How Accessible is Your Library?

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https://tinyurl.com/y3xajv5y

Objectives

- Learn about the use of audits for evaluating library accessibility

- Discuss implications of auditing library spaces

  - For library operations

  - For people with chronic vs. temporary disabilities

  - For people with visible vs. invisible disabilities

  - For library users vs. library staff

- Develop a plan for next steps at your library

Background

- 19% of undergrads & 12% of grad students have a disability (NCES, 2015-16AY)
- Percent varies for adults; increases dramatically with age

- Focused on physical spaces

Why Audit?

- Standard types of data collection
  - Surveys, interviews, and focus groups
  - Ethnographic observation
  - Space & services evaluations (audits)
- Considerations in choosing a method
  - Action research vs. exploratory inquiry
  - Depth of relationship to community
  - Embodied vs. imagined accessibility
  - Perception vs. measurement

Implications: Operations & Planning

- Space planning
  - Making the case for renovation / purchasing
  - Finding resources
  - Engaging user communities
  - Ongoing assessment
- Service development
- Staff training

Steps in the Process

1. Review previous work

2. Identify the purpose

Implications: Instruments

- Available tools
  - IFLA Checklist: https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/hq/publications/professional-report/89.pdf
  - Khailova (2005): https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1300/J118v24n02_02
  - JMU Libraries Audit: https://tinyurl.com/y5pxdbtz
- Considerations
  - Checklist vs. yes/no vs. Likert-like scale
  - Quantitative vs. mixed-methods vs. qualitative

IFLA Checklist

- *Access to libraries for persons with disabilities – CHECKLIST* (Irvall & Nielsen, 2005)

- https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/hq/publications/professional-report/89.pdf

- Bulleted lists of items to look for and/or recommendations:
  - Physical Access: Outside, entrance, access to materials & services
  - Media Formats: Accessible technologies including media and computers
  - Service & Communication: Staff training, special services, information provision, community engagement

Implications: Populations

- Chronic vs. temporary disabilities

- Visible vs. invisible disabilities

- Library users vs. library staff

- Study vs. implementation groups

JMU Libraries Accessibility Audit: Instrument

- https://tinyurl.com/y5pxdbtz

- Based on IFLA Checklist

- Only considered physical facility & furniture

- 23 items in 6 sections: Entrance, lobby, stacks, study area, service point, information commons
  - Quality of accessibility: Excellent, Acceptable, Poor
  - Importance of accessibility: High Medium Low
 - Space for comments after each section

JMU Libraries Accessibility Audit: Population

- 23 total participants
  - 6 JUST385 undergraduate students
  - 6 Libraries Public Services student workers
  - 8 Libraries staff/faculty
  - 3 students registered with the Office of Disability Services
  - 19 DID NOT disclose a disability; 4 DID disclose a disability

Steps in the Process

1. Review previous work

2. Identify the purpose

3. Choose a method

4. Engage with community

5. Recruit participants

JMU Libraries Accessibility Audit: Results
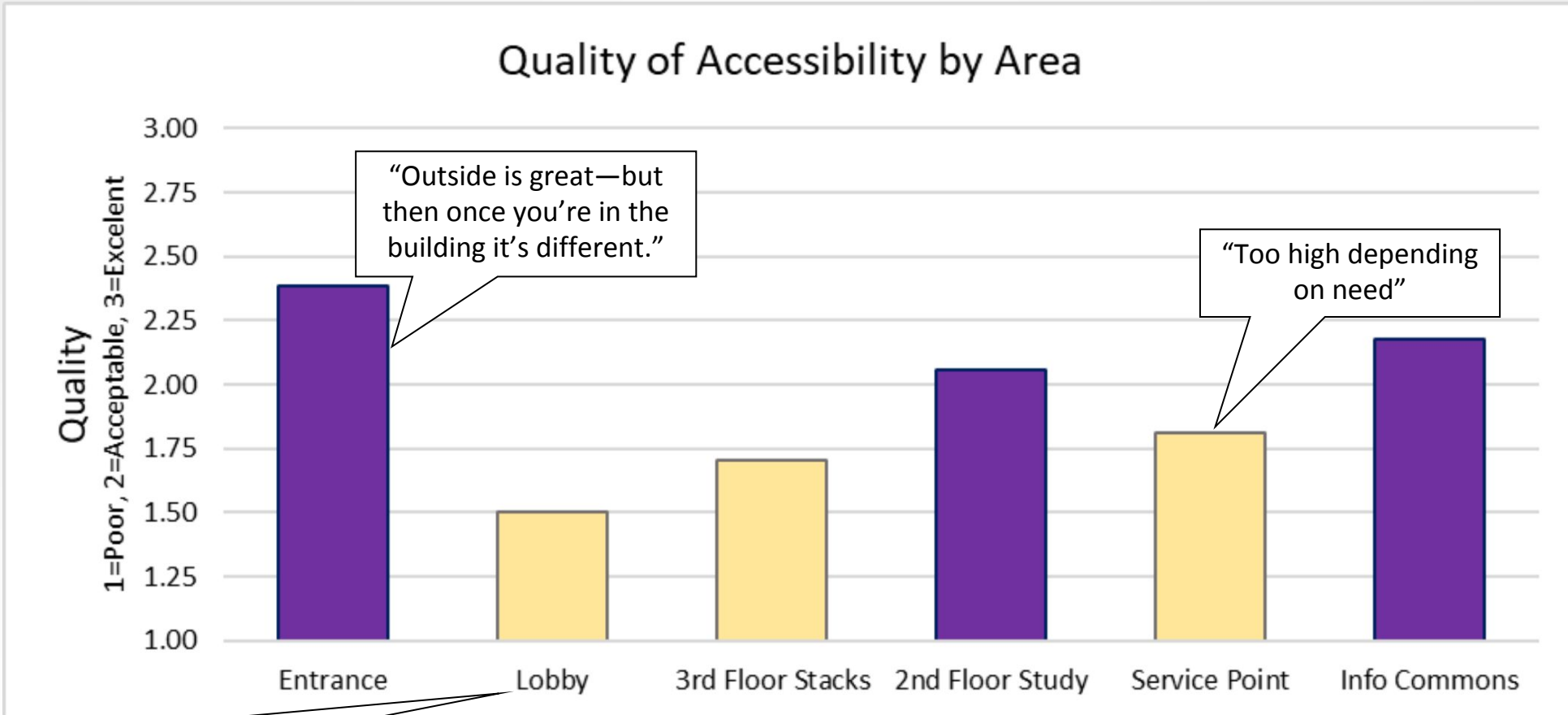
Steps in the Process

1. Review previous work

2. Identify the purpose

3. Choose a method

4. Engage with community

5. Recruit participants

6. Collect data

7. Analyze data

JMU Libraries Accessibility Audit: Findings

- No surprises among the ratings
  - Supported existing plans for changes

- Perspective & familiarity impacts ratings

- Perceptions do not match reality

- Narrow concept of disability

Findings (continued)

- Universal design makes sense to people

- People are better at judging space than people

- Strengthened community relationships

Steps in the Process

1. Review previous work
2. Identify the purpose
3. Choose a method
4. Engage with community
5. Recruit participants
6. Collect data
7. Analyze data
8. **Act on findings**

Questions?

References

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