Introduction and Background

In Spring 2013, New York University (NYU) Bobst Library revitalized its space assessment for the recently renovated 4th, 5th, and 6th floors, collectively called the Research Commons. The following year the survey was expanded to incorporate the entire building, spanning 13 floors. Previously, conducting an assessment meant placing hash marks on a paper survey to indicate how many people were on each floor. However, data collectors were unclear on numerous sections in the original survey, creating issues with the reporting of results.

Recommendations for Testing, Editing, and Training

Testing
- Take the survey yourself to discover design flaws
- Have student assistants and colleagues test the survey

Editing
- Review the survey for inconsistencies, confusing language, overlooked spaces, and overall flow of the survey

Training
- Define options and uniform vocabulary
- Clarify what is being measured
- Review how to use the technology
- Feedback

Designing and Implementing a New Survey

The first step to successful survey design is to have a clear goal. Survey design must also offer ease of use for volunteers collecting the data. This particular survey aimed to understand how patrons use the newly renovated spaces. For this assessment, data for the total number of users in a particular area of a floor, number of users for dedicated graduate student spaces, usage of newly added technology in study rooms, and use of specialized services (Data Services and Digital Studio) were of key interest.

Survey Design Strategies:
- Create a survey for each floor, allowing for a clear division of spaces and services on each floor and sense of accomplishment for the participant
- Organize the survey into blocks for each space to be assessed as a unit
- Synchronize the flow of the survey for each floor, ensuring that every survey starts and ends at the same point
- Create and maintain a uniform vocabulary for each space and service on every floor
- Add images for an accurate identification of spaces and services
- Design questions to not only be aesthetically pleasing, but also easy to answer on iPads

Data Collectors Recruitment and Training:
- Have support and initial announcement of project, highlighting objectives, sent to library employees by higher management
- Send out an email to introduce and explain the survey and call for volunteers among student assistants, library staff, and librarians across various departments
- Set up an online schedule so that data collectors can assign themselves shifts
- Provide instructions in multiple formats: handout, wiki, email, verbally
- Offer training sessions to orient data collectors to the survey
- Send out a follow-up email close to the start of sampling week, reminding data collectors of open shifts and training sessions
- Send daily reminders to data collectors the day of their shift

Results

What we Know:
- The 6th floor was most utilized
- Wednesday saw the most traffic and Friday the least
- Patrons take almost any opportunity to turn surfaces into a desk space (including our portable lockers)

Still to Come:
- What existing technology was being used by patrons?
- What types of space (islands, group study, quiet rooms) were the most utilized?
- What behaviors stood out to data collectors?