



11-19-2013

What Words Would You Use to Describe the Library?

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Myers, Sarah, "What Words Would You Use to Describe the Library?" (2013). *Blogging the Library*. 55.
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What Words Would You Use to Describe the Library?

Abstract

The library is a growing, evolving organism. Without change, the library will cease to be relevant. With the addition of technology, ebooks, virtual reference, and databases, we have the 21st century academic library. Despite the changes over the decades, ask most people what a library is meant for and you'll still likely get an answer that suggests a quiet space for books and studying. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Musselman Library, Gettysburg College, Reference Intern, Academic Library

Disciplines

Library and Information Science

Comments

The Interns at Gettysburg College's Musselman Library captured their internship experiences since the spring of 2011. Over time the blog has featured Fortenbaugh, Smith, and Holley interns. They shared updates on semester long projects, responded to blogging prompts, and documented their individual intern experience.

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Blogging the Library

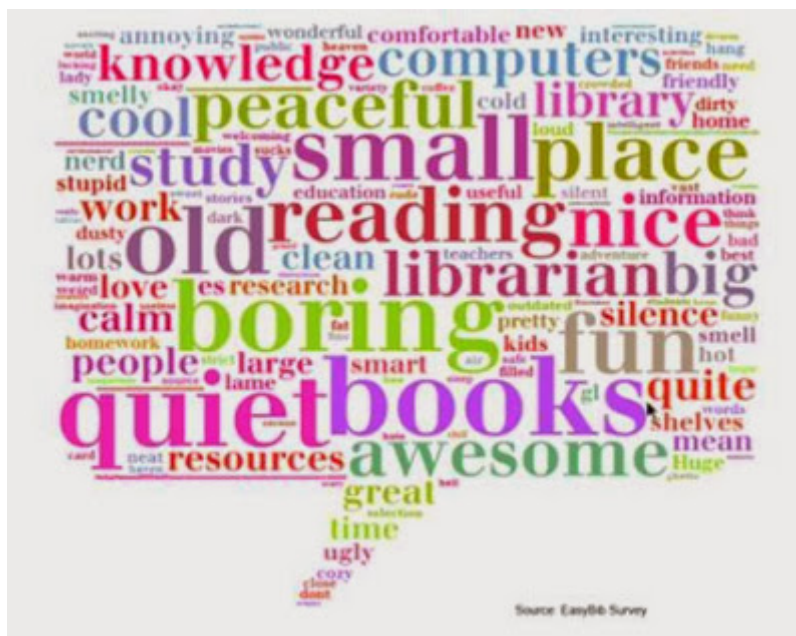
The Interns @ Gettysburg College's Musselman Library

What words would you use to describe the library?

November 19, 2013

By: Sarah Myers

The library is a growing, evolving organism. Without change, the library will cease to be relevant. With the addition of technology, ebooks, virtual reference, and databases, we have the 21st century academic library. Despite the changes over the decades, ask most people what a library is meant for and you'll still likely get an answer that suggests a quiet space for books and studying. From a recent [Easy Bib survey](#), students described libraries with the following words:



While it might be true and reassuring that students find libraries to be quiet, peaceful places of books where they can study, as a future librarian, it is troubling that some of the most used words from this survey include *old* and *boring*. If library users truly look beyond the surface to the wealth of resources that are provided by the library, I believe this to be far from the truth.

Libraries are information centers, community meeting places, and a gateway to knowledge. Just the other week, the [Bexar County BiblioTech](#) in Texas opened with a space for learning, but no physical book collection. The library world is meeting the needs of the future. Musselman Library exemplifies that fact and blows away the stereotypes. More people than ever are coming through the doors, but why? By being placed near the center of campus, this space serves many purposes for students and faculty. Despite the move to digital resources, the bricks and mortar library is alive and well.

The library is a blended academic and social space, where users are empowered to connect with information and each other. Along with the philosophy of a liberal arts education, the library on such a campus, promotes a search for knowledge conducted with a spirit of free inquiry to best prepare an individual inside and outside of the classroom for the adventures of life. The Musselman Library is a space built for all users' needs, whether they are academic, social, recreational, personal, and relaxation. Two floors are wide open and intended for group work, relaxation, and general studying. The noise level is usually at a dull roar. I often see students talking, eating, watching movies, playing games, or just relaxing. For the other studiers, the upstairs has three floors of quiet space, where students work at desks and study nooks in a noise free zone. The hours are meant to serve the busy lives of students, as the library is open 24 hours a day throughout the academic week.

For myself, the college library was that place where I was focused and determined to get some hard-core work done. In a mind over matter sort of way, I convinced myself that the library is the place where great ideas originate. If I had some thinking, writing, reading, or researching to do, I went to the library. In any other setting, I got easily distracted by technology and the thoughts of the thousand other things I would have rather been doing. At the library, I would put in my earbuds, tune out my surrounding, and actually get down to business.

For others, the library may be an appealing space for learning, but it might also be important for collaboration and social interaction. Great ideas can come from talking with others, but on a college campus, there is more to life than thinking great thoughts. The library serves as a hub where students can finish math homework, make plans with friends for dinner, watch a movie, and finish a group project. For all types of individuals, from the student diligently working on a senior thesis to the social butterfly, the library is there to meet any knowledge needs and contribute to the notion that higher education helps form a whole individual.

With the perspective that libraries are houses of knowledge and learning, the library is a sort of place where all sorts of learning, scholarly and recreational, can take place. I believe that the library can effectively continue to attract students beyond the typical purposes. Next time, I'll explore some ideas on how the long-held perceptions of the library can be changed to reflect the evolving purpose of a library on a college campus.

<http://blogging.musselmanlibrary.org/2013/11/>