The objective of the study was to determine students’ utilization of “soft spaces” in the library at Indiana University-Perdue University Indianapolis. These “soft spaces” are defined as areas that are not the stacks and not computer labs. The researcher uses an observational method to collect data; because the observations were conducted in a publicly available area with no individually identifiable information recorded the study qualified as exempt from the campus Institutional Research Board. The data was collected twice a day, Monday to Friday, during 12-1pm and 3-4 pm. Data collected included:

1. Presence of individuals in a space, by gender
2. Being or not being in a group
3. Laptop usage

The study identifies a few findings from their data collection:

1. The most attractive spaces are group study rooms, which were used mostly by groups as opposed to individual students
2. The next most popular areas are “soft chair” areas
3. High usage of typical carrels, especially towards the end of the semester; they are less popular when there are other options, but they do effectively handle large numbers of students towards the end of semesters
4. Men are more likely to use laptops than women
5. There appears to be no significant gender difference within library areas

The study concludes that an effective library addresses the entire spectrum of student needs and has the capacity to meet needs that increase over a course of a semester. In addition each campus has its own mix of spaces and uses; thus, systematic observation of areas outside the library will allow the library to tailor its design to the campus’ needs.
This study takes an ethnographic approach to look at five different college libraries to learn about what students think of the spaces. Ethnography is defined as a collection of qualitative research that focuses on the close observation of social practices and interactions. Ethnographic methods typically involve researches working with participants as they go about their daily lives. Several techniques are used to elicit perceptions and opinions about space:

1. **Design Workshops** – students were asked to brainstorm about the tasks they completed in the library and what they liked and disliked about the building. They were asked to describe their ideal library and to sketch part of the ideal library space
   a. Key elements included a 24-hour computer lab, study areas, a café, and a tutor table
2. **Flip Charts** - Quick and cheap method, used strategically throughout the library, that provided detailed information researches could use in the short term
   a. Large sheets of paper with two questions written at the top and a column for answers asked “what do you like about this space?” and “what do you dislike about this space?” Students then can write their answers and the sheets are switched out every few days
3. **Cognitive Mapping** – allowed researches to learn what elements of the library students remembered without visual clues. Students were asked to draw the library from memory and change pen colors every 2 minutes (that way researchers could tell what came to mind first). The drawings were analyzed to see which elements came to mind first.
   a. Study found computer workspaces and group study were prominent in students’ mental image of the library
   b. Also found that students identifies the information/circulation desk
4. **Photo Diaries and Ethnographic interviews** - used photographs taken by students and interviews with a diverse group of students to elicit likes and dislikes and about the library space in general

The study concludes that across all ages and living arrangements (commuting and on campus) the preference for quiet study spaces is nearly universal. In addition many students found current lighting and worn furniture a concern.
1 - From the Ashes of Alexandria: What’s Happening in the College Library? - Pgs. (25-41)

Author: Sam Demas, Previously associate director of Mann Library at Cornell University, currently a librarian and senior lecturer at Carleton College

The article uses the ideal of ‘The Mouseion at Alexandria’ to describe what the design of public and academic libraries is beginning to represent. The Mouseion at Alexandria was basically a huge library that was an “ecumenical center of art, culture research and learning”. He states that while these qualities were preserved in national and private research libraries, the opposite is true for academic libraries. “By contrast, libraries became dry, technical, and isolated shadows of their legendary progenitor.” The report goes in depth to analyze the following question: What’s Happening in the College Library?

According to the report, these are the main reasons to use the library:

- Reading and Relaxing in Safety and in Quiet
- Individual Study
- Group Study
- Internet Use
- Research for Class Assignments and projects
- Information Production: Computing, Writing, and Creating Presentations
- Meeting and Socializing
- Eating/Drinking
- Participating in Cultural Events and Civic Discourse
- Having fun
- Visiting
- Appreciating Art, Design, and Nature

Traditionally, there have been functions listed above that are considered nonlibrary uses. These are becoming more and more popular inclusions when renovating older libraries. Demas states that these inclusions “reinforce my conviction that libraries should not diversify their facilities and services simpler to bolster use figures”. He believes that offering these services enhance the library and its value as a resource.
2 - The Ultimate Internet Café: Reflections of a Practicing Digital Humanist about Designing a Future for the Research Library in the Digital Age – Pgs. (41-56)

Author: Bernard Frischer, director of the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities, University of Virginia

“Even in the digital age, some activities can take place in the research library more appropriately than anywhere else on campus, and there is a positive interaction between those activities and the design of the spaces provided to house them.” – Bernard Frischer

The above excerpt from the report summarizes the point Frischer is arguing. He explains in detail what he believes to be the three consequences of digital technology for the research library.

The Quality of Experience

He talks about how traditionally, the library was thought of as the “high-end” location where information is stored and accessed. But, in the digital age, he thinks libraries can still be an ideal place to find and access information, through special digital work environments.

Why Creators of Digital Content Need Research Libraries

In the report, Frischer claims that like printed works, digital products also need to be preserved. He explains that the research library should recognize and embrace this responsibility. Digital content producers would feel encouraged to create more high-tech environments that require more bandwidth, seeing as there would be much easier access to those resources for students.

The New Importance of Architecture and Design

This section explains how creating functional and inspirational architectural designs remains an important role. Frischer focuses on how users in the digital age want to experience something they cannot at home. He talks about how you don’t need a full-scale remodel in order to implement some of the ideas talked about throughout the report. There are smaller steps that can be taken in order to utilize already existing spaces.