floors of the library are HIGHLY unreliable.”

Context/Background:
Printing services available in the library are provided through administrative services on campus. To date, printers have been located on each floor of the library (Rooms 299, 399 and 499). Students send print jobs via UCM Global Print and retrieve those print jobs using their CatCard. Though the library has limited control over the printing services, library staff are often asked to respond to printing questions and concerns. Overall, printing has been a valued yet unreliable service.

Action:

- Library staff has met with key players on campus to take steps to resolve printing unreliability. The two black and white printers will be replaced. All printers (2 black & white and 1 color) will be moved to room 369. If one printer is malfunctioning, a student can retrieve the print job from another printer in the same room rather than moving to another floor. (In Progress)

- Student assistants will be provided with more explicit training in how to best respond to printing questions and how to perform basic troubleshooting. (In Progress)

3. Students noted that they liked the collaborative study rooms but that it was almost impossible to ever find one available. They also thought a minimum of two individuals should occupy a collaborative study room.

Quotes:

- “Have the study rooms by reservation or enforce a minimum of two people in the room”
- "it drives me absolutely insane when I'm with a group of people and we want to go in the room and every single room on the floor only has one student in it"
- "I think there should be at least two or three people reserving."

Context/Background:
To date, the collaborative work rooms have been made available on a first come, first served basis with no time limit or minimum occupancy. They have been very popular and are rarely empty during fall and spring semesters.

Action:

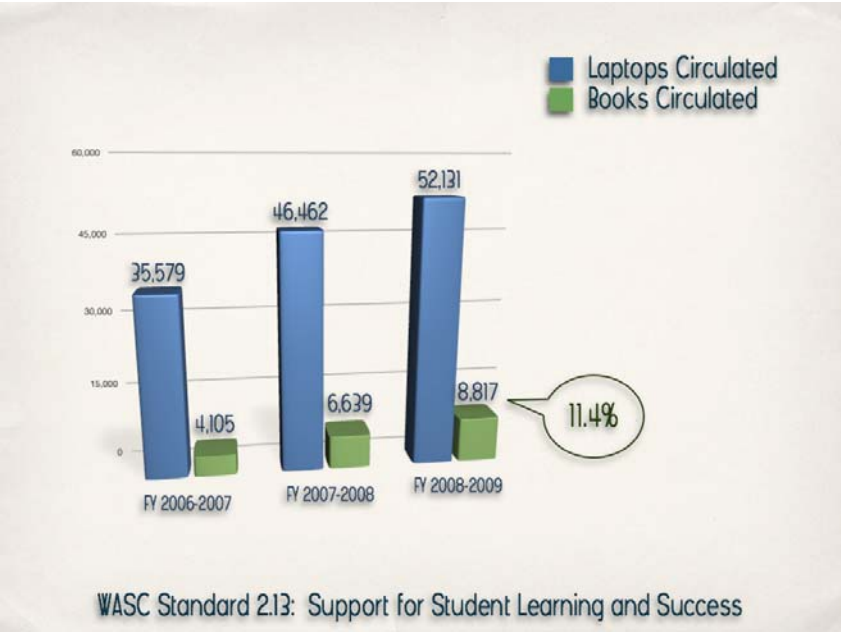
- In an effort to share collaborative work room space more equitably, the library is collaborating with the campus Information Technology department to implement an online room reservation system which would allow students to reserve a collaborative study room in advance for a maximum number of hours per day and with a minimum number of individuals. (In Progress)

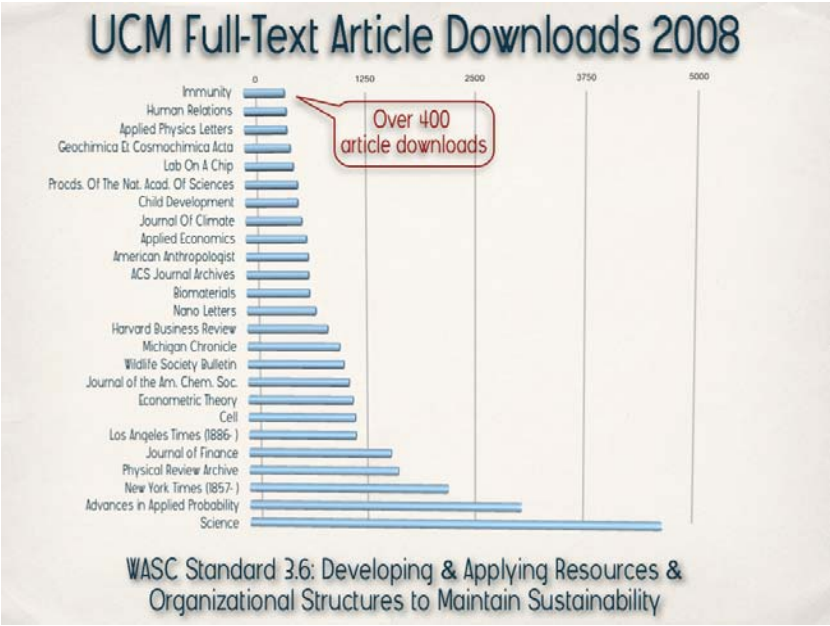
As noted by one participant, it is possible that individuals are using a collaborative work room to escape the noise. In this way, the noise complaints and the collaborative work room issue may be related. Library staff is working to create more areas for quiet study so individuals can have suitable areas for individual work. Beginning in fall 2009, the fourth floor will be designated as a quiet zone so that those who need to study or read without distractions have a refuge. One seminar room on the fourth floor will be designated as a silent study area. *See Section B#1 for details. (In Progress)

4. **Students expressed a desire for more print books in the collection. This sentiment surfaced in the survey but did not receive the same attention in the focus groups.**

Quotes:
"needs more books in the library rather than just having a plethora of them online"
"Have a larger selection of books and novels"
"WE NEED MORE BOOKS!!! I had to request Interlibrary Loan materials several times while here because we don't have many books."

Background/Context:
The library has approximately 78,000 items (e.g. books, DVDs) in its collection which represents a small portion of the total collection available to UC Merced students, faculty and staff. The majority of the library collection is available online: 540,000 online books, 22,400 online journals, 300 databases etc. and the UC Merced community benefits from the larger UC collection. Arguably print books have an appeal to many, yet online resources also have the distinct advantage of increased access via the internet whether on or off the campus network. While books circulated 8,817 times during fiscal year 2008-2009, there were over 5,000 full-text article downloads for a single online journal, *Science*, in 2008 which speaks to the popularity and use of online resources.





UC Merced continues to grow its print collection with 17,610 additions last year (08/09). For 2008-2009, approximately 50% of the total library budget was spent on collections. Yet with continuing fiscal restraints, new additions to the print collection will not grow significantly in the coming years. However, the larger local collection will continue to grow in support of UC Merced instruction and research.

Action:

- Increase communication of new titles that are available to the UC Merced community. (In Progress)

- Continue to leverage our UC ties to bring students the resources they need to support their academic success. We are committed to providing Interlibrary Loan services to share resources so that users can request and receive items that may not be available at UC Merced or not held in a user's preferred format (e.g. print). (On-going)