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How Accessible are the Libraries?

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How Accessible are the Libraries?

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Today’s Outline

- Why is library accessibility important?
- The 2017 Carrier Library Accessibility Audit pilot
  - Qualitative results
  - Quantitative results
- Next phases of research
- What the libraries are doing to change
- Questions and ideas
Activity 1: What is the Library to You?

- Think of the last time you visited a library.
- Why did you go to the library?
- What did you do there?
- How did you feel in the library?
Why is library accessibility important?

- Student engagement leads to better outcomes.
- Students with disabilities tend to struggle more than other students.
- Students with disabilities who are engaged with their school tend to have better outcomes.
Why is library accessibility important?

- “Third places” provide space for people to engage with communities and each other.
- These places are inclusive, accessible, comfortable, friendly, and support both work and play.
- Libraries can be third places for students.
Quick Facts: Carrier Library

- Built in 1940s, 1960s, 1970s, 1991
- 80,000 ft² public space
- 1,000,000 visits per year
2017 Carrier Library Accessibility Studies

- 2 focus groups: 11 participants
- Audit instrument: 16 participants
  - Perceived quality and importance of accessibility
  - Six zones of Carrier Library
  - Open comment sections for each zone
- No participants reported having a disability.
Activity 2: Who?

- Visualize a “student with a disability” who might encounter a barrier in the libraries.
- What disability/ies or impairment/s did you visualize?
2017 Focus Groups/Audit: Qualitative Data

- The overwhelming majority of comments mentioned wheelchairs.
- Students are not aware of disability topics in general.
- Students referred to their own experiences.
2017 Carrier Library Accessibility Audit

- Based on the International Federation of Library Associations *Checklist*
- Tested for reliability by library & ODS partners
- Tested for validity using SPSS
Activity 3: Auditing Carrier

- The following slides are a photo tour of the six zones included in the Audit.
- As we look at them, note areas of strength and weakness.
2017 Audit:
Quantitative Data

- Areas of need:
  - Signage
  - Access to books
  - Table height and spacing
  - Service point height
  - Restrooms
Next Phases of Research

- 2018 Audit (new and improved!)
- Survey of library and accessible technology lab use
- Individual interviews with students and faculty with disabilities
- Phenomenological study of work at the service point
What are the libraries doing now?

- Signage and wayfinding initiative
- New/expanded services like book retrieval
- Accessible and adaptive technologies in the information commons and the AT Labs
- Universal design of the service point
What are future steps for the libraries?

- Accessibility information on the website
- Training for student workers and staff
- Incorporating universal design & accessibility into facilities operations.
- And other projects not related to physical spaces & services.
Questions and Ideas

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