



Taking Snapshots: The role of photographic observations in library space assessments

Giovanna Badia

Assessment Librarian, McGill Library
giovanna.badia@mcgill.ca

INTRODUCTION:

- Space observations are labour-intensive for studies conducted in large areas
- Taking photographs speeds up the data collection process and records additional details for potential analysis
- A literature review was conducted to:
 - 1) describe best practices for using photography as a data collection method
 - 2) provide practical strategies for extracting and analyzing relevant information from the photographs taken
 - 3) summarize the types of data visualizations used to present results captured by photography

METHODS:

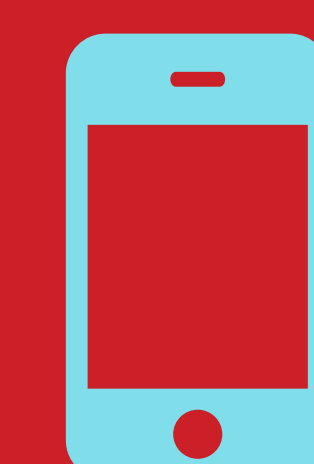
- Searched Scopus, Web of Science, LISA, LISTA, and Google Scholar for:
 - studies in which researchers or staff photographed library spaces to collect data for answering questions about facilities
 - guidelines on undertaking photographic observations of organizational spaces, which was a broader search
- Search strategies in Web of Science: (similar strategies used in other databases)
 - ((ethnograph* NEAR/10 space*) OR (assess* NEAR/10 space*) OR (evaluat* NEAR/10 space*)) AND librar* AND (photo* OR picture* OR mobile OR iphone* OR ipad*)
 - ethnograph* AND space* AND photo*

Photographic space observations complement other data collection methods. They are conducted systematically and analyzed chronologically and/or thematically.



Example:
Head counting using photography.
How many people are in each space?
How many are engaged in individual/group work?

Most results from photography are presented in graphs and tables, similar to reporting quantitative data.



Scan to download poster summary and bibliography

Available at:
<http://bit.ly/claw19badia>



RESULTS:

- 6 published studies found using photography in library space assessments
- Another 2 articles summarized guidelines for photographing spaces of work

BEST PRACTICES FOR USING PHOTOGRAPHY:

- Select specific dates and times for observations (random selection?)
- Define what needs to be photographed as well as specify a walking path and exact locations for taking photos to ensure consistency in data collection
- Inform library users of the study, via handouts, signage, website, etc., to allow users the choice not to be photographed (courtesy)

STRATEGIES FOR ANALYSIS:

- Group photos into categories to help with data interpretation
- Invite colleagues to view photos and describe what they see

PRESENTING RESULTS:

- Bar, column, and line graphs have been used in published studies, along with tables
- Sample photos and floor plans have been employed in articles to help explain study methods