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A Survey of Student Use of Sherrill Library

Marilyn Geller
Lesley University
Library Assessment Workgroup

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A Survey of Student Use of Sherrill Library

A Survey of Lesley University and Episcopal Divinity School Students

Final Report of the Library Assessment Workgroup of Lesley University and Episcopal Divinity School

2/14/2014
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Final Report of the Library Assessment Workgroup
of Lesley University and Episcopal Divinity School

Geller, Marilyn

2/14/2014

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to: Marilyn Geller, Collection Management Librarian, Lesley University Library, Cambridge, MA 02138.

Contact: mgeller@lesley.edu
A Survey of Student Use of Sherrill Library

February 14, 2014

Introduction

Sherrill Library on the Brattle Campus of Episcopal Divinity School (EDS) and Lesley University (LU) was built in 1965 and named for Henry Knox Sherrill, the twentieth presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church. It is a shared facility for LU and EDS. The library houses over 145,000 physical items including books, media, educational kits and print journal subscriptions. Each of the four floors of the building has stacks for books and a variety of spaces for study. One wing of the building outside of the library space has classrooms and faculty offices.

In the summer of 2013, the Sherrill Library Assessment Work Group began work on a project to identify areas where the current physical library facility excels and where it warrants improvement, and to understand how and why students are using physical libraries in general and the Sherrill Library facility specifically. We chose to use an online survey that was distributed to all current EDS students and to all LU students enrolled in at least one class on campus during the fall 2013 semester. The combined population size for both schools totaled 3,675 students. To achieve a margin of error of 5%, we hoped to have responses from between 350 to 375 students. We received 557 completed surveys giving us a margin of error closer to 4%; a total of 635 students accessed the survey.
A standard survey instrument was developed that relied on multiple choice, numeric open-ended and numeric rating questions with a few free text questions. This survey took approximately ten minutes for participants to complete. It was made available online by email invitation and was open from Monday, November 4, 2013 through Tuesday, November 12, 2013. As an incentive for completing the survey, we offered students the opportunity to enter a raffle to win an Amazon gift card—18 of students were awarded prizes ranging from $5 to $50.

**Demographics**

The largest percentage of survey respondents, 39%, was students in the Lesley University College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (LUCLAS). A majority of respondents, 75%, identified themselves as full-time students. The largest group of respondents, 30%, uses the MBTA to come to campus followed by 23% who live on campus and 23% who drive to campus. To move around the campuses, most students, 73%, walk. The least common mode of transportation around the campuses is by bicycle or scooter with 5% selecting this option, but it is notable that only 6% of respondents said they used the Lesley shuttle and van services to move among the campuses. Students reported that most of their classes were held either at University Hall (52%) or Doble Campus (19%).

![Number of Respondents by School](image)
Non-Use of the Sherrill Library Facility

Of the 592 respondents who answered the question “How often do you come to Sherrill Library?” the largest group, 42%, said they very rarely or never came to the library. The largest non-user group by school affiliation came from the Graduate School of Education (GSOE): Among the 90 GSOE-affiliated students who answered this question, 67% said they very rarely or never came to Sherrill Library. At the other extreme, 165 students from the Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences (GSASS) answered this question, and only 18% of them said they very rarely or never came to Sherrill Library. See Table 1 below for all school affiliations and cross tabulated non-facility use.

Of the 249 students who said they very rarely or never come to Sherrill Library, we asked why and gave them ten choices from which they could select as many options as they felt were appropriate. The three most commonly selected responses were: “It’s too far away” (57%); “Everything I need is online” (50%),
and “I don’t have time” (43%). Interestingly, this result was consistent across all schools except for EDS students who listed “other” as one of their top three reasons. Most of these “other” reasons mentioned being enrolled in a distance learning or online program with limited or no visits to campus.

We invited our non-users to provide additional comments on why they don’t use the library. This elicited 105 free text responses that fell into two broad categories: these users prefer other places to study such as home or a coffee shop or more convenient campus places such as the Information Commons or they feel that they don’t need to use the facility because their classes don’t require it or because they can get what they need at another library or online. Table 2 shows all of the choices and their response rates.
Hours and Days of Use of the Sherrill Library Facility

The students’ responses suggest that a typical visit to Sherrill Library lasts between one and three hours. The majority of respondents, 59%, chose this option, followed by 24% who reported that they stay for 30 minutes to one hour, 11% who stay for more than three hours, and only 6% who visit for less than 30 minutes. Mid-day through early evening, Monday through Thursday are the most frequently reported days and times to visit Sherrill Library as is shown below in Table 3: Hours and Days of Visits. Friday morning is the time when students are least likely to visit the library. In fact, Friday is the least popular day to visit overall, even though it has the second longest hours of operation (our longest hours are from Monday through Thursday, and our shortest hours are on the weekends).

Only 9% of respondents who said they very rarely or never come to Sherrill Library also said they don’t come because the Library is not open when they need it to be. This suggests that extending hours may not increase the population of users of Sherrill Library. Nevertheless, 43% of students who do come to the library said they have come when it was not open. Table 4 shows that if current library users could extend the hours of operation, they would prefer later hours during the week, Monday through Thursday and an earlier opening on Sunday. We received 24 comments about extending hours in general without giving specific days or times, two comments about extending hours during examination period, and 3 comments that suggested Sherrill Library should be open 24 hours a day. Friday, already the least busy day, was also the least commonly identified day to extend hours.
Uses of the Sherrill Library Facility

We asked respondent why they come to Sherrill Library in general. We also asked them what services they use when they are already in the building. The three most frequently selected reasons for coming to the library were “To find materials to check out”, “To study in a quiet place” and “To use the computers, copiers, printers, scanners”.

![Chart showing preferences for extending hours](chart.png)
When we asked those same students what services they generally use while at the library, we expected their responses to match their reported reasons for coming to the library. Since the most frequently reported reasons for coming were “To find materials to check out,” “To study in a quiet place,” and “To use the computers, copiers, printers, scanners,” we thought the most frequently-used services would be “Check out library materials,” “Use the computers, copiers, printers, scanners,” and possibly “Use a group study room or study carrel.” We did discover some consistency in the responses—checking out library materials, and using computers, copiers, printers, and scanners, were cited as two of the top three services students used while at the library. The third most-frequently used service, however, was getting reference or research help—71 percent of students reported that they used this service while at the library, even though only 30 percent of students had mentioned this service as their reason for coming to the library.
We also discovered that, while only 42 percent of the survey respondents said they came to the library in order “to use the computers, copiers, printers, scanners” (it was the third most-commonly cited reason for coming), a much larger percentage—72 percent—mentioned this as a service they use while they are at the library.

These findings highlight the importance of getting students in the library’s doors. Once they are here, they are likely to take advantage of multiple services and resources, in addition to those that drew them to the library in the first place. They may come to check out books, or find a quiet place to study, but they will stay to use the printers, talk to a reference librarian and, ideally, discover the many ways in which the library can support them in their learning.
Locations – Lower Level

We asked students what floor they typically use when they come to Sherrill Library. The most common answer was the lower level, with 39% of survey respondents selecting this choice.

The lower level of Sherrill Library includes the Teaching Resources Collection, the combined Reference and Current Periodicals Collection in a large open space, and the Bound Periodicals Collection. It also houses monographs in the Library of Congress classification range from L to Z, which encompasses the subject areas of education, music, fine arts, literature, science, medicine, expressive therapies, technology and library science, in the “stacks” room. In the large open space, there are several study areas and pieces of equipment, a dedicated library instruction space - the Ludcke Research Center (LRC) - one group study room, several group tables, public access computers, a printer and a reference desk which is generally staffed when the library is open.

Of the 29 GSOE students who told us where they typically study, 48% said they use the lower level. By percentage, the second largest group of lower level users is affiliated with LUCAD. Generally, the students who use this level come to the library at least on a weekly or monthly basis and spend 1 to 3 hours in the building. They usually visit the library during the mid-day hours on Monday through Thursday and are looking for materials to check out and for research help. On this floor, students say they typically select computer workstations at which to sit. While they commonly use the library’s
computers, they also depend on the wireless network in the building and make heavy use of the printers, copiers and scanners that are available. Users on the lower level say they are most satisfied with the sound level, and the number and location of printers, copiers and scanners. They are least satisfied with the number of computer workstations and the number and location of electrical outlets. While wireless access was not among the top three complaints about this level, among those users who said it was problematic, 62% rated this as the most important issue to address.

Locations – Atrium / Main Floor

The main floor of Sherrill Library houses the circulation desk where students can check out and return all library materials including reserved items. The library director’s office is also located on this floor. A casual seating area known as the Atrium houses current general interest periodicals, the “New and Noteworthy” collection, and a variety of recent newspapers. Art displays and literary events are occasionally held in this space.

There is a photocopier at one end of the hall, and there are three public access computers at the other end. Several classrooms and faculty offices are located on the eastern wing of the building and a restricted staff office area comprises the southern side of the building.
The main floor of Sherrill Library was the third most popular floor out of the four floors. Only 19%, or 63 respondents, said they typically use this floor during their visits. By percentages of overall respondents to this question, 26% of all EDS students and 23% of all GSASS students said they use this floor. For these users, the primary reason for coming to the library, in the aggregate, is to attend classes. They are also looking for research help, using the computers, copiers, printers and scanners, and checking out materials. Students using this floor prefer cushioned chairs and benches to all of the other seating arrangements combined. Like visitors on other floors, they use the wireless network, the library computers, and electrical outlets. They are satisfied with the number of and comfort of the seats on this floor as well as with the sound level. What they are not satisfied with on this floor is the wireless access, the temperature, and the lighting.

Locations – Second Floor

The east wing of the second floor houses faculty offices and classrooms. The southern side of the building has library staff offices, but this hallway is not separated from library users. The majority of the space on this floor is used for stacks containing monographs in the Library of Congress classification range of BX through K which encompasses the subject areas of Christian denominations (theology), history, geography, anthropology, social sciences, political science, and law. Several individual study carrels and one group study room are available for students to sign up to use. This floor also has a media conference room and a media production room. In addition, the second floor has many individual desks, a few library computers, two large study tables, and printing and scanning equipment.
More than any other group, LUCLAS and LUCAD students use this floor. Of the 124 LUCLAS students who answered the question “Where do you typically study?” 28% said they use the second floor. For LUCAD students, this percentage was 27%. They say they are looking for a quiet place to study, and many have said the sound level on the second floor is neither too noisy nor too quiet. For them, it is the Goldilocks floor, “quiet without being silent.” In fact, they rate the sound level as the thing with which they are most satisfied about this floor. They are also finding materials to check out, and they want to use the printers, copiers and scanners. Preferred seating on this floor is the individual desk (including study carrels). On this floor, wireless access and electrical outlets are the most important amenities, but students also say they use lamps, library computers and printers and scanners. What they don’t like on this floor is the seating. They find the number and the comfort of the existing chairs to be very unsatisfying. They were also dissatisfied with wireless access and temperature levels.

Locations – Third Floor

The third floor has been designated as the “quiet floor”. The east wing of the third floor houses faculty offices and classrooms. The southern side of the building has faculty offices. As on the second floor, the majority of the space on this floor is dedicated to monographic stacks. These materials are in the Library of Congress classification range of A through BV, representing general works, philosophy, some religion topics, and psychology. As on the second floor, there are several individual study carrels and one group study room available for students to sign up to use. There are many individual desks, a few library computers, two large study tables, and printing and scanning equipment.
Of all the EDS users who told us which floor they typically use, 43% said they use the 3rd floor. The next largest group of users by percentage is LUCLAS students; in this group 18% of the 124 users said they use the third floor. While users of others floors say they typically come to the library weekly or monthly, users of the third floor report that they use the library a few times a week or weekly. Fully 82% of students who typically use this floor say that they come to Sherrill Library to study in a quiet place. Again, on this floor, wireless access and electrical outlets are the most important amenities, but students also make use of the printer on this floor. Users of the third floor are most satisfied with the sound level, the wireless access and the printers that are available. The location and number of electrical outlets, the uncomfortable seating and the individual study space are the three most unsatisfying things about the third floor.
Recommendations

In spite of our desire to respond to the suggestions that students have given us, we recognize that the building itself, Sherrill Hall, imposes some limitations. Significantly more than half of the respondents who said they don’t come to the library gave distance as a reason. We cannot change the location of the library, but we do hope that shuttle service to and from Brattle campus will become more frequent and more reliable when LUCAD’s new home in Porter Square is completed.

Wi-Fi was a constant complaint of our respondents. It should be noted that from September through November of 2013, there was a documented problem with Wi-Fi in the building. This ongoing problem may have influenced the comments we received about the service. This is not to suggest that the complaint is unfounded, only that it was evident and on the minds of our respondents at the time of the survey.

We learned from this survey that there are periods of time when the library is under-used, and times when the library is not open in spite of user preferences. While Friday evenings seem to be one of those underutilized times, Sunday morning is certainly a time when students might make better use of the library if it were open then. Documenting this student need will help us rethink scheduling and possibly make adjustments or trade-offs in library hours.

Students gravitate towards their favorite floors based on sound level and furniture, and each floor seems to have its own personality. Group work is best accommodated on the lower level while absolute silence can be found on the third floor. Because our users who are “in the know” clearly have strong preferences regarding which floor to use, we believe the library should develop better signage in order to indicate the types of amenities users will find on each floor. More detailed signage could direct new library users to the floor that will best meet their study styles and needs. We think we can create signage or documentation that will help users find the right study space to suit their needs. Another area in which the library plans to improve outreach is in promoting the newly created and furnished group study rooms. We learned that very few students use these rooms, yet they have the potential to be a valuable resource for many of our patrons, and a feature of the library that could draw more students to the building.

Each floor of the library should be arranged and furnished differently, based on who is using the floor and for what type of studying. The lower level requires more computer workstations. The second floor needs more tables than we now have, and the uncomfortable chairs should be replaced. The third floor needs more individual study like the study carrels. In addition, every floor needs to be refreshed in terms of lighting, temperature and access to electrical outlets.

For those who come to Sherrill Library to check out books and to study, they generally find a comfortable and welcoming environment in need of a little bit of updating and a better connection to the digital world.
Sherrill Library Assessment Workgroup Members

Elizabeth Allen
Tamar Brown
Aura Fluet
Tiffeni Fontno
Marilyn Geller, Chair
Anne-Marie Mulligan
Pat Payne
Jaime Wimmer
Q1.1 Welcome! The staff of Sherrill Library wants to understand how students are using the physical facilities. We’d like your input on what you do in the building and what we can do to improve the facility to serve your library needs better. This survey will take less than ten minutes. The first 350 people who fill out the survey and give us your contact information will be entered into our raffle to win one of several Amazon gift certificates.

Q2.1 In which school are you enrolled? (Check one.)

- Episcopal Divinity School (1)
- Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences (2)
- Graduate School of Education (3)
- Lesley University College of Art and Design (4)
- Lesley University College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (5)

Q2.2 What is your status? (Check one.)

- Full-time (1)
- Part-time (2)
- Other (certificate, non-matriculating, etc.) (3)

Q2.3 On a typical day, how do you get to school? (Check one.)

- Car (1)
- MBTA (2)
- Walk (3)
- Bike/Scooter (4)
- Lesley shuttle/van service (5)
- I live on campus. (6)
- I never come to campus. (7)

If “I never come to campus.” is Selected, Then Skip To “Where are most of your classes held?”

Q2.4 On a typical day, how do you move around the campuses? (Check one.)

- Car (1)
- MBTA (2)
- Walk (3)
- Bike/Scooter (4)
- Lesley shuttle/van (5)
Q2.5 Where are most of your classes held? (Check one.)

- Brattle Campus (1)
- Doble Campus (2)
- University Hall (3)
- Cohort/Online (4)
- 700 Beacon (5)

Q2.6 Do you have a documented disability as defined by federal and state law that impacts the way you use Sherrill Library?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

**Answer "If Do you have a documented disability as defined by federal... “ Yes Is Selected**

Q2.7 What are the most important changes we can make in Sherrill Library that would help you use the facilities more effectively?

Q2.8 How often do you come to Sherrill Library? (Check one.)

- Few times per week (1)
- Weekly (2)
- Monthly (3)
- Only during mid-terms and finals (4)
- Very rarely or never (5)

Q3.1 Why haven't you come to Sherrill Library? (Check all that apply.)

- Everything I need is online. (1)
- It's too far away. (2)
- I don't have time. (3)
- It's not open when I need it to be. (4)
- It doesn't have what I need. (5)
- It isn't comfortable. (6)
- I don't feel safe there. (7)
- I feel anxious in libraries. (8)
- I study somewhere else. Please tell us where. (9) ____________________
- Other. Please specify. (10) ____________________
Q3.2 What would encourage you to come to Sherrill Library?

Q4.1 If you would like to be entered into our Thank You Raffle, please provide your contact information here. Name:

Q4.2 Email:

Q4.3 Phone:

Q5.1 Why do you come to Sherrill Library? (Check all that apply.)

- To attend a regularly scheduled class (1)
- To attend a library instruction class (2)
- To attend a program or event (3)
- To find materials to check out (Books, Teaching Resource items, DVDs, etc.) (4)
- To find materials I can’t take out of the building (Journals, Reserves, Assessment Tests, etc.) (5)
- To study in a quiet place (6)
- To use a group study room (7)
- To use the computers, copiers, printers, scanners (8)
- To get research help (9)
- Other. Please specify. (10) ____________________

Q5.2 Which of the following services at Sherrill Library are you aware of? (Check all that apply.)

- Get reference/research help (1)
- Check out library materials (2)
- Use Reserves, Assessment Tests, etc. (3)
- View media collections (e.g., DVDs, CDs) (4)
- Request or pick up Interlibrary Loan (5)
- Use a group study room or study carrel (6)
- Use equipment in a group study room (7)
- Check out an iPad or Kindle (8)
- Use the computers, copiers, printers, scanners (9)
- Use the Paper MakerSpace (10)
- Browse the new books and media section (11)
- Use the Teaching Resources Collection (12)
- Use your locker (13)
- Read a current journal or newspaper (14)
- Borrow chargers, flash drives, etc. (15)
Q5.3 Which of the services that you are aware of at Sherrill Library have you used? (Check all that apply.)

- Get reference/research help (1)
- Check out library materials (2)
- Use Reserves, Assessment Tests, etc. (3)
- View media collections (e.g., DVDs, CDs) (4)
- Request or pick up Interlibrary Loan (5)
- Use a group study room or study carrel (6)
- Use equipment in a group study room (7)
- Check out an iPad or Kindle (8)
- Use the computers, copiers, printers, scanners (9)
- Use the Paper MakerSpace (10)
- Browse the new books and media section (11)
- Use the Teaching Resources Collection (12)
- Use your locker (13)
- Read a current journal or newspaper (14)
- Borrow chargers, flash drives, etc. (15)

Q5.4 When you come to Sherrill Library, how long does your visit typically last? (Check one.)

- Less than 30 minutes (1)
- 30 minutes to 1 hour (2)
- 1-3 hours (3)
- More than 3 hours (4)

Q5.5 Do you typically come to Sherrill Library during the week (Monday through Thursday)? (Check one.)

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

If “No” is selected, Then Skip To “Do you typically come to Sherrill Lib...”

Q5.6 What time of day do you typically come to Sherrill Library during the week (Monday through Thursday)? (Check all that apply.)

- 8:00AM - 11:00AM (1)
- 11:00AM - 2:00PM (2)
- 2:00PM - 5:00PM (3)
- 5:00PM - 8:00PM (4)
- 8:00PM - 10:00PM (5)
Q5.7 Do you typically come to Sherrill Library on Friday? (Check one.)

☑ Yes (1)
☐ No (2)
If “No” is selected, Then Skip To “Do you typically come to Sherrill Lib...”

Q5.8 What time of day do you typically come to Sherrill Library on Friday? (Check all that apply.)

☐ 8:00AM - 11:00AM (1)
☐ 11:00AM - 2:00PM (2)
☐ 2:00PM - 5:00PM (3)
☐ 5:00PM - 9:00PM (4)

Q5.9 Do you typically come to Sherrill Library on Saturday? (Check one.)

☑ Yes (1)
☐ No (2)
If “No” Is Selected, Then Skip To “Do you typically come to Sherrill Lib...”

Q5.10 What time of day do you typically come to Sherrill Library on Saturday? (Check all that apply.)

☐ 9:00AM - 12:00PM (1)
☐ 12:00PM - 3:00PM (2)
☐ 3:00PM - 6:00PM (3)

Q5.11 Do you typically come to Sherrill Library on Sunday? (Check one.)

☑ Yes (1)
☐ No (2)
If “No” Is Selected, Then Skip To “Have you ever come to the library when...”

Q5.12 What time of day do you typically come to Sherrill Library on Sunday? (Check all that apply.)

☐ 1:00PM - 3:00PM (1)
☐ 3:00PM - 5:00PM (2)
☐ 5:00PM - 7:00PM (3)
☐ 7:00PM - 9:00PM (4)
Q5.13 Have you ever come to the library when it was closed? (Check one.)

☐ Yes (1)
☐ No (2)

Answer If “Have you ever come to the library and it has been closed?”... Yes Is Selected

Q5.14 What day and time did you come?

Q5.15 When you come to Sherrill Library, what location do you typically use? (Check one.)

☐ the Lower Level (1)
☐ the 1st Floor Atrium/Lobby (2)
☐ the 2nd Floor (3)
☐ the 3rd Floor (4)

Q5.16 Why do you typically use $(q://QID15/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices)$?

Q5.17 When you come to Sherrill Library, what type of seating do you typically use? (Check one.)

☐ Computer workstation (1)
☐ Group table (2)
☐ Individual desk (3)
☐ Cushioned chair or bench (4)
☐ None (5)

Q5.18 When you come to Sherrill Library, what type of amenities do you typically use? (Check all that apply.)

☐ Lamps (1)
☐ Library computer (2)
☐ Electrical outlet (3)
☐ Wireless access (4)
☐ Printer, scanner, copier (5)
☐ Other, please specify (6) ____________________

Q6.1 If Sherrill Library extended its hours, what day of the week and time of day would you typically come to the building?
Q6.2 When you use $\{q://QID15/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices\}$, how satisfied are you with the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dissatisfied (1)</th>
<th>Neutral (2)</th>
<th>Satisfied (3)</th>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temperature (2)</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Noise level (3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Directional signs (4)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seating - number of chairs (5)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seating - comfort of chairs (6)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seating - chairs that can be moved (7)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual study space (8)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group study space (9)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Table space - number of tables (10)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q6.3 You told us what you are not satisfied with. Please rank these items in order of importance with 1 being the most important.

- Lighting (1)
- Temperature (2)
- Noise level (3)
- Directional signs (4)
- Seating - number of chairs (5)
- Seating - comfort of chairs (6)
- Seating - chairs that can be moved (7)
- Individual study space (8)
- Group study space (9)
- Table space - number of tables (10)
- Table space - tables that can be moved (11)
- Number of computers (12)
- Electrical outlets - number (13)
- Electrical outlets - location (14)
- Wireless access (15)
- Printers, scanners, copiers - number (16)
- Printers, scanners, copiers - location (17)
- Security (18)

Q6.4 If you could change anything about the Sherrill Library facility, what would that be?