

## Report on Charge S-2330-1: Expanding Access to University Libraries Across Campuses

Charge S-2330-1: Expanding Access to University Libraries Across Campuses: Investigate current University library hours across all campuses. Determine if those hours are adequately meeting student needs (access to collections; access to study spaces; access to technology) on each campus. Make recommendations as appropriate.

As this was a charge to both the Instruction, Curricula and Advising and to the Student Affairs Committees, the committees formed a joint subcommittee to investigate this issue. The subcommittee consisted of Lisa Siebenaler Easley (SAC; Subcommittee Chair), Consuella Askew (SAC), Natalie Borisovets (ICAC) and Taryn Cooper (ICAC). The subcommittee looked at current library hours across the University, considered their impact on student access needs, and surveyed students to determine who was using the libraries, when they were using the libraries, why they were using the libraries, and where the libraries did not appear to be meeting all their needs.

Rutgers Libraries Academic Semester Hours 2025						
	Monday - Thursday		Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Total Hours
<b>Camden</b>						
<b>Robeson</b>	7 am - 10 pm		7 am - 5 pm	9 am - 5 pm	12 pm -10 pm	88
<b>New Brunswick</b>						
<b>Alexander</b>	8 am -12 am		8 am - 10 pm	1 pm - 6 pm	11 am - 12 am	96
<b>Art</b>	9 am - 5 pm		9 am - 5 pm	Closed	Closed	40
<b>Carr</b>	8 am - 12 am		8 am - 10 pm	1 pm - 6 pm	2:30 pm - 10 pm	90.5
<b>Chang</b>	9 am - 5 pm		9 am - 5 pm	Closed	Closed	40
<b>Douglass</b>	8 am - 12am		8 am - 10 pm	1 pm - 6 pm	2:30 pm - 10 pm	90.5
<b>LSM</b>	8 am -12 am		8 am - 10 pm	1 pm - 6 pm	2:30 pm - 10 pm	90.5
<b>Math &amp; Physics</b>	9 am - 5 pm		9 am - 5 pm	Closed	Closed	40
<b>Newark</b>						
<b>Dana</b>	8 am - 12 am		8 am - 6 pm	9 am - 5:30 pm	2 pm - 10 pm	90.5
<b>RBHS</b>						
<b>Robert Wood Johnson (NB)</b>	8 am - 10 pm		8 am - 5 pm	9 am - 5 pm	10 am - 5 pm	80
<b>Smith (Newark)</b>	7:30 am - 12 am		7:30 am - 10 pm	12 pm - 9 pm	11 am - 11 pm	101.5

## **Current Building Hours**

Currently, the Rutgers University library open the most hours per week is the Smith Library in Newark, which is open 101.5 hours per week. Robert Wood Johnson, the Rutgers Health library in New Brunswick, is open 80 hours per week. In New Brunswick, the Alexander Library is open 96 hours per week while the campus libraries (Carr, Douglass, and the Library of Science and Medicine) are open 90.5 hours per week. The discipline-based New Brunswick libraries (Art, Chang, Math and Physics) are open 40 hours per week. Robeson, the Camden campus library, is open 88 hours per week while Dana, the Newark campus library, is open 90.5 hours per week.

## **The Student Survey**

To learn more about student needs and how the students were using the libraries, the subcommittee created a Qualtrics survey. 200 surveys (the Qualtrics single email limit) were sent to undergraduate and graduate students on each of the four chancellor-led campuses in the Spring of 2025. Despite the survey invitations being sent four times in April and May, only 128 responses (16 percent) were received. While we could not draw too many conclusions from such a small sample, on the whole responses were in line with library observations on student use.

Of the responses received, 79 (71%) were from New Brunswick students.

## **Survey Results**

### **When Are They Using the Libraries?**

Responses show that the most (73%; 74) students used the Libraries between the hours of 12pm – 5pm.

- Evening hours between 5pm-10pm was second (59%; 60)
- Early morning hours between 7am – 11:30am was third (31%; 30)

### **Why Are They Using the Libraries?**

Students reported using library space most frequently for:

- Study 70.3%
- Computer Labs 39.1%
- Check out materials 21.9%
- Consult with a librarian 12.5%

### **How Often Are They Using the Libraries?**

The number of days per week used was dependent on the Library

- 1-2 days: New Brunswick (36), Camden (4)
- 3-5 days: New Brunswick (35), Rutgers Health (9) Newark (3)

## What Libraries Are They Using?

As most of the responses came from New Brunswick students, most used New Brunswick libraries

- Alexander 51 (67%)
- Carr 31 (41%)
- Douglass 24 (32%)
- Library of Science & Medicine 18 (24%)

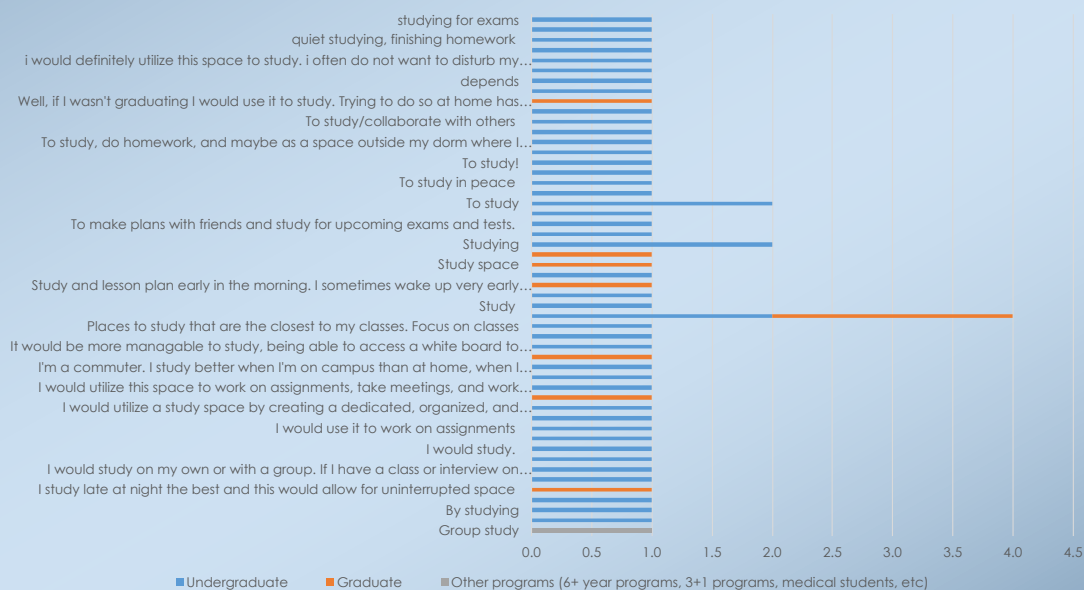
## Late Hours

- 59% (17) would not use the library after 2am while 41% (12) responded they would.
- 44% (34) indicated they use the Libraries between the hours of 10pm – 12am, 1-2 days a week.
- 39% (30) indicated they never use the Libraries during these hours

In response to the question “Would you use the library if they were open later than midnight (12am)” only 29 students responded; 17 said “No.”

On the other hand, in response to the question “If there was a designated study space open for 24 hours on campus not in the library, would you use it?” 100 students responded and 78 students said “Yes,” and in many cases elaborated on their responses.

## Use of Campus Study Space



## **Are Library Hours Currently Meeting Student Needs?**

Charge S-2330-1 asked the committees to determine if current Rutgers library hours are adequately meeting student needs in terms of access to collections, access to study spaces, and access to technology. The questions in the survey were created to gauge the student population's thoughts on those three items.

### **Access to Collections**

28 students (22%) indicated that one of the reasons they came to the library was “to check out materials.”

While located across the State of New Jersey, the Rutgers libraries operate within a “One Library” framework and--with the exception of materials in non-circulating special collections--all materials are made available to all Rutgers users. Databases are in electronic format and can be accessed from anywhere. Most journals are available in electronic format; where if something is available only in print, or not available at Rutgers at all, an electronic copy can be requested. The average turn-around time to receive the e-copy is 24 to 48 hours.

Most books bought in the last five years are also in electronic format and accessible anywhere. This includes many earlier titles where print copies may have already been in the system. Print books not available in a user's home library can be requested for delivery to that library.

The Libraries have recently instituted a pickup locker system whereby requested materials can be picked up from lockers outside the libraries 24/7. These can be used when requesting materials that are in a home library as well. Rutgers users can also specify “Personal Delivery” when requesting materials; the Libraries will mail most items to a user's home or current residence.

The majority of the time, building hours do not seem to impact access to most collections. It may impact access to special collections, although most of these have restricted hours and are not actually available for the full time that a building is open. It may also impact access to some Reserve items—books available only in print. These tend to be textbooks that publishers do not make available to libraries in electronic format.

### **Access to Technology**

50 students (39%) indicated that one of the reasons that they came to the library was to use the computer labs.

While “technology” available within the Rutgers libraries can range from microfilm readers used for reading things like reels of newspapers on microfilm to 3D printers, the primary technology utilized by students in the libraries are the computers and printers in the computer labs. However, these labs are not library resources per se. The libraries are only providing homes for OIT-owned and managed campus computer labs. OIT also makes “Virtual Computer Labs,” which in addition to software available in the physical labs provide access to some programs that cannot be licensed for physical labs, available to Rutgers users from anywhere at any time. Print jobs from a virtual lab can be sent to any campus Papercut enabled print release station, or to a local computer.

All Rutgers libraries with the exception of the two Rutgers Health libraries are home to an OIT computer lab. While these labs have not returned to pre-COVID levels of use, they are still heavily used and are still a major draw for students to the libraries. The computers have assistive technology available for use for free such as JAWS (Job Access With Speech) and ZoomText, which create access for students with disabilities who regularly use the computers in the library. Access to licenses for the assistive technology through the library computers also remove a financial barrier for students.

### **Access to Study Spaces**

90 students (70%) indicated that one of the reasons that they came to the library was to use the library as a study space. Indeed, the “study space” questions seemed to generate the most response in the student survey and perhaps reflect the most perceived need. And it was not necessarily one where they saw the library as the supplier of that need, with 100 students responding and 78 students saying “Yes,” to the question “If there was a designated study space open for 24 hours on campus not in the library, would you use it?”

Several Rutgers libraries used to be open 24/5 during final exam periods. While the libraries do tend to have extended hours during the exam period, only the Alexander library still offers 24-hour access during a portion of the final exam period. In most cases, user counts just did not warrant keeping a building open beyond midnight or 2 a.m.

There are considerable expenses and concerns associated with extended library hours. In addition to requiring sufficient library staff to keep the building open beyond normal hours, there is an expectation that the computer labs would also be staffed. Security is a major concern; building access needs to be monitored. Most libraries rely on university security staff for this. Most libraries are sizable with multi-levels or multi-wings. There is no way to limit access to one discrete portion of the library.

In 2024, Rutgers Libraries Access Services surveyed a wide array of university libraries, ranging from New Jersey academic libraries to Big Ten libraries. Of the 22 libraries responding, 7 had 24-hour locations within the library system, while 8 reported one or more 24 hour spaces available to students but not in the libraries. A number of libraries that did not currently have a 24-hour space had had one in the past but stopped due to low usage and costs.

It might be worthwhile for the campuses to identify spaces that could be set up if not as 24/7, but at least after hours, study spaces. Perhaps opening at 10 pm after most of the campus libraries close during the week, and remaining open until 7 or 8 a.m. Ideally, these would be spaces where:

- access could be limited to a discrete portion of a building
- there would be parking facilities close to the building
- the space had some comfortable furniture
- there would be computers/printers available
- there would be sufficient outlets/hot carrels available for students to use their laptops

Based on the Libraries experience with extended hours, as well as the experience reported by other libraries, these would not need to be particularly large spaces.

## **Recommendations**

The Rutgers University Senate recommends that:

1. Campus administrations identify campus spaces across all campuses that could be set up as at least after-hours study spaces.
2. These spaces could open/remain open after the campus library closes during the week, and remain open until 7 or 8 a.m.
3. Ideally, these would be spaces where:
  - access could be limited to a discrete portion of a building
  - there would be parking facilities close to the building
  - the space had some comfortable furniture
  - there would be computers/printers available
  - there would be sufficient outlets/hot carrels available for students to use their laptops
4. Resources be allocated for additional security and/or staff to appropriately manage after-hours study spaces, if needed.