THE IMPACT OF A STUDENT-DESIGNED LEARNING COMMONS ON STUDENT PERCEPTIONS AND USE OF THE HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY

by

Melissa Arenson

An Abstract of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Education Specialist in Human Services, Learning Resources in the Department of Educational Leadership and Human Development University of Central Missouri

July, 2013
ABSTRACT

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Students’ success in high school is enhanced through their connection with the library and the services offered there, as well as by viewing themselves as equal partners in their education. Librarians transforming the library into a learning commons support this mission. This study examines the impact of student-directed changes to a school library to transform a section of the library into a learning commons with these goals in mind. The study was conducted with senior students in a suburban high school. Students initiated all changes made to the library and were responsible for implementing the changes. Surveys were given before and after the changes were implemented to measure student use of and change in attitudes toward the library. The results of this study show that student-driven changes to the library encourage student use and foster a positive connection between the library and the student.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Learning is most effective and long-lasting if it is driven by student motivation to succeed. The school library is a valuable asset in public schools when it comes to student success. Small and Snyder cite findings that student success on standardized tests was higher when certain characteristics were present in the school library. These include how often students use the school library, library size, and librarian-based teaching in the library (62). Research also shows that student use of and engagement with the school library, regardless of socioeconomic factors, consistently results in higher levels of literacy (Bleidt 68). Bender finds that students engaged in after school activities report higher grades, stronger bonds to school, and fewer behavior problems than those students who do not participate in after school activities (45). However, not all youth can attend after school activities and so integrating extracurricular activities into the library during the school day while promoting student involvement might result in higher student motivation and therefore higher rates of student success in school. One way to engage students by making them active participants in their own education is to transform the library into a learning commons. This study focuses on how a student-designed learning commons positively impacts student perceptions on and use of the library.

Traditionally, students used the library to check out books and do research. However, technological advancements since the 1990s have changed the expectations of what
educational activities libraries are responsible for supporting as well as what the roles of librarian and students constitute (Weiner and Weiner 10). According to Shirley Bleidt, “In addition to providing print and electronic reading materials, school libraries support literacy development in a multitude of ways, including instruction in informatics and technology skills that are needed to be successful in today’s information economy” (67). Proponents of the learning commons embrace the idea that students and the librarian are partners in the students’ education. Weiner and Weiner describe this shift in educational pedagogy as moving from a “‘teaching’ paradigm to a ‘learning’ paradigm’” that focuses on student learning with an emphasis on technology integration and an understanding that students are constantly learning even when not in a classroom (10). To better prepare students for college and professional expectations after formal schooling ends, many school librarians around the country are transforming their libraries into learning commons.

The learning commons itself can be hard to define since professionals tend to have varying opinions and there is yet to be one, uniform definition of the term (Bonnand and Donahue 225). However, transitioning a traditional library into a learning commons typically includes many aspects, which may make the shift seem daunting. Physical spaces are shifted into more open learning spaces that offer a variety of services that include, but are not limited to, study group areas, student presentation areas, café areas, and technology areas (Stark and Samson 260).
Additionally, the role of the librarian in a learning commons shifts as well. Drueke, Naylor, and Wolfe assert that though the learning commons concept seems to marginalize the role of the librarian, librarians can use their special knowledge and abilities to revitalize traditional libraries into learning commons (112). In a learning commons, the librarian allows students to take control of their own education and gain a sense of ownership of the space. When students need help, the librarian is available but is not overbearing. Among other things, the librarian works behind the scenes to develop a collection students desire, helps with curriculum development, advocates for the changes made to the library, and addresses technology implementation in the library (Drueke, Naylor, and Wolfe 111-112). As students gain a sense of ownership in the learning commons, they become motivated to learn and gain skills that allow them to be more successful in college and more marketable to future employers.

**Statement of the Problem**

Students are relying on the traditional library and librarian less frequently while relying on the Internet, their teachers, and their own skills to attain the information they need for their school work (Kennedy 322). The result of such self-sufficiency is mixed. It is important for students to have a sense of ownership in their education so they remain motivated and engaged in the learning process; however, such a shift generally relegats the librarian and the library itself to a certain level of unimportance in students’ views. As Koechlin, Luhtala, and Loertscher state, the stereotype that surrounds the librarian is that of an information hoarder and protector (20). For students to truly benefit from the library, that stereotype needs to shift
into one where the librarian is a partner in the educational process. The transformation of the library into a learning commons facilitates that shift. Since student direction and participation in their own learning garners better learning, an approach this study explores is involving students in the transformation of the library into a learning commons. As students take charge of their own learning, they become more motivated and the learning commons itself produces more genuine learning and interest since it is student directed.

**Purpose of the Study**

Studies show that the shift from a traditional library to a learning commons is beneficial to student learning. Also, professionals have recognized that students who are engaged in their own learning do better than their passive counterparts. Much recent research centers on how to transform a traditional library into a learning commons and on the benefits of doing so. The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate the benefits of transforming the traditional library into a learning commons, and to also show how those changes are most effective when they are student led. The results of this study show that student use of the library and interest in the library increases when the change to a learning commons is student led.

**Research Questions**

This thesis examines the impact student-directed changes to the library have on student library use and on students’ relationship with the library. Though many libraries are shifting from a traditional form to a learning commons, this thesis sought to examine how effective that shift is when it is student directed rather than librarian directed. It was predicted that by having
students in charge of the renovations to the library, overall student interest in the library will increase. This thesis focused on two main questions:

1. How does a student driven transformation of the traditional library into a learning commons affect student use of the learning commons?
2. How do student-designed changes in the learning commons affect student impressions of the learning commons?

**Limitations of the Study**

This study was limited in time, scope, and size. The literature that guided this study was limited to the databases available from the University of Central Missouri. The study focuses specifically on only eighteen-year-old and older seniors in a high school. The study itself was conducted in four months, which is not enough time to prove conclusive evidence of long-term changes in student perceptions on the library. The limitation of time also had an impact on the changes that could be made in the library. Only changes that could be quickly implemented were considered. Furthermore, participants in the study are all from one suburban school and so do not reflect the typical students from various regions of the country. Due to finances, certain proposed changes could not be made. Space was also a limitation. Rather than transforming the whole library for the whole school, an infrequently used section of the library was selected and was then dedicated to senior-only use at the discretion of the librarian.

Due to these limitations, the results of this study are not meant to reflect all high school students in the country. However, this study does provide evidence that student led changes in
the library promote student interest and engagement. As such, the results of this study may be beneficial to school librarians looking for ways to include students in transforming their own library into a learning commons.

**Definition of Terms**

Learning commons – A learning commons “integrates traditional library services with other learning support services on a campus, such as information processing, tutorial services, report preparation, enhanced technology, and preparation of visual displays” while being student centered and promoting “the creation of knowledge over the transmission of knowledge” (Weiner and Weiner 10).

**Design of the Study**

This study was directed by a review of the literature available from the University of Central Missouri that pertained to the learning commons’ origin; benefits to students, faculty, and librarians; and the impact of a learning commons on student motivation and student grades. Articles were retrieved from the following databases: *Library Literature & Information Science Full Text, ProQuest Central, Science Direct*, and *Academic Search Elite*. Supplementary information was used from the American Library Association website and from U.S. Department of Education websites. Search terms included “learning commons,” “transformation to learning commons,” “student motivation,” and “library and grades.” The search began by looking for broad information on the changes that occur in a traditional library to make it a learning commons, and then the search shifted to focus on students’ engagement in the learning
commons and the effects on students’ grades and motivation when a learning commons is present.

The literature review offers a brief background of what the learning commons is, how the concept developed, and what impact it has on student learning and motivation. The majority of the literature review focuses on the various aspects of the learning commons that include the physical space, collection, non-traditional resources, technology, and the roles of patron and librarian. The literature review concludes with two case studies to show how two different libraries used very different strategies to effectively transform their traditional library into a learning commons.

Summary

This chapter has explained the reason for the study, provided the questions guiding the study, defined the terms necessary to understand the study, examined the limitations of the study, and described the research design of the study. Chapter 2 makes up the literature review portion of the study. Chapter 3 describes the study method, including the limitations of the study, the process of the study, and a summary of the data collection for the study. The data from the student surveys and library usage is analyzed and presented in chapter 4, while the study findings will be presented in chapter 5 along with the answers the two research questions posed in chapter 1.
CHAPTER 2:
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

A learning commons is a space that is designed for collaboration between patrons through atmosphere, access to information, and other tools (Drueke, Naylor, and Wolfe 109). Generally, these other tools include electronic resources, word processing tools, and tutoring services (Weiner and Weiner 10). A learning commons tends to be more conducive to student learning and lifelong learning than the traditional library. Mihailidis and Diggs assert that this is because the “learning commons is the center for student learning in a school that fosters creativity” that “encourages student and staff ownership of space, offers new technologies, and uses space creatively to encourage the arts, writing, and most important, inquiry-based thinking” (282).

The learning commons is a relatively recent concept. In the 1990s it was proposed by select librarians that the library should serve as a place that gives access to electronic resources in order to improve student learning through access to digital information (Buchanan 56). This idea gained momentum quickly after 1994 due to rapid integration of the Internet into education. The concept of the learning commons in the library is one that embodies an environment where both cyber and physical spaces are organized in a manner that is conducive to free access to information and collaborative learning for all stakeholders (Buchanan 56-58;
Harland 33). With the shift in cyber and physical expectations, the roles of the school librarian and student have also shifted.

As students are given a sense of ownership and community in the learning commons, they often become empowered. When this happens, it leads to more learning and better preparation for the world students enter after graduation (Mihailidis and Diggs 289-290).

Pamela Harland, school librarian at Plymouth Regional High School in Plymouth, New Hampshire, claims that as soon as students were given a participatory role in her library, they latched on and were actively engaged in not only helping transform the library, but also in learning in the library in general. Within one year of beginning her transformation of the library to a learning commons, its use was up 100% compared to previous years. Harland claims that this occurred because students felt they were valued and accepted in the library (35). Further exploration of the transformation of the library at Plymouth Regional High School is found in the case study portion of this chapter.

Support for the idea that student involvement in a learning commons produces better student success rates comes from the National Research Council, whose study, “How People Learn,” asserts that students learn best when they are made equal partners in the learning process and are allowed to learn in an environment that is both welcoming and supportive (Holmgren 179). The learning commons also promotes student success in the civic arena. Paul Mihailidis and Valerie Diggs assert that a learning commons environment through which access to social networking is available, promotes students’ critical analyses of the world around them
and encourages them to become active, engaged citizens (286). This directly ties to the American Association of School Librarians *Standards for the 21st Century Learner*. Standard three states that librarians should help students to “share knowledge and participate ethically and productively as members of our democratic society” (6). Transforming the library into a learning commons that is focused on socially based, collaborative learning is a natural step in the evolution of teaching (Birdsall 237). Studies performed as early as 2002 indicated that 73% of college students claimed they used the Internet in the library for a purpose other than researching (Birdsall 237). As the Internet has become an educational tool, librarians are increasingly embracing ways of transforming education to support the needs of the modern student (Birdsall 239). The transformation of the library into a learning commons is a way to meet these modern students’ needs.

This review of research literature will demonstrate how a learning commons more than a traditional library tends to lead to student success through skills attained, ownership of learning, and application of knowledge to life situations. Furthermore, research shows that using a learning commons helps students transition more smoothly between high school and college (Burhanna and Jensen 513). The aspects of a learning commons will be examined, which include but are not limited to, physical space, technology, collection, and resources. The literature review then concludes with a review of two case studies to illustrate the process of transforming a traditional library into a learning commons, the different manners in which the
change can occur, and the benefits of a successful transformation at both the high school and college levels.

**Aspects of the Learning Commons**

Despite the lack of a clear, unanimously agreed upon definition of the learning commons, school librarians tend to agree upon certain aspects. These aspects include a physical space that encourages student use of the learning commons (Sullivan 140-143); free and ample access to both traditional and non-traditional forms of technology which often include eReaders, blogs, and Facebook (Seeholzer and Salem 290-291); a collection based on patron needs (Harland 36); the incorporation of non-traditional resources that may include tutoring, help videos, and podcasts (Sullivan 137-138); and a partnership role between patrons and the school librarian (Sullivan 133).

**Physical Space in the Learning Commons**

The physical space of the library is key to a learning commons. This section examines the following physical aspects of the learning commons: comfort and convenience spaces, isolated studying and reading spaces, collaboration spaces, café areas, presentation areas, and self-checkout areas. School librarians need not integrate all of the physical aspects to have a learning commons, but the merits of each are examined in the following section.

A prominent focus in the learning commons is the comfort spaces. This term applies to a variety of aspects in the library that include seating, lighting, music, bathrooms, and wall décor (Stark and Samson 264). To engage student interest in simply remaining in the learning
commons, comfortable furniture is often purchased, but that furniture is typically light and easy to move so that impromptu study groups can form and disperse easily. Overall, the effect comfort spaces create is an inviting one that encourages student use.

While much learning in the learning commons is collaborative, a quiet study place is equally important since there are many students who learn best in silence. Not only is this space usually designed with solitude in mind, but it also is free of other technology. Though a main component of an effective learning commons is technology, even when a space is silent, technology is not. Cell phones vibrating and computers humming are a distraction to some learners. As such, the silent section of the learning commons is generally placed in an area with little cell phone reception and away from computers and other electronic devices (Whitchurch 44). Studies show that in quiet areas of the library, students prefer comfortable furniture to traditional furniture as well as soft, natural lighting (Stark and Samson 237). Stark and Samson suggest placing comfortable armchairs, or other seating designed for one person only, facing windows with as much space between the furniture as possible to discourage conversation in designated quiet areas of the learning commons (266). Lighting in the learning commons is soft, if possible; and lamps tend to create a sense of isolated study places for students who prefer to work alone (Hussong-Christian et al. 282).

While quiet study areas are necessary for some, a learning commons also focuses on spaces for collaboration while learning happens because learning in this manner has become popular (Whitchurch 44). This is often an issue because the spaces must be accessible and
useful to groups that spontaneously form to study together as well as for formal groups to collaborate. Additionally, these areas serve as a place for faculty to meet, classes of students to receive lessons, and for students to use on their own (Adams and Young 151). The importance of collaborative learning is emphasized in the American Association of School Librarians standards, which state, “Students need to develop skills in sharing knowledge and learning with others, both in face-to-face situations and through technology” (3). A complication of designing the physical space of the learning commons is that while formal collaboration spaces for faculty meetings and class visits are present in a learning commons, student collaboration groups tend to form spontaneously. Even if the group arrives at the library together, frequently the decision to do so is made only minutes before arriving. As such, certain spaces are generally set aside for the specific purpose of facilitating impromptu study groups (Whitchurch 44).

Café areas also fall into the category of physical spaces and are popular among students (Diggs and Loertscher 34). The addition of the café area is common in libraries that have made the shift to a learning commons due to the amount of student interest and the “Barnes and Noble” feel it gives to the library. Rebecca Sullivan cites the 2003 Council in Library and Information Resources study that reports the increase of food-related options in academic libraries. Of the 250 libraries that participated in the survey, 50% offered vending machine food, 23% offered a fully staffed food service, and 27% offered “other” food related services (142). Valerie Diggs, librarian at Chelmsford High School, began transforming her library with the café area because she found it simple to begin and it quickly sparked student interest. One day a
week she would offer coffee, hot chocolate, and pastries for all students and faculty in an attempt to simply get people into the library. This caught on quickly and the result was that students began noticing and checking out books while they ate and drank (34). Diggs felt the cafe addition created a general feeling of excitement about the learning commons. This helped the process of transforming her library into a learning commons go more quickly and smoothly since administrators and teachers saw an increase in student interest (34). The idea of having cafes in libraries is quickly gaining momentum. Though public high schools are sometimes limited in what they can offer, the indication is that students gain a sense of informal learning if it occurs while they are fed; and they are often more engaged in what they learn because they are inclined to work longer and stay on task better (Sullivan 142). Allowing food in the library is a big shift in the library setting, but it is beneficial in generating interest in the learning commons.

Presentation spaces are another necessity for a successful learning commons. These spaces are usually placed in a visible area near the door so students can easily come in and out of events the learning commons hosts. This area is generally equipped with a white board or interactive white board, a projector, a podium, and a computer at the bare minimum. It is utilized for classroom presentations and other activities, such as poetry readings and music concerts. This space is especially important in terms of justifying the transformation of the library into a learning commons since it can be used for a variety of school-related purposes. It also allows
the school librarian a permanent place for enrichment activities, such as guest speakers and student presentations (Stark and Samson 267).

When finances allow, librarians embracing the learning commons transformation often set up a physical space for student self-checkout systems. The self-checkout is costly, but the system itself is reflective of student desires. As Nancy Adams and James Young assert in their article, “Users Learning from Users,” the modern student is accustomed to doing most things for themselves. Students often experience frustration at being encouraged to be self-sufficient but then having that same self-sufficiency taken away as soon as they are ready to check out a book. Stores have self-checkout and Google has created a generation of “Google learners” who are accustomed to immediately getting what they need by themselves (154). Since the goal of transforming the library into a learning commons is to create an empowered, capable student, the self-checkout is a way to further that process. This system relies on trust that students are checking out the books rather than just walking off with them, but Betty Marcoux, librarian at Getchell High School, has found that her students embrace the idea rather than abuse it because they respect the opportunity given to them (Marcoux 18).

The physical spaces of the learning commons combined with services offered shift the learning commons from being viewed by students as just a library to check out books into being a central hub of the school. With a learning commons in place, students no longer go to the library to just research and check out books; they go to the library to relax, quietly study and read, learn through collaboration with peers, participate in clubs, and conduct research. In this
manner, the library becomes a learning commons and through that transformation becomes a central part of the school and students’ lives.

**Traditional and Non-Traditional Forms of Technology in the Learning Commons**

Technology is a main aspect of the learning commons but is also a frequently cited reason for why the learning commons won’t work in public schools due, in part, to funding issues and technology filters. The aspects of technology that best support student learning are heavily debated (Harland 33). However, it is clear how important technology is in teen lives. The average teen in America spends around eight hours a day engaged with some sort of media outside of the school day (Mihailidis and Diggs 284). Student engagement in technology produces better quality learning and learning products. Latham analyzed 13,000 students’ math scores on state tests and found that students benefit greatly from technology in education so long as the students are old enough to know how to use technology (87). Latham cites Wenglinsky’s claim that middle school and high school years are the years in which students will benefit most from technology in the classroom and library (88). These claims are further supported by Muir-Herzeg’s study claiming that, “any student, including the at-risk student, who has technology integrated into the curriculum, could potentially see a positive change in student classroom grades, GPA, and attendance. Research, which examines constructivist teaching and learning models, indicates that technology brings complexity to the tasks that students perform and raise student motivation” (114). Sharon and John Weiner assert that technology skills are essential to developing successful students. Employers expect and actively
recruit individuals who are capable of using technology and who are globally competitive with strong technology-based skills (12). While students may use media outside the school day, by working in a learning commons with a librarian, they can hone skills that may otherwise not be developed. Among the many skills students may learn under a school librarian’s direction are the ability to evaluate online content for accuracy and authority, to use new programs they may not be familiar with, and to use technology ethically.

Personal computers, PCs and Macs used for word processing and online research, are considered a fundamental part of the learning commons, and are therefore considered basic technology since computers were the foundation of the information commons, which was the precursor to the learning commons (Accardi et al. 311). Other technology resources that are often included in the learning commons are digital voice recorders, eReaders, and digital and video cameras. Supplementary technology tools such as these are best chosen by student request so the purchases are justifiable (Harland 33). They are, therefore, more likely to be used as well as taken care of.

A frequently cited concern about technology in the learning commons is that the school librarian cannot be expected to know how to use new technology given the constant developments. Karen Ramsey suggests the solution is to welcome students into the process of transforming the library into a technology filled learning commons (28). In 2009, her school made a large, first step in the direction of developing a learning commons by purchasing several interactive white boards. However, teachers were at a loss on how to use the technology.
Though Ramsey helped with professional development sessions to explain the ways in which the interactive white boards could be used, she was certain that many teachers were missing out on the one-on-one instruction they needed to make using interactive white boards a feasible reality. She began enlisting the help of technology savvy students. The result was a successful collaboration between students, faculty, and the school librarian. Students were given the opportunity to show their own skills and knowledge. Teachers got the help they needed when they needed it since there was now a whole team of individuals prepared to help with technology issues when they arose rather than the teacher having to wait for the librarian. The librarian benefited overall by not being the only person teachers had to go to when they needed help, which allowed her more time to rejuvenate the library and create technology-based professional development sessions. Overall, Ramsey claims that she, the students, and the teachers benefited from the process because a sense of collaboration for a common goal overrode the traditional roles of teacher, student, and school librarian (28-29). Carol Koechlin, Sandi Zwaan, and David Loertscher support this collaborative model. The authors write, “In an age when young people’s networking skills often surpass those of adults, teacher-librarians utilize these known skills and transfer them to academic situations. ...This emphasis on client-centered technology allows young people to participate in building smaller, high-quality, useful, and safe information environments” (13). Collaboration between student and teacher fosters positive relationships while addressing concerns about technology usage in a learning commons.
Robin Cicchetti addresses the issue that the addition of technology to a learning commons tends to create concerns about what types of technology are needed. When Cicchetti began transforming her high school library into a learning commons, the only technology present was older personal computers (54). In 2007, when she began transforming her library to a learning commons, she purchased 10 Macintosh computers and 20 MacBooks (laptop computers) immediately so all students were able to use the platforms of their choice.

According to Cicchetti, the addition of the new, varied technology created issues with staff training, but this was overcome by encouraging staff members to take certain devices home to “play” with to further staff understanding of how to work the devices (54).

Other types of technology, aside from hardware, are also a part of a well-functioning learning commons. Cicchetti, the librarian at Concord-Carlisle Regional High School, was able to get the majority of site-specific Internet filters in the school removed through the support of her administrators. The result is that students can now learn through collaboration as well as through other innovative online programs. No longer does Cicchetti only have classes visit her library to use databases and check out books, but they visited to use a variety of online tools that included Facebook, Animoto, Pageflakes, Glogster, Prezi, Flickr, iGoogle, YouTube, and many more (54). The unlocking of these sites by the technology department enables the students to access and organize information in a manner that they benefit from far more than by using traditional forms of research. Cicchetti supports this through statistical data that show over 60% of students who visit her library do so to use the Web 2.0 tools that the technology
department removed the filters from. Meanwhile book checkout and total patron visits have
dramatically increased (56). Further benefits from unlocking social media and Web 2.0 tools in
the learning commons are based on student analysis of sources. Not only do students benefit
from having access to online sources and media, but they benefit from developing skill in the
evaluation of materials.

Mihailidis and Diggs advocate for Internet filters being removed in a learning commons
so that students can learn the difference between informative blogs and authoritative news
sources, a skill that goes undeveloped when students are shielded from information rather than
taught how to analyze the quality of it (287-288). Blogs are also a fundamental part of the
learning commons as they connect students to teachers without the limits of the school day
schedule. The library webpage can host blogs for teachers who are willing to have them, and
the result will be that students have 24/7 access to each other and their courses in school
(Sullivan 138). Constant access is important because students frequently work on research and
school work late at night. A study conducted by the Journal of Adolescent Health found that 35%
of students in a study of over 1,000 stayed awake doing homework until 3 a.m. at least once a
week (Lund et al. 126). As such, a library that actively blocks collaborative technology is
blocking learning as well.

However, how to get filters removed is often an issue for librarians who have little
control over the technology blocks. Cicchetti was fortunate to have administrators who
supported her enough to fight the technology department on her behalf. However, Pamela
Harland offers a different suggestion on how to successfully get filters removed. Rather than becoming confrontational with the technology department of her high school, she developed a collaborative relationship. By including the technology director in all department meetings, email, and other communications with teachers, the two worked closely together. Harland sends the technology director statistical data about what Web 2.0 tools are used on a daily basis and what students are saying about the tools they can now use. Harland is adamant that open communication without criticism is key to creating a working relationship between the technology department and the librarian (33).

Jamie Seeholzer and Joseph Salem of Kent State University recognize the prominence of another technological aspect in student lives: smart phones. These librarians designed a new library webpage that was compatible with smart phones so that students always had access to the information they needed. As an extension of the integration and acceptance of mobile devices in the learning commons, Kent State also instituted Text-a-Librarian software that allows students to text questions they have while the librarian uses the software on the library computers to type back answers that are then transferred to a text message to the students (292). School librarians in the k-12 setting can implement similar changes to offer students immediate help with devices many students carry. If a student is researching in class, valuable time could be saved by texting the librarian with a question rather than having to travel to the library and then back to class. With so many technology platforms available, it is difficult for the
school librarian to reach all patrons, but the implementation of a variety of devices and programs allows as many patrons to benefit as possible.

**Collection in the Learning Commons**

Physical spaces and technology generally receive much attention in research dedicated to the learning commons; however, evaluating and renovating the collection is an important aspect of creating a fully functional learning commons. For a learning commons to be complete, student input on the collection is often considered so the collection reflects patron needs and wants. For Pamela Harland, this meant adding whole new sections to her collection that were less academic but that embody new literary movements and mediums, such as graphic novels and ebooks (Harland 36). The recent economic downturn has created budgetary issues when it comes to librarians ordering hard copies of books. However, a diverse collection is at the heart of a learning commons since free access to all information for all students is one of the aims of a learning commons. To address this concern, some librarians, such as Robin Cicchetti, have shifted to only purchasing hard copy books that are in high demand, such as graphic novels and, popular fiction (Cicchetti 54). Students are far more likely to use online resources for research, so the shift in purchasing has little effect on student success, but it has a great effect on student interest in the library. The most effective librarians who manage a learning commons are actively shifting away from hard copy books and purchasing more electronic content to meet student wishes (Loertscher 7). This is a significant change, but it is one that allows for more
creative use of the physical space through freeing up floor space after the removal of unnecessary bookshelves (Cicchetti 53).

Though the lack of books in a library may seem counterintuitive, this step is only taken in conjunction with the expansion of the non-traditional resources in the form of electronic and audio books (Adams and Young 156). One way to still encourage students to look through a smaller collection of books is suggested by Megan Stark and Sue Samson. The authors have implemented rotating display shelves in their library. The material on the shelves is rotated out weekly so that students are constantly engaged with the content by repeatedly checking what is newly available. This makes it more difficult for the books to go by the wayside when there are so many other activities going on in the library (267).

While it is important to consider patron requests for content in a learning commons, the collection in an effective learning commons is always shifting focus due to the shifting demographics, interests, and needs of patrons. For a learning commons to remain effective, the “library must be many things for disparate audiences, with an ever-changing, shifting collection, especially as the definition of learning changes to engaged, collaborative, problem-posing work” (Mirtz 252). Through the school librarian actively adjusting the collection content, presentation, and location, students come into contact with other books on similar topics to the ones they are looking for. This furthers the goal of the learning commons by building the patron’s sense of connection to the material (Mirtz 252). Overall, the collection in a learning commons reflects what patrons need and want while reflecting the continuously shifting mediums for reading.
Non-Traditional Resources in the Learning Commons

The learning commons also incorporates non-traditional resources to support student learning. A popular resource integrated into the learning commons is a student run writing lab (Weiner and Weiner 12). Writing Labs at the high school level offer many benefits. Students collaboratively work together to improve skills and are often less intimidated than they might be by having to go directly to a teacher or librarian. By nature of the concept, a writing lab in a learning commons requires that the tutors and the school librarian work closely together, and through that collaboration both the school librarian and students benefit. In addition to the help students receive from tutors, the school librarian benefits by learning from students about new social trends, student needs, and new technology students prefer to use. The student tutors learn new research strategies and sources of information from the school librarian (Sullivan 135-136).

Help videos created by school librarians are also beneficial non-traditional resources that might be found in the learning commons. Videos are used for a number of purposes including instruction on how to use online databases, navigate the library, request interlibrary loan books, use the online card catalog, and anything else that students might frequently ask about. Alternately, podcasts can be created for the same effects (Seeholzer and Salem 293).

Along with media tools comes the virtual space in the learning commons. The virtual spaces offered vary based on the school librarian; however, general categories of the virtual space include educational podcasts, blogs, forums, ebooks, online magazines (White 29), and...
periodical databases. In all, non-traditional resources vary from learning commons to learning commons, but are a basic expectation to fulfill the purpose of a learning commons.

**Role of the School Librarian in the Learning Commons**

One question frequently posed in dialogue centering on the learning commons is over the role of a school librarian. A true learning commons does not have a traditional librarian who sits behind the reference desk and helps students find research while alternately checking out and shelving books (Kennedy 320). Students often don’t utilize this type of librarian even when he or she is available, since students are more self-sufficient due to the abundance of available information on the Web. Modern students often prefer to research on their own online and no longer look to the school librarian for basic functions (Kennedy 322). However, the role of the school librarian is central to the learning commons being a successful enterprise. The school librarian of a learning commons is focused on helping the patron, no matter how much students tend to turn to technology for help (Drueke, Naylor, and Wolfe 112).

In addition to helping patrons access information, the school librarian of a learning commons fulfills many new roles. Firstly, the school librarian now staffs a technology help desk in many ways. Often the tools the school librarian implements in the learning commons are new to both students and staff, so the school librarian has to properly train both groups on how to use the tools and troubleshoot any difficulties patrons encounter. Frequently, the librarian may be completely invisible to the majority of patrons due to the demands on the librarian’s time (Kennedy 324). Some school librarians now carry smart phones so that teachers can call
for help no matter where the school librarian is in the building (Marcoux 19). In addition to this, the school librarian has to be easily accessible through email, text messaging, and instant messaging. The learning commons is a central part of the community; as such, the school librarian of a learning commons actively offers professional development training in areas of education. Robin Cicchetti, a school librarian of a learning commons, keeps her teachers aware of what is going on in the learning commons by sending out monthly newsletter emails, offering small professional development classes, and holding after-school training sessions (54). To remain up to date on the latest technology and educational programs, the librarian of a learning commons generally attends new technology training workshops and professional development sessions on a regular basis. The school librarian of the learning commons has the role of bringing in new ideas and is on the forefront of educational movements (Fredericka and Schwelik 25).

The school librarian is also responsible for teaching lessons to both teachers and students. Some physical spaces in the learning commons are designed to facilitate such engaged learning, and hosting groups in the learning commons makes it a central part of the school. At the most fundamental level, the school librarian of the learning commons fulfills a student services role rather than a reference librarian role (Cicchetti 53). Through workshops, professional development, collaboration, and team-teaching, the school librarian of a learning commons becomes a central provider of education.
Planning and Developing a Learning Commons: Two Case Studies

The process of transitioning the library into a learning commons is often daunting to consider. This can be burdensome depending on how enthusiastic administrators are about the concept. Once minor changes are made in the library to transform it to a learning commons, statistical data often support the librarian and provide a rationale behind the changes for the administration. Though the learning commons offers patrons an extreme amount of freedom and responsibility, it can be implemented at an elementary level (Waskow 8). A varied collection, resources, and a sense of collaborative learning can be put into place at elementary or middle school levels, but the nearly total autonomy given to patrons in a learning commons makes it ideal for high school and college levels. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 70% of high school students attend a two or four year college program after high school (Institute of Education Sciences). Since the majority of high school students now further their education upon completion of high school, many aspects of the learning commons implemented at university levels are frequently considered at the high school levels. This not only encourages greater student growth, but it also makes the transition between high school and college less cumbersome (Burhanna and Jensen 514). Students with a learning commons at their high school are familiar with the format and function of the learning commons and so are better equipped to conduct research at the university level. What follows are two case studies that will illustrate how librarians at two high schools made the transition from a traditional library to a learning commons.
Chelmsford High School

In 2002 Valerie Diggs was hired at Chelmsford High School as the school librarian (Mihailidis and Diggs). The library, upon her hiring, was designed to contain students and gave off the aura of mistrust toward students. All AV materials were hidden in the back room, small group work rooms were glass so students could always be monitored, and the vibrant wall colors were clearly designed to give off a fake ambiance of happiness. In Diggs’ first few years, she actively became involved in lesson planning and co-teaching, which facilitated positive relationships between teachers. Diggs found this to be a fundamental step in transforming the library to a learning commons since teachers must completely buy into the idea to help sell the learning commons to the students. For Diggs, this step took five years. Many of the teachers were uncomfortable with co-teaching or with Diggs even helping plan lessons. However, through persistence, Diggs transformed the role of the librarian at Chelmsford High School into the role of a collaborative teaching partner. Once that shift in mindset occurred for most of the faculty, Diggs was able to take more drastic steps in transforming the library. Since the learning commons is centered on collaboration, Diggs began with Wednesday café mornings. Coffee, hot chocolate, and tea were served with pastries before school so that students would come, mingle in the library, and view the space as more of a spot to socialize rather than strictly conduct research (33-34).

After the Wednesday café mornings were accepted by most students and staff, Diggs began using the professional learning communities within the school to promote the learning
commons, which allowed for teacher buy-in. Because teachers in her school were reluctant to have students socialize in the library, Diggs took the first step by having “listening lunches,” where speakers lectured while students ate lunch. Such activities made it justifiable to rearrange the space in the library. Diggs was able, without much fuss from faculty, to purge a sizable portion of old AV equipment and unread books to make space for new functional learning spaces. However, the building was old and the library was limited. Diggs contacted the city’s new town manager and invited him for a visit of the old library so that he could see first-hand the poor shape it was in. The next budget year Diggs was awarded $200,000 that the town manager allocated for remodeling the library. In that manner, Diggs had the funds needed to renovate the library into the learning commons she envisioned. Diggs’ reimagining of the library into a learning commons changed the attitude of students toward the library. Diggs claims that students are now more self-sufficient simply because they were given more control over what they learn and how they learn it. There is now a sense of excitement in the library rather than of dread. Teachers now consider Diggs a part of the educational system rather than a support of the educational system (35-37).

Plymouth Regional High School

Pamela Harland is the school librarian at Plymouth Regional High School. Harland began transforming her library into a learning commons at the same time the local university made the transition. This made the change easier to justify to administration, which was already fairly supportive since most of the students graduating would attend the university, and both
libraries running in a similar format would make the transition to college smoother for the students. The co-manager of the learning commons transformation at the college was invited to the high school library and worked side by side with Harland to ensure that the college and high school learning commons would function in a similar manner (32).

Small policy changes were made instantly, but a meeting with the high school technology department was necessary for the learning commons to really begin. Restrictions on technology had to be removed so students could have free access to what they needed. Harland made her case on the basis that education should be learner-centered and that heavy restrictions on information made their system ineffective. Harland was successful in this endeavor and followed it up with other small changes. She updated the stagnant library website to a wiki that could be used to foster collaborative research. The library resources (glue, scissors, tools) were moved to a central location where students could access what they needed freely. Such small changes excited the faculty who supported Harland from then on in her renovations (33).

To sustain faculty support, Harland led workshops and professional development sessions on how to incorporate technology into classroom lessons. Once teachers tried her ideas, student success and engagement improved, resulting in even more support for Harland (34-35). At this point, Harland was free to try new things. She bought iPods, and teachers began making podcasts of homework assignments. Kindles and Nooks were purchased to encourage students to read on platforms they are most comfortable with: technology-based
platforms. Throughout the process Harland repeatedly had to get school policies changed and revised. The school had a ban on all iPods, but Harland was successful in having this rule repealed in the interest of student learning and engagement (35-36). Harland’s transformation was minor compared to other schools. She purged books and rearranged furniture, but overall Harland’s big success lay in her getting technology access for her students. In just one year, these minor changes result in an increase of student library use by over 100% (Harland 35).

Though these are just two examples of how a library can be transformed into a learning commons, there are countless ways to do so. The true focus in any school library transformation is that students have access to any resource they need for their education and are treated as an equal partner in their own education by the school librarian. Through making the shift from a traditional library to a learning commons, students, teachers, and librarians reap benefits. Students become more engaged in learning and are better capable of coping with the transition between their k-12 and college educational settings while librarians see more active learning in the learning commons.
CHAPTER 3:  
METHOD

The purpose of this thesis was to observe how a student-designed learning commons impacts student perceptions of the library and overall student use of the library. This study incorporates two main data collection points. All data are only from students over the age of eighteen who could legally grant their own consent to participate. Attitudes of the senior students over the age of eighteen toward the library before and after the transformation were recorded through an anonymous survey. Student use of the library after the changes were implemented was also examined through anonymous data collected from a self-reported student sign-out sheet. The following research questions were specifically addressed:

1. Once changes in the library have been made, how does overall student use change?
2. How do student perceptions of the library change when students are in control of transforming part of the library into a learning commons?

Participants

The total enrollment for the senior class for is 427 students. Of those enrolled, 52 percent were male and 48 percent were female. Specific ethnic group data were as follows: 13.1 percent black, 82 percent white, .5 percent Hispanic, 1.9 percent Asian, 0 percent Indian, and .2 percent Pacific Islander. Sixteen percent of students in the senior class received free lunch while .03 percent received reduced lunch prices. This study had two sets of participants.

The first set of participants included eight students over the age of eighteen who volunteered to participate in the redesign portion of this study. All eight students were of white
ethnicity where seven of them were girls and one was a boy. These students transformed the library into a learning commons in exchange for A+ community service hours. The A+ program offers students who successfully complete it in high school two free years of college at select community colleges across the state. One of the requirements students must meet to attain this award is participating in 50 hours of community service. Permission from the A+ coordinator to count the hours students spent working on changing the library was granted.

The second set of participants consisted of seniors over the age of 18 who consented to take the before and after survey for this study. In the senior class 216 students were over the age of 18 at the time of the study. Of those students over eighteen, 57 percent were male and 43 percent were female. Specific ethnic data were as follows: 13.4 percent black, 82.4 percent white, 2.3 percent Hispanic, 1.4 percent Asian, 0 percent Indian, and .5 percent Pacific Islander. Of the 216 eligible senior students, 153 participated in the survey and sign out portion of this study.

**Participant Limitations**

All seniors used the spaced designed as a learning commons, but data were collected only from those seniors who were over eighteen and gave their consent at the time of the study.

**Setting**

This study was conducted in a western Missouri high school. The building principal was informed of the study and granted his consent for this study. The high school librarian agreed to
allow students to change a part of the library into a student-centered area where students
would design and host activities. Students were also able to alter the layout of that portion of
the library to suit their needs and those of the activities they planned.

Of the whole senior class, 8 students who were over age eighteen volunteered to
participate in transforming the library into a learning commons in exchange for A+ community
service hours. The A+ program offers students who successfully complete it in high school two
free years of college at select community colleges across the state. One of the requirements
students must meet to attain this award is participating in 50 hours of community service.
Permission from the A+ coordinator to count the hours students spent working on changing the
library was granted. The building principal was informed of the study and granted his consent
as well. The librarian agreed to allow students to change a part of the library into a student-
centered area where students would design and host activities as well as alter the layout of that
portion of the library to suit their needs and those of the activities they planned.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

There were 3 sources of data for this study. The transformation of the designated
section of the library was both the treatment and a source of data for this study. The eight
students who volunteered to redesign the library space were given three months to change the
library as much as they could. The researcher and school librarian consented to the proposed
changes and supervised student work and student participation in the activities.
After defining what a learning commons is and participating in conversations with the researcher about the goals and various types of learning commons, the eight A+ students brainstormed ideas on what could reasonably be changed in the designated section of the library in the allotted three month period. The participating students were given basic guidelines of a learning commons and shown how it differs from a traditional library by watching Valerie Diggs’ SlideShare entitled, “From Library to Learning Commons.” Students participated in a conversation that focused on what aspects of a learning commons were already present in the library and on possibilities for further changes. Students then used the Internet to learn about other libraries that operated as learning commons and consider what changes they might want to incorporate into this school library for the study. The students met with the researcher on a weekly basis to brainstorm and discuss changes proposed to the library and how they would be implemented.

Proposed suggestions were narrowed down to those that were possible to implement depending on available time and budget. Some costs were approved by the principal and paid for out of the school budget. Students were encouraged to consider changes that would incur minimal, if any, cost.

As the second data set for this study, in mid-January 2013 before any changes were made to the library, seniors over the age of 18 were invited to take a brief, anonymous survey, which asked for their current feelings about and use of the library. At the end of the study, in May 2013, those same seniors were surveyed again to gauge the changes in their feelings
toward the library and the changes in their use of the library. Consent to take the survey was granted by participants. Students who stated they were over eighteen and wished to participate signed the consent form and then took the surveys. The consent form and the survey can be found in appendix A.

As a third source of data, sign-out sheets were placed in the library for students using the redesigned section of the library. When the redesigned area was opened in March, sign out sheets were available and remained so until May when the study concluded. These were anonymous. They contained the date and asked students to list the purpose of their visit to the library area and how long they were there. Since all senior students were allowed to use this area of the library, the sign out sheets also contained a question of age. Only data given by students who marked they were over eighteen was collected and counted in this study. The sign out sheet can be found in appendix C of this thesis. Sign out sheets were collected when they were full and results were tabulated at the conclusion of the study.

**Data Analysis**

Descriptions of the redesigned library space are analyzed, presented, and explained in the next chapter. Student answers on the before-and-after surveys were compared to see how they used the transformed area and to gather their overall impressions of whether the library changed for the better after the library transformation. Student library use data collected using an anonymous sign-out sheet that senior students filled out as they left the learning commons area of the library were tabulated. Data were only analyzed for this study from students over
age eighteen. Student library use that was self-reported on the surveys for before and after the transformation were also compared for those students only over age eighteen. The descriptive data, the data from both surveys, and library usage are presented in chapter 4. Answers to the research questions posted in chapter 1, based on the review of literature and research findings, are presented in chapter 5.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS  

Chapter four presents the findings from the study. Descriptions of the redesigned library area are presented and explained. Responses from the survey given in January and the survey given in May are compared. Data from the anonymous check out sheets are also presented.

Description of the Library Redesign

Students making the changes to the library reorganized the designated section. Rules were posted stating it was a senior-only area. Students rearranged furniture to set the senior area apart from the rest of the library so underclassmen would not use it and so that students entering and leaving had to walk past the sign out sheet to minimize the possibility of students not signing out. Tables remained in the area for studying and group work. The edge of one side of the section had couches and chairs placed as a comfortable space next to a café area. The café area offered tea and coffee to seniors until 2:00 P.M. each day. Artwork was donated by the advanced placement art students to line the tops of the bookcases for visual appeal. Lamps were placed on the tables for soft lighting to read and relax by.

Additionally, lunch programs were planned that seniors could sign up to attend. These were announced in the morning announcements and in flyers placed on the tables in the senior area. Through the course of the study, there were a total of 6 lunch presentations scheduled. The lunch programs were supervised by the students who coordinated the changes in the library.
Students responsible for making the changes in the library also set up three book displays: one for popular authors, one for modern issues, one for student picks. Every week a student from the group of eight selected a new focus for the popular authors and modern issues displays and set them up accordingly during his or her free time. Forms for the student recommendations for displays, found in appendix D, were placed on tables. Students using the senior area could fill out and put their suggestions in a recommendation box. Suggested books that were available in the library were then pulled from the shelves by the student volunteer and put in the student pick display along with the form recommending them.

Eight laptops were placed in the area for senior only use so students in the area always had access to a computer. Headphones were allowed in this area as was group work. Figures 1-4 show the senior area before and after the changes (Arenson).
Figure 1. Library area before changes.

The learning commons area is immediately to the left of the library entrance. Prior to any changes made, it consisted of only infrequently used tables near the biography section of the library. Separating it from the rest of the library are bookcases on the other side. This whole area, about 15% of the total library space, is the area that was changed for the focus of this study.
Figure 2. Modern issues book display.

Figure 3. Sitting and café area
Survey 1 Results

In mid-January, before any changes were made to the library, students over age eighteen were given the initial survey over their use of and feelings toward the library in its current state. Table 1 shows the results of the question over student library access as a foundation for the rest of the findings. There were 135 students who participated in the survey, though not all of them answered all of the questions.

Table 1

Survey 1 Results on Student Library Access

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often do you go to the library in an average week without going with your class?</th>
<th>Never without going with a class</th>
<th>1-2</th>
<th>3-5</th>
<th>6-8</th>
<th>8-10</th>
<th>10+</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Initial results of the survey show that nearly a quarter of the students in the study (24%) never go to the library voluntarily. Half the study participants (49%) go only once or twice a week. Students who voluntarily go to the library 3-5 times a week make up less than a quarter of the population, only 21%. Two percent of students go 6-8 times a week, 8-10 times a week, or 10 plus times a week.

Table 2.

Survey 1 Results on Student Library Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To borrow books</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To look up information from print sources</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To look for information in databases</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To look for information on the Web</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To read magazines</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To study with my own books and materials</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To study with a group of people</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To consult the librarian</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To surf the Internet</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To spend time with my friends</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To relax</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 addresses student use of the library when they are present without a class. In terms of use, half or more of students use the library for research and book check-out in January. Fifty-four percent use the library to check out books, 50% use the library to look up information from print source, and 50% use the library to use databases. Only 22% of students utilize the librarian for help with research while in the library, but 71% use the free Web to do research while in the library. In terms of social or leisure use, 43% of students use the library to simply surf the Internet. However, the results drop dramatically in terms of other social and leisure use. Only 7% sit and read magazines, 36% come for a quiet place to study with their own materials, 20% come to study in small groups with friends, 19% go to the library to simply spend time with friends, and only 28% go to the library to relax. Table 3 addresses student feelings toward the library before the senior section was added.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th></th>
<th>No Response</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that the library is an open, inviting place</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I can relax in the library</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that the library offers programs that help me educationally</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that the library offers programs for my personal enrichment</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that the library set up is preparing me to understand the set up and use of a college library</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that student preference has been considered in the design of the library</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that student preference has been considered in the materials offered in the library</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that student preference has been considered in the programs offered in the library</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would be interested in attending presentations in the library</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would be interested in adding new services to the library (like a writing center, café area, etc)</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that the school library has positively impacted my education/grades</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Responses are generally favorable. Eighty percent of students feel the library is an open, inviting place while 75% feel they can relax in the library. Students feel as though their preference is considered when materials are selected for purchase (71%), in terms of library design (52%), and in terms of programs offered in the library (48%). Responses are also favorable when students consider the impact of the library on their success as a student. Fifty-seven percent feel the library positively impacts their grades and 56% feel the library offers programs to help them educationally. However, only 4% of students feel that the library offers programs for personal enrichment, and only 38% feel that the library is set up to prepare students for use of an academic library at a college. Interest in adding new programs to the library is high. Fifty-three percent are interested in attending presentations in the library and a sizable 76% are interested in adding new services to the library.

Positive comments from the open-ended question asking for student elaboration on their feelings are broken down into the following categories: a quiet work place (35%), help with research/school work (6%), leisure time (6%), class work (12%), general student success (12%), book checkout (6%), and computer use (23%). Six students focused their comments on how the library was a nice, quiet place to work. Notable comments on the atmosphere and use of the library follow: “This year I have gotten on the computer to do school work so I can get my work done and be successful.”; “I think the library helps my education alot [sic]. I like to go to the library to read books and use the Internet.” Minimal comments related to the general atmosphere of the library. The following comment best represents the tone of the general
comments on library atmosphere: “The library is very calm, and the librarians are very helpful.”

One detailed comment reflected feelings on student library use and on feelings toward possible changes in the library while also expanding on general student understanding of the library:

“[..] Students believe that the library is only for books when it is a prime research facility with librarians at the ready to help find useful materials. If special presentations were available – such as the lecturers that present at colleges – I feel that students would take interest. (given [sic] that the presenters were of student interest). [sic] I don’t think that people really know what the library is.”

Forty-three percent of responses on the open ended, final question were negative. Responses fell into three general categories that are as follows: not student friendly/rude librarians (42%), unnecessary (16%), and outdated materials and services (42%). Five students replied with comments that focused on how they felt the librarians were unhelpful and/or that the library was generally not student friendly. Notable comments on the issue of atmosphere and friendliness follow: “The library is not student friendly. The librarians are rude and not helpful.”; “[. . ] I feel as if it is not an inviting place and not comfortable. Drinks should be allowed and available [sic] especially if you’re in there for hours. All I can do is get in trouble/yelled at.”; “It feels like a prison a bit…” Two students felt the library was completely unnecessary, and 5 students felt the materials and technology was outdated and therefore unhelpful as were rules governing student-owned technology: “Should be able to have
headphones as it helps w/studying.”; “They have limited material, so I typically work at the public library or [sic] my personal computer.”; “Computers are needed more.”

**Survey 2 Results**

In May, the study concluded and students who were given the initial survey were surveyed again. Students were given the same survey with the purpose of seeing how their access, use of, and feelings toward the library had changed due to the senior area creation. Table 4 reflects general student library access.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often do you go to the library in an average week without going with your class?</th>
<th>Never without going with a class</th>
<th>1-2</th>
<th>3-5</th>
<th>6-8</th>
<th>8-10</th>
<th>10+</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>.7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the changes in the library were made and the senior area was created, the numbers on student access slightly shifted. Only 10% of students never go to the library without a class compared to 24% who never went without a class before the study began. Library visits 1-2 times per week remained at a constant 49%. Students visiting the library 3-5 times a week was at 22%, which is a decrease of 1%. There was an 8% increase in students going to the library 6-8 times a week. Final survey results show 10% of students go 6-8 times per week: a change from 2% on the initial
survey to .7%. Students who go to the library 10 plus times a week held steady at 2%. On the second survey, six students provided no responses on the number of times in an average week the library is visited. Table 5 reflects answers on student library use.

Table 5
Survey 2 Results on Student Library Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>No Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To borrow books</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To look up information from print sources</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To look for information in databases</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To look for information on the Web</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To read magazines</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To study with my own books and materials</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To study with a group of people</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To consult the librarian</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To surf the Internet</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To spend time with my friends</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To relax</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some categories of student use remain the same or show little change in May. Data on the library as a research location are as follows. Students use the library for book check-out is at 50%, 60% use the library to look up information from print sources, 48% use the library for
database research, 75% use the library to look up information on the Web, and 27% use the library to consult the librarian. The majority of students use the library to study with their own materials, (52%) while 35% use the library to study with friends. Leisure use shows to the most significant changes with 9% of students using the library to read magazines, 59% using the library to surf the Internet, 38% spending time with friends, and 53% using the area to relax.

Responses show increased favorability. Comparison of data will follow in the next section. The majority of students (91%) feel the library is an open, inviting place while 85% feel they can relax in the library. Students feel as though their preference is considered when materials are selected for purchase (76%), in terms of library design (71%), and in terms of programs offered in the library (70%). Responses are also favorable when students consider the impact of the library on their success as a student: 67% feel the library positively impacts their grades and 69% feel the library offers programs to help them educationally. A large increase of students feel that the library offers programs for personal enrichment (68%) and 65% feel that the library is set up to prepare them for use of an academic library at a college. Interest in adding new programs to the library dropped slightly with the addition of the programs in January, with 52% still interested in attending presentations in the library and a significant 81% interested in adding even more new services to the library. Overall, 85% of students indicate that they feel they can relax in the library after the changes were made. Table 6 reflects changes in student feelings toward the library.
Table 6
Survey 2 Results on Student Feelings Toward the Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes Percent</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No Percent</th>
<th>No Response</th>
<th>No Response Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel that the library is an open, inviting place</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I can relax in the library</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that the library offers programs that help me educationally</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that the library offers programs for my personal enrichment</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that the library set up is preparing me to understand the set up and use of a college library</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that student preference has been considered in the design of the library</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that student preference has been considered in the materials offered in the library</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that student preference has been considered in the programs offered in the library</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would be interested in attending presentations in the library</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would be interested in adding new services to the library (like a writing center, café area, etc)</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that the school library has positively impacted my education/grades</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of the students who took the survey in May, 22 students answered the open-ended, question requesting any other feelings on or information about their use of the library. Of those 22 student responses, 86% were positive and only 14% were negative. Positive responses related to a range of topics. These topics include the following: general comments (32%), relaxing (26%), a good place to study (21%), library feels inviting (11%), lunch presentations (5%), and access to books (5%). The most notable general comment addressing no specific change follows: “The senior area has vastly improved my use of the library.” Comments on students’ ability to relax in the library were plentiful. Following are a few comments that represent the main bulk of responses: “I think the senior area is a great addition. It is a great place to study or take a few minutes and just clear your mind.”; “The library seems nice and relaxing. I definately [sic] use the library way more!”; “I can go to the library and relax while doing my work. Its [sic] quite [sic] but not to [sic] quite.”; “I love that I can get coffee with my friends, hang out, study, and learn in the library!” Library resources, including laptop access and presentations, were commented on as well: “I like the new programs alot [sic] and think they are very good.”; “The senior center is great. The laptops are a great resource and the freedom helps me be comfortable enough to work. The coffee was great!” 14% of responses on the open ended, final question were negative. Responses fell into two general categories that are as follows: not enough access (67%) and noise level (33%). Negative responses on access are as follows: “I would like if teachers would actually let you go there to do work” and “feel like it [sic] inconvently [sic] closed too often.” The one negative comment on noise states, “I would like to
go there to find a quiet place to work on school work during study halls. It is very distracting when you go in to work but classes are in there for project assignments [sic] etc. making a lot of noise.” Both negative comments are not ones that could be addressed due to the limitations of the study. The original library set up is one, large, open room where classrooms space and study space is combined into one big area. As such, there is no way to add quiet spaces into the library unless other rooms were added on. There was discussion of turning one storage closet into a quiet space between librarian and researcher, but this idea was dismissed due to a lack of student supervision in the proposed quiet space. Library hours and teacher use of class time were also limitations to the study that were not possible to overcome.

**Survey Comparison**

There are several significant differences between survey results from before the senior area addition and after the addition, as illustrated in table 7. Some changes in numbers were small, at less than 15% difference, but relevant in terms of the main goals of the study. Before the addition of the senior area, 80% of students felt the library was an open, inviting place. After the addition of the senior area, there was an 11% increase to 91% of students feeling the library was open and inviting. On the first survey, 75% of students felt that they could relax in the library whereas after the senior area was added 85% of students felt they could relax. Overall, 57% of students felt the library had positive impact on their education/grades prior to the senior area addition. Afterward, there was a 10% increase to 67% who felt the library positively impacted their education/grades.
There were several more notable differences of greater than 15% increase. Prior to the senior area addition, 56% of students felt that the library offered programs to help them educationally. After the addition of the lunch presentations, this number increased to 69%. Only 4% of students felt that the library offered programs for personal enrichment on the January survey, but on the May survey 68% indicated that the library offered personal enrichment programs. In terms of program offerings, 48% of students felt that student preference was considered in the programs offered at the library whereas 70% felt this was true on the second survey. 52% of students felt that their preference was considered in the design of the library on the first survey. After the changes were made, this number rose to 71%. Finally, only 38% of students felt the library was preparing them to use an academic library prior to the changes being made. Afterward, this number rose to 65%.
Table 7
Notable changes in survey results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Before Responses</th>
<th>After Responses</th>
<th>Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that the library is an open, inviting place</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I can relax in the library</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that the library offers programs that help me educationally</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that the library offers programs for my personal enrichment</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that the library set up is preparing me to understand the set up and use of a college library</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that student preference has been considered in the design of the library</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that student preference has been considered in the programs offered in the library</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that the school library has positively impacted my education/grades</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sign Out Data

At the conclusion of this study the sign-out sheet data were analyzed to see what the area was utilized for. There were 398 line items on the sign-out sheet. The data are presented in table 8.

Table 8
Senior Area Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coffee/Tea</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General homework</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relax</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use laptops</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch presentations</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use of the area was fairly spread out. Most students used the area for general homework purposes (31%). 24% came to get coffee of tea and left without staying to do anything else. 13% came to the area to read, 13% came to the area to use the laptops, and 13% came to the area for the lunch presentations. 6% of students using the area simply came to relax and/or spend time with friends. Though all seniors were allowed to use this area, data tabulated are from only those who indicated on the sign out sheet that they were 18 at the time of use.
Summary

This chapter presented the findings from the study. A description of changes made by the eight seniors who volunteered to redesign the library are described. Next the survey given in January and in May are presented. Then student use of the senior area throughout the study are offered. Included in the survey sections were also responses to the open-ended questions on both surveys. Chapter five will present the answers to the research questions in chapter 1, conclusion, and recommendations based on the findings of this study.
CHAPTER 5:
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter five answers the research questions posed in chapter one through analysis of the data presented in chapter four. Based on the data collected, there is strong support showing that students’ feelings toward and use of the library increases with student-led changes to the library. The following research questions are addressed in chapter five:

1. How do student perceptions of the library change when students are in control of transforming part of the library into a learning commons?
2. Once changes in the library have been made, how does overall student use change?

Student Perceptions of the Library Improve Through a Student-Led Learning Commons

With a learning commons in place, student feelings toward the library noticeably became more positive. Responses for every category on the survey in the student feelings section increased on the survey given at the conclusion of the study. Students feel that the learning commons better prepares them for an academic library than the more traditional setting they had prior to the study with a 19% increase in positive answers. Equally important is the data on students feeling their preferences have been considered in the design of the library. After the changes were made, there was a 22% increase in positive answers on the survey. Likewise, there was a 64% increase in positive feelings toward the library offering personal
enrichment programs. Student responses on the open-ended questions were overwhelmingly positive at the conclusion of the study. There was a 29% increase in positive comments with most of them focusing on how it was nice to have a designate area to work with minimal rules.

The research supports the claim that student perceptions of the library become more positive when the library shifts to a learning commons through student directed changes. Further evidence of this positive increase in student perceptions of the library can be found in the statistical increase in student use of the library.

**Once a Learning Commons is in Place, Student Library Use Increases**

General student use of the library increased through the course of the study. Though only the changes addressed in this study can be accounted for as a reason for increase, student reported data on the surveys can lead to the inference that the overall increase in library use was due to the changes made to the library. Students claiming they never go to the library without a class dropped by 14%. While infrequent library user data, those visiting 1-2 times per week without a class, stayed the same between both surveys (49%), students visiting 3-5 times per week and 8-10 times per week both increased. Those visiting 3-5 times per week increased 1% and those visiting 6-8 times per week increased 8%. Frequent users visiting 8-10 times and 10+ times per week remained approximately the same. The numbers above show that after the changes to the library were made, students more frequently come to library voluntarily.

Specific use of the senior area indicates positive increases as well. While those students visiting to borrow books decreased by 4% and those using library databases decreased by 2%,
all other areas of use show an increase. The numbers indicate that in this study student led changes to the library in an attempt to create a learning commons did, in fact, lead to more student use. Mihailidis and Diggs assert that students given a sense of ownership in a learning commons tend to become empowered and that empowerment leads to more learning (289-290). Though this study does not analyze specific data reflecting student achievement, self-reported data from the surveys supports Mihailidis and Diggs’ argument. In terms of empowerment, Mihailidis and Diggs’ claim is supported by the data in this study. Survey results show a 16% increase in students bringing their own materials to the library to work on their own and a 15% increase in those voluntarily coming to the library to study with a groups of friends. Likewise, there was a 10% increase in students using print sources in the library while the percent of students looking up research on the free Web stayed fairly steady with only a 4% increase. These numbers indicate that students become more collaborative through the empowerment a learning commons gives them.

Student use of the library as a place to relax and enjoy themselves also showed significant increases. At the beginning of the study, only 19% of students went to the library to spend time with their friends. After the learning commons was in place, this number increased by 19% to 38% of students intentionally going to the library to spend time with friends. Similar findings occurred when it came to personal relaxation. Initial survey results showed only 28% of students went to the library to relax. Final survey results in May show that 53% of students intentionally go to the library to relax, a 25% increase. Since all areas of self-reported student
use, with the exception of book check out and database usage, increased throughout this study, it can be seen that a student directed learning commons does lead to more student library use.

**Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that high school libraries, transition to a learning commons when feasible. If possible, changes appear to be best made when they are student directed so that student opinions and needs can be best addressed. Through the course of this study, it became clear that students have more positive feelings toward the library when they feel their opinions are considered in the changes made to the library. These changes not only lead to more positive feelings, but these feelings appear to lead to higher usage rates in all areas from academics to personal leisure activities. As a result, students can benefit from the changes in more ways than just academics.
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APPENDIX A
Survey
Student Survey on Library Use (senior class)  

Researcher and Research Topic: My name is Melissa Arenson. I am trying to learn about how effective student led changes to the library are because we would like to see an increase of library use by students. If you would like, you can be in my study by filling out this survey.

Researcher Contact Information: I teach English in the South High School if you want to come talk to me. My email is marenson@raypec.k12.mo.us. My phone number is 816-892-1445. You can email, call me, or come see me in S302 if you have questions about the study or if you decide you don’t want to be in the study any more. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Human Subjects Protection Program at (660) 543-4621.

I will not share your personal information: I will put things I learn about you together with things I learn about other participants, so no one can tell what things came from you. When I tell other people about my research, I will not use your name or the school name, so no one can tell who I am talking about.

Participation: If you decide not to participate, you will not be penalized in any way. You can also decide to leave the study at any time without penalty. You may withdraw your data at the end of the survey, but you must do this before you turn in your survey. Once the surveys are turned in, I will not know which survey is yours.

Please circle the answers that best describe your feelings about and use of the library as of right now.

1. In an average week, I go to the library without my whole class for any reason this many times:
   - I have never used the library without going as a class 1-2 3-5 6-8 8-10 10+
2. I use the library to...
   - Yes or No To borrow books
   - Yes or No To look up information from print sources
Yes or No  To look for information in database
Yes or No  To look for information on the Web
Yes or No  To read magazines
Yes or No  To study with my own books and materials
Yes or No  To study with a group of people
Yes or No  To consult the librarian
Yes or No  To surf the Internet
Yes or No  To spend time with my friends
Yes or No  To relax

3. Yes or No  I feel that the library is an open, inviting place
4. Yes or No  I feel that I can relax in the library
5. Yes or No  I feel that the library offers programs that help me educationally
6. Yes or No  I feel that the library offers programs for my personal enrichment
7. Yes or No  I feel that the library set up is preparing me to understand the set up and use of a college library
8. Yes or No  I feel that student preference has been considered in the design of the Library
9. Yes or No  I feel that student preference has been considered in the materials offered in the library
10. Yes or No  I feel that student preference has been considered in the programs offered in the library
11. Yes or No  I would be interested in attending presentations in the library
12. Yes or No  I would be interested in adding new services to the library (like a writing center, café area, etc)
13. Yes or No  I feel that the school library has positively impacted my education/grades
14. Tell me anything else you want to about your feelings on the library, how much you think it helps with your school work, and/or what you like to come here to do and why.
## APPENDIX B

### Sign-Out Sheet

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>How long were you here?</th>
<th>What are you here to do?</th>
<th>Are you 18 or older? (Y or N)</th>
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APPENDIX C
Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

This research is being done by Melissa Arenson, a graduate student with the Library and Information Management department at University of Central Missouri.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to discover how a student designed learning commons impacts student perceptions of the library as well as overall student use of the library.

Request for Participation: We are inviting you to participate in a study on transforming a section of the school library into a learning commons. It is up to you whether you would like to participate. If you decide not to participate, you will not be penalized in any way. You can also decide to leave the study at any time without penalty. If you do not wish to answer any of the questions on the surveys, you may simply skip them. You may withdraw your data at the end of the study. If you wish to do this, please tell me before you turn in your materials. Once the materials are turned in, I will not know which survey is yours.

Exclusions: You must sign the informed consent form to participate in this study.

Description of Research Method: This study involves completing a short survey on your feelings about and use of the school library twice, once at the beginning and once at the end of the study. The survey will ask you about your use of the library, perception of what you are allowed to do in the library, and what you would like to do in the library. You will also address
your feelings on the specific changes made to the library throughout the study in the survey given upon completion of the study. The surveys will take about 30-40 minutes to finish. You will also have a chance to ask questions. Please note that I cannot give you your individual results because the data are anonymous.

Privacy: All of the information collected will be anonymous. I will not record your name, student number, or any information that could be used to identify you. I will also provide you with a blank sheet of paper so that you can cover the responses to the survey as they are written down. This will prevent other research participants from seeing your answers.

Explanation of Risks: There are no risks associated with this study that are not present in everyday seatwork in a classroom that is monitored by a teacher.

Explanation of Benefits: Participants will benefit from participating in this study through the changes made to the library when they need to use it for research or other work.

Questions: If you have any questions about this study, please contact Melissa Arenson. She can be reached at marenson@raypec.k12.mo.us or at 816-892-1445. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Human Subjects Protection Program at (660) 543-4621.

If you would like to participate, please sign a copy of this letter and return it to me. The other copy is for you to keep.

I have read this letter and agree to my participation in this study.

Student Name:__________________________________________________

Signature:_____________________________________________________

Date:________________
APPENDIX D

Student Pick Form
Student Book Recommendation Form

If you would like to recommend a book for our display, please complete the form below.

Book Title: _________________________________________________________________

Author: ____________________________________________________________________

Recommended by: __________________________________________  Grade: _______

*Remember to give just enough information to make it interesting- Don’t give the ending away!*

About this book: ____________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Put this form in the Harry Potter pot and it will be placed on display as soon as possible!
APPENDIX E

Principal Consent Letter

Raymore-Peculiar High School

To whom it may concern,

Melissa Arenson has permission to survey students and collect library data about student use and checkout habits from our library. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further questions.

Sincerely,

Ryan Gooding Ed.S.
Associate Principal | Raymore Peculiar High School
816-892-1400 | rdgooding@raypec.k12.mo.us |
http://www.raypec.k12.mo.us 20801 South School Road | Peculiar,
MO 64078
APPENDIX F

Librarian Consent Letter

RAYMORE-PECULIAR HIGH SCHOOL
20801 S. SCHOOL RD – P.O. BOX 789
PECULIAR, MO 64078

An A+ Designated School

20801 S. School Rd
Peculiar, MO 64078
(816) 892-1400

To whom it may concern,

Melissa Arenson has permission to access data she needs from our Destiny library system. I will assist as needed with using the program. Melissa has our cooperation with changes she would like to make in the library that will not interfere with the daily operation of the library.

[Signature]

Genese Wright
Librarian, Ray-Pec High School