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# Shifting Spaces

## Assessing and Redesigning a Multimedia Lab



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### What is the Design Lab?

Opened in 2002, the Design Lab is a multimedia learning space in the R.B. House Undergraduate Library at UNC Chapel Hill where students, staff, and faculty work on digital design and web development projects. It is the only such multimedia lab on campus open to all UNC affiliates, regardless of department or status.

Current equipment

- 9 PCs
- 4 iMacs
- 7 Fujitsu scanners
- 2 large-format Epson Expression scanners
- 1 KIC book scanner
- Design software (Adobe Creative Suite)



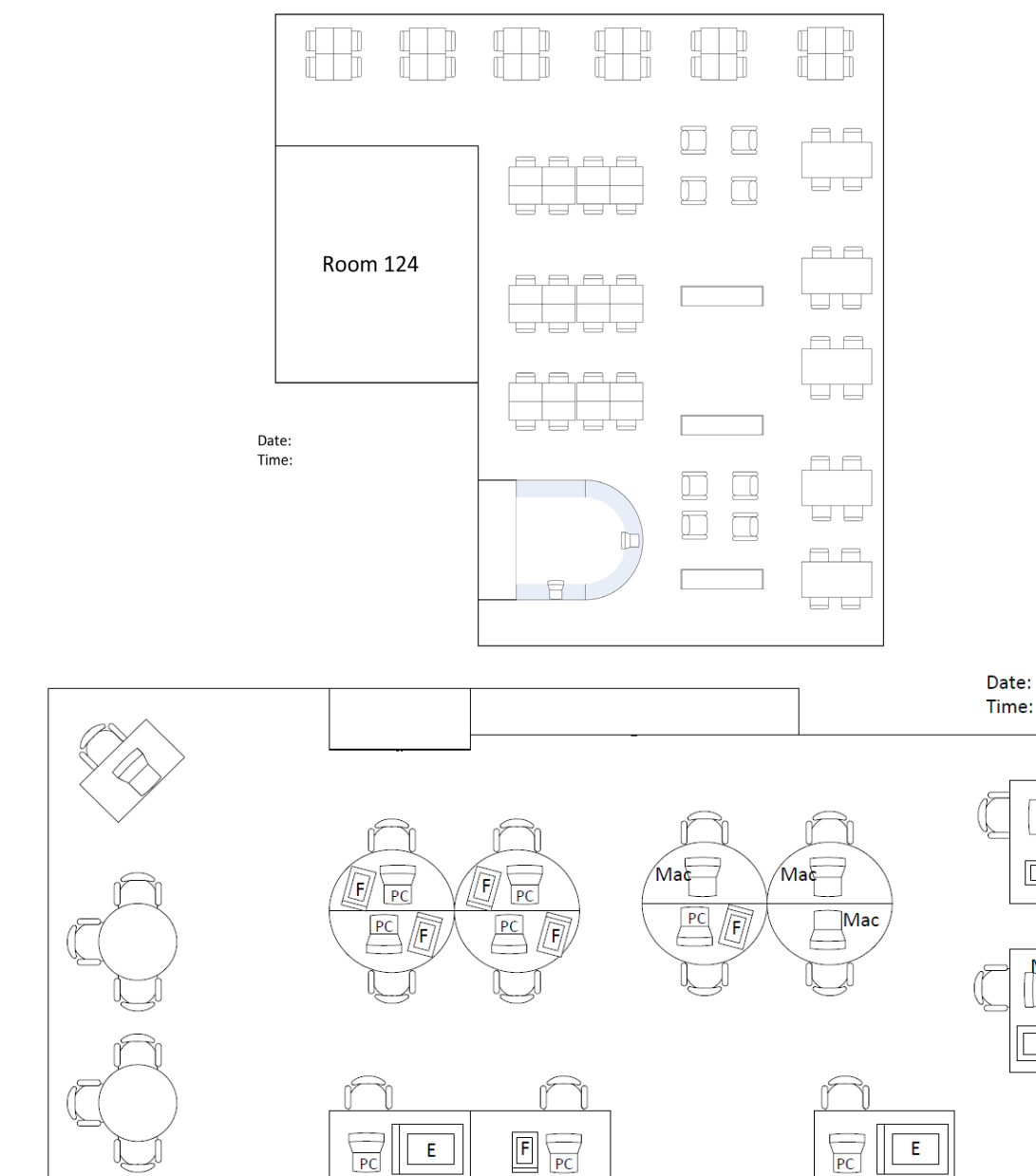
### What Did We Do?

#### Survey

- A 14 question Qualtrics survey administered to Design Lab users via iPad between Nov. 4 and Nov. 8, 2013
- Lab assistants approached Design Lab users and asked if they would take a survey about the space

#### Space Use Tracking

- Unobtrusive space usage tracking of both the Reference Room and the Design Lab between Nov. 11 and Nov. 15, 2013
- Tracking occurred 4 times per day for 4 days, and 3 times on the final day
- Staff noted where users sat, what equipment they were using, and if they were studying in groups



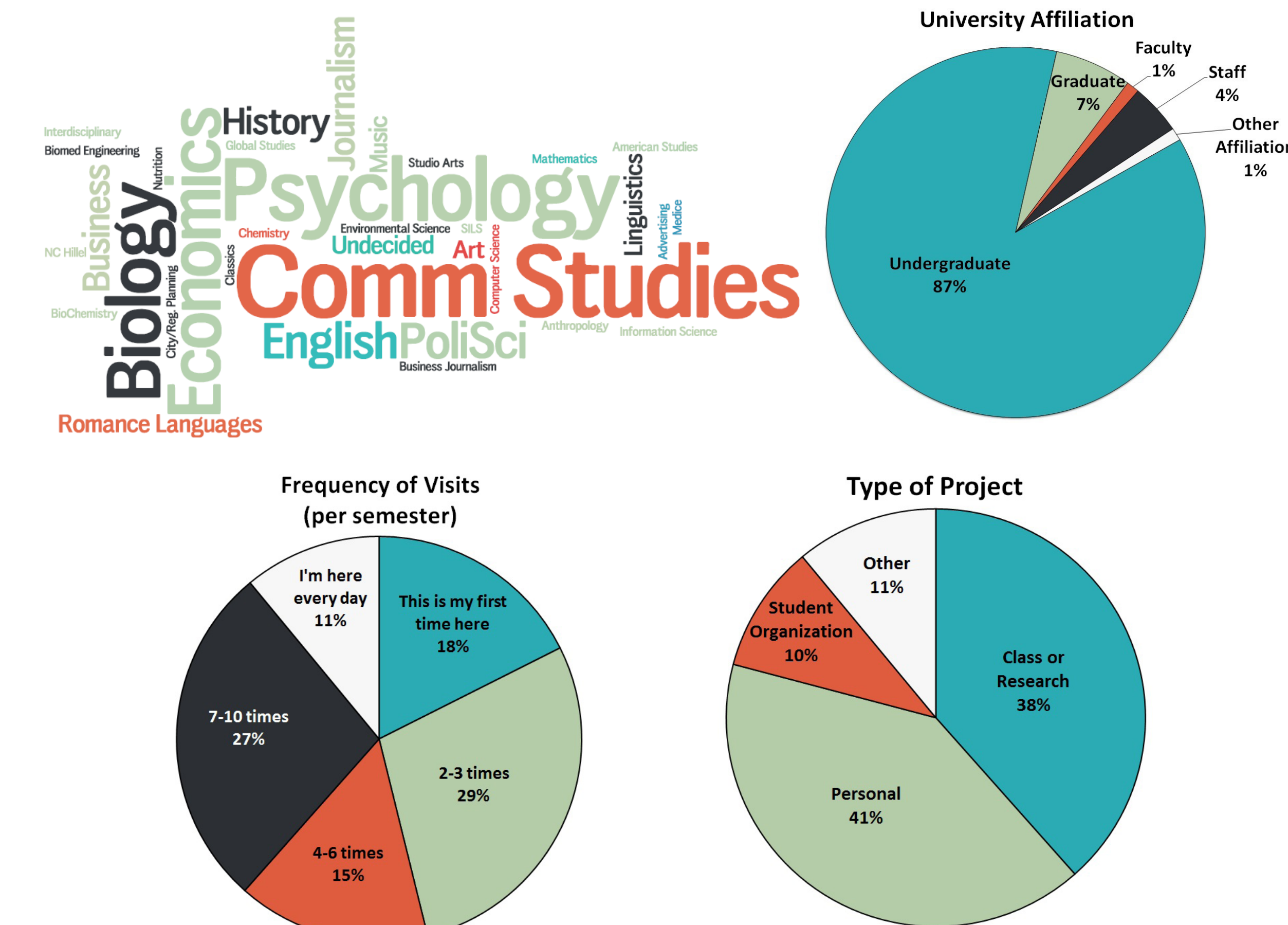
### Why Did We Do It?

**Open Space:** Recently, a large portion of the print reference collection was either deselected or redistributed throughout the library system, leaving a large amount of open space in the Reference room. Currently, that space is sparsely furnished with a limited amount of soft seating. This gave us a unique opportunity to use the space to enlarge the Design Lab. There would be room for additional equipment, and we would continue to meet the growing need for technology support for students' multimedia projects.

**Service Continuity:** Consolidating the Reference Desk and the Design Lab service points would reduce user confusion in terms of where to go for assistance as well as potentially reallocate staff to emerging needs: if Design Lab and reference questions can be adequately answered with only two desk staff members per shift, we can reduce the number of staff from three people per shift to two.

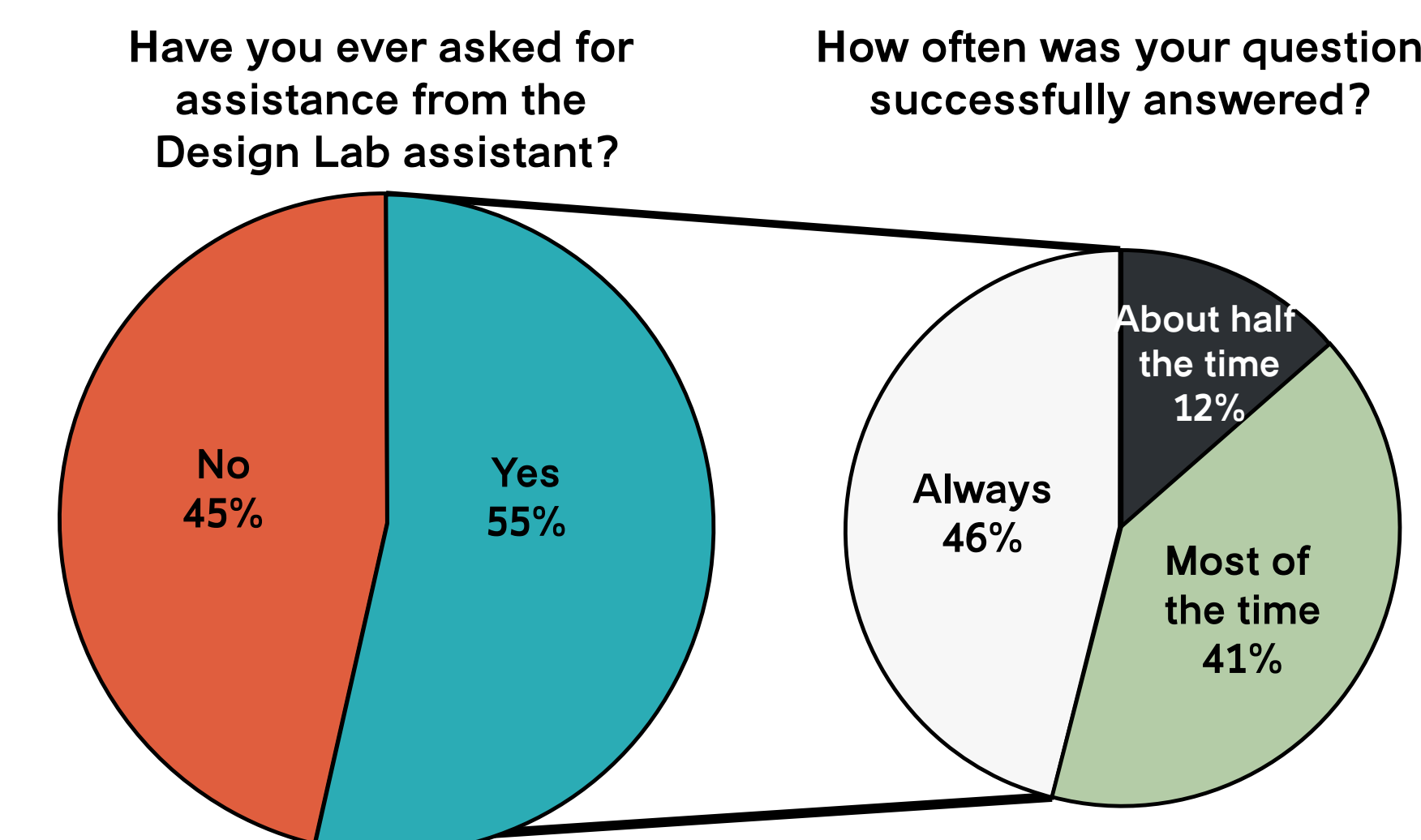
**Awareness & Marketing:** Design Lab login statistics showed a lower number of logins than we had previously assumed. We wanted to be able to better market the Design Lab and make its existence and services more prominent to users, by letting the results of the study inform new decisions.

### Survey Demographics



- 91 total responses representing 34 campus departments
- The overwhelming majority of users are undergraduate students
- The distribution of users across so many disciplines may mean that more departments or classes are requiring multimedia assignments
- Most users come to work on personal or class/research projects
- There is a fairly even spread of the frequency of user visits to the Design Lab

### Design Lab Assistance

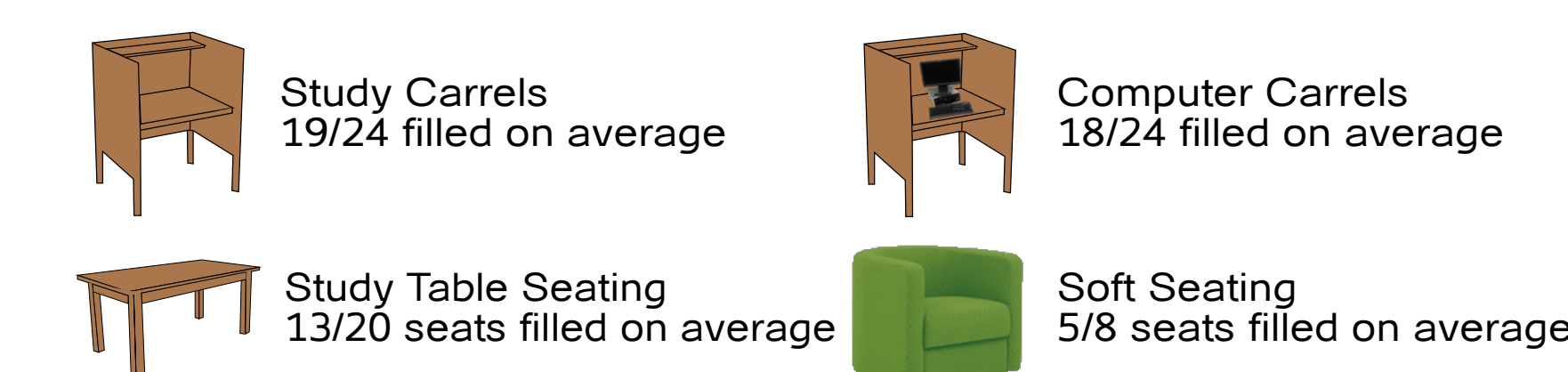


- 41 respondents (55%) said that they had asked for assistance in the Design Lab prior to taking the survey
- When asked about the success rate of the answers they received, 87% of responses fell into the "Always successful" or "Successful most of the time" categories
- There were no negative responses to the assistance users had received

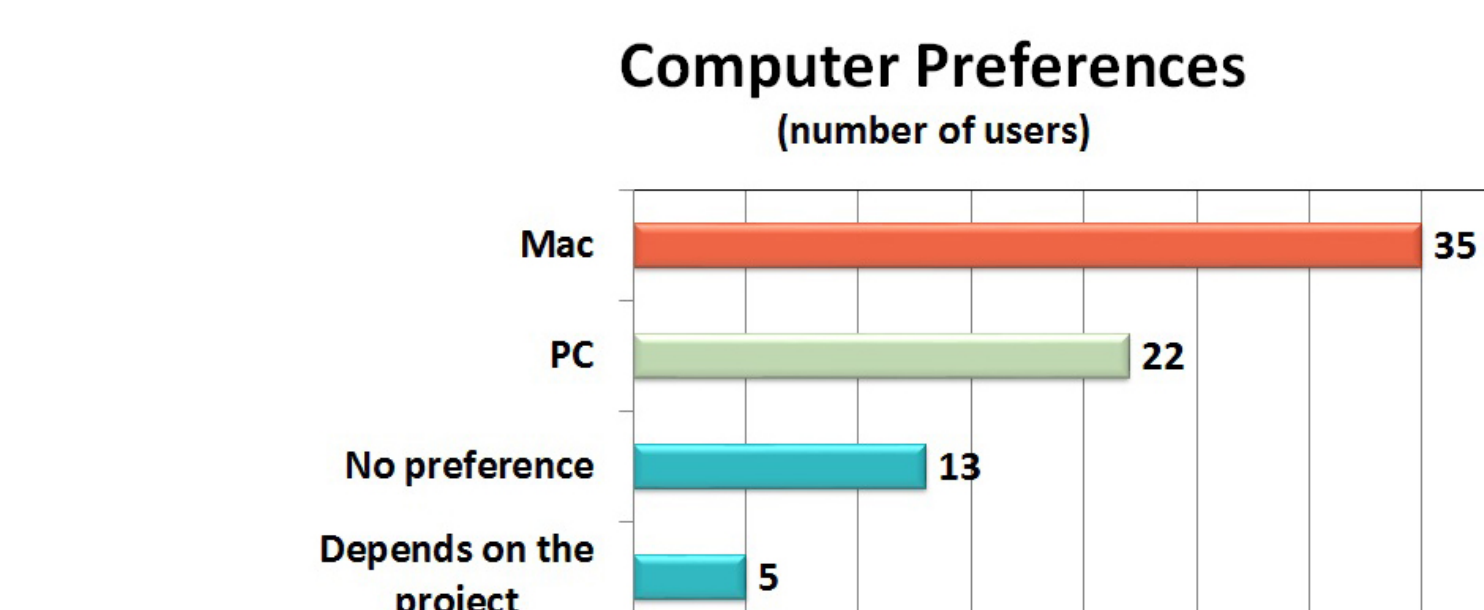


### Space Use & Occupancy

#### Seating in the Reference Room

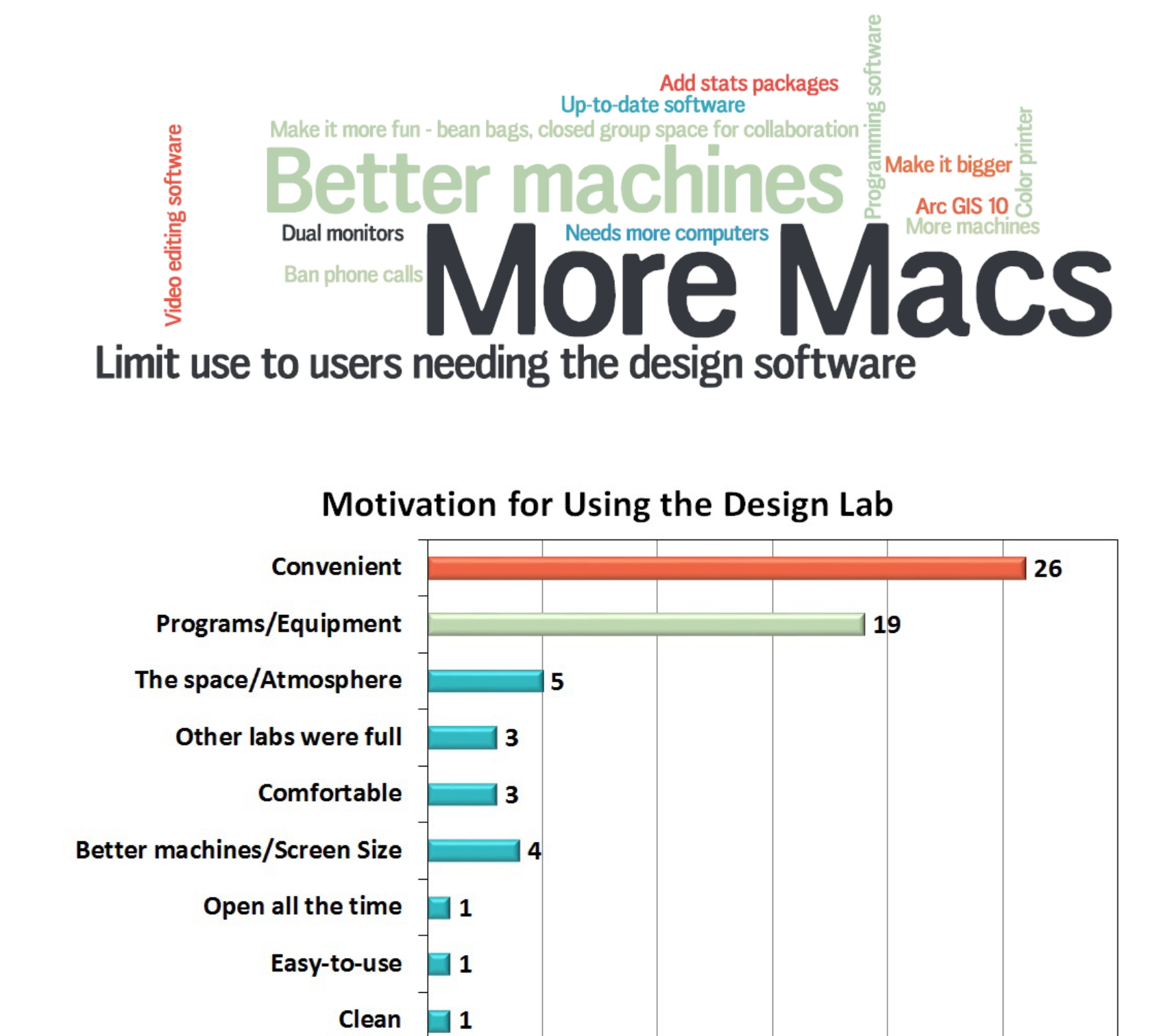


#### Seating in the Design Lab



- According to the space tracking, group work isn't common in either the Reference Room or the Design Lab
- Study carrels were more frequently full than any other seating type
- iMacs were more likely to be fully occupied than PCs
  - Several tracking reports showed all iMacs in use
  - There was never a time when all PCs were in use
- 75 respondents answered the survey questions about computer preferences, and overall there was a marked preference for iMacs

### User Comments & Suggestions



- Convenience was a very important factor for users
  - The Design Lab is close to the heart of campus and many dorms, near students' classes, and generally has open seats
- The programs and equipment available are another main reason for the amount of traffic in the Design Lab
  - This is the only computer lab on campus with scanners and visual editing software
- The most common request was for additional iMacs
- A second request was better PCs, which may have been solved by recent PC hardware and operating system upgrades

### What Did We Learn?

- Design Lab users want more iMacs available - iMacs have better screen resolution for working on visual projects, and over 60% of incoming students use Apple laptops so are more accustomed to the Mac OS
- The level and quality of assistance currently given should be maintained
- Design Lab users come from all over campus, but generally work on personal, class, or research projects
- Overall, the Design Lab is appreciated by the UNC community, and the Undergraduate Library should continue to offer and improve the Design Lab's services and equipment

**It's great!**  
Glad it's so easy to scan stuff  
Thanks! Like the space  
Glad that these programs are available to affiliates  
The scanners are great to have for photo projects  
Comfy and cozy  
Glad the space is open to the public

### What's Next?

At the conclusion of this project, a redesign was set in motion. The results of the study are being used to inform the design decisions. As of today (May 8), the Undergraduate Library will be receiving a Reference Room and Design Lab makeover. This redesign will take place over the summer with the goal of being open for the start of the 2014 Fall semester.

- University Design Services has already started creating mockups for the layout of the new space
- New furniture options are being reviewed
- A timeline and budget for the project are being finalized
- The Design Lab equipment will be moved into the Reference Room to consolidate Research & Design Lab services into a single service point
  - The current number of PCs will remain the same, but additional iMacs will be purchased



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