INTRODUCTION

The Thompson Library has been redesigned in part as a learning commons that provides assistance to students with information and research assistance. The Thompson Library has been redesigned in part as a learning commons that provides assistance to students with information and research assistance. The Thompson Library has been redesigned in part as a learning commons that provides assistance to students with information and research assistance.

BACKGROUND

O’Reilly, Karen. 2009. Key concepts in ethnography. Thousand Oaks: Sage. The Thompson Library has been redesigned in part as a learning commons that provides assistance to students with information and research assistance. The Thompson Library has been redesigned in part as a learning commons that provides assistance to students with information and research assistance.

Habitat is a concept from practice theory developed by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1980). Practice theory addresses two central questions: 1) how does the system shape individual practice, and 2) how do individuals shape the system? Habitat can be described as an individual’s system of acquired dispositions that work as a generative scheme of action that, over time, determine action. Individuals acquire these dispositions, which are embedded and mostly learned through experience, as they are socialized within families, social groups, and institutions like university libraries. Habitus produces practice, which is best described as what people do in everyday life. Practical sense or logic is often described as “the feel for the game” in which the game can stand for social life but also for other domains, including behavior in university libraries.

REFERENCES

Bourdieu, Pierre. (1980). The logic of practice. Stanford: Stanford University Press. O’Reilly, Karen. 2009. Key concepts in ethnography. Thousand Oaks: Sage. The Thompson Library has been redesigned in part as a learning commons that provides assistance to students with information and research assistance. The Thompson Library has been redesigned in part as a learning commons that provides assistance to students with information and research assistance.

RESULTS

What is the student habitat in the Thompson Library? Quiet, individual learning activities that aligned with traditional library use were considered the most appropriate and least disruptive, making quiet, studying for class. Activities that were louder, often associated with social interactions, were judged to be less appropriate and more disruptive (e.g., talking on cell phones). This study was conducted within the framework of the anthropology of habitus, a term used by Pierre Bourdieu to analyze the ways in which individuals are socialized within families, social groups, and institutions like university libraries. Habitus produces practice, which is best described as what people do in everyday life. Practical sense or logic is often described as “the feel for the game” in which the game can stand for social life but also for other domains, including behavior in university libraries.

How do students cope with violations of informal rules? Many try to ignore it or move to another area. Others clear their throats, send nasty looks, toss trash at the违背者, throw darts, or have a dispute with someone they consider an annoyance. The overwhelming rule is to be quiet and not disturb others. The three rules students use to organize their behavior are:

- "Noisy behavior is not allowed."
- "Keep the noise level down."
- "Be respectful to others."

The informal rules that guide the behavior of students are guided by a sense of respect and courtesy for other users. The overarching rule is to be quiet and not disturb others.

Where do students go to work online? The university library was mentioned most often by the students interviewed (56%), followed by dorms (45%), coffee shops (35%), and student lounges (34%). The Thompson Library and the Science and Engineering Library (SEI) were specifically mentioned. The study group spaces in the Thompson Library were favored for group work (75%), while other spaces were mentioned by less than 16% of the students. More than half of the students interviewed had ever done group work in the Thompson Library. Is the Thompson Library a learning commons? None of the students we interviewed knew what a learning commons was, but when we explained it, more than 70% agreed that the Thompson Library was a learning commons.

METHODOLOGY

We conducted an ethnographic study of students’ use of the new Thompson Library using an iterative-inductive approach moving back and forth between data collection and analysis. We used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, including: participant observation to document student behavior in different spaces in the library, and in particular potential conflicts between collaborative learning and student habits; semi-structured interviews to examine informal rules that regulate behavior in the library; grounded theory to discover categories of informal rules in interview transcripts; questionnaires to measure student habits; and descriptive statistics to describe the patterns in student habits. Over the course of the study we observed hundreds of students in the Thompson Library and interviewed 141 of them. This non-random sample consists of students from every possible major (from Aeronautical Science to Zoology), and is a good representation of the OSU student population in terms of age, rank, gender, and ethnicity.

CONCLUSION

While students are not familiar with the concept of the learning commons, they recognize that the new Thompson Library is different from a traditional library and use it in many ways as the designers intended. The library achieves its design goal of a learning commons as a dynamic, collaborative environment with mixed success. There are tensions between library practice of quiet, individual studying and social learning activities. Whether the students use the library as an appropriate activity in the library, it is also considered disruptive because of the noise.

Students share a traditional library habitus that favors quiet, individual activities. Students do not approve of disturbances, especially cell phones. Food and Facebook are no problem because they don’t interfere with studying. There is a strong commitment to the traditional library practice. Students monitor their own behavior and that of others. They correct each other through words, stares, and direct appeals.

What was striking was the almost complete absence of library staff in the different areas of the library and the quiet student atmosphere of the library was maintained by students themselves.