

Library Hours Study – February 2009

Executive Summary

Georgia State University's Student Government Association (SGA) announced a plan to petition the University Library to remain open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The library offered to work with SGA to determine whether this was a feasible plan that was desired by students. The library developed and launched a survey to gather feedback about its current hours and students' desired hours. To follow up on the data gathered through the survey, three focus groups were conducted with students.

On January 27, 2009, the University Library opened the survey and advertised it through a campus-wide email message, a banner on the library's home page, and a post on the library news blog. One thousand, three hundred, thirty-five (1,335) surveys were submitted before the survey closed on February 3, 2009. Respondents were not required to answer every question, so not each question generated 1,335 responses.

A slight majority of respondents answered that the library's hours are sufficient for their needs and schedules. Only about 15% of respondents indicated that the library should be open 24 hours during some portion of the week.

After the survey closed, focus groups were conducted with students to help validate the survey findings. Two undergraduate focus groups and one graduate student focus group were held. Focus group feedback closely aligned with survey results.

The first section of this report is a survey responses summary. Part 2 is a summary of focus group data. Part 3 consists of conclusions drawn from the survey and focus groups, as well as general recommendations.

Due to the current economic climate, the library is unable to act on survey findings at this time; however, we will use the findings for future planning when the budget situation improves. We will extend hours around final exams.

Part 1: Summary of Survey Responses

Respondent Profile:

GSU undergraduate students: 983

GSU graduate students: 314

GSU faculty: 3

GSU staff: 2

Non-GSU visitor: 1

Other: 15 (GSU alumni, GSU post-baccalaureate students)

Are the library's regular hours sufficient for your needs and schedule?

Total:

Yes: 702=56%

No: 547=44%

Undergraduate students:

Yes: 513=56%
No: 403=44%

Graduate students:

Yes: 166=56%
No: 132=44%

Other:

Yes: 18=86%
No: 3=14%

When do you visit the library most often? Check the days/times you are most likely to use the library.

Total:

Weekdays, noon - 6 PM: 839=64%
Weekdays, 8 PM – midnight: 644=49%
Weekdays, 6 PM - 8 PM: 583=44%
Weekdays, 7:30 AM – noon: 561=43%
Saturdays, noon - 6 PM: 496=38%
Sundays, 6 PM - 10 PM: 471=36%
Sundays, 2 PM - 6 PM: 434=33%
Sundays, 10 AM - 2 PM: 254=19%
Saturdays, 9 AM – noon: 236=18%

Undergraduate students:

Weekdays, noon – 6 PM: 68%
Weekdays, 8 PM – midnight: 51%
Weekdays, 7:30 AM – noon: 47%
Weekdays, 6 PM – 8 PM: 45%
Sundays, 6 PM – 10 PM: 35%

Graduate students:

Saturdays, noon-6 PM: 50%
Weekdays, noon-6 PM: 49%
Weekdays, 6 PM – 8 PM: 44%
Weekdays, 8 PM – midnight: 43%
Sundays, 2 PM – 6 PM: 42%

What three days of the week do you most often visit the library?

Total:

1. Tuesday: 326=25%
2. Thursday: 277=21%
3. Wednesday: 259=20%

Undergraduate students:

1. Tuesday: 269=28%
2. Thursday: 217=22%

3. Wednesday: 201=21%

Graduate students:

1. Saturday: 72=23%
2. Thursday: 57=19%
3. Wednesday: 52=17%
Tuesday: 51=17%

How would you change the library's regular hours? This question used an open text field, allowing respondents to enter any comments they wished. Comments were filtered based on keywords and manual counting, so the breakdowns of comments by category are approximate. n=1097

- Close later on Saturday (responses varied from 7 PM – 1 AM): 280 responses
- The hours are fine: 173
- Close later on Sunday (responses varied from 11 PM – 24 hours into Monday): 114
- Open earlier on weekdays (responses varied from 6 AM – 7 AM): 48
- Open earlier on Sunday (responses varied from 6 AM – 9 AM): 42
- Open earlier on Saturday (responses varied from 6 AM – 8:45 AM): 36
- Longer hours (open earlier and/or close later) during midterm and final exam periods: 23
- Responses that mention that the library should be open 24 hours during some portion of the week: 194
 - The library should be open 24/5 or 24 hours on weekdays: 52 responses
 - The library should be open 24/7 or 24 hours a day, 7 days a week: 36 responses
 - The library should be open 24 hours during exams/finals: 21 responses
 - There were a number of “24 hours” responses that didn’t include whether this meant the library should be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week; 24 hours a day, five days a week; or something else.
- Other libraries that are mentioned as being open 24 hours:
 - Georgia Tech
 - Georgia Southern
 - Emory
 - University of Georgia
 - Atlanta University Center
 - “all the schools in Georgia”
 - USC (probably South Carolina)

During the 2008 fall semester, were you ever unable to use the library because it was closed or were you asked to leave the library because it was closing? The comments section of this question used an open text field, allowing respondents to enter any

comments they wished. Comments were filtered based on keywords and manual counting, so the breakdowns of comments by category are approximate.

Total: Yes: 693=55%
No: 561=45%

Undergraduate students: Yes: 510=55%
No: 420=45%

Comments:

- Closed too early during finals - 28
- Closed weekday mornings - 22
- Closed on Saturday evening - 22
- Closed weekdays at midnight - 11
- Closed Friday evening - 7
- Closed on Saturday morning - 5
- Closed during breaks and holidays - 2
- Asked to leave due to fire alarm - 2
- Closed on Sunday morning - 1
- Closed on Sunday evening - 1

Graduate students: Yes: 171=58%
No: 124=42%

Comments:

- Closed during breaks and holidays - 13
- Closed Saturday evening - 12
- Closed Saturday (no time given) - 6
- Closed Sunday evening - 5
- Closed too early during finals - 5
- Closed weekdays at midnight - 3
- Closed Friday evening - 3
- Closed Sunday morning - 3
- Closed weekday mornings - 2
- Closed early morning (no day given) - 2
- Asked to leave due to fire alarm - 2
- Closed Saturday morning - 1

What are your top three reasons for visiting the library?

Total:

1. Study by myself: 508=39%
2. Study by myself: 243=19%
3. Meet a group to study: 171=13%

Undergraduate students:

1. Study by myself: 397=41%
2. Study by myself: 183=19%
3. Meet a group to study: 133=14%

Graduate students:

1. Study by myself: 102=33%
2. Access books and journals: 70=23%
3. Access books and journals: 44=15%

Would you be in favor of closing the library on a Saturday or Sunday in order to add evening hours Monday – Thursday?

Total:

Yes: 250=20%

No: 988=80%

Undergraduate students:

Yes: 215=23%

No: 708=77%

Graduate students:

Yes: 31=11%

No: 257=89%

How do you normally travel to the library from where you live?

Undergraduate students:

Drive myself: 394=40%

MARTA: 276=28%

Walk: 171=17%

PantherExpress (GSU shuttle): 66=7%

Bike: 25=3%

Ride with someone else: 21=2%

Graduate students:

Drive myself: 152=49%

MARTA: 118=38%

Walk: 14=5%

PantherExpress (GSU shuttle): 7=2%

Bike: 10=3%

Ride with someone else: 2=1%

Part 2: Summary of Focus Group Data

Focus Group 1: 6 undergraduate students

1. How would you change these hours to meet your needs and schedule?

Summary: All subjects recommended staying open later on Saturday. A few also recommended staying open later on Friday, and two subjects recommended earlier opening hours on Saturday, Sunday, and weekdays.

2. During the 2008 fall semester, were you ever unable to use the library because it was closed or were you asked to leave the library because it was closing? Tell me about what you were doing or what you wanted to do.

Summary: Subjects have arrived at the library before it has opened and also been forced to leave when the library was closing. Only one subject responded that this had never happened.

3. Think about why you visit the library. Tell me three specific reasons why you come to the library. For example, you might come to the library to print a paper.

Summary: Responses varied, but the activities mentioned most frequently were meeting study groups, printing papers, and using the library computers for internet access.

4. Of the days and times you see listed here, tell me when you're most likely to use the library.

Summary: Most subjects responded that they most often visit the library on Saturdays from noon – 6 PM. The second most popular time block is weekdays from noon – 6 PM.

5. What three days of the week do you visit the library most often?

Summary: The days subjects said they most often visit the library are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. This aligns exactly with the survey results. Interestingly, in question 4, subjects claimed they are most likely to use the library on Saturday afternoon.

6. How do you normally travel to the library from where you live?

Summary: Most subjects take MARTA to the library.

7. What do you think about the library closing on Saturday or Sunday in order to add evening hours Monday – Thursday?

Summary: All subjects responded “no” to this question.

Focus Group 2: 5 graduate students

1. How would you change these hours to meet your needs and schedule?

Summary: All subjects would like the library to stay open later on Saturday and Sunday evenings. Two of the 5 subjects requested 24x7 library access.

2. During the 2008 fall semester, were you ever unable to use the library because it was closed or were you asked to leave the library because it was closing? Tell me about what you were doing or what you wanted to do.

Summary: All subjects responded that they were here on various days when the library was closing. Several of them were meeting with study groups.

3. Think about why you visit the library. Tell me three specific reasons why you come to the library. For example, you might come to the library to print a paper.

Summary: Four of the 5 subjects said they come to the library to meet with study groups. The next most frequent response was to use books and journals.

4. Of the days and times you see listed here, tell me when you're most likely to use the library.

Summary: Subjects are most likely to visit the library on weekdays from 8 PM – midnight.

5. What three days of the week do you visit the library most often?

Summary: The responses were fairly evenly split. Monday and Sunday received 3 responses each.

6. How do you normally travel to the library from where you live?

Summary: Three of the five subjects drive to the library.

7. What do you think about the library closing on Saturday or Sunday in order to add evening hours Monday – Thursday?

Summary: Subjects unanimously responded “no” to this question.

Focus Group 3: 9 undergraduate students

1. How would you change these hours to meet your needs and schedule?

Summary: All subjects would like the library to stay open later on Saturday evenings. All subjects also would like the library to open earlier on weekday mornings or stay open 24 hours on weekdays.

2. During the 2008 fall semester, were you ever unable to use the library because it was closed or were you asked to leave the library because it was closing? Tell me about what you were doing or what you wanted to do.

Summary: Five subjects responded that they had to leave when the library closed. Subjects were studying and doing research. Only one subject claimed to have arrived at the library before it was open in the morning. This subject was coming to study.

3. Think about why you visit the library. Tell me three specific reasons why you come to the library. For example, you might come to the library to print a paper.

Summary: Most subjects come to the library to do research, study, and/or to use the group study rooms.

4. Of the days and times you see listed here, tell me when you're most likely to use the library. (The number of responses for each item appear bold in the table.)

Summary: Sundays, 6 PM – 10 PM, is the most popular block, followed by weekdays, 8 PM – midnight, and Saturdays, noon – 6 PM.

5. What three days of the week do you visit the library most often?

Summary: Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday are days subjects claim to visit the library most often. Interestingly, most subjects responded that they day/time they are most likely to visit the library is Sunday, 6 PM – 10 PM.

6. How do you normally travel to the library from where you live?

Summary: Four of the 9 subjects drive to campus.

7. What do you think about the library closing on Saturday or Sunday in order to add evening hours Monday – Thursday?

Summary: Subjects unanimously responded “no” to this question.

Part 3: Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Library users would appreciate the library staying open longer during exam periods, and the library should make this a priority. The library should consider extending hours on Saturday evenings and opening earlier on weekdays, as well, but only after additional investigation.

The data do not support keeping the library open 24x7 or 24x5 at this time. A small percentage (15%) of survey respondents requested 24-hour library access during some portion of the week, and students in one undergraduate focus group unanimously stated they would appreciate 24x5 access.

Overall Recommendations

Extend library hours during exam periods.

Further investigate staying open later on Saturday evenings.

Further investigate opening earlier on weekdays.

Do not consider closing on a weekend day in order to add evening hours Monday-Thursday.

Twenty-four-hour library access should not be considered at this time. It perhaps warrants further investigation in the future as more on-campus housing is opened and more students live on campus.

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