

Diary Study Preliminary Report

Dave Provost, Research & Outreach Librarian

Veterinary Medicine Library

15 November 2022

Planning

The 2022 VML Diary Study project was designed to capture CVM students' priorities and preferences around where they choose to do academic work. The Veterinary Medicine Library (VML) wants to be a welcoming and appealing place for students to work, and we hope that the information gathered in this study will inform the VML's decision making and planning in the months and years ahead.

The study was designed to be a diary study, meaning that a small group of participants responded to a short list of prompts every day, over an extended period of time. In this case, the study extended from Monday, October 24 to Friday, November 11. This period stretched from the end of CVM's Fall Break, when presumably students are not thinking too much about their studies, through to the start of Finals, which is obviously a very intense period of academic work. Participants responded daily to five short prompts that asked them about where they did academic work and why they chose those locations. Additionally, participants attended weekly check-in meetings where they were asked two additional questions, with several extra questions in the final check-in meeting.

Recruitment

Recruitment was carried out via emails to CVM student mailing lists and via signs on electronic bulletin boards in the VML and around the CVM. Compensation for participation was announced as \$90 in Grubhub food delivery orders spaced out over the three weeks of the study, to increase interest and to reward continued participation.

In an effort to ensure a diverse participant pool, potential participants were asked to complete a brief demographic survey. In total, 79 responses were received during the six day period the survey was open. The survey instrument is available [here](#). Respondents were given free-form text fields in which to respond, in order to allow for the most flexibility in providing answers, and

did not limit them to a pre-selected list. For example, responses to the question "What is your racial identity?" included expected answers like "White", "Black", "African-American", and "Asian", but also "Latinx", "Hispanic", "Middle Eastern", and "South East Asian" (among many others) that would probably not have been included on a list. Additionally, the final (optional) question in the survey was "Is there anything else we should know about you? For example: Do you identify as LGBTQIA+? Are you a member of an underrepresented minority in veterinary medicine? Did you grow up outside of the United States? Do you use adaptive technology to do your academic work or to complete daily tasks?" This allowed respondents to select the kind of information they would share, and allowed us to limit the number of questions in the survey while still getting as full a picture of our respondents as possible. Answers to this question included information about sexuality, national origin, chronic illness, mental health, income, living situations, and much more.

Participants

Responses to the demographic survey were reviewed and a selection of 10 participants was made. The demographic survey allowed for a wide range of perspectives and backgrounds as demonstrated in the table below:

Student Status	3 First-Years, 3 Second-Years, 1 Third-Year, 1 Fourth-Year, and 1 DVM/PhD student
Undergraduate Institution	3 graduated from NC State, 2 from other Triangle-area schools
Race & Ethnicity	4 White, 3 Black or African-American, 2 Latinx, 1 South East Asian
Gender	7 Women, 2 Men, 1 Genderqueer
Age	5 from 18-24 years-old, 4 from 25-34, and 1 from 35-44
Other	3 identify as LGBTQIA+, 5 were born or raised in countries other than the US, 2 are first generation college graduates

The selected participants were notified via email and all confirmed that they were committed to participating fully in the study. Confirmed participants were assigned a random animal name

(from www.randomlists.com/random-animals) to allow the study to attribute responses to individuals without attaching identifiable information.

Data Collection

After confirming participation, participants were offered their choice of contact methods, including email, iMessage, SMS, WhatsApp, and others. All participants chose either email (6) or iMessage (4). Participants received a daily reminder to complete their prompts via their platform of choice, along with a link to a webform that allowed them to submit their answers that way. Nine participants consistently responded via the web form, one responded only via email. Overall, participants completed 83% of the possible daily prompts, ranging individually from 58% to 100%.

The daily prompts were:

- Did you use Veterinary Medicine Library spaces to do academic work (reading, studying, completing assignments, collaborating with classmates, etc) today?
- What other spaces did you use to do academic work, if any?
- What were the main factors that influenced your decision about where to do work?
- Thinking of the spaces where you did academic work today, what are two things you liked about those places?
- What is one change you might suggest to the Veterinary Medicine Library that would have made it a better place for you to work today?

Additionally, there was an optional photo prompt that participants were given:

- Take a picture of somewhere you performed (or are about to perform) academic work. What are two qualities about that place that make it a good place to perform academic work (e.g. quiet, comfortable, has good lighting, lively, easy to meet with classmates, near my house, etc)?

Respondents were also asked to schedule a weekly meeting to answer two discussion questions and to allow them an opportunity to ask any questions they might have. There were three additional questions during the final meeting.

The weekly questions were:

- What was your favorite place to do academic work this week, and why was it your favorite?
- Did you have any academic challenges this week that were affected by where you did academic work? (For example, couldn't study for a test because my apartment was too loud)

And in the final meeting:

- How did you feel about participating in this diary study? Was it more or less time-consuming than you thought it would be?
- Looking back over these few weeks, did you learn anything about the type of places where you prefer to do academic work? Did thinking about the qualities of the places where you do academic work affect your decisions about where to work?
- Did you discover any new or interesting spaces to do academic work over the course of this study? If so, what were they?

Participants completed 97% of the weekly meetings. One participant missed their first meeting due to a scheduling issue.

Analysis

Following the data collection period, the responses will be imported into [Dovetail](#) software for qualitative analysis via response coding. Using a thematic analysis approach will allow for summarization and general description of the responses, and offers the possibility of generating unanticipated insights. Finally, the thematic approach "can be useful for producing qualitative analyses suited to informing policy development" (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is anticipated that analysis of the data will allow the Veterinary Medicine Library and the University Libraries to make data-driven decisions about resources, spaces and services.

Particular areas of focus of the analysis will be as follows, with the understanding that a thematic analysis may reveal additional unanticipated areas of focus:

- Decision-making factors that affect study location
- Positive and negative attributes of common study locations
- Positive and negative attributes of the Veterinary Medicine Library
- Suggestions for changes to the Veterinary Medicine Library

References

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>