

The Carrels are Essential: An Investigation of Faculty Study Spaces at a Mid-Size State College

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Introduction

Are dedicated study spaces for faculty still essential in academic libraries in the digital age? The results of a survey of faculty who use the library's locked study carrels at a state college suggest two important discoveries. First, faculty continue to desire these spaces. Second, these spaces appear to facilitate faculty research. The college is a mid-size, liberal arts and sciences state institution located in rural New York State. It is primarily an undergraduate, teaching-institution; however, the college expects faculty to conduct research. The institution currently enrolls over 6,500 students of which over 6,000 are undergraduates. The college employs 433 full- and part-time faculty.

There are very few studies dedicated to faculty spaces and space needs in academic libraries. Most library studies on space focus on student needs (Engel & Antell, 2004). Research on student spaces is essential; nevertheless, research on faculty spaces in academic libraries is also imperative for several reasons. First, faculty, as well as students, use the campus library's physical space (Antell & Engel, 2006; Engel & Antell, 2004; Lux, Snyder & Boff, 2016; Spyers-Duran, 1968; Weber & Flatley, 2006). In addition, a vital mission of a library is to accommodate all members of the community it serves for a variety of purposes including studying, research, and learning (Bell, 2011; Gorman, 2015). Finally, in a recent study that examined how well academic libraries are serving faculty, faculty stated that after instruction of students in information literacy, support of faculty research is the next most essential service libraries provide (Library Journal and Gale Cengage Learning, 2015). Academic libraries can enable research and learning via the provision of private work areas for patrons (Nitecki, 2011). Therefore, it is necessary that academic libraries seek faculty feedback to understand their use

and perception of the value of physical spaces. Additionally, it is essential that libraries assess these spaces to determine if they are meeting faculty research needs.

The library's locked study carrel survey served several important purposes. For instance, the library's 2012-13 assessment plan required librarians to evaluate the need for the locked study carrels and satisfaction with new guidelines governing the use of the carrels. The survey was designed to determine the perceived demand of study carrel holders for these spaces and to reveal if they were satisfied with the guidelines governing these spaces. In addition, the survey was intended to gauge if the carrel holders viewed these spaces as beneficial to their research. The survey results were also shared with college administrators. The administration was considering repurposing the carrels as student multi-purpose learning rooms and faculty offices. College administrators perceived that the faculty were not using the locked study carrels and that the library's mission was not to support faculty research; however, they did not have any data to support this opinion. Therefore, the author shared the results with college administrators so that they would have evidence to make an informed decision on the future of these spaces.

Background

At the time of the study, the library retained fourteen locked study carrels. The carrels were located on the building's third floor, which was the library's designated quiet study area. The carrels were enclosed, secured, private spaces with a desk, chair, and bookcase. According to the locked study carrel guidelines, which the library implemented in February 2012, these spaces were "available to faculty based upon an agreement with the library and the Library Committee" ("Library Faculty Carrel Policy," para. 1, 2012). One of the main goals of the guidelines was to give more faculty the opportunity to apply for and obtain a carrel. For example, the guidelines gave priority for these spaces to untenured, tenure-track faculty and

faculty on sabbatical. The guidelines gave second priority to tenured faculty and third priority to any other faculty member who needs study space but has not previously been able to obtain a carrel. Faculty must apply for a carrel every year. Prior to the implementation of the policy, the library assigned carrels to faculty for an indefinite period. Consequently, it was difficult for faculty who did not have a carrel to obtain one of these spaces. In addition, the new guidelines stipulated that the library allocate a maximum of two faculty per carrel so that more faculty could gain access to these spaces. Previously, the library assigned one faculty member per carrel.

Literature review

There are very few research studies on the demand for faculty study carrels and the benefits of these spaces to faculty research. Spyers-Duran's (1968) study examined the need for, and management of, study carrels. The author sent surveys to the libraries at thirty-two, mostly urban universities. The author did not specify if these were teaching or research institutions. He discovered that eighty-two per cent of the libraries surveyed reported that the demand for carrels outstripped supply. Spyers-Duran published his findings fifty years ago and prior to the widespread availability of the Internet and electronic resources for academic research. In a provocative article, Carlson (2001) claimed that the availability of digital resources resulted in a sharp decline in student use of the academic library building; however, more recent studies suggested that faculty continue to value quiet, private spaces in academic libraries where they may study, write, research, concentrate and reflect (Antell & Engel, 2006; Engel & Antell, 2004; Lux, Snyder & Boff, 2016; Weber & Flatley, 2006). Engel and Antell's (2004) study is the only recent study focused exclusively on faculty carrels. Their study provided important insight into these spaces. For example, their survey of 112 members of the Association of Research Libraries revealed that most faculty holders were from the humanities and social sciences. This revelation

suggested that faculty in these academic disciplines continue to use the library's physical collections despite the availability of electronic resources. In addition, the researchers interviewed ten of the ninety-four faculty carrel holders at the University of Oklahoma to gain a deeper understanding of the use and value of the space to their teaching and research. Based on the interviews with faculty, the researchers concluded that users of study carrels value these spaces for "quiet reflection, sustained concentration, productive research effort, and high quality writing" (Engel & Antell, 2004, p. 18). Antell and Engel's (2006) follow up study surveyed all faculty and doctoral students at the University of Oklahoma to determine all the spaces in the library that these groups use. The survey results showed that younger faculty were less likely than older faculty to use faculty carrels; however, younger faculty frequented the library more often and spent more time in the library in comparison to older faculty.

Other studies were less definitive in their findings with respect to the demand for, and value of, faculty spaces. They suggested that faculty use and want quiet spaces; however, faculty space needs and use are mostly tangential to the scope of these analyses. For example, Lux, Snyder and Boff (2016) examined undergraduate, graduate, and faculty use of library and non-library services. The faculty surveyed indicated that their library's quiet floor was their second most favored destination in the building; however, the researchers surveyed only four faculty. As a result, it is very difficult to draw any firm conclusion on faculty space needs from this study. Weber and Flately's (2006) research concentrated on the informational needs of faculty. They interviewed eleven faculty, many of whom stated that they used the physical library. Others expressed a desire for more private study spaces for faculty. The authors acknowledged that a larger sample size would improve the study. Weber and Flately's study is the only one completed at an institution similar in size and purpose to the state college in this study. The

remaining studies were done at large research universities. In addition, all but one of the analyses is over twelve years old.

Other articles reviewed new faculty spaces created to support faculty research and teaching at large university libraries (Allen, Gould, Littrell, & Schillie, 2010; Bell, 2011; Bodnar, 2009; Colvin, 2010; Dallis, 2016; Thomas, 2004). The primary purpose of these pieces was to describe new faculty spaces. Assessing the demand and value of the faculty area was beyond the scope of these works. These new spaces, referred to as faculty commons, scholars' commons, and research commons, were designed for communal and collaborative work. In addition, the facilities typically provided an array of services such as technological support, reference assistance, and print and electronic library resources. In some instances, graduate students also shared these spaces with faculty. Libraries added these spaces for a variety of reasons: to entice faculty back into the library, meet faculty research needs, create more work and study space for faculty and replace uninhabited faculty study carrels. In a few of the examples, graduate students appeared to be more receptive than faculty to the new spaces and the authors acknowledged that their libraries need to evaluate the value of these areas to faculty productivity (Colvin, 2010; Dallis, 2016).

Additional studies that analyzed large aggregate data sets suggested that faculty value and use the academic libraries' physical spaces less than students (Allen, Baker, Wilson, Creamer & Consiglio, 2013; Baker, et al., 2018; Thompson, Kyrillidou & Cook, 2008). For instance, two studies examined Measuring Information Services Outcomes (MISO) data for several U.S. based colleges and universities. The MISO survey is a quantitative survey that measures faculty, students, and staff's view of academic libraries. Allen, et al. (2013) examined the MISO data of thirty-eight institutions between 2005 and 2010. Baker, et al. (2018) examined MISO data of

ninety-nine institutions from 2012 to 2015. Both studies showed that faculty rarely used study carrels and quiet spaces in academic libraries; however, the surveys did not define the term study carrel. Therefore, it is unknown if respondents were using private or open carrels. It is also interesting to note in the 2018 study, faculty were less satisfied with study carrels than students were. It is possible that faculty did not view the carrels as conducive to their own work; unfortunately, the quantitative data does not reveal faculty perception of these spaces, which may have provided some insight into why they do not use them. Allen, et al. (2013) acknowledged the limits of the data stating, “frequency of use alone is not a sufficient gauge of a service’s value to faculty and students” (p.135).

In another study of large aggregate data sets, the researchers examined LibQUAL+ results for over 200,000 participants between 2004 and 2006 (Thompson, et al., 2008). LibQUAL+ is a survey tool that “measures library users' minimum, perceived, and desired levels of service quality across three dimensions: Affect of Service, Information Control, and Library as Place” (Association of Research Libraries, n.d.). There are twenty-two core items categorized under the three dimensions. The study investigated five Library as Place items, including “quiet space for individual activities” and “a getaway for study, learning, or research.” LibQUAL+ also allows participants to provide open comments, but an analysis of the qualitative data was not within the scope of the study. Over 37,000 American faculty and 5,000 British faculty participated in these surveys. British faculty ranked “a getaway for study, learning, or research” nineteenth out of twenty-two service items in 2005 and 2006. American faculty ranked the same item twentieth in all three years of the study. These results led the study’s authors to conclude, “the library physical space is less important to faculty who have been provided with their own office space” (Thompson, et al., 2008, p. 15). A close examination of the results indicated that

faculty ranked their desired service quality for library physical space much closer to the high end of the LibQUAL+ scale than the low end. For example, on the LibQUAL+ scale from 1 (low) to 9 (high), the desired service quality mean for “a getaway for study, learning, or research” was 7.45 for British faculty and 7.42 for American faculty in 2006. Furthermore, the desired service quality mean for both American and British faculty increased from 2004 and 2005. This analysis of large quantitative data is very useful for identifying general trends regarding the library services faculty value over time; however, quantitative data alone does not tell the entire story. For example, it does not explain the increase in desired service quality for the library as a getaway nor does it does not reveal the reasons why the faculty desire a high service quality for this item.

Other articles emphasized the importance of assessing library space using a variety of methods to design successful learning and research spaces (Farmer, 2016; Hanson & Abresch, 2017; Nitecki, 2011). For example, Hanson and Abresch (2017) suggested that libraries employ a range of methods to create “a true 360-degree view of users’ perspectives” (p. 121). Using multiple methods ensure that libraries respond to their patrons’ needs and priorities and thus facilitate the design of effective learning spaces. Farmer (2016) asserted that libraries should focus on providing spaces to support research. To accomplish this goal, librarians must gather feedback from all library stakeholders using a range of data collection methods that measure patrons’ perceptions including surveys, interviews, and observation. Farmer (2016) and Hanson and Abresch (2017) cited case studies of libraries that used mixed methods to measure library users’ perceptions and needs of library space. Subsequently, these libraries successfully redesigned library spaces to support learning and research. The cases studies discussed learning

and research spaces for graduate and undergraduate students. There were no examples of spaces designed to support faculty research.

This study attempts to address some of the gaps in the research on faculty spaces. It is the first inquiry in fourteen years to concentrate exclusively on faculty study carrels. In addition, it appears to be unique because it is a study of faculty study carrels at a teaching-intensive institution, not a research-intensive university. This analysis also seems to be the lone study to seek faculty feedback regarding guidelines governing these spaces. It also appears to be the first study to determine if faculty perceive that these spaces support their research. Research on faculty study carrels is important for several reasons. For example, it is necessary to determine if faculty continue to demand and value these spaces in an age when they can access research resources without entering the library building. Moreover, research helps librarians, library administrators, and college administrators to make informed decisions regarding these spaces including whether to keep them and how to improve them. Additionally, other librarians may find the survey beneficial as a template from which to create an assessment instrument for faculty spaces in their own libraries. Finally, the author hopes that this exploration will inspire additional discussion on the significance of dedicated library spaces for faculty that support research and teaching.

Research questions

The study endeavors to answer the following research questions:

1. Are the locked study carrel holders satisfied with the revised locked study carrels guidelines?
2. Does faculty research benefit from working in a locked study carrel?
3. Are locked study carrels a better working environment than faculty departmental offices?

4. Does faculty research necessitate being close to library collections?
5. Should the college add more carrels to the library?
6. Are locked study carrels important for faculty retention?
7. Will current locked study carrel holders request carrels in the future?
8. Do locked study carrels aid research necessary for faculty term contract renewal and successful applications for continuing appointment (tenure)?
9. Does the library need to improve its promotion of the availability of locked study carrels?

Methodology

The locked study carrel survey was conducted between March 22 and April 10, 2013. At the time of the survey, twenty-eight faculty members, including the author, shared a locked study carrel (two faculty members per carrel). The author did not complete the survey. The remaining twenty-seven faculty were invited to complete the survey. The author created an online survey using SelectSurvey.Net software (Appendix A). The author distributed the survey's link to the twenty-seven carrel holders via email. Twenty-two out of twenty-seven faculty responded to the survey for a very high response rate of 81%. Some of the faculty did not answer all the survey questions.

The survey collected a variety of data. First, it collected information about the locked study carrel holders including to which priority group they belonged, if they had previous access to a carrel, and their departmental affiliation. In addition, the survey inquired if the respondents shared a departmental office with another faculty member. The survey also gathered quantitative data. The survey instructed faculty to respond to nine statements regarding their perceived value of the locked study carrels to research, the need for the locked study carrels, and satisfaction with the revised locked study carrel guidelines. Respondents were asked to choose one response from

a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In addition, the survey allowed faculty to select the benefits of the locked study carrels from a list of choices. Finally, the survey collected qualitative data. The survey requested that respondents supply any other benefits of the carrels. The survey also asked respondents to write any other observations about these spaces.

Results and discussion

Profile of survey respondents

Twenty-two faculty responded to the question, to which priority group do you belong? (Fig. 1). Eight faculty belonged to the first group and eleven belonged to the second. Of the nineteen faculty who were in the first and second priority groups, eight of them stated they did not previously have access to a carrel (Fig. 2). In addition, the three faculty holders who were in the third group did not previously have a carrel. Therefore, eleven, or 50%, of the survey respondents, were first time carrel holders. These results suggest that the guidelines helped to make the carrels available to faculty who previously never held one of these spaces.

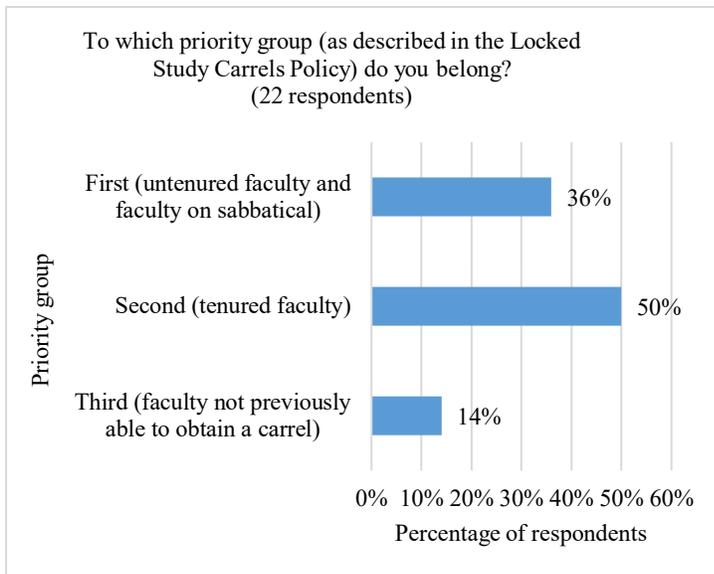


Fig. 1. To which priority group (as described in the Locked Study Carrels Policy) do you belong?

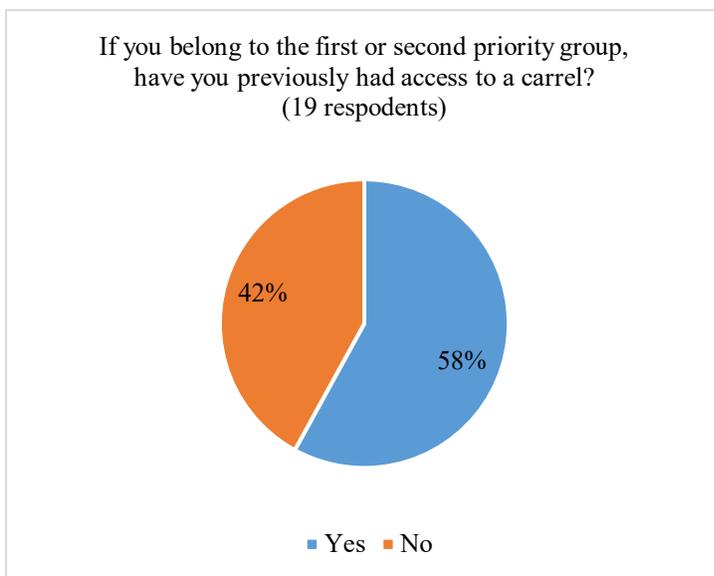


Fig. 2. If you belong to the first or second priority group, have you previously had access to a carrel?

Most of the locked study carrel holders were from the humanities and social sciences, which is like Antell and Engel’s (2006) findings. More specifically, fifteen out of the twenty-two respondents were from departments that at the time of the study were housed in the college’s School of Arts and Humanities or School of Social Sciences (Fig. 3). There are two possible explanations for the large number of humanities and social sciences carrel holders. First,

humanities and social sciences faculty continue to rely heavily on the library’s physical collections to conduct their research despite the availability of electronic resources. Having a study carrel in the library facilitates access to the collection. A second explanation is a lack of private departmental office space for these social sciences and humanities faculty. Thirteen of the twenty-two respondents stated that they shared a departmental office with at least one other faculty member. Of these thirteen faculty, nine were in the English and History departments.

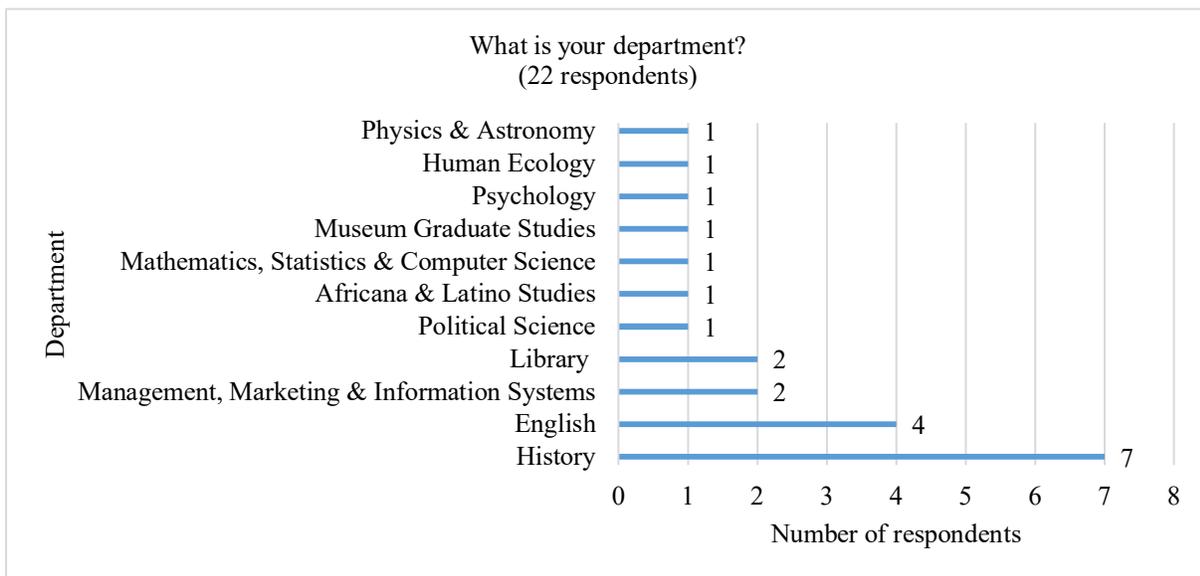


Fig. 3. What is your department?

Quantitative results

The quantitative results address the nine research questions. The results are grouped by the following themes: satisfaction with the locked study carrel guidelines, value of the locked study carrels to research, and faculty demand for locked study carrels.

Satisfaction with the locked study carrel guidelines

Many carrel holders were pleased with the guidelines (Fig. 4). Seventy-six percent of respondents expressed satisfaction with the guidelines. Three respondents disagreed with the statement and two were undecided. One respondent explained his/her dissatisfaction with the

guidelines. The respondent stated, “I feel that the supply of carrels should be sufficient enough in a college library to warrant less frequent application by those who need such space to do research.”

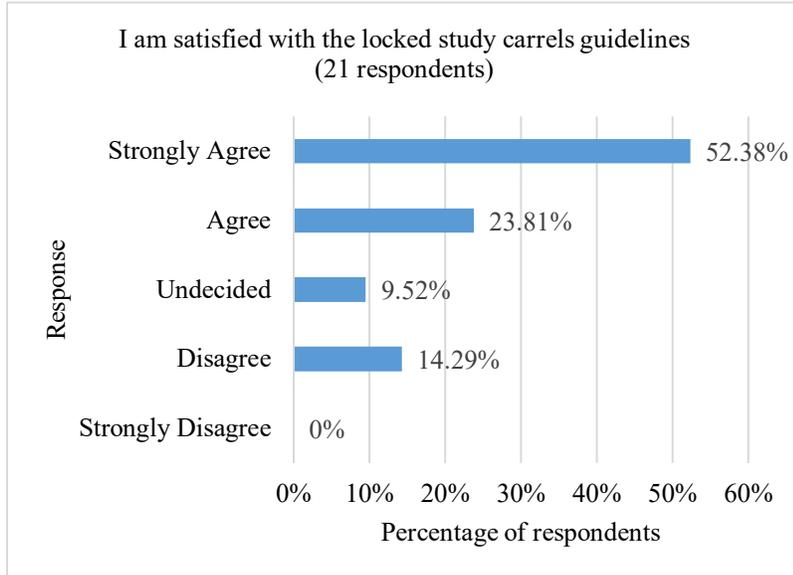


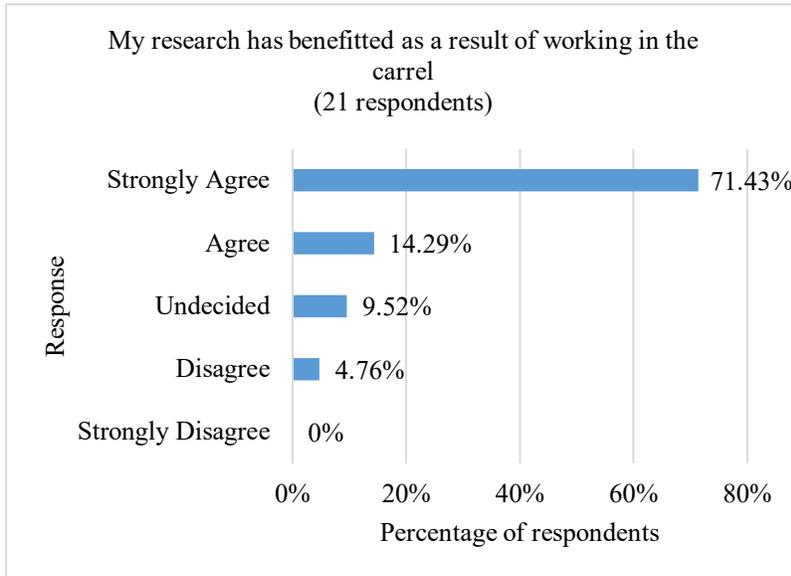
Fig. 4. I am satisfied with the locked study carrels guidelines.

Locked study carrels facilitate research

“...the supply of carrels should be sufficient enough in a college library to warrant less frequent application....”

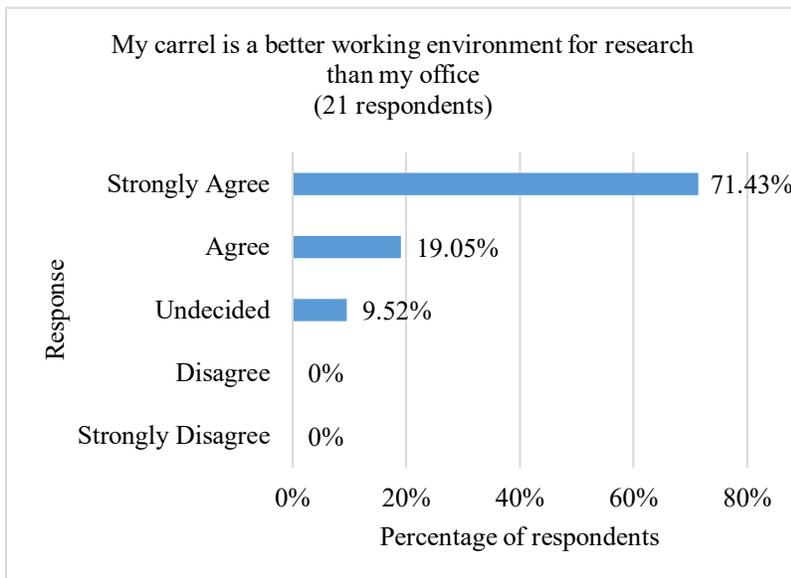
The respondents overwhelmingly perceived that the locked study carrels support faculty research. For example, eighty-five percent of surveyed faculty agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, My research has benefitted as a result of working in the carrel (Fig. 5). In addition, ninety percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their carrel is a better working environment for research than their departmental office (Fig. 6). Moreover, eighty percent of the surveyed faculty agreed or strongly agreed that their research necessitated that they be close to library collections (Fig. 7). Eighty-seven percent of respondents agree or strongly agree that carrels are important for faculty retention (Fig. 8). Finally, ninety-five percent of respondents

agreed or strongly agreed that carrels aid research necessary for successful faculty contract renewals and tenure (Fig. 9).



“My library carrel was crucial for the completion of a 375 page book and a recent article.”

Fig. 5. My research has benefitted as a result of working in the carrel.



“A number of tenure-track faculty members, such as myself, share an office. That is fine for meeting with students; but it is a difficult situation for trying to do research.”

Fig. 6. My carrel is a better working environment for research than my office.

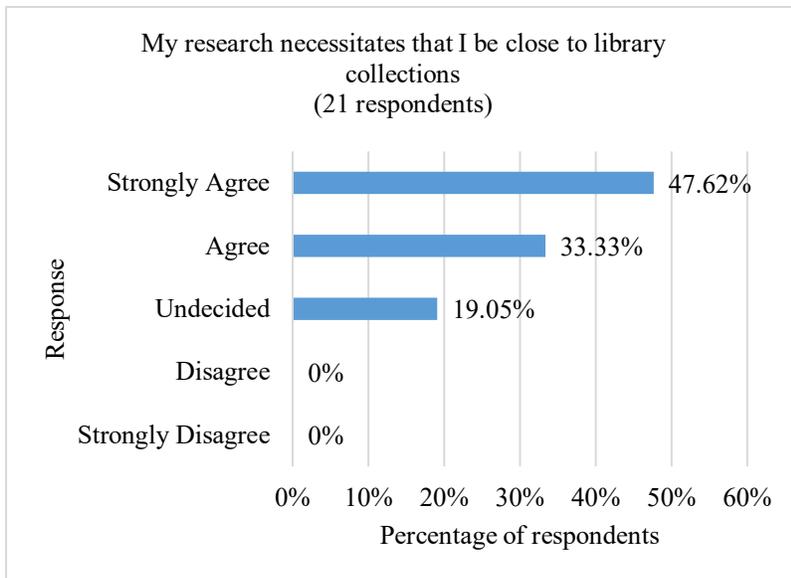


Fig. 7. My research necessitates that I be close to library collections.

“For historians who are constantly using the library [it] is crucial to have a carrel.”

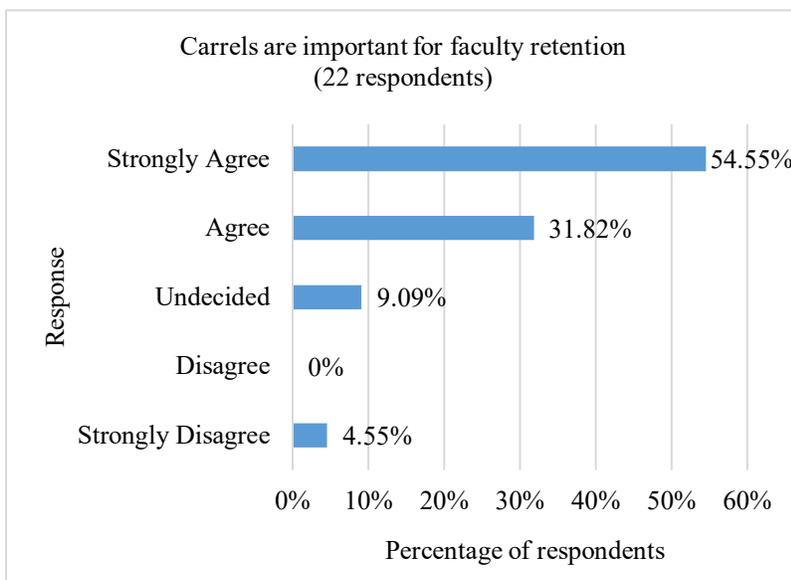
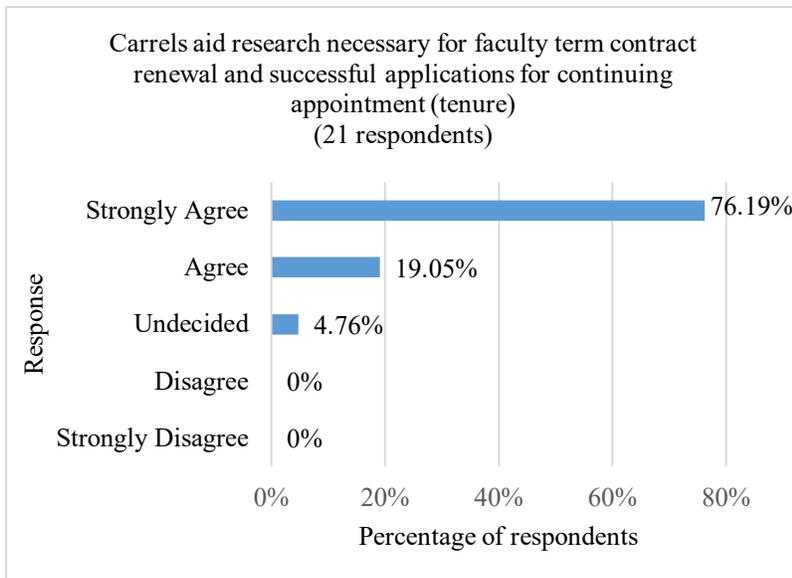


Fig. 8. Carrels are important for faculty retention.

“Without resources such as library carrels for serious scholarship in the Humanities and Social Sciences we will not recruit or keep the best faculty.”



“Faculty who cannot do research will not get...tenured or promoted. Faculty at [this college] have to submit their work to the same peer-reviewed publications at leading research universities. Having library carrels is a small way to help even the playing field.”

Fig. 9. Carrels aid research necessary for faculty term contract renewal and successful applications for continuing appointment (tenure).

Faculty demand for locked study carrels

The respondents also expressed the opinion that there is an ongoing need for these faculty spaces. For instance, eighty percent of surveyed faculty agreed or strongly agreed that they plan to request a carrel in the future (Fig. 10). Seventy-six percent of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the college should add more faculty carrels to the library (Fig. 11). It is possible that faculty expressed a need for additional carrels so that they would not have to share, or they thought that more faculty would be able to get a carrel. Most respondents also believed that the library could do a better job of informing faculty of the availability of the locked study carrels (Fig. 12).

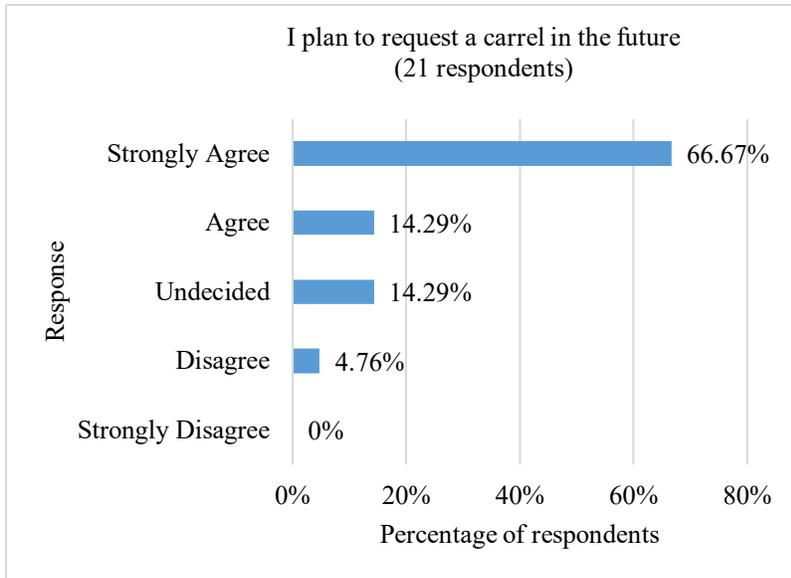


Fig. 10. I plan to request a carrel in the future.

“We are in desperate need of intellectual space.”

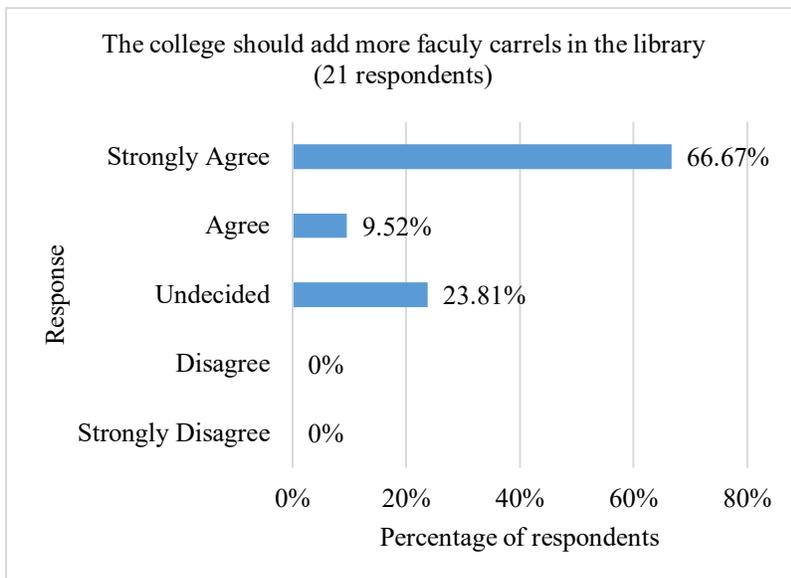
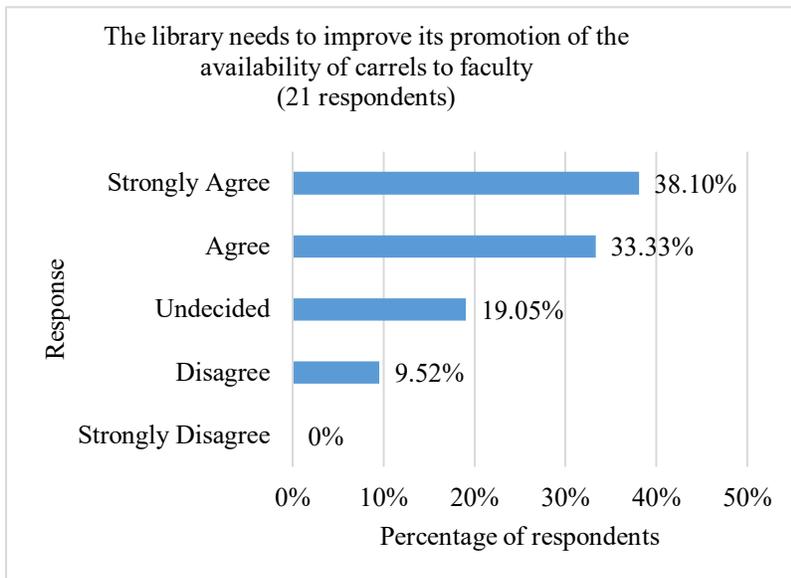


Fig. 11. The college should add more faculty carrels in the library.

“In my view, increasing the number of carrels is more important than making them bigger.”



“I have spoken with many colleagues whose research has been transformed by having a carrel. I have also spoken to many who crave this opportunity.”

Fig. 12. The library needs to improve its promotion of the availability of carrels to faculty.

These quantitative results raise several points. Faculty clearly place a high value on the locked study carrels as a space that facilitates research and they will continue to demand these spaces. In addition, the results suggest that respondents believe that these spaces are particularly important for untenured faculty because working in a study carrel may help them to complete research that is necessary to obtain tenure. Furthermore, respondents expressed a desire for more carrels in the library perhaps so that they would not have to share these spaces in the future. On the other hand, they may believe that additional carrels would give more faculty the opportunity to obtain one of these spaces. Respondents also appear to be stating that since they see these spaces as valuable to research, the library needs to do a better job of promoting them. This in turn implies that respondents believe that the library should make more faculty aware of these spaces.

Benefits of the locked study carrels

The survey asked respondents to identify the benefits of the carrel from a list of three options (Fig. 13). A quiet place to work was the most popular response with all twenty-two

respondents selecting this option. This finding substantiates the results of earlier studies that indicated that faculty continue to want quiet spaces in the library. The second most cited benefit of the carrels was proximity to library collections. Eighty-two percent of surveyed faculty cited this as a benefit. Unsurprisingly, this sentiment was strong among the humanities and social sciences faculty; however, two business faculty, one science faculty and one human ecology faculty all strongly agreed that proximity to the physical collection was essential to their research. Finally, the ability to check out sources from the collection was the third most chosen benefit. Seventy-three percent of faculty perceived this as an important aspect. These results suggest that physical collections remain relevant to carrel holders despite the widespread availability of remotely accessible electronic library resources.

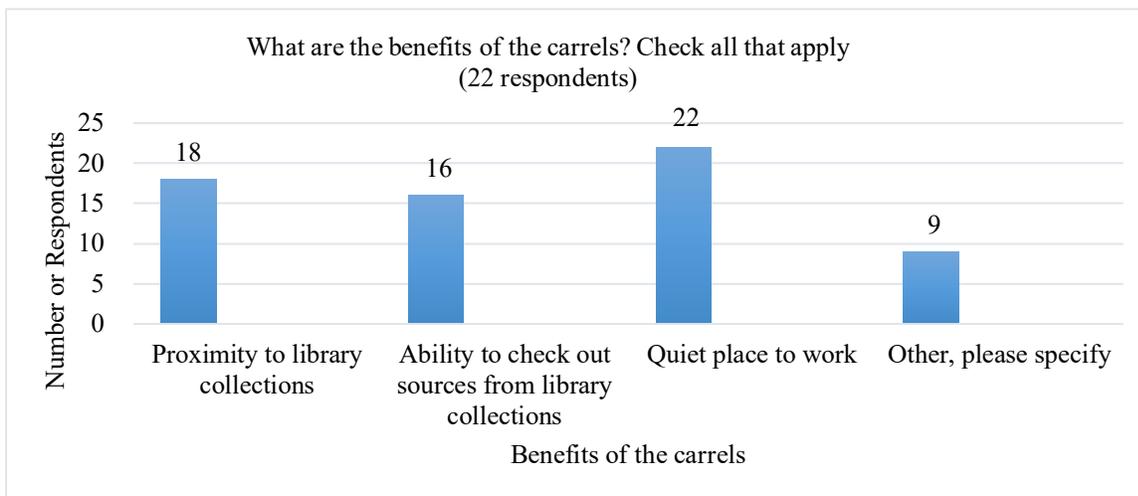


Fig.13. What are the benefits of the carrels?

Qualitative results

The survey also asked faculty to provide comments regarding their view of the benefits of the carrels apart from the choices listed in the survey. Nine respondents provided detailed remarks on this matter. In addition, the survey requested survey takers to write any additional comments they had concerning the carrels. Eighteen of the surveyed faculty provided remarks.

Other benefits of the locked study carrels

Respondents elaborated further on the benefits of the study carrels. Three themes emerged from the free responses to the question, What are the benefits of the carrels?: dedicated research space, proximity to library and non-library services, and environment free of distractions and interruptions.

Dedicated research space. Four respondents stated that an important benefit of the carrels is that they are a dedicated space to do research:

It is important to have a specified space which is dedicated to research and nothing else. Just the same way a laboratory is a dedicated space for science research, a library carrel is a dedicated space for serious scholarship...[You] will be able to access research related resources....

The library is not only a building to house books; it has a profound psychological impact on academics in placing us within an atmosphere that is not about marking, or teaching or committee work, but it allows us to let all of that go and... devote ourselves, if only for a few hours to our research and academic development.

Because I don't always bring my laptop with me to the carrel, it gives me some uninterrupted quiet time to actually think. I know I would not have completed my article last semester if I had not spent dedicated time in my carrel.

The carrels make it possible for someone like myself to have a place to accomplish research.

Three respondents specifically noted their departmental offices were not conducive to research and that their carrels served as an important alternative space to complete this type of work. These remarks are unsurprising considering the number of respondents who reported sharing a departmental office:

A number of tenure-track faculty members, such as myself, share an office. That is fine for meeting with students, but it is a difficult situation for trying to do research.

For people like myself who shares an office with another faculty member it is crucial to have a carrel because when my office mate is talking to a student i [sic] have a place where I can go and work and be productive. It is impossible to concentrate when my office mate is talking to someone in the office.

I might be sharing an office soon and to not have the chance to have a space in one's own library where one can solely focus on research would be a shame.

Freedom from distractions (my office is next to our department office).

Proximity to library and non-library services. Four respondents indicated that proximity to library staff and non-library services is also a benefit of having a carrel in the library. The respondents specifically mentioned that they liked that they could easily seek help from reference librarians and other library staff and take a break at the café.

Environment free of distractions and interruptions. Five respondents stated that the carrels are spaces free of distractions and interruptions (Image 1 and Image 2). One faculty member specified, “Mentally knowing that when you shut the door to the carrel you will not be interrupted... and have time and space to think is crucial.” Another respondent remarked upon

the carrel being “an undisturbed environment.” Another faculty member simply commented that the carrel “is a quiet place to work.”



Image 1. Interior view of locked study carrel.



Image 2. Exterior view of locked study carrels.

Additional free comments

Respondents were invited to record any additional comments concerning the carrels. Eighteen of the surveyed faculty shared supplementary remarks. These remarks are classified into four themes: productivity, proximity to library services, improvement to the locked study carrels, and opposition to repurposing these spaces.

Productivity. Nine respondents discussed in detail the research and other work they completed while working in their carrels. For example, two respondents noted that their carrels were an important space for reading, writing and research. Another noted that the carrel “made a difference in the quality of my research.” Some faculty members specifically mentioned the work that they had completed in their carrels. For example, one respondent noted, “My library carrel was crucial for the completion of a 375 page book and a recent article.” Another stated that he/she revised a monograph and completed three journal articles because of working in a locked study carrel. This respondent noted, “I knew having a carrel would help me, but I had no idea the impact quiet, intellectual space would have on my productivity.” Another respondent indicated that he/she finished a research article because of working in a carrel. Moreover, two respondents specified that they translated documents and completed conference papers in their carrels. One of the faculty completed his/her paper for an international conference and stated, “None of this could have been accomplished without the time I was able to spend in my carrel.” Two respondents said that they completed work related to their teaching even though the policy states that the carrels are for research purposes. For example, they graded papers, prepared lectures, and reviewed student theses.

Proximity to library services. The theme of ease with which faculty can access the library’s services while working in their carrels emerged again in the open comments. Four respondents stated that proximity to the collections was an important aspect of having a carrel in the library. One respondent contended, “For historians who are constantly using the library [it] is crucial to have a carrel.” Another respondent proclaimed, “there is other faculty work that should be considered in carrel assignment [because] sometimes it requires having ready access to the collection.” Two respondents noted that ready access to the library staff was another

important aspect of working in a library carrel. Another faculty respondent noted that he/she stored books and microfilm borrowed from the local collection and through interlibrary loan in the carrel. Finally, three respondents noted the importance of the location of the carrels on the library's designated quiet floor.

Improvements to the locked study carrels. Some faculty offered suggestions to improve the locked study carrels. For example, one respondent suggested that the library should assign a single faculty member per carrel instead of allotting two faculty to one carrel. Two faculty recommended that the library create more study carrels. Three respondents said the lighting in the carrels needed improvement. One respondent commented that the carrels were very cold in the winter. One respondent thought his/her carrel was "a little cramped" and it would be more usable if the space were "more comfortable."

Opposition to repurposing the locked study carrels. Four respondents expressed their opposition to the college's proposal to convert the faculty carrels to faculty offices. In addition to losing quiet research space, they asserted that the library's quiet floor was not a suitable location for faculty offices because the normal activity that occurs in a departmental office would be disruptive to patrons:

I am very concerned with the plan to turn the carrels into office. Obviously, there is the loss of the carrel, but I am even more concerned with the disruption to the one quiet place to work on campus--the third floor of the library. It is absolutely vital that a quiet floor be available for faculty and student work.

Due to issues of student confidentiality and need for faculty to keep office doors open to prevent harassment charges, the current carrel location is not suitable for faculty offices.

I really hope the carrels will continue to be available to faculty and not converted into office space. The quiet space for writing and reading is invaluable to those of [us] in the humanities who have shared offices on noisy corridors and young children at home.

I hope you are able to keep them open and it would be great if private ones are available in the future.

The qualitative data is an indispensable supplement to the quantitative data because the former provides invaluable insight into the reasons the faculty value the study carrels. The most striking discovery is the amount of scholarship that faculty produced in these spaces. The respondents' free comments imply that the synergy of a quiet, distraction free location, devoted solely to research and closeness to library services and staff is conducive to supporting faculty scholarship. It is therefore unsurprising that some of the faculty expressed their opposition to the repurposing of these spaces. Nevertheless, faculty perceived that there were opportunities to improve the study carrel experience that may enhance carrel holders' productivity. Furthermore, sharing study carrels was not ideal for a few respondents. Overall, the qualitative results support the notion that the study carrels have a positive impact on faculty research.

Limitations and further research

This study has several limitations. For instance, the results of the study are specific to the library in the study; however, some of the findings are like previous studies on faculty spaces. There may also be a bias in the data because the survey was administered only to locked study carrel holders. These are individuals likely invested in the carrels, so it would be in their interest to make positive comments about the carrels. The results may also have been influenced by the fact that so many carrels holders shared a departmental office. In addition, at the time the survey was distributed, locked study carrel holders were aware that the college administration was considering repurposing the spaces. They may have felt the need to express overtly positive feedback about the study carrels to justify their use of the space. Finally, non-study carrel users were not surveyed in this study. Nonetheless, the survey data produced useful information concerning the locked study carrels and demonstrated the value of the library space to faculty research.

Further investigation of the locked study carrels is warranted for several reasons. For example, the data from this survey is over six years old. The study carrels were renovated and enlarged shortly after the survey was administered. Nevertheless, the library has not supplemented the number of locked study carrels and faculty continue to share these spaces. Therefore, a follow-up study to determine if the locked study carrels continue to meet faculty research needs would be beneficial. In addition, it would also be useful for the library to learn if locked study carrel holders continue to be satisfied with the guidelines. Furthermore, an investigation of the use of the bookcases in the carrels could be a means to evaluate if locked study carrel holders are using the library's print materials or their own personal books and journals in these spaces. Additionally, a survey of non-carrels holders designed to gauge if there

is a demand among this population for locked study carrels would also help the library to determine if a need exists to increase the number of these spaces. A larger space needs assessment of all college faculty would inform the library if there were a requirement for other models of faculty spaces in the library to support faculty research needs. Finally, a comparison of faculty perception and demand for locked study carrels at a teaching college and a research university would also yield interesting information.

Conclusion

An assessment of the locked study carrels was long overdue. A perception persisted among some librarians and college administrators that faculty were not using these spaces based on specious evidence. The library needed to use a reliable method to determine the value of the locked study carrels to their users. The results of the survey were very revealing to librarians and college administrators and refuted the opinion that faculty were not using their locked study carrels. The faculty perceive that these are spaces support their research. They are quiet, distraction free spaces that allow for ready access to the library's physical collections and staff. It appears that demand for these spaces will continue. The faculty are generally happy with the locked study carrel guidelines. Without this survey, librarians and college administrators would never have realized the depth to which faculty value the carrels and the quantity of scholarship that faculty produced in these spaces. These revelations are to the library's advantage. For instance, the production of scholarship in the study carrels highlights the value of the library to faculty research, which can only help to raise the library's profile on the campus. In addition to providing the library with invaluable feedback regarding these spaces, the survey results so overwhelming revealed the pertinence of locked study carrels to faculty, the college administration decided to preserve the carrels for faculty use.

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Appendix A

Locked Study Carrel Survey

1. To which priority group (as described in the Locked Study Carrels Policy) do you belong? Please check one.

____ First: Untenured, but tenure-track faculty member, or faculty member on sabbatical, whose research benefits from ready access to library collections

____ Second: Tenured faculty member, whose research benefits from ready access to library collections

____ Third: Any faculty member requiring study space for one semester, or the academic year, who has not previously been able to obtain a carrel

2. If you belong to the first or second priority group, have you previously had access to a carrel?

Yes No

3. What is your department? _____

4. Is your departmental office shared with at least one other faculty member?

Yes No

5. Please choose one response from the scale 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree | | |
|--|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|---|---|
| I am satisfied with the Locked Study Carrels guidelines. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| My research has benefitted as a result of working in the carrel. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| My carrel is a better working environment for research than my office. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| My research necessitates that I be close to library collections. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The college should add more | | | | | | |

faculty study carrels in the library. 1 2 3 4 5

Study Carrels are important for
faculty retention. 1 2 3 4 5

I plan to request a carrel in the
future. 1 2 3 4 5

Faculty carrels aid research
necessary for faculty term
contract renewal and
successful applications
for continuing appointment. 1 2 3 4 5

The library needs to improve
its promotion
of the availability of
carrels to faculty 1 2 3 4 5

What are the benefits of the carrels? Please check all that apply.

- Proximity to library collections
- Ability to check out sources from the library collections
- Quiet place to work
- Other (please describe)

Please write any comments concerning the carrels below:

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